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# What are the effects of the financial crisis on Gender Inequality?

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- The case of Greece

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Bachelor Thesis: UTKVO3, 15 hp  
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# Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis has been to ask whether the financial crisis in Greece is having any effects on gender inequality using the two concepts of gender roles and care work as theoretical frameworks. The scope of the study stretches from the beginning of the crisis in 2009, to 2012. Greece is used as a case study in the thesis and the data consists of official statistics from Eurostat and ELSTAT, as well as calculations of the gender gap from the Gender Gap Report. The results of the study show that unemployment and poverty has increased both for men and women, while employment has decreased. The gender gap in political empowerment has also increased while for economic participation it has decreased. The numbers alone do not indicate that the crisis has had any effects on gender inequality but the concepts of gender roles and care work demonstrate that the crisis is creating a situation where the barriers for women to enter the official labour market are increasing. Reinforced gender roles and women's care burden are leading to less economic opportunities and participation for women, higher poverty rates and further segmentation of the labour market with a larger gender wage gap. The thesis therefore concludes that the economic crisis in Greece is currently increasing gender inequality and risks further exacerbating it in the future.

Keywords: Greece, inequality, women, financial crisis, employment, poverty

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# 1. Introduction

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It is acknowledged by the World Bank that economic growth will not automatically promote gender equality and that an unequal distribution of unpaid domestic work restricts economic options for women, which in the long run is not “smart economics”. It also states that gender equality can enhance productivity and matters for society in a broad way (World Bank, 2012a: xxi, 3). In these times of financial crises the effects of economic downturns on women therefore become especially significant. In this scenario, Greece is a particularly interesting case because economic development is a prerequisite for tackling the current recession in the country. In spite of this, there is a gap in the knowledge of how the crisis is affecting gender equality in Greece (Theodoropoulou and Watt, 2011: 24). It is therefore the goal of this thesis to look at the case of Greece and ask: What are the effects of the financial crisis on gender inequality? The crisis and the measures taken to improve the economy are still an ongoing process in Greece. It is therefore important to investigate whether the crisis and these measures risk exacerbating gender inequality right now because, assuming that gender inequality is not “smart economics”, they may affect Greece’s chances of economic recovery in the future.

The crisis has had a significant impact on Greek society. Unemployment and poverty have risen among both genders and all age groups, while the European Commission has expressed concerns regarding the risk of increasing social exclusion and other social challenges (Leahy et al., 2013: 10). Initial reports concerning the impacts of the crisis on Greek society have mentioned these risks and have also emphasised the risk of increasing inequalities. In spite of this, there is a general lack of scientific articles that tackle the specific gendered impacts of the crisis in Greece. The aim of this thesis is therefore to attempt to fill this gap. Often, the situation for women is only briefly mentioned in scientific articles dealing with the Greek crisis. An in depth analysis of their situation has so far mostly only been undertaken by women’s groups and other interest groups. This lack of academic writing about the subject is problematic because the effects of the crisis on gender inequality in Greece are very relevant to Greece’s financial situation and economic recovery. In order for Greece to recover from the crisis and continue developing, the gendered effects of the crisis must therefore be investigated and scrutinised.

## 1.1 Purpose

Based on the relevance of the topic, the purpose of this thesis is to discuss the gendered effects of the crisis in Greece, using feminist economic theory. More specifically, it will look at the impact of the financial crisis on men's and women's employment, the gender gap in economic participation and opportunity, political empowerment and their risk of poverty. In order to do this it intends to look at national statistics and the Global Gender Gap Report depicting changes in these factors since the beginning of the crisis. It will then discuss these findings using two concepts within feminist economic theory, gender roles and care work.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to ask how the current financial crisis in Greece is affecting gender inequality. In order to answer this question it will use these specific research questions:

- How has the current situation for women and men in Greece changed, in terms of employment, the gender gap and poverty since the beginning of the crisis?
- Analysed through the concept of gender roles, how will the changes for men and women's employment, gender gap and poverty affect gender inequality in Greece?
- Analysed through the concept of care work, how will the changes for men and women's employment, gender gap and poverty affect gender inequality in Greece?

The research questions are divided into two parts; the first part consists of a descriptive question asking about the changes for men and women taking place as a result of the crisis. These questions will be answered using statistical data collected from different sources. The second part consists of questions that will analyse the statistical data gathered, using two concepts within the theoretical framework of feminist economic theory, gender roles and care work. These concepts were chosen because of their importance in feminist theory and their relevance to the case of Greece. In Greece, gender roles are still affecting the structure of the labour market and care work strongly relates to women's economic participation and opportunities (Kyriazis, 1998; Matsaganis, 2012:409).

## 1.3 Research boundaries

It is not within the scope of this thesis to go into details about the reasons for the Greek financial crisis, but a brief overview of the events leading up to the crisis will be presented. A historical context of female labour participation and female empowerment starting in 1974 will also be provided in order to use as a basis for the discussion about the effects of the crisis

on gender inequality. Before this is done, some boundaries and limitations of the research will be discussed regarding the time span of the data and some of the concepts used in the research questions. The statistical data used to detect the changes that have occurred in men's and women's employment, poverty and gender gap will stretch from 2009 until 2012, meaning the time span is only four years. During these four years, there have been some substantial changes in Greek society when it comes to employment and poverty (Matsaganis, 2012), which means that it should be possible to detect general patterns and trends regarding the development of gender inequality in spite of the short time span.

### 1.3.1 Defining Gender Inequality

Besides the time span it is also important to define the boundaries of some of the concepts used in the research questions, in order to clarify the purpose and the results. The first concept to clarify is "gender inequality". Gender inequality can be defined in many ways, which makes it both a vague but at the same time very useful concept (World Bank, 2012a:4). It can be considered vague because each researcher can define it in a different way; this vagueness is nevertheless what makes it so useful because it can be adapted to many different situations. The definition of gender inequality from a developing context, focusing on nutrition or female literacy, would not be very relevant for the case of Greece. The definition of gender inequality in this text has therefore been adapted to fit the case of Greece, while still acknowledging that it as an interchangeable concept. According to Mikkelsen (2005), gender analysis showing women in relation to men instead of just an analysis of women shows social relations and differentiations between men and women better (Mikkelsen, 2005: 232). The definition in this thesis therefore includes looking at the effects of the crisis for women compared to men. Gender inequality is defined as such: men and women not having equal labour force participation (employment and unemployment), not having equal opportunities to enter the labour force, one gender being overrepresented when it comes to risking falling into poverty and there being a gender gap in political empowerment. This definition is based on the World development report and feminist economic theory, which discuss women's economic opportunities in relation to economic outcomes (Donath, 2000: 115; World Bank, 2012a:4), as well as the Global Gender Gap Report, which discusses political empowerment and economic opportunities (Hausman et al. 2012: 4).

### 1.3.2 Defining the Gender Gap

The discussion about how to define gender inequality leads to the discussion about how to define another of the concepts used in the research question, "the gender gap". This concept

has been used widely in the field of gender analysis. Again, it is a concept that can be defined in many different ways, which is both its weakness and its strength. The gender gap is used as a concept in this thesis because it widens the statistical data available for analysis. Combined with data about employment and poverty it also provides another way of looking at the effects of the crisis in Greece. According to Rowlands (1995), the feminist definition of the gender gap includes there being a gap between men and women in the access to formal power such as access to formal decision-making processes and the access to markets and incomes (Rowlands, 1995: 102). This is very similar to the definition of the gender gap used in this thesis. Since the data used in this text to measure the gender gap comes from the Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR), the definition the report uses will be the one included here. Their definition, like Rowlands' definition, focuses on economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment. They also include educational attainment and health and survival as factors (Hausman et al. 2012: 4), but these factors will not be used as much for this case, because they are not as relevant to the case of Greece as the first two factors.

