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Conceptualizing Greek Women's Resistance(s) Through Their Narratives
of Abuse By Their Male Partners: A Social Work Perspective

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SUMMARY

This thesis interrogates Greek women's narratives of abuse by their male partners informed by feminist narrative analysis. Drawing from relevant literature which views resistance as inevitable where oppression is present Greek women's narratives of abuse by their male partners are contextualized within the Greek social and cultural context. By analyzing Greek women's narratives common and different forms of resistance to abuse become evident which challenge depictions of women who have been abused by their male partners as pure victims and instead scrutinise their particular and located social and material conditions which shape the ways they manage abuse and narrate ways of resisting. Throughout my thesis my main argument has been that the Greek women I interviewed have narrated resistance(s) towards their partners' abuse and that these resistance(s) are contextualized, diverse and complex. By interpreting Greek women's coping strategies as resistance both women's strengths and the multiple constraints on women's agency posed by their social and cultural context are highlighted. A further argument is that in order for Greek women to unpack their resistance towards abuse and provide some critical understandings of their experience of abuse within which resistance occurs a theoretical context is needed which encompasses the ambivalence social progress and traditional values have generated. This theoretical context needs to consider structural inequalities and gender oppression as evident in women's narratives while at the same time being attentive to each woman's biography and complexity. A feminist-informed social work practice with women who have been abused by their male partners can redefine the problem by reference to the context of social power relations and deflect blame from women for their perceived victimization. When blame is deflected from women space is opened up for exploring women's strengths as feminist social work suggests.

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INTRODUCTION

My research was initiated by my personal interest on women's abuse by their male partners, the professional social work context within which I practice social work, that is the Greek social services context, the general acceptance that there is much to be done on the issue in Greece and the lack of a substantial amount of research and literature in Greece. What orientated my research proposal was relevant literature that conceptualized resistance as evident whenever oppression is present (Elizabeth, 2003; Faith, 1994; Hydén, 1999; Scott, 1990; Wade, 1997) and feminist research on women's abuse which highlighted women's coping strategies to manage abuse by their partners and restrictions on their agency (Campbell et al., 1998; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Elizabeth, 2003; Kelly, 1988; Kelly and Radford, 1996; Kirkwood, 1993; Lempert, 1996). Drawing from this research literature I shaped my research aim to interrogate Greek women's narratives for implying resistance, articulate the many forms it can take and contextualize them within the particular social and cultural context which involves constraints on Greek women's agency.

Though not having a direct personal experience of abuse in its narrowest definition, for the last fifteen years of my life I have been getting the feeling that abuse is more than physical violence, assaults, verbal intimidation, sexual attacks or even oppressive stereotyping of women, in other words that it is more implicit in women's every day life and can influence both our psychological and social conditions as did in mine. The context within which I was discovering these insights, the Greek society, was experienced by me and other women with whom I have been socializing as a traditional, oppressive and even conservative one, though with its contradictions generated by leaps to more progressive and liberal social conditions for women on the surface of it. It is true that as women growing up in Greece around the end of 1980s and beginning of 1990s we were experiencing this contradiction between a rather implicitly conservative upbringing and apparently equal opportunities to get education and pursue the amelioration of our social conditions.

At some point it occurred to me that the most overt aspect of this contradiction was to find out that women are abused by their male partners, whom they had met and become involved with within this apparently 'liberal' context, where women had been liberated by oppressive tactics and cultural norms, which were preparing them to become wives and dictated their partners when they were reaching the 'age for marriage'. On the other hand we were almost all experiencing a fear towards talking about feminism, a fear that I now think was embedded within the contradictory experience I already mentioned.

When I entered the social work profession, I realized that this internal conflict was experienced by social workers as well, having implications for the way we were reflecting on issues we had to address. During that time I was becoming familiar with the narrative research methodology, which for me was considered to be the most suitable method to research women's experiences of abuse by their male partners.

Therefore, my research has been a challenge for me to try and combine all these interests, in a way that will not only satisfy my academic curiosity but will contribute to the discussion and relevant literature, at least in Greece and will propose a new way of researching and working with women who have experienced abuse by their male partners, which derives from the qualitative research paradigm and draws from feminist approaches.

One of my first concerns informed by relevant feminist literature was naming the problem I was about to start researching (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; 1992; Edwards, 1987; Kelly, 1988; Kirkwood, 1993). Women's abuse in Greece is generally perceived as domestic violence in terms of policy, legislation and practice (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003; Chatzifotou, 2005; Paparriga-Kostavara, 2004). The Research Centre for Equality Issues (KETHI) of Greece, in its first epidemiological research on domestic violence (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003) adopts the term 'domestic violence' but focuses on violence against women within the family context by their male partners. Chatzifotou (2005) employs the term 'domestic violence' in her review and analysis of the issue for the Greek public in consistency

with nationally and internationally agreed upon terminology. Within the proposed research, I will use the term 'women who have experienced abuse by their male partners', as I am interested in researching women's experiences of abuse and resistance to what they experience as abuse even when it does not include physical violence (or physical violence is not its main manifestation). This choice is consistent with findings from the first epidemiological research in Greece according to which not all women conceptualize domestic violence in the same way (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003). I researched the experience of this abuse perpetrated by male partners within an intimate relationship of either marriage or cohabitation, as these social situations carry particular meaning within the Greek society and therefore provide different analytical tools. I do not consider the term 'abused women' to be unproblematic as it attaches an identity to women which sounds inescapable, although I interviewed women who have escaped or are about to escape abusive relationships. When I use the term to convey its particular meaning at a certain point in the text, I put it in brackets otherwise I use the term 'women who have experienced abuse by their male partners'. I am also attuned to the position that views women who have experienced abuse as being active agents, who employ various survival strategies towards abuse.

Acknowledging that both the women I interviewed and I inhabit the same context my reflections on the Greek context within which the women I interviewed have experienced abuse by their male partners have been ongoing during research and writing up of my thesis. As my standpoint is embedded within both the material and subjective realities of experiencing abuse I try to contextualize Greek women's narratives within the particular regimes where power is most evident that is legislation, culture and employment relevant to women's position in contemporary Greece but also within women's experiences of gender roles in contemporary Greece.

Domestic violence and abuse against women has been under-discussed in Greece. Under the influence of multiple and complex social, economic and cultural factors Greece has not followed the procedures

and policies of other European countries in terms of institutional recognition of domestic violence and therefore initiation of policies and practices to address the problem. During 1995-2005 the social recognition of the issue and any policy interventions were only initiated by the General Secretariat for Equality and by the Centre for Research on Equality Issues. Artinopoulou (2006) provides an evaluation of the progress Greece has made in terms of implementation of The Beijing Platform for Action based on the proposed indicators of family violence. In short her evaluation concludes that: there is lack of information regarding the characteristics of the 'victims' – there is direct information only for those women who ask for help from the counselling services of the General Secretariat for Equality, who are though restricted to 2% of the total number of 'abused women'; the information regarding the characteristics of the male perpetrators is limited since there are no services for abusive men in Greece and therefore any reports come from the 'victims'; regarding support of 'victims' it seems that psycho-social and legal advice is provided by the counselling services at least in five Greek cities – counselling tools and supportive material have also been developed; the indicator regarding the male perpetrator of violence is not satisfied at all in Greece since very few men seek help at special services and no therapeutic programmes for male perpetrators have been developed; the training of professionals (indicator 5) has remained at a pilot level; the State Law for addressing domestic violence has only been launched in October 2006- until then the lack of a special legislative framework was the Greek response to the sixth indicator of the Beijing Platform for Act; finally, good practices and interventions programmes for preventing and addressing domestic violence at central, regional and local level have not been implemented in Greece.

In terms of relevant policy in Greece the initiatives of the General Secretariat for Equality and the Research Centre for Equality Issues between 1995-2005 involved: a campaign in 2000 titled "Break the Silence" aiming at the sensitization of both women who are subjected to violence and of professionals and resulted in the increase of reported incidents; the setting up of an inter-ministerial committee aiming at the

processing of the legislative issue for addressing domestic violence; the organization of special training seminars for professionals who deal with incidents of domestic violence; the organization of conferences aiming at the recognition of the issue by the public; the introduction of a legislative framework which provides minoritized women who are victims of trafficking easier access to services; the setting up of 13 regional equality centres which publicize the issue and support women who have been abused; the pilot operation of an S.O.S phone line aiming at the provision of psychological and legislative support; and the organization of a European meeting on Domestic Violence within the Framework of the Greek Presidency of European Union during the first semester of 2003 (Artinopoulou, 2006).

Research on domestic violence in Greece is evident since mid 1990s and apart from the few doctoral theses on the issue there is lack of primary research on both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Artinopoulou, 2006). Research on the issue in Greece until now has mainly focused on the prevalence of the phenomenon, psychological and sociological aspects of domestic violence (Chatzifotiou, 2005; Mouzakitis, 1989 in Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003; Paparriga-Kostavara, 2004) and on the relation of the phenomenon with social/demographic variables in order to design effective policy and services. Where women's accounts were collected (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001) focus was on particular aspects of women's experience of violence. Consequently, it becomes difficult to contextualize my research within the existing relevant literature in Greece. However, the research findings on the issue in Greece highlight that there are no major differences regarding the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the issue compared with findings in other countries. One out of two women is subjected to psychological and/or verbal abuse by her partner/husband, 3.6% report that they are experiencing physical violence, while 3.5% have experienced at least one incidence of sexual abuse in their lives. What is also evident is that the attitudes of the general public towards abuse reproduce the myths relevant to abuse. At the level of punitive justice the representations of traditional gender roles are

dominant. It is also evident from the profiles of women who contact the Reception Services for Abused Women in Athens and Pireas that women's abuse in Greece pervades all socio-cultural and educational levels (Artinopoulou, 2006).

It becomes evident that the context within which Greek women experience abuse by their male partners is a patriarchal one as any developments in policy, services and legislation are very recent and still under scrutiny for implementing relevant European policies. A Greek feminist researcher (Igglessi, 1990) attempts to record and interpret the 'common experience' of being a woman in Greece, after 1975. She argues that within the Greek society radical changes on the traditional role of women as wives and mothers are evident after the Second World War, when social transformations defined new needs and opportunities and at the same time they created a climate of intense contradictions for women. Nowadays, the traditionally oppressive for women Greek society is characterized by these contradictions: the values of self-actualisation and equal treatment are evident however they do not form a common framework for women in Greece within which they shape their experiences. Therefore, the process of conscientization on gender hierarchical differentiation by the women themselves remains fragmentary and often contradictory (Igglessi, 1990). When it comes to women's abuse by their male partners patriarchal relations become evident through Greek culture within which women's abuse by their male partners is still tolerated, especially by a society dominated by strong traditional values regarding gender roles and power and by attitudes supporting the pattern of Greek husbands as not being violent to their wives and the pattern of Greek wives as being tolerant and subordinating (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003).

Clearly, there are implications for social work policy and practice with women who have experienced abuse by their male partners in Greece. Domestic violence as an area of social work research and practice is rather recent in Greece posing challenges to current social work education, research, policy and practice. Within the context of 'domestic violence' social workers in Greece are now faced with the

need to redefine their duties, techniques, perception of and knowledge about women who have been abused by their male partners.

My research is embedded with an extensive literature on domestic violence which has been published since the issue was first researched in 1970s (Bograd, 1990; Breines and Gordon, 1983; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Gelles and Straus, 1979; Radford and Russell, 1992). Since then many researchers from various fields have brought the issue to the public attention along with the women's movement (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; 1992; Edwards, 1987; Kirkwood, 1993; Mullender, 1996). Within the academic arena research was brought to the fore shaping to a great extent the context within which theory, practice and policy was developed. It is now commonly acknowledged that the vast majority of research on domestic violence initially produced derived from either sociology or psychology (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Gelles and Straus, 1979; Kirkwood, 1993) which gave rise to widely accepted explanatory theories of domestic violence. A breakthrough was made when feminist research entered the arena of domestic violence research providing new insights on theory, research and even interrogated the definition itself (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; 1992; Edwards, 1987; Kelly, 1988; Kirkwood, 1993).

One of the most insightful contributions of feminist research was the link between the personal domain of domestic violence with the social context within which it is occurring and especially with the multiple levels of women's oppression and power relations existing within the society which generate, tolerate and perpetuate the phenomenon (Bograd, 1990; Edwards, 1987; Hester, Kelly and Radford, 1996; Kirkwood, 1993; Radford and Russell, 1992). The politicization of the problem of women's abuse can be attributed to feminism which challenged the tendency to 'degender the problem and gender the blame' (Berns, 2001).

As feminist research was developing new approaches emerged within its broader context focusing on women's personal experiences of violence in the form of narratives which formed the basis for an analysis of both the personal and the social context of violence and at the same

time highlighting commonalities and differences among these experiences (Fraser, 2004). Through women's narratives of abuse analytical themes of power and agency as not so straightforward concepts but rather as a dynamic and fragmented process (Cavanagh, 2003; Elizabeth, 2003; Kirkwood, 1993) emerged as well as diverse conceptualizations of women's experiences of abuse (Fraser, 2003; Hydén, 2005). This kind of feminist research celebrated women's subjectivity regarding experiences of domestic violence without jeopardizing its political nature and it also revealed women's power and agency when experiencing a violent relationship, thus questioning women's depictions as victims (Elizabeth, 2003; Kelly, 1988; Kirkwood, 1993). As an intense discussion has been initiated about 'feminisms' and the jeopardizing or promotion of women's interests within each strand (Dominelli, 2002; Featherstone, 1997; Harding, 2004; Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996) I identify my theoretic framework as a feminist standpoint which acknowledges women's oppression, is attentive to structural and material constraints in women's lives and also acknowledges multiplicity of women's voices and discourses that may fall out of traditional feminist ideas.

I will try to locate women's resistance as manifested through its various forms within their narratives drawing on literature which views resistance as inevitable where oppression is present (Elizabeth, 2003; Faith, 1994; Hydén, 1999; Wade, 1997) and contextualising their resistances in the Greek social and cultural context. A crucial focus of reflecting on women's connection of violent experience with their wider context is on tracing their resistance towards abuse by their male partners through their narratives. An initial hypothesis is that by analyzing women's narratives common and different forms of resistance to abuse become evident and can be located within its social, structural and cultural context in order to link the personal with the social or, in social work terms, to interrogate the interactive process between the person and her social environment. By exploring agency in Greek women's narratives of abuse I try to conceptualize these strategies as resistance(s). I do so driven by political and ethical values which lead me to

problematize resistance as a challenge to patriarchal social relations for such a definition might be too demanding for women who have experienced abuse; I listened to Greek women's 'repertoires of resistance' as actions or inactions which required agency on the part of the women given their resources and constraints posed on them at that particular time. I decide to name these actions or inactions as 'resistance(s)' in order to highlight the exercise of agency on the part of women and to argue for an empowering re-naming of women's coping strategies which, however, does not romanticize all women's actions or inactions towards abuse by their male partners. Having reflected on the Greek patriarchal context these agentic strategies do not claim to undermine it but rather acquire their definition as 'resistance(s)' when contextualized within this context which poses restrictions on Greek women's agency. The Greek patriarchal context poses restrictions on women's accessible discourses as well and therefore I argue that by naming their actions as 'resistance(s)' space is provided for alternative discourses.

Throughout my endeavour I try to preserve a critical view on the research process and my positioning as a researcher drawing from feminist insights on reflexivity (Borland, 1991; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Jackson, 1998; Kelly, 1988; King, 1996; Mauthner and Doucet, 1997; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Reay, 1996; Woodward, 2000). My intention to study Greek women's abuse and resistance by their male partners is not just aimed at promoting understanding for its own sake but also for the sake of enhancing services for women who have been abused by their male partners in Greece. Therefore, my analysis will be placed within and connected to the social work context and especially the Greek social work context. It has been reported that domestic violence incidents are often in Greek social workers' every day practice and social workers in Greece are worried about issues of recognition, recording and addressing of the problem (Chatzifotiou, 2005).

In Chapter 1 the literature on domestic violence is reviewed by reference to later discussions on traditional research. The basic strands of

sociology and psychology research on domestic violence have been critically reviewed by other researchers and I provide a review of these critics. My objective for reviewing this literature is to highlight the influence it had on popular beliefs widely held about women's abuse by their partners and my analysis of women's accounts will explore the impact they have on Greek women's perception and coping with abuse. Feminist research on domestic violence which challenged these theories is then critically reviewed since it informs my research practice and methodology. The research context is set through reviewing narrative research on domestic violence, research on women's resistance to abuse and through exploring connections between feminist narratives, women's abuse and social work.

In order to narrow the context of my research in Chapter 2 I provide information about the Greek context: research on women's perceptions of their equal treatment with men, education and employment of Greek women, cultural beliefs and norms, policy and services, research on the issue of domestic violence in Greece, and legislation are reviewed in order to set the context within which the analysis of women's narratives of abuse and resistance will be placed.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the methodology of my proposed research. Within the methodology chapter I try to bridge chapters 1 and 2 as my research design is introduced encompassing the need for feminist narrative research on domestic violence in Greece. Further in this chapter I articulate the feminist narrative research context by discussing relevant issues. After I provide the rationale of my research and its aims and objectives, I discuss the relevant literature on feminist narratives which involves questions of power/knowledge, interpretation and reflexivity. Within this chapter I share some of my reflections on conducting research with Greek women who have been abused and I raise questions about my location as a researcher which shapes my choices at every stage of the research. I then move on to relate these issues with the particularities of my research: I provide information about the sample of my research, the interview context and the interpretation I attempted.

Finally, I discuss ethical issues relevant to my research as well as limitations of my research.

In Chapter 4 I set the context of my interrogation which seeks to unpack Greek women's narratives for implying their resistance(s) to abuse. The continuum of resistance(s) is further refined in order to suggest a conceptualization of resistance as multiple and complex, however omnipresent whenever abuse is narrated.

Forms of subtle resistance(s) are conceptualized and analysed in Chapter 5, which are divided into ambiguity, compliance, emotional distancing and health damage. The politics of naming these resistances are unpacked as the apparently passive coping strategies commonly named as ambiguity, compliance, emotional distancing and health damage are re-read in search for power and agency within them.

In Chapter 6 I provide an analysis of Greek women's open resistance to abuse as evident in three forms: verbal confrontation, seeking support/going public and initiatives.

Chapter 7 attempts an interpretation of some Greek women's narrative extracts as narrative resistance by reference to their narrative styles and 'resistance discourses'.

Throughout my interpretation of Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance I try to highlight both commonalities and differences among women's accounts. My project shifts back and forth from the personal to the social and in terms of the story told, the narrative of my thesis, I find Lawless's invitation very challenging: "It is the collective story we need to expose, to speak, and to hear, recognizing at the same time that each story in and of itself is significant, different and personal" (Lawless, 2001:4). By adopting this analytical method I intend to explore strategies women use to cope with their partners' abuse and its effects and highlight the process of resisting. This issue is analyzed and discussed informed by the particularities of the Greek context within which these women experience abuse and its effects.

Finally, in Chapter 8 I discuss the implications of my research, and in particular implications for theorizing from Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance(s) and implications which could inform

social work practice in Greece. I also provide some recommendations for policy and future research which evolved out of my own questions raised while conducting research.

By the end of my research inquiry I have reached a point from where to view the issue of domestic violence in Greece and argue for a feminist-informed research and practice with women who have experienced abuse by their male partners. However, my view can only be partial and contested and instead of claiming 'truth' for my argument I invite further discussion on the issue within the Greek context.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

1.1 Traditional research

Domestic violence captured researchers' interest since late 1960s and early 1970s (Cavanagh, 2003; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Jasinski, 2001; Klein et al., 1997; Mooney, 2001) and since then a wealth of information has been produced on the issue (Bograd, 1990; Breines and Gordon, 1983; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Gelles and Straus, 1979; Kirkwood, 1993; Pyles and Postmus, 2004).

Researchers who have reviewed theory and research results on the issue provide critical reviews of the two basic strands of theory produced deriving from either sociology or psychology (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Jasinski, 2001; Kirkwood, 1993; Klein et al. 1997; Mooney, 2001; Mullender, 1996). Reviewers of domestic violence literature have attempted to roughly divide it to strands: intra-individual, situational and societal-level explanations (Gelles and Straus, 1979; Pahl, 1985; Pagelow, 1981) or micro-oriented, macro-oriented and multidimensional theories (Jasinski, 2001).

Feminist scholarship along with the battered women's movement questioned fundamental assumptions of prior research and contributed in expanding understandings of the issue and in rendering it a serious social problem (Aris, Hague and Mullender, 2003; Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Hirsch, 1994; Kelly, 1988; Kelly and Radford, 1998; Kirkwood, 1993; Fineman and Mykitiuk, 1994; Klein et al., 1997; Mahoney, 1994; Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996; Radford and Russell, 1992; Stanko, 2003). Perceptions of domestic violence as a multi-faceted issue that cannot be adequately explained by one-dimensional theories have also emerged (Jasinski, 2001; Klein et al. 1997; Mears and Visher, 2005).

Researchers occupied with the issue of domestic violence have focused on several forms and aspects of the issue (Jasinski, 2001; Kelly and Radford, 1998; Okun, 1986; Pyles and Postmus, 2004) and more recent scholarship has challenged common understandings of related concepts (Fineman and Mykitiuk, 1994), provided new conceptual frameworks (Hanmer and Itzin, 2001) and introduced the

intersectionality of several aspects of women's lives (Bernard, 1997; Bograd, 2005; Crenshaw, 1994; Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996; Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005).

Within this developing literature the role of social work in addressing the problem has been widely interrogated (Danis, 2003; Davis and Srinivasan, 1995; Humphreys, 1999; Mullender, 1996; Pyles and Postmus, 2004) in terms of social work theory and practice.

I will attempt a critical review of these debates in order to set the context of my current analysis. As my research focuses on women's narratives of resistance to men's abuse, I will also review relevant research on both narrative research on women's abuse and research on women's resistance to abuse.

1.1.1 The legacy of psychology

Psychology has mostly attributed violence between men and women to deviant characteristics of the man, the woman or both (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Mullender, 1996; Pahl, 1985; Pagelow, 1981). Psychological research on women's abuse has produced popular concepts, explanatory theories and stereotypes of both 'abused women' and abusive men, which will be reviewed here as they are evident in the context within which Greek women experience abuse by their male partners.

Early research on deviant characteristics of individuals engaged in intimate partner violence episodes focused primarily on the victim (Jasinski, 2001). Within the field of psychology women are depicted as masochistic, paranoid or depressed (Bograd, 1990).

In 1980s Gelles (1985) reports that a popular professional theory of the time was that violence arises out of psychological problems of the victims. Dobash and Dobash (1979) review the results of Snell's research which found wives of assaulters to be "aggressive, efficient, masculine and sexually frigid", with a "strong need to control the relationship" (Snell et al, 1964 in Dobash and Dobash, 1979), implying that women were to blame for the abuse because of these 'deviant' characteristics. The abuse was found to maintain stability between husband and wife by

providing space for release from anxiety for the man and 'masochistic gratification' for the woman who felt guilty for her hostility expressed in her controlling behavior (Snell et al. in Kirkwood, 1993). In this theory abuse is perceived as a behavioral pattern agreed upon by the couple both of whom are perceived as deviant.

Psychiatrist J.J. Gayford, invited by the founder of the first woman's shelter in Britain Erin Pizzey to conduct research on battered women in the shelter, portrayed battered women as 'masochists', who "need protection against their own stimulus-seeking activities. Though they flinch from violence like other people, they have the ability to seek violent men or by their behavior provoke attack from the opposite sex." (Gayford in Finkelhor et al., 1983:337). The implications of such a theory suggest that possible solutions should be pursued within the personal domain that is by providing psychological help to battered women (Kirkwood, 1993) in order for them to become more powerful and controlling over their lives (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Dobash and Dobash (1992) trace depictions of women as 'masochists' although in a 'new form' in later works, as well. Shainess (in Dobash and Dobash, 1992) asserts that all women suffer from masochism, though this problem is created for women from the patriarchal society. Self-punishment, compliance and suffering are all aspects of this new masochism created for women by the patriarchal society in which women are urged to seek solutions to social problems by addressing their personal problems. The presence of this 'masochistic syndrome' makes women vulnerable to violence. Related to masochism is the 'relationship addiction' concept (Norwood, 1985; 1988 in Dobash and Dobash, 1992) which proposes that women in bad relationships are addicted to them, they choose dangerous men and dangerous situations. They fear abandonment and so they behave in a particular way which in turn provokes a violent response.

Later in the 1970s psychological analysis continued to blame women for abuse through attributing to them characteristics which were culturally deviant and thus made women prominent to abuse (Gayford, 1975 in Kirkwood, 1993). Though popular research found these

characteristics to be a result and not a cause of violence (Walker in Finkelhor et al, 1983) these characteristics were summarized by the label 'battered woman syndrome', which includes psychological sequelae developed by battered women (Walker, 1983) and gave rise to further research on battered women's psychopathology. The 'battered woman's syndrome' encapsulated popular theoretical explanations of wife battering, such as 'learned helplessness'. Learned helplessness is meant to explain either why women stay in an abusive relationship or why they become victims of violence by tracing the process of victimization in women's background of rigid sex role socialization, paternalistic upbringing and adherence to fulfill male wishes (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Walker (1983) whose name is related to the concept of 'learned helplessness' asserts that "Seligman's (1978) reformulation of learned helplessness theory would suggest an attributional style of assigning causality for successful experiences to external and specific factors and failures to internal and global ones" (Walker, 1983:40). Therefore, although societal factors have been included to explain why a woman is battered, the question remains targeted to her. Reflecting on that finding, Walker argues that women are bound with their abusers through a 'cycle of violence' resulting in 'learned helplessness' (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). The first two stages of this 'cycle of violence', the tension building and the explosion of violence are followed by excuses and promises for change on the part of man and this cycle is repeated turning the woman to a victim who has learned to be helpless.

Traditional psychological research on domestic violence focused on abusive men as well. Jasinski (2001) reports that the lack of real evidence for women's pathological characteristics as explanatory factors of intimate violence together with pressure by the women's movement led to a new focus on the personality characteristics of batterers.

Dobash and Dobash (1979) review the work of Schultz in the 1960s, which found men to have "domineering, rejecting mother relationships" resulting in "a submissive, passive individual", so pathological characteristics are still to blame for the abuse. Walker (1983:47) suggested that "there may be an identifiable violence-prone

personality for the men”, composed of “a history of temper tantrums, insecurity, need to keep the environment stable and non-threatening, jealousy and possessiveness” and who is at a high risk of exploding when he does not succeed to get what he wants. The ‘history’ of the abuser’s violent-prone personality is most commonly ‘written’ by a strict father and an inconsistent mother, who was exerting strict control and discipline over her son while at the same time was trying to protect him from his father’s potential violence (Walker, 1983). The implication here is that the psychological patterns of the abusive men are learned but women as mothers are those who transmit them to their sons. As evident from traditional psychological theories on women who have experienced abuse by their male partners these men later relate with women who repeat the pattern of the ‘nurturing mother’ and if they fail to do so violence explodes. As Dobash and Dobash (1992) conclude by further reviewing psychological research on violent men, research correlates men’s pathological characteristics with their poor relationships with women, either their past relationship with their mothers or their current relationships with their women partners. Within this prism, women are to be blamed for men’s abusive behavior either as their mothers or their partners.

Another popular explanation for abusive men’s behavior is found in the phrase ‘loss of control’ which men use in order to excuse themselves, supported by the clinical literature with terms such as ‘poor impulse control’ and ‘paroxysmal rage attacks’ (Mullender, 1996). Therefore, violent men have no control over their violent action and are justified by psychological explanations not to be able to control themselves. Once more, they are to be excused for their behavior although it is directed deliberately towards their women partners. According to the ‘loss of control’ explanation, men employ violence whenever they loose control, however this explanation obscures the fact that men employ violence only towards their women partners when they loose control.

Perpetrators’ psychopathology as an explanatory factor for men’s violent behaviour also includes perpetrators’ depressive

symptomatology, low self-esteem, aggressive or hostile personality, pure communication and social skills, need for power in order to overcome anxiety for maintaining control over their lives and others, narcissistic personalities, as well as anxiety for abandonment (Bograd, 1990; Jasinski, 2001).

Alcohol has often been associated with violent behaviour (Galvani, 2006; Jasinski, 2001; Leonard, 2001; Mullender, 1996).

1.1.2 Critiques of psychological theories

Even popular traditional research challenged deviant psychological characteristics of either the abusive man or the abused woman as explanatory factors of conjugal abuse. As early as the beginning of 1980s researchers have concluded that 'abused women's' pathological characteristics are rather a result and not a cause of abuse (Walker, 1983; Okun, 1986). Moreover, Gelles (1983) suggests that after ten years of psychological research on domestic violence it has been found that the proportion of individuals that suffer from psychological disorders and resort to domestic violence is no greater than the general population facing psychological problems.

Theories that relate abuse with 'abused women's' deviant characteristics have been criticized strongly by later researchers and 'abused women's' emotional distress has been reframed as a consequence rather than a causal factor for intimate abuse (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Humphreys and Thiara, 2003; Herman, 1997; Jasinski, 2001; Kirkwood, 1993; Klein et al., 1997; Mullender, 1996).

Psychological theories that attribute abuse to women's personalities and have proposed concepts like 'masochistic woman', 'learned helplessness' and 'battered woman syndrome' rely on tests and measurements that have not gone unchallenged. As Dobash and Dobash (1992) and Mullender (1996) argue, these studies indicate that women who have experienced violence do not differ from other women. This finding suggests methodological weaknesses traced back to the clinical contexts where such studies were conducted with biased samples by researchers who already operate from a particular stance (Mullender,

1996). According to Dobash and Dobash (1996) psychological studies on women who have experienced abuse by their male partners suggesting that some women are susceptible to violence have constructed a whole range of diverse reputed ailments, which illustrate the investigators' starting point. Women's unconscious masochism is questionable, since it was conducted in shelters for 'abused women', where the living conditions could probably have caused psychological difficulties (Kirkwood, 1993).

Attributing woman battering to women's pathological characteristics has been also criticized as reductionist and simplistic, isolating violence from its multi-dimensional and complex context (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Hanmer, 2002; Stark and Flitcraft, 1996).

Related to women's masochism are theories of women's addiction to abusive relationships. These theories have been challenged by later studies (Pahl, 1985) which suggest that none of the women had experienced repeated violence after moving on to a new stable relationship. This finding suggests that women moving on with their lives after the abusive relationship look for a healthier relationship pattern and do not seek abuse in order to satisfy their presumed addiction. Furthermore, studies revealed that women find that abuse kills their love (Pahl, 1985).

Critiques of 'learned helplessness' attributed to 'abused women' suggest that women's active attempts to seek help challenge perceived masochistic traits (Mullender, 1996). Even if they do finally find themselves to be helpless one should probably consider the inaction of helping agencies instead of women's inaction (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Women's coping mechanisms and help-seeking initiatives (Campbell et al.1998; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Elizabeth, 2003; Kelly, 1988; Kelly and Radford, 1996; Kirkwood, 1993; Lempert, 1996) illustrate women's efforts to manage and free themselves from abuse, in contrast with theories of women as 'learning to be helpless'. Although some of these strategies might be perceived as 'learned helplessness' by women themselves, when culturally constructed notions that blame

women for their husband's abuse are taken into consideration, women's attempts to seek help are seen as demanding more determination than usually perceived.

Psychological theories on abusive men's psychopathology tend to excuse the use of violence by attributing it to family, faulty backgrounds or situational factors, thus deflecting blame from men (Bograd, 1990; Hanmer, 2001; Kurz, 1998). In particular, theories that trace psychological deficiencies in abusive men explain them on the grounds of negative childhood experiences, usually poor mothering, which men seek to restore by relying on their wives' 'parental treatment', which in case it is unsuccessful, violence explodes. Therefore, once again, women are to blame for violence, either as mothers or as wives, while men are ignorant of what they are doing (Dobash and Dobash, 1992).

Psychological explanations focus on men's submerged anger which is rooted in their families and personal backgrounds. Attributing particular psychological characteristics to abusive men suggests that these characteristics, once indicated and measured would determine a man's abusive behavior. However, several studies have failed to illustrate psychological particularities of abusive men (Jasinski, 2001). Loss of control as an excuse of men's abusive behavior would mean that since anger is uncontrollable by men, it would be targeted to anyone who might provoke it. Reality though demonstrates that women are the target of men's anger and that since men do not beat or abuse others (i.e their bosses) the issue of intentionality and choice to abuse their wives emerges (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Mullender, 1996). Relevant studies come to back this argument by illustrating that the majority of men who claimed loss of control for their abusive behavior were not violent outside the family (Ptacek, 1990). Therefore, there are implications for interrelatedness and relative importance of men's choice to use violence, as an action which is purposeful, contains meaning and is culturally excused and socially supported.

Abusive men are not accountable for their actions within drug and alcohol explanatory theories, since it is alcohol that releases anger

and violence. However, alcohol can not adequately explain why the vast majority of drunken men do not abuse their wives as found in relevant surveys (Mullender, 1996) nor why even when they do become violent under alcohol they abuse their wives. Many researchers have approached alcohol as an intervening variable which is used as an excuse for violence that men have already decided to use (Pahl, 1985; Ptacek, 1990). Recent studies have also revealed that although alcohol is a contributing cause in domestic violence, it is neither a necessary nor sufficient cause (Leonard, 2001). Women themselves do not hold alcohol consumption but rather men responsible for their behaviour (Galvani, 2006). The causal link between alcohol and violence can be attributed to a simplistic analysis, which overlooks a range of both personal and social factors (Humphreys et al. 2005).

Psychological theories suggested that intimate violence is a matter of 'deviant' individuals and therefore intimate violence is an exceptional pattern of intimate relationships. They also isolated intimate violence from its social context, an aspect that sociology attempted to address.

1.1.3 The sociological turn

The recognition of family violence as a social problem attracted the attention of sociology in 1970s (Gelles, 1985; Jasinski, 2001; Kirkwood, 1993; Kurz, 1998). Sociology criticized earlier psychological theories on domestic violence and assumed that social structural factors lead to wife abuse (Bograd, 1990, Kirkwood, 1993). Within sociological research surveys revealing the prevalence of domestic violence were conducted, which were widely publicized and legitimized national concern (Klein et al.1997).

Sociological literature on domestic violence has been produced on the grounds of a theoretical distinction: literature which attempts to approach and to explain domestic violence by applying theories of general violence to the family and literature which was produced by focusing on family as a distinctive social structure, which requires special

study (Gelles and Straus, 1979; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980; Kirkwood, 1993).

Reviews of sociological theories which attempt to explain domestic violence as a social problem have been published in more extended or narrow versions (Bograd, 1990; Gelles and Straus, 1979; Jasinski, 2001; Okun, 1986; Pagelow, 1981; Pahl, 1985; Kirkwood, 1993). I will attempt a critical review of the major sociological theories of domestic violence.

Stress has been correlated with domestic violence as a deterrent caused by stressful structural factors such as unemployment (Stark and Flitcraft, 1996) or by low self-esteem which is threatened when men feel they are losing control over their life, marriage and family (Pagelow, 1981). The family is a frustrating structure for its members who respond aggressively to frustrating events and family burden and violence becomes the means to achieve positive self-image (Gelles and Straus, 1979). Structural theory of violence asserts that members of the society occupying lower socioeconomic positions experience more stress and frustration and violence is a reaction to these deprivations (Gelles and Straus, 1979). Stress is an integral feature of this explanatory approach to violence, as a stimulus which provokes violence.

Related to this structural approach is the resource theory, within which violence is a response to frustrating circumstances too, although what causes frustration is the loss of power and control. Therefore, violence "is used as a resource when all other sources of power and control were unavailable" (Kirkwood, 1993). The fundamental assertion upon which resource theory is based is that all social systems rest to some degree on force or its threat (Goode in Dobash and Dobash, 1979; in Gelles, 1985). Force is employed when resources tend to diminish (Gelles and Straus, 1979; Gelles, 1985) and thus force is expected to be more frequently met within groups with limited resources (Kirkwood, 1993).

The social learning theory explains violent behavior as a learned response (LaViolette and Barnett, 2000; Bograd, 1990; Gelles and Straus, 1979; Pahl, 1985; Pagelow, 1981; Sipe and Hall, 1996; Stark and

Flitcraft, 1996). The learning situation provides knowledge on violence and on appropriateness of violence. The learning of violence can be reached through either exposure to violence and imitation or through the learning of norms that approve violence or even as a role-model's response. Applied to family, the social learning theory argues that the family is a training ground for violence, as it provides role-models as well as rewards and punishments which may encourage or reinforce violence (Gelles and Straus, 1979; Jasinski, 2001; Pagelow, 1981).

One of the best-known theories of family violence is exchange theory, according to which the members of a relationship pursue rewards and avoid punishment on the basis of reciprocity (Gelles and Straus, 1979; Jasinski, 2001). Thus, an individual who supplies rewards to another expects benefits. If reciprocity is not achieved the interaction is obscured. According to this theory, family members invest on reciprocity and seek 'distributive justice', that is a level of rewards proportional to their investment and input. When reciprocity is not received, violence provides the rewards missed (Gelles and Straus, 1979).

The "clockwork orange" theory views violence as a response to a low level of tension which might be associated with the reciprocity of social roles. Therefore, the theory assumes that when reciprocity in roles fits too well within the family, the absence of tension it causes leads to violence as a means to achieve an "assumed optimal stress or tension level" (Gelles and Straus, 1979).

Symbolic interaction is treated by Gelles and Straus (1979) as a conceptual framework rather than a formal theory, which provides the theoretical ground to approach violence as a bearer of subjective meanings conveyed between those involved in family violence situations. Violence is then constructed by "the dynamics of the situation, careers and life cycles of violent episodes, and the encounters between actors in violent situations" (Gelles and Straus, 1979:563). A phenomenological analysis of family violence provided by Denzin (1984) places emotionality and the self at the core and suggests that family members who experience abuse find themselves trapped "within an interactional world that feeds on violence, doubt, fear, negative emotionality,

physically abused bodies and selves, deceptions and lies” (Denzin, 1984: 508) which structure a negative experience gradually leading to self-destruction.

Attribution theory asserts that within the family any malevolent intent can be attributed to the actions of another family member, who in turn is provided with the basis to form an identity and self – image as aggressive (Gelles and Straus, 1979).

Another group of sociological theories of domestic violence are classified as sociocultural theories (Gelles and Straus, 1979) or societal-level explanations (Finkelhor et al., 1983) and their common ground is that they examine family violence in terms of social structural factors which contain social organization and cultural norms (Bograd, 1990; Gelles and Straus, 1979; Finkelhor et al., 1983; Pahl, 1985; Pagelow, 1981; Jasinski, 2001). This group of theories includes functional theory, culture of violence theory, structural theory, general systems theory, conflict theory and resource theory.

Functional theory assumes that violence within the family can function towards maintaining its adaptability and flexibility when it faces “institutionalized rigidities” (Gelles and Straus, 1979:565). In other words, “violence is one response to structural and situational stimuli”(Bograd, 1990:18).

The culture of violence theory argues that violence is a distinctive feature of the lower socioeconomic levels of society, where violence is an integral part of respective cultural norms and values. Participants of these cultural norms and values learn to be violent and to legitimize violent behavior through socialization within this subculture (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Gelles and Straus, 1979, Pahl, 1985; Pagelow, 1981; Jasinki, 2001).

Within the general systems theory, family is viewed as a “goal-seeking, purposeful, adaptive system” (Gelles and Straus, 1979:567) and violence is produced by the system, through positive or negative processes which influence the levels of violence.

Conflict theory explains that different ‘interests’ among family members are pursued through conflict (Gelles and Straus, 1979).

Finally, a very popular theory of family violence in the mid 70s and into the 80s was the 'transgenerational cycle of violence'. Straus and Steinmetz (in Kirkwood, 1993) found in their studies that there is a high correlation between childhood experience with violence and violent experiences in adult relationships. According to this theory, violence is transmitted from one generation to another through experience, so children who experience violence in their parental family are predisposed to violence in their future adult relationships (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Gelles and Straus, 1979, Pahl, 1985; Pagelow, 1981; Jasinki, 2001).

1.1.4 Critiques of sociological theories

Sociological theories are generally criticized as 'gender-neutral' (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Itzin, 2001; Kurz, 1998; Mooney, 2001) as they fail to indicate the perpetrator of violence. Although sociology shifted focus from personal characteristics and incorporated the social context of domestic violence (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Kirkwood, 1993; Kurz, 1998), sociological research was scrutinized for methodological and analytical inadequacy. Kurz (1998) states that there are two reasons preventing researchers from presenting the full extent of violence against women in social life: the fact that family becomes the unit of analysis, thus becoming indifferent to perpetrator's sex and gender issues or, where this does not happen and the focus is on violence against women, the compartmentalization of the study, which views and analyzes the issue as separate and distinct from other forms of violence against women.

Sociological explanations of women's abuse focusing on family dynamics did not encompass the social circumstances in which violence against women become a tool of further domination (Bograd, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993) and abstracted the phenomenon from its socio-cultural context (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Hammer, 2002, Yllo, 1990). It is also unlikely that family research includes accurate self-reports from perpetrators and victims (Bagshaw and Chung, 2000).

Resource theory and 'theory of subculture of violence' which attribute wife battering to external factors that cause anxiety to family

members are criticized as this would mean that men who do not suffer such pressure do not beat their wives, whereas this is not the case (Mooney, 2001; Mullender, 1996). Moreover, resource theory fails to explain why sex is central to economic power rather than ability and what the 'profit' is for men who beat their wives (Stark and Flitcraft, 1996).

Functional theories take it as a pre-given that family, for the preservation of which force is used, functions for the benefit of the society without investigating the particular benefits deriving for men (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Kirkwood, 1993).

The theory of 'cycle of violence' has been criticized for its reliance on gender-neutral investigations which confounded the difference between transmitting the experience of learning to be a batterer and learning to be battered. In order to redress this methodological flaw later studies addressed the issue and reported that men learn to be perpetrators and women learn to be victims of violence, a theoretical conclusion which resembles psychological theories of abuse (Kirkwood, 1993). Studies which investigated the correlation between childhood experiences of abuse and later experience with violence in adult relationships showed that the correlation was not particularly strong (Pahl, 1985; Jasinski, 2001). Rather, childhood experience of abuse was a reliable predictive factor of a woman's decisions on responding to abuse (Kirkwood, 1993). Furthermore, Pagelow (1981) commented on the indifference of these studies to the experience of observing or being a victim of parental violence. It has been argued that the 'cycle of abuse' is a variant of the ungendered professional approach (Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996). Mullender (1996) reviewing critiques of the 'theory of cycle of violence' by later researchers reports that these studies conclude that this theory has not predictive value and it is over-deterministic, as it separates human behavior from choice of using or not using violence. She also argues that these studies have methodological flaws: samples are clinical and therefore unrepresentative, they lack control groups, data are derived in retrospect, as people are asked about their past (Mullender,

1996) and data derive from women's accounts of their male partners' histories (Lamb, 1996).

Clearly, what sociological literature on family violence revealed was that it failed to provide a comprehensive theory which places domestic violence in its historical and socio-cultural context, within which violence is one aspect of men's relative power to sustain their domination and women's oppression. This task was undertaken by the women's movement and feminist research.

1.2 Feminist research on women's abuse

Criticism to both psychological and sociological mainstream research on wife abuse was undertaken and taken further by feminist research (Bergen, 1998; Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Hanmer and Maynard, 1987; Hester, Kelly and Radford, 1996; Kirkwood, 1993; Yllö and Bograd, 1990). Understanding, rather than explaining women's abuse emerged as the urgent inquiry as these concepts failed to provide more effective responses to women's abuse.

One of the first issues with which feminist research became occupied within the domestic violence question is the term itself and its definition (Bograd, 1990; DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2001; Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Itzin, 2001; Kelly, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Kelly and Radford, 1996; Kurz, 1998; Marcus, 1994; Mooney, 2001; Mullender, 1996; Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996; Radford, Harne and Friedberg, 2000), as the way the issue is perceived can have great influence on the relevant theory, policy, legislation, research and practice (Itzin, 2001; Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996; Wilcox, 2006; Wood and Roche, 2001).

Kirkwood (1993) reports that in America, sociological research on child abuse provided a framework within which battering could be studied independently from theories that had emerged in an attempt to explain the issue and that in the mid 1970s battering was viewed by American research as a form of 'family violence' or 'domestic violence'. Researchers from this traditional American sociological research on the issue of family violence also produced definitions like 'spouse abuse' or

'conjugal violence' shifting focus from family to the marital couple but still not indicating the perpetrator.

Providing a definition is itself a political/ideological choice which influences subsequent choices of what is investigated, how, by whom and why. Diverse perceptions of violence and relevant definitions might distort or exclude violent instances which are not perceived by researchers in the same way as by the researched women (Kelly, 1990), thus highlighting the issue of breadth or narrowness of definitions (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2001; Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Woode and Roche, 2001). The politics of naming and definition has been a central theme for feminist theorizing of women's abuse 'shaping the development of research and knowledge creation' (Radford, Harne and Friedberg, 2000:1).

For some feminist researchers women's abuse by their male partners is one of the many forms of violence women experience by men in their lives (Kelly, 1988; Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996; Stanko, 1990; Fineman and Mykitiuk, 1994; Hanmer and Itzin, 2001; Hanmer and Maynard, 1987). Kelly (1988) provided the concept of 'continuum of violence' to capture the range of experiences within and between different forms of abuse. The term also expresses the connections between the many ways women of different ages, classes, races, sexualities and dis/abilities experience sexual violence and abuse (Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996).

Within feminist research on women's abuse by their male partners there seems to have been a consensus in the criticism towards equalitarian or gender-neutral terms, such as 'domestic violence', 'family violence' or 'spousal violence', as feminists agree that these terms ignore the context of the violence and the power relations that sustain violence against women (Bograd, 1990; Edwards, 1987; Hammer, 2002; Mooney, 2001; Radford and Hester, 2006). The development evident within feminist theorising on the issue is the attempt "to formulate a perspective which encompasses several or all forms of male violence, abuse and exploitation of women and to link them all to the underlying struggle by

men to retain and reinforce their dominant position as a group over women in society” (Edwards, 1987:23-24).

Mooney (2001) suggest that gender-neutral terms such as ‘domestic violence’ are not helpful with regard to theoretical or policy concerns, though it is a term most favoured in policy-making areas. DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2001) argue that narrow definitions restrain women from seeking social support as women know they have been abused but their abuse cannot be categorized according to researchers’, criminal justice officials’, politicians’ or general public definitions.

Feminist research and women’s movement named the problem ‘violence against women’ (Dobash and Dobash, 1998) or ‘wife abuse’ (Bograd, 1990) in order to place women’s abuse within the particular context of marriage. The term ‘sexual violence’ has also been proposed, which recognizes that violence is a gendered phenomenon within the context of patriarchal social relations (Kelly, 1988). Radford, Harne and Friedberg (2000) argue that the limitation of the concept of ‘violence against women’, is that although it signifies the gendered nature of violence, fails to specify connections with abuse of children. DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2001) report that “still, a growing number of researchers are recognizing the merits of broad definitions” (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2001:29). Moreover, global, international and progressive feminist conceptions connect various forms of violence against women (Woode and Roche, 2001).

In a review of feminist analysis of male violence, Edwards (1987) suggests that male violence was not given a central place in the analysis of women’s subordination, as male dominance was seen to be resting upon social, political, economic and ideological institutions and practices. However, other feminists were giving male violence a prominent place in the analysis of male dominance, initiating their analysis from the issue of rape. As 1970s progressed, feminists turned their attention to other forms of female abuse which did not necessarily involved physical force, thus unpacking the operation of patriarchy within society (Edwards, 1987).

