

# 'Battle of the Sexes' on Television: The Cases of the Greek-Cypriot and Greek Adaptations of *Un Gars, Une Fille*

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the representation of gender stereotypes in contemporary television entertainment series, using a comparative case-study analysis of the Greek-Cypriot and the Greek versions of the series Un Gars, Une Fille (1997-2003, Radio-Canada); in Cyprus Ego Kai Esy/Me and You (2010-2013, CyBC), in Greece S' Agapo, M' Agapas/I Love You, You Love Me (2000-2002, MEGA; 2019, Cosmote TV). Un Gars, Une Fille, a sketch comedy series from Canada is especially suited to this kind of comparative study; during its long runtime (close to 20 years, including various reruns), a large number of adaptations have been continually produced in almost 30 different countries and markets, including the ones selected here. Our methodology utilizes a framing analysis of various multimodal devices of Me and You and I Love You, You Love Me, including elements from the character discourse and non-verbal communication, their interactions and displays of emotion, scenes and plotlines of the sketch. Additionally, we conducted interviews with production personnel in Cyprus. The aim is to examine the female and male stereotypes represented by the protagonists in the series. Furthermore, we investigate whether and how these stereotypes relate dialectically to cultural elements, with special focus on the societal influences of both adaptations.*

## KEYWORDS

fiction  
framing analysis  
gender stereotypes  
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## INTRODUCTION

This article explores the reproduction of female and male stereotypes in contemporary television entertainment series, using a comparative, case-study framing analysis of the Greek-Cypriot and the Greek versions of the series *Un Gars, Une Fille* (1997-2003, Radio-Canada).<sup>1</sup> Frames are understood here as any devices used within the context of a communication event, in order to inspire cultural meaning and facilitate understanding of the event by a specific society. *Un Gars, Une Fille*, a sketch comedy series from Canada, is especially suited to this kind of comparative study. This is because the show, along with its reruns and adaptations, was broadcast for about 20 years in 30 different countries and markets. In Cyprus, it aired in CyBC under the title *Ego Kai Esi/Me and You* for three seasons (2010-2013); in Greece, it was entitled *S' Agapo, M' Agapas/I Love You, You Love Me* and was broadcast by MEGA for two seasons (2000-2002). Since February 2019, the telecommunication company Cosmote has begun broadcasting new episodes of *I Love You, You Love Me* on its YouTube channel, seventeen years after the last television episode aired in Greece.<sup>2</sup>

*Un Gars, Une Fille* has become a global phenomenon due to a number of unique and well-designed features in its format. A television format is a “set of invariable elements in a program out of which the variable elements of an individual episode are produced” (Moran 2004: 258); that is, the format comprises the devices distinctive of a specific TV production. There are various elements of the format of *Un Gars, Une Fille* that are the same in all its markets. Specifically, each episode (which has no title – see below) focuses on three main social issues of contemporary interest; each topic is typically addressed in one to three self-contained humorous and/or satirical sketch scenes which usually do have titles (at least in the credits). The shot for each sketch scene utilizes a single camera with a locked frame; various characters, including the protagonists, enter and leave the shot as necessary. As the director of the Greek-Cypriot version, Amanda Pelendritou (2018, pers. comm., 18 June) related, the production team did not have the creative right to modify this format.

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<sup>1</sup> This work forms part of a broader research program entitled “Francophone Global TV Format Adaptations – The Global and the Local in *Un Gars, Une Fille*”, conceived by Prof. Edward Larkey, University of Maryland, Baltimore.

<sup>2</sup> During 2019, Cosmote aired only five episodes of *I Love You, You Love Me*, which, however, were very popular to the Greek audience. New episodes are scheduled to be aired regularly after February 14, 2020 by Cosmote.

The aim of this format, again according to Pelendritou (ibid.), was to focus the shot and hence the attention of the viewers on the protagonists. In all its reproductions, the series' protagonists included a (heterosexual) couple in a committed relationship; in Greece and Cyprus, the couples were depicted as living together but not married. Despite some fixed elements, the format of *Un Gars, Une Fille* was flexible enough to adapt to local market needs. Format adaptation occurs when the established format is employed as the template of a (TV) program, but various elements may be modified to appeal to the local community, i.e., when a local flavor is added to a program (Waisbord 2004: 368; see also Larkey 2018). Specifically, although topics in *Un Gars, Une Fille* were generally similar across national television markets, the way(s) in which they were addressed and the scripts actually used were usually left to the creative discretion of the local production teams. Therefore, scripts often exhibited some variation between countries, as they were infused with local cultural characteristics. The plotline, however, followed the same, (traditionally) established paradigm: the pair of lead characters would argue over different topics due to discrepant, frequently gendered beliefs, thus manifesting a classic 'battle of the sexes' for comic exploitation.

This work undertakes a (preliminary) comparative framing analysis of the Greek-Cypriot and Greek versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille*. The specific RQs of the research include:

1. How are the female and male characters depicted through the frames used in the Greek-Cypriot and Greek adaptations of this sketch comedy?
2. How do these representations compare and contrast between the two reproductions?
3. What do the portrayals of these characters illustrate about cultural elements circulating throughout contemporary Greek-Cypriot and Greek society?