## 1.4 Background

### 1.4.1 The crisis begins

This part of the thesis will present a brief background to the crisis and to women's positions in Greek society. The crisis is said to have begun in 2009 (though Greece's recession started a little sooner, in 2008) when the budget deficits were made public. It started as a fiscal crisis shortly after the general elections in 2009. The newly elected socialist party would soon discover that the fiscal statistics had been misrepresented by the previous government and that the budget deficit was much greater than expected. The fiscal crisis soon developed into a sovereign debt crisis and eventually into a deep recession (Matsaganis, 2012: 406-407). In order to recover from the recession Greece requested outside assistance and was eventually granted loans from the European Central Bank (ECB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union (EU). Austerity measures, which were a condition for Greece to receive the loans, began implementation in 2010, soon after the specifics of the emergency loans had been negotiated (Matsaganis, 2012: 406-407).

### 1.4.2 Women's employment and gender relations after democratisation

The post-Second World War period brought substantial changes to Greek society regarding urbanisation and women's educational and labour force participation (Kyriazis, 1998: 66), but the focus of this section will be on gender relations after the fall of the junta in 1974. This is an excellent starting point because the political climate at the time fostered social change and



an increase in women's organisations. This in turn led to the adoption of the issue of gender equality by political parties (Kyriazis, 1998: 66). By 1980 Greece had become one of the most progressive countries when it came to securing women's equality legally, but traditional values in society dictating women's roles were not being addressed and remained more or less intact (Kyriazis, 1998: 66-67). This trend continued during the 1990's, as women's participation in the workforce increased, while traditional family structures still maintained a highly segregated labour market. Women dominated as 'family workers' while being underrepresented as managers and legislators (Kyriazis, 1998: 69). According to Matsaganis (2012), traditional family structures have also been reinforced by Greece's welfare system which has favoured a male-breadwinner model (Matsaganis, 2012: 409). This has consequently continued to keep female employment in Greece well below the European average in spite of the economic modernisation process during the 90s and 00s (Eurostat, 2012a). In conclusion, the Greek economy has since democratisation increased female employment and empowerment in the sense of legislation against discrimination and access to political positions, but family structures have still maintained labour market segregation and traditional gender roles (Livanos et al., 2008: 818).

## 1.5 Previous Research

According to Antonopoulos (2009), the common assumption that economic measures are gender neutral is highly problematic in the context of an economic crisis. Measures of economic adjustment that don't take into account things like gendered segregation of the labour market risk affecting women disproportionately (Antonopoulos, 2009: 7, 15-19). Like Antonopoulos (2009), further research on the impact of crises and economic adjustment measures on gender inequality highlights the disproportionate effect that recessions and crises have had on women with regard to the labour market and the gender gap. In their article called: "Crises, policy responses and widening inequalities in the EU", Leschke and Jepsen (2012) found that the economic crisis revived more traditional family views on gender roles in all four countries they looked at (Denmark, United Kingdom, Germany and Slovakia). They also found that initial figures indicating men's work being hit hardest by the crisis were soon being reversed as sectors with mostly women were targeted after a few years into the crisis (Leschke and Jepsen, 2012: 308). Similar articles about the gendered impacts of crises and austerity that support the aforementioned conclusions have been written by Seguino (2009), Lethbridge (2012) and Smith (2009). Seguino and Lethbridge, like Leschke and Jepsen (2012), see trends where female job losses become higher than male job losses after the initial surge of layoffs and how gender norms support this (Lethbridge, 2012: 22; Seguino, 2009: 3).

Gender norms, according to Seguíno (2009), are such that when jobs are scarce, men are seen as the legitimate job holders. Evidence from developing countries going through a crisis, shows that joblessness leads to the withdrawal of some women from labour markets. This could lead to an underestimation of the employment effects of the crisis on women (Seguíno, 2009: 3). Lethbridge (2012) argues that gender norms have led to a majority of women being employed in the public sector. Job cuts in the public sector are therefore affecting women more than men (Lethbridge, 2012: 22). Smith does not fully agree that there is evidence that women's employment will necessarily be affected disproportionately by a crisis, but still emphasises the fact that policy responses to the crisis risk increasing gender inequality if gendered structures in society are not considered (Smith, 2009:2).

What all of these articles have in common is that their analysis of gender inequality includes the perspectives of gender roles, care work, the welfare state and gender segregation in the labour market. These perspectives are combined with the available data regarding employment/unemployment, education, poverty and the gender gap. In the case of Greece, academic articles that mention the impact of the crisis on women and men tend to focus on the available data regarding employment and unemployment, without combining it with the wider perspective of gender inequality. Matsaganis (2012) mentions, in one of the few academic articles that mention the effect of the crisis on Greek women, that the statistics show that job losses and an increasing risk of poverty have affected men more than women (Matsaganis, 2012: 410, 412). Similar figures are shown in Matsaganis and Leventi's (2011) article about the distributional impacts of the Greek crisis (Matsaganis and Leventi, 2011: 12). There are however other articles that have attempted to combine data with a wider gender inequality perspective in Greece. These articles tend to constitute so called "grey literature", meaning they are not written for academic purposes, but for women's groups and other interest groups. One such article is written by Woestman (2010) and deals with the global economic crisis and gender relations using perspectives of care work, gender segregation on the labour market and gender roles (Woestman, 2010: 7-8). Even though there is reason to question the conclusions of an article written by an interest group with a very specific agenda in mind (in this case the advancement of women's empowerment), it is also clear that her article attempts to fill a gap in the knowledge about the Greek crisis and its effect on gender inequality. Her article is therefore still useful for further research.

Based on the conclusions of previous research regarding crises and their effect on women there is reason to believe that gender inequality could be affected by the crisis in Greece. Considering there is a gap in the knowledge about these effects when it comes to Greece, this

this thesis will attempt to use a similar perspective as Antonopoulos (2009), Leschke and Jepsen (2012), etc. to try to determine the effects of the crisis on gender inequality in Greece. According to their reasoning, the conclusions of Matsaganis (2012) and Matsaganis and Leventi (2012) do not provide the full answer and more research needs to be done on the topic.

## 2. Methodology

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This chapter of the thesis will deal with the methods used to answer the research questions, establishing their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their relevance to the topic.

### 2.1 Case study

As mentioned in the title, this thesis will try to answer questions about what the effects of an economic crisis on gender inequality are, using the case of Greece in order to do so. A single-case study as opposed to a multiple case-study or a more general overview of the research problem will provide the opportunity to answer the question in a more holistic, in depth and broad manner (Denscombe, 2011: 62). This is especially relevant to the research question of this thesis because a country case analysis will hopefully be able to reveal specific underlying norms or structures that either strengthen or weaken the impact of the crisis on gender inequality. Structures like these could be harder to determine if the research question was general and not based on the experiences of a specific country, or even if it included looking at several countries, because the amount of data to collect and structures to detect would be much larger (Denscombe, 2011: 62-63). It is fair to assume that many processes are involved in the social construction of gender inequality and choosing a single country as a case provides the opportunity to look more closely at some of these processes in a context specific setting.

This being said, it could also have been interesting to do a comparison between two countries in order to determine if the crisis has had different effects on gender inequality in different countries. This idea, though considered, was not chosen due to the fact that there have already been multi-case studies on the topic determining that crises have different effects on women in different countries (take e.g. Leschke and Jepsen's, 2012 study). A single-case study of a relevant country was therefore chosen. The case of Greece can be said to be exemplifying in the sense that it is facing a similar situation to that in several other European countries like Spain, Portugal or Ireland. This allows the research to look at key social processes in Greece,

processes that on a certain level can be found in other country cases as well (Bryman, 2008:56).