The contribution of feminist thought in theorising and addressing the problem of male violence against women was multifaceted. It was feminist scholarship and activism that called for public attention to the problem rendering it a social problem and not a private matter (Mahoney, 1994; Klein et al., 1997; Radford and Russell, 1992; Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996). Feminists identified men as primarily the perpetrators of domestic violence and child sexual abuse (Itzin, 2001; Klein et al, 1997; Lempert, 1996; Okun, 1986; Kurz, 1998) thus challenging research findings suggesting 'gender symmetry' in domestic violence (Kimmel, 2002). This finding led feminists to conceptualize male violence against women as a problem of men's violence in the context of social power relations which are gendered as male domination and female subordination (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Itzin, 2001; Kelly and Radford, 1996; 1998; Mahoney, 1994; Stark and Flitcraft, 1996; Wilcox, 2006). By scrutinising the state and its institution, feminism attributed the phenomenon of 'wife battering' to the same structural factors that maintain male violence and women's oppression: all social structures, from medical services to school and from the police to the judicial system are operating to contribute to sustaining violence against women (Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Edwards, 1987; Hanmer and Maynard, 1987; Hanmer and Itzin, 2001; Hirsch, 1994; Kirkwood, 1993; Roche and Wood, 2005). Women's oppression is additionally supported and sustained by cultural norms, beliefs and ideology, which are internalized by women (Lawless, 2001). As Hanmer and Saunders (1986 in Kirkwood, 1993) assert, the socially constructed beliefs held by women about the 'public danger' and 'private safety' urge them to 'escape' to their homes, a paradox that underlies how 'male violence against women is socially constructed to perpetuate itself' (Hanmer and Saunders in Kirkwood, 1993:27) and constructs the 'myth of the safe home' (Stanko, 1990). Similar cultural norms and beliefs compose the advantages men experience as males, sons, husbands and fathers, which they sustain through the use of violence (Hanmer, 2001).

Since the 1980s feminist scholars, taking into consideration economic and socio-political changes, challenged the unification of

women's experiences of abuse by becoming more 'diverse, dispersed and fragmented' (Fraser, 2003:281) became involved in an encounter between feminism and postmodernism (Nicholson, 1990).

Fraser (2003) informs us that third-wave feminists have argued on more access to rights and opportunities for younger women than their mothers and grandmothers and even for the arrival of post-patriarchy, thus challenging classical feminist views and analysis of gender, women's oppression, as well as abuse. Third-wave feminists have developed arguments against essentializing and homogenising women's experiences, as representing mainly "the interests of a relatively white, middle-class, able-bodied constituency" (Fraser, 2003:282). Therefore, they have argued for diversity among women and reflection on the complexity of their intimate relationships.

Feminist critiques of poststructuralist perspectives involved de-politicizing women's issues (Fraser, 2003), promoting individualism (Dominelli, 2002) and ignoring diversity within feminist thought (Dominelli, 2002; Harding, 2004; Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996).

This intersection of 'feminisms' is the theoretical context within which the issue of women's abuse by their male partners is located for the purposes of this research. My interest in analysing Greek women's experiences of abuse and discourses of resistance falls into the complex nature of abuse as has been theorized by feminist researchers who will be reviewed further.

Feminist research on male violence against women put women's experiences at the centre of interest and attempted to understand women's own experience, conceptualization and naming of abuse (Bograd, 1990; Kelly, 1988; Kelly and Radford, 1996; Radford and Russell, 1992). By undertaking this task, feminist research has helped women in acknowledging their experiences and escaping the 'cognitive-emotional paralysis' (Kelly and Radford, 1998) deriving from women's attempts to fit their experiences of abuse within cultural – political frames which lead women to doubt their own reality (Roche and Wood, 2005).

By placing women's experiences of abuse by their male partners at the centre feminists have struggled to change public opinion about battering showing why women stay (Lamb, 2001). Extended research has been undertaken towards exploring women's reluctance to leave their abusive partners and the findings highlight, amongst others, financial dependency, children, restricted opportunities for employment and housing (Kirkwood, 1993; LaViolette and Barnett, 2000; Westlund, 1999; Wilcox, 2006). Feminist theorizing of minoritized women's experiences of domestic violence added to the discussion by highlighting the added constraints of racism and cultural stereotyping imposed on them in challenging domestic violence (Burman and Chantler, 2005; Burman, Smailes and Chantler, 2004; Chantler, 2006). Therefore, the material-structural conditions of women who have experienced abuse by their male partners were interrogated for 'shaping' their agency and decisions to leave.

This kind of research, carried out within the wider feminist context, highlighted that understanding women within the abusive relationship means abandoning dual polarizations (staying or leaving), which pathologize women and detract attention from perpetrators (Eiskovits, Buchbinder and Mor, 1998; Westlund, 1999; Wood in Fraser, 2003) and exploring "more complex articulations of women's experiences of abuse and how women make sense of these" (Cavanagh, 2003:230).

A current view of women's responses to male violence suggests that there is much more in an abusive relationship than violence; it is an intimate relationship, which therefore encompasses love and commitment (Cavanagh, 2003:231; Lempert, 1996). The love/abuse dichotomy is itself a point for further analysis if we are to understand such dilemmas (Fraser, 2003). In other words, how women make sense of love and intimacy and where is abuse put within their love/intimacy narratives poses a need for a new contextualization of abuse.

Kirkwood (1993) reports six components of women's experience of abuse: degradation, fear, objectification, deprivation, overburden of responsibility and distortion of subjective reality. There

are interconnections of this emotional abuse with what Kirkwood (1993) calls 'web of abuse' defined as "a subtle, nearly invisible, process through which the components of its impact are ingrained in women, and as a result their escapes are complex and painful" (Kirkwood, 1993:60-61). Kirkwood (1993) suggested that escaping from the abusive relationship is viewed now through the lenses of the dynamics of control depicted as a spiral, where women can experience either increased or decreased abuser's control and "this progression of abuse may, on the surface, seem to mirror what she experienced before she left her partner" (Kirkwood, 1993:65). On this spiral inward movement pictures the control imposed by an abuser whereas the outward movement implies the conceptualization of the negative effects of abuse by women (Kirkwood, 1993). Although the spiral provides a schematic understanding of women's movements inwards and outwards from the abusive relationship, "it is essential to note that, as with the application of any model to human experience, the concept does not always encompass the full complexity and diversity of the individual, lived experience" (Kirkwood, 1993:66).

Lundgren (1998) suggests that abuse is conceptualized as a process of 'normalization', constituted of the 'internalization' of abuse, which is expressed by women as the effects of physical and mental isolation and expressed by men as switching between being violent and affective. The other component of 'normalization', which is 'externalization' of abuse is expressed by the man who becomes an ideal pattern (like God), entitled to 'construct' the 'perfect wife'. Lundgren here provides insights on both the construction of gender within the violent relationship as well as on the complexities of abuse, as situated between abuse and affection, thus implying the complexities of staying/leaving dilemma.

Elizabeth (2003) suggests that the stay/leave construct overlooks the complexities of separation and provides a Foucauldian feminist theoretical framework, where the concepts of discourse, subjectivity, power and resistance are of central concern. When the abusive relationship is approached as an exercise of power around which

discourse, subjectivity and resistance of women are constructed and reconstructed not only can women's movement inwards and outwards of the abusive relationship be further understood, it can also provide implications for the influence of her social context on her movements. Relating the personal with the social, Elizabeth notes that the relationships that make up her social network can, like her relationship to her partner, become vehicles for the exercise of power over her. Therefore, the character of these social relationships "has a direct and indirect bearing on the process of reconstructing both her personhood and her relation to her partner post-separation" (Elizabeth, 2003:63).

This theoretical framework can become a useful tool in both understanding and changing the part of women's social context inhabited by social services and social agents providing post-separation support. While the 'abused woman's' social network usually works to maintain her marriage, thus contributing to the 'disciplinary production of self' (Kondo in Elizabeth: 2003), encompassing a wider range of social agents "encourages us to see abused women as embedded in a whole raft of social relationships [which] operate as avenues for the exercise of power – both 'power to' and 'power over' (Elizabeth, 2003:73). As such these social agents can become the new lenses through which the abused woman will view her relationship, her ex-partner as well as herself. As these relationships form an interlinked web, "the outcome of transactions in one relational setting may well reverberate throughout the rest of an abused woman's relational network, including her relationship to her ex-partner" (Elizabeth, 2003:73).

This conceptualization of abuse and of needs of women who have experienced abuse by their male partners is particularly applicable to the Greek context. The complexities of abuse can be applicable to Greek women's experiences of abuse. Greek scholars referring to marital violence against women in Greece report that women in violent relationships often suffer years of oppression, battering and degradation, only because they are taught to live their lives according to the traditional values that allow the man to be the master simply because he is a man (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001).

Chatzifotiou and Dobash (2001) in their study of informal support seeking by 'abused women' in Greece report that women encounter personal dilemmas and concerns about disclosing the violence as they fear that the society would not be supportive to them if they publicized the problem, they would feel ashamed and guilty, their husband would retaliate and their children would be taken away. However, women's movement has put the issue forward, there is greater public concern on the issue as well as a more sensitive and responsive approach by the public authorities (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). I argue that this description depicts a contradiction which is conveyed to women who have experienced abuse by their male partners as double message: both the public and authorities recognize domestic violence towards women as an intolerable act while at the same time negative feelings and values involved with the violent act are experienced by women. In the same study, Chatzifotiou and Dobash (2001) research the role of informal support for women seeking help and conclude that "informal support can be very important for a woman seeking help, but informal help providers can also put pressure on the woman and express disbelief about her experiences, thereby compounding her problems. They can sometimes be helpful by providing her with temporary accommodations, but other times offer only limited help because they do not have the necessary resources or the information to help" (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001:1033). Therefore, as Elizabeth (2003) suggests, researchers and practitioners can make an important contribution by socializing separation as a story of multiple actors.

1.3 Social work and women's abuse

In order to locate my research within the social work context I will explore some relevant subjects: the relevance of social work in addressing the problem of women's abuse by their male partners, the effectiveness of social work support provided to women who have been abused by their male partners and finally social work practice as informed by feminist practice. Throughout this exploration I will also include the relationship of domestic violence with children, as it has

implications for all the above-mentioned aspects of social work practice with women who have been abused by their male partners. Furthermore, exploring these issues is relevant with my research context with Greek women who have been abused, as all of the women I interviewed have children except one and most of them have contacted social services.

Domestic violence recurs as an issue throughout social work (Hague and Malos, 1998). It is crucial for social workers to detect and address domestic violence given the prevalence and consequences of violence, the reluctance of women to identify abuse as a social problem and the variety of settings where social workers could be involved with cases of domestic violence (Danis, 2003). What comes to intensify the need for social work to address the problem is the research result that social workers are the most frequently contacted by battered women for all problems including emotional, physical and sexual abuse (Danis, 2003). Earlier studies had highlighted the relevance of social work with cases of domestic violence, as they recorded the majority of national sample of 'abused women' to have sought assistance from personal social services (Mullender, 1996) or the majority of interviewed women having approached social workers before going into a refuge (Pahl, 1985).

The second issue which needs to be explored within the social work – domestic violence context is the kind of help provided to women who have experienced abuse by their male partners by social workers and its efficiency. As has been noted within a relevant study, this kind of help can be tracked either through social workers' accounts or through women's depictions of the help they received (Danis, 2003). Social workers' responses indicate that they were likely to blame the victim, resort to 'masochistic' explanations of women's abuse, that they failed to recognize abuse as a social problem and they failed to make appropriate interventions and referrals (Danis, 2003).

Humphreys (2000) in her research about the connections between domestic violence and child abuse has pointed to a range of strategies through which social workers avoid or minimize domestic violence, including: supporting the man as the cornerstone of the family,

considering mother's abuse as more important than her abuse by her male partner, diverting to other problems such as alcohol or mental disorders and ignoring the man in the assessment process. Humphreys and Stanley (2006) report that regarding their treatment from social work agencies, women have been either urged to stay with their abusive partners 'for the sake of the children' or blamed for their 'failure to protect' their children through not separating. According to Hague, Mullender and Aris (2003) "despite very serious efforts over many years in both the voluntary and statutory sectors, women who have experienced abuse and accessed services as a result, still do not feel safe[...] Further, survivors of domestic violence frequently do not feel able to speak freely about their experiences. They may be blamed, silenced and stereotyped..." (Hague, Mullender and Aris, 2003: 2-3).

Other research results also highlight that social workers failed to identify abuse, that they were ignoring the woman as a person in her own right, they were being mainly interested in children, they failed to work with or confront the abuser, they were putting more controls and pressures on women and they were making women feel worse when they were actually unable to help or they were not taking them seriously (Mullender, 1996). Social workers were also said to minimize the problem and hold different perceptions of the problem than those of women (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). For Stanley (1997) men are 'invisible' and women and children are 'trapped' within social work practice. In cases of minoritized women, assumptions about 'culture' have produced barriers to the delivery of domestic violence services (Burman, Smailes and Chantler, 2004; Chantler, 2006, Humphreys, 2000).

However, there is evidence that important developments have been made towards more effective responses on the part of social work in terms of leadership roles taken by social workers, knowledge on the correlates of family violence (Danis, 2003; Hague and Malos, 1998; Humphreys, 2000) development of support networks and advocacy for families (Danis, 2003; Hague and Malos, 1998; Mullender, 1996), screening tools to identify women's abuse and understandings of

women's difficulties and danger of leaving abusive partners (Danis, 2003; Humphreys, 2000).

A considerable amount of effective interventions and good practices has also been mapped (Davis and Srinivasan, 1995; Hester and Westmarland, 2005; Humphreys et al., 2000; Morley and Mullender, 1994) including: raising awareness and challenging attitudes among young people, enabling women's disclosure, supporting women to report to the police, supporting women through the courts, reducing repeat victimization and supporting women through individual work and groupwork (Hester and Westmarland, 2005). Key skills for social workers who are involved with battered women have been identified as: listening, clarifying, observing, exploring, reframing, self-disclosure and supporting women with sensitive issues (Davis and Srinivasan, 1995). Involving 'abused women' in developing policy and practice towards their support has been suggested through recognizing women as service user group (Mullender and Hague, 2005; Hague et al., 2003).

As the correlation of domestic violence, child maltreatment and women's abuse has been established (Edleson, 1999; Hague and Malos, 1998; Humphreys, 2000; Humphreys and Stanley, 2006; Radford and Hester, 2006) effective practice suggestions are directed to practitioners within the child protection context. Counteracting social workers' tendency to minimize abuse when working from a child protection perspective could include: screening and monitoring, specialist training and development of procedures and protocols (Humphreys, 2000). Attention has been raised on avoiding punitive practices towards abused women through threats about children's accommodation and instead employment of more woman-centred practices (Humphreys, 2000). Women have commonly been blamed for their mothering in cases of domestic violence (Farmer and Owen, 1998; Hague and Malos, 1998; Radford and Hester, 2006). Researchers on the field have theorized woman-blaming in terms of gender and Western thought constructions of the 'good mother' and how such conceptualizations can entrap women in domestic violence (Radford and Hester, 2006) jeopardize children's safety (Farmer and Owen, 1998) and impact upon service delivery

(Humphreys, 2000; Humphreys and Stanley, 2006). Daniel et al. (2005) argue for the importance of using a gendered perspective to engage adequately with the causes and consequences of child maltreatment. Radford and Hester (2006) suggest that “understanding how violent men may undermine women’s parenting emotionally and materially may help professionals to respond more sensitively and build on women’s own efforts to cope and be free from abuse, especially after separation” (Radford and Hester, 2006:48). Counteracting mother-blaming requires an integrated response which consists of directing responsibility to perpetrators for their abuse and a commitment to work with domestic violence survivors from diverse backgrounds towards their safety and well-being (Humphreys and Stanley, 2006).

It becomes evident from the latter discussion on effective interventions in domestic violence cases that gender issues need to be considered together with the tensions that a gender-based approach generates.

1.4 Social work, feminism(s) and women’s abuse

It has been argued that the relationship between social work and women’s movement has been antagonistic (Danis, 2003) and that “when social work lacks a feminist perspective on domestic abuse, their response leads to continued victimization” (Danis, 2003).

Therefore, in an attempt to set the context for the proposed study and as there is no contemporary discussion in Greece about feminist social work (however organizations working with women who have experienced abuse by their male partners do refer to feminist practices) I will explore here the feminist perspective of social work. I will embark on a theoretical debate about feminist social work within the general context of social work theory as I anticipate this discussion will be relevant by reference to the Greek context. I will then try to bring this discussion back to practice with women who have experienced abuse.

Feminist social work theory emerged during the late 1970s and early 1980s by relating feminism with the four main spheres of social work: problem definition, feminist networks and campaigns, feminist

therapy and feminist statutory work (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989). It focused on the differing experiences of women in social work and contested the perception of women as carers; it highlighted the private – public divide as central in redefining social problems, so as to promote women’s collective action and response to women’s needs; it also problematized social work practice by viewing it as abusive and victimising for women and proposed relocating social work practice within a patriarchal capitalist global context, where social relations are gendered, local and socially differentiated (Dominelli, 2002). Orme (2003) suggests that feminist critiques of individual solutions provided by traditional social work led to oppositional reactions: the development of alternative resources such as shelters and crisis lines and on the other hand the effort to reconcile feminism with statutory social work. By reviewing writings on social work ethics Orme (2002) suggests that little attention has been paid to feminist scholarship that resonates with social work practice. Focusing primarily on community care, she demonstrates how debates within feminism have become more complex and have problematized understandings of both care and justice. She argues that for social work it is unhelpful to dichotomize justice and care; we should aspire to just social work practice. At the other side of the coin feminist social work had to take a position towards theory, so as to prevent ‘academization’ of feminism while at the same time being cautious towards feminist social work becoming atheoretical (Orme, 2003). Underlying these dilemmas is the concern about bridging theory with practice or produce knowledge from action (Orme, 2003). Dominelli (2002) provides a rather inclusive definition of feminist social work as “a form of social work practice that takes women’s experience of the world as the starting point of its analysis and by focusing on the links between a woman’s position in her society and her individual predicament, responds to her specific needs, creates egalitarian relations in ‘client’-worker interactions and addresses structural inequalities. Meeting women’s particular needs in a holistic manner and dealing with the complexities of their lives – including the numerous tensions and diverse

forms of oppression impacting upon them, is an integral part of feminist social work” (Dominelli, 2002: 7).

These conceptualizations of women’s position as well as the tension to unify women and their experiences did not remain unchallenged. Apart from the different positions encompassed by feminist theory, the main challenge to feminist social work came from poststructuralist perspectives. Postmodern feminism rejects the definition of one cause or mechanism for women’s oppression, celebrates differences in men and women, argues that there are mechanisms producing masculinities and femininities and therefore subjectivities are not stable, essential or fixed, that is women are not purely victims/nurturants (Featherstone, 1997). Feminism developed its theory and informed practice around the unifying category of ‘woman’ as opposed to the male domination and around each specific channel of oppression identified, such as sexuality, production, knowledge (Flax in Nicholson, 1990; Fraser, 2003). However, to generally identify women’s oppression homogenized women’s experiences under the experiences of White, middle class, able-bodied women (Nicholson, 1990; Fraser, 2003). On the other hand, to attribute women’s oppression to particular reasons implied that feminists were searching for the ‘absolute truth’ of modernist epistemology, which they had opposed as identifying it with the ‘God’s eye view’ (Nicholson, 1990; Fraser, 2003). In addition, the social changes which affected women’s positioning within the social context and their relevant experiences were not taken into consideration by feminist theorising (Fraser, 2004; 2005). According to poststructuralist critiques, feminism assumes homogeneity within oppressed peoples, as a “category of beings who are fundamentally like each other by virtue of their sex – that is, it assumes the otherness men assign to women” (Flax in Nicholson, 1990:56), who are capable of providing a comprehension of reality universally applicable, thus resting upon the Enlightenment assumptions on truth and knowledge. Moreover, constructs used by feminists to approach intimate abuse, such as socialization and oppression, overlook some of the dilemmas women face while they find themselves embedded in a blurry intimate

relationship (Fraser, 2003), thus ignoring insights about power relations, agency and resistance, which operate within the abusive relationship (Cavanagh, 2003; Elizabeth, 2003; Fraser, 2003).

In order to overcome antithetical positions and propose an inclusive framework for feminist social work theory and practice, some theorists have provided implications for common ground. Dominelli (2002) identifies commonalities among feminisms in focusing on individuals, celebrating difference, incorporating postmodern concepts of language, discourse, difference, deconstruction of positionality and identity for the promotion of an anti-oppressive social work practice, leaving clients lead the relationship and situating practitioners as potential oppressors. An 'affirmative' postmodern social work is introduced in trying to reconcile oppositional views, which involves a more inclusive and less prescriptive theory and practice: keeping a class analysis and resisting to modernity's oppressive discourse, while focusing on common interests and cross-national alliances and breaking the separation between service users and experts (Noble, 2004). In addition, there have been attempts to develop a 'postmodern critical' approach that "emphasizes social justice ideals at the same time as recognizing and developing the importance of difference and multiple perspectives" (Fook, 2003:125). Pennel and Ristock (1999) suggest that postmodern perspectives can constructively interrupt conventional views as long as social workers remain linked to feminist and other intersecting emancipatory movements.

What becomes apparent from these debates and endeavours to relocate social work within a context which neither overlooks the material conditions of people and the structural dimensions where they are embedded nor neglects changes at personal, interpersonal and international levels is that social work is undoubtedly faced with new challenges for both its theory and practice.

This affirmation has implications for the exploration of the issue of women's abuse by male partners. It might be argued that shifting the interest from structural analysis of the phenomenon could even jeopardize women's interests, falsify their experiences, de-politicize the

issue and lead to abstract theorization while abandoning action and even imply acceptance. On the other hand, focusing on merely structural analysis of women's subordination as the basis for exploring women's abuse can unify women in a homogeneous category, flatten-out their experiences and reduce them to their suffering (Fraser, 2003; Hydén, 2005). Moreover, the economic and social conditions of living are not homogeneous for all women in our contemporary times and there are more identity traits to be taken into consideration, such as race and sexual orientation, which highlight the diversity amongst women (Fraser, 2003).

Challenging traditional research for producing knowledge from the most powerful members of the society towards maintaining the status quo within which they could maintain their privileges, feminist social work practice employed the feminist standpoint approach, which asserts that women as the less powerful members of society have different experiences which produce knowledge and inform practice, in which they are engaged (Harding, 2004; Orme, 2003). It set out to explain how certain kind of politics allow for the growth of knowledge through explaining kinds of accounts of nature and social relations not otherwise accessible (Harding, 2004). Employing the feminist standpoint as a methodology enabled women to provide knowledge for women and become subjects of knowledge from their particular location (Harding, 2004). Since multiple locations from which women speak were identified feminist standpoint theorists have struggled to create a different kind of de-centred subject of knowledge where the intersectionality of multiple oppressions can be scrutinized and become sources of knowledge (Harding, 2004). Within the feminist standpoint theory 'there are many ways of being a feminist' (Jaggar, 2004).

I argue that the discussion about feminism(s) appropriate for studying and addressing the issue of domestic violence is relevant to the Greek context, within which policy and practice for women who have been abused retain their gender-neutral perspectives, although acknowledging that women are mostly the victims of men's violence within the home (State Law 3500/2006).

How are then Greek women's experiences of abuse and resistance to be perceived and analysed towards doing justice to them and promoting more effective services becomes a central concern of my methodology as I will explore further in the relevant chapter. Placing my standpoint within the relevant reviewed discussion leads me to decide that Greek women's material conditions have an effect on their coping strategies as well as their overall conceptualization of abuse. Material conditions may have ameliorated Greek women's lives but this development is not evident in all Greek women's lives, as there are other factors intersecting and shaping their material realities, such as education, social class and access to stable, waged labour in the face of motherhood and caring for children, welfare benefits that can or cannot be granted to them and the lack or presence of social networks which can replace state support. I argue then that material conditions do shape Greek women's realities of abuse and space for resistance but these realities are neither formed nor experienced the same way by all of them. My standpoint then is constructed by acknowledging the effect of material factors as well as culture on women's lives and at the same time by a commitment to openness towards each woman's lived reality as narrated and mediated by our co-constructed research context. Within this context my politics and values towards acknowledging Greek women's oppression while reflecting on their struggles to manage or address it are evident as is the intention to counter any tendency to homogenize women's experiences. And although it may sound attractive I refrain from making any universal claims about Greek women's experiences of abuse and resistance; rather, I am trying to say something new about these experiences which might be taken into consideration for social work policy and practice.

1.5 Narrative research and intimate abuse

It has already been argued that listening to women's accounts of abuse is a feminist research practice and a goal for feminist research practice. Here I would like to explore the possibilities for narrative readings of women's accounts of abusive experiences within which reconstructions can be pursued.

In their study of 20 couples involved in domestic violence, Enosh and Buchbinder (2005a) found that the narrative construction of the memory on traumatic events serves as a tool for repositioning oneself vis-s-vis the violent experience. Through the analysis of their data and drawing on earlier narrative studies on domestic violence, they focus on the process of remembering and move one step further to explore how these memories are constructed and how the interviewees “define the experiential distance between themselves and the remembered violent event” (Enosh and Buchbinder, 2005a:12). This distance ranges from reliving of the experience to its disowning; across these two ends narration indicates total recall of the experience (knowledge), observation and reflection on the traumatic experience (awareness) or even total denial (alienation). These findings are particularly insightful for narrative researchers of abuse as they alert us to psychological processes that interviewees may employ to deal with this sensitive and stressful issue.

In a different analysis of their study, Enosh and Buchbinder (2005b) provide constructions of narrative styles as struggle, deflection, negotiation and self-observation to imply the contextual nature of narratives as well as discourse, thus linking narratives with postmodern approaches. However, involvement of couples in their narrative research obscures exploration of particular emotional and mental processes employed by women dealing with abuse by their male partner.

Other researchers have focused on women’s perceptions and management of abuse through their narratives (Fraser, 2004; Hydén, 2005; Lawless, 2001; Nichols and Feltey, 2003). Feminist narrative research on women’s abuse by their male partners draws on analytical concepts such as power, resistance and agency (Elizabeth, 2003; Fraser, 2004; Hydén, 2005; Kirkwood, 1993; Lawless, 2001). Narrative accounts indicate women’s positioning vis-à-vis abuse by using agency to resist it, as well as a research shift from focusing on abuse to contextualising it within the intimate relationship as experienced, interchangeably negatively and positively, by women (Fraser, 2004).

Lawless (2001) embarks on women’s narratives of abuse in order to trace the ‘unspeakable’ pain, share the ‘unshareable’ and search

for the voices that imply self-construction, arguing that grounded in women's use of language "lies the transformative power and possibility for change" (Lawless, 2001:53). Throughout this endeavour, pauses and silences, gaps and ruptures are 'heard' as implications of 'the disaster', of that which can not be told but this reluctance to speak the disaster can be itself a resisting act towards the untold violence, an empowering process.

Hydén (2005) used women's narratives of abuse to indicate the positioning of women towards leaving. Identification of these positions was made possible through the narrative analysis: Positions are constructed through the 'dialogical' and 'resistant' self, the 'valued self' and the 'other' as the dominating force. While in the 'position of the wounded', the woman constructs the man as the dominant force before, while passive now, powerful both then and now, while she herself was and still is powerless, a compliant and passive resister then, no longer compliant but still resister. In 'the self-blaming position' the man is not constructed as dominant, the marital project was powerful then but is not now, her power is increasing and she is ambiguous towards compliance and resistance. The 'bridge-building position' is characterized by perceptions of the man as not the sole dominant force, her limited power within the marriage, which was itself powerful, the increase of her power and the improvement of her acts of resistance now. Therefore, "the battered woman can be seen from the vantage point of diversity rather than uniformity" (Hydén, 2005:187).

Fraser (2005) employs narrative methodology to depict women's perceptions of intimate relationships as constructed and embedded within cultural narratives of romantic love, insecurity as well as happiness, thus providing space for commonalities and diversity as well as distancing from 'master narratives' of abuse.

In a narrative analysis of an abused woman's case Riessman (1994) highlighted how narrative analysis and contextualization of her narrative rendered the experience of abuse meaningful for this woman.

Narratives have provided space for reading women's accounts of abuse in a way that highlights commonalities and differences amongst

women, as well as the complexities of abuse and women's coping strategies.

1.6 Researching resistance to abuse

My research study is embedded with critiques of traditional research of domestic violence or women's abuse and complies with feminist insights about women who have experienced abuse by their male partners as survivors instead of passive victims. In early 1980s research shifted focus from women who have experienced abuse by their male partners as passive victims to women as survivors and provided insights about women's active strategies to cope with or manage abuse (Campbell et al.1998; Chantler, 2006; Elizabeth, 2003; Kelly, 1988; Kirkwood, 1993; Wilcox, 2006).

Research on women's active resistance towards abuse was initiated based on earlier research on oppressed people which conceptualized resistance as omnipresent in oppressed people -even if not in open forms- who create spaces for initiating resistance as a 'hidden transcript' (Scott, 1990). Drawing from Foucauldian notions of power and resistance feminist researchers highlighted that "whenever power is infused across the range of disciplinary sites, there it simultaneously intersects with the force of resistance, even at the most microscopic, cellular and capillary levels of existence" (Faith, 1994) and that "exercises of power are constantly met by acts of resistance" (Elizabeth, 2003:66). Informed by this kind of scholarship research with women who have been abused highlighted that "alongside each history of violence and oppression, there runs a parallel history of prudent, creative and determined resistance" (Wade, 1997: 23) or else, that "in addition to each story of male violent behaviour there is a female story of female opposition" (Hydén, 1999:467).

Power has been conceptualized by early feminist thought as a negative force possessed by men and wielded over women through social hierarchy (Fraser, 2003; Wilcox, 2006). Bridging power with domestic violence, feminists have argued that men's violence is the most overt form of men's power (Bograd, 1990) exercised within the context of

gendered power relations where men's dominance oppresses women (Itzin, 2001; Wilcox, 2006). Feminists have also analysed sexual violence as men's desire for power, dominance and control (Radford and Russell, 1992) taking into account the multiple and often hidden power relations and changing gendered meanings of sexual violence (Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996). Furthermore, acts of domination are built into culture and socialization in (almost) all societies (Lempert, 1996). Drawing from Foucault, other feminist have further suggested that internalized gender stereotypes which maintain existing power relationships (Radtke and Stam, 1994) turn women to self-policing subjects (Elizabeth, 2003; Faith, 1994). Drawing from poststructuralist conceptualizations of power, later feminism argued for a relational model of power, one that is exercised within the realm of power relations (Elizabeth, 2003; Faith, 1994; Featherstone and Trinder, 1997; Fraser, 2003).

Rather than viewing women who have experienced abuse by their male partners as victims, understanding their everyday management of violence as a response attaches new meaning to violence, as a dynamic process (Cavanagh, 2003). Between staying or leaving an abusive relationship a series of responses to male violence have been located (Campbell et al., 1998; Chantler, 2006; Elizabeth, 2003; Hydén, 2005; Kelly, 1988; Wilcox, 2006). Hydén (2005) argues that feminist theory to date has focused on intervention and on challenging women's position as victims, while "battered women's ways of opposing and resisting violence are still underemphasized, and ultimately insufficiently examined in feminist discourses of violence in close relationships" (Hydén, 2005:170). Instead of 'staying or leaving' the exploration shifts from seeing leaving as the ultimate solution to viewing it as a complex process. In order to explore these complexities of separation, it is essential to analytically approach the complexities of the abusive relationship itself.

Research on women's shaping of agency and resistance to abuse has been already undertaken (Campbell et al., 1998; Chantler, 2006; Hydén, 1999; Kelly, 1988; Lempert, 1996; Wade, 1997; Waldrop and

Resick, 2004; Wilcox, 2006) and I will here attempt a review of it in order to locate my research.

Kelly interviewed 60 women on how they survived, coped with and resisted several forms of sexual violence including rape and incest and concluded that “the extent and form of women’s resistance to particular assault(s) is dependent on the circumstances of the event(s) and on the resources that they feel that they can draw on at the time” (Kelly, 1988:162). Although Kelly draws a distinction between coping, survival and resistance and uses a restrictive definition of resistance by constructing a continuum of violence towards women she found that more than half of the women she interviewed resisted incest from the time it began and all of the women resisted rape as it occurred (Wade, 1997). The importance of Kelly’s finding relevant to my study is that women do resist abuse and violence and that the form their resistance might take is situated and contextualized within the opportunities and restrictions present at the time of resistance.

Lempert focused on women’s agency to re-interpret women’s seemingly passive responses to violence as active attempts to “halt, change or cope with their partner’s violence” (Lempert, 1996:270). Within such a re-interpretation women’s invisibility was analysed as a face-saving strategy, while problem-solving strategies and self-preservation strategies served to contain the violence. The re-interpretation of women’s strategies to manage or survive abuse was analytically bound to the simultaneously of love and abuse in women’s lives towards understanding how ‘abused women’ develop agency to cope with violence. Lempert’s study highlights the importance of the relationship context in understanding the complexity and contradiction it might generate for women towards abuse. It also introduces the concept of agency which deflects blame from women for perceived passivity while at the same time verifies women’s subjectivity.

Campbell et al. (1998) interviewed an ethnically and economically heterogeneous sample of women who were self-identified as having a serious problem in an intimate relationship. Their thematic analysis highlighted that women’s responses to violence were

complicated and iterative, demonstrating resistance and resourcefulness. Most of the women interviewed identified themes such as active problem solving, including subordination of the self, responses to pivotal events and negotiations first with the self and then with the male partner. Women described “active -and effective- strategies of dealing with problems in ways that might be viewed as passivity or denial of the severity of the situation. They were aware that the relationship had to change, but they also made decisions about when and to what extent those changes would occur” (Campbell et al. 1998:759). Campbell et al. added to the literature on women’s responses to abuse as active strategies as a re-interpretation with implications for support, advocacy and partnership in realizing non-violence.

Hydén (1999) interviewed 10 battered women at the time of leaving their abusers and two years after they had left and analysed the fear that they felt as a form of resistance on the part of women. Through her narrative analysis of women’s accounts she constructed a conceptualization of fear as “an unarticulated knowledge of what is wanted and what is unwanted” (Hydén, 1999:449) and drawing on Foucault’s notion of power she read women’s narratives of fear as narratives of resistance to violence. Her narrative analysis is insightful about acknowledging the different ways that an abused woman can express her resistance and thus about rendering researchers and practitioners more able to address the complexity of women’s abuse.

In her study of women’s responses to violence Cavanagh (2003) found that understanding women’s responses to violence “prompts practitioners to be: mindful of the *complexity* of violent relationships; aware of the *strategies of resistance* which women deploy in order to stop/reduce the violence; and cognisant of the *interconnectedness of women’s and men’s responses* to men’s violence against women” (Cavanagh, 2003:229). Cavanagh expanded the interpretive framework of women’s responses to men’s violence by relating the complexity inherent in violent relationships, providing a wide range of women’s responses to violence and connecting them with the interactive style of women’s and men’s responses. In her analysis she employed men’s

responses to their violence and women's responses to their strategies as an interactive process occurring within complexity and located within the wider repertoire of women's resistance strategies.

Focusing on minoritized women Chantler (2006) highlighted the strategies of resistance used by minoritized women while facing not only their partners' abuse but also pressure from their family, community, religion and agencies which influenced their acts of resistance on the basis of gender, 'race' and class restrictions.

Wilcox (2006) analysed the restrictions that the intersection of poverty and gender place on women's agency and found that "even in these severely constrained circumstances, they [women] maintained agentic stances, actively pursuing safety for themselves and their children" (Wilcox, 2006: 171).

The common thread connecting the discussed research is a conceptualization of resistance as omnipresent, multi-formed and contextualized by complexity. It is within such an understanding of resistance that my research falls in.

Summary

Throughout this chapter I have tried to set the theoretical framework within which my research is embedded. I have reviewed traditional literature on domestic violence and critically examined its pitfalls informed by feminist critiques. I provided accounts of feminist theory and research on the issue and highlighted the contribution of feminism in addressing women's abuse by their male partners. As feminist scholarship has not remained unchallenged I reviewed the tensions arising from critiques towards feminist conceptualizations about women's abuse and identified a feminist standpoint which informs my research. Within this standpoint women as research subjects provide knowledge about their experiences of abuse and resistance from their social locations which generate commonalities and differences among them. By relating women's experiences of abuse by their male partners with social work I attempted to highlight the tensions social work faces towards addressing the issue. Focusing on women's coping strategies and

experiences of abuse by their male partners, I reviewed relevant research that challenges 'abused women's' depictions as victims while attending at the cultural, social and material restrictions of their agency. Employing women's narratives as a method to explore women's experiences of abuse and resistance I reviewed narrative research on women's abuse.

My objective has been to create a space for theorizing about Greek women's experiences of abuse and resistance by their male partners informed by feminist thought and its tensions towards contributing to social work practice which is attuned to Greek women's needs. Reviewing relevant literature has set the context for researching Greek women's experiences of abuse and resistance. As there is a lack of research on Greek women's experiences of abuse and resistance, my research is theoretically informed by feminist research conducted outside Greece, however, issues of gender, social class, material conditions and agency as have been evident and analysed by researchers outside Greece seem relevant to Greek women. Although there is homogeneity in terms of race and religion within the Greek women I interviewed, there are multiple intersections of other relevant constraints of Greek women's agency which influence their resisting strategies, as I will argue in my analysis.

CHAPTER 2: THE GREEK CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Bridging domestic violence literature with the proposed research, I provide a review of the Greek context within which domestic violence, particularly violence against women by their male partners, is approached, interpreted, researched and addressed. I do so by interrogating the context of women's experiences at the micro-level of everyday struggle and the macro-level of the wider social, political and economic power regimes within which Greek women experience abuse. As my standpoint is embedded within both the material and subjective realities of experiencing abuse I will attempt to unfold the structural conditions that form Greek women's subjectivities as constructed by individual intersections of biographies, gender and class. For reasons of analytical clarity I choose to focus on the particular regimes where power is most evident that is legislation, research, culture and employment relevant to women's position in contemporary Greece. By locating my research topic within its context, I also attempt to justify the appropriateness of my research inquiry and claim its contribution to an under-researched issue in Greece.

2.1 Women's perceptions of their equal treatment with men

In a study conducted for the Research Centre for Equality Issues (Tsalikoglou and Artinopoulou, 2003) about the psychosocial dimensions of Greek women's positions in contemporary Greece, women were asked about several issues effecting their every day lives. Of particular interest for my research are women's perceptions about their equal treatment with men in society as well as in their family.

Greek women's answers regarding their equal treatment with men in society reveal that in general Greek women do not believe that their treatment is sufficiently equal with that of men. A small percentage holds that absolute equal treatment has been accomplished and there is a 37.4% percentage that considers their treatment to be equal with those of men. Through an examination of the socio-demographic profile of women who consider that there is equal treatment between men and women in the Greek society are those with academic education.

Applying the same question to family, women respondents believe that they are more equally treated in their families (by their husbands/partners or fathers) than in the wider society. The study concludes that in general terms women do not hold to the belief that absolute equality with men has been accomplished (Tsalikoglou and Artinopoulou, 2003).

2.2 Education and employment

This sub-chapter is supposed to highlight the implications of cultural stereotypes in women's choice of academic disciplines and succeeding employment and to underline the intersections between Greek women's material realities and gendered cultural affirmations. Although this section does not provide correlations between education/employment and domestic violence I argue that it provides a context within which Greek women experience and try to struggle with abuse. As will be evident, it also implies the ambiguity generated for Greek women between acquiring ameliorated social positions through education and employment and attuning to gendered stereotypes.

A study conducted for the Research Centre for Equality Issues in Greece (Athanassiadou, Petropoulou and Mimikou, 2001) provides a clear depiction of women's social position in contemporary Greece.

The spectacular increase of women's participation in universities does not reflect the elimination of educational discrimination and restricted access to vocational training, resulting in women's over-representativeness in some academic fields such as the arts and under-representativeness in the sciences. This unequal distribution has significant implications in women's occupational choices and career. According to this study, women's educational choices are 'socially dictated' by the established perceptions about the diverse professional roles of women and men – a diversity that declares a hierarchical gradation. As a result, even women with degrees and postgraduate degrees are occupied in services and prefer waged work. Working women with university degrees obtain hierarchically lower positions.

In an income distribution survey within the area of the capital city of Athens in 1985 (Athanassiadou, Petropoulou and Mimikou, 2001) it was found that women constitute more than the double of the lowest income group and this finding is valid for all educational levels. A general picture of women's employment after 1980 suggests that women's unemployment has increased, most of the women are occupied as waged workers in the services sector, women are absent from decision-making positions, there is a discrimination between male and female professions, women are professionally static and under-represented in managerial positions, they have an increased participation in informal occupation and that there is discrimination in education and vocational training between women and men.

It is suggested that discrimination between family and work and gender roles stereotyping results to the formulation of women's restricted access in the labour market and in the professional advancement. At the same time, the insufficient welfare state presence undermines reconciliation of women's family life and employment, while employment policies aiming at equal access and treatment of women in the labour market are ineffective.

The same study suggests that despite the developments evident on women's employment and the qualitative amelioration of women's qualifications the specificities of women's position in the labour market remain unchangeable. Some of these specificities are: women constitute the vast majority of unpaid employment, they cover 40% of waged workers, 26,7% are self-employed and only 15,8% are themselves employers. Women's compensation does not exceed the 80% of men's for the same employment positions. Sub-employment smites mostly women, since 26% work for less than thirty hours per week. Women have been absorbed in the services sector and in traditional 'feminine' occupation, which do not require specialization, are temporary and their wage is supportive. The findings suggest that restricting women to 'feminine professions' is a way of creating a degrading social class (Athanassiadou, Petropoulou and Mimikou, 2001).

2.3 Cultural beliefs and social norms

Lack of evidence regarding domestic violence in Greece is due to the fact that Greek women do not report incidents of domestic violence to the authorities, as it is still culturally tolerated, especially by a society dominated by strong traditional values regarding gender roles and power and by attitudes supporting the pattern of Greek husbands as not being violent to their wives and the pattern of Greek wives as being tolerant and subordinating (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003).

Cultural beliefs and social norms affecting Greek women's response to male domestic violence become more evident when they are viewed through the construction of feminist identity within the Greek society. Research conducted in Greece with women regarding their feminist conscientization (Igglessi, 1990) suggests that traditional values regarding femininity and motherhood direct the way in which girls are socialized within the family and the school. From the early years of a girl's life, their direction towards becoming a wife and mother is implicitly or explicitly evident throughout their up-bringing and education (Igglessi, 1990). For a Greek woman, entering a marriage is identified with her social acceptance (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001) as well as her wider affirmation deriving from religious grounds: marriage is a sacred institution that allows women to transcend their sacrilegious nature and enter a more spiritual sphere as wives and mothers (Papataxiarchis, 1992). For an almost entirely Christian Orthodox society like Greece, a woman is reformulated through marriage from being a natural woman, which is represented by Eve in Orthodox religion, to a holy woman, represented by Holy Mary in Orthodox religion (Papataxiarchis, 1992). Regarding educational experiences, women in contemporary Greece are rather encouraged to enter the higher education but their experiences from pursuing higher degrees reveal that the situation is complex for them as students: they are embedded between social demands that promote acquisition of higher degrees by women and internalized messages regarding their pre-defined role as wives and mothers (Igglessi, 1990).

Within the Greek society radical changes to women's traditional role as a wife and mother become evident after the Second World War. However, most women are expected to "serve their families, bear children, and preserve Greek cultural traditions" (Hart in Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001:1027). Marriage remains of paramount significance in the lives of Greek women, as within marriage they are supposed to become respected and socially approved (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). As becomes evident by the analysis provided by the Greek feminist researcher Igglessi (1990), marriage within contemporary Greek society becomes an arena for Greek women regardless of their social, educational and economic status. Raised within a contradictory environment, where young Greek women are embedded between opportunities and encouragement of personal development and rather implicit influence towards realizing their gender role as wives and mothers, Greek women experience the ambivalence which underpins all their decisions. The modernization of Greek society imposes the need for considering some new perspectives, like education and employment, as well as a flexibility regarding the age of marriage at which women are expected to make their own family. However, the gender role still resists the pressures of contemporary social reality (Igglessi, 1990). Some of the contradictions faced by Greek women in contemporary Greece are evident in a research finding which suggests that while working outside home is a central activity of Greek women's lives, discrimination against women deteriorates by the multiple roles contemporary Greek women are called to fulfil (Athanassiadou, Petropoulou and Mimikou, 2001).

The ideology necessary for sustaining the patriarchal order (Dobash and Dobash, 1979) is transferred through values dominating a Greek woman's upbringing and involve honour, dignity and shame (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). Apparently, these values and learned gender roles are more effective in women's consideration of their violent relationships than other social divisions like employment and educational level. In their qualitative research with 'abused women' in a shelter in Athens, Chatzifotiou and Dobash (2001) provide the profile of women who have experienced abuse by their male partners in this shelter:

women were aged between 27 and 59 years old, the majority had children, the majority were married from 2 to 37 years, all lived in urban areas and most were employed. Therefore, there is an implicit requirement for researching Greek women who have experienced abuse by their male partners to view their management of and their responses to violence through the meaning the aforementioned values attach to it. The social achievements that Greek women might have gained, especially through education, and the higher status they might enjoy in terms of employment as a result of their education, is undermined by values and traditional cultural norms. In examining women's position in Greek society especially after their entrance to the labour market, Nikolaidou (1981) suggests that Greek women have now a double load: they have to respond to the demands of paid work while at the same time be efficient as wives and mothers. The entrance to the labour market and supposed amelioration of their social position is faced with stereotypes and cultural patterns that create an internal conflict, detach them from their occupation and preserve their subordination. Within this prism, women's education, employment and income become factors of lower analytical importance in order to understand how Greek women conceptualize their social self, gender role and subsequently violence towards them by their male partners. Therefore, Greek women's abuse by their male partners needs to be viewed through the contradictions that they encounter.

2.4 Policy & Services

According to the First National Report of Greece which was carried out by the National Watch for Addressing Violence Against Women (Paparriga-Kostavara, 2004), it is difficult to approach the subject without referring to the history of Women's Movement in Greece. It is stated that the Women's Movement was restricted before the involvement of Greece in the Second World War due to the dictatorship dominating the country during the four years prior to the War. Initially it targeted women's illiteracy, struggled to protect working women and promoted the right to vote. During the German – Italian Occupation the Movement was reactivated, while in 1952, after the Occupation ended,

the full civil rights were consolidated for Greek women. However, a new dictatorship which lasted until 1974 ceased the action of the Movement, as most of its members were imprisoned and women's organizations were considered illegal. The Women's Movement in Greece became active again after 1975 and feminist groups were organized towards women's liberation. In the 1980s violence against women was the first subject in their agenda and in the beginning of 90s it became priority issue. Their first effort was to publicize the problem and sensitize the public opinion. These efforts promoted legislative framework, policy refinement as well as service provision.

In Greece, a National Action Plan for addressing violence against women had been articulated since 1997 by executives from the Ministry of Interior. In January 2000, the General Secretariat for Equality announced the establishment of a Committee of Ministers for processing a relevant policy without securing a special budget. The plan that was proposed involves campaigning, training, services and legislation. The Committee was active until the end of 2003. Meanwhile, the General Secretary for Equality signed the convention for the foundation of the National Watch for addressing Violence against Women, having as partners the General Secretariat for Equality and the Research Centre for Equality Issues (KETHI), which belongs to the General Secretariat for Equality (Paparriga-Kostavara , 2004).