The article is organized as follows. The next section provides a review of the theoretical framework of the study, specifically on media representation of gender and stereotypes. In the section that follows the theoretical framework, we discuss the methodology of framing analysis in general and as used in this paper, as well as the sample of episodes we have selected to analyze. Then comes our analysis and findings, while the last section reproduces our conclusions and outlines our future aims.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF GENDER (STEREOTYPES)**

Since the 1970s, there has been a large volume of (often controversial) research on gender, identity, relations and stereotypes, as well as how these topics have appeared in the media (for example, see the thorough review on gender studies by Gill 2007). Due to space considerations, here we only focus on a tiny fraction of this body of research, specifically as it pertains to media representation of (stereotyped) gender behaviors.

The term gender was introduced in the 1970s to extricate the non-biological aspects of men and women from their binary biological distinction (Sunderland 2004: 14). Specifically, it was meant to indicate that any differences in the personal and/or social interactions and needs between members of the two sexes are not innate, but learned, mediated or constructed by society. Thus, the term implied that a range of tendencies in uses of language and social interactions were possible within each gender; that is, women did not necessarily have to exhibit a set of public conducts, speech patterns and social attitudes which were at all times and in all ways distinct from those of men. However, the subsequent academic and social use of the term has lumped social, emotional, discursive, as well as biological disparities between the sexes under the term gender differences (Sunderland & Litosseliti 2002; see also Blosser 2018). This unproblematic approach to the use of the term has made it the lexical and socio-cultural synonym of the binary biological opposition of masculinity and femininity (Sunderland 2004).

Gender, like all aspects of identity, is performative (Butler 1990). That is, a person associated with a specific identity (either by aligning themselves with it or by having others connect them to it) will use (part of) the discourse and social actions that fall under the acceptable social paradigms for the given identity, in this case gender (Sunderland 2004; Sunderland & Litosseliti 2002). Simply put, men and women speak and act 'masculine' and 'feminine' respectively, within the confines of the accepted social norms in which they are trained. Nevertheless, most societies associate a plurality of possible behaviors with each identity, such that not all gendered persons have to behave identically to one another (Sunderland 2004: 19).

All aspects of identity are created discursively, thereby implying that the media play an essential role in the construction, propagation and/or re-contextualization of identities, including gendered identity, within society (Gauntlett 2002). The conception of an (aspect of) identity (e.g. gender) through media content is the consequence of a complex negotiation between the personal, group and national 'cultures' of the audience, producers and owners of the medium, which results in a

range of possible interpretations of the same media content (but not one of endless possibilities) (e.g. Gill 2007; Hall 1980; Kim 2004; Moores 1990; Morley 1980). Media representations of gender vary according to the society and group they address. Although a number of representations (and interpretations) may exist within a given society, some appear to garner more popularity. Some of these, which are broadcast across multiple media programs, platforms and/or channels, are imbued with a naturalized value, a worth of truth and credibility (Lauzen et al. 2008: 201; Merskin 2006). These representations result in the formation of stereotypes. Although a number of definitions exist for the term, here we define a stereotype to be the perception, and subsequent code of speaking and conduct, which are informed by membership (personally or socially ascribed) in a specific group (Parrott & Parrott 2015: 72; see also Lauzen et al., 2008: 201). Hence, gender stereotypes include beliefs, behaviors and discourse enacted and/or understood because of one's implicitly or explicitly professed gender.

Traditional gender stereotypes, such as those habitually invoked in (romantic) literature, film and (as is the case in this work) television, are often informed by a 'battle of the sexes' type of interaction in the representation of gender relations (Blosser 2018; Lauzen et al. 2008). In this model, usually men and women, or male and female characters, are represented as in binary opposition, in which men (or male characters) frequently constitute the ideal against which women (or female characters) are judged (Lauzen et al. 2008: 201). This tendency typically casts men/male characters in hierarchically superior roles (often described as hegemonic masculinity<sup>3</sup>) in their relationships with women/female characters, who seem to adhere to socially construed standards of femininity in their appearance, goals and behavior (emphasized femininity) in order to appeal to their partners (Blosser 2018).

## **METHODOLOGY**

In order to investigate the research questions, we used framing analysis. Framing analysis has been a useful tool in various fields related to the humanities and social

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<sup>3</sup> Initially coined by Connell (1990) with the culturally idealized form of masculine character in a given historical setting, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has influenced gender studies across many academic fields but has also attracted serious criticism. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) suggested reformulation of the concept in four areas: a more complex model of gender hierarchy, emphasizing the agency of women; explicit recognition of the geography of masculinities, emphasizing the interplay among local, regional, and global levels; a more specific treatment of embodiment in contexts of privilege and power; and a stronger emphasis on the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity, recognizing internal contradictions and the possibilities of movement toward gender democracy.

sciences. The definition of what constitutes a frame has been adjusted to fit the specific needs of the field and the work of each researcher. Despite the non-universal definition of frames, most researchers agree that there is a connection between the framing of media content and the culture of a community for which this content is broadcast. Here, we define culture as an organized set of beliefs, codes, myths, stereotypes, values, rules, and frames that are shared in the collective memory of a group of people (van Gorp 2007: 62). Thus, here the term frame is perceived within the context of the overarching culture of a society: it comprises the meaning-making devices, complete with their cultural denotations and connotations, used to demarcate the understanding, interpretation, and discussion of the actions and/or events described in a communication process (van Gorp 2005; van Gorp 2007: 65-67; Tuchman 1978: iv).

