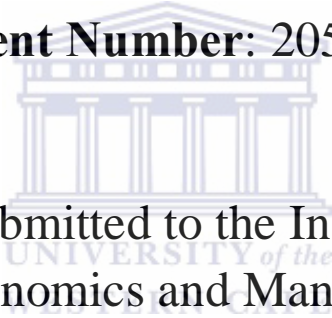


***“The effects of labour policies in the Piedmont  
Region of Italy on equity in the labour market:  
Reflections on women in Labour”***

By

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**Student Number:** 2052220



A mini-thesis submitted to the Institute for Social  
Development, Economics and Management Sciences,  
University of the Western Cape, in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Economics

Supervisor: Prof. Pieter Le Roux

Date: August 2010

**Dedication:**

To my children, Gerard and Giulia; my love Ilaria and my sister Jes: You are all the family a man needs.

“It takes a man to suffer ignorance and smile, *be yourself*, no matter what they say...”  
(Gordon Sumner)



**Declaration:**

I declare that this dissertation *“The effects of labour policies in the Piedmont Region of Italy on equity in the labour market: Reflections on women in Labour”* is a result of my own research efforts and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all the sources I have used or cited have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Heinrich John Gerwel

January 2010

Signed:.....



### **Acknowledgements:**

I firstly acknowledge my parents for having me.

The following people are acknowledged for specific reasons, and I apologise for any omissions due to oversight on my part:

For friendship and love, Jes and Ilaria;

For laughter, Gerard;

For reassurance of my humanity, Giulia;

For being the perfect example of a husband, father, and friend, Alan;

For academic inspiration Johann Graaff,

For impromptu guidance and a helpful ear for my measured radicalism, my friend Leon Pretorius;

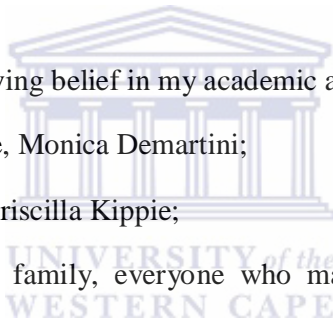
For being my motivation and having belief in my academic abilities, Judith Mayotte;

For making my research possible, Monica Demartini;

For always being there to help, Priscilla Kippie;

For a place to grow, and new family, everyone who makes up the Institute for Social Development;

For academic guidance and a foothold in this dangerous world of academia, my supervisor, mentor and friend, Pieter Le Roux.



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**Key Words:**

Welfare State;

Labour Market;

Gender Equity;

Policy Reform;

Duality of structure;

Social Justice;

Structural properties;

European Union;

Efficiency;

Female Participation Rate.



## **Abstract:**

This study aims to investigate the perceived effect of a particular social policy framework in Italy, an example of a Southern European welfare state (Ferrera, 1996; Ferrera & Gough 1996), on the female labour market participation rate in that country. This is done by looking at the Piedmont region of Italy (particularly the province- and city of Torino) as the study area and where exclusively qualitative empirical research has been conducted on the question of female participation in the labour market. This is done with the aim of assessing what role the regional (as well as provincial and municipal) government has been playing to address the low participation rate of women in the Italian labour market, where

ō, fewer women work, and even if they make up a majority of part-time employment..., part-time work is a less protected employment and not as widespread as in Swedenö (Sundström, 1999: 194).

The generic question which is posed against the background of the European Employment Strategy (Amsterdam Treaty of 1997) which stipulates that all member states must achieve a 60% female labour market participation rate by 2010 (Ferrera & Gaulmini, 2004), is the following: Is state provision of information concerning parental leave and part-time work improving gender equity in the labour market as a social, as well as and importantly, an economic efficiency goal?

The study concentrates on a particular type of state intervention in social policy. It considers whether policy reforms and subsequent provision of information with regards to the issue of parental leave and part-time work arrangements, makes an impact on gender equity in the labour market (Del Boca, 2002; Naldini & Saraceno, 2008).

Giddensø theory of structuration is the conceptual framework from which this study approaches these questions. It is thus held that agents (in this instance, women) are constrained by structures (labour policy framework and institutionalised labour practices) to achieve specific social goals. And further: that the apparent lack of power on the part of agents requires intervention on the part of the state apparatus to correct the failure (or inability) of the labour market to deliver the social justice as aspired to in the cited European Employment Strategy, as well as fostering economic efficiency (Barr, 1992). I further contend that not only are agents constrained by structural properties, but that institutional

reform (in the form of labour policy reform) is constrained by the human action<sup>1</sup> of the management of firms and enterprises as economic agents within the policy framework.

The concept of power is directly related to the provision of or ability to access information. A major part of the study focuses on the extent to which information about L53/2000<sup>2</sup> is conveyed and made accessible to, or withheld (by intent or omission) from those meant to benefit from those measures.

It is proposed that the theory of structuration is an effective guide in understanding the relationships between human agents, structures (or structural properties), power and state apparatuses- acting as a ‘sensitising device’, as there are methodological misgivings within orthodox economics when relating to normative issues such as welfare (Giddens, 1984, Le Roux, 1984 & 2006).

The research focuses on the Piedmont Region of the Italian Republic (more specifically, the province and city of Torino) where mainly qualitative research has been conducted on the question of female participation in the labour market. An inherently qualitative research method (in the form of semi-structured interviews) is applied. Secondary statistical data is only referred to, so as to verify inferences made from the in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews, which were on average more than 90 minutes in duration. The target population is stakeholders in the labour market and academics in the field, and purposive sampling was done via referrals. All of this is done to gain insight into the plight of women by investigating the assertion that increasing the female labour market participation rate in the Italian welfare state is hindered by a number of structural factors, including the lack of access to information.

Hence, this study can be viewed as firstly, an empirical investigation in the form of a case study (reporting on my research findings in Piedmont and Lombardy), secondly, a test of methodology (whether the method gives insight to research results) and thirdly, a venture into theory (e.g. understanding how human agency and structure interact in society when investigating economic phenomena) (See Le Roux, 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> Issues of culture will also be discussed in terms of it impeding the increase of the number of women in the Italian labour market.

<sup>2</sup> L53/2000 deals with issues of parental leave and part-time work arrangements towards fostering gender equity. A full discussion of this law follows in Chapter 3.



The various concepts of the 'welfare state' in Europe were meant to be ones of inclusion (Barr, 1998; 2003 and Esping-Andersen, 1990; 1996). This study, of one aspect of one of the versions of European welfare states (Ferrera, 1996), may hopefully, contribute to a greater understanding of exclusion and inequality in the wider world.



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The various concepts of the 'welfare state' in Europe were meant to be ones of inclusion (Barr, 1998; 2003 and Esping-Andersen, 1990; 1996). This study, of one aspect of one of the versions of European welfare states (Ferrera, 1996), may hopefully, contribute to a greater understanding of exclusion and inequality in the wider world.





## **Chapter 1-Introduction:**

### **1.1 Background Information:**

Of late the concept of the Welfare State has been critically considered in numerous debates concerning its relevance and applicability in the age of globalization (Giddens, 2006). There has in particular been a debate about what a welfare state implies within the context of the European Union (Esping-Andersen et. al, 2001).

The Welfare State is a set of institutions and policies which redistributes resources ó either as money transfers or as free or subsidized services - between different groups of people. In many European Welfare States, welfare is actually provided by a combination of independent, voluntary, mutualistic, and government services (See Myles & Quadagno, 2002; Barr, 2003). In his seminal work, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Esping-Andersen (1990) identifies three welfare state regimes. Firstly, there is liberal (or market-oriented) welfare states characteristic of the Anglo-American democracies. Secondly, we have the conservative regime characteristic of continental Europe, and thirdly, the Nordic social democratic policy model. Barr (1992) also discusses Wilensky & Lebeaux's (1965) distinction between a residual and universal Welfare State. The former is intended mainly as a safety net for the poor, is characterised by income testing of publicly provided services and by mainly private provision for the so-called non-poor. In contrast, within the latter case, services are intended for all socioeconomic groups. These conceptualizations of the Welfare State thus coincide with the liberal- and social democratic regimes associated with Esping-Andersen respectively.

A fourth type of welfare capitalist regime is identified by Ferrera (1996), as well as Ferrera & Gough (1996), (cited in Baldini et al, 2000), viz the so-called Southern European or Mediterranean model of welfare, which in addition to the characteristics associated with the Bismarckian or Continental<sup>3</sup> model is structured in a way that provides social protection to the so-called insiders, those who are already within the labour market and specifically members of the civil service. This protection is mostly in the form of an inflated pension provision (Lynch,

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<sup>3</sup> The Continental model was decidedly anti-liberal in origin, not at all concerned with market efficiency but deeply concerned with maintaining an organic-hierarchical social order inherited from the past. Social rights are extensive, and there is only a marginal role for private welfare arrangements (the market). It is corporatist in the sense that, in their origins at least, these rights and privileges were differentiated on the basis of class and status, and redistribution was marginal (Gerwel, 2009).

2004). Welfare in Italy can thus be seen as having mixed traits: it is universalistic in terms of healthcare and education, but it becomes occupational as a social insurance system. Participation in the labour market becomes therefore of paramount importance for the entitlement to services and the allocation of funds (Cancellieri & Longo, 2008).

These Southern European states were also strongly influenced by Christian Democratic (i.e., Catholic) doctrines rejecting the primacy of the market, on the one hand, but insisting on principles of 'subsidiarity' and, hence, the primacy of the family as the locus of social welfare on the other (Myles & Quadagno, 2002). While social spending in these nations is considerably higher than in the liberal welfare states, the emphasis is on income transfers sufficient to cover the income needs of the male breadwinner (Orloff, 1996). Social services that both facilitate women's employment (child care) and provide jobs for women are modest (Barr, 2003; Addis, 1999; Fargion, 1999). The specific example of a Southern European welfare state investigated in this study will be that of the Italian Republic (Baccaro, 2002).

According to Addis (1999: 1), the recent Italian welfare reforms:

ö reinforce the 'male-breadwinner/female-housekeeper' model. This model fosters low participation rates and low occupation rates of women, very asymmetrical division of domestic labour, and very low fertility rates.ö

This study intends to investigate whether, and to what extent, female labour participation has been enhanced or hindered in the Province of Torino, by looking at a specific program to improve the provision of information concerning rights of women (and men). The emphasis will thus be on the extent to which these interventions contribute towards women reconciling work and family life (Flaquer, 2000).

Thus, to summarise the point of departure for this argument for a stronger welfare state to enhance gender equity, I conclude this section with the following two questions: Firstly, is the issue of female employment and gender equity in general receiving the necessary attention within the Italian labour policy framework? Secondly, what, if anything, is being done within the Province of Torino concerning the issue of female activation within the labour market, since:

ø[t]he new emphasis on supply-side adjustments [of labour policies] prompted Regional Governments to assume a primary role in active labour policies by entrusting them with the responsibility for training, job orientation and job creation initiatives.ö (Fargion, 2002: 7)

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review:**

### **1.2.1 Introduction:**

Giddensø theory of structuration will provide the conceptual framework for this analysis. This is done so that Giddens theory of the state can be compared to the view of Barr (2003) on the role of the state in welfare provision. Barr then additionally provides an economic argument<sup>4</sup> for the expansion of the welfare state to promote gender equity in the context of the Italian welfare state reforms (Fargion, 2001; Naldini & Saraceno, 2008; Addis, 1999).

### **1.2.2 Giddens' theory of structuration:**

Giddens is considered by some to be ø...the most influential British social scientist since Keynesö (Fuller, 2001: 365), one who wanted to integrate the three dominant traditions of Marx, Weber and the structural functionalism of Parsons,

ø...to develop a theoretical position which, although informed by ideas drawn from each of these three approaches, differs from all of themö (Giddens, 1979: 1-20, cited in Le Roux, 1984).

Parsons and Marx used inductive approaches to their work, providing grand theories in an empiricist way whilst Weber was more deductive in his approach. As an answer to positivism, the question of what the differences between natural and social sciences are is posed. According to my own understanding, social scientific knowledge can affect the behaviour of the units of analysis or subjects of investigation because of their ability to reflect on the knowledge. There is what Giddens calls a double hermeneutic. Social theorists interpret the

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<sup>4</sup>According to Barr (1998: 1) ø... the welfare state exists not only to help the poor. It also exists for efficiency reasons, to provide services which the market would supply badly if at all, and, as such, serves the entire population.ö[See also Barr, 1992: 2.]

behaviour of the human subjects, who in their turn reflect on the theories and may well modify their behaviour. There are as a consequence no immutable laws in social science, as has erroneously been postulated by modernisation theorists, functionalists and structural Marxists.

One of the major points of criticism Giddens raises against the established social theories is their inability to bridge the gap between individual and society or, in the language of the social philosophers, to eliminate the object-subject dualism. He is critical of both the Parsonian and Althusserian traditions by claiming that they, in spite of attempts to overcome the subject-object dualism, in the end reach a position "in which subject is controlled by object" (Giddens, 2001). Giddens sees the difference between Weber and Durkheim as one of agency versus structure and theorises more to integrate existing knowledge than to open investigation into fresh fields (Le Roux, 1984; Fuller, 2001). A fuller exposition of the theory of structuration is provided in Chapter Two, the Literature Review and Conceptual Framework.

### **1.2.3 Key concepts as understood within the structuration context:**

The aim of this section is to conceptualise the key term within this framework. To embark on this venture, allow for another citation from Le Roux (1984: 3), who states that:

The central issue on which the theory of structuration differs from the established schools of thought is concerned with what I consider to be a tenet of faith, viz. that social reality can be explained in terms of a dialectic<sup>5</sup> between action and structure.

Another, more simplistic way of saying this is that action and structure are two sides of the same coin. Graaff (Undated: 230) argues that "...structure is internal to action and constitutes action. One cannot exist without the other and that they are intimately related. Social actions create structures, and it is through social actions effectively that structures are produced and reproduced, so that they survive over time. The key concept within the theory of structuration can thus be seen as the duality of structure (Giddens, 1976; Le Roux, 1984).

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<sup>5</sup> According to Sowell (1985 25), within "...the dialectical vision of an unfolding reality, the key concept is development- meaning not simply quantitative growth but qualitative transformation.

### **1.3 The research problem:**

#### **1.3.1 Statement of the Problem:**

In March 2000, the Lisbon Strategy was passed by the European Council as the articulated EU strategy for the promotion of social and economic development confronting the new challenges of globalization, ageing of population and technological changes (Ferrera et al, 2001). The implementation of the strategies has not been compulsory for member states, but has relied on the Open Method of Coordination which would gently lead EU welfare models towards a common EU welfare system. The open method of coordination has had an important role in the building of the EU dimension, promoting a learning approach towards a convergent direction, respecting national differences. Nonetheless, as a result of the midterm evaluation in 2004-05, the guidelines were introduced encouraging more efficiency.

A sustainable European welfare social model represents the attempt to consolidate a model which is able to combine social justice and economic development in a positive virtuous circle (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Giddens, 2006). Within the debates revolving around the Welfare State in Europe in general and in Italy in particular, there is specific concern that the autonomy of state policies are being influenced by the strictures of the European Union, and specifically the European Employment Strategy (EES),

which is designed to increase the employment rate through both active labour market measures, especially education and training, and through employment-friendly reforms of social security and taxation. Recipients of social benefits are increasingly also participants in employment activation measures (Fargion, 2002: 2; see also Frisina, 2004).

#### **1.3.2 Research Rationale:**

Also directly linked to the question of welfare state reform in Italy, is the issue of female participation in the labour market, and other equal opportunity issues (Gornick, 1999). As far as discourse on this subject is concerned, I refer again to Fargion (1999: 2) where she states that:

“ [t]he specific gender relations fostered by the present Welfare State were not examined, almost no measurement was presented on the shift of resources between men and women caused by the first attempts of reform, and hence no consensus was reached about the need and right direction of change in this area”.

We should also note,

“ [the] quantitative targets fixed by the EU during the Lisbon and Stockholm summits in March 2000 and March 2001-according to which the total and female employment rates should respectively reach 70 % and 60% by 2010” (Ferrera and Gualmini, 2004: 98).

These are not only goals of social justice, but in terms of the ambitious goals of the Lisbon Agenda, ones of economic efficiency as well (Pissarides, 2006).

I wish to conclude this section with the following two questions: Firstly, is the issue of female employment and gender equity in general receiving the necessary attention within the Italian labour policy framework (Del Boca, 2002)? Secondly, what, if anything, is being done within the Province of Torino concerning the issue of female activation within the labour market, since:

“ [t]he new emphasis on supply-side adjustments [of labour policies] prompted Regional Governments to assume a primary role in active labour policies by entrusting them with the responsibility for training, job orientation and job creation initiatives” (Fargion, 2002: 7)

### **1.3.3 Aims of the study:**

It is against this theoretical and conceptual background that the overarching aim of this study was to examine the role of the Piedmont Regional and provincial government in promoting gender equity in the labour market. It was thus deemed valuable to evaluate how this affluent region of the country deals with matters pertaining to the welfare of its population (specifically women) by looking at a specific policy intervention (L53/2000).

The proposed study has the following specific aims:

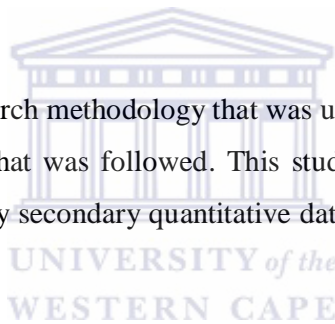
1. To provide the study with a solid theoretical and conceptual framework from which to launch the investigation by analysing theories pertaining to the welfare state as an institution in the context of the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1979 & 1984).

2. To investigate whether current labour policies make it easy for women to enter the labour market in the province. Or alternatively, are the reformed labour policies structured in a way that helps, or hinders the advancement of female labour participation in the province? This is done to discover if female non-participation represents a significant problem, and if so, is it structural due to the institutional set-up of the welfare state system?
3. To establish whether an alternative methodological approach to positive economics (Friedman, 1953) can integrate qualitative and quantitative methods to yield reliable and replicable results?

These three initial questions will provide the narrative focus of the study, and will be individually answered in a number of different ways in this investigation.

#### **1.4 Research Design:**

This section outlines the research methodology that was used in this study and will indicate the specific research procedure that was followed. This study employs an inherently qualitative research design, with ancillary secondary quantitative data analysis and these are discussed in more detail below.



##### **1.4.1 Qualitative Research:**

According to Mouton (2001) the qualitative approach helps the researcher to understand human interaction within natural settings through the eyes of the actors. Babbie and Mouton (2008) refer to the so called insider perspective that the researcher derives from employing this paradigm. Qualitative studies demand detailed descriptions of phenomena and understanding of behaviour. Qualitative research is deemed to be more flexible and pragmatic, allowing for modification of the methodology, the time frame and other aspects of the study to suit the object of the study and to correct for serendipitous findings.

#### **1.4.2 Quantitative (Secondary data analysis):**

This section will only be using secondary data analyses from data sets of the 2002-2003 Time Use Survey, OECD and ISTAT publications and previous quantitative studies. Reference to these data sets will be used mainly to substantiate arguments and inferences made in the literature review, and based on the informed views of experts in the field.

An associated strength of secondary data analysis is the savings in time and cost, since it uses existing data with the possibility of reanalysing previous findings (Mouton, 2001). This study does not intend to gather any new quantitative data, and this secondary data analysis is done merely to strengthen or refute inferences made from the interviews with stakeholders mentioned in section 1.4.3.

#### **1.4.3 Research Methodology:**

A variety of research tools were used in order to gather information. These include a literature review, secondary data analysis, and qualitative research methods such as informal and semi-structured interviews. The literature review entails the analysis of relevant documentary data. This qualitative evaluation approach involves the use of the abovementioned research tools to

...describe and evaluate the performance of programmes in their natural settings, focussing on the process of implementation rather than on quantifiable outcomes (Mouton, 2001: 160).

Hence it can be said that the study follows a dual methodology of a predominantly qualitative design (interviews) and to a lesser extent, a quantitative analysis of labour market performance (using secondary data). The duality of structure, and the importance of evaluating both systems (as well as institutions) and human action is the motivation for this research design, which postulates that female labour market participation is hindered by a number of factors in the Italian welfare state framework. Hence, this is an explanatory investigation concerned with why these social phenomena occur and attempting to deal with the forces and influences that drive their occurrence. A summary with some methodological clarification follows.

The design represents an integrated research approach incorporating a full range of research methods. The principle of triangulation applies, meaning the ordering and interpretation of



data secured from different sources and methods (including all evidence with a bearing on specific research questions to ensure valid and comprehensive answers to these questions).

In a qualitative design, as in the one here, methodological criteria for understanding an event / case differ from a quantitative in the following respects (Babbie & Mouton, 2008: 235):

- *Representation in qualitative research*: An explanation is judged as adequate on the grounds of comprehensiveness. The relevant aspects of the project under scrutiny needs to be presented as fully as possible. This requires a definition of a set of criteria for selection and the intentional / purposive selection (i.e. sampling) of individuals / participants on the grounds of meeting these criteria. Applied to the current study it means intentional selection of individuals for interviewing, of the different focus groups needed and participants for focus groups, and of the community workshops and participants.
- *Credibility*: Compatibility between constructed realities in minds of respondents and those that are attributed to them. (This is the qualitative variant of internal validity.)
- *Transferability*: Findings applicable to other contexts or with other respondents. It emphasizes the need for "thick description" (sufficient detail) and representation as explained above. (This is the qualitative variant of external validity.)
- *Dependability*: Is the design replicable, and what are the chances that other researchers will reach the same findings? (This is the qualitative variant of reliability).
- *Confirmability*: Objectivity in qualitative terms.

According to Snape and Spencer (2005: 9), the use of qualitative research was encouraged by a number of challenges as a means to overcome

the perceived limitations associated with the scientific method [in the form of positivism].

The most crucial of these challenges surrounds the debate concerning whether it is possible to control variables in experimental research involving human subjects with the aim of

achieving unambiguous results<sup>6</sup>. Ontologically, this study stands closer to a neo-materialist position, identifying ways in which material conditions (economic, political and in this case gender) influence belief, behavior and experiences, maintaining that,

“the social world is regulated by normative expectations and shared understandings and hence the laws that govern it are not immutable” (ibid. :13).