According to Chatzifotiou (2005), the official services for addressing violence against women in Greece are restricted, although steps forward can be traced during the last five years. These involve public awareness raising campaigns, funding of SOS phone lines, initiation of three new shelters, implementation of scientific conferences on the issue and publication of the first national statistics (Chatzifotiou, 2005).

The main official agencies in Greece occupied with the issue of violence against women are:

- The General Secretariat for Equality, which belongs to the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization and is responsible for promoting equality between men and

women at political, economic, social and cultural level. The Reception Center for Abused Women in Athens is a specialized service operating since 1988, providing legal advice and psychosocial support.

- The Research Centre for Equality Issues (KETHI) was established in 1994 with five branches throughout Greece, in order to support women who experience violence and social exclusion.
- Since 1983 Prefecture Committees on Equality are operating throughout the country (Chatzifotiou, 2005).
- The shelter for Abused Women of the Municipality of Athens which was founded in 1993 in cooperation with the General Secretariat of Equality. The shelter can accommodate 10 women with their children for a flexible time period ranging from twenty days to three months.
- Two shelters for abused women in Athens, which were established and are supervised by the National Centre for Direct Social Help.

There are also other statutory services for 'abused women' in Greece as well as services for 'abused women' provided by Non-Governmental Organizations (Paparriga-Kostavara, 2004) but a focus in shelters in Athens is necessary as this is the area where my proposed research will be carried out.

2.5 Research

Domestic violence has not been systematically researched in Greece; most of the studies are reviews of research conducted abroad and do not include evidence deriving from the Greek context (Mouzakitis 1989). The first epidemiological survey on domestic violence in Greece was conducted by the Centre for Research on Equality Issues (KETHI) in 2003.

According to the research findings and relevant analysis provided (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003), it is evident that women

do not experience violence within their family; the majority of the Greek women who participated in the survey do not consider their husband's/partner's behaviour as being violent. The data analysis reflects that women do experience particular forms of violence which, however, they do not consider as violent behaviour. A question is raised here as to whether women who do not consider their husbands' behaviour as violent deny or minimize it in order to avoid the negative cultural meanings attached to violence and the relevant threat these meanings impose on the 'sanctity of marriage'(Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). For a Greek woman to disclose violence in the family would mean that the values of 'dignity' and 'honour' traditionally related to the institution of the family would be jeopardized and there would be consequences for the stability of their identity, which is supposed to be actualized within marriage (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001; Igglessi, 1990). This view is further supported by an important finding (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003) which informs us that women who do not experience violence in their intimate relationship characterize violence as 'severe criminal act', while women who experience violence consider it to be a 'mistake'. There are also the demographic features of violence against women by their husbands/partners revealing that 58,2% of women living in urban centres face verbal/psychological violence, whereas 3,7% of them experience physical violence.

These findings, a few amongst many, highlight the peculiarities of approaching the issue of violence towards women in Greece, involving traditional values, culture and beliefs as they are reproduced within the contemporary Greek society. As it is mentioned in the research findings of the first epidemiological survey throughout the study of domestic violence in Greece there is an interaction between the traditional structure of the Greek family and its transition to a post-modern phase (Artinopoulou and Frasedakis, 2003).

2.6 Legislation

The Greek Constitution secures all human rights for men and women and recognizes equality between the two sexes. Greece has also

signed International Conventions on Human Rights amongst which is the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (Paparriga-Kostavara, 2004). Until very recently, the Greek Civil Law made no special reference to violence against women. It only set the base for treating violence against women as behaviour which jeopardizes one person's life, freedom, honour, personality and sexual freedom regardless of his/her sex. Women in Greek legislation were not granted special protection and therefore Greek legislation could be characterized as 'gender-neutral' (Paparriga-Kostavara, 2004). Conjugal violence was treated as falling under the concept of "personality degradation" of the Civil Law.

The issue of domestic violence was addressed by the Greek legislation through the State Law 3500/2006. On 8/8/06 the Minister of Justice introduced the new law to the Governmental Committee and set its aims (Presentation of Law 3500/2006, www.ministryofjustice.gr):

- To safeguard freedom, dignity and self-determination of the person within the family context.
- The particular protection of the woman, against whom domestic violence is usually targeted, resulting to the violation of the constitutional principle of gender equality and the obstruction of the free development of woman's personality.
- The protection of children's physical and emotional health.
- The definition of a healthy family environment.

The State Law 3500/2006 was launched in October 2006 and promoted five crucial reforms:

- The institution of judicial mediation is introduced regarding domestic violence offences – not crimes. Both the perpetrator and the victim are called before the relevant Public Prosecutor, with the contribution of social workers, psychologists and other specialists, in order for all attempts to be made for the restoration of harmonic cohabitation and family peace.

- For the first time forced intercourse without the free will of both partners is treated as a domestic violence crime, according to European Union member states' laws
- Physical force against children as a means for punishment is strictly forbidden.
- All legal measures taken apply to cases of stable co-habitation between man and woman outside of the marriage context.
- Domestic violence substantiates marriage breakdown

The law introduces strict penalties for domestic violence crimes where 'new forms' of domestic violence crimes are included, such as employing violence in front of children, against pregnant women, against persons that are unable to defend themselves and there are also strict penalties for causing psychological pain which can cause psychological harm.

Regarding social support to victims of domestic violence the relevant law highlights the duty of the police for providing information to victims on moral and material support from state social services.

School teachers are obliged to inform the authorities about any student's suspected physical violence by a member of his or her family.

Perpetrator's ex officio persecution is proposed in case judicial mediation does not prove to be effective, that is in case the persecutor does not take responsibility, does not reform his actions and does not attend counselling-therapeutic programmes.

Any publication of family members' names is prohibited before the trial for protecting them from stigma attached to cases of domestic violence.

Lengthening of prescription time for domestic violence crimes towards minors is introduced until they are adults, so that impunity for the perpetrator is avoided.

The law provides space for the judge to impose measures for the protection of the victim, such as distancing the perpetrator from the family home and prohibiting approach to victim's home or workplace.

Finally, domestic violence victims are exempted from judicial expenses if the victim is temporarily unable to protect herself.

There are noticeable developments in this law especially when viewed through the Greek cultural prism, which influences law-making. First of all, although the 'judicial mediation' measure provides implications for preserving the institution of family, strict penalties are evident for the perpetrator in case he does not conform to the requirements. The particular articles referring to the protection of the woman from domestic violence seem to respond to earlier comments on traditional Greek law for cases of domestic violence provided by scholars who were called to work on law reform. Before the launching of the State Law 3500/2006 domestic violence was not a situation where Justice could intervene, although the Civil Law supported equality between the two sexes within marriage. The absence of the term 'domestic violence' had consequences for the management of such cases by the police, which most of the time did not arrest the perpetrator but rather prevented prosecution in order for the marriage to be preserved (Paparriga-Kostavara, 2004). Rape within the marriage was not treated as a particular offence (Chatzifotiou, 2005; Paparriga-Kostavara, 2004).

It is obvious that such inadequacies of the Greek Law regarding domestic violence have been addressed and it is culturally remarkable that terms like 'rape within the marriage' or domestic violence between cohabitating couples are introduced. These developments could be easily attributed to the influence of Non Governmental Organizations, the Greek Ombudsman, Amnesty International, the National Committee for Human Rights, European Women's Lobby, the National Watch for Addressing Violence Against Women which processed the draft and made recommendations, many of which were taken into consideration by the Greek Ministry of Justice. However, as the issue of domestic violence involves cultural values and touches on the sensitive issue of family one can quite securely conclude that since such a law is proposed for addressing the problem, the Greek society itself is prepared to accept it, meaning that relevant developments have been made in terms of cultural and social approaches to the problem. This is probably why the Greek

Minister of Justice introduced the law draft by referring to statistical data which reveal that the phenomenon of domestic violence responds to one out of three Greek families and refers to circumvention of rights, while in his epilogue invites the Greek society to provide voice and state protection to the victims.

The development of launching a State Law for addressing domestic violence has been a crucial although delayed one. As this Law was launched in October 2006 it is still very early to have feedback from its application and the influence it might have had for women who have experienced abuse by their male partners, perpetrators, policy and practice. Nevertheless, the fact that a State Law to address the issue of domestic violence was so delayed provides some insights about the reluctance of the Greek state and society to be occupied with the issue and threaten the stability of the Greek family and society.

Summary

Within this chapter I attempted to locate my research within the Greek context as constituted for women by cultural beliefs and norms about their roles, opportunities for or restrictions of employment as well as legislation, policy and services provided for women who are faced with domestic violence. As my research focuses on Greek women's experiences and narratives of abuse I included in this chapter about the context of domestic violence Greek women's perceptions of their social positions and of domestic violence.

Although the law is recent it suggests that changes have been identified in legislation and institutions in Greece towards securing equality between women and men and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. Despite legislative changes supporting Greek women's equal treatment with men, the Greek women's professional position and identity is still in jeopardy and a paradox is generated: the distance between the legislative acknowledgment of equal employment opportunities and the implementation of law (Athanassiadou, Petropoulou and Mimikou, 2001).

With regards to legislation about domestic violence in Greece, the latter has been delayed in acknowledging and attempting to address the issue and since it is very recent it remains unknown whether the same paradox is generated for Greek women by law regarding domestic abuse.

My review of the context within which Greek women experience and/or perceive abuse by their male partners/husbands revealed that research and policy/services on domestic violence have been scarce and my interpretation of this reluctance towards addressing the issue led me to acknowledge the possible cultural and gender-stereotyping norms that might be reflected on that reluctance.

Women in contemporary Greece find themselves in seemingly ameliorated social conditions while at the same time they hold on to traditional values and norms regarding women's roles, marriage and the family. On the other hand, research shows that Greek women are still lower positioned with regards to their material conditions compared to men (Athanassiadou, Petropoulou and Mimikou, 2001). It is probably this contradiction that might blur Greek women's perceptions of their equal treatment with men as well as the low percentages of reported experiences of domestic violence (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003).

In reviewing the parts of the Greek context most relevant with how Greek women experience and manage abuse my objective has been to reflect on the conditions that might influence women's agency and narrated experience of abuse and resistance to it, which is my research topic. Through this review I anticipate contradiction in Greek women's narratives of perceived experience of abuse by their male partners to the extent that cultural norms and gender roles stereotyping might contribute in the minimization of abuse heightened by the until recently state reluctance to address abuse and support its victims on the one hand while their experience has led them to acknowledge abuse. I also anticipate struggle in women's narratives of abuse as their gender and material conditions intersect and influence the way they cope with abuse.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

My research is clearly embedded within the feminist standpoint theory and it is therefore influenced by its central commitments. I identify my research with that of other feminists in terms of methodology, politics and values as well as critical reflection on interpretation of data, ethics and limitations, which constitute the issues of my concern throughout this chapter.

As reviewed in the previous chapter on the Greek context of women's abuse by their male partners, research on the issue has been scarce in Greece and therefore my research methodology is based on relevant research conducted outside Greece.

My central focus on Greek women's narratives of experiencing abuse and coping with it places experience at the centre, however not uncontested. My attempt to provide an interpretation of Greek women's narratives as narratives of resistance is a political choice to challenge women's depictions as pure victims and instead scrutinize their particular and located social and material conditions which shape the ways they manage abuse and narrate ways of resisting. I do so within a feminist research context and therefore I can only provide a possible interpretation of their narratives which is open to multiple readings. However, I chose this particular reading of Greek women's narratives not only in attempt to fill in the gap of existing research in Greece but also because I intend to link this research strategy with social work aiming for more effective policy and practice in Greece.

Therefore, I outline my aims and objectives and then set up the methodological context within which these are to be accomplished. In particular I review feminist narrative research which influenced my research design and then I move forward to locate my research within it by reference to issues of particular interest of feminist research as evident in mine. Throughout this endeavour I try to be attentive to a critical reflection on my choices as well as difficulties in conducting research and my position within it.

3.1 Research rationale

What is evident by reviewing the limited research and relevant literature on the issue in Greece (Artinopoulou and Farsedakis, 2003; Mouzakitis in Chatzifotou and Dobash, 2001; Chatzifotou, 2005) is the lack of a qualitative approach. The efforts until now have focused on measuring and connecting the phenomenon with social/demographic variables in order to design effective policy and services. Where women's accounts were collected (Chatzifotou and Dobash, 2001) focus was on particular aspects of women's experience of violence. The experiences of being abused has not been researched and Greek women's experiences of violence is not critically put within its particular socio-cultural context, which is necessary in order to understand how violence is perceived and managed by Greek women. Therefore, the policy proposed and the professional help provided can have implications of 'objectifying' women through just measuring and of being culturally insensitive. Within this prism, it is also crucial to put the professional help provided within the same critical plan, as it is influenced by the same socio-cultural factors, which might perpetuate the violence. What comes to make this matter more important for the Greek professional help provision is the fact that at least within the social work education and practice very few, if anything, is said on gender issues and even less on violence against women. This is not to imply that all professional help is provided by insufficient or culturally and gender insensitive professionals but rather that it is carried out within a socio-cultural context which fails to validate women's experiences.

Women's reflections on this process might be subjective, still original and authentic in providing some overlooked aspects of the construction of abused and post-abused or re-abused woman. In order to trace this construction, narrative accounts of women who have experienced violence by their husbands/partners in Athens, Greece can be the channels through which connections between the personal and the social can be made before, during and after the 'located' violence and hints on potential for change can be traced.

A crucial focus of reflecting on women's connection of violent experience with their wider context is on tracing their resistance towards abuse by their male partners through their narratives. An initial hypothesis is that by analysing women's narratives common and different forms of resistance to abuse become evident.

3.2 Aims and Objectives

I consider the aims and objectives of my research to derive from my location as a woman in Greece and as a researcher within the social work discipline. It is the first position that forms my aims and the second that provides implications for my objectives.

The aims of my research are:

- To contextualize Greek women's experiences of abuse by their male partners by drawing on structural, social and cultural factors influencing their experiences.
- To explore Greek women's narratives for resistance to abuse.
- To provide a theoretical framework for tracing and interpreting resistance.
- To explore the need for a feminist perspective in addressing the issue in Greece.
- To contribute to a more effective social work practice with women who have been abused.

Objectives:

- To listen to Greek women's accounts of abuse by their male partners.
- To interpret women's accounts by relating them to their social context.
- To explore possible constraints posed by the Greek context on women's agency in coping with and resisting abuse.
- To analyse women's narratives of abuse and resistance within a critical feminist context.
- To critically reflect on contradictions faced by women who experience abuse by their male partners within the Greek context.

- To critically reflect on the research process including my ambiguities and difficulties as influencing the knowledge produced.

My research aims and objectives are guided by questions on both theory and methodology as employed within the Greek context:

- What is the impact of the context within which Greek women experience abuse on their experience?
- What are the theoretical implications of analysing women's narratives of abuse and resistance?
- How can social work theory and practice be informed by an analysis of women's narratives of abuse and resistance?
- Can there be a theoretical framework for social work with women who have been abused that will consider both women's needs and the political role of social work?

It needs to be noticed that my research aims, objectives and central questions have been constantly reformed as the research progressed and my familiarization with the acquired material was intensified. However, I fully acknowledge that both my social position and political commitments played a crucial role in their final formulation.

3.3 Research methodology: feminist narratives

As declared earlier, my research falls in the feminist standpoint tradition as perceived by Harding (2004): "...standpoint theory is a kind of organic epistemology, methodology, philosophy of science and social theory that can arise whenever oppressed peoples gain public voice" (Harding, 2004:3). My standpoint suggests that Greek women are oppressed and that abuse against them by their male partners is an explicit manifestation of their oppression. What I will try to explore is how their particular social, cultural and material context intersects with their particular locations and biographies in constraining their agency and in shaping common and different acts of resistance towards abuse. Throughout this attempt my intention is to highlight both commonalities and differences among women, as well as multiple oppressions that

might constraint their agency. Refraining from homogenizing and essentializing the experience of abuse and resistance, I shape my feminist standpoint around pluralism of abuses as well as pluralism of resistances and acknowledge complexity and diversity in Greek women's narratives. Since I am interested in acquiring some understanding I take as a pre-given that women who have experienced abuse by their male partners can provide knowledge on how to explain accounts not otherwise accessible (Harding, 2004).

By pursuing Greek women's narratives my research falls in the qualitative research paradigm which has been both popular and useful within feminist research (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Jackson, 1998; Yllo, 1990). However, the contextualization of my research as feminist and my choice to acquire narratives by Greek women who have been abused require focusing more closely to particular methodological issues deriving from these research traditions.

The point of departure for choosing the narrative methodology is the quest for making new meaning about a particular, significant experience, which lies between the personal and the social and emerges through sequential events (Riessman, 1993). As I am going to research women's abuse, I also find justification of methodological choice in that "the entire evaluation of a real-life problem may be tackled by a narrative approach" and in the assertion that narratives can represent specific subgroups, usually discriminated –against minorities, whose narratives express their unheard voices (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998:3). My fundamental assumption that women who have experienced abuse by their male partners form a discriminated-against group, whose voice has been oppressed, generates connections with feminist research, as well (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993).

It is by now evident that narrative research has gained great expansion as well as increasing appreciation in the social science, though not uncontested (Fraser, 2004; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993). Narrative theorists have attributed this 'narrative turn' (Plummer, 1983; Riessman, 1993) or 'narrative revolution' (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998) to the demise of positivist

methodology (Bruner, 1997; Sarbin in Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 2003) and explore its connection with the human nature of narrating (Fraser, 2004; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993).

Narrative research is said to be more of an art (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998) and metaphors used to describe it, such as cooking, knitting, sewing and travelling (Fraser, 2004) reveal the subjective nature of research which brings research close to 'ordinary' people and demystifies "practices that have long been associated with (orthodox) masculinity"(Fraser, 2004: 183). This affirmation is particularly important for my research, as I conducted my research with women who have experienced male domination and probably feel that they have been objectified by their male partners. Therefore, a further objectification by a positivistic research would raise their resistance or scepticism.

As Riessman states "there is no binding theory of narrative but instead great conceptual diversity" and she suggests that "the purpose is to see how respondents in interviews impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives" (Riessman, 1993:2). Chase (2005) asserts that "contemporary narrative inquiry can be characterized as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse interdisciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographic particulars as narrated by the ones who live them" (Chase, 2005: 651). Consistent with the both broad and inclusive definitions provided for narrative research (Riessman, 1993) is the lack of 'prescriptive' literature on how narrative research is conducted. This is not to imply that a researcher can actually just improvise or rest upon insights; apart from romanticizing narrative research, such a perception of narratives would also jeopardize its theoretical legacy and underestimate some of the most insightful research that has been conducted within the social sciences (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998). However, lack of certain guidelines sometimes can cause anxiety to the researcher or even cause unintended harm to the research subject. Therefore, my purpose is to review

narrative theory and extract some suggestions I find useful for my research.

A quite rich theory has been developed on narrative context and ways of analysing research material as narrative researchers suggest (Chase, 2005; Fraser, 2004; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993). Particularly essential for narrative theory are concepts of representation, interpretation and meaning. Riessman (1993) argues that a narrative account can be viewed as a representation in each of the forms it can take, namely speech, written account, transcription, analyzed text, as representational decisions enter at different stages throughout the research process and these decisions are informed by theoretical interests and values. Representations can also refer to the context of the narrative story, some features of which are the aim of the interview, the nature of the audience, the relationship between teller and listener as well as the mood of the narrator (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998). The accounts that Greek women who have experienced abuse provided generated a rich material for analysis, which, however can only be represented. Its content would most probably be different in another context, while the context itself is a product of our interaction, where we both represented our subjective realities situated in a particular context, the interview. The extracts from the accounts that I incorporate in my analysis represent my theoretical orientation and thematic interests and my reflections on these extracts represent my interaction with each woman when these accounts were provided. The issue of representation of narratives alerts me on the ownership of the accounts as well as my authority on representing them, which I will further explore. The authority that the author is granted to treat the final product is scrutinized (Chase, 2005; Fraser, 2004; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 2003) and the notion of 'interpretive level' is introduced, that is the theoretical understandings affecting interpretation: at one pole there is phenomenology, which takes the narrative as it is; at the end of the spectrum there are theoretical assumptions guiding the quest for underlying or implicit contents concealed by the teller. Between the two poles various interpretive levels are positioned influenced by culture,

experience, language, and expectations (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998). My objective regarding theorising is to leave space for women's narrations of resistance as constructed on interrelated themes, all contextualized within the contemporary Greek culture.

I conceive my work to be located within the feminist context since I embark from the pre-given that women are oppressed within the patriarchal Greek context and since I provide space to women to name their experiences (Radford and Russell, 1992), placing them as central (Radford, Kelly and Hester, 1996). In addition, since this research is put within the social work context, providing implications for practice and change, I find Fraser's (2004:180) comment that "narratives may be used to reinforce but also contest dominant social practices" to be consistent with the aims of this research. My pre-occupation with 'resistance' as evident or implied in Greek women's narratives of abuse is methodologically embedded in feminist research methodology which provides space for the 'incompletely articulated aspects of women's experiences' (DeVault, 1999:65) and translates them in feminist terminology. By reading Greek women's transcribed narratives I undertook the task of interpreting their narratives of abuse and oppression as resistance which they could not identify as such within a masculine linguistic framework. This methodological stance provides women with alternative discourses within which they can challenge abuse (Elizabeth, 2003; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994).

Feminist research has introduced and validated women's narratives as a research means towards validating women's experiences versus the objective, masculinist, scientific 'objectivity' (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994). Women's experience has been central to feminist research (DeVault, 1996; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Hester, Kelly and Radford, 1996; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994) which highlighted that women's experience could not always fit dominant discourses (Anderson and Jack, 1991; DeVault, 1996; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Elizabeth, 2003). In trying to challenge the androcentric bias of much academic work and to provide space for women's voices to be heard, feminist

research has been collecting women's life histories and personal narratives (Jackson, 1998).

The experience women narrated has been largely problematized by feminist researchers (Blakely, 2007; Jackson, 1998; DeVault, 1996; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Hester, Kelly and Radford, 1996; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994). There seems to be a feminist conceptualization of experience as discursive, constructed, partial, situated and mediated by language and social relations (Blakely, 2007; DeVault, 1996; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Jackson, 1998). Experience as evident in women's narratives is not transparent, objective or straightforward but rather constructed within their narratives by the ideology, discourses and language available to them. It is also co-constructed within the interview context as women recall memories which attempt to fit theirs and the researchers' agendas. While narrating experience the narrating subject reconstructs her subjectivity by responding to the experience recalled however her response and therefore the reconstruction of her subjectivity is both enabled and constrained by her social location and material social context (Jackson, 1998). Women's experiences have thus been interpreted as constructed by both affirmation of dominant cultural meanings evident in their narratives as well as discontinuities caused by their lived realities which might not fit these cultural discourses (Anderson and Jack, 1991; DeVault, 1996; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). In order for these discrepancies to be heard some feminist scholars have argued for flexibility and reflexivity on whose story the interviewer is asked to tell (Anderson and Jack, 1991), as well as being reflexive on whose story we are prepared to listen through acknowledging the ignorance our own privileges may have produced (DeVault and Gross, 2007).

As women narrate their experiences several decisions occur for both the researcher and the researched and it is flexibility that can politicize these decisions. For example, the concept of 'resistance' was not in my research agenda when I started interviewing Greek women who had been abused by their male partners but through what I ended up naming 'political listening' I tried to provide space for alternative

narratives that might not fit dominant narratives about experiencing and managing abuse. I could listen to the women I interviewed shifting in and out of narratives of resistance and abuse and I welcomed both kinds of narratives.

Feminist narratives have also problematized the notion 'woman' as a unified category generating unified experiences. Underlining its connections with politics feminism calls for an understanding of narratives as shaped by the social location of their narrators and the cultural resources available to them (Jackson, 1998) focusing on both commonalities and differences among women, as "without commonality the connections are tenuous and/or situational; without acknowledgment of difference whole groups of women are marginalized or even forgotten" (Hester, Kelly and Radford, 1996).

Relevant with the discussion about commonalities and differences and of particular interest for my research is the issue of placing women narrators as agents of their own accounts through their negotiations with the social structures which influence the way the story is told (DeVault and Gross, 2007). When women are placed as active subjects of their accounts they cannot be abstracted of their social and material contexts that shape their agencies. The 'situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1988) women narrate re-politicize their experience, an endeavour feminist narrative research has undertaken by being conscious about the fact that certain narratives can de-politicize, for example narratives of healing versus narratives of struggle against oppression (Jackson, 1998). Particularly helpful for my research on Greek women's resistance to abuse by their male partners has been the contextualization of their narrated resistance to abuse as shaped by their social contexts. By linking narratives of resistance with both implicit and explicit restrictions of women's agency complexity is revealed. For feminist research women's narratives are not transparent mediums to objective ends but rather contain contested meanings open to multiple readings which feminist research must make explicit (Chase, 2005; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Fraser, 2003; Jackson, 1998). This is not only a commitment to scientific rigour but also a political commitment

compatible with the feminist task of demystifying research procedures and put the researcher into the same critical plan as the researched (Elizabeth, 2003) in order to unpack and undermine the inevitable power and control exchanged within a research context (Chase, 2005; Dominelli, 2002; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Reinhartz, 2002).

Feminism has indeed showed that power can be exercised over women and their 'subjugated knowledges' through attributing superiority to objective knowledge compared to personal experience (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994). Therefore, the research context becomes an arena problematized by feminism which maintains that research relations are never simple encounters but they are always shaped by cultural constructions of similarity, difference and significance (DeVault and Gross, 2007). Issues of control and power become significant not only in political terms but also in epistemological terms as they can become crucial in shaping the research material produced. The researcher has the power to decide how to represent the data as well as how to interpret it thus shaping the knowledge produced (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994). Feminist research has pioneered in challenging the research procedure for lines of power and control and has introduced reflexivity as a mean to counter the power and control exercised over women within the research context. Questions about 'whose story is told', 'how the story is told' and 'whom the story is for' can address the problematic issues of knowledge production and linking theory with practice. For feminist research, taking women's experience as what counts as knowledge is a first step towards challenging existing ideas, policies and practices by linking theory with practice (Hester, Kelly and Radford, 1996).

It becomes evident that interpreting women's experience besides being a methodological issue becomes a political issue as well. Reflexivity on the interpretation phase of the research involves taking into consideration the ways in which our biographies intersect with those of the women we interview as well as how we present ourselves in the text (Jackson, 1998), or else which voice we employ in order to narrate our own interpretive account (Chase, 2005). In addition, within the

interpretive phase, the researcher not only has the power to decide about what and how to interpret the data but she also has access to discourses that might be inaccessible to the women interviewed and therefore interpretation might become a further vehicle of exercising power. However, I argue that as one mode of gaining power is to gain access to dominant discourses (Elizabeth, 2003) accessing such discourses while interpreting women's experience might provide a more mindful, conscious and political dynamic of women's words, which they might have used as well if they had access to it. This is particularly relevant to my research of women's resistance narratives to abuse by their male partners as none of the women I interviewed used the word 'resistance' in their narratives, however through my analytic prism they employed several forms of resisting strategies to manage abuse. I suggest that the women I interviewed might have talked about resistance if the term 'resistance' had not been kept for narrating masculinist practices of fighting back and winning. Reflecting on the interpretation I chose to provide I am attuned to the argument that as social scientists we have access to academic and feminist discourses which profoundly affect the way we make sense of the stories others tell us (Jackson, 1998). I do not claim to provide women's subjective realities of their abusive experiences in a transparent way; rather, I politicize my intention towards providing an interpretation of women's narratives as narratives of resistance without claiming that this could be their only interpretation. I acknowledge my intentions to be political and value-laden and in terms of methodology I draw from relevant literature to ground my decisions.

It has been asserted that research can never be value-free (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994) and that a value-laden research is not to be contested but rather claims authenticity (Bograd, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Igglessi, 1990). Within my research certain values and theoretical stance have been evident through all of its stages: feminist influence directs my decision to conduct research with women, and the feminist narratives methodology choice is justified by my intention to provide space for non-directive accounts (Igglessi, 1990), to explore the context of Greek women's experience in an attempt to link the personal with the

social and provide a narrative of my interpretation which does not claim objectivity but rather suggest some implications for change in the way Greek women who have experienced abuse are culturally perceived and supported by helping agencies.

I consider these choices to be political since they influence both the topic and the methodology of my study. Answers to the ‘why’ question particularly involve the impact of research on the researched subject, which coupled with feminist objectives problematize the contribution of social research to social change. As Glassie puts it: “Good work is not the end of our task. Scholars are citizens in debt of their society. Our study must push beyond things to meanings, and grope through meanings to values. Studies must rise to perplex and stand to become part of a critical endeavour” (in Lawless, 2001:53). My political stance towards research involves commitment to a critical endeavour which challenges existing ideas, policies and practices and attempts to provide alternative conceptualizations of the issue researched towards linking theory with practice (Hester, Kelly and Radford, 1996).

3.4 Reflections on my research

While conducting research several anxieties evolved regarding a variety of issues. Some of these were: the possible hurt and harm my research could cause to women participants; the relevance, quality and operation of the methodology employed; the handling of the emotions arising out of the interviews for both women narrators and me; the extent to which my interpretation could perpetuate the exercise of power and control over women participants and the research material; the relevance of my interpretation to broader theoretical contexts about women’s abuse by their male partners grounded in feminist standpoint discussions; my social location and interaction with women participants as shaping the research product; and finally a sense of heightened responsibility about the claims I could make and their implications for theory, research, policy and practice on the issue.

In trying to counter these anxieties I became familiarized with relevant literature where other feminist researchers share similar worries

and discuss their ways of managing them (Blakely, 2007; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Jackson, 1998; King, 1996; Mauthner and Doucet, 1997; Reay, 1996; Reinharz, 2002; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Drawing from their insights I shall attempt a sharing of my own research worries towards positioning them within a broader epistemological context before I proceed to reflecting on how I actually did my research.

One of my first major concerns has been to locate myself vis-à-vis the women I interviewed in order to unpack our interaction and the influence it might have on the stories told, the stories heard and the story produced. I am a young, educated, married woman with working-class origins having turned to a feminist oriented researcher within the British academia but researching women's abuse within the Greek context, having conceptualized and experienced gendered-based abuse however having not been identified as abused within an intimate relationship. My self-reflection is full of contradictions and transitory and I have come to acknowledge that my own contradictions and complex social relations have been transferred to my research in terms of both relating to the women I interviewed and of interpreting the research material. I consider my choice of interpreting women's accounts as narratives of resistance to be not so innocent, as I have often doubted my own resistance to several forms of gender-based abuse I have experienced in mostly covert forms. However, my education and relevant access to empowering discourses granted me the opportunity to challenge several forms of gender-based oppression I had experienced by acquiring a language to unpack it as well as accessing discourses of resistance, which challenge masculinist conceptualizations of resistance as merely active responses (Campbell et al., 1998; Hydén, 1999; Kelly, 1988; Wade, 1997; Waldrop and Resick, 2004; Wilcox, 2006).

However, the interpretive authority (Borland, 1991; Blakely, 2007; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Personal Narratives Group, 1989) I had on women's narratives generated hardship as well as thought-provoking worries regarding the extent to which I could claim some resonance for my interpretation. To what extent could I claim presenting Greek women's subjective realities of abuse and resistance

since I only had acquired their experiences, mediated by the social context and the language used to communicate them? (Blakely, 2007; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Jackson, 1998). I decided to be honest with my theoretical positioning and political commitments of feminist research by opening up the structures and operations that underlie my research (King, 1996). I am aware that the narratives of the Greek women I interviewed may have multiple possible readings according- among others- to the theoretical foregrounding of the research. My theoretical orientation derives from literature unpacking resistance as complex, omnipresent and dynamic (Elizabeth, 2003; Faith, 1994; Hydén, 1999; Scott, 1990; Wade, 1997) and a feminist standpoint that contextualizes women's resistance in their social and material contexts which might restrict their agency (Cavanagh, 2003; Elizabeth, 2003; Lempert, 1996; Wilcox, 2006). I am also coming from a social work background which provides me with counselling skills which I can not claim to have left behind when interviewing women but which I have tried to employ towards a more genuine research interview (King, 1996).

It also worried me enough during the course of conducting interviews that I had to decide how to present myself thus influencing the kind of interviewer I was, in other words locating my self as a researcher between a stranger and a friend (Reinharz, 2002). I came to realize that my pre-fixed decisions about such a concern would be very much altered by the kind of relationship we co-constructed with each woman I interviewed which was in turn influenced by her social positioning as well. An illustrative example of this interactive process came to be the use of language. I realized that some interviewees were reluctant to use slang or colloquial terms without having acquired my approval (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994) possibly because my representation as a young educated researcher was interpreted by the women I interviewed as being someone (or one more) who was capable of criticizing their narratives of abuse in terms of 'legitimacy' of abuse: I might had been driven by the stereotype of women who use slang or swear being more prominent to abuse. However, retaining my decision to refrain from using clinical or academic language during my research provided space for women to

access discourses more familiar to them and possibly countered the danger of having women interviewees providing the accounts they thought I wanted to hear in other words appropriating what they said in an existing schema (Anderson and Jack, 1991).

On the other hand, my commitment to provide a context of trust and empathy might have led some of the women I interviewed to disclose issues they had not intend to (King, 1996) or to go deep into their feelings about harmful events. I will address some of these issues relative to the research I conducted in the subchapter about ethical issues. As part of the feminist methodology I employed discussed here I can only reflect on my contradictions between being careful about possible harm caused for the women I interviewed and my intention to interview in ways that allow the exploration of incompletely articulated aspects of women's experiences (DeVault,1999). When interviewing Greek women who had experienced abuse by their male partners I often became both uncomfortable and surprised with my feelings as well as women narrators' emerging feelings. As the issue researched is a sensitive one I had expected difficult feelings to evolve (Blakely, 2007) but what I had not so clearly foreseen was my identification with experiences narrated which had never occupied me consciously before. Moreover, I was sometimes surprised to find out that I was actually being challenged by women's narratives about conceptualizations of gender, internalization of gender stereotypes as well as management of the abuse they were experiencing. It occurred that I was intellectually responding to their narratives the way I intended to counter. I realized that I found myself in front of disclosures that I might had preferred not to see due to the conflict some of them caused to my own value system or regarding aspects of women's experiences (King, 1996) which of course generated anxiety about what to do with them (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994).

Towards countering these tensions I made some political decisions: first of all I thoughtfully acknowledged myself along with its contradictions and its social location is part of my research (King, 1996) and therefore my interpretations were mediated. Regarding the interview context I could not be but guided by my training as a social worker and

therefore employ some of my counselling skills (King, 1996) though constantly trying to retain my position as a researcher somewhere between being a stranger and being a friend (Reinharz, 2002). Being aware that my responses and mannerisms affected women's narratives (King, 1996) I could only counter such contested issues by unpacking and making explicit the processes through which I both collected and interpreted the narrative material (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; King, 1996; Mauthner and Doucet, 1997; Reay, 1996) and treat my personal difficulties as sources of knowledge (Mauthner and Doucet, 1997). For example when one woman narrated her experience of not being cared for enough by her husband when she was pregnant though according to her 'a pregnant woman is the centre of the world' I found out I was being challenged. How can women claim autonomy and self-sufficiency when we are attuned to such gender stereotyping about the emotional vulnerability of a pregnant woman? It sounded like a contradiction between claiming her subjectivity towards her husband's abuse and claiming his care at a point where she wanted to be treated as special. As her narrative evolved I could reflect on her autonomy and self-efficacy in raising three children after divorcing her husband and still being a good professional willing to broaden her interests. Reflecting on my reaction I came to realize that I have also internalized such stereotypes which I have tried to counter through feminist thinking but at the same time I found reconciliation of autonomy with the need for love and care to be liberating. Through this prism I could translate this 'pregnancy-narrative' as a narrative of resistance towards her husband's disinterest to meet her emotional needs contextualized by the cultural discourse of pregnancy which served to legitimize her need.

Through this discussion I attempt to make transparent the personal, social and political influences of my interpretation of Greek women's narratives of abuse in order to make explicit that my interpretation is partial, contested and open to discussion while still suggesting a way of reading them which has implications for current conceptualizations of abuse and relevant policy and practice in Greece. My intention is to undertake responsibility in recognizing myself as

imperfect as well as thinking and feeling and my research as partial (Blakely, 2007).

3.5 Preparing for research

As feminist narratives were my methodological guide for researching Greek women's abuse by their male partners, my first decisions were about the women I was going to approach and ask them to co-operate as narrators. Initially I contacted shelters for 'abused women' in Greece in order to make arrangements for research and be granted admission to the shelters. An explanatory letter was sent to the state shelters whereas just phone contacts were made with the NGO that runs another shelter. At the same time an 'invitation' was prepared for women to participate, which informed about my research rationale, aims and methods and was also assuring women about matters of privacy and respect of withdrawal from the research. This invitation was disseminated by women's helping agencies. As currently most shelters operating in Greece are occupied by women from ethnic backgrounds other than Greek I faced difficulties in accessing Greek women through shelters. Therefore, I employed other methods of accessing possible narrators for my research. I posted an announcement at a web page and I also prepared flyers with which I invited women to participate in my research and disseminated them at places that women usually visit such as beauty salons as well as residence buildings.

With all of the women I interviewed we had a phone contact prior to the interview during which I provided the context and rationale of my research and initiated a discussion about matters of confidentiality. During this phone call two of the women I finally interviewed expressed their concerns about 'suitability' of their stories to my research as they considered their abusive experience to transcend the boundaries of 'commonsensical' abuse by male partners.

Before the interview, women were given a 'theme structure' around which they could construct their narrative, which was facilitating rather than prescriptive. The issues involved were personal information on birth date and place, education and job, family of origin as

experienced through principles and values, meeting the partner, relationship, marriage, love and intimacy, problems experienced in the relationship and their escalation to abuse, responses to abuse and coping strategies, seeking for formal and informal help and present condition. By providing this proposed structure I was looking for narrative coherence, as well as a personalization of narratives, so as to avoid “generalities about the interviewee’s or others’ experiences” (Chase, 2005:661), however I clarified that it was only suggestive. Most of the women I interviewed started their narration from the point of meeting their abusive partner and some of them shifted to past later in their narrative.

Women interviewed were also given a consent form with which they were assured that their narratives would be confidential, pseudonyms would be used for presenting their narratives within my thesis and that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

A feedback form was prepared for women narrators to fill in and return to me a few days after our interview. My intention through this feedback form was to provide women narrators space for comments and reflections on the interview process in order to acquire some useful information regarding the process itself as well as the experience of narrating and make some amendments informed by their comments. It was also a method through which women would be enabled to ‘let go’ of the emotional luggage they might have been loaded during their narration (King, 1996). I also handed the feedback form because I perceived women who would provide their narratives of abuse to be active participants in my research who could comment and provide useful feedback on how women who have experienced abuse can contribute to the research process. I received back six out of ten feedback forms.

3.6 Sample

Within my invitations to women to participate in research I stated that research was about women who have experienced abuse by their male partners. I deliberately chose the words as I refrained from

defining abuse or women who have experienced abuse by their male partners and was instead pursuing narratives by women who had the experience of abuse, thus had themselves defined their experience as abusive. My invitation was open to women who have experienced abuse and therefore was addressed to women who had either escaped from their abusive relationships or were still trying to escape. I narrowed my research to women who have experienced abuse by their male partners as abuse between same-sex couples has not been discussed, researched or supported by agencies in Greece, therefore I would not have access to such a 'hidden' group.

A 'pre-requisite' for participation in the research was women's ethnic background, since narratives are viewed as a 'linguistic event' (Mishler, 1996) and therefore language is the medium through which to approach women's narratives. Obtaining a common language with the narrators as well as a common cultural context with the informants (Hydén, 2005) would form the basis for co-construction of meaning. However, meeting this 'criterion' was not such a straightforward process, since women who provided accounts were resident in the great area of Athens but they might come from sub-urban areas or even villages close to Athens, which affect their linguistic styles. Although all of the women I interviewed have Greek ethnic origins, homogeneity of the sample is problematized and so is the term 'Greek' for women born and raised in Greece. Considering that the women I interviewed were born and raised in Greece I employ the term 'Greek' in order to define the social, cultural and local context which shapes their experiences and informs their narratives rather than claiming any ethnic homogeneity. The women I interviewed defined themselves as of Greek origins, heterosexual and able-bodied to name some of the social distinctions that influence both their experiences of abuse and the interpretation I attempted. However, other Greek women whether abused or not do not define themselves in the same terms and clearly this has implications for my findings. Other Greek women would have provided different narratives informed by the simultaneity of being dis/abled, homosexual or of mixed origins. Within the context of women's abuse by their male partners in Greece the issue

of 'representativeness' of the sample of women included has remained underdiscussed in terms of diversity. Representativeness is pursued in terms of dispersion of the sample in order to represent all the Greek state and its social composition. Therefore, issues of diversity amongst women in terms of ethnic background, dis/ability and sexual orientation have gone unchallenged and such a context is missing from informing a critical stance towards the 'sample' of the women I interviewed.

In terms of women's current involvement with their abusive partners my decision was to interview women who had either escaped from abusive relationships or were in the process of leaving and were supported by relevant services.

I did not place criteria of age or duration of the relationship as I intended to consider the impact of multiple structural features on how women experienced abuse by their male partners and structured their resistance. I was rather pursuing multiplicity than homogeneity among women who had experienced abuse by their male partners.

I interviewed ten women aged from 25 to 55 years old, who had experienced or had been experiencing abuse by their male partners from 3 to 20 years. Nine out of ten women I interviewed had children with their abusive partners. The two women I interviewed at shelters had escaped a few months ago but had still contacts with their abusive partners. Two women had already divorced, one was about to divorce, one had stopped seeing her abuser for two years and four were supported by women's agencies on their decision to leave their abusive partners.

Although I had employed the term male partner instead of husband in order not to exclude women who were in long relationships or co-habiting with their male abusers, nine out of the ten women were married.

In terms of socio-economic condition, seven of the women I interviewed were not working or were occasionally working while in their abusive relationships and therefore were now facing financial problems or were claiming financial support for their children through their lawyers. Five of these women had attended high school and two had

completed primary education. The other three women were employed in the private sector with a standard wage.

At the time of the interview two women were staying at shelters, two were staying at their own place with their children, one was staying alone, one had returned with her baby at her parents' home and four were still living with their abusive partners although they were separated.

3.7 Conducting interviews

My intention was not to assure common interview context but just to pursue privacy and avoidance of interruptions. Therefore, interviews were either conducted at shelters where women were staying or at the women's support agencies premises or at their places, where they were either alone or we met alone in one of the rooms of their home. My intention was not to put women in 'laboratory conditions' where the surrounding would have minimum impact on 'data' and at the same time maintain a certain level of 'environmental neutrality' in terms of privacy and avoidance of disturbance.

Interviews were recorded after obtaining women's consent about starting recording but recording was initialized at different points in each interview. The point at which I posed the question for starting recording is itself an integral part of the narration: it needs to be taken into further consideration the time and kind of interaction with each woman before the actual narration started, that is before I felt that we both felt 'ready' for our narrative interview. The initial question I posed after having pressed the 'record' button was not the same for every woman. What affected the choice of this question for each woman and how the question itself influenced the flow of the narrative to follow is yet another point for analysis though outside the scope of my research.

From the beginning my approach to the interview was identified with the 'discussion' style, which enables flow of views and ideas between interviewer and interviewee however to a certain extent (Mishler, 1996). This choice was not just 'technical' for me but necessary for validating the narrator by sometimes reflecting on her narrative content in a personalized but not judgmental way. The uniqueness of

each narrative is also present through the different extent to which this 'discussion' style was performed. With some women it was important for reassuring they were listened to and understood, while for some other women every attempt to 'build an oral bridge' between us had the effects of a common interruption. Many women's narratives were filled with notations of women saying 'you know', which contextualized within their wider narrative did no longer seem "like stumbling inarticulateness, but appears to signal a request for understanding' (DeVault, 1999:69). I argue that phrases like 'you know' followed by me nodding 'uh-huh' underline the collaborative work of constructing narratives and sustaining rapport between the woman narrator and me, a reassurance that we understand each other 'as women'.

My feelings during women's narration were intense and at certain points some of my beliefs and understandings of intimacy, abuse and resistance were challenged. The women narrators and I embarked on a 'narrative journey' during which the role of the captain was handed to the narrator. My role was mostly identified with that of the compass, whenever we seemed to lose our direction. However, loss of direction itself was viewed as yet another narrative which acquires its meaning only when contextualized by the wider narrative (Chase, 2005; Mishler, 1996). When I refer to 'direction' I mostly mean my attempt to invite yet another narrative (Chase, 2005). Some women started following the thematic structure and as their narrative developed, they followed their own thematic pathways.

One of my major concerns before I started interviewing Greek women who had been abused by their male partners was to be attentive to the possibility of boundaries merge between a therapeutic and a research interview context (King, 1996). I had anticipated that some women would find themselves in emotional tension during their narration and although I acknowledge the ethical dimension of reliving traumatic experiences I preferred to discuss these tensions with the women rather than overlooking them or pursue a utopian emotional-free interview. My decision was also value-laden since I consider women who have experienced abuse by their male partners to be the agents of their

emotions capable of interrupting or even withdrawing if their emotional tension was overwhelming. I had also prepared a short list of helping agencies women could contact if they felt they needed (further) support, which I used in one instance when a woman asked me for agencies where she could acquire therapy for her and her daughter.

As happened with the starting point of each interview it was difficult to locate its end as well. For some interviews it was easier to identify the end as women employed 'exit phrases' while with most of women I interviewed the discussion went on even after I had turned off the tape recorder. Roughly, I considered the end of the interview to be located at the point where women expressed an escape from their narrative by shifting from the position of the protagonist of the story narrated to that of the research participant, indicated by questions about my reflections on their narratives.

Despite my anticipation for the opposite only one woman asked me personal questions about my marital status. As I had informed the women I interviewed about lack of experience of abuse by a male partner in my biography none of them asked me about personal experience of abuse, however our introductory discussions about how abuse can be perceived and the multiple possible ways in which a woman can experience male abuse established some consensus regarding experiences of abuse.

3.8 Analysis and interpretation

Since the beginning of my research my interpretive authority on women's accounts was one of my central concerns and I acknowledged that control could be exerted over women's narratives in every stage of the research especially in collecting, transcribing and interpreting data.

Transcription has been theorized as a phase of the narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993; Fraser, 2003). I transcribed women's narratives verbatim as I intended to construct analysis of the relationship between narrative form, meaning and social context (Riessman, 1994) of Greek women's abuse and resistance. In the transcribed passages I included silences, false starts, emphases and discourse markers and

therefore my transcription was an interpretive process (Riessman,1993) of how I heard what women said and how it can be represented in written. As interviews lasted from one to two hours with the exception of one that was conducted on two days and lasted totally three and a half hours, transcription produced accounts of about four hundred pages. As the women I interviewed used the Greek language I also translated their transcribed accounts into English and during this process I faced difficulties in ascribing meaning which is transferred through language, especially in cases where there are certain Greek expressions carrying cultural meaning. In such cases I decided to provide some explanatory information about the cultural meaning of the word or phrase in a parenthesis. However, the 'narrative style' of the Greek women I interviewed is directly related to their language and I was often faced with the difficulty of transferring the meaning of their linguistic expression into English. Although inevitably some meaning has been lost in translation and the translated extracts I provide might seem incomprehensible at times I retained women's expressive styles in order to stay as faithful to their narratives as possible. A methodological choice was to minimize my mediation between women's narratives and the transcribed material as much as possible by translating their accounts verbatim. Acknowledging that language conveys cultural meaning the process of translating was neither straightforward nor unproblematic. However, as I am interested in unpacking women's accounts for analyzing their coping strategies and re-reading them as resistance(s) I tried to remain 'faithful' to their own words which convey special meaning surrounding their experiences. At times my methodological choice became problematic and especially when women's words carried an ethical or political meaning which challenged my feminist stance towards analyzing their accounts and therefore their 'patriarchal' discourse sounded as they might weaken my argument that women do manifest resistance whenever they are abused. An illustrative example is the word 'fight' that some of the women I interviewed used to narrate their experience of being abused by their male partners. 'Fight' is a word commonly used by women although it obscures the unilateral exercise of

power from the male perpetrator towards a woman and therefore it is gender-neutral and implies mutuality when this is clearly not the case. However, I insisted on translating it to the English corresponding word in an attempt to involve the words women use in unpacking the internalization of cultural meanings by the women themselves. In other words I argue that the discourses that the Greek women I interviewed could access are oppressive discourses that impact upon the choice of their words and need to be challenged for restricting women's agency within abuse.