When a cultural message is encoded (into a frame), various constraints arise from human intervention during the processes of production, publication, and reception, and interplay to delimit the interpretation of its coding. Specifically, the sources of the message (here, the professionals employed to produce, write and act in the show), as well as the professionals in the media in which the message was aired (here, the staff of the specific television stations), select the versions of reality that they themselves perceive (as important) and highlight them. Conversely, both these groups avoid, partly or wholly, those meanings that they do not consider important, do not agree with, or are unable to relate to due to different personal experiences, cultural and/or ideological constraints. The use of specific meaning(s) from multiple – but not infinite – choices results in promoting specific definition(s) of the message, and in interpreting its cause(s) and evaluating it culturally and ethically in (a) predetermined way(s) (Entman 1993: 52; Goffman 1974; Semetko & Valkenburg 2000: 94; van Gorp 2007: 63; Vliegthart & van Zoonen 2011: 105).

In addition, during reception the same process repeats itself while the message is decoded. Every member of the audience retrieves their own schemata, i.e. perceptions and experiences relevant to the topic (Fiske & Taylor 1991; van Gorp 2007: 63), in order to interpret the frame(s) of the message, selecting and/or showcasing some of their characteristics and omitting others (e.g., Gitlin 1980: 7; Neuman, Just & Crigler 1992: 60; Semetko & Valkenburg 2000: 93-94). Therefore, the comprehension of the message(s) in a communication device (here, a set of frames in an entertainment program) is, in fact, a process not based on the personalities and beliefs of individuals alone, but also on their shared cultural experiences and the elements specific to their community. This also constitutes the

main reason why the plots of *Un Gars, Une Fille* were modified from the original<sup>4</sup> in the versions presented in various other countries (Pelendritou 2018, pers. comm., 18 June – see also the analysis below for a comparison of the Greek-Cypriot and Greek versions).

Although framing analysis has been traditionally used in studying the communication of real events, investigations of fictional shows have been done in the past (e.g., Photiou & Maniou 2018). Mainly, these focus on the advantages gained by this methodology because of its emphasis on cultural influences encoded in and decoded from various frames. Here, we too perform a framing analysis on a fictional series, the Greek-Cypriot and the Greek adaptations of *Un Gars, Une Fille* (*Me and You* and *I Love You, You Love Me*, respectively), as well as a comparison between them. We assume that the producers and staff of the programs, the staff of the television channels, as well as their audiences employ their own perceptions in encoding and decoding its messages in the communication process. However, as discussed above, we consider that the frames within the plot and portrayals of the characters – that are ultimately utilized as a reference and background by the participants on both sides of the production and consumption equilibrium – are founded in the (shared) cultural elements of their respective societies. We claim that determining and investigating these frames will produce an advantage in examining the cultural influences from and societal effects of the series (see also Aitaki 2018) over methods of analysis which lack a sociocultural focus. Furthermore, due to the comparative nature of the study, we can evaluate how we may perceive culturally close but still different backgrounds through frames informed primarily by one of the two cultures.

In this work, we analyze five episodes from the second season of the Greek-Cypriot show (2011-2012) and contrasted them with seven episodes from both seasons of the Greek production (2000-2002). Figure 1 below provides the numbers of these episodes; we do not include titles, as the broadcasts did not exhibit these when they were aired (although we do speculate that the scripts did have some form of title identification). At the time of the research, CyBC, the station that owns the copyrights of the series in Cyprus, had not published any content on free, online channels. Upon requesting content from the station, and within their bureaucratic and our funding limitations, we were supplied with the episodes shown in Figure 1. However, as we analyzed their content, we realized that the number of the episodes was sufficient in identifying several recurring frames and bringing out their cultural backdrop. Therefore, although we consider our work here preliminary, as our

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was the producers that decided to modify the original plot so as to adopt to norms and values of the Greek society at the time the program was aired.

analysis of this series is still ongoing and the sample of episodes are still limited, it is already sufficient to report on interesting findings. Conversely, the station MEGA, which owned the copyright for the series in Greece, had published it online with free access. So, we were able to select those episodes that had similar themes to the ones we had from the Cypriot version, since our interest in the former was purely for comparison purposes with the latter.