## 2.2 Limitations and Reliability of method

When it comes to Greece as a case study there are limitations with regard to its external validity, just like with any other case study. The external validity of a text determines whether it is possible to generalise the findings beyond the single case that is used in the text. Since this thesis will attempt to discuss underlying structures such as gender roles and care work that influence the effects of the crisis on gender inequality, the ability to generalise is improved. Structures that determine or influence the effects of a crisis on people exist in all countries, but are very influenced by the context in which they exist. Greece can therefore be seen as an exemplifying case in the sense that it may have similar structures influencing the effects of the crisis as other countries, but the effects may still not be the same in all countries because of different contexts (Bryman, 2008). It is therefore important to recognise this limitation in the thesis and not draw general conclusions about all countries. It can however be acknowledged that Greece shares common traits with other European countries currently in a similar financial situation, meaning this study can provide a basis on which to look at other cases. The perceived lack of external validity and generalisability of the case of Greece is therefore not a big issue because the context specific limitations of looking at a single case are recognised, while the larger generalisability of looking at structures is emphasised.

## 2.3 Data collection

The data that the analysis of this thesis will be built on has mainly been collected from documents released by the official statistical bureaus of Greece (ELSTAT) and of the European Commission (Eurostat). These sources were chosen because they offer the most detailed sets of statistics regarding employment/unemployment, poverty and more general living conditions in Greece, both during and before the crisis. Information about the gender gap has been collected from the Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum. Official statistics as opposed to raw data analysis was chosen because statistics regarding unemployment and poverty are generally considered to be reliable (Bryman, 2008: 304). There is therefore reason to believe that the statistical findings of Eurostat and ELSTAT are relatively reliable and not purely based on subjective interpretations of what employment and unemployment means (Denscombe, 2011: 305). It would have been possible to supplement the statistical data and the data on the gender gap with interviews and/or surveys in order to

add the personal experiences of women. This path was not chosen because the emphasis of this thesis is on larger societal structures as opposed to personal experiences.

Since figures of the gender gap are missing from ELSTAT and Eurostat, another source had to be used for these figures. The Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) was therefore chosen to represent changes in the gender gap in Greece. It incorporates several important factors into its calculations, such as economic participation and opportunity and political empowerment. In doing so, it is able to assess a country's gender gap independent from its level of development (Hausman et al., 2012:4), which makes it suitable for Greece. If one were to instead use the World Bank or another organisation more focused on development issues as a source for calculating the gender gap, there would be a risk of concealing some amount of gender inequality. This is due to the fact that these organisations tend to focus more on indicators typical for developing contexts, such as maternal mortality and women in non-agricultural employment (World Bank, 2012b). Such indicators are not completely relevant for Greece, a country that has reached a certain level of economic and social development. Again, the reliability of the GGGR was deemed to be sufficient for this purpose as sources for its analysis include major development and labour organisations such as UNESCO, the World Economic Forum and the International Labour organisations (Hausman et al. 2012: 5).

## 2.4 Limitations and Reliability of data

Concerning data collection from official statistical bureaus and the GGGR, there is the issue of validity and reliability. This is especially relevant for ELSTAT, the official Greek statistical agency, which in the past has misreported figures relating to the deficit and debt of the Greek government (Georgiou, 2013:1). Since the data used in this thesis is unrelated to the misrepresented figures, there is no real reason to question their reliability. Having said this, another possible limitation of the data is its ability to measure things like unemployment, employment and poverty with the specific definitions that are used (Bryman, 2008: 306). Eurostat uses definitions that make it possible to compare statistics from different European countries (Eurostat, 2009). ELSTAT reports to Eurostat and their figures are therefore also comparable with the rest of Europe. Because of this, there is a risk that country specific structures of the labour market are not represented and that some types of unemployment or employment are concealed in the statistics. As Tsaliki (2000) points out, employment figures for Greece need to be handled carefully since they only show registered employment (Tsaliki, 2000:224). The informal economy and the family economy can therefore not be included in

the numbers, but the usage of gender roles and care work as analytical tools in this thesis is an attempt to at least incorporate some parts of the informal market into the analysis.

## 3. Theoretical Framework and Concepts

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On the basis of Greece as a case study and the research problem, this chapter will present the theoretical framework which has inspired the choice of concepts for the analysis, as well as the factors chosen to serve as data.

### 3.1 Feminist economic theory

Feminist economic theory, according to Nelson (1993), is an attempt to broaden the rigid outlines of conventional economic theory into something that considers all humans, their interactions and strive for survival and health. This is a step away from the tendency to simply refer to the mathematical theories of individual choice as economic theory, and an attempt to include more nuanced meanings to the theory (Nelson, 1993: 34). Feminist criticism of conventional economic theories point out the androcentric biases that tend to make women's contributions in the economic sphere invisible (England, 1993: 38). Feminist economic theory is, of course, not one homogenous set of ideas, but a collection of several directions within feminist economic thought. There have been many debates about where the focus of the feminist critique of mainstream economic theory should lie. An important distinction between different directions of feminist economic theory can also be made between its criticism of androcentric biases in economic theory and structural biases in societies. Feminist economic theory incorporates both of these directions, but the one that will be used for this thesis is the direction that criticises structures in society that discriminate women. This theory is most suitable because the discussion in this thesis will look at inequalities in Greek society, as opposed to discussing theoretical biases.

England (1993) identifies two major emphases within feminist economic theory that criticise inequalities in society. The first emphasis is on the exclusion of women from certain spheres of society such as traditionally male activities and institutions. This exclusion can be a result of discriminatory laws, norms or traditions and can lead to a situation where the barriers for women to enter into paid labour, political positions or other positions associated with high status, money and power are very high. This emphasis is related to the idea of gender roles, where norms about the role of men and women dictate their opportunities. In order to correct this situation, feminist critics advocate allowing women to participate in the spheres they are excluded from (England, 1993: 38-39). The second emphasis, according to England, focuses

on the devaluation of traits and activities typically associated with women, such as household work, child rearing and volunteer work. In devaluing the importance of these activities, conventional economic theories fail to recognise women's contributions to the wealth and prosperity of the country. Feminist critics with the second emphasis argue that the solution to the problem is to change the values that depreciate the work of women (England, 1993: 39). Though these emphases may seem very different, they are compatible because they both encourage all activities to be available to both men and women and think these activities should be more equally valued.

The first emphasis, as described by England (1993), with its focus on the exclusion of women from certain spheres in society is the one that has influenced the choice of factors included in this thesis the most. Female participation in the formal labour market provides status and the ability to transcend traditional gender roles (Kyriazis, 1998: 73), which is why it is a crucial factor to consider when it comes to gender inequality. The risk of falling into poverty, like employment, is an indicator of women's status and opportunity. The gender gap in the sense of ability to participate in the formal economy, to influence political decisions and of having economical opportunities also provides a way of analysing gender inequality because it reveals whether women are excluded from institutions of power and decision-making (Hausman, 2012: 3-4).

### 3.1.1 Gender roles

The first emphasis of feminist economic theory concerned with women's exclusion from certain spheres in society is very relevant for this thesis because of its focus on economic opportunities for women. Gender roles are one important aspect of this exclusion because they can act as a barrier between women and their chances of getting education or a career, just as much as discriminatory laws can (Eccles: 1987: 135). By being excluded from the labour market, women's economic opportunities diminish. According to Kyriazis (1998), traditional family values regarding women's and men's roles in society have maintained gender inequality in Greece and created barriers for women when it comes to entering the labour market as well as entering typically male dominated jobs (Kyriazis, 1998: 67-69). Gender roles, which is a concept used in feminist theory (and consequently in feminist economic theory) therefore becomes an appropriate analytical tool in the case of Greece. Kyriazis (1998) exemplifies in her article how values about gender roles have created and maintained the relative exclusion of some women from the labour market and kept its gender segregation. This exclusion has continued in spite of changes in legislation officially equalising men's and women's opportunities (Kyriazis, 1998).