#### **1.4.4 Data Gathering methods and instruments:**

The main data gathering instrument that was used was the semi-structured interview. This is deemed as the most appropriate methodological tool which enables the researcher to undertake detailed descriptions and develop an understanding of phenomena within the field of interest of this study. Interviews are particularly well suited to research

“...that requires an understanding of deeply rooted or delicate phenomena” (Ritchie, 2005: 36).

, as is the case with the embedded cultural attitudes towards women and work in Italy [and other Southern European Welfare States]

Data collecting methods also include informal discussions/interaction, observation, but as mentioned above, mainly open and semi-structured in-depth interviews were used. Non-probability purposive sampling techniques were employed to construct the research sample. The unit of analysis of this investigation were mainly academics and labour market stakeholders at different levels of government. This sampling technique was deemed to be most the appropriate one, as a network would already exist amongst these abovementioned individuals. This study concurs with the view of Bulmer (1982, cited in Ritchie, 2005: 25) that,

“...social research is at its most useful when theoretical insights and social investigation are mutually enhancing such that the collection of evidence is informed by theory and interpreted in the light of it”.

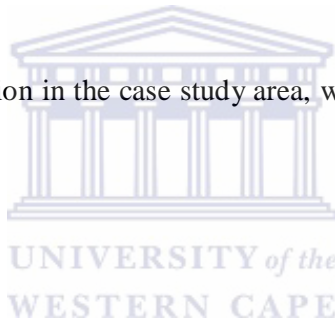
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<sup>6</sup> More on the limitations of economic methodology in terms of its role within “Social Theory” follows later.

#### **1.4.5 The Research process:**

The research procedure will include the following steps:

- Literature study of primary and secondary data from different sources, including the University of Torino's library and extensive databases, as well as the Piedmont Regional Government, which allowed one access to government officials and labour market stakeholders.
- Situation assessment of case study area, using secondary statistical data analysis.
- Identification of participants (personal interviews with different stakeholders in the labour market, welfare provision (public), and also academics who are involved in research and scholarship in this particular field of study.)
- Consultation with all relevant bodies (local government offices, equal opportunity offices etc.)
- Gathering of information in the case study area, which entails all the above mentioned gathering techniques.



#### **1.4.6 Literature Review:**

The literature review will give a theoretical and intellectual background to the study and build a logical framework for the research. As it has been indicated by Mouton, (2001) the importance of the literature review is to avoid duplication of efforts, save time, and to guide the researcher towards conceptualising the research question by locating it in a body of theory. A theoretical analysis adds depth to empirical research in that methodological and epistemological questions are addressed which bear on the practical fieldwork undertaken and reflectively, that theoretical assertions have to be tested against social reality. Finally, it is contended that in this way,

ö...the proper integration of fieldwork and theory advances the development of both social theoretical and research related [or empirical] knowledgeö (Conradie, 1992: 8).

## **Chapter 2- Literature Review and Conceptual Framework:**

### **2.1 Introduction:**

This part of the investigation proceeds by reviewing two papers that described the dominant debates within sociology<sup>7</sup> at two historical periods; the first, written by Tom Bottomore (1975) being significant since it coincides with the time Anthony Giddens started work on his theory of structuration. The second reading, written 26 years later by Steve Fuller (2001), sets the scene for the same type of debates at the turn of the century. This comparison of sociological traditions hopefully will provide insight into what led Giddens to the synthesis in his theory of structuration and how his work was viewed within the same debate a quarter of a century later. This will hopefully prove instructive as to the metatheoretical reasoning behind selecting the theory of structuration as the conceptual basis and -framework for this study.

#### **2.1.1 Historical Background:**

Bottomore (1975) begins his treatise by referring to a 'crisis' within the discipline of sociology:

...a remarkable proliferation of new approaches and paradigms in sociology; to such an extent indeed that some writers have referred to a 'crisis' affecting the whole discipline, which they may judge either favourably, as a condition of intellectual ferment and renewal, or unfavourably, as a state of affairs in which sociological thought seems to have lost any rational coherence<sup>8</sup>... (ibid. : 191)

Sociology has historically always been a 'multi-paradigm science' (ibid. : 191), but the dominant tradition in sociology in the 1950s was the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons and contained very little if any reference to alternative theoretical approaches like Marxism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and structuralism, which were well known and proved to be influential in sociological thinking of the proceeding decades (ibid. : 191- 192).

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<sup>7</sup> These two papers refer to sociology, but the ideas emanating from this discussion can just as easily be translated to Social Theory (as described by Le Roux, 1984), of which Economics is an element.

<sup>8</sup> This loss of 'rational coherence' is what Giddens was attempting to address when '[h]is attempt to bring about a synthesis of the various social scientific traditions [w]as undertaken in the conviction that social science needs to be philosophically informed' (ibid. : 4).

Functionalism can be loosely defined as a "sociological theory which sees society as composed of interdependent parts which each contribute beneficially to the greater whole" (Coetzee, 1989: 34).

Parsons, originally trained as a biologist, drew strongly from the work of the so-called "Holy Trinity of sociology" Durkheim, Weber and Marx in the evolutionist form of their thinking, who all dealt in their work with the transition from traditional to modern society (ibid. 1989). Parsonian sociologists saw Marx as an idealist and had ethnocentric views of society being determined by culture through looking at normative variables such as values. Parsonian sociology does not take class stratifications as being important (unlike traditional Marxists) and saw nationalism and national identity as being more superior forms of analysis than class disputes. This dominance of Parsonian "scientific sociology" in contrast with policy-oriented, more social philosophical kind of sociology was not without criticism. The main critics of these saw functionalism

"...as an unhistorical, politically conservative theory which neglected, in particular, the elements of change and social conflict in social life" (Bottomore, 1975: 192).



### **2.1.2 Decline of Functionalism:**

According to Bottomore (1975), sociology was becoming a multi paradigm science. Kuhn, who came up with the concept of a paradigm, was of the opinion however that a discipline only becomes a science once there is one dominant paradigm. This is indeed the case within economics, which has neoclassical general static equilibrium analysis claiming "hegemonic" status as a paradigm (Le Roux, 2006).

The 1960s saw the resurgence of many different versions of Marxism, along with a rediscovery of the works of Max Weber by a New Left who was seeking to establish a radical or critical sociology. Bottomore (1975: 192) goes further by stating that "[f]unctionalism no longer occupie[d] such a prominent place as a sociological paradigm..." and mainly held sway in the USA. There are many theoretical traditions prevalent in sociology today. Giddens attempts an integration of major historical traditions and social theories under his theory of structuration. I now proceed with a discussion of some of the dominant traditions in sociology,

some which I personally find interesting and applicable to development thinking and others defunct.

### **2.1.3 Structural functionalism vs. Marxism:**

Functionalism later came to be called structural functionalism, since its aim was to analyse the functioning of institutions, or elements of social life, as parts of a definite social system or structure. Even though it was in decline, in modified forms functionalism continues to direct a good deal of sociological inquiry (Bottomore, 1975). Structural functionalists believed in the primacy of norms and values as indication of a society's level of development, which became one of the main concepts of modernisation theory. They also spoke of a protestant work ethic to explain the superior relative development of northern- to southern Europe. The 'archaic' values associated with Catholicism were posited as reason for this phenomenon<sup>9</sup>. It was believed that behaviour is influenced, but not determined by knowledge. Before moving on to a discussion of the Marxist traditions in sociology, allow a final word from Bottomore on the topic (1975: 193)

“One consequence of the adoption of a functionalist paradigm is a certain indifference to historical processes and historical explanations”.

Marxism, which directly engages with the concept of historicity, can be viewed as being divided into two distinct 'schools'. These are the structuralists and the critical theorists of the 'Frankfurt School'. The existential Marxists, associated with Sartre lay claim to being another 'school' of Marxist thought, as well as 'analytical Marxism', which has developed as a way of furthering the 'Marxist agenda', while trying to avoid the limitations of the above mentioned styles of Marxist theorising by combining analytical philosophy, empirical social science and neoclassical economic analysis with traditional Marxist theoretical and political concerns (Wright et. al. 1992). The structural Marxists like Althusser and his followers who assert that Marx's major scientific work consisted in an analysis of the 'deep structure' of modern capitalist society and that the focus of Marx's thought was this structural analysis rather than the depiction and interpretation of a process of historical development (Bottomore, 1975). They were concerned with the need to understand the changing structure of society. This view

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<sup>9</sup> This is prudent in this study, as Catholicism is also postulated as being a large cultural determinant of the social labour contract of women within the 'male breadwinner' model (See Naldini & Saraceno, 2008).

however took away agency and individual action as playing any role in the development of society, and was a perpetuation of the teleological view of social evolution associated with functionalism. The structural Marxists are not very clear as to how the "transformation from one structure into another" occurs and needs to perhaps reintroduce notions from historical Marxism in which the development of social movements, changes in consciousness and purposive human action are seen as crucial elements (Bottomore, 1975: 198- 199). The emphasis of Marxian philosophy on development is juxtaposed with its recognition of its opposite alienation, which according to Sowell (1985: 34)

"...is not simply a general malaise but more specifically a misconception of reality growing out of thwarted development- an inversion in which human reality and human needs are made subservient to artificially created things, to the imaginary gods of religion or to the *financial institutions of capitalism*" [emphasis added].

The followers of the Frankfurt School use the term "critical theory" to distinguish their interpretation of Marxism from the

"...economic determinism and evolutionism of orthodox Marxism, to emphasise the significance of cultural factors (and of theoretical criticism itself) in the development of society, and to mark their affinity with a philosophical, rather than a social scientific (and more specially positivist) formulation of Marxism (Bottomore, 1975: 196)".

Writers like Habermas, who formed part of the post war generation of critical theorists, criticised orthodox Marxism's theoretical system so extensively, that critical theory is sometimes regarded as a separate and independent form of social inquiry. Critical theorists pursue knowledge and assign to knowledge and knowledge production a preeminent influence in the formation and transformation of modern societies. Hence they see the internal social conflicts experienced in modern societies as being cultural and intellectual of nature, rather than as clashes of economic interests or class conflicts (ibid. ; Held, 1980). They believe knowledge to be important for three purposes or functions: *control*, to increase understanding or "*verstehen*" and *emancipation*. This concern with emancipation or "long term process of human liberation" hence aims at construction of a new philosophy of history that can act as a general theoretical framework for empirical investigations. This associates critical theory closely with the aforementioned "radical sociology". I now turn my attention to Anthony Giddens, as a social theorist that Steve Fuller (2001) deems worthy of a mention when one



wants to get an accurate picture of the social conditions of 21<sup>st</sup> century social theory (among authors like Manuel Castells and Judith Butler, who will not be discussed in this dissertation).

## **2.2 Anthony Giddens and the theory of Structuration:**

Giddens is considered by some to be „the most influential British social scientist since Keynes“ (Fuller, 2001: 365), one who wanted to integrate the three dominant traditions of Marx, Weber and the structural functionalism of Parsons,

„to develop a theoretical position which, although informed by ideas drawn from each of these three approaches, differs from all of them“ (Giddens, 1979: 1-20, cited in Le Roux, 1984).

Parsons and Marx used inductive approaches to their work, providing grand theories in an empiricist way whilst Weber was more deductive in his approach. As an answer to positivism, the question of what the differences between natural and social sciences are is posed. According to my own understanding, social science theories can affect the behaviour of the units of analysis or subjects of investigation. There are also no immutable natural laws in social science, as believed by modernisation theorists, functionalists and structural Marxists.

One of the major points of criticism Giddens raises against the established social theories is their inability to bridge the gap between individual and society or, in the language of the social philosophers, to eliminate the object-subject dualism. Conradie (1992) speaks of Social Theory as referring to the body of theoretical knowledge which has developed in sociology and its related disciplines, and which deals with epistemological and hermeneutic questions. Giddens condemns both the Parsonian and Althusserian traditions by claiming that they, in spite of attempts to overcome the subject-object dualism, in the end reach a position "in which subject is controlled by object". Giddens has an impulse to epitomize the difference between Weber and Durkheim as one of „agency versus structure“ and theorises more to legitimate existing knowledge than to open investigation into fresh fields (Le Roux, 1984; Fuller, 2001).

Bernstein (1986: 235) is of the opinion that „Giddens is in the process of attempting nothing less than a rethinking of the modern sociological tradition“. From the two pieces discussed in this section above (Bottomore, 1975 and Fuller, 2001), it is apparent that the multi paradigmatic nature of sociology brought about what Kuhn would have seen as a breakdown



of sociology as a science (Le Roux, 2006). The 'crisis' as described by Bottomore (1975) can be considered as being causal in Giddens'

...attempt to put forward a new synthesis not only of the different sociological traditions, but of what he calls social theory, a term by which he refers to a whole range of the social sciences, including anthropology, *economics*, politics, human geography and psychology' (Giddens, 1982:5, cited in Le Roux, 1984 emphasis added).

Giddens' synthesis presents one with a theory that is both

...powerful and attractive because it expresses a deep understanding of what we are as reflexive knowledgeable human agents who are always conditioned by and are constantly reproducing social structures' (Bernstein, 1986:240).

As for drawing from differing traditions to synthesise a new understanding of social theory, I am personally more attracted to critical theory<sup>10</sup>, as the acquisition of knowledge towards the goal of self-emancipation from mental slavery is an imperative which I feel is lacking within modern debates surrounding the issues of human and social development. To begin summarising this section, which highlights my motivation in employing the theory of structuration as conceptual framework, I refer once more to Bernstein (1986: 243), when he states the following:

Giddens is self-reflective about the interplay of theory and empirical research. While he rejects the narrow idea that the sole or main function of empirical research is to confirm or disconfirm 'laws' derivable from theoretical postulates, and the naive inductionist view that we can build theories by generalizing empirical observations, he does argue that theory can 'sensitize' us to empirical research.

Giddens (1984: 287) himself helps this argument along when he states that '...structuration theory is intrinsically incomplete if not linked to a conception of social science as critical theory'. This point is substantiated by Giddens where he states that remaining true to the spirit of Marx means,

...defending a certain core of what Marx has to say about modern capitalism, about its **corrosive effect on other cultures**, about the centrality of certain *mechanisms of class domination centred around the capitalistic labour contract*. Keeping alive the spirit of Marxism means developing a critical theory. Critical theory which is not optional, but

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<sup>10</sup> Or neo-materialism, as alluded to in 1.4.3.

pursues the theme that anyone who does social science is involved in a critical relation with their subject matter (Bleicher & Featherstone, 1982: 64 emphases added).

However, Giddens wants to distance himself from the 'specific conceptions of 'critical theory' employed by the Frankfurt School, and especially as it is used by Habermas (Bernstein, 1986: 245). Giddens is further cited by Bernstein (1986: 245), where he states:

'I would probably work more from within a sociological conception which would seem to me to suggest that some things are clearly noxious and other things are clearly desirable and that it isn't necessary to ground them in order to proclaim this to be so (Bleicher and Featherstone, 1982: 72).

This does not however preclude one from indeed using the theory of structuration as a synthesis to combine a metascientific approach of interpretivism<sup>11</sup> and critical theory, as I am personally critical of all levels of unjust inequality, but am not seeking to make any participatory contribution, as is the want of critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt School<sup>12</sup> per se.



### **2.3 Key concepts as understood within the Structuration context:**

The aim of this section is to conceptualise key terms within this framework that will be valuable within the context of the study of the female labour market participation in Italy. Within the context of this specific investigation, the following concepts will require definition in an order presented slightly differently to that used by Giddens (1984):

- The duality of Structure;
- Structure as 'rules and 'resources';
- Systems and Forms of Institution;
- Agency and Power.

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<sup>11</sup> 'In interpretative sociologies, action and meaning are accorded primacy in the explication of human conduct; structural concepts are not notably prominent, and there is not much talk of constraint' (Giddens, 1984: 2).

<sup>12</sup> According to Le Roux (1984: 16), Giddens '...argues that the social sciences cannot be neutral but he doesn't claim that the theory of structuration is of an emancipatory nature. In the end it is the use to which human actors put their knowledge, rather than social theories, which cause changes in social reality'.

### **2.3.1 The duality of Structure:**

An important point to allude to at this juncture is Giddens' own view on the importance of the synthesis of functionalism/structuralism and interpretive sociologies:

“It is in the conceptualising of human knowledgeability and its involvement in action that I seek to appropriate some of the major contributions of interpretive sociologies. In structuration theory a hermeneutic starting point is accepted in so far as it is acknowledged that the description of human activities demands a familiarity with the forms of life expressed in those activities” (1984: 3).

This leads us to how important Giddens feels it is to reflexively take cognisance of the duality of structure and the fact that it is ordinary individuals that create structures. Le Roux (1984: 7) sees this as referring to the “...fact that the structured properties of social systems are simultaneously the **medium and the outcome** of social acts” (his emphasis). According to Craib (1992: 44), the duality of structure refers to the perceived idea “...that structures are both produced by human action and are what Giddens calls the medium of human action”. He uses the analogy of languages and speech to give a clearer explanation of this notion of what structuration entails (See Graaff, Undated; Craib, 1992; Le Roux, 1984). It is within this context of the duality of structure that it is important to note the following: As human action can be constrained or enabled by structural properties, in the same light, reforms of these structural properties can be both constrained and enabled by the individual agency of influential human actors<sup>13</sup>.

### **2.3.2 Structures as ‘rules’ and ‘resources’:**

Within the theory of structuration structure as such has no existence. It is manifested only as structural properties<sup>14</sup> of social systems (Le Roux, 1984). Giddens often makes the point that structures<sup>15</sup> only have a virtual existence, and that they are not models of reality produced by the observer (Craib, 1992).

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<sup>13</sup> This is the assertion that will be made within this dissertation, concerning the reluctance of firms to hire women on contracts that make access to L53/2000 available.

<sup>14</sup> Giddens (1984: 377) defines these properties as “[s]tructured features of social systems, especially institutionalised features, stretching across time and space”.

<sup>15</sup> Sewell (1992: 3), in a critique of Giddens' notion of the duality of structure, states that structure denominates “...the tendency of patterns of relations to be reproduced, even when actors engaging in the relations are unaware of the patterns or do not desire their reproduction”.

Alluding to the abovementioned analogy, Graaffø (Undated: 231) exposition thereof provides one with the most clarity:

When we speak English, we are bound by the rules (that is, the structure) of grammar and meaning. We cannot make up our own language at all, we will be unable to express ourselves.

The structure of language, according to Craib (1992), solely exists in and through speech acts. The structure of language ultimately depends on the people who use it. Human agents can thus, through their actions, transform as well as reproduce structures. To sum up this concept of structure, it can be said that structures are simultaneously constraining and enabling.

Giddens (1984: 377) articulates the term structures as follows:

Rule-resource<sup>16</sup> sets, implicated in the institutional articulation of social systems. To study structures, including structural principles, is to study major aspects of the transformation/mediation relations which influence social and system integration.

### **2.3.3 Systems and Forms of Institution:**

A social system is defined by Giddens (1984: 17-18) as simply being a pattern of social relations that exists over a period of time and space, which is understood to be reproduced practices. Institutions are defined as "practices which have the greatest time-space extension"; this basically means that these practices or patterns of social behaviour show some continuity over time. Le Roux (1984: 10) and Craib (1992: 51) refer to social practices which are "sedimented" and "embedded" in time-space respectively.

### **2.3.4 Agency and Power:**

Craib (1992) starts his discussion with the concept this chapter deals with last. Agency, or human action, is seen as the centre of sociological concern and that its crucial feature could be considered to be the undetermined nature thereof.

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<sup>16</sup> Giddens (1984: 18) introduces this usage of "structure" to help break with the fixed or mechanical character which the term tends to have in orthodox sociological usage. For a thorough exposition of what Giddens means by "rules and resources" see Craib (1992: 44-47).

The importance of Agency as concept takes one back to the beginning of this section, the duality of structure. Human agents, by virtue of their actions, are capable of reproducing as well as transforming structure as defined above.

For a concise description of the relationship between agency and power, Giddens (1984: 14) provides a coherent starting point:

To be able to act otherwise means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs.

The human agent thus has power in even the most suppressive circumstances, in the sense that he participates in the dialectic of control (Le Roux, 1984: 8). As Graaff (Undated: 235) describes by using an example of a family eating Sunday lunch (referring to the power a child holds over what topics are deemed appropriate to discuss in their presence), "...power is the ability to make a difference in the flow of events". Thus, human agents have potential power in the form of reproductive- and transformative capacity. This dissertation thus analyses the dialectic relationship between the transformative capacity of social policy reforms on the one hand and human agents (in the form of women and firm management) on the other. The inherent power relations within this relationship are of cardinal importance if one is to collect rigorous and informative qualitative data.

In the following section, a discussion of the role of the state, and specifically the welfare state in social transformation will be given. This will also be done within the conceptual framework of the theory of structuration, and will draw heavily from the analysis by Le Roux & Graaff (2001). Barrø (2003) views on social justice and the state will be integrated into the argument as his efficiency argument for the Welfare State forms the basis of the Theoretical Framework in Chapter-3.

#### **2.4 The State and its role within different theories of society:**

As discussed in the preceding section, Giddens attempts a reconciliation of structuralist and voluntarist traditions by developing a theory of structuration (Le Roux & Graaff, 2001). In terms of political theory, this implies a combination of state-centred and society centred theories. Before proceeding with a discussion of Giddens' view on the state, it would be

pertinent to provide a brief introductory discussion of different theories of society (Barr, 2003: 61).

According to him (ibid. : 42), a society is defined as "...a cooperative venture for the mutual advantage of its members" and the purpose of a theory of society is to offer principles that enables one to analyse different forms of social arrangements. Barr thus distinguishes three broad theory types: libertarian; liberal; and collectivist.

#### **2.4.1 Libertarian theories:**

These theorists, broadly associated with liberalism of the nineteenth century, see the primary aim of institutions as individual liberty. They also see the best method of achieving its economic dimension through the operation of private markets. Libertarians such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman defend a position of minimal state intervention out of a belief that such a regime will maximise total welfare. The pursuit of social justice is not only seen as being pointless, but also dangerous for the market order, which is viewed by them as being not only efficient, but also the only guarantee of personal freedom. Government interference in market determined distribution is seen by these "monetarist" (Clarke, 1988: 7) theorists as a process that will progressively approach totalitarianism (Barr, 2003).