Version	Episode number
Greek-Cypriot: <i>Me and You</i>	1, 2, 3, 8, 30
Greek: <i>I Love You, You Love Me</i>	1, 10, 12, 34, 49, 50, 57

**Fig. 1:** The list of episodes analyzed from the Greek-Cypriot and Greek versions of the series *Un Gars, Une Fille*.

These episodes were analyzed using an inductive framing analysis, in which we did not approach the content with a-priori expectations of the frames that would be encountered (van Gorp & van der Goot 2012). On the contrary, we scanned communication devices for patterns which could be linked to specific frames and then ascribed or determined the cultural significance of these frames (ibid.). Due to the idiosyncrasies of the production (see Introduction), we focused on the following devices (e.g., Fairhurst & Sarr 1996): keywords, phrases and catchphrases, discourse of the characters in general, interactions of the characters, displays of emotion, scenes, and plotlines of the sketches, non-verbal communication (paralanguage and extra-linguistic elements).

In addition to our primary methodology, we also conducted interviews with production staff from the Greek-Cypriot adaptation. Specifically, we interviewed the actors playing the two protagonists of *Me and You*, Photis Georgidis (Photis) and Danae Christou (Danae), as well as the director Amanda Pelendritou. Each interview lasted about an hour, and had a technical and a creative aspect. That is, some questions centered on the set-up and characteristics of the production (the established format and the series adaptation), while others investigated their own contributions, focusing on the socio-cultural background they employed and/or sought to highlight and satirize through the show. The interviews were used supportively in order to provide technical details of the production, while our questions on their contributions to the creative, plot-related aspects were used additionally to inform parts of the analysis (see below).

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

As the introduction indicates, the format of the program is such that each episode deals with three contemporary topics, each of which has one to three different sketch scenes enacted for it. This does not enable the development and maturity of the characters considerably.<sup>5</sup> However, as most scenes provide caustic humor on gender relations in a (heterosexual) couple, by situating the characters in classic opposition on various issues and satirizing their interactions (see below), it does allow the delineation of the male and female protagonists as well as the investigation of their conflicts in a given cultural setting. In this work, we examine two gendered frames with which the two characters in each couple relate.

### Financial Management Styles

The show capitalizes humorously on the distinct styles of management that the male and female characters exhibit. In fact, this topic is one of the recurrent ones that comes up in the Greek-Cypriot version, *Me and You*, often eliciting conflict between the characters. Specifically, in the first episode of the second season, as the protagonists are doing their grocery shopping, Danae (female) picks large quantities of various fruit and vegetables. Photis (male) objects to her practice, which prompts the following conversation:

Danae: Well, you've become a major cheapskate. This is the last time I'm bringing you along, because you're skimping on the last penny.

Photis: You've picked a whole field of cucumbers and a heap of fruit. What are you going to do with all of that?

[*Me and You*, S02E01, 23:37-23:52]

The dichotomy in the couple's spending habits is obvious. The male character is represented as a stingy person, a 'cheapskate,' in the eyes of Danae, as he seems unwilling to spend money on some fruit and vegetables ('skimping on the last penny'). Conversely, the female character is described as a wasteful person by her partner; hence, the exaggerated descriptions of her purchases ('field of cucumbers,' 'heap of fruit'). Both characters exhibit disdain in their paralanguage as this short dialog proceeds, which highlights their opinion of the other's behavior.

The motif of the stingy male character and extravagant female character is encountered in various other episodes. For example, in S02E30, Photis is in a club

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<sup>5</sup> This lack of character development is a common feature in the genre of sketch comedies, as they focus on satire for their humorous value, rather than storytelling and the development of internal jokes (by contrast to other types of comedy).

for the birthday of a friend and is depicted as gorging on food and drinks, since 'they are free', as he exclaims. In the first episode of the same season, Danae is portrayed as trying to shop everything the salesperson highlights in a camping store, despite the fact that the couple never goes camping. Although space considerations do not allow us to perform an extensive analysis of more scenes on this issue, we have identified this dichotomy in financial styles in most scenes where this couple faces the handling and expenditure of their monetary assets.

A similar discrepancy is encountered in the Greek version. For example, in the tenth episode of the series, Demetra (female) spends substantial time on her mobile phone, not caring about the cost, which was much more considerable in 2000 than nowadays. She is similarly delineated as wasteful with water and electricity in the same episode, with Thodoris (male) protesting the expenditure. Again, we find the characters are delineated divergently in most scenes (and episodes) where money is up for discussion.

This analysis illustrates that both female characters seem similarly hyperbolic in their spending habits, and that the male characters exhibit a resemblance in their (perhaps excessive) caution. That the male characters are obviously the financial managers of their respective couples, with the authority to reject or at least criticize their partners' spending, is another obvious similarity.

The similarities between both female and male characters help to establish stereotyped spending habits. Specifically, the former embrace the traditionally feminine trait of excessive spending and the latter the equally traditional male trait of frugality. The shows use these roles to add a humorous note to the shows (i.e., by making fun of both sets of characters). However, this in turn establishes a pattern of conflict between the male and female members of each couple, which seems to draw from a constant divergence of opinion (see also below and in the next subsection).