Gender roles in the Greek case are based on the family unit where men have the role of outside representative and breadwinner, which brings with it social esteem and prestige. Women on the other hand have the role of organising and managing the household, making sure that everything functions properly and that the family's wellbeing is taken care of (Kyriazis, 1998: 71). Women's role as caretaker of the household in Greece has been valued in society because the family unit's status has to some extent been dependent on the household running smoothly. The choice of women to not seek higher education or formal employment can be seen both as women's individual choice and preference, but also as a choice that stems from social pressure and pressure from the family (Eccles, 1987). The second emphasis of feminist economic theory concerning women's work being undervalued is therefore not as appropriate for Greece as an analytical tool because the problem for women in Greece has not been that their contribution to the family is undervalued, but that their assigned role has acted as a hindrance for them to seek employment and status positions outside of the household (Kyriazis, 1998).

The relevance of the concept of gender roles to this thesis lies in its ability to question how the crisis with its massive effects on employment and wages will be tackled by people and family units in Greece, considering the background of strong gender roles. Kyriazis (1998) concludes in her article that an increase in female employment is not necessarily an indication of a change in traditional family values. Changes in the economic sphere are however an important prerequisite when it comes to giving women an opportunity to be included in the official market where higher status can be gained (Kyriazis, 1998: 73). Considering the impact of the crisis on the Greek economic sphere, it becomes relevant to ask whether changes in employment, poverty and the gender gap risk hindering the recent developments in Greece, where more women defy gender roles and educate themselves in order to enter the formal workforce.

### 3.1.2 Care work

On the one hand, care work can be seen as a consequence of gender roles that dictate how a certain gender has the main responsibility for caring for children and elderly relatives (Donath, 2000: 115-116). But on the other hand, care work is also an important analytical framework by itself. According to Donath (2000), feminist economists focus on care work because it "is arguably one of the major sources of women's continuing economic disadvantage relative to men" (Donath, 2000:116). Like traditional gender roles, the lack of care provision by the market acts as a barrier for women to enter into paid employment, while a transfer of care work from the household to the market has a potentially liberating effect



(Lyberaki, 2011: 105). This liberating potential of care services being provided by the state is what makes the concept so relevant for analysing gender inequality. When care services are provided from outside of the household, women's labour force participation becomes facilitated. Providing care work therefore decreases women's exclusion from the formal labour market, which can provide both status and a change in gender roles, while potentially increasing gender equality (Lyberaki, 2011). Defining care work is not a simple task because it sits on the border between being formal and informal, paid and unpaid and private and public. According to Lyberaki (2011), this ambiguity is part of the reason why mainstream economic analysis does not care much for the concept (Lyberaki, 2011: 105). The clear connection between women's ability to join the labour force and the provision of care services, on the other hand, is what makes it so useful for feminist economic theory.

The Greek welfare state has traditionally used the strong family unit to cover for the gaps in its social safety nets. The responsibility of caring for children and elderly relatives has been placed upon females in the family (Matsaganis, 2005: 39), with the background of traditional gender roles. This lack of available care services has, along with gender roles, kept female labour participation in Greece below the European average. After democratisation, by the early 80s, female labour participation increased a great deal, but later stagnated in the late 80s despite improvements in legislation promoting gender equality (Kyriazis, 1998). A large increase in female labour participation following the stagnation occurred in the beginning of the 90s and continued well into the 00s. Lyberaki (2011) attributes this increase to affordable care services being provided by immigrant women as Greece rapidly changed from a sending to a receiving migrant country (Lyberaki, 2011: 107). It must however not be forgotten that Greece itself has also made several improvements to its social policies, increasing the availability of care services (Vlachantoni, 2010:232).

Care work as an analytical concept is very pertinent to the Greek case because it has been so strongly connected with women's labour force participation, risk of poverty and political empowerment. Since the Greek crisis has obliged Greece to ask for emergency loans with the conditionalities of having to decrease all social spending (Matsaganis, 2012: 407), there is therefore reason to analyse these changes in the Greek welfare state through the lens of care work. Care work has the potential to either increase or decrease women's participation in official employment, their economic opportunities and their risk of becoming poor, all of which are important factors in gender equality.

## 4. Data

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Using previous chapters dealing with the background of the research problem, Greece as a case study and feminist economic theory, this chapter will present the data. The data is focused on the concepts used in the research questions, looking at how these have changes since the beginning of the crisis. The concepts are: men's and women's employment, unemployment, their gender gap regarding economic participation and opportunity and political participation and poverty.

### 4.1 Employment and unemployment

As we can see in Table 1 (table can be found in the appendix), unemployment has increased a great deal both for men and women since the beginning of the crisis. For men there has been an increase of 15.8 percentage points (from 9.6% - 25.4%) and for women the increase has been 15.9 percentage points (from 13.1% - 29.0%). Employment has during this period decreased by 13.5 percentage points for men (from 78.8% - 65.3%) and by 7.5 percentage points for women (from 52.7% - 45.2%). Judging from these results, there has not been a significant difference between the impact of the crisis on men's and women's unemployment. Employment on the other hand has decreased more for men than it has for women with a difference of 6 percentage points. Looking at the table it also becomes clear that though there might not have been significant differences in the increase of unemployment figures and some differences in the decrease of employment figures, men's and women's unemployment and employment started out by having a large gap in between them. There was a difference of 6.1 percentage points between men's and women's unemployment and 26.1 percentage points between their employment numbers in 2009. In 2012 the gap is 6.3 percentage points for unemployment and 20.1 percentage points for employment. According to Matsaganis and Leventi (2011), this gap is due to the fact that norms and labour market institutions have protected the male breadwinner at the expense of grown up children and wives (Matsaganis and Leventi, 2011: 11). The benefit of this has been that unemployment has not directly lead to poverty, because the primary earner of the family has been protected. This tendency is illustrated in Table 2, showing unemployment and employment one year before the onset of the crisis and two years after, with the inclusion of age groups.

In Table 2 (table can be found in the appendix) we can see that gender as well as age is an important factor for the level of unemployment and employment. Men aged 30-34 had an unemployment rate of 3.5% in 2008, while women aged 20-29 had an unemployment rate of

19.9% that same year. For women aged 15-19 the unemployment rate increased by 40% from 2008, to 67.4% in 2011, while for men aged 15-19 the unemployment rate in 2011 was 44.5% (not shown in the table) (Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013: 29). Again, there do not seem to be any significant differences between the increase in unemployment for men and women or for different age groups after the onset of the crisis, considering the fact that they all started out having very different levels (ELSTAT, 2011).

## 4.2 The Gender Gap Report

The overall ranking of Greece in the Global Gender Gap Report has fluctuated somewhat during the beginning of the crisis as demonstrated in Table 3 (table can be found in the appendix). On the whole, Greece shows slightly better results when it comes to the gender gap since the beginning of the crisis in 2009, but a worse result compared to 2010-2011. Since the overall ranking and score of Greece includes factors such as educational attainment and health and survival, the focus will mostly be on the two individual factors of “Economic participation and opportunity” and “Political empowerment”. Economic participation and opportunity includes women’s labour force participation in relation to men’s, the wage gap between men and women and the ratio of women to men in positions of senior officials, management, legislators, technical positions and professional workers. Political empowerment includes looking at the ratio of women to men in the highest levels of decision-making, i.e. in minister-level positions, parliament-level positions and years in executive office (Hausman et al, 2012: 4). Economic participation and opportunity has according to the Gender Gap Report improved since the beginning of the crisis, while political empowerment has decreased during that same period. The increase in economic participation and opportunity can likely be attributed to the larger decrease in men’s employment compared to women’s, while the decrease in political empowerment can mostly be attributed to the sharp decrease in women holding ministerial posts, 31% in 2011 compared to 6% in 2012 (Hausman et al., 2012: 23-24).