Review of narrative analysis literature leads me to awareness that analysis can be attempted "along myriad dimensions" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998:8). Although roughly suggested and while much insight and authenticity is required both to conduct and to analyse narrative research, a literature review suggests that there are some helping guides (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Fraser, 2003; Mishler, 1999; Poindexter 2002; Riessman, 1993).

Narrative accounts by Greek women who have experienced abuse by their male partners are diverse in various terms. First of all, Greek women who were researched were resident in the urban area of Athens but their diverse origins place great differences on the language used and verbal expressions, so a commitment to analysis of form would be methodologically weak, since a linguistic homogeneity could not be pursued. Diversity amongst researched women was also evident in terms of age, education and social class, family stories as well as 'social mentality', factors which fashioned their narratives in various ways as will be further analysed.

Drawing from narrative analysis and informed by feminist theory my analysis is constructed around the theme of 'resistance' as expressed within women's narratives in various forms. Throughout the analysis, the issue of resistance is explored as related with other structural, social and cultural factors as well as with women's narrative styles.

Before I focused on 'resistance' as a central theme in Greek women's narratives, I read each transcribed narrative three times drawing

from relevant methodological literature (Fraser, 2004; Mauthner and Doucet, 1997). My first reading was an attempt to acquire a sense of each narrative as a story, that is the way it unfolds and regain the sense it provided me when conducting the relevant interview as well as new thoughts and feelings which I kept as notes. During the second reading I disaggregated 'stories' within women's wider narratives (Fraser, 2003) and followed an 'open coding' of meaning units and concepts identified (Padgett, 1998), for which I kept notes at the margins of the transcribed interviews. My third reading was conducted after having acquired an amount of stories from each woman which I conceptualized as narratives of resistance, in order to refine types of resistance women could have implied. I employed the method of 'constant comparative analysis' (Padgett, 1998) to re-read women's identified stories as stories of resistance. Through this method I generated a list of narratives of resistance to which I was returning after identifying yet another one to see its applicability and generating new conceptualizations of resistance where these narratives could fit. As I resisted the temptation to read all women's stories as stories of resistance, the extracts referring to resistance were narrowed. However, the form resistance was taking in each story of each woman's narrative was different. For analytical reasons I tried to list some of these forms resistance was taking within women's narratives and constructed a long list of forms of resistance which I analytically divided in open and subtle forms of resistance informed by relevant literature (Kelly, 1988; Campbell et al., 1998; Wade, 1997; Waldrop and Resick, 2004).

After repeatedly reading women's shorter narratives of resistance through some of these forms of resistance merged and a third one was revealed: apart from open and subtle forms of resistance women initiated a third way of expressing resistance through their narrative itself. Narrative resistance was constructed at the time of narration and was expressed through narrative styles and features such as tone of voice, imaginary dialogues, shift of positions from narrator to resisting partner. My intention was not to construct an exhaustive list of possible forms of resistance therefore I did not employ any of the methods used for coding.

Rather, as I attempted to interrogate women's narratives for resistance I was looking for commonalities and differences amongst them (Fraser, 2003). I finally constructed four categories of subtle resistance and three categories of open resistance as well as narrative resistance. I created a table with all women's pseudonyms for each of these forms of resistance and as I read women's narratives I was informing the tables with the lines of each woman's narrative that was corresponding to the identified forms of resistance. My method for analyzing Greek women's accounts for resistance to abuse was initiated while I was actually carrying out the analysis and anxiety-provoking as it may be I fully comply with the suggestion that feminist research has to be insightful in order to provide new understandings of women's experiences (DeVault, 1999; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Again, I was fully aware that I do not intend to provide a rich analysis of the forms of resistance Greek women employ in their narratives but rather provide some readings of their narratives as narratives of resistance. Inherent in my intention is the acknowledgment that my analysis was actually identified with an interpretive process located between the 'manifest content' as spoken by the producer of the narrative and the 'latent content' as heard by me (Tonkiss, 2004).

Acknowledging that my interpretation of Greek women's narrative accounts as narratives of resistance is one of the many ways their narratives could be read, I attempt to provide a critical reading of these narratives as manifesting resistance in various ways. My analytic attempt is informed by narrative and feminist objectives of linking the personal with the social through contextualization of narratives towards providing implications for changing perceptions of women who have experienced abuse by their male partners as victims and therefore suggests an interpretive context that could inform research, theory and practice on the subject matter. Throughout this attempt I shift from the personal to the social context in order to trace the implications of women's social context and material conditions in restricting or enabling their personal agency (Wilcox, 2006).

Refraining from romanticizing social research for making the world better, I acknowledge that my research is situated locally and

historically and my interpretations are culturally mediated as well as informed by my personal biography. From where I view the data I collected “certain aspects of the data are much more prominent than others and as a consequence interpretation remains an imperfect and incomplete process” (Reay, 1996: 57). And soon I became, at least partially, aware that my point of viewing women’s narratives influences the product of my research (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Mauthner and Doucet, 1997; Reay, 1996; Stanley and Wise, 1983).

3.9 Quality of research

Qualitative criteria of research are adjusted to the research paradigm employed. Traditional criteria applied to scientific/positivist tradition are reconceptualized within the interpretivist paradigm (Seale, 2004; Spencer et al., 2003). Within the latter context, the perspectives and priorities of individuals are allowed to be revealed (Seale, 2004). Most important, I identify my research to be located within the feminist methodology and therefore its quality criteria are shaped by relevant literature which challenges masculinist notions of objectivity and universal truth which can be reached by a distant researcher and instead problematizes social research (Blakely, 2007; Harding, 1987; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Kelly, 1988; Jackson, 1998) and acknowledges that different standpoints will produce different knowledges (Stanley and Wise, 1983).

As qualitative interviewing is very time-consuming and produces a vast amount of material it can normally be applied to a few cases (Seale, 2004), so the limited breadth of the method can be charged for jeopardizing external validity (Seale, 2004). However, for the sake of a thorough analysis of concepts identified within and across women’s accounts, certain focus is on the process of conducting the research, in order to pursue validation rather than validity (Spencer et al., 2003). Informed by feminist methodology I reflected on the problem of validity faced by feminist researchers generated by the possibility of interpreting women’s interviews in many various ways (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 2004). My methodological position has been to be reflexive on my

decisions regarding collecting and interpreting Greek women's narratives as decisions informed by my located subjectivity shaped by personal, social, educational and political influences.

More specifically, some qualitative criteria to which my research has been committed are to listen and record carefully and to keep notes of my reflections on each interview. Transcribed accounts were sent back to women for further comments and a feedback form on the experience of narration was completed by each woman so that ameliorative developments could be made.

Within my narrative study, validity then is not seen as a matter of measuring the applicability of my research on quantitative terms; rather, it requires a systematic identification of repetitive patterns within the accounts, until they are found to be 'saturated' (Igglessi, 1990). Such patterns were explored regarding the forms of resistance Greek women manifest towards abuse and their abusive partners and were related to the context within which such resistance is experienced and manifested.

Committed to reflexivity and considering it as a quality criterion (Bryman, 2001; Seale, 2004; Spencer et al., 2003) I tried to systematize my reflections by keeping notes on particular issues like feelings, body language and recalling personal experience, which I incorporated in the analysis of the account in respect. This method has often been identified with the 'reliability' of the traditional research paradigm (Bryman, 2001; Seale, 2004). Within the narrative context, the researcher participates in the process of narrative construction but the narrating subject is provided with a flexibility to talk about issues that are important to her in an equivalent relationship. In order for this relationship to be equivalent, the researcher may proceed to disclosures. Therefore, the account is mutually constructed but not in favour of affirming researcher's pre-conceptions, as the content of the account is provided by the researched subject (Igglessi, 1990). Consequently, the basis for theorizing is provided by the narrating subjects and is supported by the internal structure of each account as well as contextual features, such as emotional reflections and body language that affirm the content of the account (Igglessi, 1990; King, 1996). By treating my material in a flexible manner, open to

discussion, I pursue another conceptualization of validity, 'validity as an incitement to discourse' (Lather, 1995 in Spencer et al, 2003).

In terms of credibility, rather than trying to claim truth for my theorizing, I consider it to be an interpretation, one of the many possible that could be ascribed to women's narratives, however one that was reflexively informed by my theoretical, methodological and political interests. My interpretation might not be applicable to every Greek woman who has experience abuse; yet, its quality lies in the provision of an original understanding, open to discussion, which might propose a new way of perceiving women's abuse and professional help consistent with women's needs and desires.

In order for qualitative and especially narrative research to maintain its uniqueness, traditional criteria for the quality of the research, deriving mainly from the positivist research tradition, have been reconceptualized and even renamed to fit the nature of qualitative research (Bryman, 2001; Seale, 2002; Spencer et al, 2003).

Narrative research can not be freed from qualitative criteria; yet, as narrative inquiry suggests, there are quality features that move the process of research into the social world (Riessman, 1993). Validation is replaced by 'trustworthiness' as narratives might not be consistent from one setting to another (Riessman, 1993). Validation is then approached through other ways (Riessman, 1993): persuasiveness requires evidence from the accounts, as well as alternative interpretations of the data. Correspondence is attempted by taking interpretative accounts back to the informants (Riessman, 1993), though Fraser (2004) poses some considerations regarding re-reading of stressful experiences. In the case of my research I sent back the transcribed interviews to the women whom I could access quite long after our interview in order to provide space for clarifications and a possibility of control on their part upon their narratives. All of the women responded that they felt comfortable with their transcribed narratives and trusted me about my attempted interpretation. Their trust though enhanced the sense of my responsibility towards their narratives and my research product (Blakely, 2007).

Coherence can be achieved by “continuously modify initial hypotheses about speakers’ beliefs and goals (global coherence) in light of the structure of particular narratives (local coherence) and recurrent themes that unify the text (thematic coherence)” (Riessman, 1993:67). As my focus of research was modified during analyzing Greek women’s accounts and as my ‘categories’ were redefined until I identified those most common in women’s narratives, I can argue that women’s narratives were currently scrutinized for revealing resistance.

My research seeks to respect quality by providing space for alternative interpretations, further research and reflexive accounts, while at the same time being consistent with its aims and objectives. I tried to pursue accountability of my interpretation by trying to make knowledge produced applicable to the worlds that women live in (DeVault and Gross, 2007) especially by interpreting their agency shaping their resistance as restricted or enabled by their social and material realities.

I argue that regarding my research with Greek women who have been abused by their male partners, adopting traditional quality criteria would probably further oppress women researched. For example, if I insisted on trying to prove or generalize women’s views, I would probably convey the message that their accounts are not validated. It would also probably reduce my genuine personal commitment to authenticity and discovery, in an attempt to strictly serve traditional positivist criteria of research quality.

3.10 Ethical issues

Ethical issues evolved during all stages of my research. As my research draws from narrative methodology it is relative to state that “narrative research, based on the real lives of people made public, converts what is private into public; can violate privacy; and can cause mental, legal, social and financial hurt and harm” (Bakan, 1996:3). As my research also falls in the feminist methodology I have also found that ethics is an arena which needs to be problematized and cannot be separated by the methodology which a feminist researcher employs. For example, issues of power and control in feminist research sound to me

like political, methodological and ethical issues. I will then try to reflect on some ethical concerns which aroused from the beginning of my research and are still present while I am writing up my thesis. I would roughly divide them into ethical issues regarding the research itself in epistemological terms and those which involve the research participants, in the case of my research the Greek women whom I interviewed about their experience of having been abused by their male partners. I would also add to these two 'areas' of ethics one that explores ethical issues in the social work discipline within which I carried out my research (Butler, 2002; Wilks, 2005).

I agree with ethical standards that treat the issue of quality of research (ESRC-REF) and the researcher's professional integrity (BSA Statement of Ethical Practice, 2002) as ethical issues. However, drawing from a feminist methodology I have tried to explore these issues and apply them to my research through a feminist discourse. Within this prism I have discussed issues of quality in the previous subchapter and therefore I will here discuss ethical issues concerning the conduct of research where I am present as a researcher and involved in a research relationship with the research participants.

Initially, my research raises ethical issues regarding its topic, which is sensitive, since it involves traumatic experience (Lee, 1993). Relevant literature on research ethics and especially regarding qualitative research on sensitive topics has tackled these issues by reference to potential risk and harm to research participants (BSA Statement of Ethical Practice, 2002; ESRC-REF; Lee, 1993; Seale, 2004). In trying to address these problems they have particularly discussed matters of privacy, confidentiality and informed consent.

Exploring these issues within my research, privacy was secured either in co-ordination with the staff of the shelter or by asking women for a private interview when the interview was conducted at their place.

The women I interviewed were reassured about confidentiality both orally and in written. In particular they were informed that I would secure anonymity by using pseudonyms and as I would include extracts of their narratives I would avoid to provide identity traits and life story

particularities through which they could be identified. One of the state organizations for battered women I co-operated with asked me to sign a declaration for the purposes of my research and for not disclosing information publicly but only for academic purposes. I was pleased to find out that most of the women I interviewed focused on the purposes of research as they commented on the need for such research to be carried out so that their voices can be heard and the public to be informed about the problem of domestic violence. Towards this aim most of the women I interviewed said that they consciously wanted to participate in my research and none of them was anxious about issues of confidentiality and anonymity although they still agreed with using pseudonyms and protecting confidentiality.

Acknowledging the importance of acquiring women participants' informed consent I disseminated to each woman that intended to participate in my research a brief description of the research scope and objectives including securing anonymity and confidentiality. I tried to provide this information in terms meaningful to them (BSA Statement of Ethical Practice, 2002; ESRC-REF). They were also informed about the fact that my research was being conducted for academic purposes and that they had the right to withdraw at any time during research. Before starting the interview with each woman participant we discussed those issues and then they were given an informed consent form including all this information to sign. However, informed consent was not a process completed at the time of signing it; rather, it was an ongoing process (ESRC-REF) as the interview evolved and sensitive issues were disclosed.

The issue that calls for greater consideration is probably harm and the relationship established with women to avoid or counter it. At certain points in the course of conducting interviews I faced my anxiety caused by my ethical considerations about my intrusion to women's lives, the intellectual and emotional demands of the interview as well as disclosures that women participants did not intend to make or disclosures I was not prepared to listen (King, 1996). My methodological standpoint and my professional ethics could only lead me to an open discussion with

the women I interviewed about difficulties arising during the course of the interviews. I often had to reflect on my role within the interview as extending between the researcher and the social worker and I found out that it would be too artificial to try and distinguish these two traits of my identity. However, my ethical concern during conducting interviews was not to convert the research interview to a therapeutic interview which could cause vain hopes to the women I interviewed. On the other hand, I could not be ignorant towards the fact that my social work counseling skills were part of the interview and reflecting back upon the interviews I conducted I argue that these skills contributed in establishing a genuine and respecting relationship with the women I interviewed (King, 1996). At times I felt that some of the women I interviewed got very deep in their experiences and fearing that the interview might cause emotional disturbance to them I asked them to stop if they wished though none of them did. I had also been prepared to find out that some of the women I would interview might ask for further help and I had prepared a list of services for women and children which they could contact.

It would probably be simplistic to say that an open discussion of difficulties with the research participants can easily address issues of power and control in research. Power and control as ethical issues were present in both overt and covert forms during conducting research with Greek women who had been abused by their male partners. At some points few of the women I interviewed reached out for validation of their words by my academic authority – I preferred to say that it was their own experience that counted as valid and that I was not looking for rights or wrongs. At other times some of them thought they had to apologize or legitimize the coping strategies or overt resistance they employed towards abuse as they thought I had internalized gender stereotypes through which I would judge their narratives and possibly produce knowledge. The mere fact that the women I interviewed were aware at the time of narrating their stories that I am going to listen to their recorded stories as many times as I would want after our interview was over and that I had the time and space to provide my own interpretations generated a sense of enhanced responsibility for what I was going to

explore, write and disseminate. I tried to counter such control by assuring women at certain points that my interpretation would refrain from being judgmental and that I only intended to provide a possible reading of women's narratives of abuse. After transcribing the interviews I sent the transcribed texts to the women I had interviewed whom I could still access asking for comments or extracts they would prefer to be left out in order to transfer some control over their narratives to them. None of the women I interviewed said she would like to change or delete something.

My ethical dilemmas were often treated by me through the social work prism. Apart from being a researcher I am also a social worker and it was not easy for me to distinguish between these two practices. The ethics and values of my research were identified with my professional social work ethics and values. By arguing that women do resist when they are in abusive relationships I try to promote their welfare by highlighting that their agency can be constrained by structural inequalities and cultural norms which social work needs to challenge.

3.11 Limitations of research

The limitations of my research are in accordance with the methodological context within which I carried out my research. It is possible that my worries and dilemmas while conducting my research point to the limitations of my research.

A possible limitation for my research would be the women I included in my research and the implications the exclusion of other women interviewees might have on the knowledge produced. The feminist commitment to inclusion (DeVault, 1996) poses a limitation on my research as it included a small sample of Greek women who have experienced abuse and has possibly excluded other women with different experiences. I tried to counter this limitation by valuing differences among the women I interviewed in terms of contextualizing their resistances to abuse. When I interpret Greek women's experiences of abuse as resistance I try to be careful not to falsely universalize them (DeVault, 1996). When I decided to include in my research Greek women I anticipated that their supposed homogeneity in terms of ethnic

and cultural background would provide a context to interpret their narratives of abuse and resistance compatible with my intention to explore the implications of that particular context for Greek women's shaping of agency and resistance while acknowledging differences among them as well. However, I can still question which voices remained unheard and silenced as I hypothesize that there might have been other Greek women who were informed about my research but refrained from participating (Woodward, 2000) for personal reasons or fear.

Other methodological choices point to further possible limitations of my research. Decisions about which data to include and how to interpret them in order to counter the possible power exerted over the women I interviewed while still retaining my epistemological and methodological objectives referred me to similar challenges other feminist researchers have faced (DeVault and Gross, 2007; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Jackson, 1998; King, 1996; Mauthner and Doucet, 1997; Reay, 1996; Woodward, 2000). It became evident that I could not escape such worries and dilemmas but that rather I had to form a feminist standpoint (Harding, 1987) from which to speak about the Greek women I interviewed while acknowledging that my social positioning mediates my interpretation (Blakely, 2007; DeVault, 1996; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Jackson, 1998). My standpoint was shaped by my theoretical and methodological interests, my social positioning and educational background as well as my politics and values and it is from there that I talk about the Greek women I interviewed as agents in their abusive relationships by contextualising their agency in its social, cultural and material context.

Would the knowledge I produced claim to be Greek women's knowledge and to what ends should this knowledge be used? I often worried about de-politicizing the issue of Greek women's resistance by implying that they do resist therefore they do have agency and so they could leave abusive husbands—since they stay with their abusive partners they choose to suspend their agency or use it towards remaining with their abusive partners. However, my interpretations need to be contextualized. Women are seen as passive victims in Greece but the

delays in providing services and introducing laws against domestic violence suggests that traditional gender stereotypes and cultural values of marriage and family are still highly respected in Greece. Therefore, it is one thing to talk about women's abuse to resistance in a context where others have spoken about it before as they have done in U.K and U.S.A from which I acquired relevant literature (Campbell et al., 1998; Chantler, 2006; Hydén, 1999; Kelly, 1988; Lempert, 1996; Wade, 1997; Waldrop and Resick, 2004; Wilcox, 2006). And it is a different thing to claim resistance from the narratives of Greek women who experience abuse. It might sound more provoking while at the same time more urgent and necessary to unpack Greek women's resistances and restrictions of their agency towards leaving an abusive relationship. It is at this point where questions about power over the women's narratives become more intense.

In trying to counter my power over the narratives I collected I was supported by relevant literature suggesting that reflexivity is a paramount project within feminist research towards unpacking power and control in the research process (Borland, 1991; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; Jackson, 1998; Kelly, 1988; King, 1996; Mauthner and Doucet, 1997; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Reay, 1996; Woodward, 2000).

My aim to provide space for the unvoiced was not such a straightforward process. As decisions about interpreting Greek women's experiences of abuse entered my research the concept of experience itself became problematic. It became evident that I could only approach Greek women's experience as constructed and mediated (Blakely, 2007; DeVault, 1996; DeVault and Gross, 2007; Jackson, 1998). Greek women's accounts did not speak for themselves; rather, I chose a standpoint from where to view their experiences as including resistance and interrogate the dynamics of resistance by contextualizing it. The possibility of providing unreliable conclusions based on my interpretations can be further reinforced by other theoretical positions which would view many of the narrative extracts I provide in my analysis as implying the exact opposite of what I argue. However, I am fully

aware that I cannot clean up my research from my standpoint which is embedded with my political objective to provide a reading of Greek women's narratives that de-pathologizes them and seeks for their agency while anchoring the constraints that might be posed on it, which I further claim that need to be challenged. I argue that credibility for my claims can only be located. I have researched Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance and it is the Greek context within which I have approached their experiences for the possible implications it might have on how Greek women shape their resistance. At the same time, had I been in a different position I would probably have overlooked resistance in their narratives.

I undertake responsibility for my conclusions while I try and bring to light the processes of doing my research and the difficulties and dilemmas faced instead of arguing that my research was 'hygienic' (Stanley and Wise, 1983).

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS: SETTING THE CONTEXT

Soon as I began transcribing women's accounts and as I was disaggregating their lengthy narratives into stories (Fraser, 2004) an insight emerged that women's stories of abuse were more than stories of victimization. Not only were these women sitting in front of me having already distanced themselves from abuse but they were also constructing accounts that challenged their assumed passivity. Having in mind the challenges that have been posed upon commonsensical understandings of women's management of abuse as leading to staying or leaving an abusive relationship which has been enforced by relevant research (Campbell et al., 1998; Chantler, 2006; Elizabeth, 2003; Hydén, 2005; Kelly, 1988; Wilcox, 2006) I attempted to interrogate women's account for resisting. Shaping my inquiry towards this objective my aim became to argue for the usefulness of attempting alternative readings on women's accounts of abuse and of providing women alternative discourses to talk about resistance.

My inquiry was accompanied by relevant theory regarding resistance which suggests that "in addition to each story of male violent behaviour there is a parallel story of female opposition" (Hydén, 1999:460) and that "alongside each history of violence and oppression, there runs a parallel history of prudent, creative, and determined resistance" (Wade, 1997:23). Therefore, if I was to trace resistance in women's accounts I had to employ an alternative reading of their narratives informed by the assumption that persons possess a pre-existing ability to resist violence (Wade, 1997) and that violence arises because there is resistance (Kelly, 1988). At that point I became fully aware that I could only provide an interpretation of women's experiences as narratives of resistance.

Since I had embarked upon an inquiry about women's resistance to male violence and abuse my analytical lenses had to be focused on the particularities of such resistance. In order to track down and consider these particularities while analyzing women's accounts I found contextualization helpful. Women's accounts were attributed meaning by being contextualized within each particular woman's socio-cultural

context as well as location at the time of narration and resources available to them. As the narrative accounts I had collected were coming from Greek women, I acknowledged the impact of the particular socio-cultural context, involving beliefs and norms, legislation and policy on women's abuse and attempted to involve it in my analysis.

Theoretical issues emerged as well in trying to conceptualize women's resistance(s) to male violence and abuse. Acknowledging that I am employing a feminist stance for my research and analysis I sought for women's resistance within heterosexual relationships where women experienced patriarchal oppression (Kelly, 1988) while at the same time they were sharing intimacy and trust with their partners (Fraser, 2003; Lempert, 1996). Challenging seemingly passive women's reactions to men's abuse means trying to consider what women actively 'do' when they attempt to make their relationships safe (Cavanagh, 2003) and leaving aside erroneous dilemmas of staying/leaving in order to verify women's resistance. Within the framework of the present research, resistance is conceptualized as pluralized, heterogeneous, diverse in form and transitory (Faith, 1994). Through women's narratives the various forms it can take are considered and analyzed (Kelly, 1988; Roche and Wood, 2005; Hydén, 1999; Wade, 1997; Faith, 1994; Waldrop and Resick, 2004).

Within this lens most of women's reactions to abuse could be interpreted as acts of resistance. However, not all of women's acts had the same motives, context, aim and impact on their relationships. Refraining from romanticizing women's coping strategies as acts of resistance I acknowledge that these resistance(s) are positioned within the Greek patriarchal context which remains unchallenged by them, however I argue that a re-reading of women's coping strategies as acts of resistance(s) deflects blame from women for their perceived passivity and provides conceptualizations of resistance as less demanding for women who experience abuse. The terms I use in order to trace these resistance(s) in Greek women's narratives are themselves commonsensical, employed within the patriarchal social context within

which the women I interviewed experience resistance, however in order to challenge the blame they convey for women.

In shaping their acts of resistance women are faced with restrictions of their agency (Lempert, 1996; Wilcox, 2006), which I try to make explicit in my interpretation. Therefore, further analysis was needed to encapsulate these issues. Tracing a continuum of resistance (Burstow in Wade, 1997) within Greek women's narratives of abuse, the repertoires of resistance are roughly divided into two forms: subtle and overt resistance. Although distinguishing between these two forms is not a straightforward process for analytical reasons they are roughly distinguished as those which become known to either the abuser or others (overt resistance) and those which are adopted by women either deliberately or subconsciously in order for them to manage abuse or cope with its effects, while not threatening the stability of the relationship (subtle resistance). Having acquired a very rich material of Greek women's accounts I elaborated my analysis to trace particular forms that these two general strands of resistance can take.

The chapter devoted to interrogating women's subtle resistance is divided into three parts according to the form women's subtle resistance took in their narratives: compliance, ambiguity, emotional distancing and health damage are interrogated in respect in my endeavour to capture their particularities as well as complexities.

Throughout the chapter on women's open resistance I analyze this form of resistance through the forms it took in the narrative material I had in my hands: verbal confrontation, seeking support/going public and women's initiatives to resist abuse are explored and contextualized.

As the material I am analyzing comes from narrative interviews within my analysis I came across a particular way women sometimes employed to manifest resistance through their narrative style, tone of voice, silences and poses as well as narrative strategies like imaginary confrontations with their abusers and enactment of inner dialogues. What relates these resistance strategies is the narrative space itself where women can search for and find alternative discourses to manifest their

resistance. I named this chapter 'narrative resistance' as this form of resistance acquires its meaning through narration itself.

Throughout my analysis I draw mostly from feminist literature and research on women's abuse by male partners as well as from anthropological literature on the particularities of the Greek socio-cultural context and from narrative theory and research in order to do justice to these women's accounts and create some space for implications relevant to social work theory and practice.

CHAPTER 5: REPERTOIRES OF RESISTANCE: SUBTLE RESISTANCE

In terms of the meaning attached to women's subtle resistance, I comply with researchers who have roughly distinguished strategies of resistance which are 'disguised activities' (Wade, 1997), 'choreographed demonstration of co-operation' (Faith, 1994), 'resistant thinking' (Riessman, 2000), 'denying violence' or 'keeping it secret' (Hydén, 2000), 'subtle resistance' (Roche and Wood, 2005) or 'doing gender' (Cavanagh, 2003) as opposed to open defiance. Subtle forms of resistance are often employed by women leaving within abusive relationships in order to resist, when other forms of open resistance are not accessible to them due to the impact of abuse on their agency, which makes it difficult for them to respond in more challenging ways (Cavanagh, 2003). Therefore, women's resistance does not have to be public, organized and formal (Riessman, 2000) nor successful (Kelly, 1988). The coping strategies women employ to resist abuse are not monolithic, neither mutually exclusive (Kelly, 1988) and are related to the context within which they are employed (Naples, 2003; Wade, 1997), the effectiveness they might have (Kelly, 1988) as well as the 'individual's social orbit' (Elizabeth, 2003). Even women's efforts to avoid men's controlling actions by adapting their behaviour, by refusing it is happening or by employing self-destructive habits can be conceptualized as agentic acts of self-preservation since where women resisted more overtly the levels of violence increases (Wilcox, 2006). Therefore, my analysis considers such women's strategies of coping with abuse as acts of subtle resistance in terms of the agency required to resort to them.

Within this context, the first chapter of my analysis is devoted to interrogating women's narratives of abuse for traces of resistance, although subtle. I argue that women's narratives of abuse, although apparently 'passive' are full of subtle forms of resistance, on which women themselves as well as helping professionals can build.

5.1 Ambiguity

In trying to conceptualize forms of resistance that challenge traditional polarities of 'love-hate', 'defiance-compliance' on behalf of women in abusive relationships, I disaggregated narratives of ambiguity, which I try to analytically approach as a subtle form of resistance. I deliberately chose the term 'ambiguity' as a word commonly used to depict a constant move between two poles in order to trace the components of this move for women who experience abuse and challenge its commonsensical meaning which implies that ambiguity is present when agency is absent. I argue that for women who experience abuse ambivalence is more complex and problematic and that it requires agency to move between the two poles defining what the women are ambivalent about. Towards this aim I depart from a standpoint which takes abusive relationships as consisted of many other components apart from abuse, such as caring and mutual support (Fraser, 2003; Lempert, 1996; Eisikovits and Buchbinder, 2000). Within this ambiguity, resistance becomes present when one edge of this polarity (love) is questioned by the woman, even if this questioning does not lead to open confrontation or generalized questioning of the whole relationship on the part of the woman who is abused by her intimate partner. As Lempert (1996) states, "it is this simultaneity that must be grasped analytically to understand *how* abused women strategize and develop agency to halt, change and/or cope with abuse" (Lempert, 1996:270).

When women who are abused narrate their ambiguity or ambivalence, they question various components of the relationship: their partners, themselves, moments of their relationships, dreams and hopes as well as feelings.

By reading through women's narratives in order to trace this ambiguity they might experience, it became evident that ambiguity can be generated within women who experience abuse by various causes. I conceptualized ambiguity as a form of resistance which women in abusive relationships experience when they find themselves between resisting abuse and being influenced by either their partners' 'remedial work' (Cavanagh, 2003), cultural scripts about women's role as wives

and mothers (Lempert, 1996; Riessman, 2000; Roche and Wood, 2005), the love they might feel for their partners (Cavanagh, 2003; Fraser, 2003; Lempert, 1996) as well as recalling of 'good moments' when their partners were meeting women's criteria of a 'good husband'.

Anthi narrates how she questioned her partner since the beginning of their relationship:

Anthi: Since then I had mentioned some things that were not ...O.K, like...that were a little weird but...he was behaving himself and...he wasn't expressing himself.

She narrates ambiguity regarding her partner's behaviour. The fact that she finally stayed with him does not erase the meaning of her ambiguity which was an implicit way of resisting his 'weird behaviour'. Her ambiguity also highlights the interactive nature of the abusive relationship (Cavanagh, 2003; Lempert, 1996), as she stayed with him not because she deceived herself but because 'he was behaving himself'. Her ambiguity is also located within the context of an intimate relationship which had just started and therefore hopeful expectations are generated reinforced by her partner's silence ('he wasn't expressing himself'). Since her partner was not acting in an abusive way her initial ambiguity could be interpreted as mere suspicion which could not be grounded on his behaviour.

Later in her narrative, Anthi narrates ambivalence using a present tense even though years have passed since the beginning of their relationship:

Anthi: At times he swears, at times he cajoles us, I mean the guy has seven faces, I don't know, I mean I don't know how he can, I don't know how he can do this thing. At times he's like this, at other times he's like that, at other times he's something else, I mean I don't know how his mind functions, I can't understand.

In this extract Anthi apparently provides depictions of her husband's unstable behaviour but her narrative can be read as a narrative

of resistance. Her abstract depictions of her husband's behaviour ('*at times he's like this, at other times he's like that, at other times he's something else*'), highlight her ambivalence as she does not define or name his behaviour as abuse. However, this undefined behaviour challenges her thinking through its unpredictability. She does not know how he can have such an unpredictable behaviour because she does know that this is not the behaviour she expects and requires from her husband. Her resistance could be identified with 'denial of violence' (Kelly, 1988) but it could also be interpreted in terms of having no access to discourses where abuse can be defined (Elizabeth, 2003).

What is implied by Anthi's narrative becomes more evident in other women's narratives. Their ambiguity is closely related to the 'cycle of violence' (Walker, 1983) phase of their relationship. When they are getting on well together with their partners women regain hope for the future of their relationship and place expectations from their partners, who reaffirm their commitment to their wives' or partners' well-being, through apologies, accounting and requests (Cavanagh, 2003). When the relationship enters the 'abusive phase' again, women question their relationships and partners again, thus resisting their partners' vicissitude and abusive behaviour:

Korina: I...left some times, I was saying "I will leave you", he, I was about to leave, he was falling in my arms and "I'm sorry" and "I'm this and that", he was swearing at himself, "I will not do anything again, never", things were calming down, for the first two or three days things were fine, then the usual.

Although the above narrative can be read as a description of the 'cycle of violence' (Walker, 1983), it can also demonstrate where the ambivalence that so many women who have experienced abuse by their male partners experience towards their partners and their relationships come from. It could be argued that when the man that a woman has invested emotionally upon makes serious attempts to reaffirm his love and commitment and especially during the first years of abuse where

abuse has not yet been defined as such, it is understandable that a woman affirms her choice of partner and remains faithful to her expectations for a good relationship. Although her last phrase *'then the usual'* implies that she had experienced the same behaviour before and after her partner's apologies and reaffirmation of his commitment to their relationship, his active endeavour to reassure her that he acknowledges his mistakes convinces her to give a chance.

Similarly Maria narrates how her husband's regret made her accept him back:

Maria: Anyway he, I left, I went to my aunt's, he came on his knees, all night long, on the second day I opened the door, because I had been ridiculed to the other flat residents, he was beating the door, and just after he entered "please, nothing will happen again, I swear". He was crying, like a baby child. "O.K. yes", I say in the end "but nothing will be done again, nor will you reach out your hand on me". "No, no, no".

Maria's husband's acts of regret in this narrative extract are informed by cultural scripts of 'targeting women's sensitivities' by showing vulnerability and employing child-like behaviour like crying. Throughout this narrative extract Maria is trying to resist his regret. First, she opens the door, though after long, because she had been ridiculed and not because she was sorry for him. I argue that the justification she provides for opening the door to her husband implies resistance towards interpreting her choice in simplistic terms that is just as her 'weakness'. Then she becomes more flexible by the combination of his reassurances that he will not repeat his abuse and his child-like behaviour of crying for forgiveness. Maria's determination is bended, however she does not surrender totally, retaining an inside balance towards her ambiguity: she accepts him back on conditions. My metaphor for the conditions she imposes on him is of the 'plummets' put by women who return on the side of the scales which weigh their partners' pros. The scale is a metaphor for women's ambiguity and the terms and conditions imposed

on their partners are a means towards balancing the scale, otherwise it would weigh down on their partners' cons side.

Flora narrates a similar strategy of balancing this ambiguity through imposing terms and conditions on her husband:

Flora: At some point, at the end of October, because he started saying "come back to bed", these things, and this and that, I say "maybe I should give him a chance, maybe I should handle it differently". And this is when I told him that "I will come back on the condition that you will give me your word, and not only your word, you will sign a paper for me that you will not cause such troubles to me again".

As Flora's narrative progresses we come to learn that these conditions were not finally met. However, within the framework of her ambiguity at the time of imposing them they served as a strategy to balance her ambiguity and let her partner be aware that she will no longer accept abuse if they are to live like a couple. She reinforced her attitude towards his abuse by not only asking for his word but by asking him to sign a paper as well. The abstract phrases '*these things and this and that*' once more are employed to convey the unspeakable (Lawless, 2001), which contextualized within her narrative extract can be conceived to represent all the 'natural' shared life of a couple. By not describing this shared life components, she might be narrating her resistance and ambiguity towards their ability to pursue them. This kind of resistance resembles what has previously been described as being vigilant about the abusive partner's behaviour or "keeping it under control, that is continuing the emotional connection but if violence continued the relationship would end" (Campbell et al., 1998). I argue that this kind of resistance is interrelated with the contradictory feelings women have for their partners, generating ambiguity which women try to balance through posing conditions to their abusive partners.

The context within which women narrators in this study experience their ambiguity is further illustrated later in their narrative:

Korina: Because it's what they say "hope is the last to die", I mean I was always hoping he will get better, I was always saying this "could he?", because what he did, uuuhm...he might had done something, then he was returning and was becoming another person and I was saying "could he, could he change this time? Could he this, could he that?" And it's also that I had the baby, and I was always considering the baby. I was saying "O.K I will not stay here waiting for him to become nice but what now that I have the baby? She should have her parents together. And I was saying "maybe, maybe, maybe..." But it was in vain. I have come to understand that these people do not change.

Korina's narrative could now be read not only as a resistance to her partner's abuse, which makes her question his words but also as resistance to the cultural script of 'hope for change' and 'hope for a happy marriage' (Fraser, 2003), as probably implied in her indefinite words '*could he this, could he that*'. Her hope is further substantiated by cultural and societal norms, which suggest that it is better for a child's well-being for its parents to be together, no matter what the quality of their relationship is (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). Her last phrase is an overt resistance to these cultural scripts, as she comes to deconstruct their validity motivated by the reality she experienced: her husband's abuse. Therefore, her ambiguity could now be interpreted as the first step towards this deconstruction. At the time of our interview Korina is accommodated at a shelter and this context is to be taken into consideration when tracing her present resistance. She narrates that she has '*come to understand that these people do not change*' implying possibly that her understanding is a process which is still taking place as she is supported by a women's support service. Categorizing her husband within '*these people*' could suggest that the shelter she finds herself in at present provides space for discourses that challenge her past employment of romantic scripts suggesting that an abusive man can change.

Maria narrates how uncomfortable the 'fights' with her husband made her feel from the beginning of their relationship and the ambiguity cultural beliefs caused her:

Maria: I want to say that before the marriage, two days before, when is the 'bed-make', and I felt like getting away with it that day, regardless of me being pregnant and leave it all behind. And they told me "be patient, he will be fixed"

In this narrative extract Maria feels ambiguity towards getting married to her partner because although they already had 'fights' she was made to think that if she was 'patient' he would 'be fixed'. Apparently, Maria's social network exercises power over her (Elizabeth, 2003) but at least she resists by thinking otherwise. It is important to note that she dared to even think of resisting this marriage although she was pregnant. If her thought is contextualized within the rural Greek societal context, where 'honour' and 'dignity' are highly respected values for a woman (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001) it becomes more evident that it must have taken a lot of courage for Maria to even consider leaving her husband. Regardless of her decision to finally get married to him, she attempted to resist the abuse she was experiencing through their 'fights' by considering an alternative choice. Her agency here is present as her active negotiation between her perceptions and her social context of constraint which provided no access to discourses other than 'be patient, he will be fixed' (Elizabeth, 2003).

Flora narrates how her husband's way of apologizing through buying her presents and flowers came to reinforce cultural scripts of 'keeping the family together' both distorting her reality and causing ambiguity:

Flora: So we had the fights, because this is what I was telling you, he was seeing me a little more calm the next day and that's when the flowers were coming, the jewelry, he was filling me with jewelry – I can't say otherwise-that was his tactic. At some point, he started doing that in public, I mean the

whole family might had gathered together, e.g in Easter, suddenly, I receive flowers from the flower shop. The first time that happened, something wasn't O.K with me, I mean, I said he does love me, but on the other hand I didn't like that, I thought he was showing off. And I told him. And he said "if you think that's the way it is", he says "what can I say to you? No" he says "I did that because I feel this way, because I love you, because this, because that". So everytime we had fights, we had this tactic. I always believed it was the last time. I didn't want to ruin my home, damage it, I had a child, many, many things.

Flora's narrative extract is compatible with relevant research and theory of 'remedial work' (Goffman in Cavanagh, 2003) which men employ in order to alter the woman's perception of abuse "by seeking to impose their understanding of what is happening in the relationship" (Cavanagh, 2003:242). Flora feels offended by his presents but soon she enters ambivalence after his interpretation of his act as implying love. Culturally, Flora is further justified to enter such ambiguity by responding to cultural scripts suggesting that a woman is to be flattered by men's generous and gentle manifestations of love and on the other hand by responding to her feelings of having been offended. The context of that interaction, the whole family, becomes the cultural context within which Flora comes to experience such ambivalence and locate her agency. Therefore, her narrative on her ambiguity towards her husband's 'novel' manners is her current position towards both her husband's behaviour and societal expectations for her reaction. I suggest that by choosing to narrate such an episode, Flora resists her husband's abuse and tactics, that is why she exits that narrative by justifying her decision to stay with him not because she was convinced by his 'novelty' but because she believed she should keep the 'home' running.

Later in her narrative account her justification of her decision to stay comes from her daughter's mouth:

Flora: Meanwhile, before I went to bed, before my little girl fell asleep, she says "Mom, please, I don't want you to separate, I want you to give him a chance. A chance. Let's not ruin our family, let's not ruin our home".

Motherhood is a highly respected as well as 'natural' role for a woman in Greece (Paxson, 2004) and children are often employed in women's narratives to reinforce a woman's decision towards abusive relationships. I suggest that if Flora was not resisting her husband's abuse, she would not need to justify her decision to stay by all convincing means, the most convincing of all being her little daughter.

A similar narrative is provided by Olga, another woman narrator, who narrates how she came to question her experience of abuse after his vicissitude, caused by his father's efforts to bring him to reason:

Olga: Anyway, after he [her father-in-law] talked to him, since then and until I delivered, "the nicest guy", "the nicest guy", I mean even better than all the previous years. Perfect. I was saying, "Holy Mary, the baby will be born, we will become a super family", tender moments, nice moments, everything fine...

When Olga was pregnant, her husband became more abusive towards her and she sought support by her father-in-law to tell him what she could not articulate, not because she did not have the means to do so but because her authority would not have such an impact on her husband as his father's would in the still patriarchal Greek family (Papadopoulos, 1998). However, she actively involved someone to indicate to her husband that what he did was unacceptable. After her husband complied with his father's admonition, Olga affirmed his change and made dreams for a nice family. It is evident that the two poles of her ambiguity, being in and out of the relationship coincide with his tenderness and abuse in respect. Therefore, Olga resists his abuse when present in their relationship. The fact that she remains in the relationship might not mean that she does not resist but rather that resistance is relational (Campbell

et al.1998; Cavanagh, 2003; Elizabeth, 2003; Lempert, 1996; Wade, 1997; Waldrop and Resick, 2004; Westlund, 1999). She had expectations, she loved him, she was pregnant and she saw a change in him. This is the context within which she decided to remain in the relationship.

Later in her narrative she seems to resist her own ambiguity:

Olga: After my mother left, again I was not able to talk, again I wasn't calling my father, again I was going to the gym, again I was keeping up the same life style, going to the gym in the morning, chatting with my mother in the afternoon, but then doing nothing, returning home, same with him in the evening, the same again.

Although she had talked to her mother about wanting to leave her husband and after having acquired her mother's support, she experiences the impact of her abusive relationship which has immobilized her (Cavanagh, 2003; Lamb, 1996). However, her narrative seems to transcend passivity as Olga recognizes her deliberate passivity (Campbell et al., 1998). Her repetition of the word 'again' before she refers to everything she wanted to get away from implies her resistance to her final compliance to her habitual lifestyle that did not challenge her partner's abuse that far. Olga narrates this ambiguity now that she has left her abusive husband. By choosing to narrate this ambiguity in a temporal order which gradually leads to narrating her final decision to leave, she places her ambiguity within this whole process of reaching her escape. Within this conceptualization, her ambiguity is not just an impediment to her escape but alternatively, a transitional phase towards leaving.

This gradual process becomes more evident later in her narrative, when she narrates how a violent episode reinforced her determination on the one hand and on the other hand the unforeseen duration of this process until determination becomes action:

Olga: And...he hurt me with a knife that Sunday, took the baby from my arms, touched the baby's back with the knife – he didn't hurt her- just for me

to see it- this was the end for me, I said "Olga, since you have told your mother, since you have made your decisions, what are you waiting for? End of it! You have to do something!" ... Next day, I didn't say anything again, again the same with myself, the fucking same again, backwards and forward, backwards and forward.

Although Olga narrates a violent event which could have been the 'last violent event' (Chatzifotiou, Dobash and Tsougas, 2001) between her and her abusive husband and prepares the listener for her final escape through her 'narrative of determination' using words like '*End of it! You have to do something!*' she transcends this anticipation by narrating how her determination was submitted to her immobilization. There is a pause in her narration before shifting to compliance. I listened to this pause as an active attempt to find a place for interpreting it before she can narrate it. Using the word '*again*' in a habitual manner to narrate her return as well as repeating the movement backwards and forward she resists the interpretation of compliance and rather narrates her immobilizing ambiguity.

After she has come to narrate how she reached her current state of mind she goes back to her ambiguity again, this time to reflect on it:

Olga: What I was experiencing these 10 months, I mean I was 'into it' in the evening and in the morning I wasn't making any move, because I didn't want to acknowledge that I am experiencing this.

By placing this narrative extract to its temporal location that is at the end of her narrative, Olga provides a meaning for her ambiguity and at the same she attaches significance to it. Ambivalence was the omnipresent feature of her thinking while in her abusive relationship but she could not proceed because she had not attached meaning to it (Cavanagh, 2003). According to Olga, the meaning of her ambiguity was that she did not want to acknowledge her ambivalence because that would probably mean that she should experience her abuse, at a moment when she preferred to distance herself from the abusive experience by denying it (Hydén, 1999).

Here, I do not mean to imply that there is a functional feature in ambiguity, a particular way a woman experiencing abuse should unpack and use ambivalence. Rather, I tend to highlight the particularities of resistance inherent in ambivalence, which is however experienced variously by each woman and placed in different locations in each woman's narrative.

So far women narrators have highlighted how ambivalence is related to the interactive context of the abusive relationship, especially when related to men's acknowledgment of their abuse.

For other women ambivalence is an experience related to how they rationalize their partner's abuse. In the following narrative extract Flora narrates how ignorant she was of his abuse until lately:

Flora: And at a certain point, I was at the bathroom crying, there he came and grabbed my neck. It was the first time he did that and until recently the last. I didn't pay attention, I didn't evaluate that this man might have a problem, right? I thought that because he was angry, I thought that these things happen because we come from different worlds, he has a different background, we hadn't spent much time together and it might be that because of that he did that stuff...I justified it that way.