#### **2.4.2 Liberal theories:**

These theories, associated with utilitarianism and Rawlsian thought, contrast with libertarian views in two ways. Firstly, they allow for a greater distributional role for the state, and secondly through presumption "...that the free market is necessarily the best means of production and distribution (Barr, 2003: 61). The treatment of private property right is not an end in itself, as with libertarians, but a means towards the achievement of stated policy aims.

The utilitarian aim is to maximise the total utility of the members of society. This view enables statements to be about the optimal distribution of resources, and so legitimates a redistributive role for the state.

Rawls on the other hand, sees justice as the primary aim of policy and defines social justice in terms of the distribution of liberty and also other commodities. This implies that all

commodities (including liberty and opportunity) should be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution is to the advantage of the least well-off individual or group (ibid. : 48).

### **2.4.3 Collectivist theories:**

Le Roux & Graaff (2001) discuss these as Marxist theories of the state. The main socialist aims are deemed to be equality, freedom and fraternity (Barr, 2003). Despite general agreement concerning their aims and the in the diagnosis of the failings of the free market, there are great divisions<sup>17</sup> amongst socialist thinkers as to how these aims should be achieved. Marxists are generally hostile to the role of the welfare state. They can be broadly classed into two groups. Firstly, classical or 'vulgar Marxists' (Le Roux & Graaff, 2001: 202) regard the welfare state as an actively malign agency that serves as an instrument of social control, to protect the continued existence of the capitalist system. Other writers, like Offe and Habermas, contend that the welfare state is faced with contradictory tasks. These tasks are the sustenance of accumulation on the one hand, and the maintenance of legitimacy by deliverance of social services on the other (Le Roux & Graaff, 2001). Barr (2003: 62) argues that there are also those writers who see the welfare state as a ransom paid by the dominant class, but that it does represent a 'genuine improvement in working-class conditions.'

### **2.5 Giddens' views on the state:**

To start this discussion of Giddens' views concerning the role of the state in social transformation it is important to take note of the following:

...states are bound by the contexts of their history, but institutionally they can think critically about their activities and change their policies (Le Roux & Graaff, 2001: 207).

Giddens actually speaks of 'the state apparatus' as referring to 'the administrative organs of government and society or culture' when... he means the encompassing social system (Giddens, 1987: 17). Four particular aspects of the principal structural conditions under which the modern state operates are identified by Giddens. These are capitalism, industrialism,

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<sup>17</sup> These are discussed above in 2.1.3.



bureaucratic surveillance and the military. He insists that all four of these must be considered, as each of them interacts with and is influenced by all of the others. Marxist- and Liberal/libertarian thought are solely concerned with capitalism and industrialism respectively. Giddens has contributed to this debate by specifically analysing the other two aspects, bureaucratic power and the impact of the military on state formation (Le Roux & Graaff, 2001).

The state establishes itself as the only institution entitled to exercise violence legitimately and distinguishes itself by ð...building a functionally differentiated bureaucratic apparatus capable of administering the population...ö of these nation states (Le Roux & Graaff, 2001: 207).

Looking at the duality of structure within the context of theories of the state, one now needs to juxtapose the voluntarist or agency side with the abovementioned structuralist aspects. This is seen as ð...the state's capacity for reflexive monitoring, its autonomy from the influence of society and its powerö (Le Roux & Graaff, 2001: 208).

Unlike Weber, Giddens does not claim any neutrality for state bureaucrats, and in contrast to Marxist positions, he puts great emphasis on the independent role of the bureaucracy. The increases in bureaucratic power of the state to control authoritative- and allocative resources are seen by Giddens as a precondition for economic development (Giddens, 1985: 256, cited in Le Roux & Graaff, 2001). The ability of these bureaucracies to implement and coordinate policies is improved by the state's increased capacity for surveillance, referring to both overt and covert means of gathering information. To conclude this section, Giddens view of the influence of globalisation on the nation state is shared. He feels that very significant shifts will be necessary before nation states will become obsolete, but that globalisation being a direct consequence of modernity, it requires enhanced levels of personal and institutional reflexivity. My understanding of what Giddens is saying here is that within the context of globalization and all it entails,

[e]veryone in some sense must reflect upon the conditions of her or his life, as a means of living a life at all (Giddens, 1995: 4).

This section of the chapter has outlined Giddens's theory of structuration and how it applies to theories of the state. The concepts of structure, agency and power relates to the study of the Italian labour policy framework in the following way: The *agents* (women) are constrained by the *structure* (labour policy framework) and this lack of *power* requires intervention on the



part of the *state apparatus* to correct this failure of the labour market to ensure social justice. However, the structural reforms (in the form of labour policy reforms) are also constrained from being implemented effectively through perverse incentives on the part of *agents* (the management of firms) to employ women in contracts which make the access to the part-time work and parental leave associated with L53/2000 available.

## **2.6 Contextualisation of Conceptual Framework: Economic Methodology, does it require a 'synthesis'?**

This section of the theoretical chapter will assert that two of the dominant traditions in economic philosophy of science require a similar 'synthesis' as they are associated with instrumentalism (in the Case of Friedman's monetarism) and conventionalism (in the case of those who espouse Kuhn). Firstly, an introduction in the form of a historical perspective to the philosophy of science will be given. Secondly, the falsificationist approach of Karl Popper, as well as the research programs of Imre Lakatos will be briefly discussed and compared with Kuhn's views concerning paradigms. This is followed with a succinct description and critique of Friedman's monetarism.

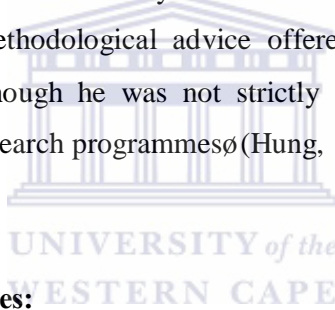
MPF, as espoused by Le Roux (2006) as an alternative form of falsificationism will then be discussed, by drawing an analogy of his 'synthesis' of methodological approaches with Giddens' synthesis of philosophical and sociological thinking in his theory of structuration (Giddens, 1976; 1984). Returning to the initial assertion referred to above, conclusions about positive economics and its role in policy prescription will be drawn in light of its inherent weaknesses and impact on development. This justification of the use of the theory of structuration as conceptual framework should be greatly illuminated by this section.

### **2.6.1 Historical Perspective:**

The focus of this section is on the development in methodology and philosophy of science within economics as discipline within the broader framework of development studies as social theory. Conradie (1992) alludes to Comte's three stages in social awareness: the religious

stage; the metaphysical stage and the positivist or scientific stage ð..., where the scientific method of the natural sciences is used to investigate and explain social phenomena (ibid.: 9). Hence, the historical starting point for the discussion will be the so-called ðclassical dynastyö (Hung, 1997: 317), which commenced at the start of the previous century, since it was during this epoch of ðchange and advancementö (ibid.) that logical positivism<sup>18</sup> was born.

Logical positivism was termed thus by Herbert Feigl, and is seen by its proponents as ð...Comte's positivism made logicalö or the ð...regimentation of Hume's empiricism through the use of modern logicö (ibid: 335). This is the view that dominated economic thinking through the work of Popper (1965), Lakatos and Kuhn and by far its most influential proponent, Milton Friedman (1953), who distinguishes between positive and normative economics (see also Le Roux, 2006 and Wade Hands, 2008). Noted economists like Paul Samuelson opined however that ð...much of economic theory appeared to not satisfy logical positivist or Popperian standards of theory assessmentö (Hausman, 2008: 143). Let us now turn our attention to the methodological advice offered to economists by Karl Popper's falsificationist approach, although he was not strictly speaking a positivist, and Lakatos' methodology of scientific research programmes (Hung, 1997: 317 and Wade Hands, 2008).



### **2.6.2 Popperian Approaches:**

According to Hung (1997: 317), ðlogical positivism and Popper's falsificationism, are usually taken together as forming...the classical traditionö. This approach is actually composed of two separate theses: one on demarcation [demarcating science from non-science] and the other on methodology [how science should be practised] (Wade Hands, 2008). The demarcation thesis concerns this essay only in so far as economists of the dominant tradition (associated with Friedman's monetarism) consider themselves, and not other normative economic practitioners, to be rigorously scientific.

According to the online version of the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Popper's methodology can be summarised by stating that scientists should,

1. formulate theories that are logically falsifiable, or in layman's terms, inconsistent with some possible observation reports;

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<sup>18</sup> The introduction of logical positivism into economics followed Mills' method *a priori* (Wade Hands, 1997).

2. subject theories to harsh test and should be willing to reject these theories upon failing these tests;
3. Regard theories as at best interesting conjectures, and that passing the test does not make the theory true or confirm it, but only justifies the continued use thereof.

Although there are a number of reasons why economists have felt that Popper's falsificationism would be a desirable methodology, it is *...seldom or ever practised in economics* (Wade Hands, 2008: 190 his emphasis), as specific economic theories are rarely logically falsifiable. A number of criticisms are raised against and provides a negative appraisal of falsificationist economic methodology. Despite the fact that this methodology has been very popular amongst mainstream economists, it fails to provide a reasonably adequate set of rules for doing economics (Wade Hands, 2008). Applying Popper's views on falsification in strict adherence to its norms would *...virtually destroy all existing economic theory...* condemning them as unscientific and leaving no coherent means to discriminate among economic theories (Wade Hands, 2008: 193 his emphasis).

The following section looks at the influence of Imre Lakatos (1970) on economic methodology through his methodology of scientific research programmes (MSRP), which forms a part of the Popperian tradition, but is also strongly influenced by historians of science, such as especially Thomas Kuhn, who is the last of the three influences on orthodox economics that will be discussed in this section of the chapter (Wade Hands, 2008: 194).

### **2.6.3 Lakatos and his MSRPs:**

Almost immediately after Lakatos's expositions on philosophy of science appeared in the early 1970s, it found a large following among economists. Being a follower of Popper for most of his career as philosopher, he addressed the inherent problem of the destructive implications of falsification of theories for economics by introducing a notion of *theoretically progressive* or *scientifically acceptable* modification to the assumptions underlying economic theories (SEP/economics, 2009; Wade Hands, 2008). Le Roux (2006: 33) sees the best description of Lakatos's methodology as

*...a permissive instrumentalism, which panders to all the prejudices of, established communities of scientists hold so dearly.*

Lakatos considers the primary unit of appraisal in science to be the so-called research programme, rather than scientific theory. According to Wade Hands,

“...a research programme is an ensemble consisting of a hard core, the positive and negative heuristics, and a protective belt” (2008: 194).

Lakatos emphasised that this so-called hard core of basic theoretical propositions that define a specific research programme are not to be questioned within said research programme. In addition to this, members of the scientific community or research programme accept a common body of heuristics to guide them in the articulation and modification of specific theories (SEP/economics, 2009). According to Wade Hands (2008: 194), “[t]he positive and negative heuristics provide instructions about what should and should not be pursued in the development of the programme”. The protective belt Lakatos refers to can be considered as consisting of the programme’s “...actual theories, auxiliary hypotheses, empirical conventions and the (evolving) body of the research programme” (ibid.). It thus follows that theories can co-exist, compete and reach wholly differing results, solely based on which research programme is being considered.

However, a critique often levelled against Lakatos’s views is that it does not provide a satisfactory account of how economics can be a reputable science despite its reliance on extreme simplifications (SEP/economics, 2009). Although his work is much better suited to economic methodology than that of Popper, MSRP does not provide an appropriate model for the acceptance or rejection of economic theories, and plays a more important role in the debates around history of science (Wade Hands, 2008). Also like Popper, Lakatos claims that there is no such thing as empirical confirmation, maintaining that evidence never provides reason to believe that scientific claims are true.

The following section will look at the influence of Thomas Kuhn, after which a glance will be taken at the instrumentalist monetarism associated with Milton Friedman.

#### **2.6.4 Kuhn: paradigms and the normal vs. revolutionary practice of science**

Kuhn’s contribution to the philosophy of science signalled a break with several key positivist doctrines as well as inaugurating a new reconciliation between philosophy- and history of science. This account of development of science held that science enjoys periods of stable growth, which is periodically punctuated by revisionary revolutions. His so-called

-incommensurability thesis is controversial in its view that theories from different historical periods are not comparable (SEP/Thomas-Kuhn, 2004).

His analysis of science suggests that in practice, scientists operate in very different ways from those proposed by the positivists or Popper, but that science is characterised by a commitment to a scientific paradigm (Haralambos, 2002). A paradigm can thus be defined as consisting of:

...a set of beliefs shared by a group [or community] of scientists about what the natural world is composed of, what counts as true and valid knowledge, and what sort of questions should be asked and what sort of procedures should be followed to answer those questions (ibid: 1025).

The importance of the work of Kuhn lays in the way in which it made philosophers more aware of and interested in the "larger theoretical structures that unify and guide research within particular research traditions" (SEP/Economics, 2009). Also, when scientists work within a paradigm, they tend to look for data that supports and refines that paradigm, and is in this sense comparable to and influential on Lakatos's MSRP. The so-called normal scientist in Kuhn's framework perceive the world around them in a way that is constrained by and limited to views that are consistent with the paradigm<sup>19</sup> (Haralambos, 2002). Le Roux (2006: 38) is of the opinion that

"Kuhn is popular among practising scientists because his paradigmatic perception of science coincides with the situation scientists actually encounter."

This speaks directly to the concept of the normal scientist, and the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy's discussion on Kuhn's development of science greatly informs this part of the argument. Kuhn does however also acknowledge that scientists are not entirely objective, and that paradigms are not accepted or rejected on the basis of evidence alone. Each paradigm has a social base, grounded in the community of scientists who dogmatically practice it, unquestioningly and religiously.

According to Kuhn, the development of science is not teleological and uniform, but is interspersed by alternating normal and revolutionary phases, analogous to the contractions and expansions of the institution of the capitalist system within the Regulation Approach to development as espoused by Aglietti (see Klerck, 1996, Graaff and Le Roux, 2001 for exposition on the Regulation Approach). In a scientific revolution, one scientific paradigm is

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<sup>19</sup> It is due to this reason that Le Roux (2006) refers to most economists being "prisoners of their paradigms".

replaced by another, and Haralambos (2002) refers to the replacement of Newton's classical mechanics with the quantum mechanics<sup>20</sup> associated with the relativity treatise of Einstein (Atkins, 1995). These revolutionary phases are thus not merely periods of accelerated progress, but differ qualitatively from the protracted periods of normal science.

Kuhn (1970: 7) himself refers to scientific revolutions as being

...taken to be those non-cumulative developmental episodes in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one.

This usually occurs when an accepted paradigm is confronted with so many inexplicable consequences, that a new paradigm is developed that does not suffer from the same anomalies (Haralambos, 2002). Kuhn's importance to economics lies in his demarcation of a science as a subject in which there is, at least most of the time, an agreed paradigm; although there is no guarantee that the accepted paradigm is correct. It may well be falsified and replaced by an alternative paradigm in the future (ibid.).

As opposed to Popper's view of constant and perpetual revolutions in the form of attempts to discredit proposed hypotheses, Kuhn finds these revolutionary phases to be few and far between in history. The routine and unexciting normal science is research carried out within the abovementioned paradigms as overall theoretical frameworks and defines or represents five criteria for a good scientific theory (Hung, 1997). These criteria are accuracy, consistency, scope, simplicity and fruitfulness. The following citing from Hung (1997: 368) sheds light on the importance of paradigm as a concept within the work of Kuhn:

...paradigms play a decisive role in the practice of science. They determine the relevance of data, the content of observations, the significance of problems, and the acceptance of solutions. Paradigms supply values, standards and methodologies. In brief, each paradigm determines the way science should be practised; it is a *Weltanschauung*<sup>21</sup> (his emphasis).

The following section will turn its attention to the contribution of Milton Friedman to the debates surrounding philosophy of science in economics.

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<sup>20</sup> Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, experimental evidence accumulated showing that classical Newtonian mechanics failed when applied to very small particles like atoms (Atkins, 1995: 359).

<sup>21</sup> This is literally translated as "world view" but can be associated in this context with how Kuhn views paradigms.

## **2.6.5 Monetarism, Friedman and the 'Chicago School':**

Arguably Friedman's most important contribution to the corpus of economic methodology is his 1953 essay (reproduced in Hausman, 2008: 145-178), "The Methodology of Positive Economics". He begins this essay by distinguishing between positive and normative economics. Friedman's basic framework, although heavily criticised, is still widely accepted by orthodox economists, since his proposal that economists use theories or hypotheses as pragmatic devices to summarise data and make predictions over a relevant range of observations remains popular amongst them (Kahn, 2008).

The abovementioned distinction between positive and normative economics conjectures that policy disputes are typically actually disputes about the consequences of alternatives, and are thus capable of being resolved by progress within the sphere of positive economics (SEP/economics, 2009). Simplified, this implies that what matters in economic investigation (which should solely be concerned with predictive accuracy) is whether the theory employed (e.g. the theory of the firm) makes correct and significant predictions.

Thygesen (1977: 57), in a tribute to the scientific contributions of Friedman has the following to say concerning the influence his work has had on methodological matters in economics:

Friedman makes a strong plea for using the implications, rather than the assumptions as a testing ground for economic theory. In Friedman's view the "realism" of the assumptions is often a misleading indicator of the usefulness of a theory; the conformity of assumptions with reality cannot provide an additional or direct test for confronting the implications of the theory with observed behaviour.

This attests to the instrumentalist nature attached to the methodology of "positive economics". But contrary to what Friedman himself says about conventionalism, and Popper's claims to be opposed to both it and instrumentalism, both are openly promoted in mainstream neoclassical economics (Boland, 2003). Rozsypal (2007: 3) provides one with a succinct synopsis of Friedman's methodology of positive economics, by stating that according to Friedman:

"...true economic laws are not known and probably will be unknown for a while (maybe for ever). We can observe some regularities in human behaviour. Based on these regularities, we can adopt a policy. The regularities are observed mainly by econometric analysis."



In the following section, a brief description of Le Roux's (2006) MPF, bringing to light the serendipitous similarities between his synthesis (from 1980) and that of Giddens in his theory of structuration, and looking at the role reflexivity plays in development studies.

### **2.6.6 MPF and the theory of structuration:**

The alternative methodology proposed for development economists by Le Roux (2006: 2) is described by him in the following way:

“It is argued that none of them [the dominant methodological traditions in economics] provide us with acceptable criteria to justify a commitment to the particular paradigm. It is shown that there are serious problems with the existing methodological traditions. To address these, multi-paradigm falsificationism (MPF) is developed as a methodology that meets the need of the positivists for a neutral procedure of theory choice (but, as I then argue..., it is also put forward as the method that best meets the needs of the critical social theorists, with their commitment to an emancipatory praxis!)”.

In this sense, the analogy with structuration theory lies in the fact that one of the major points of criticism Giddens raises against the established social theories is their inability to bridge the gap between individual and society or, in the language of the social philosophers, to eliminate the object-subject dualism. With MPF the duality is between model building (within a specific paradigm or research programme) and the reality of the effects of positive economics on the subjects of the product of normative economics through policy.

As I have stated earlier, according to my own understanding, social science theories can affect the behaviour of the units of analysis or subjects of investigation. There are also no immutable natural laws in social science, as believed by modernisation theorists, functionalists and structural Marxists. For the relevance of this essay, the same thing could be said of the belief in the assumptions in neoclassical economics in general, and instrumentalism associated with Friedman's monetarism in particular. Thus, Le Roux's MPF could be seen as an alternative to the duality between realities experienced by the populations of the developing countries acting as economic laboratories, and the assumptions made by the monetarists. Referring to his new methodology, Le Roux (2006: 3) even uses the word synthesis, one he uses effectively to describe Giddens's theory of structuration (Le Roux, 1984).



The importance in bringing to light the similarities between these syntheses of Giddens and Le Roux is the fact that there exists dialectic between sociology and economics, where the one is affected by the other. An example of this is the influence of structural functionalism in the guise of Parsonian sociology had a direct influence on the structuralist economists of the 1950s like Arthur Lewis and Fei and Ranis, who advocated a surplus labour, two-sector economy model to explain urban-rural migration (Ghatak, 2003).

The point that is so laboriously being made is that hopefully the serendipitous concurrent synthesis of sociological theory and economic methodology points to an ushering in of a new era of reflexive investigation in economics; with a move away from the adherence to neoclassical dogma. To quickly illuminate my own interpretation of the concept of reflexivity, allow me to begin by saying I feel that 'reflexivity' refers to the awareness of one's own biases or preconceived notions with the aim of 'a full understanding of the researcher, the researched and the research context' (Rose, 1997: 305). Kapoor's (2004: 644) discussion of the work of Spivak demanding 'vigilant self-implication and painstaking, ethical engagement' recognizes the need to take cognizance of 'unequal power relations' when creating a narrative of the Developing World<sup>22</sup>. The important point to ponder at this juncture is that this narration does not take place under 'laboratory conditions' but functions within geopolitical institutions that circumscribe what, and how, this narration is done. Lynch (2004) lists a large number of ways in which reflexivity can be interpreted, but more importantly, the following point arises from that exhaustive exercise:

Each of the reflexivities in my inventory – mechanical, substantive, methodological, meta-theoretical, interpretative and ethnomethodological – involves some sort of recursive turning back, but what does the turning, how it turns, and with what implications differs from category to category and even from one case to another within a given category (Lynch, 2004: 34).

Furthermore, Lynch says that reflexivity is frequently associated with radical, anti-objectivistic programmes, but many conceptions of reflexivity support rather than undermine more conventional programmes of empirical research.

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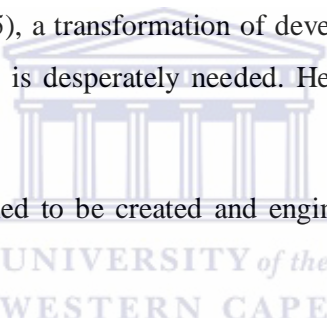
<sup>22</sup> Kapoor (2004: 627) is very concerned with (as is Gayatri Spivak) how our (as academics researchers or development practitioners) representations of marginalized groups in the Developing World are directly and intimately linked to our positioning in terms of culture, gender, historical and institutional background, amongst others.