## 4.3 The risk of Poverty

As shown in Table 4 (table can be found in the appendix), the risk of poverty has increased by 1.8 percentage points for men (from 19.1% - 20.9%) and by 1.7 percentage points for women (from 20.2% - 21.9%). The increase in the risk of poverty is not as large as the increase in unemployment since norms and market institutions have protected the “primary earners” and unemployment has therefore not lead directly to poverty (Matsaganis and Leventi, 2011: 11). Again we see that men and women have had different starting points, with women showing a

larger risk of becoming poor both before and during the crisis. This risk has been even larger for young women with poverty rates of 35.5% for adolescent girls (ages 12-17) (Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013: 29). The overall increase in poverty for both genders has been very similar (1.8 compared to 1.7 percentage points) and women are still at a higher risk of poverty than men.

## 5. Results and Analysis

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With the background of the previous chapter showing the data and the other chapters demonstrating context, background, research problem, method and theory, this chapter will analyse the data using the concepts of gender roles and care work within feminist economic theory. The purpose of the thesis is as previously mentioned to ask how the crisis is affecting gender inequality in Greece. It will do so by answering the research questions stated in chapter 1.

### 5.1 Gender roles and unemployment

Judging purely from the statistics above (presented in table 1 and table 2 in the appendix) it would seem that the crisis has not had any significant effects on changing the existing gender inequality in Greece in terms of unemployment rates. The statistics clearly show the uneven labour force participation for men and women before and during the crisis (ELSTAT, 2012a). Drawing conclusions from statistics alone, it would seem that Greece's gender inequality with regard to unequal labour market participation has remained more or less intact since the beginning of the crisis, without any significant increases or decreases. Using feminist economic theory though, we can draw a different conclusion. The fact that the gender gap in employment and unemployment has remained after significant changes for both men and women suggests that structures that cause gender inequality in the labour market have also remained intact. This conclusion can be drawn because women's continued exclusion from the labour market means that the barriers that keep them from participating in the economic sphere are being reinforced. These barriers, in the case of Greece, are norms about gender roles, but also the structure of the welfare state (Kyriazis, 1998; Matsaganis, 2012: 409). This means that the positive trend of an increasing number of women entering the work force, which has been going on since democratisation, has come to a stop (Lyberaki, 2011: 108; Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013: 29).

According to Lethbridge (2012), the numbers in Greece are an example of how women are more affected by increased unemployment even though it is not visible in common labour

force statistics. The full impact of women's decreased economic opportunities can instead be seen in a study by OECD that showed that the number of women actively looking for a job in Greece increased, while their unemployment rate decreased. This same pattern was not true for men (Lethbridge, 2012: 12). Furthermore, women's increasing unemployment rates are not fully shown by these statistics because they only take into account unemployment among women who are actively looking for a job. According to Stella Kasdagli, deputy editor of *Cosmopolitan Greece* and co-founder of *Women on Top* (a project to connect women with mentors in their professional field), the development for women is going backwards in time. Instead of wanting to strive for a successful career, the lack of available jobs is causing women to look elsewhere for their happiness. In this case, they are choosing to stay in the household and act as caretakers (interview with Kasdagli in: Davies, 2012). This means that the increasing number of women who are resigning from the labour market completely due to social pressure from gender roles combined with scarce opportunities of finding a job are not shown in the figures (Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013: 29).

Some of the causes for the maintenance of structures of gender inequality in Greece, as mentioned previously, are ideas about gender roles. In a time where jobs are scarce, ideas about gender roles have a detrimental effect on women's employment in particular because the breadwinner model dictates that men, as primary earners, need to take precedence over women in a competitive labour market (Leschke and Jepsen, 2012: 300). According to a study performed by Leschke and Jepsen (2012), increased unemployment among both men and women as a result of a financial crisis occurred in Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom. In these countries, males showed even higher numbers of unemployment than women in the beginning of the crisis. This led to a reinforcement of the belief that women should limit their paid employment for the sake of their families in all three countries in their study (Leschke and Jepsen, 2012: 300). The crisis and its effect on employment therefore led to a reinforcement of ideas about gender roles and norms causing increased social pressure on women to not seek outside employment and consequently it decreased women's economic opportunities (Leschke and Jepsen, 2012: 300).

Based on the evidence from Greece, the argument in this thesis is that Greece's situation is similar to the situation of the countries in Leschke and Jepsen's (2012) study. It is clear that gender roles in Greek society are being reinforced as a result of the crisis because barriers for women to enter the labour force are intact. Woestman's (2012) interview with a Greek psychologist/analyst came to the conclusion that when young women feel that they have little opportunities on the labour market, they may return to other aspects of life they see as

valuable. In the Greek context, this means that they will return to being primarily mothers and homemakers (Woestman, 2012: 8). This example illustrates how gender roles are being reinforced in Greece as a result of rising unemployment figures. The changes in unemployment and employment figures in Greece also show many similarities to the cases of Denmark, Germany and United Kingdom, with regard to employment having decreased more for men than for women in the initial stages of the crisis. The numbers also demonstrate that the gender gap in Greece's labour force has been kept more or less intact and that the positive development of an increasing number of women entering the labour force has stopped (Lyberaki, 2011: 108). If Greece continues on this same path, the crisis and widespread unemployment rates along with reinforced notions of gender roles will erode Greek women's economic opportunities and reverse the positive trend that was occurring up until the beginning of the crisis. The increased pressure on women to return to being caretakers of the household while men remain as primary earners can ultimately be seen as having increased gender inequality since economic opportunities for women have decreased.

According to Lee and Rhee (in Antonopoulos, 1999) in their cross-country analysis of all countries receiving financial assistance plans from the IMF 1973-1994, they found that employment recovered more slowly than other macroeconomic indicators (Lee and Rhee, 1999 in: Antonopoulos, 2009: 14). If this is the case in Greece as well, it would mean that the existing gender inequalities in the labour market which have been maintained since the beginning of the crisis with its increasing unemployment numbers will recover very slowly as the country struggles to recover financially. The statistics showing a continued gap between men and women in the labour market after the crisis indicate that the progress women have made in Greece in the world of work is slowing down and being reversed (Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013: 29). Based on this evidence, it is one of my main conclusions in this thesis that progress made in the field of gender equality has stopped since the onset of the financial crisis and because of the continued ideas about gender roles in society.

Moving beyond just looking at figures of employment and unemployment, it is also crucial to look at the type of work that women and men have, because this will also dictate the effects of the crisis (Smith, 2009: 10). Women, more than men, tend to be concentrated in part-time and lower-paid jobs, and Greece is no exception to this rule. According to Woestman, women constitute three-quarters of all part-time employment in Greece (Woestman, 2010: 7). Based on Greece's history of traditional family values, this trend can be attributed to societal structures regarding gender roles where men are seen as primary earners. As the crisis has decreased permanent employment for men and women, temporary and part-time employment

has increased. The increase for men in part-time employment from 2008-2009 was 25%, while the increase for women was almost 20%. Though the increase for men was higher, it must still be remembered that women already comprised the majority of part-time workers and continue to do so today (Woestman, 2012:8). Part time work does not only comprise a job with fewer hours. It also consists of jobs with lower salaries and limited social benefits (Seguino, 2009:4).