However, there exists a significant deviation between the male characters of the Greek and Greek-Cypriot adaptations. The character of Photis is represented as obviously stingy, while Thodoris seems to uphold the (otherwise still gendered) stereotype of a wise financial manager. Though Greek character's concerns about his partner's expenditure appear called-for and prudent, as he makes logical, numerical arguments against her spending, he does not appear rude or degrading in his conversations and paralanguage with Demetra. The aberrantly crude behavior of the Cypriot male character is so extreme as to prompt further investigation. In an interview, the director and the lead male actor of *Me and You* verified that this was by design, the former stating that her 'aim was to make him appear boorish'

(Georgidis 2018, pers. comm., 29 June; Pelendritou 2018, pers. comm., 18 June). In fact, she used the slang label ‘χώρκατος’ for this character, which is a substantial insult as it translates to ‘hillbilly’ (Mavratsas 2012: 17). Although the term derives from the Greek word for peasant, it does not signify (a rural) upbringing, social stratum or educational level anymore in the contemporary Greek-Cypriot dialect. Actually, it encompasses specific psycho-social characteristics: chauvinistic, egotistical, even narcissistic behavior, with overt inclination towards misery, stinginess and distrust (Mavratsas 2012). The ‘χώρκατος’ persona is culturally encountered in various contexts in contemporary society and is often depicted in Greek-Cypriot television as a stereotypical antihero (ibid), evidence of the effect of culture on the media and vice versa. A number of characteristics associated with this persona are indeed encountered in Photis and in his interactions with Danae (see also below). This is because the director considered that the audience would at least recognize the cultural coloring of the character and possibly even find his antics humorous (Pelendritou 2018, pers. comm., 18 June), which verifies the (in this case, deliberate) dialectical relationship between Cypriot culture and *Me and You*.

The divergent financial behavior between male and female characters is also encountered in both the Greek-Cypriot and Greek versions of the series in their interactions with vagabond characters. In the third episode of the second season of *Me and You* (2011), Photis and Danae encounter a male character who is portrayed as being, or acting the part of, a homeless person asking for money. Photis initially retorts loudly that the man should find work; his countenance and paralanguage illustrate his anger towards this individual. When the man claims to have searched and found nothing due to the financial crisis, the following dialog ensues:

Danae: Oh, look at him sweetie. The poor thing, he’s not even two kilos, he’s like a baby fly...

[Photis wordlessly gives him 50 cents and Danae protests.]

Danae [talking to the vagabond character]: So, today I’m making oven roast and potatoes. You will come to our place to eat, my food is very tasty!

[When the homeless man asks to bring three friends, Photis angrily shouts at Danae pointing out the danger of inviting strangers into their home]

Danae [talking to Photis]: What are you talking about Photis? What will they do to us?

Photis: What do you mean, ‘what will they do to us’? It’s going to be four impoverished men. They’re going to cut me up and eat me, and you, they’ll spit-roast on the charcoal.

[*Me and You*, S02E03, 0:18-2:15]

In this dialog, Danae assumes the stereotyped, gendered persona of a caregiver (see Sunderland 2004). These traits are obvious in the female character urging Photis to give money to the less fortunate character by pointing out his misfortune ('two kilos' and 'baby fly'), as well as her invitation for a meal at their place. Her tone is also overly sweet in her attempt to draw Photis on her side, although he is depicted as diametrically opposed to her overtures. In addition to being gendered (see also below), Danae's nurturing attitude portrays her as outrageously naive and unintelligent. As Photis points out, the strangers she has invited into their home could easily overpower them, but she seems unable or unwilling to reach the same conclusion on her own ('What will they do to us?'). The depiction of Photis' crass objections and indelicate paralinguistic seem similarly excessive (e.g. giving the man 50 cents; shouting at Danae in the street for issuing the invitation). His descriptions of what the vagabond characters could do to them ('cut me up and eat me' and 'you, they'll spit-roast') are especially graphic, and his sarcastic tone when he mentions the phrase 'spit-roast' insinuates the sexual connotations of the phrase.

We argue that the outrageous depiction of both characters could constitute an attempt to be humorous, by enhancing the shock factor of their exchange (Martin 2007). For example, Danae's inability or unwillingness to reach the fairly simple conclusion that her invitation is dangerous, exemplifies a character of limited ability. By highlighting his stinginess, mistrust and crudeness, Photis is represented once again as a 'χώρκατος' for the comedic factor (see above – Mavratsas 2012; Pelendritou 2018, pers. comm., 18 June). Although portrayed as extreme, we contend that these character traits must resonate with the cultural background of Cypriot society; otherwise, the attempt at this type of humor would have been in vain.

A similar incident was presented in S01E10 of the Greek series. Specifically, the couple are depicted as being accosted in their apartment by a pre-teen boy, a character that could be characterized as a 'street urchin,' who asks them for money, narrating a story of how fate has crushed his loved ones with incurable diseases and accidents. From his posture and gestures, the boy seems to be blind, or at least pretending to be as a ruse. The male character, Thodoris (who is depicted as answering the door), responds with a sarcastic tone, 'Get out! I don't believe for a second that that the fates have struck you so heavily.' (*I Love You, You Love Me*, S01E10, 18:28-18:31). This reveals Thodoris' mistrust and reluctance to help. The heroine, Demetra, who arrives on the scene at that instant, however, urges Thodoris to give the boy money, thereby representing herself as the generous caregiver of the

couple. Then, Thodoris is depicted as testing the child's alleged blindness: he hands the boy 100 drachmas telling him that it's 10000 and the boy objects, revealing his story to be a ruse. Nevertheless, Demetra asks the boy in their apartment for a meal when he claims that he is hungry.