I now turn my attention to how this controversial and highly contentious concept of 'reflexivity' relates to the perception of what development entails and how many development theorists are prisoners or captives of 'certain paradigmatic assumptions which are largely unconscious' (Frank, 1997: 4).

### **2.6.7 Development and Reflexivity:**

The opinion that there has been a marked change or shift in the understanding of development as a discipline is shared by a number of authors (Ellis and Biggs<sup>23</sup>, 2001; Shepherd, 1998). How then, does the concept of reflexivity tie in with the general malaise surrounding development as a discipline and its inability to actually 'bring' this development to the billions of people affected by 'underdevelopment'?

According to Frank (1997: 4-5), a transformation of development practice associated with the dominant modernist paradigm is desperately needed. He summarizes these assumptions and practices as follows:

- 
- Development is assumed to be created and engineered, and does not exist in and of itself.
  - Development is thus brought to and for the underprivileged (or underdeveloped) by others who are presumed to be more developed.
  - Development is done on behalf of third parties.
  - Development is a teleological process, with a direct line between cause and effect.
  - Development assumes that increasing understanding will generate change, and does not take account of unconscious factors, of processes of change, of culture or of tradition.

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<sup>23</sup> This article provides an overview of the major switches in rural development thinking over the last 50-60 years. The debates brought up can be extrapolated to encompass the major shifts in Development thinking as a whole (See Shepherd, 1998 for an exposition on 'Sustainable Rural Development' as an alternative to the Modernisation Paradigm within rural development).

- Development assumes a preferred culture or value system; there is something that requires change and the results are judged according to these preconceived norms.<sup>24</sup>

He summarises by stating that 'a conventional development approach is fundamentally about the delivery of resources' (Frank, 1997: 5). Lievegoed (1997: 6) in the antithesis of the same article understands the concept of development as being the recognition that it is an innate and natural process and that development practitioners do not deliver development, but intervene into development processes which already exist.

It can thus be safely asserted that the current dominant tradition in economic methodology, in particular the instrumentalist monetarism, does not live up to this expectation, and should be rejected on the grounds of insufficiently dealing with issues concerning development in developing countries in particular and being totally 'unreflexive'.

That orthodox neoclassical economics is experiencing a crisis in its current guise as monetarism is no secret. The current global economic crisis, and the Keynesian stimulus packages that are being employed pragmatically by the industrialised nations of Europe, the UK and USA attests to the fact that the medicine prescribed to the developing world during the neoliberal era of structural adjustment and stabilisation policies is too bitter a pill even for them to swallow. According to Wilson (2009), the crisis brings two interacting factors to light. The first was the powerful ideological belief that the free market contained within itself a tendency to 'return to equilibrium', which made state intervention not only unnecessary but actually harmful. The second was the '...significant intellectual failure by the economics profession at large' (ibid. :9). He goes further by identifying two factors that lead to this failure. First, an abandonment of history, and second, a false understanding of science: a belief that '...true science requires the capacity to predict' (ibid.). The essence of the scientific method is to find ways of understanding particular phenomena. Natural sciences have come to terms with, and incorporated into itself uncertainty as part of the method (like Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle). Outside of the system being investigated, these sciences acknowledge that there are far too many variables beyond the researchers control to make firm and reliable prediction possible. Economics is no different. Paul Krugman (cited in Wilson, 2009) succinctly states that

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<sup>24</sup> He mentions other assumptions and practices, but I mention only those I feel are informative for this discussion.

ö...the central cause of the profession's [economics] failure was the desire for an all-encompassing, intellectually elegant approach that also allowed economists to show off their mathematical prowessö.

The inherent difference between empirical investigation in natural and social sciences is the following: In the former, one must be *reflective*, in the latter, *reflexive*.

The dominance of instrumentalist monetarism during the last thirty years touts this as the period which has öshown the greatest escape from poverty in world history and tremendous growth...ö (Chomsky, 2008: 2). What should be added here is that these phenomena of progress took place in nations which ignored the neoliberal rules of the so-called "Washington consensus" like South Korea and Malaysia. The opposite is true in those countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, which followed these prescriptions. How this approach to development ties in with issues concerning the Welfare State in Italy in particular and in Europe in general will form one of the themes of the Theoretical Chapter.

Amartya Sen (1977: 317) in a paper entitled *Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory*, discusses the assertion of Edgeworth that

ö"...the first principle of Economics is that every agent is actuated only by self-interest." This view of man has been a persistent one in economic models, and the nature of economic theory seems to have been much influenced by this basic premiseö.

If economic factors and issues are to remain the primary field of investigation of development studies, a rethinking of the methodological approach to economics as a discipline is required. Le Roux's bold attempt at reconciling the differing traditions within economic methodology which are ö...all equally convinced of the superiority of their own particular paradigmö is done because he is of the opinion, which I happen to share, that

ö...none of them provide us with acceptable criteria to justify a commitment to the particular paradigm. It is shown that there are serious problems with the existing methodological traditionsö (Le Roux, 2006: 2).

Whether MPF could provide a coherent starting point for investigation into these matters remains speculation, and I doubt whether Le Roux would judge its efficacy on the same basis as Friedman. Dissatisfaction with the purely positivistic and quantitatively obsessed orthodoxy within economic methodology provides the contextualisation of using a "synthesis of social theory" within an investigation into economic and social policy.

## **Chapter -3 Theoretical Framework: The Welfare State, Italian Policy framework and Gender**

### **3.1 The Welfare State in Europe**

As alluded to in the introductory description (Chapter-1.1), the concept of the Welfare State has been critically considered in numerous debates concerning its relevance and applicability in the age of globalization (Giddens, 2006). There has in particular been a debate about what a welfare state implies within the context of the European Union (Esping-Andersen et. al, 2001).

In a seminal report to the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union (Ferrera et al, 2001: 1), they

õ...examine the changing nature of the European social model and its capacity to deal with both domestic and external challenges in the early 21st Centuryö.

Furthermore, they emphasise the importance of understanding the diversity of European welfare states. Their description of the differences amongst the different Welfare State -regimesø provides a coherent starting point for the discussion in this chapter (ibid.: 2-3):

Historically, the Scandinavian model with its high levels of employment relied heavily on public sector employment growth. The main problems confronting the Scandinavian countries are, first of all, difficulties in financing their costly welfare states under conditions of high capital mobility. Secondly, there is a need to expand private sector employment to compensate for the stagnation or decline of job opportunities in the public sector.

In contrast to the Scandinavian model, welfare state financing and private sector service employment do not appear to be particularly problematic in the Anglo-Saxon countries. However, the Anglo-Saxon welfare states lack support for highly competitive, export oriented, high-quality specialization in production based on co-operative industrial relations and a well-trained labour force. As a result, there is little investment in training at the low and medium bands of the labour marketø skills spectrum. Since the lean Anglo-Saxon welfare states provide only meagre levels of social protection, low qualifications go hand in hand with poverty and social exclusion.

The continental regimes with their highly regulated labour markets are confronted with low employment levels (both in the private and the public sector), high levels of benefit dependency, as well as high long-term and - in the case of Belgium and France ó youth unemployment. Since the continental welfare states rely mainly on payroll

taxes for financing, private service employment is often priced out of the labour market, especially at the lower end of the earnings scale. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon countries, poverty and under-qualification are not acute problems for the continental welfare states.

The Southern welfare state pattern has created a widening gap between labour market insiders with extensive coverage and under-protected labour market outsiders (a chasm that is most pronounced in the clientelistic, pension-heavy Italian welfare state). Like the continental welfare states, the Southern model also relies heavily on payroll taxes for financing, whereby private service employment is priced out of the labour market. In terms of poverty, the Southern model follows the Anglo-Saxon pattern.

### **3.1.1 Esping-Andersen's Welfare State typology**

In order to define a welfare regime, Esping-Andersen (1990) used two major dimensions:

- i) the level of decommodification, that is, the degree to which one can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living without reliance on the market; and
- ii) the type of stratification, that is, how and to what extent welfare systems differ in the structuring of social citizenship.

Following from the above mentioned criteria, he embarks on identifying three ideal types or regimes ó liberal, conservative and social-democratic ó each differing with respect to the historical and political development in various societies (Arcanjo, 2006). For the purpose of this dissertation, only Esping-Andersen's ideas behind the Conservative Regime will be discussed, as this is the regime within which he places Italy. This is done by once again drawing from the work of Arcanjo,

õThe Conservative Regime places the family at the centre of welfare provision. It is characterised by a large number of different social insurance schemes for different occupational groups (with special schemes for civil servants). Entitlements rules are fairly strict and are based on the history of paid contributions. The levels of benefits are high and earnings-related. The collective schemes are financed through compulsory contributions. The private provision plays a marginal role. The level of decommodification is medium, but is largely concentrated among employed people with a high contribution period. In terms of stratification, this regime tends to preserve the differences based on occupational statusö (ibid. :5).

This dissertation supports Esping-Andersen in placing Italy within the Conservative Regime, but also concurs with those espousing the idea that Italy and the other Southern European states (which is also discussed in 1.1) have Welfare States structured in a way that provides social protection to the so-called insiders, those who are already within the labour market and specifically members of the civil service. This protection is mostly in the form of an inflated pension provision (Lynch, 2004). Welfare in Italy can thus be seen as having mixed traits: it is universalistic in terms of healthcare and education, but it becomes occupational as a social insurance system. *Participation in the labour market becomes therefore of paramount importance for the entitlement to services and the allocation of funds* (Cancellieri & Longo, 2008 emphasis added).

The reason for using the Mediterranean typology for Italy stems from the fact that Esping-Andersen later acknowledged that the Southern European countries presented characteristics which were not entirely compatible with his 'three worlds'.

The case of the Mediterranean countries merits greater attention, given that the creation of a specific regime would depend principally on the role of the family in the welfare mix. To this end, Esping-Andersen identifies and assesses two dimensions of familialism (the public policies aimed at families and the welfare burden assumed by the latter) (Arcanjo, 2006: 10).

An important criticism against the 'three worlds' typology (relegated to a footnote by Arcanjo) is its neglect of gender-dimension (Arcanjo refers to the work of Lewis, 1992, 2002; O'Connor, 1993, 1996; Orloff, 1993, 1996; Siaroff, 1994; Sainsbury, 1994, 1999 in this regard). This takes us directly to the following section, which deals with issues concerning Gender and the Welfare State.

### **3.1.2 Gender and the Welfare State**

In a powerfully written and thought provoking paper for the *Institute for Research on Poverty*, Ann Orloff (1996) illuminates the dialectic between Gender relations and the character of Welfare States by providing a summary of

...the current state of understanding of the varying effects of welfare states on gender relations, and vice versa (ibid. :1).



She goes further to say that the Welfare State- often defined as the assortment of social insurance and assistance programs that, over the past century, have been developed across the Western industrialized world to provide income protection to the so-called 'needy' is in need of a broader definition.

This definition, especially popular amongst feminists<sup>25</sup> can be seen as including the '...provision of day care, education, housing, medical services, and other services dedicated to the care of dependent citizens' (ibid. :2). She also clarifies what she means when she speaks of 'gender relations' as referring to

'...the set of mutually constitutive structures and practices that produce gender differentiation, gender inequalities, and gender hierarchy in a given society' (ibid. :3).

Whilst she directly criticises Esping-Andersen for only incidentally taking account of gender differences among different types of welfare states, she acknowledges that his ideal-typical scheme has inspired fruitful research on the variation among regimes as investigators have utilized or reworked his schema to incorporate gender. A number of the key feminist critiques of '...the gender-blindness of his scheme' follows (ibid. :27):

- i. his citizens are implicitly male workers;
- ii. his dimensions tap into states' impact on class relations and the relationship between states and markets without considering gender differences within classes or the relations between states and families;
- iii. he ignores women's work on behalf of societal welfare (that is, unpaid caring/domestic labour); and
- iv. his framework fails to consider states' effects on gender relations, inequalities, and power

Significant for gender relations (and this dissertation) is the fact that conservative regimes promote subsidiarity (thereby strengthening women's dependence on the family) as opposed to social democratic regimes, which have promoted an individual model of entitlement and provide services allowing those responsible for care work- mostly married mothers- to enter the paid labour force. This leads us to the following section that discusses the main economic arguments for the Welfare State.

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<sup>25</sup> 'feminist,' refers to analyses that take gender relations into account as both causes and effects of various social, political, economic, and cultural processes and institutions (ibid. :2).



### **3.2 Justifications for the Welfare State**

A coherent starting point for this section is a revisit of Nicholas Barrø (1992; 2004) discussion on the objectives of the Welfare State.

#### **3.2.1 The objectives of the Welfare State**

Barr (2004) starts this discussion by stating that the objectives of social institutions, as in any other area of economic policy, are efficiency, equity and administrative feasibility. This dissertation will be looking explicitly at the first objective: economic efficiency, which is characterised as having at least three aspects (ibid. :10):

- i. Macro-efficiency, entailing the efficient fraction of GDP being devoted to the totality of welfare institutions (policy should avoid distortions leading to cost explosions)
- ii. Micro-efficiency, where policy should ensure the efficient division of total Welfare State resources between the different cash benefits, different types of medical treatment, and different kinds of educational activity.
- iii. Incentives. Where institutions are publicly funded, their finance and the structure of benefits *should minimise adverse effects on labour supply, employment and saving* [emphasis added].

Along with these issues of allocative efficiency, Barr acknowledges the clarity of the fact that the Welfare State exists also for much wider reasons, such as the reduction of inequality.

This dissertation is thus mostly concerned with the issue of horizontal equity. Towards achieving this objective, differences in benefits should take account of demographic variables such as age and family size, and differences in service provision should reflect only factors that can be regarded as relevant (whether or not the client has dependant relatives), but not irrelevant factors like ethnic background (ibid.). He also alludes to social inclusion as a very important objective of social institutions to promote both human dignity and social solidarity.

The following section directs its attention to two of the objectives mentioned above: Economic macro-efficiency and the creation of incentives.

### 3.2.2 The concept of economic efficiency

There are a number of ways in which efficiency is defined, but for the purposes of this dissertation, economic efficiency is seen as relating to making the best use of limited resources given people's tastes, involving the choice of an output bundle

$$X^* = (X_1; X_2; \dots; X_n) \quad (1)$$

[where  $X_i$  is the output of the  $i$ th good] with the property that any deviations from these quantities will make at least one person worse off. Thus, the optimal quantity of any good, *ceteris paribus*, is that at which the value placed by society on the marginal unit equals its marginal social cost. For general equilibrium<sup>26</sup> to occur, three conditions must hold simultaneously. These are productive efficiency, efficiency in product mix, and consumption efficiency. Productive efficiency means activity should be organised so as to obtain the maximum output from given inputs. Efficiency in product mix means that the optimal combination of goods should be produced, given existing production technology and consumer tastes. Efficiency in consumption means that consumers should allocate their income in a way that maximises their utility, given their incomes and the prices of the goods they consume. Formally stated, this implies that the Marginal Rate of Substitution (MRS) must be equal for all individual consumers of this good (Barr, 2004: 66-67). In layman's terms, this means that efficiency for consumption is achieved when an allocation of goods or income among people cannot be changed to make someone better off without making somebody else worse off. Similarly, efficiency of production occurs when no more of any one good can be produced without giving up some quantity of another good. Essentially, efficiency is nothing more than the absence of waste.

Having now discussed the main objectives of policy, the next step is to look at the different ways in which the state intervenes in the economy for reasons of efficiency. This intervention can occur in three ways: regulation, finance, which have indirect effects on the market mechanism, and income transfers (*ibid.*). Since this dissertation investigates these phenomena within the neoclassical economic paradigm, intervention occurs only under circumstances of inefficient market allocation. Barr (2004) alludes to the invisible hand theorem, which asserts that the market clearing set of outputs,  $X_m$ , will be the efficient output bundle  $X^*$  in equation

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<sup>26</sup> Regardless of my personal misgivings concerning neoclassical economics, the orthodoxy allows for a compelling substantiation of my economic justification for the Welfare State.

(1) if and only if a number of standard assumptions hold. These are concerned with issues of perfect competition, completeness of markets, the absence of market failures, and, crucially, perfect information (Barr, 1992 & 2004).

### **3.2.3 Incentives created by entitlements**

The importance of incentives lies in the conflict that can arise between goals of social justice and efficiency through its effects on human behaviour or action. Alternatively to Amartya Sen (1999), this dissertation defines entitlements as the benefits provided by government to its citizens in the form of payments or in-kind transfers. Targeted entitlements are subject to problems of moral hazard because of incentives for people to adapt their behaviour to the conditions required to receive the entitlements. Adams (2006) alludes to an investigation into the choice between entitlements provided in terms of income as opposed in-kind. It concludes that generally, taxpayers prefer that entitlements be delivered in the latter form. Importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, as will be seen in Chapter-4, in-kind entitlements can also be delivered in the form of vouchers. The vouchers can be spent like money, but only for the purpose that the voucher is specifically designated by- and for the sum indicated by the voucher. The significant characteristic of vouchers is that public finance is separated from government (or public) supply in the delivery of that specific entitlement. When entitlements are delivered in this fashion, government bureaucracy (Weberian or other) are not required to make any resource allocation decisions (ibid.).

Having now illuminated economic justifications for state intervention in the market, as well as for reasons of social justice, we now proceed with a discussion of the institutional Welfare State and its structural properties in Italy.

### **3.3 The Welfare State in Italy**

This section aims at setting the institutional scene for the investigation by linking the theoretical framework directly to the case study country, Italy. Saraceno (2000) refers to recent analyses that show Italy has a relatively high degree of inequality in terms of income distribution. Concurrently, a high degree of immobility in the income positions of Italian

households is found. These two phenomena are intertwined with specifics of the Italian economy and social organisation:

- i. A low employment rate (including specifically, but not exclusively, a low employment rate amongst women);
- ii. A dualistic structure of the economy with high regional differentiation;
- iii. An unusually high incidence of self-employment;
- iv. An only moderately progressive role of the taxation and contributive systems (which benefit mostly high income earners);
- v. Moderate redistributive impact of social policies;
- vi. A high reliance on extended family and kin solidarity to provide both care- and income support and;
- vii. A relatively low level of inter- and intra-generational social mobility (Saraceno, 2000: 162).

For the purposes of this dissertation, the crucial question that hence arises is: What is the impact of social policies in Italy, indirectly, in terms of what type of behaviour they incentivise within households and by specific household members (along gender and generational lines), with what consequences (ibid.). The next section will take a look at the particular key policy reforms that took place in the Italian labour market from the early 1990s.

### **3.3.1 Policy reforms in Italy**

From the end of World War II, the institutions and policies adopted in Italy have been clearly marked, on the one hand, by the predominance of a male bread-winner labour market model and, on the other, by the strong protection of workers (insiders) and weak (if existent) protection of the so called 'outsiders' (Graziano, 2004). Due to political and institutional constraints, Italy has 'recalibrated' its own welfare state and, in particular, its labour policies that have become increasingly inspired by a 'workfare' approach, in line with the 'making work pay' imperative already diffused in other European countries, especially the Liberal Welfare State model embodied by the United Kingdom.

These reforms were in a large measure informed by the strictures of the abovementioned EES (employability, adaptability, entrepreneurship, equal opportunities, see 1.3.1), but were also

essential in the early 1990s to ensure that Italy adhered to the conditions required to enter the European Monetary Union, a hope that was rather dim with the fiscal problems experienced by Italy, referred to by Ferrera and Gaulmini (2000: 191) as 'the persistent crisis in public finances,' and also the dismal performance of the Lira. In other words, significant external pressures (i.e. during the '90s those channelled through the European Union) may not determine the *need* for change, but they might have determined the *direction* and the *timing* of change in situations where there is a policy or institutional 'misfit' between the external, increasingly binding (supranational) setting and the internal (national) setting (Graziano, 2004 emphases added)

For two decades after the ousting of the dictatorial and oppressive Fascist Regime, Italy experienced a period of good economic performance, but the 1970s ushered in a new problem for the Italian Republic, unemployment. This phenomenon in Italy continued to constitute one of the major socioeconomic challenges of Italian governments that not only had to cope with high unemployment figures but also had to face a peculiar territorial, gender and age distribution of unemployment.

Firstly, the major unemployment problems were (and still are) concentrated in the Southern regions where the unemployment rate was particularly high and employment rate particularly low. In the 1970s, after a reduction of the territorial gap that occurred during the 1960s, the problem of unemployment started to become particularly relevant and the territorial gap was increasingly wide: in 1970 there was a gap of 'only' 2.6 percentage points (2.3% in the Centre-North regions and 4.9% in the South of Italy), whereas ten years later the gap reached almost 6 percentage points (5.8% vs. 11.5%) and the widening of the gap never stopped since. At the end of the 1990s the territorial unbalance is still as evident as ever. In April 2003 there still was a difference of almost 15 percentage points between the unemployment rate of the Northern regions (3.9%, in line with a full employment pattern) and of the Southern regions (18.2%).

Secondly, the gender gap has remained a significant and daunting challenge over the years, in particular if we consider the employment data which shows that in 1972 the gender gap between the male and female unemployment rate was lower than 5%, in line with the 2002 data (5.1%); instead, the gender gap referred to the employment rate diminished, due to the increasing presence of women in the labour market, from almost 40 percentage points (in

1956) to 26 percentage points in 2003 (Gualmini, 1998; ISTAT, 2003 cited in Graziano, 2004). Thirdly, and more dramatically, the increase in the youth unemployment rate shows that in 2000 it reached 30.7%, whereas in 1990 it was 26.9%. According to Graziano (2004) again, more recent data show that there has been a limited progress, since in 2002 the unemployment rate for people between 15 and 24 years of age was lowered to 27.2%.

From the mid-90s, however, a series of concrete reforms have been proposed in order to provide more labour insertion opportunities; moreover, a move towards more flexible working conditions and workfare oriented programmes has taken place and new forms of working contracts (such as temporary work, which was illegal until 1997!) have been introduced (see Ferrera and Gualmini, 2000 & 2004; Graziano, 2004). Another characteristic of the -90s has been the decentralisation of employment services. Since 1997, sub national authorities (Regions and Provinces) have become relevant actors in the formulation and (especially) the implementation of labour policies. In addition, the same law gave the opportunity to private bodies to manage employment services, widening the number of actors that operate in the labour policy arena. Therefore, a new multitiered governance of the labour market was emerging: unemployment benefits were still provided at the national level, whereas employment services and vocational training was increasingly delegated to the Regional and Provincial administrations.