Gender segregation regarding type of unemployment has, according to the statistics mentioned above, decreased. Though I would like to stress the reason for this decline because it is important and will have impact on future trends when it comes to part-time work. Men's employment has decreased more than women's since the beginning of the crisis because traditionally male jobs such as manufacturing and construction have been hit hardest by the crisis (Woestman, 2010: 7). Women's concentration in public service professions has protected them from the initial effects of the crisis, but with increased budget cuts women's jobs in the public have been frozen and are being cut at the same rate as men's jobs in the private sector (Smith, 2009: 16). A larger proportion of men have therefore had to take part-time jobs in these initial stages of the crisis, compared to women (Woestman, 2012:7). It can therefore be concluded that changes in work-type segregation are not due to any shifts in gender roles, but are consequences of the increasing scarcity of jobs. According to feminist economic theory, the reinforced gender roles that are a result of the crisis, along with the structure of the welfare state, will mean that when more full-time jobs become available, men will be the first ones to take back these jobs. The reason for this is that their position as primary earners has not been compromised by the crisis, quite the opposite, it has become reinforced. More women will therefore be left in part-time positions as the economy recovers (Woestman, 2010). Again, it becomes evident that gender roles and their impact on Greek society after the crisis are in fact hindering the previous positive trends regarding a decrease in gender inequalities. Increased unemployment among both genders and growing numbers of part-time work means that men, as primary earners, according to gender roles and the structure of the Greek Welfare state, will be prioritised when the labour market starts recovering.

In conclusion, applying feminist economic theory to the statistics showing employment and unemployment in Greece illustrates how reinforced gender roles are maintaining gender inequality and are creating more barriers for women when it comes to entering the labour force. It also shows how gender segregation on the labour market is maintained and how this will lead to increased gender inequality in the future. Using the concept of gender roles to

answer the research question it can therefore be concluded that the positive trends of more women entering the labour force relative to men is being reversed (Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013: 29). The positive trend of decreasing gender inequality in the world of work is therefore also being reversed in the wake of the crisis.

## 5.2 Gender roles and the Gender Gap Report

According to the Gender Gap Report, women's economic participation and opportunity relative to men's have improved since the beginning of the crisis (Hausman et al., 2012). I argue that this improvement is caused by the fact that employment has decreased more for men than it has for women, while the gap in unemployment has remained intact between the two genders (ELSTAT, 2012a; Eurostat, 2012b). Political empowerment on the other hand has decreased because the proportion of women in ministerial posts has declined a great deal since the beginning of the crisis, 31% in 2011 compared to 6% in 2012 (Hausman et al., 2012: 23-24; Woestman, 2010: 8). Rising nationalism and politicians that emphasise traditional family values has been a trend in Greek politics since the emergence of the crisis (Diakoumakis, 2012: 12). Traditional family values clearly dictate gender roles where women are primary caretakers of the household, while men are primary earners and hold positions of high status in society (Kyriazis, 1998: 71). Based on this evidence, we can therefore attribute the decline in women holding ministerial posts to rising nationalism and the emphasis of the importance of traditional family values.

The outcome of the last elections was a highly polarised multi-party system where such parties as right wing LAOS and neo-Nazi Golden Dawn gained a lot of popularity. Left wing parties also increased in popularity (Sotiropoulos, 2012: 33), but the increased emphasis on nationalism and traditional family values was still very evident in the election results.

Traditional family values are especially present in nationalist Golden Dawn agenda, a party that emphasizes the importance of Greek history and identity (Diakoumakis, 2012: 12). Even in left wing party Syriza's agenda, women's issues are lacking attention (Davies, 2012). My argument is therefore that fewer women holding ministerial posts can be seen as a result of a change in people's voting behaviour after the crisis. Since the parties gaining power are less concerned with women's issues, already existing gender roles in society and in politics are being reinforced. This is increasingly leading to a situation where women's concerns and needs are being overlooked in politics. One feminist activist explained the situation like this: "Women's unemployment is rising faster than men's. But when so many men are also losing their jobs, many women [...] don't feel it is the right time to bring up women's issues. They



are taking second, or even third, place to what is considered to be the primary issue at hand (Woestman, 2010: 16). The decline in women holding ministerial posts where there is power to influence the course of politics, means that there are fewer chances for women to be heard and to have their concerns brought forward on the political agenda (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003: 103-104). There will consequently be fewer chances in politics to change existing gender roles that maintain the gender gap in economic opportunities and political empowerment.

Relating back to the research question, the numbers included in Gender Gap Report, like the employment and unemployment statistics, do not definitively show that the crisis has affected gender inequality in a negative way. But this conclusion changes when the concept of gender roles is applied. The most important conclusion is however that the previous positive development for women in the field of political empowerment has however been reversed (Hausman, 2012: 23-24), which means that women's issues in politics will become less of a priority. Since the increase in economic participation and opportunity could be attributed to men's decreased employment rates relative to women's, it is unlikely that this factor showed an actual increase in women's economic participation and opportunity in Greece, but more likely it showed men's employment initially being more affected than women's. Using the concept of gender roles as an analytical tool therefore shows that the crisis with its reinforcement of traditional family values and gender roles in politics has had a negative effect on women's political empowerment already, which in turn will lead to an increase in gender inequality in the future.

### 5.3 Gender roles and poverty

Poverty for unemployed people and families was a real risk for Greek inhabitants even before the crisis in spite of the social policies that protected primary earners. This can be attributed to the fact that social protection was disproportionately focused on the needs of pensioners and older people as opposed to being focused on long-term unemployed people and single households (Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013:29). With further cuts in social spending, this risk of poverty has according to the statistics increased even more (ELSTAT, 2012b). Already vulnerable groups, such as young and old women are therefore even more vulnerable and are facing an increased risk of becoming poor. Existing gender roles make young women more vulnerable to poverty because they might not have a spouse to act as primary earner, and are therefore not as protected by the system of social protection (Kyriazis, 1998). The Greek social protection system, as mentioned before, focuses on providing pensions as opposed to

protecting the unemployed with unemployment benefits. It also focuses on protecting households with a primary earner and a caretaker, as opposed to single households. Since young women are the ones most vulnerable to unemployment, it means they have the least protection from the welfare state both because they are unemployed but also because their low wages mean that they have an increased risk of poverty in old age (Matsaganis, 2011: 1, 8).

The gender wage gap is also widening, especially in the private sector. Women have previously been protected from these changes in the gender pay gap because of their employment in the public sector, where the gender gap is smaller. Since budget cuts are shrinking the size of the public sector, I am arguing that women who now have to work in the private sector are facing widening gender pay gaps and consequently a higher risk of poverty than men (Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013: 29). Older women are vulnerable because Greece has a contributory system of pensions and gender roles dictating their place in the household have kept their employment rates very low and consequently their pensions at a low rate (Vlachantoni, 2010: 225). Matsaganis (2012) also links the risk of poverty with political power. He states that there is an inverse link between the two, meaning that a lot of political power translates into a low risk of poverty and vice versa (Matsaganis, 2012: 412). With women's drop in political empowerment this would therefore mean that their risk of poverty will increase even more in the future, disproportionately to the rate of men's poverty.

The conclusion I have drawn from the increasing poverty rates for both men and women is similar to the previous conclusions drawn about unemployment and the gender gap. Gender roles have historically kept female poverty rates higher than men's poverty rates (Kyriazis, 1998), and this gap is being maintained by the effects of the crisis on poverty. We can most likely not see the full effects of the crisis on poverty for men and women, but trends point out that the positive developments for women in poverty have been reversed since the beginning of the crisis. Future developments in the risk of poverty relate to women's decreased political empowerment. This lack of political empowerment is directly putting women in risk of poverty because there is an inverse link between political power and poverty (Matsaganis, 2012: 412).