With these sketches, the two reproductions of *Un Gars, Une Fille* did not attempt to address the serious social and ethical ramifications of poverty and the provision of financial help (Maniou & Photiou 2017), but rather to satirize the reactions of the stereotypical (if humorously enhanced) male and female characters to the problem. As such, we find that there are obvious similarities between the reactions of the two female characters: both are depicted as nurturing and eager to help those in need or less fortunate. That is, they seem to embrace the feminine stereotype of the caregiver persona. The fact that both ask their partners to give money to the vagabond characters illustrates yet again that there may be an unspoken agreement that the male protagonists are the financial managers of the respective couples, which likely reproduces another gender stereotype, as discussed above (see Kalava 1982). There is also a similarity between the two male characters: they are depicted as suspicious of strangers asking them for monetary help, as well as sarcastic and mistrustful. This reaction seems like the polar opposite of their female partners, a feature that further draws from and emphasizes the ongoing financial 'battle' between the members of the couples.

This gendered difference in the styles of financial management has been encountered in previous examples as well. In fact, the two female characters are depicted as spending their money more easily or even extravagantly than the male characters, who are portrayed as more frugal and tight-fisted. Although only a few, but exemplary, scenes are investigated here, this difference is emphasized in many more sketches and episodes dealing with various financial issues. So, we argue that there exists a frame of financial management in both versions of the show, under which the (disparate) way(s) that male and female characters utilize their finances is encoded, under a traditional paradigm of acceptable masculine and feminine stereotypes.

Finally, we identify significant differences between the protagonists of the same gender. Thodoris is represented as much less extreme than Photis in his respective response to the character that asks for financial help. This is in view of the fact that Thodoris is fed a highly unlikely and certainly unbelievable story, while Photis is presented with a more plausible one. Their responses enhance Photis' depiction as a Cypriot hillbilly, while Thodoris is represented as a sympathetic, if stereotypically thrifty, male protagonist. What is equally significant is that although the female

characters are both represented as generous but naïve, Danae's reaction is also depicted as more extreme than Demetra's: the former invited four adult strangers into her home, while the latter a hungry boy. The Greek-Cypriot characters appear outrageous in contrast to the couple in the Greek show. Therefore, we can conclude that the frame of financial management resonates in both societies due to a cultural similarity regarding the gendered stereotypes it establishes, and that the difference in levels of reaction is a device that attempts to enhance the comedic factor in *Me and You*, by satirizing certain Cypriot cultural stereotypes (also mentioned by the interviews of the Greek-Cypriot production personnel).

The financial issues highlighted in the above analysis (and see also the next subsection) are clearly points of gendered contention for both couples and often lead to humorous altercations. This is not to insinuate that the behavior of female characters does not exhibit any disparities, or that the male characters behave identically. Obviously, there are esoteric differences within the gendered behaviors themselves, some of which have been identified here. However, the above discussion exemplifies a trend encountered in many scenes and episodes. Therefore, in both versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille*, the female characters seem to exhibit opposite desires, opinions and behaviors, compared to their partners. In fact, this frame elicits humor because of this opposition and the often hilarious arguments the two partners have with each other on each topic. Although we are averse to making generalizations, we argue that this almost polar opposition between the male and female characters suggests that there might be an overarching philosophy that encompasses all our observations: gender antithesis or a classic 'battle of the sexes', as was more commonly referred to earlier in the history of television (e.g., Gill 2007).

The use of this traditional and classically comedic device is certainly by design in the Greek-Cypriot adaptation. Specifically, although the term 'battle of the sexes' was not actually mentioned in any of the interviews, the director Amanda Pelendritou (2018, pers. comm., 18 June) related that the show was often scripted and directed in such a way as 'to pit the characters against each other' because the production team considered that it would provide for comic situations.

### **Emotional and Social Settlement**

As discussed in the introduction, both versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille* depict couples who live together, have joint finances and lead established daily routines, but are not (yet?) married. The characters in each couple are portrayed as sincere about their relationship and commitment to each other, and enjoy the emotional stability that comes with such a serious partnership. Would following the socially accepted

norms for settling down improve their emotional status? Although this is not a question that the show directly addresses, marriage and family are topics that come up in many plotlines.

For example, in S02E08, Photis and Danae find themselves in a flower-shop discussing marriage. The dialog below exemplifies some of the main stereotypical expectations:

Danae: [...] Oh, if we had a house with a garden, to dig and plant and water it.

Photis: You mean that I'd be digging around and planting and watering it, and you'd be issuing commands and bossing me around.

[...]

Photis: ... if I do you the favor of marrying you!