In relevant research justification of partners' abuse on behalf of women has been theorized through their interviews as minimizing or denying violence (Kelly, 1988) and indeed the complexity of naming this experience has been highlighted (Kelly and Radford, 1996; Wilcox, 2006). I suggest an alternative reading of these narratives of rationalization as ambiguity, interrogating women's words for implying resistance. In this narrative extract Flora resists being blamed for not having evaluated her partner's behaviour 'correctly', that is for not having defined it as abuse (Kelly, 1988; Lempert, 1996). Not only does she resist blame but she also invites the listener, me, to affirm this resistance by asking 'right?' (Riessman, 1994). The rationalization she provides is constructed by cultural psychology narratives (Fraser, 2003), which justify men's abuse and call for women's 'emotional work' to

redress his behaviour (Cavanagh, 2003). As her narrative unfolds, she employs a narrative strategy to resist her partner's abuse by not naming it (*'that stuff'*). Elaine Lawless (2001) in the chapter 'Hearing silence' of her book on 'abused women's' narratives reviews feminist critics which have "suggested that silences can speak a muted message of oppression and hint at furtive attempts to speak an opinion, to lash out, or to defy" (Lawless, 2001:79). I suggest that within this framework, Flora's reluctance to define *'that stuff'* as abuse is a narrative strategy to resist it. Moreover, by using a past tense regarding her conceptualization of her partner's behaviour (*'I thought'*) she might imply that in the course of time she came to challenge that conceptualization.

Stella narrates how she managed abuse through ambiguity when she thought she could not change the situation:

Stella: I had accepted it. It was part of my life. I had hope for nothing in the world anymore. I didn't believe in anything...that I could be free from this suffering. During the subsequent five years, because the story lasted for ten years, I tried to compromise this part of my life with the rest of my life. To give a fight and manage to be independent, to find myself alone somewhere, away from everybody, having nobody to influence me, nobody to ruin my life...

Ambiguity takes a slight different meaning in Stella's narrative. Although she believed that she could not free herself from this suffering, she talks about *'fight'* and *'independence'*, attributing herself characteristics which she was deducting from herself. Stella feels ambiguity about her ability to manage violence but she narrates a way of managing it by resorting to her 'inner' world, trying to sustain her coherence within such a destructing context. This narrative relates ambivalence with escaping in the 'privacy of the mind' (Wade, 1997). Stella finds agency in shifting from the context of abuse to the context of her inner world, between 'acting' and 'being acted upon' (Elizabeth, 2003).

5.2 Compliance

Compliance is probably the most subtle form of resistance, as it appears to sustain the nature of the abusive relationship and to not lead to an alteration of the situation. Following other researchers' conceptualization of compliance as an active response to abuse (Campbell et al., 1998; Lempert, 1996) I attempt to unfold its traits and trace its emotional and cultural context. In order to locate acts of compliance that can be interrogated for implying abuse I conceptualize compliance as a form of 'disguised' active response to abuse (Wade, 1997) undertaken towards preservation of self (Lempert, 1996). Within this conceptualization, compliance on the part of women experiencing abuse can take several forms which might not threaten the stability of the relationship but they can be viewed as women's attempt to avoid further abuse or stop/reduce violence (Campbell et al.1998; Cavanagh, 2003; Kirkwood, 1993) or protect the relationship or their partners (Lamb,1996). Additional conceptualizations of compliance are traced within this section, such as fear (Hydén, 1999) and isolation (Riessman, 2000; Wade, 1997) which provide an alternative reading of acts of compliance as active responses to abuse.

In some women's narratives compliance is contextualized within the framework of the preceding ambiguity they have experienced towards their partners and their relationships with them.

Anthi narrates how she came to finally comply with her husband's demand of moving together to a new house:

Anthi: I tried in a kind way to tell him that we can't go on together anymore, first he swears, makes a mess, yells and then he goes on like we are together, like nothing's going on. Because he insisted and all these things, I went, we saw a house..

Compliance is evident in Anthi's last phrase 'I went, we saw a house', where she narrates that she complied with her husband's plans regardless of her initial resistance. Her narrative can be read as evidence of the internalized gender oppression that leads women to self-subjugation and "thus making them unwitting partners in their own

oppression” (Roche and Wood, 2005). However, when her compliance is contextualized within her narrative extract, additional meanings are provided. First, she narrates how she attempted to stop the relationship by actually telling her husband although *‘in a kind way’* that she experiences his ambivalent behaviour towards her as abuse. Further, she narrates being irritated by her husband who goes on with her *‘like’* they are together, *‘like’* nothing’s going on. As her husband tried to impose his *‘definitional hegemony’* on their relationship (Elizabeth, 2003; Lempert, 1996) Anthi resists. The repetitive use of the word *‘like’* leaves space for the listener to question the fact that according to Anthi they are actually together and that nothing is really going on. She finally complied with his will to go and see a house but she first provides a rather *‘commonsensical’* explanation—*‘he insisted’*, therefore if she refused she could not predict what would happen-but then she provides space for other possible readings of her compliance. *‘All these things’* are the location where possible explanations of her compliance can be tracked down. By locating this phrase within her wider narrative extract, *‘all these things’* that made her submit could represent all the causes of ambiguity towards insisting on a final decision to openly resist his demand. Her phrase could also represent fear, however fear can also be conceptualized as *‘resistance’* “not in that it includes action, but rather in that it constitutes a force which makes the woman notice that what may happen is something she doesn’t want to see happen” (Hydén, 2005:172). By relating fear with compliance, the latter can be viewed as containing resistance.

This is further illustrated in Anthi’s later narrative extract:

Anthi: And I told him, I told him “I’m not staying home alone with you, you are dangerous, I’m afraid of you”. “You are, aren’t you?” he said ironically, “yes” I told him, “I’m not staying home with you, alone”. He grabs my hand, here [she shows where] and says “you’re not going anywhere!” The kids were yelling (sigh). I say to them “it’s O.K, go to school and tell your teacher”.

At the beginning of this narrative extract Anthi articulates her fear towards him and by employing fear she tries to explain why she will not stay with him home. Her husband challenges her fear by not assuring her that she has nothing to be afraid of but instead through irony he provokes her further articulation of fear and resistance, so he can further challenge her resistance by provoking more fear. As Anthi realizes that she can do nothing more, she stays home with him, tries to comfort her children and resorts to a last attempt to protect herself by indirectly asking for help from her children's teacher and directly saying this in front of her husband. She is now powerless but "fear is the resistance offered by those who are presumed to be powerless" (Hydén, 2005:172), therefore her compliance now contains resistance.

Other episodes of seemingly overt compliance are provided for interrogation by other women's narratives. Stella narrates how she submitted to her abuser's demands to meet and have intercourse:

Stella: I had to leave home, get to a certain place, meet him, having him do what he wanted and return home. I mean after work I had to suffer that martyrdom. I remember I used to say that before, from the seven days of the week, one is called hell, it's not called Sunday, it's called hell. [Me: What was Sunday?] I had admitted that. It was part of my life. I had admitted that. I had hope for nothing in the world anymore. That I could ever be redeemed from that martyrdom. For the next five years, because the whole story lasted for ten years, I tried to reconcile that part of my life with the rest of my life.

Stella narrates not an instant episode of compliance but her 'habitual compliance' to her abuser. With short phrases separated by commas and cleared from feelings, she narrates her repeated abuse as she concludes to a comment on that experience, describing it as 'martyrdom' and 'hell'. The use of words deriving from religion implies the certain kind of ethics Stella had attributed to her abuse and the guilt she was

experiencing. She even had no hope for 'redemption' which shifts responsibility for one's own suffering to an 'ultimate power' to change the situation and free her from suffering. Within this context of 'religious passivity' Stella's compliance to her abuser could be interpreted as coinciding with the ethics she has embodied: she is the victim of her abuser. As I tried to clarify what Sunday meant in terms of her abuse I take no direct answer. Instead, Stella provides a narrative about how she had come to admit what was happening to her. It is not clear whether it is a passive approach towards abuse to simply accept it or whether admitting it is a kind of surviving strategy that requires resisting abuse. Although Stella had no hope she tried to reconcile that part of her life with the rest of her life and using the verb '*tried*' leaves space for seeking for agency.

Later in her narrative, Stella provides a clear justification for her compliance: fear.

Stella: He was saying to me: "You will be at that place on that day". There was a place here, his place, where I should be. And I was going there like an obedient instrument. I mean I was going. For me it was the most natural thing. There was no other solution for me. There was not. And if I didn't do it, he would 'rot me away' [greek expression for hard beating]. Uuuhm...And I started seeing a therapist and at the same time I was seeing him.

Stella chooses to narrate her obedience to her abuser's commands without providing excuses. After narrating her obedience for the first couple of lines she employs a metaphor ('*obedient instrument*') which conveys feeling towards her objectification (Kirkwood, 1993). She repeats that she was going like she cannot herself believe she was obedient. Rather, for her it was the most natural thing. The following statement '*there was no other solution for me*' challenges the apparent meaning of her previous statement. It was not a natural thing to obey to his abuse; it was just the only solution for her. Before this statement raises questions about her agency, upon which she apparently does not

embark when she says that there was no other solution for her, she herself challenges this statement by narrating the consequence of her possible inobedience, which would be beating. I chose to read this statement as one that implies resistance, since fear for beating is inherent in it (Hydén, 2005). In narrative terms, she resolves the underlying conflict by referring to her initiation to see a therapist, which I would argue is an overt form of resistance to abuse, although it implies women's responsibility for abuse and need to change herself.

In research on 'abused women's' decisions to stay, women have often been blamed for staying or described as psychologically inadequate to resist (Eiskovits, Buchbinder and Mor, 1998; Westlund, 1999, Wood, 2001 in Fraser, 2002). Some of the women I interviewed, like Stella, refer to seeing abuse as a natural thing, obviously reinforcing such research findings. I argue that when contextualized and exposed to other possible readings, phrases like that (*'I considered it as a natural thing'*) imply more agency and 'survival skills' than obvious and can be viewed as an essential step that preceded defining abuse as such and deciding to take action (Campbell et al., 1998).

In the following narrative extract Flora provides a context for her believing that abuse could be natural.

Flora: Within this period he tried to make me quit my job, I was in the Greek Corps of Women Guides, I started being isolated from my friends but I wasn't seeing all this. I considered them as natural, I considered them as a natural consequence of a great love affair, this is how I felt and since the relationship is entering a formal phase, I should cut off, that this was the sensible thing to do.

A reader of this narrative extract might not consider what Flora narrates as abuse. However, literature on women's abuse suggests that such constraints imposed upon women by their abusive partners are manifestations of abuse or have their place on the 'continuum of violence' (Kelly, 1988). Therefore, if women are criticized for staying with an abusive partner, it would be expected that they should probably

also be criticized for staying when their partners convey such 'abusive messages'. Instead, as Flora's narrative highlights, social and cultural scripts of 'romantic love' (Fraser, 2003) reinforce this kind of abuse by implying that it is a manifestation of love, which complies with women's expected roles when they enter marriage. Since Flora narrates this from her current position of the woman who has gradually validated her sense that this was actually abuse and not love, she resists both these scripts and her husband's abuse as a manifestation of these scripts.

Later in her narrative she resorts to another cultural script in order to narrate her compliance to his demand to restrict her from being involved in their children's school parents committee.

Flora: But this had become a canker and then he started nagging and through his own way he brings me to a point where I submit my resignation and I told my daughter's teacher, because my daughter was in the nursery school, "I won't be able to help you because I have other responsibilities with my husband as well". I was always trying to excuse him. This was my mistake. I mean I presented him to everybody like he was the one and only. I had put him high and I was doing this until a year ago. And the result was that everybody had the best opinion for him, right?

Even when Flora had managed to return to her extra-domestic activities it was not easy for her to sustain this return, as her husband was still negotiating her exclusive occupation with domestic activities. The ways he used to bring her back home are not clearly narrated, they are just narrated as 'his own way'. When Flora says that 'this was my mistake' she undertakes responsibility for her compliance to her husband's decisions and I interpret acquisition of responsibility as an act of resistance, because responsibility requires agency (Lamb, 1996) and acquiring responsibility is required for developing solutions for future change (Busch and Valentine, 2000). She narrates her mistake to be presenting her husband to the world outside their home as 'perfect'. I

would argue that supporting the representation of husbands as perfect to the outside world, though they are abusive, is an agentic act in diverse terms: first, it serves to provide space to women to realize and negotiate the condition they are in. It is also a strategy to face the criticism a woman can undergo for possible abuse. Then, there is also the threat of her husband to employ more abuse if he realizes that his abuse has been disclosed to others by his wife.

In her following short narrative Eleni narrates fear towards her abusive husband:

Eleni: I couldn't stand it anymore. We had given him... "first of all", I was saying, "if you hit me again I will leave", my dad had given him some notice, he could see that I wasn't like I was at the beginning. Certainly, I wasn't saying anything because I was scared.

Her first phrase demonstrates her resistance towards her husband's abuse. Since she can not stand it anymore, she attempts to tell that to her husband. It is interesting that after having narrated expressing resistance to her husband she employs her father in her narrative, to reinforce this resistance. A possible reading of this narrative choice is that Eleni, born and raised in a rural Greek family with patriarchal values attempts to narrate respect to these values, while at the same time she attempts to make her father the one who resists her husband on behalf of her, so that her position as a woman and wife is not challenged. Later she narrates that her husband could see that she was not like she was before after having told him that she can not stand his abuse anymore and after her father had given him some notice. However, her last phrase highlights the effect of fear on this attempt to resist.

Olga's following narrative extract provides an illustration of the relation between fear and resistance and the way these two active ways of managing violence can lead to compliance:

Olga: Uuum...as soon as he entered home that night...he was...I mean I was afraid of him...when I saw him...he didn't look like just someone that had

drunk and felt dizzy and you say "O.K I will let him sleep and that's it..." I called my parents-in-law, I called my father in law.

At the beginning Olga narrates compliance and lets her drunken husband go to sleep without verbally confronting his drunkenness because she was afraid of him. However, she was so afraid that her fear caused an overt form of resistance: she did not challenge her husband because of fear but at the same time fear motivated her agency to protect herself and so she called her father-in-law.

The influence of the socio-cultural context of marriage is evident in Olga's later narrative:

Olga: I was informing his parents and I was saying to them "let me, I want to go back home, I want to talk to my father" and because they knew that my father had understood his [her husband's] psychology and had told them "I don't want that for my girl" and these things, they told me "no, don't talk to your father, you'll see, we will fix our son...don't do anything". I was respecting them, I was saying "O.K , they are fucking parents, they might want to fix it for us", this is how I took it, "our girl we love you, we have been having you for years, now that you gave us a grandchild, don't leave our son, our boy loves you, O.K who knows what went wrong with him, we will talk to him" ...and I wasn't saying anything finally, O.K?

There is a Greek saying that 'when you marry someone, you marry his/her whole family' implying that the Greek family interferes in the married couple's shared life. This is evident in Olga's narrative, where she turns to her parents-in-law to take responsibility for their son's behaviour. She depicts the covert tension between the two families, hers and her husband's, who defend their children towards each other and at the same time they try to keep the marriage going. In Olga's narrative her husband's parents rely on the Greek value of *filotimo* (Chatzifotiou

and Dobash, 2001; Theodossopoulou-Papalois and Theodossopoulou, 1998), which means 'love of honor' and the honor here seems to refer to the wife respecting her parents-in-law, the fact that she has been accepted by them as well as their efforts to fix her marriage. Viewed through this cultural lens it seems at least arrogant not to give it a try after her parents-in-law have consulted her so and have assured her that they will fix their son. However, she narrates the process of being persuaded with anger (*'they are fucking parents'*) which challenges her apparent compliance. Anger is also evident in her last phrase, where she admits that she was not saying anything finally and transfers her anger to the present for having submitted then.

What Olga also narrates is a clear demonstration of her parents'-in-law love towards her and although it is not directly related with her decision to stay in her narrative, cultural scripts of love/advice for someone's 'own good' suggest that love can distort someone's subjective reality, especially a woman's reality, since culturally love fulfills a woman's life (Fraser, 2003).

In the following Dimitra's narrative extract, the love she feels for her husband leads to compliance:

Dimitra: Anyway, I started smoking then while I had quit smoking for ten years when I met him. He told me that...again he forced me and he made me quit smoking. He threatened me, while we were ready to get married, I would start preparing the marriage, he comes one day and says, "if you don't quit smoking we're over". Anyway, I was in love and much in love, I quit smoking.

This narrative extract is embedded with the tension she had previously narrated between her and her husband after having got married, due to his flirting with their bridesmaid. At that time Dimitra started smoking again, although she had quit for ten years, since her husband had forced her to do so. She had then complied with his order because she was in love as she narrates, shifting her narration to the past of their relationship. Elsewhere in her narrative Dimitra had said that she

then had quit because she quits smoking when she feels happy. Viewed within this context, smoking becomes an act of resistance for Dimitra, one that challenges her husband's authority, since he has forbidden her to smoke. After a series of abusive incidents which she narrates, Dimitra finally says that they '*talked it over*' and got together with her husband at some point, when she complied and quit smoking. She therefore narrates that she submitted to her husband's order but only after she had acquired the position she felt comfortable with, that is being his loving wife.

Later, Dimitra provides a narrative about negotiating with her husband their summer holidays, as her husband was working at an island away from their home and Dimitra was supposed to get there with their children in order for the whole family to be together for the summer. In her narrative extract love for her husband and resistance co-exist:

Dimitra: We didn't get there in the summer, he didn't accept us, while I was begging him to come and take us, that "we love you", that "we miss you", "no" ...because I started smoking again and I told him that I started smoking. He was attributing everything to smoking. At times it was the dentist, at times it was smoking, then "I'm sorry". That's what he wanted. But I don't apologize if it's not my fault. Neither in the first case nor in the second I did something wrong to apologize for-otherwise separation. Otherwise "we're divorcing". I haven't seen such things anywhere. I mean if I don't apologize...say I haven't learned to apologize, mister, I'm who I am, you will not turn me to someone different at 40, will you ruin your family, will you dump your children? And that's what he did. We didn't get there with him.

It is important to place Dimitra's narrative extract within the context of her relationship with her husband, who was initiating abuse on three main subjects: her smoking, her 'jealousy' for his flirting with their bridesmaid and his 'jealousy' for taking their children to the dentist who

used to be her partner before they got married. I take these three reasons for becoming abusive as the sites of authority of an abusive husband, where he tries to impose his will on his wife's habit which pleases her (smoking), maintaining his 'masculinity' by flirting with other women and at the same time restricting his wife from any social contact that could imply her flirting with someone else. In Dimitra's narrative, her husband pursues to verify his authority on her by insisting that she should apologize for all these three sites of their 'fights'. Although he had been attempting that for long, Dimitra expresses her will to spend the summer together by reassuring him that she and their children love him and miss him. However, since he insists on acquiring her apology, Dimitra departs from her love confession towards her subjectivity and refuses to satisfy his authoritative will by employing an acting-out narrative of confrontation with her husband. From a certain point on in her narrative extract Dimitra employs the voice of her selfhood and directs her narrative towards her husband in order to resist him. I suggest that this narrative turn clarifies the merging of compliance with resistance and provides a hint for locating the context and process of differentiating between the two.

Later Dimitra provides a similar narrative on her negotiation with her husband to spend Christmas holidays together:

Dimitra: He went, stayed with his mother, Christmas was over. On Epiphany I called him, "Look" I said "Christos, please, if I swore at you, if I offended you..." while he has offended me but always gently-like. "Sick intelligence", "nothing", "zero", "unworthy mother", this is the kind of insults he uses. "Uneducated", "no intelligence" such things. Surely, I have swore at him and I have told him "fuck you, asshole". That was, O.K, a bad thing but when he was pushing me to the edge, I had never used swearing, never, ever. I was a quiet child that had nothing to do with anybody...always kind, I had nothing to do with anybody. And I wasn't using

swearing. No, I didn't know it. But when he pushed me to the edge, it came out. And I say to him, "if I swore at you, if I offended you, if I told you these words, I apologize, I was out of control, I understand that these words should not be said and come, come back, let's make up, forget about everything" I say "like a bad dream, let's get on with our life because we have two kids and there's nothing wrong between us". I made this effort not because...I don't know if I wanted him, I had a vacant feeling. I didn't love him and I didn't hate him, either. I just wanted everything to become what it used to be...

It seems as if the narrative construction of the good wife inhabits Dimitra's narrative style in this extract, where she attempts to convince the listener that she is not the kind of woman who would be blamed for insulting her husband, thus threatening her marriage. She narrates the person she used to be in order to convey lack of responsibility for swearing at her husband. She seems to submit to his abuse when she apologizes for swearing at him. However, I suggest that her resistance lies within the fact that although she apologizes, she does that for a 'mistake' she admits she had committed and not for the 'mistakes' her husband suggests she had committed as she narrated in the previous extract. What is more, she invites him to make up 'for the kids' refraining from expressing love to him like she did in the previous extract. She reflects on that and narrates that she was empty inside and she just wanted it to be like before. What it was before could imply a life and marriage context where abuse was absent and it is through this prism that her compliance (apology and attempt to make up with her husband) is read as a disguised form of resistance to abuse. It could also be that the emotional distancing with which she exits her narrative can be interpreted as a failure to conform to norms expected by her, which signals a possibility to transcend prescribed roles (Smith and Watson, 2001).

Another dimension of compliance is provided by women narrators when they narrate how their compliance was employed by them as a means to comfort their partners, maintain their partners' authority and serve the stability of the relationship. Drawing from relevant literature, I explored these strategies in women's narratives as manifestations of subtle resistance—though through devious means (Wilcox, 2006)—and 'categorized' them as 'doing gender' (Cavanagh, 2003). I attempt to explore these manifestations of subtle resistance jointly with compliance because apparently they declare compliance with partners' demands and orders. I conceptualize this aspect of compliance as a manifestation on the part of the woman who experiences abuse by her partner of her efforts to comfort her partner, show him her love and/or commitment as well as willingness to 'work' for their relationship. In this context, this aspect of compliance is interrogated for its complexity and inherent resistance to abuse, for it is abuse that women want to stop/change and therefore they try several tactics. Within an intimate relationship, providing comfort and reaffirming commitment seem to be sensible ways of pursuing eradication of abuse and establishment of love and respect.

Anthi reflects on her 'gendered resistance' to her partner's abuse:

Anthi: I mean I was the one who should understand him when he was hurt, I was the one who should stand by him, I did things that I think about now and... (laughs surprised), I was washing him, I cut his nails, he didn't change clothes, I was washing his feet, I changed his socks when he was asleep. He didn't change clothes, we were fighting. I had become...I don't know, a tele-guided toy.

Anthi distances her present self from the wife she used to be and reflects on her efforts to always comfort her husband. The wife she narrates resembles a mother that treats her baby child but as the one she treated was an adult man she laughs surprised as she remembers how she acted towards her husband. First, it seems that she has reached a point

where she can distance herself and place her present subjectivity opposite to the one she was embodying when she was living with her abusive partner. Her narrative also implies that since there is no mention of her husband demanding this treatment, her choice to comfort him implies her agency to do so and therefore reflecting on her choice she is facing her narrated self with surprise (laughs surprised), ignorance (*'I don't know'*) and criticism (*'a tele-guided toy'*). What is important in her narrative is the shift between her two subjectivities, the woman she was and the woman she has become who can challenge her past compliance.

From women's narratives of abuse it became evident that when they narrate strategies to comfort their partners they experience several feelings that might imply resistance to abuse. Anthi felt surprised, ignorant and critical. Olga, who narrates several episodes of her comforting her husband experiences anger:

Olga: Anyway, we went out, I remind you that from Monday he started over again, the same story again, he was returning, vomiting, I was crying, I wanted to leave home, he was saying "you have the temper of the woman in childbed, your hormones are irritating you", "Kostas, it's not like that, I consciously know why I'm like this", meanwhile when you were trying to talk to him, you couldn't make any sense, with a drunk man what sense can you make? But I was so lonely that I insisted, even within his drunkenness, on the process to us making up again, that I might bring him to reason, it could be that he has the problem, I would sit down and try to solve it!

At the beginning of her narrative extract Olga invites me to her narration of how her husband returned to his habitual behaviour after they had passed a 'honeymoon' period during her pregnancy. After she gave birth, things returned to their previous state. She narrates his drunkenness and her active reaction towards it that was to tell him that she was going to leave home. He challenges her statement by referring to

her hormones that irritate her after childbirth in an attempt to resort to common gendered stereotypes in order to shift blame for his behaviour. Olga reclaims her subjectivity by stating that she consciously knows why she is like that but as her narrative declares her subjective reality is distorted by her partner and she provides the excuse of alcohol for that. She shifts from the narrating 'I' to the distanced 'you' when she refers to her unsuccessful endeavours to reach an understanding with her husband, escaping to generalization for not working it out with him (*'with a drunken man what sense can you make?'*) However, she narrates that she insisted because she was lonely. The loneliness she narrates provides some insights about how desperate and helpless a woman can be when no formal or informal sources of support are accessible. At that time, Olga was young, unemployed and a new mother and therefore her 'loneliness' can be viewed as the context within which she tries to resist her partner's abuse. Olga resists her helplessness and implies agency by actively attempting to reach her husband even if it was for solving his problems.

Later in her narrative, after Olga has narrated that she stayed with her husband for her baby, she provides another narrative of resistance through her attempts to reach an understanding with her husband:

Olga: I tried hard, I was begging him, kindly, angrily, "Kostas, do you want us to see a doctor? We won't transfer that to our families, I'm your wife, I'm standing by you" ...nothing... every day he was becoming worse...every day. At some point he admitted that he was alcoholic, in a moment of powerlessness, some twenty days before I left home.

Her resistance lies in her deliberate attempts to make him stop his abuse, though she attributes abuse to his alcoholism. She narrates that she tried in both kind and challenging ways and as she focused on his alcoholism as the source of their problems she suggested that they saw a doctor. She involved herself in that suggestion complying with cultural beliefs that the wife is co-responsible for her husband's abuse and

depicts herself as the good wife who stands by her husband and shares responsibility for their family's malfunctioning. Not only that, but she also assures him that they will keep it secret, referring to the cultural script of the 'privacy of the family' as a Greek proverb suggests: "What goes on in a home, is not to become known to the public" resembling what Dobash and Dobash have stated "it is considered disloyal to betray patriarchal privacy by seeking help from outsiders" (Dobash and Dobash, 1990:57). Her attempts to stand by her abusive husband can be interpreted not only through these cultural scripts but as an active response to the abuse she has been experiencing. Since she wants this abuse to stop, she tries to invite her husband in this struggle by making it as less threatening for him as possible. She reassures him that if he cooperates, aspects of his authority will be secured: nobody will know, she will not dispute him because she is his wife and nobody will find out about his 'problem'. Therefore, she resists abuse by not disputing him. As her narrative exit suggests, however, she did not challenge alcoholism as the source of his abuse, which he finally admitted. A possible reading of her interpretation of his abuse as a consequence of alcohol could be that it also deflected blame from her for his abuse and it took a 'moment of powerlessness' for her husband to admit that it was his problem, which she narrates as a relief.

Deflecting blame for her husband's abuse and her resistance to share responsibility is evident in Olga's later narrative:

Olga: He was talking to me like that [swearing] every day, O.K? And he was also beating me on the head, 'bunches'. [Me: Every day?] Yes! Every day! And from a certain point on, when I stopped paying attention to him, he was coming in the house and he was trying to kiss me, right? So, because I was saying "Come on, Kostas, you stink", in a cool manner, so that I won't be beaten, however, I was beaten-bop!-straight away directly to the head, right? Straight away. Because I didn't kiss him!

Her submissive behaviour towards her husband is located in her phrases '*stopped paying attention to him*' and '*in a cool manner*'. However, her behaviour is contextualized within her anger throughout her narrative, which I tried to transcribe by using exclamation marks. Olga attempts affiliate appeals ('*O.K?*' and '*right?*') with me to assure that I understand her reality (Riessman, 1994). Although she has previously narrated her husband's alcoholism as the source of his abuse, she now shifts location and instead of looking for an excuse for his behaviour, she sounds angry and surprised for its consequences. In narrative terms, Olga has shifted her temporal location and she now speaks as the strong woman who has acquired help from an agency and has regained confidence in her strength. She now speaks from the position of the 'survivor' who questions the legitimacy of her ex-partner's abuse.

However, as Olga escaped from her abusive husband a few months ago and is still visiting the helping agency in order to acquire further psychological and legal support, she has not yet stabilized her positioned self away from her abusive husband. Her narrative reflects this short distancing from the experience of abuse through the shift backwards and forward, in and out of the relationship. Although she has narrated her present strong self she later goes back again to narrate an episode between her and her husband, during which she tried several strategies to bring him to reason:

Olga: I called him, I say "Kostas, look, I think you understand what's going on". He says "Understand what?" I say "I think you understand". He says, "What? Tell me". I say "Kostas, it can't go any further, I want us to divorce". I say "I want you to come and talk about the child, we have to look for an arrangement for the child. Certainly, the child will come with me but...shouldn't we talk about the child? Can I leave just like that?" ... "Don't make me screw everything up, I'm not coming home, I will go out and drink to death and I don't know when

I'm coming back!" He hung up the phone, I called him again, I called him at work because he had switched off his mobile. I say "Call me Kostas" I called twice at work, I say "Bring me Kostas on the phone because we will have trouble!"- I threatened! In my own way. Kostas comes on the phone, I say "What are all these things you're doing? Why are you doing all these to me?" I say "for so long? I can't take it anymore" I say "do you want me to leave just like that? What are you looking for?" I say "we have a child. O.K, I won't leave" I say, "O.K we're not going to divorce" [she laughs]. "O.K" he says "I'm coming home in a while".

The dialogical pattern Olga employs in this extract can be said to represent her 'dialogical self' (Hydén, 1995) as she shifts between past and present, between 'staying' or 'leaving' her abusive relationship. She re-experiences the dialogue she had with her husband when she decided to talk to him about divorce through acting-out the dialogue they had in the present tense. Interrogating her narrative extract for 'subtle resistance' the process of manifesting it unfolds as a spiral (Kirkwood, 1993): she initiates the discussion by expressing clearly her decision to separate from her husband. However, she is careful of involving him in the decision as they have a child, thus maintaining his share of authority upon their child. As her husband responds angrily she insists on her decision to discuss the future of their marriage and she surprises herself by threatening her husband's colleagues if they do not put him on the phone. She did that *'in her own way'*, a phrase which negotiates between the triumph for doing so and the disappointment of not having done that more intensively, resembling the dialogical form she has employed. However, when her husband came on the phone, she shifts the discussion from the child to her abuse, which she *'can't take anymore'*. Her intolerance towards abuse is then again negotiated as she asks him *'do you want me to leave just like that? What are you looking for?'* Her first question passing him authority to decide about the way they should

separate in order for his authority not to be threatened possibly expresses her consideration of her role as a wife who has responsibility of working for her marriage. The next question passes authority to her husband to decide how she should act: what he is looking for could inform her about what she should do. Then she relies on his sense of fatherhood to re-invite him to co-operation ('*we have a child*') as she actually prepares her deliberate compliance to his will to stay together. Her laughter implies a 'choreographed demonstration of co-operation' act of compliance (Faith, 1994) which leads to the planned result: he finally agrees to return home. Then she will probably create another opportunity for negotiation on their divorce and therefore her shift from overt resistance to compliance becomes the basis for her future attempts to resist his abuse. Drawing from anthropologist Sherry B.Ortner (in Smith and Watson, 2001) we can trace agency in Olga's narrative as agency is situated "in the ability with which people play the 'games' of culture-with their rules and structures- with wit and intelligence" (Smith and Watson, 2001:44).

The woman she used to be was consistent with social and cultural scripts of women comforting their husbands and employing 'feminine roles'. Part of these roles refers to 'mother-like' treatment of husbands which is related to the emotional work women undertake in the family (Cavanagh, 2003; Wilcox, 2006). Some other part involves keeping the husband by being attractive in feminine terms as Frosso's narrative highlights:

Frosso: There is a barbaric humiliation in all this because at the end of my pregnancy I have the need to exist as a woman. How can I tell? I need to feel that he wants me as a woman- that he still wants me as a woman. However, in my condition, with the huge belly, nine months pregnant, it is very difficult to exist as a female. But at this point that I feel I'm losing him, uuuhm....I try to exercise, to expose all my means, the 'feminine' is one of those, and I do expose it, but very...how can I tell you...it's very humiliating. Uuum...for example trying to approach

him in a love mood, sexually, uuuhm...and he was doing that as a concession and as a favour. Certainly, for me it was different, for him it was different.

Frosso employs what she calls 'feminine means' to keep her husband although he has been abusive. However, as her narrative suggests she does not finally submit to him and his abuse because what alerts her is the loss of her selfhood and female subjectivity ('*it's very humiliating*'). She resists this kind of abuse by saying '*for me it was different, for him it was different*'. Contextualizing this reflection within her wider narrative where she had narrated her and her husband being in love, sharing nice moments together and building a life together, it has now become weird for her having to provoke his love, while also being pregnant. It is also her femininity that is challenged and provokes her resistance. Earlier, Frosso had narrated how important a woman feels and needs to be treated when she is pregnant and this is something she did not experience from her husband. Her need therefore, becomes the site of her resistance as this need is not met by her husband and she realizes that their love life has different meanings for the two of them.

As my reading of women's narratives of compliance suggested, the acts of apparent compliance on the part of women who experience abuse are embedded with ambiguity, as women experience ambivalence before they finally submit. Ambivalence and compliance are in turn interrelated with emotional 'emptiness' and distancing.

5.3 Emotional distancing

Within women's narratives I have traced so far subtle forms of resistance as being roughly divided into acts that imply ambiguity and compliance towards abuse and/or the abuser. I have argued that by interrogating narrated ambiguity and compliance space is provided for tracking resistance, therefore women's passivity is challenged.

Another form of subtle resistance that was traced within women's narratives is emotional distancing from the abuser. Though not an overtly active reaction towards the abusive partner, emotional

distancing as narrated by women serves to maintain self-coherence, provide protection for women, or disguise and/or suppress anger towards the abuser. As with other forms of subtle resistance, emotional distancing is a roughly categorized form of resistance which involves various women's attitudes towards abuse, which have as a common thread the shift of the emotional state of women from direct involvement in the abusive experience and/or the relationship with the abusive partner. I argue that it is within this space that women can exercise their agency as this space is inaccessible by their abusive partners' abuse.

In the following narrative Anthi expresses distance from the relationship with her abusive husband located within the site of sexual life:

Anthi: When I got sick...(sighs) and I found out that he was ignorant and that...however he did want to sleep with me, yes, in order to sleep with me he could forget everything...and when I didn't want to, he was standing up and was swearing, that I have an affair, that he pays and I fool around with guys...

Anthi's sickness becomes the site of questioning her husband's support. What causes further emotional distancing is the fact that although he is ignorant about her sickness he does pursue sexual intercourse with her. Anthi emphasizes that he did want to sleep with her by affirming her statement ('yes') without having been questioned for its validity by me. However, his pursuit of sexual intercourse with her has probably been questioned by her as it was not what she expected from him while she was sick and while their relationship was already problematic. Anthi narrates that she did not want to be involved in sexual activity with him implying her emotional distancing, through which she resists her husband. She further chooses to narrate her husband's reaction to her distancing as being insulting and abusive. Through this narration she affirms her distancing, which is now further caused by his abuse. Further emotions towards her husband's abuse are unarticulated within this narrative extract and are implied by other expressive means. She sighs when she narrates that she was sick, she emphasizes his unexpected

pursuit of sexual intercourse with her and she chooses to narrate his abusive reaction to her resistance. As the female body becomes a 'strategic site of power and resistance' (Faith, 1994:37) Anthi resists by restricting access to it by her abuser.

What remains unarticulated in this narrative becomes evident later in her narrative:

Anthi: And after all this I was disgusted and I mean I had become sick of me and I had stopped sleeping with him, I couldn't stand it I mean it was...I was feeling sick. Like an animal, he wanted to satisfy his needs and then standing up off bed and swearing at me! I mean he was going on...and at some point while I was also sick but I couldn't stand it anymore either, I came to a point where I was sick of me, like an animal! And this is where he was getting mad, when he was realizing that I didn't want to, that I didn't want him anymore he was getting mad. And he stood up off the bed and went on...we're talking about such a swearing, I mean it turns you....(sigh).

Anthi narrates disgust which I argue is a form of emotional distancing from the abusive partner and which contains resistance. Although she narrates being sick of herself, she provides strong negative depictions of her husband acting '*like an animal*', which shift disgust from her to him. She was sick of herself because she was staying and having sexual intercourse with him, whom she had come to detest. She further employs the same narrative strategy as she did in the previous extract, narrating her partner's abusive reaction towards her emotional distancing. What is narrated is her involvement in the sexual intercourse but without any emotional involvement from her part. When he was realizing that she was distanced he '*was getting mad*' and I argue that his reaction affirms emotional distancing as a form of resistance because it is resistance that causes further abuse.

Flora narrates having symptoms of health problems while trying to resist sexual intercourse with her husband as she felt emotionally distanced:

Flora: And at some point he says "and don't you even think that I bite your tale about your period", he says. "Who knows with whom you slept with and got pregnant and this is why you're going to the doctor". I got sick then. I had reached a point where I disgusted him. When he got close to me, after the fights at the hospital, I felt like vomiting. And I went to the bathroom and I pleaded, because everything was happening simultaneously to me, my gums had become very sensitive, the dentist had gone crazy. And I say to him, "I'm just very stressed and it is possible that this is how stress is coming out". And I pleaded that there was blood coming to my mouth and I need to go to the bathroom. I almost vomited.

The body becomes the site of negotiation and resistance. First, it is the site of domination by her husband which initiates intercourse regardless of Flora's reluctance. As Flora has problems with her period, her husband relates these problems with her femininity and blames her for imagined infidelity. His disrespect towards her problem and his blaming make her sick and add to her disgust which was caused before this episode by his abuse. She escapes her husband's abuse on the grounds of dental problems. As she was feeling like vomiting her tooth bleed and verifies the truthfulness of her symptoms by employing her dentist's response. In order to justify her unwillingness to have sexual intercourse with her husband she provides a possible explanation of her symptoms through which she covertly attributes blame to him for these symptoms (*'I'm just very stressed and it is possible that this is how stress is coming out'*). When she finally narrates that she went to the bathroom feeling like vomiting her resistance becomes embodied and this embodiment becomes a site of knowledge and knowledge production, which revises cultural norms (Smith and Watson, 2001).

In her following narrative Flora relates disgust with emotional distancing, both caused by her partner's abusive behaviour. What is also implied is the blame attributed to women for their emotional distancing which further reinforces abuse, which, in turn, further reinforces emotional distancing on the part of women. After a long period of abuse, Flora is emotionally distanced from her husband. At a certain point when he was about to leave for work, she distanced herself and did not express any tender feelings towards him neither did she say goodbye. After some time she was told that her husband had a serious accident and as she gets to the place of accident her husband makes a gesture that implied that her ignorance to show him tenderness caused the accident. After a difficult period in the hospital they return home.

Flora: Fights started at home, since September when he had the accident until 8th of December when I left home, it was all fights, fights, fights. Meanwhile, I had left our bed, I wasn't sleeping with him because I didn't want him anymore, I felt emptiness, I told him, that what he did at the hospital made me feel vacant. "I can't conceptualize it, you being hit, waiting for the ambulance and tell me that I am responsible. Why am I responsible?" He says, "because I left our shop and you didn't even turned your sight on me, you didn't kiss me, nothing". And after that his explanation, after he got out of hospital, was that I caused the accident indirectly, through my swearing at him.

After her husband had attributed blame to her for his accident, Flora had left their bed, which becomes the reflection of the couple's emotional state. On Flora's part it was an act of resistance which is interrelated with her emotional emptiness. She enters a dialogue with her husband by directly asking him why she was to be blamed for his accident and he blames her for her emotional distancing when he left home. While it was emotional distancing that caused his further abuse of blaming her for his accident, his abuse now becomes a cause for Flora's

further emotional distancing, which seems to find its most accessible manifestation in women's restriction of tender feelings and availability for sexual activity. The couple's sexual activity becomes the 'site of struggle' where abuse is negotiated and resistance is expressed on the part of women.

Eleni further relates emotional distancing as expressed within the site of intercourse with fear:

Eleni: While I loved him at first then I started hating him. And I was even bored of my life itself. I mean even when my mood was good, I didn't want to make love with him. I disgusted him, I avoided him and was going to the child's room to sleep. I was saying "Holy Mary, may they [her husband and his relatives leaving together at their home] go and never come back". I mean when I heard them coming fear was increasing.

Eleni narrates that her feelings towards her husband had changed from love to hate. This change had impact on her sexual restriction towards her husband, which she maintained even when her mood was good. She resists being available for sexual intercourse by distancing herself physically from their bed. She further resists his abuse in general by wishing they never came back. Her wish encapsulates the resistance she can not express overtly. She expresses disgust which later is merged with fear. It is interesting that her fear is caused not only by her husband but from his brother and mother as well and therefore fear is not caused by physical violence. Her fear and disgust have distanced her from her husband and through these feelings she resists.

Later in her narrative detest for her husband is narrated through her child. Eleni detests her husband and his sense that is transferred to their child daughter when she sees her father now that her parents are separated.

Eleni: And the day before yesterday that I saw him, I detest him. And just feeling that he touches my child, I detest him. Because when she returns home, there

*is this smell, I think my child has that smell, too.
And I take her directly to the bathroom to take this
dirtiness off her.*

In this narrative it is not clear whether detest is actually an expression of emotional distancing as Eleni sounds emotionally involved when narrating detest for her husband. However, it is this detest that distanced her from her husband and became the vehicle of her resistance towards him. Eleni focuses on a particular reason for detesting her husband, his smell. Eleni takes her daughter to the bathroom when she returns home after having met her father and she washes her so that the smell vanishes. In metaphorical terms it sounds as Eleni attempts to wash away everything that reminds her husband, resembling other women's idiosyncratic strategies of resisting abuse (Wade, 1997). The body as a site of resistance is evident in this extract through her daughter now. Eleni does not want him to touch her daughter, as it is the body that suffered the most from his 'touch' when they were married and it was the same hand that abused her and now touches her daughter. Although Eleni does not narrate abuse of her daughter by her husband his hand becomes a symbol in her narrative, a symbol of father's tenderness which is merged with the symbol of the abuser's hand and she now resists this symbol (Lundgren, 1998).

The body expresses the emotional distancing from the abusive husband, even when it has been submitted otherwise to the attempt of expressing love and compromise. This is evident in Dimitra's narrative extract, where she narrates making love with her husband even though she was experiencing his emotional abuse:

*Dimitra: However, we were together again, we
made love, we were going out at nights, my parents
were staying together and so they were keeping the
children. I return to Athens. But I could not get over
it. While it seemed that I have got over it, after
returning to Athens I started suffering again.*

Dimitra's emotional distancing has seemingly taken place without her acknowledgement. Her body, which she subjects to

reconciliation with her husband and her emotions which are attuned to the attempt to spend some good time with him co-operate and manifest her resistance to the abuse she has been experiencing when she distances herself physically from her husband. Her unconscious is a site of agency, as “its excess is a source of resistance to socially enforced calls to fixed identities” (Smith and Watson, 2001:44). It was not until she returned to Athens alone that she realized that her attempts to turn her feelings and her body compatible with her efforts to make up with her husband were not so effective and she starts suffering again. It seems as if this suffering itself resembles her resistance towards the emotional abuse she has been suffering.

It is interesting within Dimitra’s narration that detest towards her husband develops gradually and is widened to involve various aspects of their common life. She has already narrated the ineffectiveness of their bodily contact to restore their relationship and later she generalizes detest towards traits of his personality:

Dimitra: I can not recognize this man anymore, I detest him because of his lies.

Later:

Dimitra: I have realized that he has become very mean. He says very bad things. And I detest him for these things.

And finally:

Dimitra: There is no physical abuse, but it’s this thing, this every-day kind of thing, I get out of bed and.... In the summer when he was to come home I was getting scared and terrified. I mean I wanted to move out of my house because I wouldn’t stand seeing him. Fortunately, I got over it. I was saying “how can a stranger come?” For me he was a stranger.

First, Dimitra expresses detest towards her husband because of his lies, as his lies were abusing her. She provides hints of estrangement as she cannot recognize him anymore. Later, she establishes her detest

on the bad things he says, verbalizing a mean personality for Dimitra. And finally, she provides a narrative which involves terror and intolerance which are added to her previous detest and lead to total estrangement. The detest she feels makes her realize that he is not the man she loved and the loss of positive traits in the other becomes a turning point of her positioning towards her husband and her relationship (Eisikovits, Buchbinder and Mor, 1998).

Frosso narrates an 'offer' to make up on the part of her husband although he has an affair. As emotional distancing is the context within which this attempt would take place Frosso narrates that it was not even initiated by her. Her emotional distancing growing out of the abuse she had experienced undermines any effort and implies the resistance towards abuse.

Frosso: Around 8-10 months later, he asks me to make up with him, but it is then impossible. [Me: Did you try?] Mmmm...it is impossible. We did not try because it was put like 'either you take me back now or Katerina will have me'. And I felt like he is out to 'great offers', I mean I saw it like 'great sales, hurry up because these are the last days of sales' and I freaked out even more.

Frosso is emotionally distanced from her husband not only because he has an affair but because she has also been abused by his indifference to stand by her during periods of her life when she needed it the most. When her husband returns and asks her to make up, Frosso does not even initiate an effort. She is not only distanced because of her previous abuse but she also implies detest for her husband 'offering himself to sales' by posing her the dilemma of her or the woman he is involved with to have him. The metaphors she uses 'offers' and 'sales' become her narrative style of expressing her resistance towards his abuse to pose this dilemma on her and also towards his objectification, verbalized through these metaphors. He has turned himself to a 'commodity' over which the two women should negotiate and Frosso

resists being involved. Objectifying himself intensifies her emotional distancing.

Similarly, Olga refrains from making up with her husband when he asks her to:

Olga: The next day, Kostas comes back from his village "baby, I will change, I'll do this, I'll do that". I was saying to myself "even if for one in a million this is to be true, I'm not staying anymore". I mean even if in deed Kostas changed, if he quit drinking, if Kostas in deed became the perfect family-man, I wasn't staying.

Olga's husband enters a narrative of 'remedial work' (Cavanagh, 2003) and assures her that he will change, therefore she should make up with him. Although Olga does not express resistance to his initiative verbally, she resorts to her emotional distancing from her husband to resist. She does not believe in his words ('*for one in a million this is to be true*') and initiates an inner narrative of pre-conditions which her husband should satisfy and for which she decides that he cannot fulfill. She can see that now that she has distanced herself from him after several episodes of abuse, she can re-evaluate the incidents and possibly deflect self-blame and this way she constructs her resistant thinking (Riessman, 2000).

There are other stories of abuse through which women narrate detest and construct their resistance. Some women narrated anger as dominating or leading to their emotional distancing from their partners.

Frosso: Our fights were so intense sometimes that...I had the need to beat him! I had this crazy need to beat him a lot. Of course, he was bigger than me...I never exercised physical violence but....I regret it!

When Frosso narrates that their 'fights' were so intense sometimes that she had the need to beat her husband, she provides space for interpreting this intensity as intense abuse towards her that made her so angry that she wanted to beat her husband. She narrates this need after

a short pause which might be expressing a hesitation to 'confess' this need. Although Frosso is a young, educated and modern woman, she is here attuned to the cultural script provided for women regarding managing their anger (Riessman, 1994). However, as her narrative progresses she affirms her need by regretting not having exercised physical violence towards her husband. Although her present anger implies that Frosso is still involved in her abusive experience I argue that she has affirmed her agency in order to be able to express this anger and experience her resistance.

In her narrative Dimitra relates ignorance and avoidance to highlight another aspect of emotional distancing as she narrates how she avoided recognizing her husband's flirting with their bridesmaid:

Dimitra: I saw strange things in my home. But I couldn't lead my thought towards the bridesmaid. Never. I wasn't suspecting him, I trusted him. I saw some things, I never talked. And this is what I said to [psychologist]. While I saw things, it was like forgetting them. She said that I probably did not want to accept this was happening.