## 5.4 Care work and unemployment

As has been previously stated, the uneven labour force participation of men and women in Greece can partly be attributed to the strong influence of gender roles in society (Kyriazis, 1998). It can also be attributed to the lack of affordable care services that have prevented

women from entering the labour market even when strong gender roles were not as present (Lyberaki, 2011). The statistics regarding changes in men's and women's employment and unemployment in Greece after the crisis do not show any significant changes in the existence of gender inequality (ELSTAT, 2012a; Eurostat, 2012b). I am arguing that the concept of care work, when applied to these statistics, provides us with a different perspective and shows different results. Men's employment, as well as women's, is an important factor for the continued usage of care services by households. The Greek welfare state has made several improvements when it comes to state provision of formal care services (Vlachantoni, 2010: 232), but families are still to a large degree dependant on private care services, mainly from migrant women (Lyberaki, 2011). The loss of men's employment in Greece means that the primary earners in many households will become unemployed. This in turn means that a significant income for the family will be lost, an income that could have paid for the continued use of care services. Care services to households by migrant women are therefore at great risk because they rely heavily on people's ability to afford them and people's willingness to pay for them (Lyberaki, 2011). Budget cuts by the state also mean that state provision of care services is decreasing, which is making care services less available to households as well as making them less affordable (EWL, 2012: 8). It is thus one of my main conclusions that increasing unemployment figures for men combined with the state's budget cuts are creating a situation where care services are no longer as available to households. Increasing unemployment as a result of the crisis is creating a crisis of care.

Going back to the research question, why is this crisis of care caused by the financial crisis important for gender inequality in Greece? It has already been established in the thesis that gender roles are becoming reinforced in the wake of the crisis and that these roles play a crucial role in determining women's job opportunities. They emphasise women's roles as caretakers and men's roles as breadwinners (Kyriazis, 1998: Woestman, 2010:8). The economic crisis, with its increasing unemployment for both men and women, is creating a situation where care services will have to be handled at a household level again, reversing the previous trend, where outside care services provided by the state and migrant women were becoming more available and affordable (Lyberaki, 2011: 106; Vlachantoni, 2010: 232). Gender roles dictate that care should be the woman's responsibility; my main conclusion is therefore that the crisis of care means that more women than men will have to give up their careers in order to take care of their children (EWL, 2012: 8). It is very unlikely that unemployed males will fill the gap in the provision of care services because of the existence of strong gender roles (Woestman, 2010: 10). In conclusion, the crisis with its increased

unemployment figures is creating another sort of crisis, a crisis of care. The crisis of care caused by men's increasing unemployment and budget cuts will decrease women's continued participation in the labour force because it is taking away households' opportunities to find available and affordable care services, thus diminishing women's economic participation and opportunity.

Regarding changes in employment and unemployment since the crisis, care work creates a different set of problems for women unemployment than for men's since women are not considered to be primary earners (Matsaganis, 2012: 409). The fact that women's increasing numbers of unemployment will reduce households' purchasing power and therefore reduce their ability to pay for outside care services is contributing to the crisis of care. The fact that women constitute the majority of care workers and are now losing their jobs is another issue that is also highly problematic. In the past, women in Greece have not had many options when it comes to entering the formal labour market. For migrant women who currently work with care services and domestic help in Greece, this is still the case. Care work and domestic services often constitute the only options for migrant women to ensure basic living standards with their employment (Lyberaki, 2011: 106-107). With the increasing job losses for women in the care sector, there is therefore the issue of these women not being able to find jobs in other sectors that will be able to secure basic living standards. Migrant women's economic opportunities are therefore being severely compromised by the crisis and its effect on unemployment.

For Greek women, the main problem with increasing unemployment figures also lies in declining wages. Though they might not be as vulnerable as migrant women, the changing structure of the labour market, where budget cuts are forcing women from the public to the private sector, means that women are facing a situation where they will have to work for much less money. This is the case because the gender wage gap in the private sector is much larger than it is in the public sector (3.8% in the public sector compared to 15.2% in the private sector) (ELSTAT, 2010: 3; Stavropoulou and Jones, 2013: 29). For women who work in the care sector and all other sectors, this will mean that there will be declining possibilities to find work and that the jobs that are available will offer much less security and a lower wage, which in turn will also affect women's ability to afford care services.

Going back to the research question, how is the crisis affecting gender inequality in Greece? If we look at the declining figures of employment since the crisis began through the concept of care services, it becomes clear that both men's and women's increasing unemployment will

have serious effects on households' ability to find and afford care services. State budget cuts of social services are also reducing the availability of these services (EWL, 2012: 8). This is creating a spiral where the declining ability to use care services is increasing the barriers for women to maintain their positions in the official labour market. More women will therefore have to give up their careers and return to the role as primary caretaker of the household and of children. For migrant women, who are an especially vulnerable group in society, decreasing job opportunities in care work will mean declining living standards. My argument is therefore that the economic crisis, and its creation of the crisis of care, is creating a situation where women's labour market participation is being hindered by the lack of available care services. Increasing numbers of unemployment for both genders are affecting women's opportunities disproportionately, since they carry a heavier care burden than men.

## 5.5 Care work and the Gender Gap Report

The Gender Gap Report shows that the number of women holding ministerial posts in Greece had decreased from 31% to 6% since the crisis began and that women's political empowerment has decreased as a result of this (Hausman, 2012: 23-24). This is especially problematic for women in general because it means that women's issues will not be on the agenda as much as before (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003: 103-104). As was discussed by a feminist activist in a previous paragraph, women don't feel like they can bring up women's issues in the current political climate because other issues are considered more important (Woestman, 2010: 16). Care work is, which has also been discussed in previous paragraphs, an important prerequisite for women's labour participation (Lyberaki, 2011). Women's ability to participate in the formal labour market is in itself not a clear sign of decreasing gender inequality, but it is an important step in that direction because it provides women with a disposable income and status, which are prerequisites for changing gender roles and increasing gender equality (Kyriazis, 1998: 73). My conclusion is therefore that political structures that keep women from increasing the availability of care services are hindrances to changing the structure of gender inequality. Women's decreasing political empowerment along with cuts in social services means that the provision of care work, a typically female issue, will not be a priority on the political agenda. Women's decreased political empowerment since the beginning of the crisis is therefore very likely to create even more barriers for women to enter the official labour market in the future, and the ability to change existing gender roles will consequently also decline.

It is perhaps too soon to draw any certain conclusions about whether the decreased political empowerment of women will indeed increase gender inequality. But considering the importance of the availability of care services for women's economic opportunity, participation and living conditions (Lyberaki, 2011), the current trend showing diminishing political empowerment for women becomes highly problematic. Since care work is such an important prerequisite for women's labour force participation, their decrease in political empowerment creates a serious risk for their continued economic opportunities. Without economic participation and opportunities, women's position in society will become even more marginalised than before.

## 5.6 Care work and poverty

As has been previously mentioned, poverty is increasing for both men and women and women have maintained their position as more prone to poverty than men since the beginning of the crisis (ELSTAT, 2012b). From the perspective of care work, this trend along with increasing unemployment rates creates a climate where households have less ability to afford care services. For women, I have drawn the conclusion that this is problematic for two reasons: the first reason is that when families can no longer afford care services, the woman in the family will have to fill in that gap (EWL, 2012: 8). The second reason is that women constitute the majority of care workers, so a decline in the demand for care services means that women face an even greater risk of unemployment, poverty and declining living standards. This risk is especially great for migrant women (Lyberaki, 2011: 6-7).

## 6. Conclusion and Future research

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Using statistics showing changes for men and women's employment/unemployment rates, the gender gap and poverty since the beginning of the crisis, the purpose of this thesis has been to ask whether the economic crisis has had an effect of gender inequality in Greece. In order to answer this question, the two concepts of gender roles and care work within feminist economic theory have been applied to the statistics. The conclusion I have drawn in the analysis is that the economic crisis in Greece has indeed reversed previous trends where gender inequality was decreasing and, due to existing structures of gender roles and care work, created a situation that will ultimately increase barriers for women to enter the formal labour market. This will in turn decrease their economic participation and opportunities, their ability to earn a disposable income and their chances of getting out of poverty. The crisis has therefore had a negative effect on gender inequality in Greece.