[*Me and You*, S02E08, 0:05-1:01]

The incident ends with Photis letting Danae know that even if they did get married and have a house and garden, he would not be tending to it and she responds that in that case she would hire a gardener and “pay him in kind”. On the surface, the discussion seems to be about the gendered roles in the upkeep of the garden of a potential house that the couple may share. The specific gardening tasks are presented as belonging to the male character, in both their minds. Hence, when Photis calls Danae up on the fact that ‘we’ means ‘he’ would be doing them, she does not disagree. Furthermore, when he ‘rebels’ telling her that he would not be tending to the garden, she tacitly threatens him with hiring a gardener. The threat is implicit as the hypothetical gardener would not only take up the manly responsibilities of gardening; Danae insinuates that she would repay him with sexual favors, thereby threatening Photis’ manhood much more severely than with a household chore.

Beneath this rather superficial exchange, we encounter several cultural issues that permeate the dialog without being spoken, or perhaps even acknowledged. Specifically, with Danae’s spoken desire of tending their own house, the minds of both characters are depicted as immediately leaping to marriage (“... if I do you the favor of marrying you!”), as their means of achieving this goal (even if Danae seems to desire it more than Photis). Also, Danae’s description of their would-be garden, and the longing in her voice and facial expression, implies that they would own the house (although this is not explicitly stated). As mentioned above, this is a committed couple who could decide to search for and even buy a house together (if their finances permit it), and who have every emotional, personal and social asset to

make it into a home, without getting married. Therefore, it is culturally significant that even the couple themselves are not portrayed as recognizing this possibility (or at least voicing it), but consider that they have to be married in order to do so. This signifies the importance of the institution of marriage in the emotional and social settlement of a couple. More importantly, the automatic leap to marriage indicates that this is a naturalized sentiment (Fairclough 1992), possibly ingrained in Cypriot culture and society as well.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, multiple (insignificant as well as serious) topics that deal with the couple's relationship seem to spark the same discussion in several episodes. Therefore, we argue that there exists a frame of settlement (encountered in various Greek-Cypriot media – see also Maniou & Photiou 2013). In Cypriot culture, emotional settlement is portrayed as tantamount to marriage; thus, the contextualization of this frame enables them to perceive that their various relationship discussions should address this topic.

Socially, Cyprus is not different from other western countries, where it is typically the task of men in a committed heterosexual relationship to ask their female partners in marriage, and it is the prerogative of the latter to accept the proposal. Therefore, the statement Photis makes (“... if I do you the favor of marrying you!”) seems to be a reversal of the established norm, as it implies that the female protagonist has at some point in time asked him to marry her, and it is his privilege to accept. We argue that this is not a representation of the inversion of masculine and feminine positions on the topic of marriage; rather, it is a reversal of roles meant to surprise the audience and humorously capture their interest. The same technique has been used in other narrative instances for the same purpose (see below).

The frame of settlement is encountered, somewhat differently, in *I Love You, You Love Me* as well. In one of the sketches of the pilot, Demetra seems to be rocking a teddy bear back and forth as she tells Thodoris:

Demetra: Thodoris, today is the thirteenth day.

Thodoris: Of what?

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<sup>6</sup> Among women over 18 (i.e. of marriageable age), the Statistical Service of Cyprus (2012) have discovered that more than 50% are married and that the percentage has not changed significantly since 1982. Importantly, the percentage of single women has decreased from 41.5% to 37.8% during this time.

Demetra: Of my cycle. Today, if everything goes according to plan, I'm ovulating. Come to bed with me!

[*I Love You, You Love Me*, S01E01, 13:51-14:28]

The scene ends with Thodoris arguing that they should not rush it and that a child will arrive "in good time." Here, the female character is more sexually aggressive than the male one, making as direct a statement of her intentions as possible ("Come to bed with me!"), which is in itself a reversal in the gender stereotype in a sexual relationship. In this instance, however, her aggression likely comes from the fact that they could have a child if they were to have sexual intercourse because she may be ovulating. One of Demetra's life goals is to become a mother. This is why she insists on having sex with Thodoris in the scene above, and why her exasperated question "When will I become a mother?!" (although not present in this exchange) became one of the catchphrases of the show in Greece. Since she is represented as a thirty-something woman, a biological concern may spur her argument, hence the consideration of 'when' is always at the back of her mind and in her catchphrase. On the other hand, Thodoris is portrayed as not worrying at all over time, claiming that progeny will arrive later and unforced ("in good time").

The desire to get married and have a child arguably result in the formation of a family unit. Therefore, the frame of settlement is still present in the Greek adaptation, even if it seems to follow a different sequence. The female characters of the Greek-Cypriot and Greek versions of *Un Gars, Une Fille* are thus similar in their eagerness and even hurry to settle down with their partners (see also Maniou & Photiou 2013). However, there are also significant differences between them. For example, Demetra does not bring up marriage in order to have a child, which possibly illustrates a cultural divergence in gender relations between Greek and Greek-Cypriot societies, as it seems acceptable to form a family out of wedlock in the former.