The bridesmaid is a trusted person whom women usually first contact when seeking support for their abuse (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). However, Dimitra's bridesmaid was not a friend of hers but her husband's colleague, who owned the business he was working for. Their relationship contains power and it is this power that shifts from business to flirting and possibly distorts Dimitra's picture. Her bridesmaid was actually her husband's boss, coming from a wealthy and respected family and therefore the power dynamics influenced her view of the situation: her bridesmaid could not be flirting with her husband. At the same time, Dimitra had strong feelings about her husband and a strong wish to create a happy family and towards this aim she trusted her husband. Therefore, although she started seeing '*strange things in her home*' she could not verify her perception of reality because the lens through which she viewed reality was distorted by her context. Her ignorance then is interpreted as a strategy she employed to resist the

abusive reality she perceived and therefore veils her own image as victim (Lempert, 1996). She was trying to forget what she was seeing and she provides an interpretation that came from her psychologist to affirm that there was agency in doing so, as she did not want to accept this was happening.

I have tried to explore emotional distancing in women's narratives as an attempt to create a private space within which they can experience their resistance. As with other forms of resistance emotional distancing is not defined in a straightforward way. Through women's narratives I constructed an interpretation of their emotional distancing as resistance by exploring its various manifestations through anger, detest, avoidance and ignorance.

5.4 Health damage

Most of the women I interviewed narrated stories of health problems. As I tried to interrogate these stories for carrying some resistance I re-read the stories as narratives of resistance within the context of health. Theoretically, I base this reading of narratives of health damage as resistance on the grounds of health being an issue which provides space for women to talk about abuse without naming it. The impact of abuse on women's health is known and pervasive (Stark and Flitcraft, 1996) and therefore provides an alternative discourse to women to talk about abuse. At the same time health can be interpreted as a site of resistance for women who experience abuse as it is health that is damaged by resisting abuse. If women were not suffering and resisting abuse their health would not be damaged and therefore health damage can signal some resistance through the body when resistance can not or is not articulated.

Anthi narrates how her health damage emerged to resist her husband's abuse and threatened his dominance:

Anthi: I had bleedings, the doctor was saying that I should stay in bed and he [her husband] made me stand up, get out of bed to do some housework...

Anthi had to stay in bed as the doctor had advised her to do. The doctor's voice here becomes her justification towards her husband for her staying in bed so that her husband will not blame her for laziness and therefore poor performance as a housewife. However, as her husband's authority is threatened by the doctor's order he reaffirms it by making her get out of bed and do some housework. However, Anthi's health damage implies resistance when it is read within her unsuccessful attempts to find some time for herself and stay in bed which she could now claim because she was bleeding.

Later Anthi returns to the same pattern:

Anthi: When I had this health problem and could not do many things, I was getting tired very easily, the medicine had side effects and...I had become a 'plant', I mean sometimes I couldn't do anything at all. And he was pushing me to go buy him cigarettes, go buy him whisky...

As Anthi had become a 'plant' from medicine she was taking for her health problem she narrates losing her agency. Therefore, what Anthi cannot consciously resist is resisted through her health damage. Again, her husband's authority is threatened by her health problem which legitimizes her unwillingness to respond to his orders and therefore he becomes more abusive to re-establish his dominance.

In Vasso's narrative, health problems as a response to abuse become evident:

Vasso: I could return home and he could be all day at home and soon as I entered the house he would ask "what have you cooked?" it was a big breaking of nerves, very big breaking of nerves...so he would leave me no space to answer sensibly or answer...I had to say something foolish or say anything, I mean what is that, soon as I entered house "what have you cooked?". Many times I was leaving, I was turning away and I was leaving (laughter), so a very big fight was waiting for me when I returned. So

when I was returning home I had psycho-somatic, I had psycho-somatic symptoms, I had blisters on my skin. And I had been to a homeopathic doctor, because I was on homeopathy and I happened to visit [name of doctor] who...was co-operating with [name][Me: The name is familiar to me] yes, yes he's the 'father of homeopathy' in Greece, excellent, and (sighs) she had told me "Could it be your relationship, could it be that it's not working?"

Vasso narrates the kind of emotional abuse her husband exerted on her towards which she would turn around and leave. However, she knew that she had to face a 'fight' when she would return home and as she did not manifest her resistance she channeled it to her body. From her dialogue with the homeopathic doctor it is implied that Vasso had not related her bodily symptoms with her abuse. However, her body became the site of resistance which she could not verbalize and through her bodily symptoms she came to realize that her relationship was abusing her.

Later Vasso narrates feeling depressed:

Vasso: And it was this thing, I was feeling my body becoming heavy and having no mood for anything, I was feeling I'm reaching depression and sinking into it, I was saying "O.K, this is how things are, these are relationships, what can I do? This is destiny".

As Vasso was sinking into abuse and as she was not confronting it abuse was fueling her body and soul. I would argue that depression can be a disguised form of resistance: the resisting self can no longer tolerate abuse and as there are no resources and means available to resist, the self escapes to depression.

Later Vasso attributes some positive characteristics to depression and attaches meaning to it:

Vasso: The symptoms of depression, I mean this boredom, I had no mood and things like that, I was sleeping many hours, there were phases in all these,

I was attributing these to my self's inadequacy "I'm not good enough, I'm not strong enough, I'm not this and that enough". In the long term this was good for me because I undertook responsibility, it was good because it was accompanied by some critical thought because there are women that never go away.

Vasso narrates attributing her loss of agency to her inadequacy. However, Vasso provides an alternative meaning of depression as a passive reaction to abuse and attaches agency to it, for it took agency to undertake some responsibility for the situation she found herself in. Her criticism therefore towards herself deriving from her depression became the incitement towards changing the situation. Her depression motivated her agency.

The narrative moment that Korina chooses to initiate a narrative about her health problems highlights the resisting nature of health problems. Soon as Korina has narrated her thoughts about returning to her husband and as she has argued against it because that would be a risk for her life she narrates:

Korina: Because I have from...regarding my health I have problems. For example, the simplest, I have spastic colitis, caused by my stress and my sadness. The other thing is that because of the beatings on the head I have concussion, I had concussion, I have headaches, migraines all the time.

As Korina narrates her inner negotiations regarding returning to her husband she finds a strong argument against that decision in her health damage. Her health had been so damaged by her husband's abuse that she would put her life at risk if she returned. Korina names a series of troubles and symptoms caused by her husband's abuse and therefore her health damage becomes her resistance towards his abuse. What her thoughts and feelings possibly cannot manage, that is to take her away from her abusive husband, her health does.

Flora provides a very lengthy narrative of a health crisis while her husband was at hospital blaming her for her accident. After narrating her health crisis episode in detail she involves her husband in her narrative of health crisis:

Flora: I realized my condition was serious, I wasn't panicked but I could not control it. At 3.30 in the morning the 'gentleman' [her husband, ironically] got out of his bed to come and see me. Meanwhile the doctors had told him, he had notified his sister and she came urgently, but when I saw her I nodded her to leave because I was becoming emotional, the doctors had told him [her husband] not to come to my room and they had told that only my brother could. At 3.30 in the morning he dared come to my room and as I turned my head, because I was like dizzy, when I saw him I didn't want to see him. When I saw him I didn't want to see him. I turned him out. I said "go".

And later in her narrative she elaborates on her health damage while her husband was still at hospital and concludes:

Flora: Of course in the morning they [the doctors] told me that "since it's not something serious, it's caused by stress, you will leave hospital", my husband had to stay for five days more, "you will not come to the hospital again". I considered him [her husband] responsible for what had happened to me and since then the final countdown started from me towards him. This is where I felt he was leaving from inside of me. I felt the emptiness. I felt I don't love him anymore. I don't want him anymore.

From the beginning of the story about her husband's hospitalization for an accident Flora had narrated having 'fights' with him because he considered her responsible for his accident and because he would not let her leave the hospital not even for a few hours. In her

first narrative about her health crisis Flora constructs its context as a serious crisis during which her husband was not allowed to see her. However, he did go to her room and as Flora saw him she turned him away. She did that after having experienced a health crisis which was verified by the doctors. The medical discourse provided Flora the space to resist her husband and reclaim her privacy.

In her second narrative Flora attributes her health crisis the characteristics of 'a turning point' when a 'shift in thinking occurred' (Cavanagh, 2003) and was located (Campbell et al., 1998) after she experienced a loss which made her reorganize her meaning system (Eisikovits, Buchbinder and Mor, 1998). Flora had experienced abuse from her husband before but as she felt she was loosing her health she reinterpreted what was happening to her as something that distanced her from her husband. Her health crisis became the sign of the resistance she could not manifest earlier in the relationship and that now, within the context of the hospital, could be justified.

Similarly, health problems became a turning point in the relationship for other women I interviewed. Maria narrates being abandoned by her husband after she gave birth to their daughter:

Maria: I went to the hospital, I delivered, I mean immediately. I started at three o'clock, I delivered at a quarter past three, but I had problems afterwards. Bleeding. I mean since afternoon and all night long I was bleeding. The doctor did not leave me for a second. My aunt stayed. He was outside at the clubs with his sister entertaining himself.

Although Maria did not leave her husband after his neglect, she experienced that 'pivotal moment' (Eisikovits, Buchbinder and Mor, 1998) when she could not have the kind of support she needed from her husband. At a moment when she needed her husband to treat her and take care of her he was outside entertaining himself. Maria might not had the resources or discourses available to resist her husband then, however she resists through narrating two oppositional stories: a story of health problems and a story of entertainment. Her narrative style and implied

irony in her last utterance '*he was outside at the clubs with his sister entertaining himself*' leaves space to interpret this pivotal moment as adding to the construction of her resistance towards her husband's neglect and abuse.

Similarly Olga narrates her husband's neglect when she delivered their baby and had health problems:

Olga: From the next day of delivery on, while he knew that I couldn't even go to the toilet, I'm telling you I had a probe, I was calling him "come on, Kostas, where are you?", "well, I'm at the coffee shop, I'm having a coffee and I'm coming" ...my moral was broken and he was breaking it even more, I was full of blood, my nightgown full of blood, you know that we have after delivery, I didn't have a person to come and take my nightgown to wash it, I was in need of his help to take me up and help me walk, because the midwives had told me that "you have to stand up, so that your body starts moving, you can't stay in bed all the time" and of course you can't make it alone because I had a probe and I had this... 'butterfly' [medical component]. However, Kostas, because he had that behaviour, I was standing up alone, right? Alone and the midwives were coming and felt pity for me and congratulated me for managing on my own.

Olga provides a dramatic narrative of her first days after delivery at the hospital where she found herself alone and helpless. Olga employs the medical discourse to justify her dramatic situation and to underline her husband's indifference. She also employs the affirmative clause '*you know*' (Riessman, 1994) to affirm the dramatic situation as I would understand it as a woman. As Olga was left alone she was following medical advice and was helping herself. Although she attempts to employ the voice of the victim (*'the midwives were coming and felt pity for me'*) she finally exits her narrative triumphing about her

managing the situation on her own. Her health at the moment when she was in need of help signaled her resistance as it was actually mirroring her husband's neglect and abuse but it also revealed Olga's survival skills.

Through narratives of health damage I have tried to unpack women's resistance as conveyed through health symptoms, which might signal a turning point in their way of thinking towards abuse and their abusive partners. Health damage might also provide space for experiencing and expressing resistance towards abuse through the medical discourses which become available to women and affirm and verify their situation and usually relate it with abuse and its effects.

Summary

By interrogating women's narrative accounts for forms of subtle resistance space is provided for alternative readings and alternative discourses become available to women to speak resistance in terms of ambiguity, compliance, emotional distancing and health damage. However, as these forms of resistance are neither straightforward nor necessarily successful in altering the abusive situation there is the inherent danger of romanticizing women's narratives for subtle forms of resistance (Riessman, 2000; Wade, 1997). Women who experience abuse do resist but they also usually live under material conditions and within socio-cultural contexts which restrict their alternatives and distort their subjective realities where their agency can emerge. Therefore, resisting in subtle forms is not always the most wanted choice of women who live in abusive relationships and sometimes these forms of resistance disguise their feelings and thoughts. It is only by contextualizing them that their meaning in each woman's life and relationship becomes more evident.

CHAPTER 6: REPERTOIRES OF RESISTANCE: OPEN RESISTANCE

As previous research has shown open forms of resistance can lead to escalation of violence (Chantler, 2006; Kelly, 1988). Contextual factors that have to be taken into account when interrogating women's responses to abuse include the length and severity of violence (Waldrop and Resick, 2004), access to material and informal resources (Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993) and the combination of dangers and opportunities for each woman at a specific time (Wade, 1997).

Drawing from women's narratives I conceptualized open resistance as those active responses on the part of women who have experienced abuse by their male partners which overtly confront the perpetrator and make him aware that abuse is not tolerated anymore and which threaten the stability of the relationship.

In this chapter, I interrogate women's acts of open resistance to abuse to trace their contextual nature, within which I argue that first, there can be no clear distinction between overt and subtle forms of resistance, therefore women's responses to abuse are multiple, complex, interrelated and overlapping. Moreover, I argue that when women who have experienced abuse by their male partners are blamed for not resisting, they might initiate acts of resistance that are not successful in terms of reducing abuse or escaping from the relationship.

For analytical reasons I have divided open resistance to three forms it usually took within the narratives of the women I interviewed: verbal confrontation, seeking support/going public and the active initiatives women took to confront their perpetrators. Through analyzing open forms of resistance I attempt to highlight their complexity, interrogate the assumption that open resistance is a straightforward process and locate open forms of resistance within their context. Parts of this context are common for women who have experienced abuse by their male partners while other parts are unique for each woman.

6.1 Verbal confrontation

I begin to interrogate open forms of resistance on the part of women who have experienced abuse by their male partners towards their perpetrators by the most obvious form this might take, which is verbal confrontation. Within the narratives of the women I interviewed verbal confrontation has been initiated by all women at some point. However, the context within which open confrontation took place is different for each woman as is the significance it is attributed by each woman within her narrative of the whole abusive experience. I also try to contextualize open forms of resistance within the abusive relationship by providing further narrative extracts which are related to the open resistance narrated earlier by each woman narrator.

Anthi narrates how she verbally confronted her husband when she was pregnant and he had embarked without giving any signs of life:

Anthi: At some point I sent him a telegraph that he should contact home and after a long time he called, he told me "don't you ever bother me again, give my personal belongings to my friend"... "I have been an asshole. I have been 'this' and 'that' that I got involved with you" and on that day I was leaving, I was going to my sister, my sister was working at a hotel in [area] and she had talked to her boss and I was going there. I told him "I'm about to leave now, I'm leaving home as it is and I'm out of here and I won't bother you again". And [he said] "go get rid of the baby" and such things.

Within this narrative Anthi verbally resists her husband's abuse by announcing that she is leaving home. The context within which she initiated this confrontation is one of support as her sister would take her at work and at home with her. Although her husband kept on abusing her verbally on the phone and although Anthi told him that she would not bother him again as he had ordered, the fact that Anthi initiates an escape turns him more abusive and he orders her to interrupt her pregnancy,

reaffirming his dominance on her. Later Anthi narrates her new life away from home when he suddenly appears:

Anthi: And suddenly he appeared one month before I delivered....he came, everybody tried to convince me that he might change because of the baby and, and, and many other things. However, his life was in bars. He was used to coming, spending his money and when it was gone, he was leaving.

Anthi's previous open resistance to his abuse is now subverted as he returned and her social context convinced her that he would change. The agent of her resistance now is the woman who is acted upon (Elizabeth, 2003) by her social context, which exercises power over her. She does not explicitly narrate that she started living with her husband again but she provides a habitual narrative of his bad behaviour which implies that. Therefore, Anthi shifted from the active agent of her initial confrontation to a self that was disciplinary produced by social forces (Elizabeth, 2003). When these two narratives are related, open resistance manifested in her first narrative is located within Anthi's shifting contexts from one of support to one of discipline and her open resistance becomes more complex.

Another factor which open resistance is to be related with is the interaction between the women who resist and their perpetrators. Some women narrated that their initial verbal resistance turned their partners to persons they had no reason to resist anymore. Some women's verbal resistance provoked their partner's temporal apologies and accounting (Cavanagh, 2003) so that women had no reason to resist anymore. However, as their narratives unfold it becomes evident that their partners' compromise was a technique through which they regained power over their wives.

Olga narrates how her partner persuaded her to marry him after she had asked him to separate because he was not supporting her:

Olga: ...and for the first time I told him then "I want us to break up" and he says "what are you saying? I love you. Why break up? I want us to get married, I

want...I want...I want...you need to get out of here [her parents' home], now that your grandmother is like that [sick], how will you be living in an environment like that?" I was saying, I was very young then, I was 24-25 and I was saying, it seemed hard, you know, unbearable, and I was saying that I will not make it in here, I wanted to leave home. So, he related that, he says "come with me, let's get married, you'll get better"...and such things, "but Kostas, it's not like that, you're not supporting me", "you'll see" he says "everything will change, it's just that I'm stressed now, new at work, working overtime, and your parents don't want me, your father, he always turns me down" and things like that and I told him, "... he convinced me right? He convinced me. Just like that. He says "if we go, everything will change. I will change, too, I'll calm down". "O.K".

Olga narrates what followed her initial resistance towards her partner's reluctance to support her through a difficult period. Not only did he affirm his support but he asked her to marry him as well. Her partner suggested an escape for her through marrying him when Olga was facing a frustrating situation at her parents' home. Olga employs abstractions, justifications and silence to narrate how her partner persuaded her. His argument is an unfinished phrase (*'I want...I want...I want'*) which might imply that it was overwhelming for her and contradicts what she finally went through by marrying him. Her second attempt to acquire support by her partner (*'you're not supporting me'*) is followed by her partner's excuses for his indifference as well as justifications and promises for change. He attempted to establish privacy for their couple which would work together against anything that might threaten it by referring to her father's denial to accept him. Olga's silent answer to his repertoire of persuasion implies her ambivalence, which was what informed her decision to stay with him instead of real

persuasion. She now admits surprised that he convinced her but she has first narrated all the strategies her partner used towards that end. The fact that these strategies made Olga stay with him calls for an interrogation of the social meaning and emotional impact they had on her. At the same time, the careful selection of the means her husband used to persuade her to stay with him point to his deliberate control exercised over her. In order to persuade Olga to stay with him her partner resorts to emotional affirmations of love, initiatives to take her away from her frustrating family environment and will to protect her. Then he constructs the ideal of the safe and protective couple, which lives happily away from external threats. And finally he shifts to his personal behaviour and promises that he will change. This way, his attempt to persuade her is directed to the three sources of Olga's doubt: their interpersonal, the social and his personal and therefore her initial resistance is not supported anymore by any source of doubt.

A slight differentiation of love affirmation on the part of the abusive husband after a woman's verbal abuse is narrated by Frosso. After their 'fights' about her partner's affair she asks him to leave a few days after she has delivered their twins:

Frosso: I delivered and the next day he disappears and he comes at the clinic and says "I decided to stay with you". O.K I decided to forgive him, O.K we return home with the twins and Maria [their older daughter]. And this is where the next 'party' starts, uuuhm...the next day the babies cry, because they are newborn, I feel strange, he feels very strange because he probably interrupted his affair and there starts a very miserable situation at home, depressive maybe, very sad and very stressful and the day after I start and say "you're leaving now from here" I say "you take your misery with you and you're going now and I say to my parents that you went to Italy, we will say that you went to Italy". He goes and there starts a thing "yes, I love

you but I also love her” [the other woman], there starts a thing like that but this whole thing, how can I tell you, carries a psychological violence, I think deliberately on his part, which goes on for approximately a year.

Elsewhere in her narrative Frosso has narrated how important she thinks the period of maternity and deliverance is for a woman and that his indifference during these periods is something she will never forgive. It is within this emotional tension that Frosso narrates her husband's shifts in and out of their marriage as the response he employed towards Frosso's resistance to comply with his emotional abuse. In the beginning of this extract Frosso's words sound bare from emotion as she narrates his decision to stay and her decision to forgive him. I argue that this emotional distancing from the narrated compliance implies her resistance. Then Frosso employs irony to narrate his realization of his decision to stay as he seemed unprepared to support her with the newborn babies. She uses the word *'party'* to describe the situation which later describes as miserable, depressive, sad and stressful and she also resists his behaviour by ironically narrating that the babies were crying because they were newborn. The expected and natural difficulties caused for the couple by the newborn babies' crying is something that he should have taken into consideration when he decided to stay with them and Frosso attacks his inability to meet his role's demands through irony. Then she shifts to more overt resistance by asking him to leave and although he leaves he reassures her that he loves her. Frosso narrates implied subversion of her resistance as this went on for a year. Her narrative provides another contextual factor through which both her resistance and its subversion are to be viewed: their social context which was misinformed that he was away from home for work. Therefore Frosso's resistance and its subversion are interchangeable within a context that is kept away from what is really happening and which would have to be faced if she insisted on her resistance. Elsewhere in her narrative Frosso has also narrated that they had very good times together. The emotional impact of these good times on her coupled with the

emotional burden of finding herself with two newborn babies might also provide a more problematized interpretation of her tolerance towards her husband's emotional abuse as she herself defines it.

Flora narrates the power of apologies on the part of abusive partners by providing the meaning it can have for women's self-esteem.

Flora: O.K I delivered my daughter and we had problems about her baptism again, because they [his parents] influenced him and I told him that we will do the baptism, even on the day of baptism, the baptism will take place and then the two of us are over. We're separating. And the reason, they [her parents-in-law] did not respect some things I had said, since there was no financial ability, and he considered it right to take the part of his parents. Later of course he realized that and apologized, one of the very few times he apologized.

Flora's narrative is about the tension caused between her and her husband about their daughter's baptism material context. Her narrative then has to be placed within the material context she found herself in while she was married. Her husband worked at his parents' shop and the two families were co-dependent with her husband's parents being in charge of the finances. Flora did not work and had no involvement in the family business either. This financial scheme resulted in Flora's parents'-in-law involvement in the couple's life especially when their choices and decisions involved money. As the financial matters of her daughter's baptism were controlled by her parents-in-law and as she had been distanced from this negotiation she expected her husband to support her material choices about her daughter's baptism. Her husband complied with his parents' restrictions and therefore ignored Frosso's preferences. It seems that the power exerted over her husband by his parents on the grounds of financial dependency is transferred to Flora on more complex grounds of abuse exerted over her by her husband. Frosso overtly resisted this cancellation of her requirements and her husband's decision to take the part of his parents

instead of supporting her to them. She accepted the baptism to take place under the circumstances her parents-in-law had decided but told her husband that after the baptism they will separate, thus manifesting her resistance towards his indifference to respect her choices as they had agreed. It was her respect that was wounded the most by her husband's compliance with his parents and it was her respect again that was regained by his apology, especially since he did not apologize often. Flora provides a meaning of apology on the part of her husband for his abuse which is related to her self-esteem: she narrates that first he realized she was right and then he apologized, thus affirming her resistance. Resistance is though subverted by his apology because as he does not apologize often he has conveyed the meaning that his apology is important and therefore the respect towards the person he apologizes is affirmed.

Respect as an issue influencing their relationship returns later in Flora's narrative when she discusses with her husband her decision to be involved in their children's school parents committee:

Flora: When we went for a coffee and I told him that I intend to do this and that, he responded in an awful manner, I got very angry because he insulted me, he underestimated me very much, he turned and said to me "who do you think you are? Who do you think" he says "you are and you'll manage with the Municipality?" I say "Why do you say that? I know some people". He says "you have a big idea about yourself". This is where I got very angry but I also got stubborn and I say to him "I will prove to you that you are wrong and I am right". And indeed I succeeded in this case, I felt very proud and I told him and what was his answer? "I knew that" he says, "I trust you". Exactly like that, in this style "because if I didn't trust your abilities I would send you neither to the banks, nor to the public services, nor anywhere".

Flora narrates feeling insulted by her husband's attempt to restrict her to the domestic sphere by undermining her ability to manage school cases. Flora resisted his abuse by insisting on her decision to be occupied with the school committee. When she announced her husband that she actually managed what she had undertaken he shifts from insults to praises for her abilities. His response surprises her and some anger is also evident when she asks rhetorically what his answer was about her success. Flora then comments on his words and style about trusting her, with which he erases his earlier insults and validates her abilities. Although Flora does not narrate how she came to depart from her initial resistance, both her surprise and anger about her husband's response imply that she did not expect it and also that it subverted her resistance since there was nothing for her to resist anymore. Her husband had finally validated her. Through a more challenging listening of this narrative, her husband had entrapped her by appealing to one of her most cherished values (Herman, 1997), her competence in the public sphere.

Sometimes apologies are silent but they still have an impact on women's attempts to resist abuse by dislocating the reason why they initiated resistance:

Flora: Yes in September he had that accident at work, three days earlier we had a fight again, the fight was the same, that is that our life has changed, that it is because of the shop and this is where I had reacted, and I say that "you should stop saying that because we took the decision to do it together and a shop requires sacrifices and we have to sacrifice things and finally what is it that we previously had in our lives and we don't anymore?" I didn't step back, I told him that "I don't forgive you" because the kids were in the room and they were hearing the fight again, as soon as I had closed the shop and had returned home. And two days later, I was redecorating the shop window, he had realized

*again he was wrong and he started approaching me
again with gifts.*

Flora was 'fighting' with her husband because he did not want her to have a professional occupation as he thought this keeps her away from her family. Flora's husband disguises his controlling behaviour to restrict her within the domestic sphere by arguing that her occupation ruins their family life. He therefore makes an appeal to the pride derived for most women from their capacity to sustain relationships (Herman, 1997). After several 'fights' Flora resists by reminding him that they took the decision together, therefore attributing his share of responsibility. Then she draws from 'business language' to argue that business requires sacrifices. And finally, she attacks their imagined ideal marriage life by inviting her husband to wonder what it is they had before that they have now lost because of her business. As Flora has employed arguments to resist his abuse and as she insists on her resistance her husband shifts to 'approaching strategies' in order to make his wife reachable again. Flora does not narrate that his gifts actually subverted her resistance. A few lines later she initiates the story of her husband's accident which occurred after this 'fight' and became another arena for them. She stayed with him because he had this accident and not because of his presents and therefore her resistance is subverted by the cultural expectations for her to meet her role as a caring wife for her hurt husband.

A slight differentiation of the 'apologizing strategy' employed by abusive husbands to undermine women's resistance is that of apparently complying with it. In the following narrative extract Maria provides a 'narrative of triumph' (Fraser, 2003) over her husband for his affair:

*Maria: And I called him and said "you tell your
bitch that I have given her no right and tell her not
to say anything again because I don't know what
mess I will cause". "But" [her husband said]...
"listen to what I say!" I said. "Did you get that?"
And I don't remember what else I told him. And he*

comes back home after an hour and I was sitting at the balcony. He comes aggressively and says "what was all that about?" "About what I told you" I said. "Didn't you get that?" I said. "Tell your bitch" I say "that I haven't given her any right but never talk to me again" I say "because I don't know what will take place". And he stood there like that. He didn't even say a word. I mean like he admitted that. Like he admitted that.

After Maria has narrated several episodes of abuse she initiates a story of triumph over her husband through which she regains power within their relationship. She renders her husband aware that she has found out about his affair and that she has contacted his girlfriend. The power she narrates she tried to gain over the other woman is a way of proving her husband that she is in charge of the situation. Within her narrative Maria does not resist her husband's abuse through his affair but rather tries to affirm her subjectivity as his wife who is reluctant to be bothered by his affairs. Maria employs a strict tone when manifesting her power over the other woman to her husband and when he returns home she resists his aggression by repeating the same words. Her insistence on her resistance is what she narrates made her husband astonished and she interpreted his silence as an admission on his part that he was wrong. Through her interpretation Maria's suspicions that her husband has an affair as well as her initiative to manage the situation are validated. As Maria's husband remained silent towards her verbal confrontation with him he provides space for several interpretations of his response. Although his silence might seem as compliance when contextualized within their relationship it could also be a strategy of avoidance to be involved in a 'fight' and still go on with his abuse. However, as he remains silent at that moment and as Maria interprets that as a victory they can return to their habitual interactions and Maria has nothing to resist anymore.

Ignorance can be an abusive husband's reaction to a woman's verbal resistance in a more evident way:

Korina: Uuuhm...he...when something occurred and I told him 'it's your fault', he was getting angry and was taking his things and was leaving. He was leaving for a week, he was going to his mother. After a week, another time, he was going to one of his friends. Same thing every time. I was saying "You know something?" I say "I will leave, it will be once that I'll leave and I won't come back". But of course he wasn't paying any attention because he was thinking that he has done everything he wants. Whatever he wanted he did it.

Korina narrates her husband's avoidance strategy when she was verbally confronting him. As the avoidance he was employing did not lead to any result Korina reaffirms her subjectivity by announcing him that if she leaves it will be once for good but her husband does not react to this warning either. Korina attempts to make meaning out of his indifference by interpreting it. According to Korina her husband was ignorant towards her verbal resistance because his power was not threatened by her words. Therefore, the meaning of his ignorance is not that of compliance but rather one of further abuse as he does not even pay attention to her words.

In a temporal order it becomes worth interrogating the fact that as Flora's narrative unfolds she narrates how her husband's reactions towards her attempts to resist shifted from apologies and approaching strategies to further abuse:

Flora: And he says, "very well, we'll divorce, we'll sell everything and that's over, we'll share everything and that's it!" And then I got angry and I say "what are you going to sell?" He says "the lorry, the shop, everything" "Who are you deciding for?" And I mean that moment it was like somebody else entered my body and I got angry because he took the initiative and the decision all alone. And I say "are you deciding for me?" He says "Yes, this

is how we'll do it" I say "you're wrong. I'm not selling the business" He says "and what are you going to do?" I say "I will change the business address". This is where I killed him! And then it became a mess. He got out of the room, I went on crying, crying, I couldn't, he tried to approach me. The situation was getting worse.

This is one of the last 'fights' before they finally separated and it has by now become evident that her husband's reactions to her resistance have shifted from apologies to further abuse. As Flora negotiates divorce with her husband he attempts to retain authority over her and the relationship by material means. Flora's business runs at her husband's building and he now threatens Flora's financial independence by deciding to sell it. As her business is what supported her materially to definitely decide to separate with her husband Flora becomes frustrated and reclaims her right to decide for herself. Although her husband further threatens her by trying to make her feel weak without his financial support Flora sounds prepared for this by announcing that she will keep the business and just change its address so that she will not use his property anymore. At this point in her narrative her emotional distancing is met with her financial independence, both strengthening her decision to leave and her resources to realize it.

Later Flora returns to her business as the site of 'fights' with her husband who now reacts to her resistance with further abuse:

Flora: And he comes by the shop one morning and suddenly, without any reason, because he started nagging about the shop again without reason and I say "please, if you intend to go on nagging get out of the shop". He says "where are you throwing me out from?" because the property is his. I say "this might be your property but the business is mine and I don't want" I say to him "you to come over every now and then and cause me problems and make me cry because people come in and I don't want people

to see me like that. This is a business area". And there was the first threat that... "What do you want now? Do you want me to shut your shop down in the middle of the Christmas period and not work at all?" And I say "don't you threaten me and don't you dare do such thing to me". I had though already started visiting a child psychologist and I had started visiting the [women's support services]. His next threat was "what do you want now? Throw you down and start stepping on you?" And I say to him pointing my finger at him "don't you even think of even touching my hair", I say "I will fold you in a piece of paper and take you to the public prosecutor!" And I take my purse and go, I leave him at the shop I go to the banks, I had some payments to make and I return after forty five minutes. Like nothing had gone on. A different person. I say "sorry, did you realize what you told me before?" "Come on now" he says "I said a word while I was angry". I mean I had gone crazy from his change. I say "sorry, it wasn't just a simple word, it was a serious word" and I have told him, I say to him that "the tongue has no bones but it breaks bones" I say. "You threatened me." He says "come on poor you, it's all right, we didn't say anything".

This narrative highlights how abuse escalates when Flora tries to regain her subjectivity and insist on her resistance. When her husband realizes that Flora is determined to keep her business running and as he estimates her business to be a threat for his authority because it strengthens her financial independence and self-esteem he shifts to threats. First he threatens what supports her resistance, that is her business and then he generalizes his threats towards her physical integrity. His initial threat caused anger which further reinforced Flora's

resistance. When he threatens her with physical violence he attempts to cause fear. Flora makes a parenthesis in her narrative to explain where she found the strength to resist fear as well by saying that she had already started visiting women's support services. This is how she resists his threats and escapes from this 'fight'. However, when she returns she is faced with a totally different person who tried to deflect responsibility for his behaviour like he did in he past.

It is interesting how Flora relates in her narrative her financial independence with their sexual life as sites of 'fights' and resistance on her part. She continues her narrative from the last episode she has narrated:

Flora: But the final countdown started then. It was like he realized we were going to divorce, maybe he was also seeing my behaviour, he started saying crazy things, although I returned to bed we had no sexual contact and one day I had closed my shop during the afternoon and I was about to go take my daughter from her English class, as I am dressed and all made up he wants to approach me in an aggressive way and kiss me. Meanwhile because his beard is harsh and my skin is sensitive, it blemishes and things like that, I say...when he approached me I say "please, don't do it, because I'm going to take the girl from English class". Do you know what he said? He says "why? Are you going to be picked up?" He didn't say "you're going for 'kamaki'" [Greek slang for flirting] or "you're going out flirting". "You're going to be picked up?" When he said that I went mad. I say "what did you say?" And he repeats exactly the same. He says "are you going to be picked up?" I got so angry, I grabbed my purse, I left, I went to pick the kid up from the English class, I returned and after half an hour I say

to him "I want to tell you something. Did you realize what you said?"

A few lines later she narrates what followed her verbal resistance towards his verbal abuse:

Flora: He was trying to impose himself on me, he controlled my phone calls, he opened my drawer, he was inspecting my underwear, what was missing, so that he could figure out what I was wearing and he was telling me.

The episodes Flora narrates within these three succeeding extracts took place a few months before the interview when she had already been married to her husband for over eighteen years during which she narrated she had been abused in various ways and had employed several coping strategies to resist abuse. As time passes within their relationship both abuse and Flora's resistance convey different meanings and are related with sites of women's oppression instead of being related to particular issues concerning their common life. Flora's husband abuses her about her business, which has become the realization of her resistance for her and the manifestation of her will and ability to be independent. Then he abuses her about her sexuality which he aggressively demands to be expressed exclusively towards him otherwise she is blamed for an imagined infidelity. The sites of oppression imposed on her now intersect; Flora is now already distanced from her husband's abuse and able to relate the sites where abuse was taking place and attach a meaning to it. At the same time, Flora is already in contact with a support service and has initiated divorce while her husband has shifted from responding to her resistance with apologies and approach strategies to exercising further abuse on her as she has become more determined to escape. Therefore, Flora's resistance can be contextualized within her narrative in terms of duration of the relationship, escalation of abuse, material conditions and sources of support and be conceptualized as a process.

This is also evident in Anthi's narrative where she narrates the resistance strategies she had employed over the course of her marriage

and the shift in her husband's reactions towards them now that she has already left him and stays at a shelter. Within her narrative there are stories where her husband abused her for initiating employment and for imagined infidelity like Flora's husband did. In the following extract Anthi narrates how she verbally confronted him when he attempted to restrict her from working:

Anthi: And one day I was at the doctor and a lady called and asked for me, I wasn't there and she left her number to call her back and when I returned home he says "that lady called, I don't know what she wants, call her to find out". I called her, this lady wanted me to clean her house, she was preparing a celebration. And I told him and [he said] "you're not going anywhere, it's not your business to go there and who knows what you are doing there and you gather together and...screw [lowers her voice]". I say to him "Do you know this lady? How can you talk like that for her? I asked for work and she offers me work. How can you speak like that?" "You're not going anywhere and I will give you the money". I say "you're wrong, when I shouldn't work, when I was sick and shouldn't work, you threw me out and I had to go for work, I'm not going to stop working. Where were you when I needed you? You were nowhere!" He says "I was working" I say "you're wrong, you weren't working, you were here for nine months but you were nowhere, you were in a bottle of whisky". And [he said] "yeah, right, this is the only thing you always say" and "you're not going!" "I'm going!" I say "I promised and I'm going and you can do anything you want!"

In this extract Anthi threatens her husband's authority by initiating to undertake extra-domestic activity, where he will not be able

to control her and from which she will acquire some financial independence. Here again the woman's sexual activity and financial independence become the site of struggle, within which Anthi attempts to resist and her abusive husband attempts to maintain his authority.

Anthi: And he called the other day and said "you can come and take lemons and oranges I brought from the village" and I say to him "eat them on your own, let them get rotten, why are you saying it to us?" and he goes "I'm not going to talk to you like that again, I'm not going to behave to you like that again".

Anthi's verbal confrontation is now viewed through her current position of the woman who has left her abusive partner and stays at a shelter where she gets support for her and her children. It is through the same context that her husband's reaction to her resistance acquires its meaning as he has now realized that Anthi can be gone for good and employs strategies to dissuade her. As Anthi is still staying at the shelter there is no evidence that Anthi returned home because she was convinced by his promises neither the opposite. However, her current context has changed and she now has the resources to verbally confront her husband and there is a shift in their power relations as his approaching strategy implies. Anthi has gained power and her husband attempts to regain it by taking her back within his power domain.

Most of the women I interviewed narrated verbal confrontation with their abusive partners which led to further abuse.

Anthi narrates the last violent episode between her and her husband which had started as a 'fight' on her decision to work. After 'fighting' all night, this is what followed:

Anthi: He got up and said "you're taking the kids to school and you're coming back". I say "you're wrong, I'm taking the kids to school and then I'm going to work". He says "did you hear what I said?" I say "did you hear what I said? I promised and I'm going. I'm not quitting my work just

because you're here, because you want me at home all day. You don't mind me working when you're away. When you're here you want me from morning until...no!" I say "forget about it!" He started shouting "did you hear what I said, otherwise you're not going anywhere" he grabbed me from here [arm], he forced me to the wall.

The 'fight' continues having as a topic Anthi's work. Her husband forbids her to work and orders her to return home after taking the kids to school. Anthi verbally confronts him by arguing on the grounds of her professional reliability therefore avoiding opposing him openly. However, right after she affirms her decision on personal grounds by saying to him that she will not stay home because this is where he wants her to be all day. She reclaims her self-disposal and her right to work and at the same time she raises her self against her partner's order. Her confrontation '*you don't mind me working when you're away*' does not remove her husband's control of her financial activity. Rather, when contextualized within his habit to leave his family back and embark for long periods without supporting them financially, her work becomes a structural site of oppression, which she has to enter when her husband abandons her—even when she was seriously ill—and quit when her husband is back home and reclaims his authority. Anthi seems determined to oppose his order and her husband employs violence to impose his decision on her.

The same strategy is employed by Vasso's husband when she confronts him verbally on the grounds of her intellectual activity.

Vasso: As I didn't take these [his orders] easily, I couldn't accept them, but I started...answering in a provocative way, that is "I will do what I want to do, I don't consider your threats, neither this or that and I will find out what your limits are [laughs]". Therefore, he was receiving that as the ultimate dispute and he...he anyway was giving me the

'appropriate answer' [laughs] so that I could understand.

When Vasso opposed her husband verbally she was prepared to face his violent reaction as her laughing might imply. He did become violent because according to Vasso his authority was disputed. Vasso narrates that independent thinking was not allowed for her and as happened with Anthi's working activities, both their attempts to escape their husbands' authority led to violence. Vasso narrates his violent reaction to her verbal resistance as the *'appropriate answer'* employing slight irony towards its appropriateness and resists it through laughing.

Korina narrates further abuse employed by her husband when she verbally expressed her emotional distancing caused by his affairs and reclaimed her right to express her feelings:

Korina: And...he didn't like him. Of course, I explained to him that "you know something? If you don't like it, leave, I don't mind. I'm...I'm not crazy about it but what I can I say? This is me. And there's nothing I am to be blamed for...that I have to apologize for. It's something you have done and things have turned out the way they have". And generally since then he had started getting angry easily...and gradually he was violent...many times.

Korina's husband became violent when she verbally defended her right not to feel emotionally attached to him after finding out about his affairs. It seems that women's feelings can become another site of abusive men's control as it is often through relying on women's feelings that they exert their abuse. Korina shifted blame from herself to him about this emotional distancing, thus further reinforcing her right to be emotionally distanced. When Korina threatened this taken-for-granted emotional attachment to her husband he became violent not to reclaim her feelings but rather to re-establish his control through her feelings.

Olga narrates further abuse when she verbally resisted his ignorance towards her and his reluctance to change regardless of his promises:

Olga: Forty days after baby's birth, we had arranged for his cousin to visit us together with her children and her husband, to pay me a visit...uuhm...he says "well, I'll come back early from work", he comes back from work and says "until my cousin comes I'm going out to have a beer". "Kostas, they're your relatives you know, why should I care? And you know of course that I need help with the baby, I mean keeping the baby and having your cousin here as well, something might happen...you stay here to...stay just even to open the door, I mean I don't know, I'm getting crazy all alone here, alone when I was pregnant, alone when I delivered the baby, you have done five episodes, you say you won't do them again and now you can't be brought to reason not even for your own relatives? So why did you arrange it then?" And there comes the mess, we broke everything in the house, he took the baby from my arms...

Olga's verbal resistance to her husband's ignorance towards a certain occasion of having relatives visiting them is contextualized within her narrative as a verbal resistance to his general abuse. Olga begins by opposing her husband's reluctance to help her with the visitors as she now has the baby to care for as well but as her narrative unfolds she constructs a verbal resistance towards all his abusive behaviour at her life's crucial moments. Then she returns to the particular episode of their relatives' visit to attribute him the responsibility for arranging the visit while she recalls his promise to change. It seems that attributing responsibility to her husband is what leads to a violent episode as his reliability has now been attacked and he needs to regain his authority. Olga's resistance takes place during a period in her life when she had just given birth and had spent all of her time at home alone with the baby. The baby itself restricts her ability to seek for resources outside home where she could seek support as she has to take care of it. Therefore, her

resistance is not informed by a positive change of her resources but rather the opposite and therefore it is initiated towards sharing responsibility with her husband for what she experiences alone. Her verbal opposition is not instrumented towards causing a definitive rupture with her husband but rather as an attempt to bring him to reason. As the circumstances that exist while she initiates this opposition are obstructing a possible escape for her, Olga's husband is not threatened by a possible escape and therefore he employs abuse to restore his authority and refuses responsibility for taking care of her and their baby, thus attributing to her the role of baby's nurturer as an expected role.

Further abuse when women resist openly might take several forms. Dimitra narrates how her husband involved her parents in order to argue that she is wrong to be influenced by them to attack him:

Dimitra: He had installed 'bugs' in the house because he wanted to control what I was saying to my relatives. And he told me afterwards. I told him that "what you did was cheap!" "I know" he says "but you were blaming me". I say "I wasn't blaming you I was telling everything you did to me because I couldn't keep it inside, I wanted to tell them to somebody". And he started about my relatives then and "advise...your advisors"...they didn't advice me to divorce but, O.K, these people...they were saying probably "if you suffer and you can't take it anymore, it's better to end it than having the kids listening to your fights. A separation is better than this mess".

Dimitra resists her husband's initiative to control what she was saying on the phone by installing 'bugs'. When she resisted his restriction of her movement and trespass of her privacy, he attributes blame to her for blaming him to her relatives. Dimitra shifts her resistance towards his argument and departs from her initial resistance towards his illegal action to monitor her calls. She assures him that she was not blaming him but rather that she was sharing her problems with

people because she needed to talk. Her abusive husband was threatened by her seeking support from others and tries to argue for the inappropriateness of sharing their privacy with others by attributing blame to them for advising her to leave him. Now Dimitra is distanced from her initial resistance and rather argues in favour of her relatives which her husband blames. Within this narrative Dimitra's husband has taken control of her resistance by shifting both subject and blame and Dimitra has moved from resisting his abuse to arguing for her relatives.

Her husband shifts blame for their marital problems from his abuse to her relatives' intervention, thus subverting her resistance towards his abuse and putting her in the position to apologize. What differentiates Dimitra's attempts to resist from these of the other women I interviewed is her strong commitment and love towards her husband which she often narrated and to which she often resorted after an abusive episode. Based on these grounds, her husband's strategies to subvert her resistance every time she attempted it were informed by her manifested feelings towards him. However, I argue that regardless of the love women might feel within an abusive relationship they do express open resistance though in certain ways in a context of complex engendered dynamics (Wilcox, 2006) and that this resistance can be reinforced and can lead to separation even when feelings of love are present. This is a process informed by both common and unique circumstances for each woman. Dimitra did finally leave even if her husband was the one to initiate divorce:

Dimitra: He calls and says "I will come back to talk about the divorce." "All right" I say "I can't take it anymore either" I had anyway decided that.

Regardless of her feelings Dimitra accepted her husband's initiative to divorce and further resists that it was actually his initiative by saying that she had actually decided that. In this way she implies both the process and the time that might mediate between resistance and escape from the relationship. Within this process and during this time I argue that there are several occasions when women do resist in several forms.

Further abuse might also aim at women's self esteem thus trapping them further in the abusive relationship after their initiative to resist has been manifested:

Stella: He was coming in, I was pulling a long face, I was never smiling at him. This was making him mad. I was always saying no for sex, "no, I don't want to!" I was closing the door. This was making him mad. He wanted to have authority on me. He wanted to dominate what I am. But he was using it as propaganda. I mean he was saying "I will teach you how to live in this society, I will teach you manners". He never taught me manners. "I will help you find a nice guy to settle yourself down". I mean he was also using this tale. And I believed him! One thing that the last years, a few years ago I told my gynecologist and he just started laughing and I felt extremely offended and sad, that for many years he was saying to me that if a man is erected he will die if he's not satisfied. I mean I had to satisfy him so that he wouldn't die.

Stella begins by narrating subtle resistance towards her abuser. When it comes to sexual intercourse she resists him verbally and she repeats twice that this was making him mad, probably implying abuse. She attempts to attach meaning to his further abuse through interpreting his behaviour as his need for authority and domination. And from there she starts narrating how her resistance was subverted by his abusive strategies towards her self-esteem. He would teach her manners, implying that she had not and he would find a nice guy for her implying that she could not and at the same time manifesting the temporality of their relationship. Her last narrative lines highlight how her abuser subverted her resistance by resorting to threats for his health if she resisted sexual contact with him. Stella's narrative has to be contextualized within her life-framework consisting of structural factors that restricted her from further resistance. It is interesting that Stella

provided a very long narrative at the beginning about how difficult her childhood as a girl was at home not only in financial terms but also as a girl who was constantly lowered by her uneducated parents and who always had to serve her family and respect her father's dominance. She has narrated how both her selfhood and gender were erased within her home and how she had to escape from home. She went to live with her grandparents away at a distanced island where a distant relative met her and started harassing her and then sexually abusing her. However, her abuser was a respected man with authority at this island and her grandparents always comforted him at their home. He had obliged Stella to keep what was happening between them secret. Within this context, Stella's attempts to resist are viewed as requiring even more courage as she had no financial and emotional support and as this abuse was taking place within a cultural context that would blame her. Moreover, her low self-esteem has prepared her to accept her abuser's offences and blackmailing without questioning them as her cultural context had not provided her with the ability to do so. Stella did resist though, as she pursued both job and studies for herself and started seeing a therapist. This is how she has come now to attach meaning to her abuser's dominance and resist her compliance then.