Starting with the first research question: How has the current situation for women and men in Greece changed, in terms of employment, the gender gap and poverty since the beginning of the crisis? The data shows that employment has decreased for both genders, but more for men than for women (Eurostat, 2012b). Unemployment figures show an even increase for both genders (ELSTAT, 2012a). The data regarding the gender gap shows that even though Greece's overall gender gap score has improved, women's political empowerment has decreased by 25 percentage points since 2011 (Hausman et al, 2012: 23-24). It also shows that women's economic participation and opportunity has increased relative to men's, but since this can be attributed to the larger decrease in employment for men, it does not show any significant changes in women's ability to enter the formal labour market. The at-risk-of poverty has also increased rather evenly for both genders since the beginning of the crisis (ELSTAT, 2012b). The statistics have also demonstrated that there was already a significant gap between women's and men's employment, unemployment and poverty rates before the crisis. Women were overrepresented in both unemployment and poverty rates, while being underrepresented in employment rates. Since the beginning of the crisis, women continue to show much lower employment rates and much higher unemployment and poverty rates than men. This signifies that the previous trend up until the crisis showing increasing numbers of employment and decreasing numbers of unemployment and at-risk- of poverty for women has been reversed.

In the second research question where the perspective of gender roles was applied to the data I came to the conclusion that the crisis is reinforcing gender inequality in Greece because women's economic opportunities and participation are being affected negatively. Already existing structures of gender roles in Greek society are crucial to the outcome of the crisis and are leading to the further marginalisation of women on the labour market. As unemployment is increasing, gender roles are reinforcing men's position as breadwinners and women's position as caretakers. This is causing fewer women to seek unemployment outside of the household because norms and social pressure are increasing barriers between them and the labour market (Lethbridge, 2012: 12). Women are also to a greater extent having to take part-time jobs and jobs in the private sector as opposed to the public sector. Part-time jobs are more unsafe, provide lower salaries and fewer social benefits, and the private sector has a much higher gender wage gap than the public sector (Seguino, 2009: 4). Women are therefore to a larger extent than before being pushed into positions where they will earn less money and work under more unsafe conditions. Even though men are also having to take part-times jobs, the persistent structures of gender roles mean that when more full-time jobs will become

available, men with their position as primary earners will be prioritised for these jobs (Kyriazis, 1998; Matsaganis and Leventi, 2011: 11). Based on this evidence, women's economic opportunities are being affected more than men's because of the crisis, and the crisis is therefore reinforcing existing gender inequalities.

Political empowerment, in the form of access to the formal decision-making process through ministerial posts, has also decreased for women since the beginning of the crisis. In this thesis, it was argued that this can be attributed to a reinforcement of gender roles in society. A decrease in political empowerment is affecting women's economic opportunities in a negative way because with fewer women in high political positions, there will be fewer opportunities to bring forward women's issues to the political agenda (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003: 103-104). Women's decrease in political empowerment also relates to women's increasing poverty rates, because there is an inverse link between poverty rates and political power (Matsaganis, 2012: 412). Men's poverty rates are also increasing, but because their political empowerment has not decreased, they are not facing a much greater risk of poverty in the future like women are. Since women are also being pushed from the public to the private sector to a greater extent, their income security is at greater risk than men's.

In the third research question where the concept of care work was applied to the data the same conclusion was drawn; the crisis is indeed increasing gender inequality in Greece. But from the perspective of care work, these reasons for this look slightly different. The economic crisis is creating a crisis of care in Greece because rising unemployment figures mean that households have less money to pay for care services and budget cuts in social services mean that care services are becoming less affordable (EWL, 2012: 8). Since women carry a heavier care burden than men, this will affect their employment disproportionately. Women's declining political empowerment is also creating a situation where the care issue is much less likely to be on the political agenda. Since the provision of care is an important prerequisite for women's continued labour market participation (Lyberaki, 2011), it was concluded that women's decreasing political empowerment along with rising unemployment figures mean that the crisis of care will continue to discourage women from working. Regarding increasing numbers of unemployment, the crisis of care is also negatively affecting the demand for care services and because women constitute the majority of care workers this means that women now face a greater risk of declining living standards and poverty than men. This risk is especially high for migrant women because of their marginalised position on the labour market (Lyberaki, 2011: 6-7).



To summarise, when using both the concept of gender roles and the concept of care work, applied to the data regarding employment, the gender gap and poverty I was able to come to the conclusion that the economic crisis in Greece is increasing gender inequality. It is doing so because women's opportunities to enter the labour force, their economic participation and opportunity, their political empowerment and their risk of poverty (ELSTAT, 2012b; Hausman, 2012: 23-24; Woestman, 2010) are all being compromised, as a result of the crisis. The reasons behind the negative effect of the crisis on gender inequality are the already existing structures of gender inequality in Greece. These structures are strongly related to gender roles and care work. Without these pre-existing structures it is likely that the effects of the crisis would have been different. The case of Greece has thus shown how important existing structures of gender inequality are for the outcome of the gendered impact of the crisis.

Women have been treated more or less as a homogenous group in this thesis, so suggestions to future research on this topic would be to include age groups, social groups and the urban-rural divide in the analysis. The subjects of age and social groups were briefly touched upon when it was mentioned that young and old women were more prone to poverty and migrant women were more vulnerable to fluctuations in the labour market, but it was not elaborated. Future research could provide further insights into the significance of these factors in the effects of the crisis on women. It must be recognised that women are a heterogeneous group and that the crisis is affecting different groups of women in different ways. For us to fully understand the effects of economic crises on women, these factors will have to be further investigated in future research.

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## 8. Appendix

**Table 1.** Labour Market indicators by gender (2009-2012) %

	<i>Unemployment</i>			<i>Employment</i>		
	<i>All</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>All</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
2009	9.6	7.0	13.1	65.8	78.8	52.7
2010	12.8	10.2	16.5	64.0	76.2	51.7
2011	18.4	15.7	22.1	59.9	71.1	48.6
2012	25.4	22.7	29.0	55.3	65.3	45.2

Source for unemployment figures: ELSTAT (2012a)

Source for employment figures: Eurostat (2012b)

**Table 2.** Labour Market indicators by gender and age (2008-2011) %

		<i>Unemployment</i>		<i>Employment</i>	
		<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
2008	<i>All</i>	4.7	10.9	61.9	37.9
	20-29	11.1	19.9	67.7	50.3
	30-34	3.5	10.3	93.8	65.5
2011	<i>All</i>	13.7	20.0	54.5	35.0
	20-29	27.8	37.0	55.0	40.8
	30-34	12.0	18.8	84.5	61.8

Source: ELSTAT (2011)

**Table 3.** Global Gender Gap Report (2009-2012)

	<i>Overall result</i>		<i>Economic participation and opportunity</i>		<i>Political empowerment</i>	
	<i>rank</i>	<i>score</i>	<i>rank</i>	<i>score</i>	<i>rank</i>	<i>score</i>
2009	85	0.6662	86	0.6067	94	0.0863
2010	58	0.6908	79	0.6209	42	0.1773
2011	56	0.6916	79	0.6242	42	0.1772
2012	82	0.6716	80	0.6329	99	0.0858

Source: Hausman et al. (2009; 2010; 2011; 2012)

**Table 4.** People at risk of poverty after social transfers by gender (2009-2011) %

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
2009	19.7	19.1	20.2
2010	20.1	19.3	20.9
2011	21.4	20.9	21.9

Source: ELSTAT (2012b)