Over the past two decades, Italy's labour market has undergone substantial reform. Adverse macroeconomic conditions, including an unemployment rate that exceeded 12% during the late 1980s, and Italy's envisaged entry into the EMU in 1999, resulted in several reform measures (*patti sociali*) starting in the early 1990s. Key among them were the social pact of 1993 which included the incomes policy arrangement and which laid down the foundations of the industrial relations and collective bargaining framework currently still in practice; and the Treu measures in 1997 and Biagi reforms in 2003, both aimed at improving labour market flexibility (Schindler, 2009).

While the 1993 social pact provided a broad bargaining framework between the social partners, the Treu measures in 1997 (L197/1997), named after then-Labour Minister Tiziano Treu, were the first legislative measures aimed specifically at increasing the employment rate, particularly in the South, and overall labour market flexibility. The Treu law aimed at increased flexibility via labour market reform 'at the margin,' mainly by introducing

temporary contracts and providing incentives for part-time work. Another law in the same year (Law 469/1997) on the privatization and decentralization of job centres abolished the principle of a public monopoly on employment services. Efforts to increase labour market flexibility were taken forward with the 2003 Biagi reform (Law 30/2003), named after the late Marco Biagi, advisor on labour market reform under the 2001-2006 Berlusconi government. This reform further deregulated the use of atypical work arrangements, such as temporary agency work (staff-leasing) and part-time work, and introduced new forms of atypical work arrangements such as on-call jobs (*lavoro intermittente*), job sharing and occasional work (*lavoro a progetto*) (ibid.). Since the central research question is concerned with female labour market participation and how it is influenced by the Italian policy framework, an investigation of the issue of gender equity in the Italian labour market is required at this juncture.

### **3.3.2 Gender equity in Italy**

As alluded to above in 3.1.2. ,the Welfare State is a highly gendered set of institutions and policies, which redistributes resources (either as money transfers or as free or subsidized services- between individuals and across different groups of people (Addis, 1999).

In the debate on the reform of the Italian Welfare State, many issues of redistribution - from rich to poor families, from young to old, from North to South, from employed to unemployed- were the objects of careful measurement and rich discussion. A broad consensus emerged among academics as well as among policy makers about the sources of problems and the appropriate directions of change. The academic and policy making community was almost silent instead, about redistribution by gender (ibid.). What Addis thus remarks on the topic is that,

“...[t]he specific gender relations fostered by the present Welfare State were not examined, almost no measurement was presented on the shift of resources between men and women caused by the first attempts of reform, and hence no consensus was reached about the need and right direction of change in this area” (ibid. : 2).

She goes further to state that female participation in the labour force is low because the lack of services substituting for women's traditional care giving work prevents women, and in particular mothers, from participating other than at a high personal and family cost. In addition, some of the direct transfers are regulated so as to give incentives for non-



participation (ibid.). Her assertions are supported by the empirical evidence (discussed in Chapter-4), but probably the most pertinent for the purposes of this dissertation can be found in the following citation:

“Let me stress that low participation and low employment are a waste of a most crucial economic resource for economic growth. The more so as Italian women are highly educated, and economic growth in the already industrialized countries in the years to come will depend more and more from the ability to take advantage of the human capital accumulation of men and women, in productions with high technological content. The Italian economy can ill afford, in the global era, to compete with the other economies while *keeping women trapped in an inefficient use of time...* What is at stake therefore is not just an issue of women's politics but an issue of national economic policy” (ibid. : 6 emphasis added).

Berta Esteve-Volart (2004: 1) also argues that gender discrimination is an inefficient practice. She begins the introduction to her econometric analysis as follows:

“Gender discrimination against women in the market place reduces the available talent in an economy, which has negative economic consequences. Gender discrimination takes many forms. Many social practices seen as *normal* from a religious or cultural point of view (which may have deep historical roots) leave women out of the economic mainstream. These social practices may have profound economic consequences because they do not allow society to take advantage of the talent inherent in women”.

She uses India as a case study to test “...a theoretical model that allows us to explore the economic implications of gender discrimination in the labor market” (ibid.). The use of India as case study is substantiated by the existence of a great variability in gender sensitivity and customs among Indian states. Regions in northern India (which tends to be more patriarchal and feudal) have lower female labour force participation rates than southern regions (where generally women have relatively more freedom and a more prominent presence in society). Geographically, the opposite is true of Italy.

Her study shows that discrimination tends to lower equilibrium wages for female and male workers, and to reduce investment in human capital by all females and by male workers. Furthermore, it is shown that the average talent of managers is smaller in case of discrimination, which accounts for reduced innovation in the economy, and that the average productivity of workers, which accounts for technology adoption in the economy, is reduced too. Both factors lower economic growth (ibid.).



It can thus be inferred that it is of utmost importance for the Italian Republic to make a concerted effort to increase the female labour market participation rate, not only for reasons of social justice, but more crucially, for economic development. I intend to, from this point of departure, discuss the way in which the policy reforms mentioned above impact upon the situation of women in terms of labour market participation, explicitly looking at the influence of women friendly labour policies (specifically L. 53/2000) and how the Province of Torino has implemented programs towards facilitating this aim.

### **3.3.3 Towards increasing female labour market participation**

According to Del Boca (2000), economic models of household behaviour typically yield the prediction that increases in schooling levels and wage rates of married women lead to increases in their labour supply and reductions in fertility. In Italy, as well as in other Southern European countries, low labour market participation rates of married women are observed together with low birth rates. The proposed explanation for this apparent anomaly involves the Italian institutional structure, particularly as reflected in rigidities and imperfections in the labour market and characteristics of the publicly-funded child care system. These rigidities tend to simultaneously increase the costs of having children and to discourage the labour market participation of married women. What this basically proposes is that the structure of the labour market, along with insufficient publicly provided child care services, is to blame for the difficulties experienced by women in reconciling work and family life.

Italy's regions, as opposed to the Italian state, are now the main, and in many cases, the sole responsible body for defining objectives and developing policies on social care and social assistance, although their budget still depends to a large degree on the central state. As far as labour policies are concerned, they are regulated at a central level by the welfare state (Gerwel, 2009).

According to Genova (2006), the rescaling of regulative authorities represents a common trend in EU countries which has been characterised by a double direction: downwards, shifting the balance of power from the national state towards regions and local municipalities; and upwards improving the role of supranational organizations such as the EU, the World Bank or the World Health Organisation.

In a summary of the first chapter of the *Economic Survey of Italy 2005: Economic performance and policy challenges*, the OECD identifies the priorities for reforms to labour markets and social policies (OECD, 2005: 6, emphasis added). Herein it is asserted that,

“[a]lthough employment has risen substantially since the late 1990s, and unemployment rates have fallen, overall employment rates in Italy remain low, as do participation rates. The overall participation rate for those of working age is 63%, compared with an EU average of close to 70%. As in most countries, participation rates for prime-age males are well above 90%, but the figure drops to barely over 30% in Italy for males over 60 years old. **Female participation rates are low by international comparison at all ages. Less than 50% of women are in the labour force compared with an EU average of 60%.** And as in other southern European countries, part-time employment of women accounts for a relatively low proportion of their total employment. Participation rates of women and older males are lower than the EU average even in the prosperous Italian regions. There is therefore considerable room for expanding output for some time to come by raising participation and employment rates of women and older males, including in the northern and central regions, towards international levels.”

The survey continues by stating that as in

“...other Mediterranean countries, there is a traditional culture of women staying at home to look after their children, and to care for their ageing parents. Concerns about the low rates of female participation can be addressed by **greater public investment in child-care facilities and care support for the elderly** in order to help women stay in paid work” (ibid. Emphasis added).

A short description of L53/2000 as a tool towards reconciling work- and family-life follows.

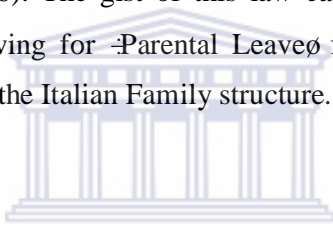
### **3.3.4 L53/2000 for the reconciliation of Work- and Family Life**

L53/2000, was implemented into Italian law Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 on the “framework agreement on parental leave” concluded by the European employer and trade union organisations - the Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe (UNICE), the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP) and the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC). This led to the introduction of significant changes in Italy:

- all working mothers with children aged up to eight years are entitled to apply for parental leave, whereas, previously, the children had to be aged three years or under;

- the length of parental leave has been increased from six to 10 months; the employee is allowed to spread the time out to a certain extent (but not as a fully part-time option);
- there is now a provision for unpaid sick leave;
- fathers are entitled to apply for parental leave and, if they apply for at least three months, a further month is granted.

Law 53/2000 also recognises the wage-earner's right to lifelong learning and introduces the possibility of using unpaid leaves to this specific end. In this framework, the administrative regions are organising a training supply characterised by programmes which are personalised, certified and recognised. At the time, some 18,000 wage-earners have been involved in such training, which mainly responds to individual demands (ISFOL, 2004). However, payment rates for leave remain unchanged (30% of wages), and are limited to six months of the leave period for children aged up to three years, where previously it only applied to children up to one year old (Giaccone, 2006). The gist of this law can thus be seen as the promotion of Gender Equity through allowing for Parental Leave for facilitating the reconciliation of Work- and Family life within the Italian Family structure.



### **3.4 Short overview of Piedmont's Labour Market:**

This overview is included to give a perspective of the overall labour market context in the demarcated study area. The position of women in terms of participation rates (in both Italy and the Piedmont Region) will be analysed, and conclusions drawn about how the policy framework assists (or detracts) in this regard in Chapter 5.

The total population of Piedmont in 2005 was estimated at 4 341 733, comprising 2 105 545 men and 2 236 188 women. (EURES, 2007) Although this represented an increase in the total population compared to the previous year, it was mainly attributable to net migration from abroad. The number of residence permits issued to foreigners ó mainly Romanians, Moroccans and Albanians ó increased to more than 14 000 owing to a strong demand for non-EU labour in the fields of child- and frail care, farming and building construction. The average age of the population remains higher than in Italy as a whole. Migratory flows are particularly evident in the Province of Verbano Cusio Ossola on the Swiss border (approximately 5 000 persons cross the border every day to the cantons of Ticino and Valais).

The economy of Piedmont is dominated by the industrial sector, with particular centers of excellence in the automotive, textile and food sectors (Fiat, Fila, Zegna, Ferrero, Galup, Maina, rice mills and the major wineries of Gancia, Marchesi, Barolo and Cinzano). Approximately 67% of Piedmont's exports go to EU countries – predominantly France and Germany. The ISTAT labour force surveys show a general economic improvement in the Turin Province due to the impact of the 2006 Winter Olympics. The number of people employed increased by approximately 33 000 (in the tertiary sector). Turin, which is once again becoming the engine of the economy (having a relatively low, 4.8% unemployment rate at the time), accounts for most of the increase, while the situation in industry – especially in the textile and clothing sectors – was stagnant (with an unemployment rate of 5.4%). It was once the dominant province in this sector, but it is now becoming harder to find work there than in other areas. On the other hand, the situation in the engineering sector is improving, mainly due to the recovery of the Fiat Group. The services sector – particularly, tourism and corporate services – is also expanding, but peak demand is for *personal care and family services*<sup>27</sup>, fuelled by an increasingly elderly population. Cuneo is the best-performing province (unemployment rate 3.2%), while the gold jewellery sector in Valenza (Alessandria) and the refrigeration industry are seen as being in difficulty. The average unemployment rate in the region is 4.5% (women 5.7%, men 3.6%), with unemployment being worse amongst women and those in the 15-24 age group. The socioeconomic landscape of Piedmont has good and bad features, but is on the whole, one that is considered to be dynamic and responsive notwithstanding some problematic aspects, such as the widespread incidence of precarious and badly paid forms of work and the difficulty of adapting to productive innovation (Romans, 2008; EURES, 2007).

The increase in employment in the region is almost exclusively attributable to the paid-for services sector. Broken down by sector, the growth of jobs is concentrated in corporate services, hotels and public corporations, all of which are among the sectors with the highest level of jobs. The hotel sector is growing, albeit comparatively slowly. The industrial metalworking sector should record a slight increase in jobs in the medium term. The main occupations in which recruitment is expected are intellectual, scientific and highly skilled occupations such as commerce and services. The main demand is for hotel staff, tour guides,

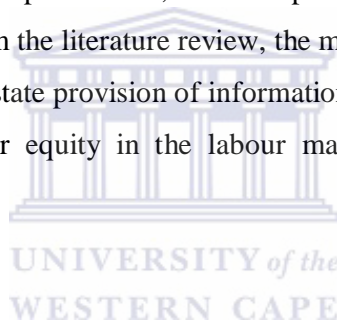
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<sup>27</sup> This is an important variable in the upcoming analysis of secondary statistical data.

IT and electronic engineers, analyst programmers, social and health workers, and nurses (EUROSTAT, 2008).

Piedmont is losing jobs in the industrial sector in line with the national trend. As a result, employment in Piedmont's industry is expected to fall to 537 000 jobs in 2008. Most of the job losses are attributable to declines in the textile and tanning sectors, while engineering and the automotive sector are also expected to show a decline in the long term. Finally, Piedmont similarly to the rest of Italy is having a sharp decrease in agricultural production and jobs. A negative trend is therefore expected among craft and farm workers, as well as equipment operators, semi-skilled workers and machinery and mobile plant operators (EURES, 2007).

This concludes the Theoretical and conceptual components of the dissertation. In Chapter-4 follows the synthesis of the empirical data, which hopefully provides adequate substantiation to the postulates deduced from the literature review, the most crucial of these being in the form of the following question: Is state provision of information concerning parental leave and part-time work improving gender equity in the labour market as a social and, an economic efficiency goal?



## **Chapter-4 Research Chapter: Methodological Design & Results**

This chapter will be dealt with in two parts. The first will document the design and methodology followed during the fieldwork; the second does so for the empirical results and shall be substantiated (or refuted) by secondary statistical data. The aim of this chapter is to accurately present the findings of the fieldwork and link it to the theoretical section (Chapters 2 and 3) in an objective and reflexive manner. Any sources of possible personal error are acknowledged.

### **4.1 Research Design and Methodology:**

The problem posed by the Italian Welfare state, and particularly the accompanying labour market reforms presents one with a number of questions that require investigation, especially if a workable methodology is to be established. Firstly, the study aimed to follow a largely qualitative approach, focusing more on empirical investigation into the issues surrounding the empowerment and inclusion of women in the Italian labour market. Certain valuable quantitative- and textual data that was used in an evaluative way and was gathered from secondary sources, such as statistics and former studies are employed to bolster conclusions drawn from the interviews. Hence it can be said that the study follows a dual methodology of qualitative design (interviews) and to a lesser extent, a quantitative evaluation of female labour market performance (using secondary data).

#### **4.1.1 Main Postulates and Assertions:**

Referring directly to the Abstract of this dissertation, we begin this section by stating that this study aims to investigate the perceived effect of a particular social policy framework in Italy, an example of a Southern European welfare state on the female labour market participation rate in that country. This is done by looking at the Piedmont region of Italy (particularly but not exclusively the province- and city of Torino) as the study area and where mainly qualitative research has been conducted on the question of female participation in the labour market. This is done with the aim of assessing what role the regional (as well as provincial and

municipal) government has been playing to address the low participation rate of women in the Italian labour market, where

õ, fewer women work, and even if they make up a majority of part-time employment..., part-time work is a less protected employment and not as widespread as in Swedenö (Sundström, 1999: 194).

The generic question which is posed against the background of the European Employment Strategy (Amsterdam Treaty of 1997) which stipulates that all member states must achieve a 60% female labour market participation rate by 2010 is the following:

*Is state provision of information concerning parental leave and part-time work improving gender equity in the labour market as a social, as well as and more importantly, an economically efficient goal?*

The duality of structure, and the importance of evaluating both systems (as well as institutions) and human action is the motivation for this research design, which postulates that increasing female labour market participation is hindered by a number of factors in the Italian welfare state framework. Hence, this is both an explanatory investigation concerned with why these social phenomena occur and attempting to deal with the forces and influences that drive their occurrence, as well as a descriptive study, intending to contextualise these social phenomena referred to above.

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#### **4.1.2 Issues of Measurement**

As mentioned above, this study is inherently qualitative in its empirical nature. Measurement issues as associated in quantitative analyses concerning the instruments used to measure key variables of the study are absent. Some of the authors referred to mentioned problems experienced with the 2002-3 Time Use Survey Data Series, but these are discussions are conspicuous in their absence in this dissertation since they are dealt with more thoroughly by excellent research at the University of Torino<sup>28</sup> (Del Boca, 2003; Del Boca et al, 2004).

This is merely mentioned to conform to conventions associated with economics dissertations, as issues of measurement are not thought to be very influential on the results of qualitative analyses generally. Laurel Richardson (2008) provides one with a poststructuralist view of

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<sup>28</sup> Authors like Daniela Del Boca, Manuela Naldini, Chiara Saraceno and Sonia Bertolini are also involved in numerous projects to further discourse and scholarship on the issues surrounding gender and the Welfare State.



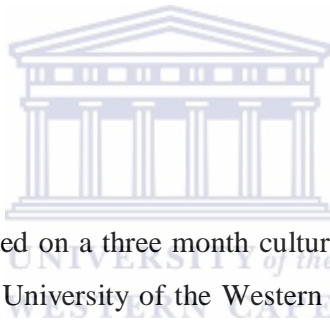
qualitative writing as a method of inquiry<sup>29</sup>. She stresses the importance of the individual researcher's skills and aptitudes when doing qualitative work by stating that

“[t]he researcher- rather than the survey, the questionnaire, or the census tape- is the ‘instrument’ (Richardson, 2008: 474).

#### **4.1.3 Sample Design and –Methods**

Due to the fact that social research is often (if not mostly) conducted in situations where selection of probability samples associated with large-scale social surveys are impractical, such situations call for non-probability sampling methods (Babbie & Mouton, 2008).

This study employed a combination of two of these non-probability sampling methods. They are purposive or judgemental sampling and snowball sampling. Each of these will be briefly outlined below.



##### **4.1.3.1 Purposive Sampling**

The initial study was conducted on a three month cultural exchange programme between the University of Torino and the University of the Western Cape. Once a research question was established through consultation with Prof. Adriana Luciano, an education consortium funded by the Region of Piedmont, COREP, of which she is a director, was instrumental in facilitating contacts with the research sample. It was established by the researcher and his ‘mentor’ Ms. Monica Demartini that to yield reliable data, interviews with academics in the field and labour market stakeholders working with and in different levels of government would be the most appropriate. Due to the association of the project with the regional government of Piedmont, access to government officials who may have been impossible to contact otherwise was assured. The issue of language barriers as impediment to access was skirted by Ms. Demartini acting as translator on the occasions that interviewees lacked sufficient command of the English language.

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<sup>29</sup> “Specifically, poststructuralism suggests two important ideas to qualitative writers. First, it directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times. Second, it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said to everyone” (Richardson, 2008: 477).



A pilot interview was then arranged with Ms. Paola Merlino, a major stakeholder in gender- and general equity issues in the Province of Torino. This initial contact served as a sounding board for preliminary thoughts and ideas relating to the research project. From the answers and suggestions elucidated from this 'pilot' interview, it was then made possible to formulate a more clear and concise direction for this investigation into the efficacy of active labour market policies in affecting the level of female participation in the labour market in the Province of Torino in particular and Italy in general.

#### **4.1.3.2 Snowball Sampling**

Snowball Sampling is deemed appropriate when the members of a special population are difficult to locate. This procedure is implemented by collecting data from the accessible members of the target population, and acquiring referrals to other member of the population (ibid.). In addition to referrals from COREP for academics who specialise in the related area, Ms. Merlino provided a number of key referrals to colleagues of hers in the field<sup>30</sup>.

“Snowball refers to the process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects” (ibid. : 167).

Furthermore, due to it resulting in samples with questionable representativeness, this sampling procedure is used primarily for exploratory purposes. This was indeed the case in this study.

#### **4.1.4 Data Collection Methods**

The main data gathering instrument that was used was the semi-structured interview. This was deemed as the most appropriate methodological tool which enables the researcher to undertake detailed descriptions and develop an understanding of phenomena within the field of interest of this study. Interviews are particularly well suited to research

“...that requires an understanding of deeply rooted or delicate phenomena” (Ritchie, 2005: 36),

as is the case with the embedded cultural attitudes towards women and work in Italy

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<sup>30</sup> These were particularly useful in the 'second round' of interviews, discussed below.

Data collecting methods also include informal discussions/interaction, but as mentioned above, mainly open and semi-structured in-depth interviews were used. The interviews were conducted over two periods. The first occurred within an 8 week period from 30-05-2008 to 16-07-2008. The second was in a 2 week period from 15-30 October 2009.

An electronic MP3-player was used to record most of the interviews, which were transcribed for ease of analysis. Where further translation was required, personal resources were employed to further clarification.

#### **4.1.5 Sample Profile**

As mentioned above, the sample consisted of stakeholders in the labour market (on provincial and municipal level) as well as academics in the field of gender equity in particular. As a description of the plight of women in the Italian labour market was sought, it was both more effective in terms of costs and time to gather expert opinions, rather than to analyse the narratives of women's personal experiences as subjects of investigation<sup>31</sup>. As mentioned above, this investigation was done over two periods.

The first round of interviews consisted of discussions with 5 government officials who work in equal opportunities and job centres in the Region and City municipality of Torino; 2 academics from the University of Torino and The University of *Piedmont Orientale* respectively; and the equal opportunities consultant involved in many projects managed by the EU, Piedmont region and provincial job centres mentioned above. The second round of interviews consisted of two follow-up interviews, one with the abovementioned consultant, the other with the academic from the University of Torino; two consultants from the organisation, *Pari e Dispari*; and a labour economist from the University of Torino.

#### **4.1.6 Data Capturing and –Editing**

Once again, the inherent qualitative nature of this study did not necessitate the use of any computer software to capture large amounts of quantitative numeric data.

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<sup>31</sup> As it happened, all but two of the interviewees were women. Thus, on a certain level, the narratives of women's personal experiences are interrogated in an interpretive manner in this investigation also.