I have tried to highlight that women's verbal resistance, the most overt form of resistance, as they come face to face with their abusers does happen but is neither a straightforward nor a unified process. I also argued that although open resistance is what culturally counts as resistance on the part of women who have experienced abuse by their male partners, it does not necessarily lead to reducing abuse or interruption of the relationship. Instead, any attempt to resist and any unsuccessful result needs to be contextualized in terms of material and personal resources and needs to be interrogated for leading to escalation of violence. Further, I argued that women's resistance can be subverted by their abusers as they use apologies, promises, threats and further abuse to achieve that.

6.2 Seeking support/going public

All of the women I interviewed sought support or went public and disclosed the abuse they were experiencing within their relationship with a male partner at some point. Going public and/or seeking support for the abuse has been researched before as a coping strategy (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001; Kirkwood, 1993; Wilcox, 2006). Here I will try to explore what the context of such an active resistance was for women as well as the effectiveness of such an act in terms of responses from the social context where women sought help and in terms of altering the relationship with the abusive husband.

Compatible with previous research on help-seeking (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Wilcox, 2006) the women I interviewed sought help and disclosed abuse to people close to them after suffering abuse for various periods. In addition, women's help-seeking was not a straightforward act but rather a process which included interchange of acts of open and subtle resistance as well as different levels of determination on the part of women to change the situation. Seeking support also involved both informal networks and formal agencies and differs in terms of the abusive partner's awareness that their wives/partners actually seek support. I will try to explore these women's help seeking actions by first assuming that they denote resistance to the abuse they suffered as help-seeking signals an escape from the relationship and conscious decision to change the situation. Towards exploring these acts of resistance I will locate them within the situational, personal/cultural and structural circumstances within which women initiated them (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001).

I argue that although there are commonalities amongst women's help-seeking strategies, the unique context within which women initiate them calls for exploration of differences as well. Therefore, I do not intend to classify or generalize about help-seeking strategies but rather reveal through women's narratives the unique ways through which women initiate such resistance.

For analytical reasons I divide women's help-seeking strategies into those that were addressed to parents, others which were addressed to psychologists and therapists and those which involved formal agencies.

When women sought support from their parents, they did that during mainly two phases of assessment of the situation and related determination to change the situation. When women found abuse unbearable and wanted to talk to someone they did not aim at escaping from abuse and/or the relationship with their abuse. During that phase women contacted parents and/or friends without actually asking for help but rather just disclosing abuse. When women disclosed abuse to their parents they were sometimes faced with cultural commands to keep the marriage going:

Korina: Then I had talked to my parents, but my parents due to fear, because they live in a 'closed' community, they didn't want it to be heard that their daughter is divorced and generally because there was the kid, she says "no, you're staying with him", the same evening she told me that. And I stayed with him.

Korina turned to her parents for support. From her mother's response we are informed that she asked her parents to stay with them. However, her mother ordered her to stay with her husband and Korina attempts an interpretation of her mother's unwillingness to help her on the grounds of cultural obstacles towards leaving her marriage. Korina narrates the cultural scripts of staying in an abusive marriage because otherwise failure would be attributed to her and her parents and the highly respected values of honor and dignity pursued through marriage in Greece would be threatened (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). Contextualizing Korina's narrative extract within its structural circumstances where Korina had quit her job and her parents had provided no financial support to her during her life, her parents' reluctance to help her can be interpreted in financial terms as well. Elsewhere, Korina has narrated that her husband, apart from being abusive, was a hard-working man who was supplying everything for her

and their baby. On these grounds, a possible break of their marriage would mean that she would pose a financial burden on her parents if she moved with them. It is not uncommon in Greece for parents to consider raising a daughter as a financial burden and her marriage as a financial relief since another man, her husband, will undertake her living costs, especially in cases where these women have not acquired a stable and well-paid job. At the same time, Korina had to consider the cultural implications of leaving her husband while they had a baby together, as it is considered wiser for the couple to stay together for the child's sake (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001).

Korina returned to her parents to ask for help after having sought temporal support from a friend:

Korina: After the last time I run to my friend's sister, she accommodated me that night at her place and she gave me money and in the morning I went straight to my mother where I stayed for two-two and a half weeks. But unfortunately, I didn't go to a usual, normal environment, I went to an environment that wanted to send me back to my husband and it was this... they were not mumbling over me all the time but "oh! Did you see what he did? He went and bought you flowers" for example and "did you see what he did? He went and bought you clothes". And that I should try and they finally managed, they convinced me to return to him because he had made some efforts. Of course things became the same again.

It seems that Korina was determined to leave her husband this time as she first sought for urgent help from a friend but then she did not return home. She decided to go back to her parents for a more permanent accommodation. The fact that she did not stay at her friend longer and that although she was aware that her parents were against her leaving home she did go there provides implications for the cultural context within which a woman seeks for resources to leave her abusive husband. Regardless of her friend's willingness to help Korina turned to her

parents as it is culturally expected for a woman to leave home when she gets married and return to her parents' home if the marriage breaks up. This cultural expectation implies first that the woman belongs to a household which ensures maintenance of her dignity under the authority of either her father or her husband. Then, it also implies that the woman, especially as she is not financially independent, is sustained by either her father or her husband and therefore her choice to change households as well as the obstacles she faces in doing so involve cultural and financial considerations. This becomes evident in Korina's narrative through her parents' attempts to convince her to return to her husband by arguing that he makes noble efforts to show her his feelings by means which also imply that her husband is willing to spend money for her. This argument is further sustained by the expectation that she would try harder for her marriage, as 'emotional work' (Cavanagh, 2003) is a woman's job in marriage.

Frosso narrates a similar episode when she delivered her twin daughters while she was distanced with her husband:

Frosso: When the twins were born, my parents started putting a pressure on me to make up with him and I have a dad, who is very traditional, a man of 'nuclear family' and...totally 'pater familias' who called me and said "my daughter, you are a woman!" and this stroke me, it was a 'diiin' [sound of bell] I mean at the time of 'my daughter, you are a woman!' I stood up and started shouting that "do you want me to be like I am now, or do you want to see me in a psychiatric clinic in two years, accept him back and not standing seeing him, waking up in the morning and vomiting?" This is where my father realized that there is...not a chance, that we won't make up.

When Frosso gave birth to her twin daughters the context of her separation with her husband changed for her parents. Instead of providing support they tried to convince her that they should now make

up. The time they chose to do so coincides with the birth of her daughters therefore it can be viewed as her parents' effort to keep them together for the children's and family's sake. The argument her father chose to underline the righteousness of his admonition is drawn from the cultural norms constructed for women. '*My daughter, you are a woman!*' utterance encapsulates the expected roles for women when they enter the marriage context. The concept 'woman' as used in this utterance consists of prescribed roles and obligations which realize it and identify with compliance of rights and satisfaction of cultural expectations. Now that Frosso had become a mother again, separation from her husband was to be viewed as a 'bad moment' in her marriage which had to be restored by her wisdom to act like a woman: hard-working as a wife and nurturing for her children. Frosso then maintains resistance towards her husband's abuse and at the same time initiates resistance towards her parents. In order for her resistance though to be successful she had to employ a depiction of her becoming a crazy woman as she says to her parents she would become if she stayed with her husband. At the realization of such a dramatic possibility her parents stop trying to convince her to return to her husband and as Frosso later narrates they gradually became supportive towards her. However, their support was something that Frosso had fought for through resisting.

In the following narrative Dimitra regrets having involved her parents in her relationship with her husband because they insisted on her staying in the marriage. Dimitra had initiated sharing their common money because she felt insecure for her children's well-being. After she told him he blamed her but Dimitra insisted and so her husband turned to her parents for support because he had found it there before when they were 'fighting' for his affair. It was then that her husband had told her that whenever their bridesmaid was to come home Dimitra should leave home. She narrates how her parents subverted her resistance towards such an arrangement:

Dimitra: Because when that was going on with Gianna [the bridesmaid] I called my parents because I couldn't come to reason with him. "Listen

what he says to me, I mean leaving home, do you find it normal?" And what my parents were saying was "It doesn't matter, let her come home. And apologize to him once". They were forcing me to apologize. But he was the one who did...was I the one who should apologize? I couldn't apologize for that. But my parents were saying "stay there" so that we don't divorce.

Dimitra sought support to resist her husband's weird arrangement according to which she should leave home whenever the bridesmaid was visiting them on the grounds of their professional cooperation. As Dimitra sought support for her resistance from those who according to her were the most available to provide it, she found instead their affirmation of her husband's proposed arrangement. Her subjective reality was blurred as she was told that what her husband asks for might be something she could agree with. In terms of resources in case of Dimitra's insistence on her resistance, that would mean that Dimitra would find neither the place to stay nor the emotional support for her decision to resist him and leave. It becomes clear that their effort to 'keep her in marriage' even if it did not distort her view obstructed her definitive resistance and presented further dilemmas for her (Cavanagh, 2003).

Consistent with parents' attempts to keep the abusive marriage going when their daughters ask for their support is their disclosure that they had realized that abuse was taking place in their daughter's marriage. However, they would not discuss it until their daughter asked for their help implying that at least initially they considered maintenance of marriage more important than their daughter's well-being:

Flora: When my father died we had another fight and I remember it was the night of Resurrection and there became a mess. He broke the table, the window of the kitchen table, he threw the candle, many such things. I had then talked to my family of course and my family had talked to him as well and

this is where I mention the fights of our first years of marriage for the first time. And my mother told me that my dad had understood some things.

It was after a 'fight' that Flora finally talked to her mother and brother about her husband's abuse as her father had died by then. Her family talked to him but according to her narrative his husband's abuse went on. Therefore, although disclosing abuse to her family might temporarily restrict the man's abuse since it became known and in a way controlled by their social context, the fact that it resumed after a while might be viewed as a failure of the woman's family to provide actual support by limiting involvement to attempts to bring the abusive husband to reason while the marriage is not threatened.

Similarly, only after Dimitra has left her home and is accommodated at her parents' home her mother discloses that she had noticed that something was going wrong in her daughter's marriage:

Dimitra: The only thing I wanted was to return to my parents' place, not our place, so that I could feel safe and I could sleep. This is what I was only missing, sleep. And having my mother taking care of the children so that I could get some rest. So, I told them everything, and my mother then told me that she had been suspecting something and had seen something and hadn't told me.

Dimitra narrates resisting her husband's abuse through seeking safety and comfort for herself at her parents' home. She does not narrate that she is determined to leave her husband, however she provides information about a woman's need –even temporal- for safety and comfort while she is experiencing an abusive relationship. When Dimitra told her mother everything, her mother confessed that she had understood that something was going wrong in her daughter's marriage. Dimitra does not narrate whether she got angry by her mother's reluctance to initiate a discussion with her daughter about suspicions of abuse and therefore to provide space for Dimitra to disclose it. However, when Dimitra told her parents about abuse they did provide her with the

safety and comfort she needed and her mother's confession might have provided relief for Dimitra who would not have to face the difficulty of defining the abuse they were experiencing to her parents against public definitions of abuse (Campbell et al., 1998) as they already knew.

Parents might also refrain from initiating a discussion with their daughter for suspected abuse on the grounds of respecting the privacy of the married couple. Within the Greek culture, the parents of the married couple are considered to be very close to the couple (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001) to the extent that parents are often culturally blamed for being too involved in the married couple's life. At the other extreme then, some parents are kept distanced from the couple even when there are signs of abuse justifying their reluctance as discretion. Olga's narrative about her mother's reluctance to initiate a discussion with her although she had recognized signs of abuse interrogates the assumption that such reluctance is justified by discretion:

Olga: First, I told my mother "Look" I say, my mother realized my psychological condition but she did not know that he was pointing knives at me and such things, she knew everything, apart from the fact that he was threatening me with knives, I wasn't telling them because I thought I shouldn't scare them, foolish of me but O.K [Me: O.K you were managing this way]. Olga: Yes, I thought this was what I should do. I told her "This and that, mother, I'm determined to divorce" she says "that's what you should do, I didn't want to tell you" she says "I didn't want to influence you, we should talk to your father, who is stronger than me, who will help you legally as well, so that you don't leave home just like that because I'm afraid of Kostas" she says "he's not a civilized man and you don't know how he might react, O.K?"

First of all Olga narrates that her mother's reluctance to talk to her about possible abuse was informed by her mother's unawareness that

Olga's husband had become dangerously violent. Olga regrets having protected her parents –and at the same time protecting her husband from disclosure- from the reality of his violence. After I validated her silence towards her husband's violence, she reaffirmed her decision as being right at that moment. After Olga disclosed to her mother her determinacy to escape from her husband's violence through divorce her mother validated her decision and at the same time initiated a narrative which provides some alternative interpretations of her silence towards acknowledging her daughter was abused. The utterance '*I didn't want to influence you*' encapsulates the cultural tendency for parents to keep themselves away from the married couple's problems. However, as her narrative towards her daughter's disclosure unfolds, Olga's mother refers to her husband –Olga's father- whom they should inform before proceeding, leaving space for interpreting her prior reluctance as a strategy to protect Olga's marriage from her father's possible active intervention. Now that Olga is determined though, her mother involves Olga's father again as the one they should consult about how to manage the situation. And finally, Olga's mother confesses that she is afraid of Kostas's reactions as possibly violent and thus she incorporates fear of escalation of violence as an obstacle to bring violence forth to discussion.

However, Olga later narrates that she returned home and took no initiative to talk to her husband about divorcing. Later, she provides a narrative which can be scrutinized for possible interpretations of her earlier reluctance to leave home. She turns to her mother after having disclosed abuse to the mother of a man she was flirting with, who advised her to leave her husband:

Olga: Anyway, then I had this discussion with his mother [the mother of the man she was flirting with] and I return home and say to my mother "That's it! I'm calling dad, that's it!" I say "I had that discussion with his mother and I don't know what happened to me" I say "I don't know what awakening was that inside me, since I have decided

that and since I'm telling you too and won't let you talk to dad, that's it, we'll arrange everything today, no more" I say "either you take me out of here dead or you take me to [psychiatric clinic] or my baby will die, I don't know" I say "what will happen, save me!". Then for the first time I actually asked for help.

Although Olga had talked to her mother about her marital problems she continued living with her abusive husband. It was not until a strong emotional incitement empowered her that she decided to 'go public' and talk to her father about her decision. Olga narrates saying to her mother that she talks to her but will not let her talk to her father. Now that she decided to speak to her father there is a shift in her help-seeking aim from just talking to somebody (her mother) to doing something by talking to her father. It becomes evident that as the father personalizes authority in the family an abused woman's decision to talk to her father signals her conscious intention to commit herself to changing the situation by making her father aware. As she continues narrating she enacts the narrative she provided her mother and tries to convince her mother –and probably herself- that things have to be arranged immediately otherwise she would either go crazy or dead or her baby would die. By narrating possibilities to happen if she stays in the abusive relationship in such a dramatic way, she asks for help in a dramatic way so the chances to be refused are scarce and at the same time she becomes a dramatic heroin who has to change her destiny and be saved.

Eleni narrates having talked to her mother about her husband's abuse and provides a narrative which articulates some of the reasons why she had not sought help from her father:

Eleni: We went together [with his husband] to Athens and my mom told me "now you will say everything so it comes to an end, your father and brother will know". And we reached a point where she told, she told me "tell us Eleni, why is Yiorgos beating you?" I said the reason, of course I was

*afraid of him then, very much, my father went mad
then, he didn't know what to do, my brother left.*

Eleni's mother initiated disclosing her daughter's abuse to Eleni's father and brother in front of Eleni's husband. After having assured that the men of the family were present she could initiate a negotiation with Eleni's husband without having to be afraid. Eleni's husband could not be violent in front of two other men and therefore the context of this discussion was carefully chosen by Eleni's mother. Eleni discloses her husband's violence which turns her father mad, though she does not provide information about what her father actually said or did. Her brother left and as no confrontation is narrated between her father and her husband this episode of disclosure just made Eleni's husband aware that his actions had become known. Any other effectiveness on Eleni's abuse had left like her brother did. However, this episode highlights another aspect of disclosure. Eleni had disclosed abuse to her mother though she knew that her mother was 'weak' to provoke any change. However, it was her mother knowing about abuse that initiated further disclosure and made Eleni's husband aware that his abuse had become known.

Sometimes women turn to their informal context to disclose abuse without having articulated what exactly it is they are looking for. Instead of interpreting this behaviour as mere ambivalence on the part of women, it has to be contextualized within the Greek cultural context where just talking to somebody for a personal problem provides relief and possibly some space for women to reflect on their experience through 'sharing their pain' (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). Regardless of the fact that when women just seek for understanding of their experience and do not pursue change of the situation, their initiative to disclose abuse is an act of resistance, since women depart from the 'privacy of the marriage' and attempt to attribute their husbands their negative characteristics instead of protecting their husband's dignity by being silent.

Flora provides a narrative about talking to her brother on the phone about her husband and having to hang up when he appeared:

Flora: By that time I had close contacts with my mother and my brother and we were discussing all the time because things were happening all the time. While I was on the phone with my brother that afternoon my husband was coming so I say to my brother "I have to hang up because he [her husband] is coming".

When Flora narrates that she was talking on the phone with her brother about her husband because *'things were happening all the time'* she narrates having disclosed her husband's abuse to her mother and father. As she employs a continuous tense (*'we were discussing all the time'*) she provides a habitual narrative of disclosure which did not lead to any change in her marriage or her husband's behaviour. We are rather led to understand that her husband was unaware of these discussions and that Flora was very careful about her husband not finding out she had *'betrayed'* their privacy. Her narrative illustrates that a woman may disclose abuse without altering her situation, however employing discussions on the subject with those she has made aware of the situation can act as a relief and can also construct her safe side-place where she could turn when the situation becomes unbearable with the abusive partner.

Dimitra narrates having constructed an informal network which was aware of her abuse and was constantly informed about developments:

Dimitra: Anyway, I was telling things to my aunt, everything he did to me, I was calling my mother and my aunt and was saying everything on the phone.

When her husband found out she was disclosing their interactions Dimitra defended her self by saying *'I wasn't blaming you, I was saying everything you did to me because I couldn't keep it inside, I wanted to tell someone'*. Her utterance *'I wasn't blaming you'* restores her husband's authority and talks within the patriarchal context which dictates keeping the *'master of the household'* intact. Then, Dimitra

admits she was disclosing his abuse though in a neutral way, that is not to blame him but rather share the pain he was causing her. Dimitra reassures her husband that while talking about him with relatives she respects his authority not only because she speaks within a patriarchal context but also because she has affirmed many times in her narrative that she loves her husband and works for saving their marriage and family. Although her narrative can be interpreted within the patriarchal context, her habit to talk to her relatives about her husband's abuse is an act of resistance within which she creates a space away from her abusive relationship where she can establish relationships of support.

The meaning of disclosure becomes slightly different when women decide to seek support from their in-laws. Relevant research in Greece about in-laws' responses has mainly referred to the negative responses of mothers-in-law (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). From the women I interviewed, two narrated seeking support from their in-laws.

Olga narrates seeking support from her father-in-law:

Olga: Since I was pregnant I had informed my father-in-law that...there is this problem, I don't know, such things. So I called him that night and say "we have the same again, I arranged for us to visit his cousin, Kostas came in totally messed up" and such things, I was crying and I say "I can't stand staying in, I mean I haven't been out of home for long, I'm pregnant, he comes home drunk every day, I mean..." he says "I'll come there tomorrow and talk to him". He did come the other day, he sat him down, he turns and says "what are these things you're doing? Why are you drinking? What is happening suddenly?" he says "I have responsibilities" he says "I'm stressed at work" he says "I work too much". "Yes" he [father in-law] says "but look, now you are making a family, you consciously made her pregnant and we" he says "are waiting for a grandchild. This girl is not a girl

anymore, she's a woman, she's baring a child. What if something happens to her? If something happens to her" he says to him "I will blame you as your father, because I'm expecting a grandchild now".

Olga turns to her father-in-law for support by making him aware about his son's abusive behaviour towards her. Her husband's father becomes the authoritative figure who stands above the authoritative figure of her husband within the Greek patriarchal context and therefore he is the only one who can bring him to reason. Olga attempts to make her husband own his behaviour (Cavanagh, 2003) through positioning him face-to-face with his father, who would act as a spokesperson for Olga. In deed her husband constructs a narrative of excuses for his behaviour which could be comprehensible by a man, as he talks about work and responsibilities generated by fatherhood. His father-in-law shifts from the position of Olga's protector to the position of the grandfather who should be respected as expecting a grandchild and attributes roles and responsibilities: his son should be a responsible man because he is making a family now and his daughter-in-law is the child-bearing woman who should be respected. Abuse is not negotiated here as an issue regarding the relationship between the two and the negative effects it has on Olga but as an issue which obstructs the construction of the 'right family' who is run by a responsible man. Olga is not a person who suffers in her father's-in-law narrative but the 'girl' who has become 'a woman' through pregnancy and should be respected as the bearer of his grandchild. Her father-in-law renders his son responsible for Olga's well-being during pregnancy because nothing should happen to her until she delivers his grandchild. Therefore, Olga's husband is responsible towards his father for not abusing Olga, though as a pregnant woman and not as just a woman. Contextualizing Olga's support-seeking within the Greek patriarchal context it becomes evident that it was an act of resistance in terms of effectiveness; her husband's behaviour did change after her father-in-law talked to him as 'a man-to-man' (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001).

As Olga's context changes after having a baby and as her husband's abuse resumed, she turns to her father-in-law again in a more determined way:

Olga: Kostas was in his own world and I had this conversation with my father-in-law in the car, like "look, it doesn't get any further, I have a baby now, if you don't consider your grandchild I will consider my child". And my father-in-law turns to me and says "you're right we talked to him, we did everything we could do, we'll talk to him once more tomorrow morning but in this occasion you are right" he says "because the baby is a wonderful child and we don't want anything bad to happen to her".

Olga's husband returned to his abusive behaviour which included drunkenness. It was this part of his abuse that validated Olga's complaints towards her father-in-law, as alcohol renders him dangerous for his child, as well. It is at this point that Olga insists regarding responsibility towards the baby which she attempts to share with her father-in-law. As she is having a baby now, Olga reaches a point where she differentiates responsibilities from that of the grandfather to that of the mother who would be determined to take care of her child. Her father-in-law focuses on the baby as the one who would possibly suffer his son's abuse and it is in these terms that he validates Olga's determination to change the situation.

Flora narrates involving her father-in-law in one of the 'fights' with her husband after her husband told her he was going to talk to her brother:

Flora: And I say to his father "you see? You have to take him to a doctor. He has a problem". "The lady here wants to divorce. The lady here this, the lady here that" and then I said that I can't stand it anymore. "This and that is happening". My brother said "you should go to a marriage counselor

together and talk, maybe you make up, maybe...”
Nothing. His father wasn't listening a word, he
wasn't listening a word either. “They don't need a
marriage counselor, they'll arrange it on their
own”. Anyway, we said many things that night, he
[her father-in-law] talked to me in private and said
“I don't want you to divorce, try” he says “and see
what you can do” e.t.c

Flora called her father-in-law to intervene in one of their ‘fights’ so that her husband would own his behaviour (Cavanagh, 2003). Indeed her husband attempts to justify himself by attributing blame to Flora for wanting to divorce and bringing her to the position of considering the familial costs that her decision to divorce will bring. Divorcing would mean that she did not try hard for her marriage and therefore her brother intervenes proposing to both of them to visit a counselor and work together for their marriage. However, both her husband and her father-in-law would not find any reason for the husband to try for his marriage. Instead, her father-in-law advises her to try and shifts all responsibility to Flora for the situation. Flora’s act of resistance to seek support takes place within a patriarchal context where her brother, her husband and her father-in-law negotiate on how she should best manage abuse so that the sanctity of marriage would remain intact (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). Instead of finding support, Flora finds herself further burdened with the responsibility of working for a successful marriage.

Some women, especially those who found disclosure of abuse to their family as an act which would put further pressure on them, turned to friends to seek support.

Korina: I went to a friend of mine first. I went to a
friend of mine, I went there crying, running, she was
staying close to me, uuuhm...she was terrified when
she saw me, she asked me about it, she was troubled
when I told her that it had happened before and
generally that night I had met two or three friends of
mine that stood by me that night, she says “if

anything happens I want you to call us, to ...anything” etc. Uuum, I went back home, I didn’t tell him that they know, that I talked to people.

Korina narrates creating a safe space for her the night after a violent episode. She sought help from friends, who were willing to provide it especially as emotional support. Korina did not ask for any other kind of help that night. She returned home and told nothing to her husband about the social network she had acquired to resist any further abuse from him. Korina’s friend saw her crying and running and it was the severity of her situation which affected her willingness to provide support and assure her about any future support (Waldrop and Resick, 2004).

Sometimes friends, especially when they are common friends of the couple, provide support to the marriage instead of the woman who seeks for it.

Frosso: I had arranged an appointment for the next day to have an abortion and my friends, our friends, talked to me, they called me downstairs – they happen to stay downstairs- they called me downstairs “what kind of bullshit is that you are doing?” and “there is no better father than Kostas” and “since you are a couple in love” and “everything will be fine” and there starts an endless mumbling over my head, I have my doubts if what I’m about to do is the right thing, and I decide to keep the baby.

Frosso’s friends are her husband’s friends as well and they have established a model of co-habitation which resembles that of staying with parents. Friends for Frosso have become an alternative family and as such, her friends provide the kind of support that is usually provided by parents for women who experience abuse. Friends want the couple to stay together and act as mediators in cases of ‘fights’. Frosso had decided to have an abortion because she was not getting on well with her husband

when she got pregnant. Her friends considered this decision as a mistake and constructed arguments for her husband and their marriage. Frosso was convinced for a number of reasons: people who supported her were friends and not parents and therefore their advice might sound as more authentic; she was provided feedback about her husband's parental skills and her marriage from people who are supposed to be living close to them and therefore are able to have a more 'objective' view of the situation; as they were friends it was inevitable that they were talking for the couples best interest. However, when Frosso entered a relationship with her husband she entered a brand new world of people, ideas and life-style where she also acquired friends, who became friends of both hers and her husband's. At the same time, the abuse Frosso was experiencing was not observable in terms of physical violence and therefore her discontent was an issue of negotiation: things were going to be fine if only she showed some good will. This 'definitional discord' resembles the one occurring when women disclose abuse to their parents. As evident here, friends' responses can be compounding for some women as these responses are informed by the same cultural context.

Some women narrated seeking support from professionals or formal agencies. When women contacted therapists they were trying to change themselves within or towards the abusive relationship.

Stella: Uuuuhm...And I started visiting a psychologist and at the same time I was seeing him. This lasted for ten months before I decided to say "stop, end of it. End of it" I said it once for good. And this happened in a weird way and it made me trust the psychologist even more. I told him [the psychologist] that he blackmails me, that he has people watching me and they found out that I visit a psychologist and he told me "I know where you're going and I'll go there and tell him everything you have done". This cost me and made me angry, I mean he was threatening that the man I was visiting and had trusted by my own initiative, he would turn

him against me. I felt devastated. I said "no. I don't want this to happen now, I won't stand it"-because I had started trusting the psychologist. And I told the psychologist. And he says, absolutely spontaneously, because he was angry "if he comes here I will start beating him". And despite the fact that I didn't want such a development, no way, I felt that a person trusts me, I mean he believes me without...I had no proof that "here it is, this is it" I had never showed him my body, I had never showed...he believed me just like that. I mean I didn't have to bring him evidence, I mean show him the wounds necessarily so that he understands. And this moved me a lot.

Stella narrates what the influence of visiting a psychologist was on her while still experiencing abuse. After ten months she decided to end the abusive relationship. Establishing a relationship of trust with the psychologist became the context within which Stella became determined to escape the abusive relationship. Trust was constructed on the grounds of having someone believe in her unconditionally. When her abuser found out that Stella was making a leap outside his dominance he threatened what was most precious for her: her trustworthiness. Her psychologist then responded in a way that manifested defense for Stella and made her feel powerful against her abuser. She experienced being validated for what she says and feels and acquiring aggressive support against her abuser which would diminish her fear towards him. She narrates her psychologist to respond in an 'unprofessional' way by employing the role of Stella's protector. The fact that her psychologist was a man possibly comforted her as happened with other women who narrated seeking support from fathers and brothers. Within a patriarchal context it has become a commonsensical thought that an abusive man needs to be faced with a determined man supporting the woman in order for him to own his behaviour. Stella's narrative of empowerment through acquiring support by a male leaves space for critical reflections on the patriarchal context within which abuse occurs. This context has also

implications for the provision of professional help to women who have experienced abuse by their male partners. Could Stella be empowered by a female psychologist? And if not, should it be considered as the psychologist's deficit? The development of women's support groups and the effectiveness they had on many women's lives towards escaping abusive relationships argues for the opposite. However, these groups were initiated and became effective as a movement of collective resistance, which has the inherent trait of questioning structural gender inequalities. For Stella and other women who attempt to resist abuse on personal grounds this conscientization has not taken place and therefore their attempts to acquire support can sometimes endure patriarchal systems and cultural scripts.

Psychological support for women who have experienced abuse by their male partners which is provided in person might contradict the core of the problem, which is abuse itself (Kelly, 1988). Through acquiring professional psychological support women do resist abuse but they do so within a context that calls for personal change instead of structural changes.

Flora: Before the big fight of December, which was a catalyst for our relationship, I was visiting a Psychological Support Centre and a doctor was seeing me there and he says 'there is a need that you delete' because I remember many details, precise facts, precise phrases and words and this is bad for me, right? But I can't erase it from inside.

Flora's initiative to seek support for the abuse she was experiencing is an act of resistance as it implies that she wants a change to happen. Even if she seeks support for her bad emotional condition, her act signals that she does not consider her emotional condition to be the one she deserves. It is evident from her narrative that she attributes this emotional condition to her husband's abuse as the doctor refers to her relationship. However, the doctor, in trying to change her attitude towards abuse, advises her to forget things that make her re-experience traumatic interactions with her husband. Flora, seems to agree that

remembering worsens her emotional condition but her concluding utterance '*But I can't erase it from inside*' is an evaluative thought towards the inevitability of remembering and a possible call for another kind of support.

Some women seek help from professionals while they are actually seeking therapy for their abusive husband. Since abusive husbands are reluctant to see a therapist because that would mean taking responsibility for their behaviour, some women see therapists in order to find out what is wrong with their abusive husbands.

Dimitra: I think, because I discussed that with a psychiatrist, all the things he does, it just looks paranoia to me.

Through acquiring a professional diagnosis for her husband Dimitra attempts to attribute blame to him for his abuse. However, at the same time this professional diagnosis erases any responsibility of her husband for his abuse, since it is paranoia that causes abuse. Her husband's acts of controlling her phone calls or searching her things resemble paranoid symptoms, however only if not contextualized within his controlling and abusive behaviour.

Anthi seeks professional help for her husband's drinking problem:

Anthi: I had visited A.A, I mean I had made efforts before I come here [shelter] about what can be done, how I should handle this and all this and they were telling me, I mean anywhere I went they told me "the problem is his and he has to want it in order to do something for himself" but I was going for the kids basically, because I didn't know what to do, how to behave.

Anthi narrates an abused woman's common route of visiting helping agencies trying to handle the abuse and provide help to her abusive husband. Focusing on her husband's drinking problem she visits A.A where she is informed that the decision to be helped must be his. Anthi was looking for a way to handle his abuse and she was faced with

his responsibility for which she could do nothing. Anthi sounds as if she had already realized that the problem was his husband's when she says '*I was going for the kids basically*' in a way manifesting her reluctance to help her husband; what she was really caring for was handling the situation for her children's sake. Anthi's visits to professional helping agencies are active attempts to confront the situation, shift blame for the situation to her husband and protect her children. What remains intact is the problem of abuse itself, which is handled only indirectly; the problem to be solved is still alcoholism.

When the problem of abuse is de-contextualized and becomes a malfunction of the couple women who have experienced abuse by their male partners might be refrained from continue seeking for solutions. Dimitra narrates involving her husband to couple therapy sessions and her interactions with the therapist:

Dimitra: Anyway, I told her [the therapist] about his meetings, uuhm...she was justifying him. She says "You can't tell from that"...we had a second session, the second session was with him also. He downloaded from the internet a text about love, by some author. And the next time I went alone she read that to me. Now, I don't know what this woman wanted, I, to be honest, my mind went to...I have told her so much, O.K, that maybe he paid her, strange that I thought of that. But it wasn't that. She was trying, I was told by a woman who visits her and suggested her to me, she [the therapist] was trying to approach him so that he would open up. But when I was calling her and at a phone call she became angry, I had the need to talk, now, I might bothered the lady, I couldn't wait for the next session but I felt he was doing something to me and I had to tell her. She offended me at some point, I didn't go again.

Dimitra went to the marriage counselor seeking validation for her feelings while at the same time she was not determined to separate from her husband whom she involved in the therapy. The marriage counselor in trying to make their marriage work involved both of them in sharing responsibility and changing attitudes. Although Dimitra was frustrated by her husband's neglect and involvement in business meetings which kept him away from home the therapist invited Dimitra to raise blame from him as there was no evidence he was cheating on her. However, Dimitra had much evidence for that before going to the counselor. Then, Dimitra's husband manifested his will to make his marriage work by bringing texts on love with which Dimitra's behaviour was not complying. When the therapist invited Dimitra to work on that she became suspicious that her husband was paying the therapist to convince Dimitra that part of the problem might be her negative attitude. When Dimitra says '*strange that I thought of that*' she implies her shame for having been suspicious. However, her suspicions were contextualized within her husband's known behaviour of suspecting Dimitra and arranging ways to control her secretly. Dimitra's friend explained to her that what the therapist did was a strategy of establishing an alliance with her husband so that he would be willing to be involved in therapy. As her narrative unfolds it becomes evident that what she was looking for was emotional support for herself. She was calling the therapist to share her emotions and thoughts but as she did that outside the therapy context she was faced with the therapist's reluctance to listen to her. Dimitra attempted to resist her husband's abuse through acquiring support for both of them while what she was actually looking for was validation of her feelings. Motivated by a friend of hers and possibly ambivalent about her relationship she sought help without having the information about what kind of help she needed. Then she found herself involved in a process which she was not willing to follow. She narrates being offended by the therapist who followed a therapeutic process, which Dimitra would take as personal failure. The therapy context consisted of theoretical assumptions and cultural values which at that time put more pressure on Dimitra. She was called to share responsibility and related

blame towards saving her marriage at a time when it was not consciously clear for her that this was her aim. Dimitra's initial resistance was then blurred and as the help she was provided was inappropriate for the empowerment she needed she quit sessions.

Women might not be informed or even conscious about the kind of support they need but when exposed to it they initiate channels of communication. Eleni narrates meeting a woman from a women's help agency by chance.

Eleni: There was this bazaar at the metro and we went in, her father [her daughter's father] was with us and my mother was with me because she was coming with me because I was afraid and I saw...they were selling and I bought her [daughter] a T-shirt. I said "let her wear that" because she was looking at it and she was saying to him [father] "buy me this" and he didn't, not even a mug. And she [the lady from the service] "you know, if you want"...I said "I can't afford it because I'm a battered woman, I don't have money". She says "me, too, right now I don't have my child, his father has it". She says "why don't you go somewhere?" I told her "I don't know any place to go". And she introduced me to the social worker and since 2004 I come here.

While Eleni is still in her abusive relationship and has employed the strategy of being accompanied by her mother in order to manage her fear towards her husband, she finds herself at the bazaar of a non-governmental organization. Her daughter asks for a T-shirt but her father is not willing to buy it. Then Eleni insists on having her daughter buying that but as she has no money she initiates a talk with the representative of the organization. As the representative of the organization has witnessed Eleni's disagreement with her husband on buying a T-shirt for their daughter she initiates a contact with Eleni. Eleni discloses her abuse to a stranger whom she meets within the context of a helping organization.

Although the organization does not address women's battering Eleni's disclosure reveals that the representative of the organization has the same experience. As this lady works for a helping organization she has the information about what service Eleni could contact and after sharing her personal experience she provides the information Eleni needs. All this interaction takes place close to Eleni's husband and despite the danger of her husband listening to her discussion she manages to establish a contact which she would use later. It would be simplistic to argue that Eleni was just lucky finding herself at that moment at that place acquiring some helpful information. Although Eleni has narrated being afraid of her husband she risks a dialogue with a stranger while her husband is close. It is worth problematizing the dissemination of information about what services a woman who has experienced abuse by her male partner could contact to seek help. As women narrate not knowing where to seek professional help from, they initiate informal talks –some of which are dangerous for their physical safety- with people likely to inform them. Unfortunately, these informal talks, random as they are, might lead women to mistaken choices as happened with Dimitra who entered couple therapy sessions when what she needed was empowerment to resist her husband's abuse.

As the information provided is fragmented and sometimes blurred, some women turn to police and hospitals as the most dominant helping authorities where they are sometimes met with further dilemmas. Korina narrates her interaction with the police:

Korina: Once, before the last incident, I had been to the police other times before e.t.c, and I went there once before the last incidence, there was a very nice man and I explain to him that I don't want to ruin my home, I just want to do something to stop that, because everything else is fine, "I can't" I say "lie to you. I just want to be fine, not to be threatened by something like that and that we could live like an ordinary..ordina...ordinary, ordinary house, me, him and the child, nothing else". This man

understood that, because he should be experienced, all these people e.t.c and right away he says "you'll go" he says "there are some.." uuuhm...how did he called them, regarding women...[Me: Support services?] Korina: Support services. And... I say "O.K". He says "you'll go to Citizens Information Centre and you'll ask for their phone numbers because I don't have" he says "their numbers now". Uuuhm..I went, he says "when are you going?" I say "now, right now" I went straight away.

Korina narrates having visited the police before but this was the only time a police officer provided special information. She narrates constructing a picture of herself as a woman who although she is abused by her husband is not willing to ruin her house and who does not generally blame her husband. She does not expose her husband to the police and as she finds herself in a patriarchal context, the police, she tries to present herself as a thoughtful woman who isolates incidents of violence from the rest of her marriage. She reduces her aspirations about her marriage to ordinary things, an ordinary couple living in an ordinary home so that she does not challenge the police officer's presumed patriarchal responses. She constructs this picture of herself within a context of respect for police and police officers when she says *'This man understood that, because he should be experienced, all these people e.t.c'*. Her respect is given and therefore she does not have to explain it but instead presumes its inevitability and uses *'e.t.c'* where she would construct arguments about why is police worth being respected. Korina was lucky enough this time to meet a sensitized police officer who informed her about women's support services. However, he was not informed about the contact details although police is the main agency Greek women who have experienced abuse by their male partners seek support from. Korina was also lucky enough to meet a sensitized civil servant at the service where she asked for contact details who motivated her to contact the services straight away. From Korina's narrative it becomes evident that the difficulties that women who have experienced

abuse by their male partners face when seeking for professional support are interlocked. Formal information is to be provided by officers who work within a patriarchal context. Even when women contact sensitized officers who are willing to help, structural difficulties obstruct acquisition of help. At the time when Korina had that contact with the police officer, the new legislation about managing cases of domestic violence on the part of the police had not yet been put to validity neither any training had taken place to police officers, therefore women relied to each officer's sensitivity to acquire the help she needed.

Olga narrates her experience with the police during the last violent episode with her husband:

Olga: I hadn't called the police yet, I called my dad, I said "dad, he came in, I have the baby in my arms, the baby cries..." ...he says "I'm calling the police, you call it, too". We both called the police, they took my contact details, of course the police didn't come. [Me: They didn't arrive at your home?] Olga: The didn't arrive at my home, although both me and my father called them and this was something I had been afraid of all these months, that if I called the police, the police would come but would they secure me because if they didn't the next day I would leave in a worse situation beaten by this man. And they assured me as a state, right? The police didn't come. Unacceptable!

Olga called the police while her husband was being violent towards her. Although the police took her contact details they did not arrive at her home as Olga had expected. Besides the implications that the reluctance of the police might have for Olga's physical safety Olga narrates having expected that and for this reason she had not called the police during past episodes. Even if the police came Olga wondered what their management of the situation would mean for her physical safety. The legislative context of police intervention during episodes of domestic violence at that time suggested police orders for the man to

behave himself. However, women's initiative to call the police and disclose their partners' abuse to them would most of the times mean that they were further exposed to violence after the police left because women had allowed external intervention to the 'master's household'. Without a legislative context to protect mainly women's physical safety women refrained from calling the police. Reluctance of the police to intervene in Olga's narrative challenges her criticism towards the inability of the state to protect women from abuse. Therefore, it might be argued that when women do nothing to confront their abusive husbands it might be not because they do not resist but because their resistance is not further sustained by structural factors.

When women know from the beginning that even acquiring evidence for the abuse they suffer will involve them to a system within which the law, cultural norms and patriarchal ideology will further abuse them they might refrain from acquiring this evidence. Sometimes, this reluctance might be combined with the feelings they have for their partners whom they protect from vilification.

Maria: I went to [hospital] they told me to call the forensic surgeon but I say "I don't want the forensic surgeon", whatever will be will be...just sign me a paper that you found me...I came here, that...something, just to have it, I say "he doesn't treat children badly, O.K I can't say that he treats children badly, beat them and things like that", I say "it's towards me that he behaves badly".

Like Korina did at the police, Maria isolates her husband's abuse towards her from his general behaviour and especially his behaviour towards children. As she is about to acquire all the evidence she needs in order to charge her husband for beating her she shifts to destiny to decide about her husband and their relationship ('*whatever will be will be*'). Her pauses encapsulate all the unarticulated hesitation towards charging her husband until she tries to convince herself not to charge him by acknowledging his parental skills. If she insisted on considering his behaviour towards her she would probably proceed to

putting charges on him but her hesitation leads her to shift her thought towards her children. Since his behaviour towards them was good she should neglect herself and think as a mother who, according to cultural norms, should not restrict her children from their father. Moreover, her whole narrative is full of references to her feelings towards her husband with whom she had shared the greatest moments of her life, which are difficult to be erased by her in a moment. Before Maria was suggested by the hospital staff to put charges on her husband it could be easier for her to move smoothly towards escaping this relationship as she did after some time through contacting women's support services.

Flora narrates disclosing abuse and seeking help from the authorities while she refrains from putting charges on her husband.

Flora: And I left. He took me to my mother's place and from there I went to the doctor, he gave me a tranquillizing injection, I went to the police, decisions were now totally mine, my parental family didn't put pressure on me, nobody put pressure on me, I said "this is the end". The only thing is I didn't put charges on him, because he would be ex officio suspended, because this was an act of homicide, ten years sentenced, but I said that I don't want my children to see him behind bars. And I left.

After Flora had a big 'fight' with her husband she took her final decision to leave. Reclaiming her subjectivity ('*decisions were now totally mine*') she went to the police to report the incident. However, she narrates not putting charges on her husband. Although this seems an act of protecting her husband I suggest that Flora exercised her agency when she decided not to put charges on her husband not only because that would be degrading for him towards his children but also because Flora might still have feelings for her husband. I argue that social expectations for women who have been abused to be very strict with their partners in terms of prosecution and legal 'fights' jeopardize women's own interests and overlook women's feelings at specific moments in each woman's life, when she may not be available to meet such expectations.

From women's active initiatives to disclose abuse it becomes evident that the context within which women seek help and go public plays a significant role in both motivating women and providing helpful support or not. The context is also the interpretive means through which women's acts of seeking support acquire their meaning in terms of the people they contacted, the extent to which they were determined to escape the relationship and therefore women's staying/leaving dilemmas. Cultural norms, patriarchal ideologies and structural gender inequalities contribute to women's hesitation to seek support for escaping abuse. Within this context other factors are to be taken into consideration in unpacking acts of help-seeking like length and severity of the violence, children and emotional and material resources. Finally, women's emotions towards their abusive partners might refrain women from seeking support more actively until they reach a point where all the contextual factors can support a more determined act of help-seeking.

The women I interviewed provided narratives of help-seeking and disclosing abuse that coincide with those that women have narrated in relevant research (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Wilcox, 2006). However, the particularities of the Greek legislative and cultural context have an impact on both commonalities and differences of each woman's acts of help-seeking. Uniqueness of each woman's resisting strategies becomes more evident when interrogating women's active initiatives to resist their partners' abuse.

6.3 Initiatives

Within this chapter I will attempt to highlight women's active initiatives to resist their partners' abuse while they are in the relationship with him. Research has shown that abuse can immobilize (Cavanagh, 2003; Lamb, 1996), isolate women and result in emotional as well as social and financial burden (Bograd, 1990; Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Humphreys and Thiara, 2003; Herman, 1997; Jasinski, 2001; Kirkwood, 1993; Klein et al., 1997; Mullender, 1996). Although the women I interviewed narrated these implications of abuse some of them also

narrated their active initiatives to resist total surrender to abuse. Some of these initiatives are expected and commonsensical while others are unique and situational. In any case, I argue that when these initiatives are focused upon they reveal women's active resistance towards abuse and/or their abusive partners. They also imply that women who experience abuse and its negative consequences on them initiate ways to maintain some level of self-determination although still in the abusive relationship.

Anthi narrates how she and her children tried to escape her husband's abuse without seeking help:

Anthi: There were times last winter, I left home with the kids and we went to the church, we couldn't stand being at home anymore. There were times I took them and we went to my sister's or up on the terrace there was a room for the burner and the washing machine and we stayed there, secretly.

Anthi attempted to find some temporary peace by physically distancing herself and her children from home and her abusive husband. She asked for accommodation at the church or at her sister's but as she had not decided to permanently leave home she initiated other situational 'escapes'. In order to address her need to be distanced from home for a while she took the children and they stayed at a room up on the terrace without her husband knowing where they might be. It is the secrecy of her action which implies her initiative to resist her husband's abuse, since he would look for them in all possible places where she would have turned for accommodation. Staying at the terrace was also a situational decision since Anthi could realize it easily and quickly without jeopardizing her safety.

Stella provides an 'escape narrative' where she initiated physically distancing herself from her abuser under unfavourable circumstances:

Stella: He was following me, later I wanted to stay alone, leave from my grandfather's home, because my grandfather's building plot was bordered on his.

My mother had an old house, uuuhm...she had it, as we say at the villages, North village, South village, so my grandfather was at the north village, my mother had a house at south village and I decided to go there. This house had no electricity, no water supply, it was a pigsty in a way. It had a primitive kitchen and I wanted to go and stay there. I insisted, I insisted, I had fights with my grandparents and I left to go leave there alone.

Stella had escaped her parents' home and was staying far away at her grandparents' home, which was bordered on her abuser's home whom her grandparents praised and respected. Experiencing abuse secretly and finding it difficult to expose her abuser to people who respected him she initiates moving from her grandparents' home to her mother's old house. As she had no financial resources she found herself in a house that did not meet any human standards of accommodation. She employs the metaphor of 'pigsty' to describe this home, a metaphor which attached to her who was staying in it implies how she felt for herself. De-humanized in material terms now, Stella prefers to protect herself from abuse than remain within a relationship which de-humanizes her in emotional, physical and mental terms.

Korina initiated acquiring a job when she realized that she could no longer rely on her husband for financial support for her and her baby.

Korina: Some time towards the end, that's why things got worse, I forgot to say that, it's that I found a job. Because I saw that he was leaving, he was coming e.t.c and he wasn't leaving money at home e.t.c and I say "it can't go on like that" because whatever happens, I will then run with a child looking for things from the beginning.

When Korina realized that her husband would not support her financially and as she had a baby to consider she looked for a job. She undertook this initiative after thinking that whatever happens between her and her husband she must have brought herself to a position where

she will be able to sustain herself and her baby. Although Korina narrates relying on destiny for the future of her relationship (*'whatever happens'*) she undertakes part of this responsibility by being prepared for the consequences of a possible divorce. The impact of Korina's initiative on her husband implies resistance. Korina narrates that it was because she found a job that *'things got worse'*. I argue that if her initiative to find a job was not an act of resistance -and as such was not a threat to her husband's authority- her husband would not react in a way that made things between them worse.