In addition, Demetra's aim of motherhood, a goal arguably represented as feminine in many (western) societies and their media (e.g., Lazar 2000), manifests itself rather uniquely in *I Love You, You Love Me*. Unlike the Greek-Cypriot female protagonist, Demetra is exhibited as haranguing Thodoris with this issue in multiple scenes and many episodes. This is entrenched by the fact that the question "When will I become a mother?!" becomes a catchphrase of the character, a punchline delivered in numerous scenes. In fact, according to Amanda Pelendritou (2018, pers. comm., 18 June), the actress portraying Demetra (Demetra Papadopoulou) revealed to her that the creation of this catchphrase was accidental: the actress tried it, and it worked comedically so the production team kept it. Demetra's behavior and

catchphrase are likely informed by a feminine cultural artefact that seems more pronounced in the Greek version: the portrayal of the female character as a grumpy, nagging woman obsessed with her own desires. This portrayal is the only extreme one in the Greek version, and seems to resonate culturally given the comic success of the character, her catchphrase, as well as the overall humor value of her constant nagging.

Unlike their female counterparts, Photis and Thodoris seem similarly unwilling to take the socially accepted (gendered) next step in settling down with their partners (yet?). The former seems undecided about marrying Danae and the latter hesitant to have children with Demetra. In addition to being informed by their character traits, their hesitancy seems to be rooted in the (internationally acknowledged) masculine stereotype of refusing to be tied down, which even the otherwise sympathetic character of Thodoris seems to be displaying. This seems like an added gendered element in the frame of settlement: while male characters seem content to cohabit with their partners, the female characters are looking for what they perceive to be the next (natural?) step in their relationships. Given our Cypriot base, here we wish to acknowledge that the Greek culture is explored through frames encountered in Greek-Cypriot society, though they do seem to be present in the Greek version as well.

Therefore, the frame of settlement is clearly polarized with respect to gender, and is being used in various scenes and episodes (as with the previous frame, we do not analyze them all here due to considerations of space). The antithesis of the masculine and feminine viewpoints entailed within it arguably again derives from the overarching philosophy of garnering humor from the established paradigm of the 'battle of the sexes'. That this is by design in *Me and You* has been verified by our interviews with the Greek-Cypriot production personnel. Unfortunately, we lack such information from the Greek cast and crew, in order to ascertain whether this was in fact the philosophy of both production teams, although *I Love You, You Love Me* certainly seems to exploit the exaggerated gendered opposition of the characters for its satirical, and hence humorous, effect. As a concluding remark, gender antithesis, in turn, derives from and exemplifies a background of traditional, patriarchal norms, in which female characters are depicted as having wishes, aims and behavior opposite to men's at all times (e.g., Maniou & Photiou 2013; Stamou, Maroniti & Dinas 2012).

## CONCLUSIONS

The framing analysis conducted in this work verifies that there indeed exists a dialectical relationship between the Greek-Cypriot and Greek reproductions of *Un Gars*, *Une Fille* and the respective societies they were created for. Specifically, we found two similar, culturally fueled, gendered frames in *Me and You* and *I Love You, You Love Me*, which possibly owe to the close ties between the Greek-Cypriot and Greek societies, but which are nonetheless tweaked in order to resonate more effectively with their respective communities. We consider the methodology of framing analysis as an invaluable asset in analyzing the content in a culturally informed manner, primarily because this method requires the use of sociocultural context in the meaning-making component of the analysis. In addition, we conducted interviews with Cyprus personnel in order to gather information about the production, which verified some stereotyped design features of the characters.

One of our research aims was to decipher how the female and male characters of the series are depicted. We have identified two frames (the frame of financial styles and the frame of settlement) which inform the characters' behavior in their financial dealings and relationship goals. In most issues examined here, the female and male characters exhibit a polar outlook, reminiscent of a classic 'battle of the sexes', which both adaptations seem to exploit comedically, and which was injected in the Greek-Cypriot version by design according to the interviews of the production personnel. However, we did find significant differences in the comparison between the depictions of the characters of the Greek-Cypriot and Greek versions of the program, the investigation of which constituted another of our stated research goals. Specifically, the Greek-Cypriot characters seem to be portrayed as the outrageous versions of their Greek counterparts, in an effort to add caustic humor to the Greek-Cypriot version, as the production team and cast of the show have indicated in their interviews. Nevertheless, one of the successes of the Greek female protagonist is depicted as an extreme version of the cultural artefact of a grumpy, nagging woman.

Our final research objective was to examine whether and how *Me and You* and *I Love You, You Love Me* drew from the cultural background of their contemporary societies. Both frames as well as the comparison between the characters already demonstrates that their portrayal relies heavily on this element. At this stage, we need to examine the current, limited scope of our study. Although restricted in the number of scenes examined herein, this work exemplifies the interactions between the male and female characters in the two adaptations, as we were able to identify the two frames in multiple other scenes and episodes of both. Due to the small number of episodes and sketches examined, we are loath to make generalized conclusions. However, within the broader research program our work forms a part

of, it is our aim to systematically analyze more scenes until all the issues referenced in the two adaptations of the show can be explored, in comparison not only to each other, but also to other international markets.

*I Love You, You Love Me* has come back, seventeen years after the last television episode in Greece, to a YouTube channel operated by the telecommunication company Cosmote. Although the episodes are much shorter and usually comprise a single sketch scene (to conform to the needs of the new format), the characters are the same and featured by the same actors with many similar or identical punchlines, catchphrases, and issues.

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