Babbie & Mouton (2008) refer to numerous software packages that have been developed for capturing qualitative textual data, such as Nud\*ist, Atlas/ti, Winmax and Hyperqual (ibid.). The manageable number of interviews, coupled with the generous time allocation allowed for the interviews to have been transcribed manually, with detailed summaries of interviews (appended) kept.

Specific themes were equated with the four initial questions asked during the pilot interview. These are the following:

1. Do current policies make it easy for women to enter the labour market in the province? *Or alternatively, are the reformed labour policies structured in a way that helps, or hinders the advancement of female labour participation in the province?*
2. Is there a way in which the effectiveness of gender equity policies and programs can be evaluated?
3. Is female inactivity a problem on a large scale, and is it structural, due to the set-up of the welfare state system?
4. Could the increase in female participation be made mandatory?

The second round of interviews pursued the same questions, but in light of the global financial crisis. Since this round was more informed by the findings of the initial report to the Piedmont Government (Gerwel, 2009), it aimed to expand on these initial findings and to ask the following three questions in conjunction with the initial four, which required the respondents to provide their personal thoughts and feelings on:

1. Evaluation of the effect of policies (specifically L53/2000) in increasing the female labour market participation rate;
2. What they feel are the problems associated with the law and whether they feel it is effective; and
3. Commenting on the political will to increase above mentioned rate in the Italian policy framework

The data analysed from the two rounds were then compared to try and correct for any errors that may have occurred with the data collection. What could potentially have posed problems in this study is the so-called research selectivity effect, or the research expectancy effect. These two respectively refer to, firstly,

is a very common problem in research because many methods [as employed in this study] involve choices on the part of the researcher about which data to observe or select and which to ignore (Stern, 1979: 73, cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2008: 106).

and secondly, subtle communication on the part of the researcher of an outcome expectancy that the respondent unwittingly fulfils. Critical within the conceptual framework Giddens (1994: 5) makes a point that is extremely valid in the context of this study.

By the rationalisation of action, I mean that actors-also routinely and for the most part without fuss- maintain a continuing theoretical understanding of the grounds of their activity.

The interviewees are also exerting agency as activists in the fight for gender equity. This can thus provide a modicum of clarification for the similarities of their views with those expressed by their colleagues that were unearthed during the literature review.

#### **4.1.7 Data Analysis and –Synthesis:**

As a start to this sub-section, allow for another citation from Babbie & Mouton on the subject:

The aim of analysis is to understand the various constitutive elements of one's data through an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables, and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in the data (ibid. : 108).

They go further by stating that synthesising one's results means relating them to existing theoretical frameworks (outlined in Chapter-3) and showing whether these are supported or refuted by the evidence in the form of the new interpretation.

This part of the research is also fraught with common errors that are associated with poor analysis and interpretation. The one that the researcher has tried to correct for is biased interpretation of the data through selectivity. Often scholars are guilty of attempting to prove their pet hypotheses or assertions without proper consideration of rival hypotheses and alternative explanations. In this regard, the researcher was limited by the availability of alternative literature sources, and was greatly inhibited by language availability of relevant resources. The sources cited mostly have a more progressive or leftist slant, as not much scholarship on the issue of gender equity (and equality in general as a social or economic goal) is frequently conducted by the more conservative spectrum of academia.

Researchers generally use qualitative data analysis and synthesis to examine and organise the observable data so that their ideas and theories about the social world reflect not only the surface level reality, but, more importantly, the deeper structures and forces [in this case, human agency] that lie unseen beneath the surface (Jones, 2009: 1). This is done by using the data to generate and evaluate theories and generalisations.

To borrow from methods learnt in Chemistry, what is basically being done is comparing the literature value with the empirical (or experimental) value. What this means is that from the literature review (Chapter-2) was provided the secondary quantitative data which informed the questions asked in the qualitative interviews. Also in chemical analysis, one tests the purity of a synthesised compound by comparing its melting point to a theoretical literature value. If there is a large difference in the empirical- and literature values, the associated level of purity of the synthesised product is lower. The impossibility of such comparison in social sciences (especially economics) seems to substantiate the view that the scientific method needs to be adapted to take this further difference between natural and social sciences into consideration.

Hence this study can be classified as deductive. In this case, the study starts with an assertion (or hypothesis). One then gathers evidence to enable one to reach certain conclusions based on this assertion. A hypothesis is applied, based on theory, to a specific situation to yield certain conclusions based on empirical observation.

As mentioned above (Chapter-2), Giddens' theory of structuration is the conceptual framework within which the investigation is done in the context of the Welfare State (Barr, 1998; 2003 and Esping-Andersen, 1990; 1996). It is proposed that this theory of structuration is an effective guide in understanding the relationships between human agents, structures (or structural properties), power and state apparatuses- acting as a sensitising device, as there are methodological misgivings within orthodox economics when relating to *normative* (Friedman, 1953) issues such as welfare (Giddens, 1984, Le Roux, 1984 & 2006).

## **4.2 Empirical Results**

This second part of the chapter will be dealt with in two main parts. Firstly, the results and findings of the qualitative interviews, interspersed with a discussion of the results through the

highlighting of specific themes shall be presented. Secondly, concluding interpretation of the empirical results will be done.

#### **4.2.1 Presentation and Discussion of Results**

As noted above, this investigation was down through two rounds of interviews. The data shall be presented in the same fashion. The first part will use the results as presented for the paper prepared for COREP to extract four specific themes (Gerwel, H. 2009). The second part aims at presenting the findings of the second round in a manner that is informed by the findings of the initial round of interviews in a theme by theme manner. This could unfortunately not be done as thoroughly for the first round of interviews, as the original interview notes are no longer available due to a burglary. MP3 recordings of two the interviews were re-transcribed with the purpose of providing some "quotable quotes", which are

...the actual statements of the participants that are chosen because they clearly present a theme or an important point one wants to emphasise (Bender, 2009: 85).

Round One of interviews will thus be discussed in a chronological order as the interviews progressed interspersing the relevant narrative description with the four abovementioned themes. What serendipitously emerged as a pattern was that the interviews were conducted in the following order:

1. Labour market consultant
2. The Provincial CdP,
3. Academic from University of Torino
4. Academic from University of Piedmont Orientale
5. Equity representatives at the Job centre in Settimo Torinese.
6. Equity representatives at the Job centre in Chivasso.
7. & 8. 2 Equity representatives from the City of Torino Municipality

Each of the two rounds of interviews will have the data extracted from the synthesis presented theme-by-theme in tabular form. It must be made clear that no statistical significance is placed on the inferences made from the responses, since the use of a non-probability sample of the population was employed. It serves merely to graphically illustrate the general trends in

responses to the different themes, which will then be discussed in more detail to create dialectic between empirical findings and theoretical assertions where possible.

#### **4.2.2 Initial Interviews: 2008**

At the end of the 1980s, following decades of deficit spending, Italy entered the Euro Zone with a weak welfare state (particularly with regard to the provision of social services, a minimum safety net for the poor and family policies) and a huge public debt. The margin for strengthening the weaker aspects of the welfare state was accordingly very narrow. Like other southern European welfare states (see Ferrera 1996, 2005 cited in Naldini and Saraceno, 2008), Italy is characterized by a preference for income transfers [particularly in the form of pensions] over transfers in kind, by a dualistic protection system that makes a sharp distinction between insiders and outsiders, and by a marginal role for policies aimed directly at supporting the family (Naldini and Saraceno, 2008).

This point is also very eloquently made by Del Boca (2000: 3) stating that in regards to the labour market, the work rules and wage-policies implemented during the seventies and eighties have served to increase job security for full-time labour market participants, but this benefit for some has come at the cost of lower probabilities of finding work for new entrants and/or individuals looking for temporary or part-time employment. The fact that part-time employment is extremely rare in Italy is an important factor in accounting for the low employment rates of married women, particularly those with children. As a consequence, married women are forced to choose between no work and full-time work, neither of which is necessarily their preferred option.

As stated above in 4.1.1, the generic question forming the narrative theme of this round of interviews is the following:

*Is state provision of information concerning parental leave and part-time work (manifested juridically as L53/2000) improving gender equity in the labour market as an economic efficiency goal?*

Specific themes were equated with the four initial questions asked during the pilot interview. These are the following:

1. Do current policies make it easy for women to enter the labour market in the province? *Or alternatively, are the reformed labour policies structured in a way that helps, or hinders the advancement of female labour participation in the province?*
2. Is there a way in which the effectiveness of gender equity policies and programs can be evaluated?
3. Is female inactivity a large scale problem, and is it structural, due to the institutional set-up of the welfare state system?
4. Could the increase in female participation be made mandatory?

From this point of departure, I shall discuss the way in which the policy reforms impact upon the situation of women in terms of labour market participation, explicitly looking at the influence of service provision (child- and elderly care) and -women friendly labour policies (specifically L53/2000) and how the Province of Torino has implemented programs towards facilitating this aim. This will be done by providing a theme-by-theme analysis of the findings from the COREP report (Gerwel, 2009).

### **Theme- 1: Do policies make labour participation easier for women?**

Italy's regions, as opposed to the Italian state, are now the main, and in many cases the sole, responsible body for defining objectives and developing policies on social care and social assistance, although their budget still depends to a large degree on the central state. As far as labour policies are concerned, they are regulated at a central level by the welfare state. According to Genova (2006), the rescaling of regulative authorities represents a common trend in EU countries which has been characterised by a double direction: downwards, shifting the balance of power from the national state towards regions and local municipalities; and upwards improving the role of supranational organizations such as EU or the World Bank. It was intimated by a leading author and senior academic at the University of Torino that the interpretations of labour policies at local (regional and provincial) level were highly varied in terms of organization. She went further to state that service- or care provision was organized at municipal level (through L328), but the operational plan comes from the provincial level, with low financial contributions by the central government. She felt that this lack of inter-tier coordination has contributed to the decline in implementation of L53/2000 in recent years.



I was also informed about projects run in conjunction with trade unions in 2003. Using focus group studies, they tried to establish how many people were informed about the abovementioned Law 53/2000. She also told me about an inherent reluctance on the part of firms to implement the law<sup>32</sup>.

The point of the attitude of firms and enterprises within the Piedmont region not really making part-time work easy through their attitudes towards it was mentioned by two other interviewees. Ms. Merlino explicitly mentioned that "[f]irms pose cultural constraints on women, by seeing traditionally female home/care/domestic work as second class work, which is not deemed worthy for men. Thus, it can be deduced that there is probably a cultural disincentive provided to firms for the hiring of women on contracts that could allow the invocation of L53/2000. Therefore, in Italy, it is difficult (due to culturally influenced preconceptions) to get firms to invest in part-time. The sharing of domestic duties by both spousal parties- an essential element of successfully implementing this law- does not occur sufficiently. Effectively then, what is deemed as progressive policy is effectively contributing to the perpetuation of the situation of women in the labour market through the human actions of those holding institutional power, resisting social transformation and constraining the efficacy of policy reforms.

Developments (or the lack of them) in the area of policies for the family, for equal opportunities and for reconciliation of work and family life, in so far as such policies are concerned, should ideally address two of the main changes in Italian society today. Firstly, women's labour force participation and secondly, population ageing. Resistance to change derives certainly from budget constraints and the defence of vested interests. This is made evident by the difficulty found in changing the internal balance of social expenditure. Even since the important 1995 pension reform, social spending has still been strongly biased towards pensions, which in 2004 accounted for over 60 per cent of total expenditure on social welfare, compared to an EU average of 50 per cent (Eurostat 2007:70, cited in Naldini and Saraceno, 2008).

From my interview with a leading academic from the University of Eastern Piedmont, a rather pertinent question regarding the shape and direction of the policy reforms arose.

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<sup>32</sup> This is a recurrent theme which makes its appearance in the second round of interviews as well.

“Are the labour market reforms concerning gender equity not just a perpetuation of the neoliberal agenda of privatizing services and weakening the influence of the state?”

This was interesting, as the provision of services such as child care, and care for the elderly were privatized, with the latter being done largely on an informal basis, by either the female partner in the “male breadwinner” model, or female immigrants, usually from the Philippines<sup>33</sup>. Thus, a way of potentially promoting female participation in the public sector through the provision of such services using public funding was dispatched of in favour of the neoliberal route of decreasing the budget deficit by cutting spending on public service provision. Genova (2006) once again makes an important contribution to this debate, stating that since the beginning of the ‘80s, in Western countries, there has been an increasing inclusion of neo-liberal regulative principles in welfare policies. Changes in society imposed change in welfare policies, redefining the relationship between social and labour policies.

If all women are not targeted in the correct order of preference (e.g. Social status and financial means), the purpose of policy is essentially defeated. It was also mentioned that a number of EU sponsored projects could be interpreted as mere window dressing, giving credence to a basically defunct commitment towards issues regarding gender equity. Basically, it can be agreed from the interpretation of the data that provision of information is a start, but not more than that. Much is needed in this battle, which is Sisyphus pushing that boulder of prejudice and institutional ignorance up the proverbial cliff of an entrenched systemic problem. Issues of ethnic elitism and social exclusion also arise in this context but will divert the focus of this investigation if they are to enjoy any attention at this juncture.

## **Theme-2: Can the effectiveness of gender policies be measured?**

A report by the Italian national statistics office (Istituto nazionale di statistica , ISTAT), *Conciliazione dei tempi di vita e natalità (Work-life balance and fertility rates )*, contains the first results of the ad hoc module devoted to reconciling work and family life, which formed part of the 2002-2003 Time Use Survey. This module was commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Department of the Ministry of Welfare, in accordance with Law 53/2000, in order to investigate work schedules and working time flexibility, reasons for flexible working time, work-life balance, and the take-up of leave. According to the report, only ~749,000

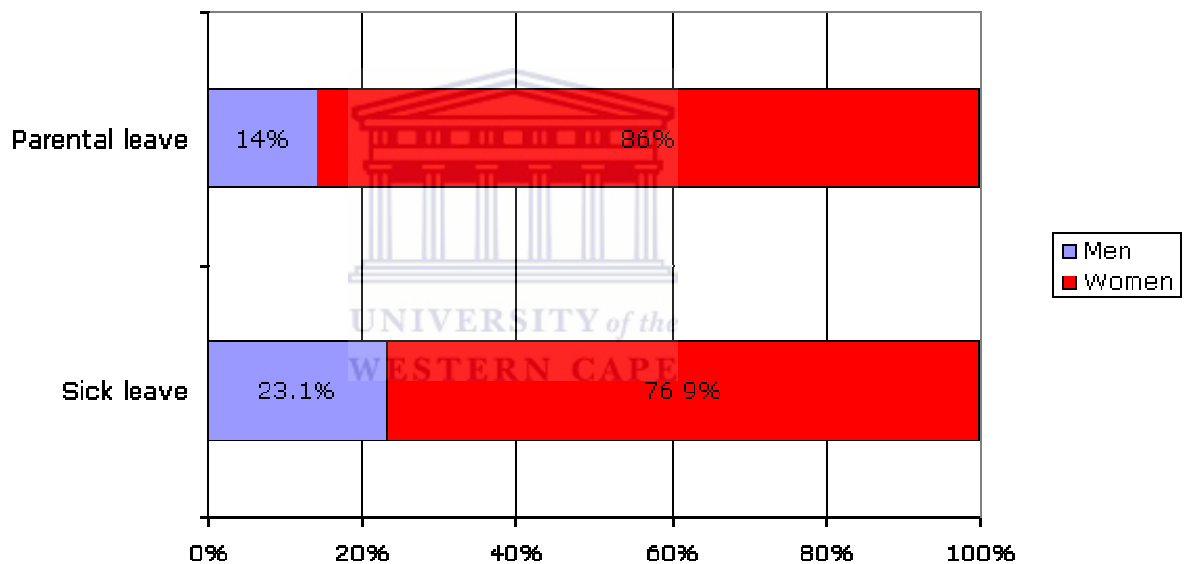
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<sup>33</sup> For an excellent discussion of female migrants to Italy’s perceptions of migration, see Petersen (2009).

working parents applied for parental leave (86% of whom were women) and ~541,000 applied for sick leave (76.9% were women).

In the pilot interview, Ms. Merlino said that she felt that “this is the most important question”<sup>34</sup>. She also stated that the way in which data concerning female labour participation is analysed is important, and that it should ideally be done by “people who work with women”. Her point with this is that “many people say there is no discrimination”, since the data can be “translated [interpreted] wrong”, providing a “superficial view of the situation”. A major problem she also mentioned was that a large percentage of women work informally, so gathering data about their activity or labour market participation is difficult.

**Employees with children aged 0-8 years using leave, by sex (%)**



**Figure 4.1** Source: ISTAT, 2005, based on 2002-2003 Time Use Survey (Reproduced from Giaccone, 2006)

The data show a strong gender bias in the take-up of both types of leave, although just over 40% of all working women with children aged up to eight years applied for parental leave and 27.2% for sick leave (Figures 1 and 2.1 in the ISTAT report). Such a poor take-up is explained by low payment rates during leave (cited by 16.9% of respondents), employers’

<sup>34</sup> Cited from the interview.

refusal to grant leave (reported by over 5%), and lack of information (cited by 2.6%). It is worth noting that more than 90% of working women did not apply for unpaid parental leave.

Only approximately 105,000 men applied successfully for parental leave (less than 5% of eligible fathers). However, a further ~77,000 were refused leave by their employers, ~68,000 reported that they were insufficiently informed about leave options, and ~64,000 did not apply because of the drop in income (all values estimated). The level of employer disapproval of employees' parental leave rights may be interpreted by the fact that 2% of women were dismissed from their job when they became pregnant or after they had given birth (5% among those aged 35-44 years); a further 7.6% of women (16.2% among those aged 35-44 years) were forced to resign (Giaccone, 2006).

Ms. Merlino mentioned a research project run by the Province of Torino that interviewed 700 women who left the full-time employment labour market. According to the study, women generally felt that there was good maternity legislation, the most pertinent of these being the fact that firms are not allowed to fire a parent before the child is 1 year of age. If they choose to resign within this period, an affidavit needs to be signed with the CdP. The respondents also intimated a problem with reinsertion into the labour market. When asked for reasons for leaving full-time employment, 42% indicated that their requests for part-time work schedules were denied; and only 6% citing child rearing responsibilities as their reason for leaving. What was indicated by the results of this particular study was that firms create disincentives to women to reenter the labour market. Methods used by firms to do this mentioned were changing of departments worked in, relocation to satellite offices, etc. Ms Merlino went further, stating that all the interviewees were keen to explain why they left their jobs:

“All felt lack of welfare policies; they don't have personal transport [in the form of automobiles], so if they have [a] child they need to find child care.”

The resistance to change amongst women as opposed to the change of the position of all women seems to be a way of maintaining a specific status quo, at the expense of true gender equity in the sense of all women feeling the benefits of policy instruments. The issue of vertical and horizontal segregation springs to mind in this context and a moment should be taken to provide definitional clarity to these concepts.

Horizontal segregation refers to the concentration of women in certain sectors of the economy. Traditionally, analysis of this form of segregation starts with a review of the distribution of

men and women in the three broadest economic sectors: the primary sector, i.e. agriculture and mining, the secondary sector, i.e. industrial production and manufacturing and the tertiary sector, i.e. services. Throughout the evolution of industrial societies, there has been an increase in the proportion of the working population concentrated in the tertiary sector. Vertical segregation can be defined as the concentration or the over-representation of women in certain levels of the professional hierarchy. This dimension of the gender division of labour should be analysed in light of women's access to higher education and training. Although the role played by formal qualification in obtaining the most prestigious posts varies from country to country, the *qualifications lever* has proved a key influence on women's access to the most prestigious professions. In all European countries, women access to higher education facilitates their access to the most prestigious positions in the social and professional hierarchy (Le Feuvre, Undated).

What I have thus provisionally concluded from the two abovementioned themes was that the general perception in academic circles is that there is still plenty that needs to be done on the part of firms to implement the L53/2000 and also other policy measures that can contribute towards making the increase of female labour market participation rate a reality. Relating this to the conceptual framework (Chapter-2), it can be said that the efficacy of institutional reform to facilitate the increased insertion of women into the Italian labour market is constrained by the action of firms' management as economic agents within the policy framework.

In the upcoming two themes I intend to turn my attention to what is being done about the implementation of L53/2000 on the provincial and municipal levels by referring to the interviews held with Provincial officials in Gender Equity, including the *Consigliera de Parità* (CdP), who is responsible for conciliation and dispute management in the province that is based on targeting issues of discrimination (especially gender based- and ethnic discrimination). Direct referral will also be made to interviews with Gender Equity officers in a number of Job Centers (*Centri l'impiego*), as well as that conducted with persons who hold the same position in the Municipality of Torino (*Citta d'Torino*) which are used to inform the third and fourth themes.

### **Theme-3: Is lack of child-care and the WS a problem for female participation?**

According to Del Boca (2000), economic models of household behaviour typically yield the prediction that increases in schooling levels and wage rates of married women lead to increases in their labour supply and reductions in fertility. In Italy, as well as in other Southern European countries, low labour market participation rates of married women are observed together with low birth rates. The proposed explanation for this apparent anomaly involves the Italian institutional structure, particularly as reflected in rigidities and imperfections in the labour and housing markets and characteristics of the publicly-funded child care system. The challenges faced by Italian society are multiple and diverse. These include,

„an increased presence of women in the labour market (often in precarious positions), an increased marital instability and de-institutionalisation of the family (new family-forms, including single mothers) and limited male involvement in family care-work<sup>35</sup>“ (Cancellieri & Longo, 2008: 2).

These rigidities tend to simultaneously increase the costs of having children and to discourage the labour market participation of married women. This basically proposes that the structure of the labour market, along with insufficient publically provided child care services, is to blame for the difficulties experienced by women in reconciling work and family life. In those countries where high percentages of youth are unemployed, (Italy, Greece, Spain) the female participation rate is lower. Moreover, when the unemployment rate is high, fewer women leave the labour market during the childbearing years because it is more difficult to re-enter later (Del Boca, 2003). In the words of one of the respondents, „[w]omen choose to follow their child[ren] and think of work later. This directly contrasts with the view expressed by Del Boca (ibid.), but was attributed her interpretation of the data to be due to the following reasons. Women are not sufficiently aware- or informed of their rights, parental-leave, or even the CdP. Those who do know about parental leave as a reconciliation measure are not aware that it can be taken up by men as well, essentially reproducing the structural principles („[t]he most deeply embedded structural properties, implicated in the reproduction of societal totalities,“ of the „male breadwinner-model“ (Giddens, 1984: 17).

According to a study mentioned by one of the academics, women also felt more marginalized in the workplace after having their first child. Contrary to the opinion of the mostly male employers, all the women interviewed felt that they were more productive in their time use

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<sup>35</sup> This was also mentioned above in Theme-1 by one of the respondents.

now, than they were before giving birth, This is due to time wasting and stretching of tasks before. Firmsø value quantity of work over quality of work- is this then not inefficiency epitomized?

What transpired as a very important requirement for increased female labour participation from the interviews is the provision of flexible and sometimes more importantly, affordable child care services. Little change has occurred on this level. The public child care system does not provide services which are of much assistance to married women in terms of reducing the direct costs of participation. In particular, while the quality of publicly-provided child care services is very high in many regions in Italy, there are a limited number of slots available and the hours of child care is typically incompatible with full-time job hours. Public child care institutions were developed in an era when the wife either did not participate in the labour market and was responsible for organizing all family activities in a very bureaucratic society, or worked in public sector jobs which required limited time commitments each day (e.g., teaching or public administration). These institutions are evolving slowly over time and continue to do little to increase the attractiveness of full-time work for women with children<sup>36</sup> (Del Boca, 2000). It can also be argued that the precarious nature of most part time work creates a disincentive for women to attempt to reconcile work and family life. Hence it can be deduced that the agency of women (in the form of choices available to them concerning work) is mostly constrained by the structural principles as embodied by the labour market reforms mentioned in 3.3.1.

Publicly provided child care services are typically inexpensive, relative to private sector alternatives, though their capacity, in terms of number of children and hours per child is extremely limited. The system is highly subsidized but characterized by extreme rigidity in the number of weekly hours available. This makes the service compatible with part-time work but not with full-time activities. Having school age children does not necessarily increase the attractiveness of full-time employment since school days often end in mid-afternoon, thus making child care necessary for late afternoon and early evening. It is important to note that a remarkable difference exists between the availability of child care for children under 3 years of age and for children between 3 and 6. In Italy the percentage of children less than 3 who are

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<sup>36</sup> One respondent also mentioned that although some men assist with child-care duties, the care for the elderly is seen as an exclusively female issue.



in child care is quite small (6 per cent), while the proportion of children older than 3 in child care is relatively high (91 per cent).

While the availability of child care for children older than three is quite uniform across regions, this is not the case for children under three. There are marked differences across regions. The proportion of children less than three years of age in public child care is about 30% in some areas of the North and only 1-2 percent in most Southern areas (this ratio is the number of places available divided by the population 0-3 years of age). In the Northern areas the labour market participation rate was about 42 percent, while in the Southern regions it is about 23 percent at the time (ibid. : 5). In the pilot interview, Ms. Merlino discussed two of the three main regions of Italy (North and South) in terms of their female participation rates. According to her, these rates were 54% and 27% respectively.

During the last two decades in order to face socio-economical challenges, OECD countries have been mainly involved in labour policy reforms and consequently in social assistance reforms. In the labour market, strongly affected by the globalisation process and the decrease in the employment rate, the *visible hand* of the welfare state has been accused of disturbing market dynamics. Therefore the *workfare* approach and activation measures have been introduced in order to avoid dependence and passive attitudes towards jobs among claimants, subordinating social to economic policy. Despite the absence of sociological research that claims to be conclusive evidence that social assistance per se creates dependence (Saraceno 2002: 235-258 cited in Genova, 2006); the myth of welfare dependence is strongly rooted and is still present.

The interview with the *Consigliera di Parita* (CdP) was mainly in the form of discussions surrounding types of projects that the CdP was currently involved in, and I tried to get more specific details about projects that consist of information dissemination at the provincial level, concerning the rights available to women in the labour market.

She told me that information is provided in six languages, intended to include the many migrants who are intending to enter the labour market and Italian society. She embarked on telling me about the new *job centers* that are set up within the province. Used to have a single central *body* governing and co-ordinating employment measures (Ferrera & Gualmini, 2004: 99), that used a list of job seekers. The currently employed job centers now perform this function without the use of a list. 75% of these are women. There are also cultural



mediators at these job centers to assist migrants fitting into Italian society by providing information about social services, labour market, language, etc.

The CdP also works along with the *Politecnico di Torino* to assist young female entrepreneurs. These candidates, once identified and provided with assistance then also receive a three year period of 'incubation' basically industrial protection; and they are also introduced to potential investors. An award is also given annually to the most successful female entrepreneur. From 2007 (the year of equal opportunity for all), there has been efforts towards empowering along with women, the disabled and also migrants/ foreign nationals.

According to the CdP, most discrimination in the work place is against parents (male and female), concerning the right available to them for flexible working hours to allow for the reconciliation of work and family. L53/2000 tries to make flexible working hours in the form of 'Part-time' easier and more accessible, and in this regard, the CdP's role is to create accord between firms and workers. However, many difficulties are experienced with 'Part-time' such as opposition from trade unions and firms concerning the implementation thereof. There are however examples of 'best practice' following EU directives and employs 600 women in the production of eyewear. The firm introduced part-time with three shifts, allowing women to work nights if their spouses were willing and able to provide child care at night. A number of social support services (child care) are also available to new mothers, provided at both provincial and municipal level.

The interviewee at the Settimo Torinese job center is a stalwart in the battle of gender equity and is impassioned about the efforts made by their specific job center to do projects, produce advertisements in print media, trying through every activity to (almost subversively) promote gender equity.

A major problem in her opinion is the difficulties experienced by mothers searching for affordable child care, which she attributes to the large scale privatization of child care and other welfare services stemming from the so-called 'Amato Reforms' (Ferrera and Gualmini, 2000: 191). It is also difficult for Small, medium and micro enterprises to find solutions to their problems with providing the needed services to their employees. In this regard she mentioned a case study done of a woman with children younger than 12 months, and was thus eligible for parental leave (as outlined in L53/2000). A request was made to reduce the work day by two hours. She was told by her employer that this was not possible and the CdP was

asked to intervene. This she used as an example to highlight the subversive hostility in firms (not only from men, but female managers as well), making women with children feel uncomfortable and unwelcome at work. If a problem like this is discovered however, it is referred to the gender officer and a report is subsequently sent to the CdP.

A function of the job centres mentioned by one of the respondents is the promotion of so-called "active policies"<sup>37</sup>. This effectively refers to activities related to skills development, vocational guidance and others to improve the Employability of participants, in line with the four pillars or principles the EES was based on. Public support for training actions mainly takes the form of the national funds provided for by L53/2000, European Community funds (ESF) and in certain cases, regional funds. It is aimed at adult workers, active workers registered with the *Cassa integrazione* (a short-term earnings supplement fund) and more recently, inactive workers for whom training is a hiring prerequisite. The job center in Chivasso is collaborating with high schools and voluntary organizations to create and promote discussions about gender equity issues.

Like her colleague in Settimo, she felt that there was a distinct under provision of "care services" and to this purpose there is also collaboration with firms to inform workers and managers about the rights available to women (and to men). The town of Chivasso underwent a "job crisis" once Fiat started downsizing and many people were retrained and now work in eyewear production. She gave some examples of firms that are implementing best practice techniques and also providing flexible child care services to enable women to balance work and family life effectively. There are also certain cases in which women are allowed to work at night (through the provision of three shifts per day), if their spouses are willing<sup>38</sup> to provide the care for the children during these hours. However, low payment rates for leave and traditional social stereotypes, both in families and particularly in the workplace, result in women having to take on most of the household and care work, putting extra strain on their work-life balance.

A very interesting point she made is that many policies are influenced by what she referred to as "cultural conditioning". Naldini and Saraceno (2008) also address this cultural issue by stating that while the breakdown of the Italian Communist Party revealed the lack of sturdy roots for a secular culture and attitude in Italy, the even more dramatic collapse of the

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<sup>37</sup> Active policies are associated with "workfare" as opposed to welfare approach to unemployment support.

<sup>38</sup> This is an issue that gets mentioned in the second round of interviews too.

Christian Democratic Party opened the way for a more explicit initiative in Italian politics on the part of the Catholic Church, which expanded its influence across the various political parties, particularly with regard to matters concerning the family and sexuality. Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* jumped on this bandwagon.

As a consequence, the unbalanced nature of the Italian welfare state did indeed enter the public debate at the policy level as a result, on the one hand, of the growing concern engendered by declining fertility and population ageing and, on the other, of the advocacy of the women's movement as well as the role of the European Union in framing public discourses.

**Theme-4: Is there the needed political will?**

All of the respondents felt that there is a distinct lack of political will on national level to promote issues concerning equity in general and gender equity in particular. What can be concluded from the interviews is that there are concerted efforts made by government departments on provincial as well as municipal levels, with dissemination of information being the key operational instrument. The issue of social exclusion is also addressed through the provision of information booklets in languages other than Italian, so as to help newly arrived immigrants to integrate themselves within society at large and making them aware of rights to which they are entitled.

Progression towards a more flexible working hours system has started later in Italy than in other countries and has been much slower. On one hand, unions have traditionally opposed part-time employment fearing that potential divisions of the work force (in terms of working arrangements, demographic characteristics, etc.) could reduce workers' cohesion. On the other hand, under current regulations social contributions paid by employers are strictly proportional to the number of employees, not their hours worked, which makes the employment of two part-time workers more costly than one full-time employee. Moreover the service sector, where part-time work is traditionally more widespread, has not developed as quickly in Italy as in other countries (Del Boca, 2000).

The point that I am trying to illuminate with all this is that concerted efforts on the part of the Provincial (and municipal) governments are making a difference to the situation of female labour market participation, especially in the Piedmont Region, but large regional differences

still endure, with good achievements in this regard occurring in the North, accompanied by dismal rates in the southern Regions. As the final part of this section of the chapter, mention will be made of efforts towards equal opportunities made in the municipality of Torino.

The most striking aspect of the fieldwork conducted was that all the interviewees were women<sup>39</sup>. It seemed that gender equity and equal opportunities were not issues that were taken very seriously by men in Italy. That was until I had the opportunity to speak to two representatives of the City of Torino Municipality, both of them men. The discussion focused mostly on the numerous projects concerning equal opportunities run by the City (see the dedicated website: [www.comune.torino.it](http://www.comune.torino.it)). A specific project that was of great interest and also an unusual nature was geared at providing support for the integration of trans-sexual job seekers into the labour market of Torino. Due to privacy issues, not much detail could be divulged, but the mere fact that a project of this nature was embarked on, surely vouches for the commitment of this particular municipality's progressive approach towards providing equal opportunities for all. Many of these projects are EU sponsored, and the City is also involved in many public-private partnerships and international initiatives.

It is plain to see that the efforts towards promoting equal opportunities run by the City of Torino are truly commendable and progressive. The fact that the two representatives I gained access to were both men also attests to the manner in which the city is attempting to move away from the traditional view of equal opportunities being a women's issue that does not really concern men. This attitude is evident also at national level, with an extremely low level of female representation in the Italian Parliament.

#### **4.2.3 Follow-up Interviews: 2009**

There has been a shift in the commitment to gender issues within the EES when the 'four pillars' which had specifically as one of its aims the task of increasing gender equity, were replaced by the 'ten commandments' which only has one point referring to general 'equal opportunity issues (See Ferrera & Gaulmini, 2004).

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<sup>39</sup> This made me realise the importance of being reflexive of my position as a man; of myself as 'the other'

“The focus on women’s employment within the EES to date has been primarily on the employment rate target, with little or no attention paid either to job quality or to the importance of women’s employment for social inclusion” (Rubery et al, 2004: 605).

This loss of commitment to issues of gender equity brought the following question to the fore:

*How has the global financial crisis impacted on this commitment within the Italian government to promote the increase of the female labour market participation rate?*

This is the main narrative theme of the second round of interviews. As in the first round, the first interview was with Ms. Paola Merlino, who once again served as an excellent referent for two further interviews conducted in Milan. As mentioned above (in 4.1.5), this round was more informed by the findings of the initial report to the Piedmont Government (Gerwel, 2009). It expands on these initial findings and asks the following three questions in conjunction with the initial four, which required the respondents to provide their personal thoughts and feelings on:

1. Evaluation of the effect of policies (specifically L53/2000) and programmes in increasing the female labour market participation rate;
2. What they feel are the problems associated with the law and whether they feel it is effective; and
3. Commenting on the political will to increase above mentioned rate in the Italian policy framework

In relation to the global financial crisis, labour market participation is a problem for women (and to a lesser extent, men) older than 40. According to Ms. Merlino, the emphasis is now on “active aging” or keeping working till 65 as the major response to the crisis and its associated negative “externalities”. What is needed are “passive policies” in the form of transfer payments to help with consumption smoothing while engaging in the “active programmes”. All respondents remarked on the increased difficulty in reconciling work and family life for women in Italy. Labour demand side policies in the form of incentive creation for firms to hire more (or lay-off less) workers was also mentioned as a possible short term measure. The European Social Fund used to fund programmes dealing with how to implement equal opportunity measures. Since most of the money was spent on passive labour measures, this source of funding for promoting gender equity has been abandoned due to fiscal constraints now implemented to counter the crisis.

Having now provided a summary of what the respondents thought about the main research question in relation to the global financial crisis, we proceed with a theme-by-theme analysis of the second round of interviews.

### **Theme-1: Evaluation of L53/2000**

Ms. Merlino remarked upon the importance of skills imparted through active training facilitated by the job centres (*centri d'impiego*). This training<sup>40</sup> takes place in the form of individual and group vocational guidance. It is deemed as very important for women, as it helps with social cohesion amongst the participants. However, there was a generally negative impression of L53/2000 from the majority of respondents.

L53/2000 has three essential parts. These are parental leave, conciliation projects and Article 9, which from a national level provides financial assistance to firms to provide help with measures like on-site kindergartens. Parental leave is deemed as a good reconciliation measure for women, but men were not so keen on taking up parental leave (see Fig. 4.1). In the Piedmont region there are efforts towards promoting the take-up of this right by more men in courses offered by the CdP. A main concern was that not enough money was being made available for parental leave, since it makes provision for a payment equivalent to merely 30% of the applicant's salary. Due to the gender wage gap (According to Ms. Merlino at 26%) it is more detrimental to the livelihood for men (as one of two breadwinners) to take-up parental leave. More incentives need to be created, since municipal welfare (in the form of payments and care provision) are deemed inadequate. In short, it came to light that what the respondents felt was needed were more family-welfare provision; as well as more concrete and obligatory policies.

### **Theme-2: Problems associated with L53/2000**

As this investigation aims to look at the effect of policy on the female labour market participation rate, it was deemed appropriate to relate the respondents' impressions of what they associate the problems with L53/2000 to be.

The provision of part-time work in Italy is considered a big problem due to the lack of availability of adequate (in terms of time flexibility and affordable) care services for children younger than 3 and the elderly. According to the targets of the Lisbon Treaty of 2000, member

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<sup>40</sup> For a fuller discussion of these projects, see the appended transcription of the interview notes.

states of the EU are required to facilitate 33% of child care provision be publicly funded. This figure is currently 13% in Italy. The case study area, Piedmont, is leading the way in this regard, providing more than the required percentage. The respondent alluded to the contrasting female participation rates between Piedmont (56%) and Puglia in the south (27%). It was also stated that women of the 26-35 cohort who hold higher education qualifications generally find it easier to get employed.

What most of the respondents intimated as the major problem with L53/2000 itself was *Article 9*. Municipal welfare (which caters for the funds for *Article 9*) was considered to not create enough incentives for take up of parental leave. Since there is now a wait to see what the Berlusconi government's decision concerning L53/2000 will be and its commitment to the targets of the Amsterdam Treaty, few firms are accessing the money available from L53/2000. It was stated by one of the respondents in Milan that generally people are satisfied with the law, but that there is resistance from trade unions, as they feel it takes away from their convoluted bargaining power.

The majority of firms seek young, male workers. There are hence active attempts made at including women and older persons. According to one of the respondents from the first round of interviews, the Settimo Job Center tries to take gender issues into consideration concerning all aspects of job creation/enhancement/placement. One person per job center is the dedicated gender officer who operates according to a provincial directive, coming from the Provincial *Consigliera di Parità* and is coordinated through monthly meetings. Here solutions to gender discrimination cases are discussed with the Provincial CdP. She states however, that gender equity is imagined by society, but it is actually lacking!

Most firms who do invoke L53/2000 are medium sized enterprises. Smaller enterprises require additional incentive creation. It was further remarked that the law needs to be implemented on a context specific and pragmatic basis that goes together with institutional and organisational transformation. There are also problems with policy fragmentation, as inequality of social protection occurs due to the corporatist nature of the Italian welfare state. There was also mention of 'double discrimination' against foreign women, but as mentioned in the discussion of the first round of interviews, information concerning L53/2000 is made available in a number of different languages, so as to make it more accessible to immigrant women. It was



also felt by this particular respondent that care services need to be targeted at impoverished (and immigrant) women so as to deal with the associated social stratification of classes.

The following sub-section will discuss the third and last of the themes that emerged from the interviews, the political will to increase the female labour market participation rate.

### **Theme-3: The political will to increase the female labour market participation rate**

This could possibly be deemed the most important theme for the future of L53/2000 in particular, as well as the attitude towards gender issues in general. It is thus of paramount importance to note that, as with the first round of interviews, *all* the respondents felt there was a distinct lack of political will on the part of the Berlusconi government to do something about the 'cultural constraint' to women's empowerment in the labour market. Ms. Merlino referred to '...cultural constraints on promoting the equity of women'.

Since L53/2000 is more of a 'legal philosophy' than a binding and obligatory statute, the respondents at *Pari e Dispari* both mentioned that they are awaiting the decision of the new government on the fiscal contribution to this law. Hence, fewer firms are making use of the currently available funds for conciliation projects and *Article 9* (as mentioned above). There are also cultural constraints in the form of husbands not wanting their wives to work with other men. As far as culture as a problem is concerned, all the respondents concur that there needs to be a drastic change in the 'culture of firms' concerning female employment. The following citation from a European Commission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment assessment of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Italy:

'In order to foster equal values, the Ministry of Equal Opportunities and the local Parity Advisers network are engaged in a campaign to disseminate cultural and more specific information on gender issues. This campaign is carried out almost entirely by the Ministry website and booklets, since the media show little interest in equal opportunities issues (undated: 3).'

In a TIME article entitled *Silvio's Girls*, Carla Power points towards the long way this ministry still has to go if it wants to keep emphasising its achievements.

'Italy has the lowest percentage of working women in Europe. Only 2% of top management positions in Italy are held by women, less than in Kuwait. In last year's [2008] *Global Gender Gap* report from the World Economic Forum, Italy Ranked 67<sup>th</sup> out of 130 countries' (Power, 2008: 17).'



These dismal figures, along with the lack of media support for the promotion of equal opportunities can actually be seen as being indicative of the lack of political will regarding this issue. And, since Italy is the only country in Europe whose leader owns the media<sup>41</sup>, the above mentioned lack of media support can be equated to a lack of political will. There is however a slight challenge to Berlusconi's cultural assault on gender issues, but with Italy's center-left opposition in disarray, the longest serving government since World War II seems set to garner the support of its electorate. Ironically, Berlusconi's minister of Equal Opportunities, Mara Carfagna says that

“[t]here is only person in Italy who has had the courage to put young people and women in politics” (ibid.: 17).

This may be so, but whether social inclusion or media appeal is his main incentive for doing this, remains a matter for contention.

The final part of this research chapter follows, providing concluding interpretations of the interviews discussed in 4.2.1. Secondary statistical data gathered during the ongoing literature review will also be presented so as to test the conclusions drawn from the interviews with the actual dynamic situation of women in the Italian labour market.

#### **4.2.4 Concluding Interpretations of Qualitative data**

The aim of employing a qualitative research design was primarily to gain an interpretive evaluation of policy efficacy in promoting the increase of female labour market participation from equity stakeholders in the labour market, as well as from academics in the field.

What has thus emerged from these discussions and interviews is the following: The problems do not lie with the policies themselves, but at the level of implementation. This is due to not only fiscal constraints on the supply side of services, activation measures and money transfers, but also to a lack of incentive (and cultural constraints) on the part of enterprises to employ more women. The cultural aspects can be extrapolated to encompass also the institutional set-

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<sup>41</sup> “Berlusconi's Mediaset stations, and his government's control of the state-owned RAI, means he has cornered 90% of the television market, where an estimated 80% of the population gets its news from television” (Power, 2009: 16).

up of the Italian Welfare State, based on the primacy of the family as the locus of care provision through the principle of subsidiarity, which was fostered by the Catholic church in the past, and the 'family values' currently espoused by *Berlusconiani* and the more than slightly government biased media.

As far as the assessment and evaluation of gender mainstreaming in Italy, I refer again to the above mentioned ECGE report:

National statistical data, produced by public institutions, do not yet allow a satisfactory assessment of policies from a gender perspective. In fact, they are still inadequate to *ex-post* the impact of policies on women's conditions in the labour market. However, some progress has been made recently. ISTAT has been asked by the Ministry of Equal Opportunities to develop more effective statistical tools to assess the impact of policies from a gender perspective (Villa & Bonetti, Undated: 3).

According to Del Boca et al (undated: 3), over the last few decades,

ö...labour market participation of women increased, while fertility declined in most advanced countriesö.

After 1985, the participation of women in the labour market continued to increase in all countries, but fertility rates started to decline at a lower rate or, in some countries, began to grow again. The countries that currently have the lowest levels of fertility (Spain, Italy and Greece) are those with relatively low levels of female labour force participation.

They go further by referring to other studies pooling cross country and time series data, to allow for country-effects and show that only in Mediterranean countries is there a negative correlation between fertility and female employment (Engelhardt, Kogel and Prskawetz 2001). This result implies that it is important in these countries for female participation and fertility to be considered a joint decision and those policies encouraging fertility may have an adverse effect on female employment and vice versa (Del Boca 2002b).

As mentioned above, the increase of female employment represents one of the phenomena that mostly distinguish the transformations of the labour market in the past number of decades. Regarding the much-contained variations among men in the activity, employment, and unemployment rates during the 1993-2003 period, women have registered a 6-percent increase regarding the first two indicators and a 3-point decrease as regards unemployment (Tab.4.1).

**Table 4.1: - Population by professional condition and gender – Years 1993-2003** (*data in thousands; activity, employment and unemployment rates*)

	Men			Women		
	Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Activity rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
1993	73.8	68.2	7.5	41.9	35.8	14.6
1994	73.1	66.7	8.6	41.9	35.4	15.4
1995	72.5	65.9	9.0	42.3	35.4	16.2
1996	72.5	65.9	9.0	43.0	36.0	16.1
1997	72.4	65.8	9.0	43.5	36.4	16.2
1998	72.9	66.2	9.1	44.6	37.3	16.3
1999	73.2	66.7	8.8	45.5	38.3	15.7
2000	73.6	67.5	8.1	46.3	39.6	14.5
2001	73.6	68.1	7.3	47.3	41.1	13.0
2002	74.0	68.8	7.0	47.9	42.0	12.2
2003	74.4	69.3	6.8	48.3	42.7	11.6

\*Note: the activity and employment rates are calculated according to the labour forces and the population between 15 and 64 years old. [Source: Istat, The Labour Force Survey, cited in Romano (undated).]

Despite this slight increase, the participation of women in the Italian labour market remains at levels that are below those attained by the rest of European countries. In 2002, the female activity rate was 61% while the average rate of the European Union was 69.6% (Tab. 4.2). This difference is even stronger in terms of employment rate that reaches 55.4% in Italy and 64.2% in Europe. When analysing in detail the situation in each European country, Italy presents a participation level of women to the labour market that is even lower, not only in

relation to the levels registered in Northern countries with a different tradition of welfare state, but also in relation to those of the Mediterranean countries. In Spain, Greece and Portugal, the activity and employment rates are superior to the corresponding Italian rates.

**Table 4.2: – Activity, employment and unemployment rates by gender in the European Union – Year 2002**<sup>42</sup>

Countries	Activity rate			Employment rate			Unemployment rate		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
European Union	78.3	60.8	69.6	72.9	55.5	64.2	6.9	8.7	7.7
Denmark	83.8	75.8	79.9	80.2	72.6	76.4	4.3	4.4	4.3
Germany	78.7	64.2	71.5	71.8	58.8	65.4	8.8	8.3	8.6
Greece	76.6	50.2	63.1	71.7	42.7	56.9	6.4	14.9	9.8
Spain	78.8	52.6	65.8	72.8	44.0	58.4	7.7	16.3	11.1
France	75.5	62.6	69.0	69.6	56.4	62.9	7.8	9.8	8.7
Ireland	78.3	57.3	67.9	74.6	55.1	64.9	4.7	3.8	4.4
<b>Italy</b>	<b>74.2</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>68.9</b>	<b>41.9</b>	<b>55.4</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>9.3</b>
Portugal	79.6	64.9	72.1	76.3	61.2	68.6	4.1	5.7	4.8
Finland	79.4	74.9	77.2	70.9	67.3	69.1	10.7	10.2	10.5
Sweden	79.8	76.1	78.0	75.5	72.5	74.0	5.4	4.6	5.0
Great Britain	82.3	68.3	75.3	77.7	65.3	71.5	5.6	4.4	5.1

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey (ibid. emphasis added and adapted).

A very interesting point that emerges from this analysis is that ÷...the increase of women's employment, between 1993 and 2003, has provided an overall contribution of 80 percent to the total employment incrementö (ibid. : 3).

<sup>42</sup> Only 11 of the EU 15 represented.

According to this abovementioned analysis, the reasons for resorting to part-time employment indicated by female employees living in a couple with children are the following:

1. In 51.4 % of all cases (28.8 % of women living in a couple but without children), mothers have chosen part-time employment because they do not want to work full-time;
2. 9.9 % (6.2 % in case of women living in a couple but without children) would like to work full-time, but cannot do it due to reasons independent from the labour market (Tab. 4.4).
3. About one third has chosen a part-time employment due to the lack of alternative employment offers.

**Table 4.3: –Part-time employed women living in a couple by type of family and reasons for part-time employment (percentage composition)**

Reasons for the part-time employment	Type of family	
	Couple without children	Couple with children
Did not choose it, it was imposed by contract and/or company	40.5	25.0
Did not succeed in finding a full-time employment	18.3	8.5
Did not want a full-time employment	28.8	51.4
Would like to work full-time, but cannot	6.2	9.9
Other reasons	6.1	5.3
Total	100.0	100.0

*Source:* Istat, Time Use Survey 2002-2003 provisional data (reproduced from *ibid.* : 6).

However, as mentioned in the second round of interviews, there is a distinct problem with reinsertion into the labour market after maternity leave.

**Table 4.4: – Women under 64 years of age who have stopped working due to family reasons, by age group and reasons (100 women with the same characteristics)**

Reasons	Age group				Total
	Under 34	35-44	45-54	55-64	
Marriage	9.2	17.1	17.9	10.4	13.1
Birth of first child	14.0	20.3	13.7	9.9	13.6
Birth of second/third child	7.2	14.4	8.1	4.0	7.6
Other family reasons	5.9	7.8	17.0	10.7	10.6

*Source:* Istat, Time Use Survey 2002-2003 provisional data (ibid.: 10).

Even though this data is alarming, it remains consistent with the situation of countries that benefit from a conservative welfare regime- countries that register frequent transitions to part-time employment or persons who leave the labour market- since women are generally not encouraged to participate when the family demand is very high. The interruption on work activity, even though occurring during particular phases of a woman's life cycle can nevertheless be the result of a choice. I contend however that this choice is usually culturally influenced, and fits in with the male-breadwinner model discussed in Chapter-3. It deductively follows that this highly gendered model is perpetuated by the institutional set-up of the Italian Welfare State through the incentives created by the social and labour policy framework nexus.

#### **4.2.5 Graphical representation of Qualitative Results:**

Before proceeding to the conclusion in Chapter-5, allow for a synopsis of the results of the two rounds of qualitative interviews in tabular form. Some inferences are to be made from this

data, but it must again be noted that since the sample is statistically non-representative, this is done merely to illuminate trends in the opinions of the experts consulted.

**Table 4.5.1: First Round of Interviews:**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Theme 3</b>	<b>Theme 4</b>
<b>1</b>	No	Yes	Yes (child care)	No
<b>2</b>	No	Yes	Yes (child care)	No
<b>3</b>	No	?	Yes	No
<b>4</b>	No	No	Yes	No
<b>5</b>	Yes	Yes (difficult)	Yes (child care)	No
<b>6</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes (parental leave)	No
<b>7</b>	No	Yes	Yes	?
<b>8</b>	?	Yes	Yes	No

**Theme-1:**

62.5 % of respondents felt that policies did not make it easier for women; 25% felt it did, and one was undecided.

**Theme-2:**

87.5% of respondents felt that the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming can be measured. One remarked that this could be done, but with great difficulty. One of the respondents

emphasised the importance of gender budgeting<sup>43</sup> in increasing the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming.

### **Theme-3:**

All the respondents felt that female inactivity was a problem associated with the institutional set-up of the Italian Welfare State. The Italian welfare system seems unable to face the challenges like increased risks in the labour market, especially for youth and women, since it is based on the family as the first agent of welfare provision. The family model implies a rigid gender division, with the husband being the main breadwinner and the wife providing all the care-work. The strong Catholic tradition has historically legitimised and supported this family model and has not only had an inspirational role in shaping many social policies in Italy, but it has also always had an active part in the implementation of social services. This is expressed by the principle of subsidiarity, which gives a central role to intermediate bodies in the implementation of social policies and considers State intervention only as a last resort, as is consistent with Esping-Andersen's (1990) conservative Welfare State regime (Cancellieri & Longo, 2005).

Three of them specifically mentioned a lack of affordable and flexible child-care services as being the greatest impediment to reconciling work- and family-life. One respondent felt that increased provision of parental leave could help the situation along.

### **Theme-4:**

87.5% of the respondents felt that there was a distinct lack of political will to implement mandatory and more concrete policies to promote the increase of female labour participation. This effectively means all but one of the respondents concurred on this theme. The one respondent was undecided.

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<sup>43</sup> More to follow on this concept in Chapter-5.



**Table 4.5.2: Second Round of Interviews:**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Theme 2</b>	<b>Theme 3</b>
<b>1</b>	No	Yes (implementation problems)	No
<b>2</b>	No	No (implementation problems)	No
<b>3</b>	No	Yes (implementation problems)	No
<b>4</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>5</b>	No	No	No

**Theme 1:**

All the respondents had a negative impression of L53/2000's efficacy in increasing the female participation rate.

**Theme 2:**

60% of the respondents felt the law was ineffective. The same number of respondents mentioned that implementation is the biggest problem associated with L53/2000.

**Theme 3:**

All the respondents (as was the case with the decided respondents in the first round) felt that the distinct lack of political will was a great factor hampering the increased activation of women in the Italian labour market.

In conclusion of this chapter, a very pertinent point that emerged was the fact that the economic efficiency elements of the argument to increase the female participation to the labour market were put forward by only one of the respondents. All but one of them approached the question as one of exclusively social justice. But surely using the economic arguments elucidated in Chapter-3 could be more convincing to the neoliberalistically inspired

policy makers? The lack of political will could be turned around if specific reference is made to the role that increasing female labour market participation could potentially play in increasing the productivity<sup>44</sup> of the Italian economy, and also help to increase the fledgling fertility rate, which has recently been shown to portray a positive correlation between this rate and the female labour market participation rate.



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<sup>44</sup> "...persisting relatively high core inflation and relatively large current account deterioration suggest that there is a *structural*  $\delta$  rather than just a measurement or a cyclical  $\delta$  problem with productivity and competitiveness in Italy" (OECD, 2005: 4 emphasis added).

## **Chapter-5 Conclusion:**

Firstly, this final chapter will succinctly discuss the main findings obtained in the study by drawing together the results of the previous chapters in relation to the stated aims of the study (1.3.3). This is interspersed with an overall interpretation of the empirical results in terms of the literature and conceptual framework (discussed in Chapters-2 & 3). And finally, recommendations regarding further research and possible policy implications will be furnished, giving acknowledgment to gaps in the results and serendipitous findings.

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

As alluded to above, the overarching aim of this study was to examine the role of the Piedmont Regional and provincial government in promoting gender equity in the labour market. It was thus deemed valuable to evaluate how this affluent region of the country deals with matters pertaining to the welfare of its population (particularly women) by looking at a specific policy intervention (L53/2000).

These three aims (see 1.3.2) are addressed in different ways. Firstly, the theory of structuration- highlighting the concept of duality of structure- provided the study with the required level of theoretical analysis from which to launch the investigation. This is represented by the findings from Chapter-2.1- 2.5. The theory of structuration is deemed to be an appropriate tool in conceptualising the dialectical<sup>45</sup> interplay between social science and social reality, embodied in the constraining effect structural properties (in the form of policy reforms) has on the agency of women (in the form of work/fertility decisions) due to the influence of the structural principles (in the form of cultural attitudes) on the institutional set-up of the Italian Welfare State. Furthermore, within the context of the duality of structure (2.3.1)-holding that social systems are both the medium and outcome of social acts-the transformative potential of policy reform is also constrained by the human actions of firms management as economic agents.

This is not only socially unjust, but more importantly for Italy's dismal productivity growth performance (OECD, 2005), economically inefficient. Ms Merlino (in the pilot interview) was

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<sup>45</sup> Dialectics in Marx referred to opposing forces in reality... [and]... [w]hat Marxian philosophy derived from Hegel was that the way to understand the world was not to see it as a collection of *things* but as an evolving *process* (Sewell, 1985: 17 his emphases).

the only respondent to remark upon "...the important consequence of higher GDP" implied by increasing the number of women in the labour market. She made mention of a study conducted by a Swiss Bank stating that a positive correlation exists between increasing the female labour participation rate and the average household (or livelihood) income. This increased spending capacity along with more women in the labour market should be opening "major opportunities for women's employment". However, "Italy has [a] very big problem [in the fact] that people do not link to these things". Furthermore, from the interview with the labour economist from the University of Torino, it emerged that "flexibilisation of the labour market forces especially women [and youth] to be underemployed with low social protection". This can be interpreted as representing a negative investment in human capital, as there is fiscal investment spending in the education of women, but due to cultural attitudes creating constraining disincentives, marginal returns to these educational investments accrue, due to women being relegated mostly to informal, insecure employment.

Secondly, and directly following from above, this investigation into whether labour policies help or *hinder* the increase of female labour market participation in Italy aligns its findings with the views of those espousing the latter opinion. The empirical part of the dissertation (Chapter-4) discusses the conclusion drawn after analysing the qualitative data collected with the use of semi-structured interviews. Although there were increases in the Female Activity (or Participation) - and Female Employment rates of 6% and 6.2% respectively in the 1993-2000 period, it was still 8.6% and 8.8% below the respective corresponding EU averages (See Tables 4.1 & 4.2). In terms of female participation levels in Europe, Italy is not only lower in relation to those of Northern European countries with different traditions of welfare state, but also relative to those of the other Mediterranean countries (see 4.2.4: 87).

Thirdly, the question was asked whether employing an alternative methodological approach to "positive economics", integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, is desirable. This issue is rigorously investigated and addressed in Chapter-2.6. It is hoped that the research design employed in this study yields the type of reliable and replicable results associated with social scientific enquiry, cognisant of the theoretical underpinnings of these empirical findings.

Dissatisfaction with the purely positivistic and quantitatively obsessed orthodoxy within economic methodology provides the contextualisation of using a "synthesis of social theory"

within an investigation into economic and social policy. This idea however, is far from new. In an essay entitled *Motivation of Economic Activities*, written by Talcott Parsons in 1940,

“The traditional doctrine of economics that action in a business economy was primarily motivated by the rational pursuit of self-interest has been shown, in part to be wrong, in part to cover up a complexity of elements and their relationships of which the people who have used this formulation have for the most part been unaware. It may be hoped that [this essay will help the economist to]... do better justice to some of the empirical problems which confront the economist and will enable him [or her] to cooperate more fruitfully with the neighbouring sciences of human behaviour instead of, as has been too much the tendency in the past, insulating himself from them in a kind of hermetically sealed, closed system of his [or her] own (Parson, 1954: 66).

Being “prisoners of their paradigm”, orthodox monetarist economists became obsessed with the instrumentalist “predictive capacity” of economics as a science. In a thought provoking doctoral dissertation, Suyuti (2008: 208) makes the following pertinent statement:

“From an academic perspective, ...[i]n an era of increasing disciplinary convergence, the importance of interdisciplinary approach to the study of economic development cannot be overemphasised”.

Akin to the Critical Theorists mentioned in 2.1.3, Wilson (2009) feels that the essence of the scientific method is to find ways of understanding particular phenomena, to *verstehen*. Extrapolating this idea to the current study within the context of the emancipatory programme associated with the Frankfurt School, one needs to *verstehen* and have a modicum of control over human agency before this can occur (Held, 1985). What is required as a grounding for the social emancipation of women in the Italian labour market is self actualisation and reflexive awareness of their positioning within the structural properties (and principles) of the Continental/Mediterranean Welfare State. The question that remains is thus, how can culture and traditional values- currently employed by the ruling party to canvas support- be challenged and progressively transformed to attain the stated goal of increasing the female labour market participation rate?

## **5.2 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations**

This dissertation has asserted rigorous arguments for the Welfare State: in the context of market failure, it achieves equity objectives that many people support; and it contributes to

important broader objectives such as social cohesion and justice (Barr, 2004). Allow for a final citation from Barr (2004: 354) on the matter:

“The major efficiency role of social institutions makes them relevant to the population at large, not just to the poor. The welfare state is much more than a safety net; it is justified not simply by any redistributive aims one may (or may not) have, but because it does things that private markets for technical reasons either would not do at all, or would do inefficiently. We need a welfare state of some sort for efficiency reasons, and would continue to do so even if all distributional problems were solved.”

It has done this within the conceptual framework of the theory of structuration, formally proposed by Anthony Giddens in his 1984 work, *The Constitution of Society*, by concentrating on a particular type of state intervention in social policy, L53/2000. It considers whether policy reforms and subsequent provision of information with regards to the issue of parental leave and part-time work arrangements, makes an impact on increasing the number of women in the labour market. It further asserts that these measures do potentially make it easier for women to reconcile work- and family life, but that its transformative capacity is curtailed by the culturally entrenched (or embedded, if one prefers espousing Mark Granovetter) social institutions, embodied in the male breadwinner model. Giddens is of the opinion that it is crucially important to take cognisance of the duality of structure and the fact that human agents, by the virtue of their actions, are capable of reproducing, as well as transforming structural properties. Therefore, it is asserted that within the dialectic of control (Le Roux, 1984: 8), the transformative capacity of the policy reforms alluded to above are constrained by the human agency of firm management (amongst other stakeholders). This is not only contra to the stated goals of social justice articulated in the EES, but is actually a negative investment in human capital, as numerous women (especially in the study area) are educated and highly skilled, but are mostly employed on precarious part-time contracts, which provides little social protection, if any, in the form of care service provision. This would make it easier for women to reconcile employment and fertility decisions. Following on Barr's (2004) efficiency arguments for the Welfare State, it is held by this dissertation that state intervention into increasing the female labour market participation rate would potentially lead to an increase in productivity, and effectively, GDP growth.

However, according to Del Boca et al, (2004: 21),

“[t]he Lisbon target of 60% of female participation in 2010, would require an increase of almost 20 percentage points for Italy, implying not only a constant increase in the

level of female education, but important changes in the labour market... The Mediterranean countries have created fewer part-time jobs, mostly because their labour markets are too rigid to enable firms to create them. If they liberalise their markets to make it easier for firms to create such jobs their aggregate employment rates will be likely to rise. Our results show that this policy may have a sizeable impact on participation but at the cost of lower fertility. This implies that married women need the extra provision for family care. The EU summit passed a recommendation that by 2010 member states should provide childcare to at least 33% of children under age three and at least 90% of children between age three and mandatory school age.

This concurs with the empirical findings of this dissertation too, which found from one interview that only in the North is this target of 33% reached, and only in the north is the EES target of 60% female participation reached. The correlation between the two cannot be easily denied. There has been a shift in the commitment to gender issues within the EES when its aims, articulated in the so-called 'four pillars' were replaced by the 'ten commandments' which only has one point referring to gender issues. 'The focus on women's employment within the EES to date has been primarily on the employment rate target, with little or no attention paid either to job quality or to the importance of women's employment for social inclusion.' (Rubery et al, 2004: 605) So perhaps Italy needs to take the initiative in terms of gender equity in a more positive and proactive manner. The provision of information (as discussed above) can be seen as merely being a way to lead to individual empowerment, but does very little to actual 'group or community activation'. The concept of excluding foreign (migrant) women from the discourse and also neglecting the issue of structural class conditions make for interesting food for thought and possible further fields of investigation. What could potentially avail itself to investigation within this time of discontent with the current economic orthodoxy, is a similar investigation into the efficacy of policy in increasing female participation, using New Institutional Economics as the conceptual and theoretical framework.

As far as policy recommendations are concerned, the most appropriate one that springs to mind is for Italy to implement a type of 'Gender Equity Act' modeled on the South African Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, which states the following in its preamble:

*“To provide employment equity and to provide for matters incidental thereto*

*Recognising-*

- *That as a result of apartheid and other discriminatory laws and practices, there are disparities in employment, occupation and income within the national labour market; and*
- *That those disparities create such pronounced disadvantages for certain categories of people [including women] that they cannot be redressed simply by repealing discriminatory laws*

*Therefore, in order to-*

- *Promote the constitutional right of equality and the exercise of true democracy;*
- *Eliminate unfair discrimination in employment;*
- *Ensure the implementation of employment equity to redress the effects of discrimination;*
- *Achieve a diverse workforce broadly representative of our people;*
- *Promote economic development and efficiency in the workforce; and*
- *Give effect to the obligations of the Republic as a member of the International Labour Organisation.*

(RSA, 1998)

As the Italian situation is not one where institutionalised and legal discrimination needs to be redressed, it could thus be informed by how the Act is structured, but then extrapolating it into a gender sensitive context. Although the discrimination may not be intentional, as was the case during apartheid, none the less, the structure of the welfare state, both institutionally in terms of labour and social policies, as well as culturally (due to influences from the Vatican, as elaborated on by Naldini and Saraceno, 2008), has an impact on women as a demographic segment of Italian society that is at once unjust, and leads to non-optimal levels of economic efficiency. Though the problem of gender equity does not come from the lacking of good laws, but from the obstacles in applying them, due to perverse incentives and cultural barriers, I think it could be supported through political will if national legislation takes a progressive stance in this regard. Gerwel, G. & Le Roux (1984) argued for a form of 'direct democracy' in determining resource allocation in post-apartheid South Africa. Italy's political uncertainty and the precariousness nature of its political landscape preclude Italy from implementing this lesson from its neighbour north of the Alps.



Finally, the weak representation of women in politics and decision making positions will only assist in the perpetuation of the male breadwinner model, which serves to marginalise the mothers, sisters and daughters of this vibrant and culturally rich Nation. Recent World Bank and OECD research provides evidence that gender equality, especially in representation and rights, is an important element in development. Aside from the direct private benefits for women, equality in these dimensions also has instrumental social benefits in terms of economic growth and poverty reduction. Even after controlling for income and other factors, greater participation by women in public life is associated with cleaner business and government and better governance, which in turn also promotes economic growth (Goldin and Reinert, 2007: 219). Equity and efficiency need not be competing policy goals. By relating different notions of social justice to economic theory, this dissertation has attempted to show that the theoretical arguments of Nicholas Barr and others like Daniela Del Boca support the existence of the Welfare State not only for well-known equity reasons but also- and powerfully- in economic efficiency terms. What appears to be an irreconcilable choice between social justice and growth could be the opportunity for the phoenix of growth with equity to emerge from the ashes of institutional constraints in the form of the Italian Welfare State. Hope for the future of the Italian Republic to emerge from this quagmire of political confusion springs from the words of the Jamaican Dub poet, Linton Kwezi Johnson:

“Sometimes the pungent odour of decay, signals a brand new life upon the way.”

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