Olga narrates her initiative to be registered at a gym despite her husband's potential refusal.

Olga: Anyway, I started exercising at the gym, he didn't want to, but I did that by "this is what I want". "You can place knives before me, you can drink, you can do this and that, I'm going!"

Olga initiates being registered at a gym as a way of affirming her subjective needs. Olga had narrated a little earlier that she used to be occupied with sports when she was younger, therefore her initiative to start exercising again is a manifestation that she affirms herself and invites activities she enjoys back. Her husband will not let her receive the 'triumph' of affirming her need but still Olga verbally resists him by challenging the ways he might respond to her decision. Her initiative to start exercising at the gym is interrelated with what followed. At the gym Olga met a man whom she became interested in.

Olga: Uuumh...I started becoming interested in this man, because he was approaching me in his own way and this way of approaching me was covering me, for the first time, because in ten years, twelve years that I had been with my husband other men approached me but nobody ever 'covered' me...never [Me: Uhm-uhm] but he 'covered' me with the way he was approaching me and he had come at a phase in my life, the worst, right? So I started becoming...weak, so when I realized I want

him, at the same time my husband was becoming worse and worse, right? I say "what are you doing? You'll stay at [name of the area] and you'll be seeing this man in the morning. But when this man leaves from your life you'll find yourself again in the problem and you'll also still be having the baby".

Olga initiated a relationship with another man while she was still in the relationship with her abusive husband. It is not narrated that Olga was actually intimately related with this man but their interactions initiated an inner dialogue in Olga which made her realize that she had to do something more active towards her abusive relationship. Olga narrates being 'covered' by the way this man was approaching her, a narrative of possible 'emptiness' she felt in the relationship with her husband which was 'covered' by her interaction with another man. As meeting another man while married is to be culturally blamed Olga constructs a narrative of 'dignity' within which she constructs herself as a loyal woman during the years of her marriage. She justifies her feelings towards this man now on the grounds of his way to approach her, implying some choice on her part. At the same time she provides the information that her husband was becoming worse leaving more 'emptiness' to be 'covered' by another man. Olga is still talking as a married woman within the cultural context when she says '*So I started becoming...weak*' as her feelings towards the man she met renders her a 'weak woman' who flirts while she is married. However, it is not without some hesitation that she attributes this characterization to herself, subtly narrating some resistance towards these cultural values. Meeting this man initiates a dialogue in Olga where the 'culturally defined' woman negotiates with the 'flirting woman' on the right thing to do. Apparently the former dominates the latter in convincing Olga not to enter a relationship with this man. However, right after Olga narrates going to her mother and talking to her openly about divorcing with her husband. It seems that feelings might be a mobilizing force for women, even when these feelings are developed within a cultural context that forbids them.

Similarly, Flora initiates undertaking extra-domestic activity by being involved with the children's school parental committee despite her husband's disagreement.

Flora: At some point then, since my little daughter went to school, I said, "I will be involved". However, during the last years when Jacob [older son] was attending school, he [her husband] was conveying the message "don't be involved with committees, I don't want to believe that you'll be involved with committees", we became a mess, this and that. And I was not involved. But when my daughter started attending school, then I wanted to do something, beyond domestic work.

When her older son was attending school Flora wanted to be involved in parental committees but she submitted to her husband's orders to be restricted at home. When her daughter started attending school Flora had already experienced a lot more abuse from her husband and she was now determined to be involved with an activity which would make her feel helpful and active. Flora resisted her husband's dominance on her self-determination by initiating being involved with an activity which was broadening her social activities and helped her escape from domestic work. Acquiring self-validation threatened her husband's dominance and control over her everyday activities but now Flora was determined to proceed. Her earlier compliance to her husband's order not to be involved had led to her restriction at home while his abuse had not been reduced despite her compliance.

However, her husband insisted on 'fighting' with her about her involvement with parental committees and after Flora quit, she initiated another active escape from her domestic restriction.

Flora: I wasn't involved in anything else until 2005 when I decided that I have to do something in my life, because our finances were going bad, he had his job, the lorry, as a free-lancer. He wasn't running after the job as much as he should and now

I understand the reasons. In 2005 his father was retired but he was keeping the shop business but at some point for reasons of age he couldn't keep it and he decided to give it. I found this as a great opportunity and escape and I say "I will keep the shop business" [narrating her mother finding herself without financial resources after her father died]. Well, I was considering all these and I say "since we don't know how life will turn out, I must do something to secure myself. And at the same time support our home".

Gradually Flora's husband had become indifferent about his job and had brought his family to financial hardship. As his father retired Flora considered it was a great opportunity for her to be activated professionally so that she would find an occupation and would contribute to the family expenses. By narrating that her mother found herself financially insecure after her husband's death Flora is 'taught a lesson' about securing herself in case she is not with her husband anymore. Flora initiates a business that would provide her financial independence from her husband. Through this initiative Flora takes an active stance towards her husband's ignorance for the family's finances and pursues personal security.

Remaining within financial issues, Maria narrates how she decided to fool her husband about her overtime payment.

Maria: Anyway, when I was paid the money, for example three thousand, I don't remember exactly, uuups! He comes and grabs the money. I say "why are you taking the money? You" I say "didn't want me to do it for three hundred and now you're taking it?" Next month, I had two notepads, I wrote the right amount in one and the wrong in the other.

Maria agreed to work overtime so that she would make some more money with which to feel secure for herself and her children. Her husband disagrees at the beginning attempting to 'enlighten' Maria about

her boss's exploitation to offer her less money than her work was worth. However, Maria is in need of the money so she starts working overtime. When she is paid for the first time her husband takes the money from her in an attempt to retain the control of family finances and to restrict Maria from being in charge. After Maria verbally confronts him she initiates a trick within which she resists her husband's financial abuse without challenging his further abuse. It would be simplistic to argue that Maria could easily insist on keeping her money without having to cheat on her husband. Maria's resourcefulness to keep two notepads for her income is an action within which she resists her husband's control and safeguards the safety of her and her children.

Having already narrated finances as a thorny issue between her and her husband Maria narrates finding out that her husband was saving money secretly, which he spent entertaining himself with other women. This is how she initiated collecting evidence for her husband's 'secret life':

Maria: There comes the phone bill of the house and they had issued a list of phone calls. And he made a scene that "you dial mobile numbers...and this..." he had only made two or three. Although I had checked the bill, I didn't talk yet, I was waiting for the next bill. I told the postman "don't leave it downstairs" because he [her husband] was tearing the bills afterwards, I say "wait". I hide the phone bill and when the mobile phone bill arrives, it allegedly just fell in my hands and I say "this number reminds me of something". I went and brought the house phone bill. "Here it is" I say.

Maria constructed her evidence towards proving she is right that her husband had a girlfriend with whom he was spending his money. As her husband would not admit it, Maria kept the girlfriend's phone number from the time she had called home and then asked the postman to deliver her husband's phone bill to her. She initiated a talk with her husband about their phone bills and asked him about the number issued on his bill statement. When he refused to disclose whom it belonged to,

Maria brought the house phone where his girlfriend's phone number was saved. It is common for women who suspect their husbands for infidelity to attempt acquiring evidence for his activities. The patriarchal cultural context of marriage has constructed a 'blame discourse' for such women's actions which offends their worth and dignity. In Greece, there is a common name attributed to women who try to reveal their husband's cheat, a nickname implying actions of someone who is less than a woman. The nickname Katina comes from the Orthodox name Ekatirini, which in everyday language is called Katerina. When a woman is blamed for acting like a 'Katina' it means that she has lost her completed, coherent and valued self implied by the full name 'Katerina' and has become something less, implied by the nickname 'Katina'. I argue that the ideology of 'Katina' was constructed to restrict women's active strategies to protect themselves, reveal their partners' cheat on them or make their presence known to those involved in their deceit, sometimes to other women involved with their partners secretly. Although I do not hold that these activities are effective or self-validating, I argue that they could be interpreted as acts of resistance on the part of women who are abused and cheated especially when considering the impact of abuse on their self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

Summary

I have tried to interrogate women's narrative accounts for forms of open resistance towards abuse and their abusive partners in terms of verbal confrontation, seeking support/going public and initiatives women undertake. In no case I would suggest that open forms of resistance are more valued or threaten the abusive relationship in a more effective way. Sometimes, open resistance can be an unwise choice as it can challenge further abuse. However, when open forms of resistance are located within each woman's socio-cultural and material context they can provide insights about what could be helpful for women to openly resist abuse. Material and social resources, informal support and verification of their subjective stories as well as respect of women's personal choices

could help in deconstructing patriarchal discourses and in reconstructing women's lives.

CHAPTER 7: REPERTOIRES OF RESISTANCE: NARRATIVE RESISTANCE

I have so far tried to explore women's acts of resistance while they were in an abusive relationship with their partners as they are narrated by women. Those acts of resistance were roughly divided into acts of subtle resistance for these acts that did not overtly manifested women's determination to change the situation and were employed without being acknowledged by abusive partners and acts of open resistance for these acts that overtly threatened the abusive partner's authority and the status of the relationship.

Within this chapter I will attempt to highlight women's resistance towards abuse and/or their abusive partners through their narrative styles. I have conceptualized the particularity of this kind of resistance to be located within women's 'resistance discourse' which is signaled by shifts in tone of voice, initiation of imaginary confrontations with their partners, questioning of the situation and/or their partners' authority and employment of irony. When women initiate these narrative acts of resistance they do not clarify whether their content was ever known to their abusive partners and therefore this kind of resistance is located at present and has retrospective applicability. That is, women may have never made the content of this resistance known to their partners while it is referred to the past. I argue that the narrative resistance women enact within their present accounts contains resistance applied to their past experience which either remained unarticulated or is re-enacted in a style that empowers them at present. Consequently, interrogating women's accounts for narrative resistance might provide space for expressing resistance which would remain unarticulated outside the narrative context.

I chose to include 'resistance discourses' that were not earlier included in subtle or open forms of resistance and to construct a further category of resistance acts that is located within discourse and is de-contextualized by its situational and structural conditions, which would call for an analysis similar to that applied to open and subtle forms of resistance.

Some of the women I interviewed employed other people's voices to resist abuse and/or their abusive partners.

Anthi resists her husband's voice by including it in her narrative:

Anthi: He was talking alone. He wanted to have a person's shadow and talk, talk. You agreed? He would take that wrong "So, you agree, because...I don't know, you have your intention". You didn't agree? "You don't know, you're not into things, your mind isn't sharp enough".

Anthi employs her husband's voice and enacts his construction of a 'no-win' situation where Anthi was faced with a dead-end regarding her response to his statements. By enacting her husband's voice she resists the kind of abuse he was constructing to entrap her. The tone of her voice implies anger and her question-answer narrative style implies the two poles of her husband's 'no-win' situation. Anthi chooses to narrate her husband's narrative construction of this 'no-win' situation in order to enact it now that she is distanced from him and reconstructs her experience of abuse.

At another point in her narrative Anthi unites her voice with that of her children to resist her husband:

Anthi: The children woke up, they were yelling, he was scaring them. He was saying that he would take them away from me, they were yelling, crying, and as we are 'one' with the kids, because they live with me, they do everything with me, they told him "we're not coming with you, no matter what and do whatever you want" and he grabs the computer and throws it down the balcony, and the younger says "throw everything" he was supposed to had brought the computer for the kids, "throw everything" they say "and if there is nothing else left to throw, throw our beds".

During this episode Anthi is without voice. However, she employs the voice of her children to resist her husband's abuse. She justifies this identification in terms of having become one with her children as they live together and do everything together. It was necessary for her to say anything during that episode, since her children confronted and challenged her husband in words that could have been verbalized by Anthi. In employing her children's voice Anthi acquires some cultural justification for resisting her husband. Since her children were negatively affected by his behaviour she cannot be blamed for being too intolerant towards him. She resisted him for her children's sake as her role as mother is more sanctified than her role as wife. Her resistance then through her children's voice is culturally more acceptable.

Similarly, Eleni employs her daughter's voice:

Eleni: And the kid turned to me and said "I don't even want my name, can I change it?" I told her "this can't be done by law. When you grow up" I said "we can think about it".

The discussion Eleni narrates between her and her daughter took place shortly before our interview. Eleni has already left her husband and their marriage is an issue of negotiation within their divorce process. Within this context, Eleni at the same time reconstructs her life and negotiates legal matters with her husband. Her daughter has her father's surname and through this their kinship is symbolized. As her father's abuse impacted on her life she asks her mother to change her name. I argue that in symbolic terms this is an act of resistance towards her father's authority and dominance on her life. Eleni narrates her daughter's will in a possible attempt to validate both her abusive experience and her resistance towards it. Although by law it is difficult to change surnames, Eleni does not turn down her daughter's suggestion but just places it in the future when her daughter will be grown up, thus underlining the legitimization of such a suggestion and the resistance it conveys.

Flora chooses to narrate her brother's confrontation with her husband when the latter was hospitalized for an accident:

Flora: and my brother says to him "what's up, mate?" he says, "what do you wanted to have beside you? A servant?" These were the only words my brother told him. Because he respected him, as I told him later, after he got out of the hospital, when other episodes occurred, I say "my brother respected you, because seeing me and following all these what should he do to you? Beat you down? Ask for the reason? What did you expect him to say?"

Flora had several 'fights' with her husband while he was at the hospital because he would not let her go and would be abusive to her to the extent that Flora had health problems. As Flora had confronted her husband without achieving any change of the situation she employs her brother's voice to resist her husband's abuse. Her brother becomes the voice which would support her and have an impact on her husband as they talked man-to-man (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). Flora explains to her husband that he would have said or even done more if it was not for his situation, in a way providing some excuses for her brother not further confronting her husband. However, her brother told her husband what she wanted her husband to know, that she is not his servant. She employed her brother's voice to resist what she went through during the hospitalization of her husband as it is a voice which can be heard from him.

Similarly, Eleni provides a confrontation between her husband and her father:

Eleni: Because when he [her husband] came in Athens and told my father to sign a paper that "I will not beat Eleni again" and he [her father] says "what is Eleni? Any donkey?" he says "or any furniture you bought by installments? From now on my daughter decides".

Compatible with Greek cultural norms about arranging matters with the woman's father, Eleni's husband initiates an arrangement with her father. He asks to sign a paper that he will not beat Eleni again so that his father-in-law allows him to take her back. Eleni enacts her father's words within which he resists the objectification of his daughter. She is neither an animal nor some piece of furniture upon which the two men can negotiate. Though this episode takes place in a patriarchal context which Eleni does not seem to challenge, I argue that by employing her father's voice to narrate this incident Eleni resists the abuse her husband attempted in the only terms comprehensible by her husband. She reconstructs this incident to experience her father's words as hers by enacting them to me within the narrative context.

Later, as she narrates an episode of being abused by her husband where her life was threatened she employs her son's voice:

Flora: My little daughter is standing by the door watching the scene, my brother is next to her and he [her husband] is over me with his hands around my throat ready to choke me. My son rushes and grabs him from here [shows] and he [her son] couldn't manage him. And he [her son] says to him "what are you doing there, asshole? You'll choke her!"

Flora provides a dramatic narration of a violent incident between her and her husband where he was close to choke her. Literally and metaphorically Flora had lost her voice so she could not resist her husband's abuse. Within her present narration she borrows her son's voice to manifest resistance towards her husband's violence. It is with anger she does this identified with her angry son who swears at his father. I argue that her choice to provide an enactment of her son's words instead of using indirect speech or a description of the incident is a narrative way of resisting the content of her narrative by employing now the voice she did not have then but came from her son.

Later Anthi employs a characterization for her husband which, contextualized within her narrative of his abuse, is used on the surface of what she really means.

Anthi: Anytime he would call and swear, I'm talking about...very bad words, without reason, without having the right, without anything. All women I socialized with were whores, all people he could see progressing in their lives were assholes, he was everything, God!

Anthi resists her husband's definition of reality and of the people she socialized with. Through swearing her husband was trying to impose his view of others on Anthi and therefore isolate her from others whom she could perceive as nice and successful compared to him. Through such a comparison his unquestionable dominance would be threatened and Anthi seems to encapsulate his attempt to protect his dominance by attributing him the characterization of how he presented himself to her: 'God' implies not only the unquestionable authority but due to its divinity, the word grasps the impossibility to be applied to a human. Since Anthi attempts to do exactly that, her words can only imply irony and resistance towards such a depiction of her husband.

Frosso attributes an idiosyncratic characterization to her husband to resist his unquestionable superiority:

Frosso: Look, his mother raised him as her only child, based on a perception that he is the most smart human on the planet, the best, the most beautiful, the most 'fucker', the 'biggest dick'...in the course of time she probably found out that he is not the most beautiful, nor the smartest, nor 'Mr. Fuck'...

In order to deconstruct the depiction of her husband as the 'perfect man' Frosso employs a challenging narrative both in terms of content and style. She employs an idiosyncratic and 'rude' language to resist the utmost superiority of her husband. She deconstructs his depiction as the perfect man on the grounds of the three characteristics he relied on to abuse her: his looks, his mentality and his sexual superiority, which caused her much pain. Frosso has narrated earlier that he had an affair through which he abused her emotionally and he was also

perceived to be a respected and witty professional man. He was also coming from a wealthy and aristocratic family. Frosso has also narrated that these were the grounds upon which most of their 'fights' were initiated as she was coming from a 'different world', a world less 'politically correct'. Through her narrative she takes a political stance towards her husband's world when she initiates the deconstruction of this world by employing a 'dirty' language which was inappropriate for her husband's 'world'.

Anthi employs her husband's voice to resist his evaluation of others and his related superiority:

Anthi: He saw all women in me, either good or bad or...and he was swearing me. Of course, out of all women, none was good, they are all whores, it was only his mother that was a woman to make a home and family with.

Anthi's attempt to make meaning for her husband's swearing was initiated upon an understanding that it was because he saw all women in her and since there were no good women for her husband Anthi personified all the negative traits attributed to women. Although she says at the beginning that her husband saw all women, both good and bad in her she immediately clarifies that actually there were no good women for her husband. Since all women were whores according to him Anthi was a 'whore archetype' for her husband. Beginning her husband's perception of women as whores with the phrase '*of course*' provides space for exploring some irony and resistance towards this statement on Anthi's part, which is further intensified by her husband's perception of his mother as the only good woman. The construction of the 'good woman' is then further explained by Anthi as the one on whom a man can rely for making a 'home' and 'a family' with. I argue that Anthi's irony resists her husband's patriarchal discourse and shifts her position to women's standpoint where women are not to be viewed as whores.

Irony is present at other points in Anthi's narrative as well.

Anthi: It was a tyranny, tyranny. We shouldn't buy yoghurt...[Me:Why?] Because it was unhealthy,

while whisky was normal, whisky was part of a healthy diet!

Anthi provides an example of what 'tyranny' meant to her by narrating her husband's order not to buy yoghurt. As I needed some clarification for his order because there were children living at home and yoghurt is supposed to be necessary for their nutrition, I asked her to explain this to me. Anthi employed irony to explain this to me. Her husband argued that yoghurt was unhealthy. It is the inevitable invalidity of his argument that signals irony in Anthi's narrative which is intensified by the inevitable invalidity of her counter-argument that according to her husband whisky was healthy. Anthi resists the abuse she was suffering from her husband in terms of his alcoholism by attributing to whisky a characterization that should be attributed to yoghurt which she thought was not allowed to buy. Her irony is intensified by the tone of her voice which is punctuated by an exclamation mark. I argue that this exclamation mark could imply surprise, anger and resistance as it provides her negative evaluation of her husband's behaviour.

Similarly, Anthi resists her husband's voice by employing irony towards his financial orders:

Anthi: Rent, phone bills, electricity bills, heating oil I needed and then he was saying "be patient until I come back". We wouldn't eat, we wouldn't use electricity, we wouldn't consume water, until he came back!

Anthi relied on her husband for financial support but her husband had embarked and was away, while she was back trying to run a house. As the financial dues put pressure on her and life could not go on without the basic comforts of electricity, heating and water she probably asked money from her husband whose answer she provides: 'be patient until I come back'. As living without the basic comforts was not a matter of patience for Anthi but rather her husband's ignorance towards hers and their children's needs, she initiates a resistance narrative to highlight the insensibility of her husband's words. Her irony is located within the

deadly consequences her husband's orders would have but which he still ordered.

Irony towards their abusive husbands' behaviour and opinions is evident in other women's narratives.

Frosso provides an ironic evaluation of her husband's perception of his role as a father:

Frosso: I got pregnant to my older daughter, we decided to keep it, probably under more pressure from me and much less from him, he had many insecurities about having a baby, he didn't feel ready to become a father and all these nice things.

Frosso reflects on their decision to keep their baby and realizes that it was more of her decision than her husband's. She initiates an explanation for this by providing her husband's attitude towards being a father that is he did not feel ready to become a father. When Frosso says '*and all these nice things*' she narrates irony as she did want to keep the baby and therefore she could not perceive her husband's reluctance as a 'nice thing'. At the same time, a second reading of her narrative is provided, as a resistance to the insecure father's-to-be discourse, according to which he is not ready to become a father. Reference to her husband's insecurity as '*all these nice things*' implies that his justification for his reluctance is a common discourse, which I am also aware of and therefore Frosso presumes my understanding of her irony.

A narrative style that was revealed as narrative resistance is the 'habitual narrative' some women provided about their husband's abuse. I argue that these habitual narratives inherently implying repetition together with the repetition of words or tone of voice on the part of the narrating woman leaves space for interrogating these narratives for resistance. Within habitual narratives women do not simply narrate an abusive incident but construct the omnipresence of their partner's abuse in their lives. I argue that this omnipresence is deconstructed by being intensified through repetitive phrases.

Anthi narrates:

Anthi: I mean, he isolated us from everybody, he didn't want anyone at home, neither me to take the kids out for a walk, nor make them birthday celebrations, nor attending other kids' birthday, he considered everything as pointless, everything in vain.

Anthi employs the linguistic schema of neither-nor construct to narrate her husband's abuse in a repetitive style. As narrated, it is not an instant caprice of her husband not to let her take the kids out for a walk. She reinforces his abuse on this matter through a narrative that leaves no space for her husband to be represented otherwise. If Anthi just narrated that he would not allow her to prepare birthday parties for her kids, one might imagine that alternatively he would let her take the children to other kids' birthdays. However, Anthi attempts to exhaust all possibilities that her husband would leave space for some socialization. I argue that this 'narrative flooding' of his restrictions provides an alternative reading as a narrative resistance on Anthi's part.

Similarly Olga narrates the omnipresence of abuse in her life:

Olga: Uuuuhm....so the fights started, he began passing by the coffee shop first, drinking, returning, pretending he's fine, meanwhile he was stinking from far and you could see it, his eyes were torn, right? I was pregnant, I had crises, I was crying, he was going mad, cool in front of me, he was like "fine, fine, O.K" he was taking the bottle of whisky and was going to the couch to...drink, every day, every day, every day, constantly...

Olga narrates juxtaposition between her husband's freedom to have a good time away from home and her suffering as a woman who had just given birth and was facing physical and emotional difficulties. The juxtaposition becomes evident not only through content but also through the narrative style. Olga employs the past continuous tense for both of them to describe oppositional behaviours. By exiting her narrative with the repetition of the word 'every day' she justifies the use

of the past continuous tense through which she constructs a pattern of her husband's abuse. Speaking from the position of the woman who has left this constantly abusive partner, it sounds as if she attempts to resist his abuse through repeating its presence.

Later Olga returns to her husband's continuous abuse:

Olga: I delivered on Monday. I got out of the clinic on Friday. The weekend mediates, from Monday on the same started again. He was not returning home, he was passing by the coffee shop, he was 'drinking his ass' [Greek expression for drinking too much], he was returning home, he was vomiting, in the house, me, a woman in the birth-bed, I was taking the baskets, my belly was in pain, I was needing help, because I didn't have my mother-in-law, nor my mother, I was alone, having had a difficult delivery, I almost died, both me and the baby, and he was coming to me like that?...[sighs]...Son of a bitch!

Olga orients us in time and sets the context for her husband's abuse. As she had just delivered and as a woman who has just delivered is in need of support and culturally perceived as vulnerable, Olga contextualizes her husband's abuse in a way that implies resistance: he could not be justified for his behaviour especially because she was alone and vulnerable. After setting the scene, Olga employs the continuous past tense to narrate her husband's inappropriate habits in juxtaposition with her suffering which is intensified by her loneliness. She describes her difficult delivery in a dramatic way since her and her baby's life were threatened only to resist her husband's 'coming to her like that' whereas her condition would call for the opposite. The description of her situation contextualizes her wondering as a rhetorical question already answered by her and therefore it is possibly employed as a narrative resistance device. Olga has narrated her abuse as re-experiencing it and by the end of her narrative she is so emotionally tensed that pauses her narrative and sighs. What is released out of her narrative, after her pause and her sigh

is a swearing which is not clearly addressed to anyone. In Greek language someone can swear without addressing it to someone in specific mainly when she/he is overwhelmed by a situation that generates anger and/or pain. Swearing could though be addressed to the person that caused it as well. In any case, Olga's swearing is an expression of anger and as such I argue that it is a form of resistance towards what has just been narrated.

Later Olga embarks on a narrative about her father's anger towards her husband's relatives:

Olga: And my father told them, then my father came by, his [her husband's] uncle had come and he [her father] told him that "right now I am receiving my daughter and I'm taking her to the women's aid agency, lies are over!" he says "over! As a family you were up to here. You took my girl, you drove her crazy! Who of you thought about the grandchild? And you're pretending to be nice and loving to it! Because if you were nice, I was burdened with your son and nephew so many years, if you were nice and didn't want it to shatter you would have come and say 'my son or my nephew has this problem. Since there is a kid, could we go to a doctor? Could we do something to save their home from being destroyed? But you let that" he says to them "wily, covering everything and my daughter was fucked up! [raises her voice]...Now I'll fuck you up!"

Olga re-enacts her father's verbal attack towards her husband's relatives and employs her father's voice to resist them and to resist her husband's abuse through them. It is important to contextualize Olga's narrative within the Greek family norms where married couple's parents and close relatives are involved in their marriage and often responsible for interfering when there are problems in their marriage. Within traditional Greek families a spouse's problem is viewed as a failure of her or his parents to raise her or him 'right' and their incapability of

repairing it in order to save the marriage. It is not surprising then that Olga is identified with her father's voice when he comes to protect her from his abusive husband and his reluctant family, even if he refers to his daughter as a commodity which he will receive from some place and will take to some other place. Then her father suggested what should have been done if his son's-in-law parents were 'nice' that is if they complied with the Greek traditional family norms. Since I presume Olga is identified with her father's voice this becomes her suggestion, too, implying her need for her abuse to be acknowledged by those most willing to reject it: her husband's relatives. The value of saving the marriage is not excluded from her father's narrative as this was what caused his anger: his son's-in-law relatives' reluctance to uncover and manage the problem. It is implied here that Olga's father considers alcohol to be the problem and not abuse itself. Therefore, if all of them were trying to confront this problem the marriage would have been saved. Like in her previous narrative, Olga exits this narrative with an escalation of anger which is verbalized in swearing and in threatening as a revenge for her suffering.

Similarly, Frosso narrates how she swore her husband towards his mother:

Frosso: Many times I was bursting out towards her [her mother-in-law] and I was telling her "it's your fault because you made him sluggish, you made him stupid, you made him asshole, you raised him to become God and you ruined us all, me, the kids and you, as well".

Frosso's narrative resistance towards her abuse from her husband is verbalized towards his mother. It is not uncommon within the Greek cultural context for a mother to be blamed for raising her male child in ways that reinforce gender inequalities. Drawing from popularized psychological explanation of the 'oedipus syndrome' women are viewed as responsible for raising authoritative men. I argue that such a perception distorts the picture of a patriarchal context within which women raise their sons in ways that comply with cultural and family

norms, which are not to be ignored if women are not to be faced with further personal and familial costs. However, Frosso makes a point towards the inevitability of this patriarchal context which raises men who behave in abusive ways towards women. By resisting the way her mother-in-law raised her son Frosso resists the context which facilitated this and her abuse as a consequence of the patriarchal context. Frosso finally refutes her initial argument according to which her mother-in-law is responsible for her abuse by including her to those negatively affected by her husband's abuse. Her refute strengthens my earlier point about the patriarchal context 'producing' abusive men and not their mothers who end up suffering from their sons' abuse as well.

Although it is difficult to disaggregate narrative extracts where narrative resistance is evident, the narratives of the women I interviewed oriented me towards a common form of narrative resistance women can convey. Within their narrative accounts some of the women I interviewed constructed imaginary dialogues with their perpetrators in order to confront them. I argue that such imaginary dialogues are narrative devices to verbally express their resistance towards narrated abuse in ways that were not available when they were in the abusive relationship.

Anthi brings her past dialogue with her husband to the present to confront him:

Anthi: Now he's preparing a house, we have told him that we're not going and he says "uuuhm, we can stay together for 10-15 days, then I'm embarking". But what does it mean you're embarking again and...we told you we're not staying together!

Although Anthi has moved to a shelter with her kids to escape from her abusive husband, he keeps contacting her and tries to persuade her to return back to him. In doing so, he is preparing a new house with intentions about a new life through which he attempts to invalidate Anthi's decision to leave him. As Anthi turned his proposal down he insisted by saying that they will stay together only for a couple of weeks and then he will embark. Anthi's husband attempts to re-establish his

dominance on her and their children by constructing a new life where he will be absent leaving them with a new house. Therefore, he attempts to make it easier for Anthi to be convinced to return. Her resistance was expressed to him verbally and supported by her children. However, Anthi narrates this dialogue and initiates a new imaginary dialogue on the same topic to resist her husband's attempt to dominate her. Her need to initiate this imaginary dialogue can be contextualized within her current circumstances. Anthi has no job and no place to stay after the shelter and she has two kids. Her husband's offer could be tempting especially since he announces that he will not be home if they return there. However, Anthi has experienced how it is to be financially dependent and dominated by her husband and revalidates her decision not to return through enacting an imaginary confrontation with her husband.

Similarly, Maria revalidates her arguments towards her husband's financial abuse expressed through comforting others and restricting money from his family:

Maria: It was winter time and she [her daughter] was going to the school in her sweater. And he couldn't afford buying her...he would feed this guy, you, the other guy who comes to the house, I mean the local assembly, he would offer him whisky, he would offer...I was cooking a little food I had, I should offer them, "mind your kids eating first and then offer to others if you have".

Maria's imaginary confrontation with her husband takes place in her last utterance where she shifts person and instead of narrating what 'he' was doing she addresses him on what he should do. 'He' becomes 'you' but 'you' needs an 'I' to confront it. It seems that Maria's 'I' during her husband's reluctance to take care of his family's needs had no space to be revealed. Maria does not narrate what she felt or said when this was happening in the past but I argue that through her imaginary verbal confrontation at present she tries to restore her agency which is absent from her narration of the past. Reclaiming her agency at present Maria confronts her abuse in the past.

In her narrative Dimitra supports herself towards her husband's blaming her of jealousy through constructing arguments at present:

Dimitra: While my parents came, he [her husband] was saying, he downloaded texts about jealousy from the internet, he was trying to convince them I was jealous, for so many years I wasn't jealous of him, why would I be now? And he had been with 'angels' next to him, some really nice girls from abroad.

Dimitra constructs her argument to support herself towards her husband's blaming for jealousy at present. Her husband had invited the audience which would support him and would provide the context within which Dimitra would find herself blamed: her parents. As Dimitra has narrated earlier her parents had advised her to stay in her marriage and submit to her husband's requests to leave her house whenever he was co-operating with the woman Dimitra suspected he had an affair. Based on that support and the knowledge that her parents influence Dimitra her husband invites them to entrap Dimitra further. Dimitra does not narrate whether she argued against his blame at that past moment but as her narrative unfolds at present she provides herself the space to defend herself and resist his blaming. In order to do so Dimitra embarks upon cultural scripts about beauty which is a reason to be jealous of somebody and resists them by narrating that she was not jealous even when her husband was working with some very beautiful women. Therefore, her implied narrative is that it was the context and the meaning of the relationship between her husband and their bridesmaid which made her suspicious. Her subjective perception of reality is affirmed and her agency towards perceiving and estimating reality emerges. However, it is not until some narrative space is provided to her that she does so within which she questions her husband's blaming (*'for so many years I wasn't jealous of him, why would I be now?'*) which is now literally addressed to the listener, me. I argue that her husband and her parents are quasi-present in this narrative and the question is addressed to them as well, as

Dimitra reconstructs the past scene and initiates a self-defense that she did not then. As the listener was actually me I suggest that her narrative was co-constructed by both of us (Mishler, 1996) and alternative discourses became available to her (Elizabeth, 2003) within which she was able to construct her own version of reality.

Dimitra embarks upon the same narrative strategy to construct an imaginary defense towards her husband whom she found out spying her:

Dimitra: So, then I found out. I found out. Of course, then I didn't have the time to bring [the evidence] because we were about to leave. I had to have some evidence anyway. Why are you spying me mister? What am I doing? I'm from morning 'till night with my kids, a housewife, taking care of them, raising them, taking care of you, why are you installing 'bugs'? Why? Are you bothered with me telling to my aunts? I can say anything I want, anyway they are my aunts. Better than blaming you, than saying things, than saying...You have no right to spy me, what I say with my mother, my personal and anything.

Her first phrase 'I found out' which is repeated right after in order to be verified signals her triumph over her husband's secret activities to entrap her. She narrates that she had to have some evidence and then she constructs an imaginary series of rhetoric questions which she would be entitled to pose on her husband after she had that evidence. Dimitra does not totally reject her husband's unethical and illegal action but is rather seeking for meaning when she asks him the reason for spying her. Since she is complying with the roles prescribed for her, taking care of all her family members and being a good housewife, her husband has no reason to spy her. She is seeking for meaning in her disclosure of marital problems to her aunts which she justifies as her right, since she does not blame him. Dimitra's role as a wife is value-laden and her values are informed by cultural scripts about her role

according to which she should not blame her husband to others or 'say things' or say something that remains unarticulated. What could Dimitra say to others about her husband that would blame her for disclosure? Her difficulty in articulating it, punctuated by a pause, could imply the internalization of these cultural scripts about the privacy of marriage, within which she produces a disciplinary self (Elizabeth, 2003) whom she is still not able to escape from. However, she retains some subjectivity and selfhood by considering it her right to have some personal information which she can share with anyone. The questions she poses to her husband at present become the narrative vehicle on which she embarks to reaffirm her subjectivity and the rights deriving from it.

Towards the end of her narrative Dimitra employs the same narrative strategy to reaffirm her decision to leave her husband:

Dimitra: I received a series of letters, anyway, extrajudicial, two extrajudicial letters, then with Gianna [the bridesmaid], always that he loved me, that he was trying to save our marriage, letters full of lies. Full of lies. Save our marriage? Save our marriage by putting me at distance for six months, if I don't ask for forgiveness the marriage is over? And now, the same thing, "if you don't ask for forgiveness the marriage is over". And the marriage was over.

Dimitra narrates that when her marriage was in crisis because of her 'fights' with her husband about his affair he had sent her two letters, though not personal but extrajudicial, where he was stating that he loved her and that he wanted to save their marriage. However, these letters were not personal and therefore their content was not a personal confession to Dimitra but they were informing Dimitra about his line of defense in case they were entering a legal 'fight'. Dimitra rejects their content and argues on that rejection again by addressing questions on their content. She resists the terms posed by her husband on her according to which she should ask for forgiveness in order to stay together. Dimitra affirmed her subjectivity by insisting on not asking for

forgiveness even though her husband's ultimatum was that marriage would end. Her last phrase '*and the marriage was over*' verbalizes her resistance towards her husband's ultimatum and inherent abuse on her and I suggest that her previous questions constructed the base upon which to establish her final resistance and give meaning to it.

As Dimitra provides these narratives within which she finds a space to defend herself, to justify her decision to leave her husband and to give meaning to her decision, she attempts to build a bridge between her past experience of being in an abusive marriage and her present position as a survivor. Dimitra is not yet totally distanced from her experience as it is only a few months that she has been taking support from a women's help agency. Her narrative construction then is located within the context of her inner negotiation and process of self-affirmation informed by two opposite powers: the internalization of her husband's blame and oppressive cultural scripts and her subjective version of lived experience. I argue that the narrative context provided her with the space to experience this negotiation and provide meaning to it (Mishler, 1999; Riessman, 2003).

The impact of women's location on the narrative resistance they construct towards their abusive experience becomes evident by the following narrative. Vasso has separated from her abusive husband many years ago during which she studies psychology and became involved in a women's helping agency as a counselor. As she narrates her resistance towards her past abuse she is able to provide meaning to it:

Vasso: And this was his way of thinking that what he did was always for defense, so he felt threatened, constantly threatened, from what? From my autonomy, from my thinking, from my attitude, from my independence.

Vasso attributes meaning to her husband's abuse by attempting a psychological explanation for it informed by education and experience as a counselor for women who have experienced abuse by their male partners. Since her husband was abusive because he was in a defensive position he must have been feeling threatened. Vasso interprets his

feeling of being threatened in terms of her triumphing subjectivity which she underlines by claiming it as hers. She repeats the possessive pronoun 'my' to indicate the agency of the autonomy, thinking, attitude and independence which threatened her husband. I read her narrative as a resistance narrative initiated by Vasso's attempt to make meaning of her experience signaled by her question on what was threatening her husband. The agent of her question is her present self who verifies the subjectivity of her past self and her narrative provides the context for an inner dialogue within which she makes meaning through her resistance.

Through a repetitive style she elaborates on this process of meaning-making later on:

Vasso: He was returning at 2.00 am and he was waking me up while I was sleeping, I was deeply asleep, shedding the light on me and telling me "tell me, tell me the truth, tell me the truth!" Which truth would I tell him, I hadn't hidden something to...but because I had changed, he didn't accept the change, he didn't accept maturity, he didn't accept the next stage.

Vasso employs the same narrative strategy of posing a question in order to initiate an explanation for her husband's abuse on the grounds of her arising subjectivity within her abusive marriage. She makes meaning through her narrative for her ex-husband's abuse by indicating and repeating the agent of the abuse: he was the one that did not accept her subjectivity which was arising and being constructed against his abuse challenging his unquestioned authority. Vasso does not narrate what her response towards her husband's abuse was then but rather provides a space for herself at present to reclaim her subjectivity which was evident in the past, while she was in an abusive relationship.

Summary

I have attempted to highlight the importance of narrative context in order to provide alternative discourses to women who have experienced abuse, where they can construct their resistance towards abuse in narrative terms. Although the men whom they resist are not literally present in their narratives they are quasi-present, invited in their narratives in order to be resisted. Towards constructing their narratives of resistance the women I interviewed employed some strategies some of which are common and some of which are idiosyncratic and instill their narratives. I have tried to contextualize their narrative strategies of resisting in terms of their current location and the influence of their social and cultural context on the narrative discourses available to them. I have argued that the narrative context provided at present to women who have experienced abuse leaves space for alternative discourses on abuse as well as on women's resistance towards it. Through focused listening and attention to the personal narrative strategies employed by each woman resistance can be traced and the agents of this resistance can be affirmed.

CHAPTER 8: IMPLICATIONS

Questions about production of knowledge as a social process (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994) enter at this point of my research where I attempt to interrogate my research findings for the implications they might have. As happened with earlier stages of my research where decisions about what to research and how to research it emerged, in this chapter I provide some implications of my research, some out of many that could be suggested depending on the theoretical, methodological and ethical orientation of the researcher. First, I discuss the context within which Greek women narrate abuse and resistance for it is this context that leads to a more articulated conceptualization of 'resistance' within women's narratives, one that has a more contested meaning, yet one with which I argue social work can be occupied. I try to contextualize Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance within my feminist perspective by drawing from relevant literature in order to suggest the need for a new theoretical framework through which to approach the issue of abuse towards women by their male partners in Greece. And second, since my disciplinary framework is social work I attempt to transfer the discussion to the field of social work practice and drawing from Greek women's narratives of abuse I try to make some suggestions for social work practice.

8.1 Theorizing Greek women's resistance(s)

The starting point of my analysis of women's resistance towards abuse and abusive male partners has been other researchers' argument that resistance is omnipresent where there is abuse (Elizabeth, 2003; Faith, 1994; Hydén, 1999; Wade, 1997) and that women manifest resistance in various, complex ways (Campbell et al.1998; Chantler, 2006; Elizabeth, 2003; Kelly, 1988; Kirkwood, 1993; Wilcox, 2006). Therefore, women's resistance does not have to be public, organized and formal (Riessman, 2000) nor successful (Kelly, 1988). The coping strategies women employ to resist abuse are not monolithic, neither mutually exclusive (Kelly, 1988) and are related to the context within

which they are employed (Naples, 2003; Wade, 1997) the effectiveness they might have (Kelly, 1988) as well as the 'individual's social orbit (Elizabeth, 2003). Drawing from this literature I argue that defining resistance as an act that challenges patriarchal relations is too demanding for women who are abused by their male partners as they are expected to be successful in resisting only if they provoke social changes. I also argue that such a definition of resistance has implications for the support they are provided as well since women are often blamed by their social networks and sometimes by the professionals for not resisting in more effective ways. Therefore, I define resistance(s) as coping strategies that manifest that women do not tolerate abuse, that they would stop it directly if they could, that they actively use resources available and that it takes determination to use agency; even when women's resistance(s) are not successful they are not passive since they provoke a change on their current conditions within abuse. The resistance(s) I traced within Greek women's narratives are pluralized, heterogeneous, diverse and related to the resources available and constraints posed by both the patriarchal context and their unique social positions. As the changes each form of resistance causes vary in extent I conceptualize resistance(s) as divided into open and subtle forms. Drawing from women's narratives I conceptualized open resistance as those active responses on the part of women who have experienced abuse by their male partners which overtly confront the perpetrator and make him aware that abuse is not tolerated anymore and which threaten the stability of the relationship.

In terms of the meaning attached to women's subtle resistance, I comply with researchers who have roughly distinguished strategies of resistance which are 'disguised activities' (Wade, 1997), 'choreographed demonstration of co-operation' (Faith, 1994), 'resistant thinking' (Riessman, 2000), 'denying violence' or 'keeping it secret' (Hydén, 2000), 'subtle resistance' (Roche and Wood, 2005) or 'doing gender' (Cavanagh, 2003) as opposed to open defiance. Subtle forms of resistance are often employed by women living within abusive relationships in order to resist, when other forms of open resistance are not accessible to them due to the impact of abuse on their agency, which

makes it difficult for them to respond in more challenging ways (Cavanagh, 2003).

I have conceptualized 'narrative resistance' to be located within women's 'resistance discourse' which is signaled by shifts in tone of voice, initiation of imaginary confrontations with their partners, questioning of the situation and/or their partners' authority and employment of irony. When women initiate these narrative acts of resistance they do not clarify whether their content was ever known to their abusive partners and therefore this kind of resistance is located at present and has retrospective applicability. That is, women may have never made the content of this resistance known to their partners while it is referred to the past. I argue that the narrative resistance women enact within their present accounts contains resistance applied to their past experience which either remained unarticulated or is re-enacted in a style that empowers them at present. Consequently, interrogating women's accounts for narrative resistance might provide space for expressing resistance which would remain unarticulated outside the narrative context. The terms I use in order to trace these resistance(s) in Greek women's narratives are themselves commonsensical, employed within the patriarchal social context within which the women I interviewed experience abuse, however in order to challenge the blame they convey for women.

In terms of subtle resistances, Greek women narrated ambiguity, compliance and emotional distancing. Each of these researched forms of resistance was in turn constrained or enabled by each woman's social, material and cultural context as well as personal resources. Ambivalence was analysed as related to the interactive context of the abusive relationship, especially when it is generated by the perpetrators' 'acknowledgment' of their abuse. Ambivalence is also experienced according to how each woman rationalized their partner's abuse and personal capacity to manage violence.

Compliance was contextualized within the preceding ambiguity towards their partners and was analyzed as an act of resistance in the light of gender oppression that leads women to self-subjugation, of the

fear for escalation of violence, of the cultural scripts about romantic love and jealousy as a proof of romantic love, of the 'filotimo' (love of honor) script (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001) which in the narratives of the women I interviewed meant that the wife respects her parents-in-law, the fact that she has been accepted by them as well as their efforts to fix her marriage. Compliance was also contextualized as an act of resistance by reference to some women's tender feelings for their partners. The form that compliance took in some Greek women's narratives as devious means of managing abuse (Wilcox, 2006) is conceptualized as resistance in the light of the gendered beliefs these women had internalized. There were also structural constraints that dictated compliance for some Greek women. Emotional distancing has been conceptualized as resistance as such distancing became the space where the women that narrated it could exercise their agency as it is a space inaccessible by their abusive partners. Emotional distancing was evident as disgust, estrangement, questioning of the partner's personality and anger and was most overtly evident in sexual life – sex is used as a means of control in abusive relationships (Weiss, 2004) and in women's health.

In terms of open resistance the Greek women I interviewed manifested it as verbal confrontation, seeking support and taking initiatives towards abuse. Some women narrated that their initial verbal resistance turned their partners to persons they had no reason to resist anymore. Some women's verbal resistance provoked their partner's temporal apologies and accounting (Cavanagh, 2003) so that women had no reason to resist anymore. However, as their narratives unfolded it became evident that their partners' compromise was a technique through which they regained power over their wives. It seems that women's feelings can become another site of abusive men's control as it is often through relying on women's feelings that they exert their abuse. Some women's verbal confrontation with their abusive partners was contextualized within their narratives in terms of duration of the relationship, escalation of abuse, material conditions and sources of support and were conceptualized as a process. Most of the women I

interviewed narrated verbal confrontation with their abusive partners which led to further abuse.

Regarding help-seeking most of the women I interviewed sought support or went public and disclosed the abuse they were experiencing within their relationship with a male partner at some point. Compatible with previous research on help-seeking (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Wilcox, 2006) the women I interviewed sought help and disclosed abuse to people close to them after suffering abuse for various periods. In addition, women's help-seeking was not a straightforward act but rather a process which included interchange of acts of open and subtle resistance as well as different levels of determination on the part of women to change the situation. Seeking support also involved both informal networks and formal agencies and differed in terms of the abusive partners' awareness that their wives/partners actually seek support. I argue that although there are commonalities amongst women's help-seeking strategies, the unique context within which women initiate them calls for exploration of differences as well. When some of the women I interviewed found abuse unbearable and wanted to talk to someone they did not aim at escaping from abuse and/or the relationship with their abuser. During that phase women contacted parents and/or friends without actually asking for help but rather just disclosing abuse. When women disclosed abuse to their parents they were sometimes faced with cultural commands to keep the marriage going. Some of the women I interviewed challenged this gender-stereotyping while others were constrained by them. For some women these cultural scripts were coupled with material constraints. Sometimes women turn to their informal context to disclose abuse without having articulated what exactly it is they are looking for. Instead of interpreting this behaviour as mere ambivalence on the part of women, it has to be contextualized within the Greek cultural context where just talking to somebody for a personal problem provides relief and possibly some space for women to reflect on their experience through 'sharing their pain' (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001). Even when women just seek for understanding of their experience and do not pursue change of

the situation, their initiative to disclose abuse is an act of resistance, since women depart from the 'privacy of the marriage' and attempt to attribute to their husbands their negative characteristics instead of protecting their husband's dignity by being silent. Drawing from the narratives Greek women provided, it seems that a woman may disclose abuse without altering her situation, however employing discussions on the subject with those she has made aware of the situation can act as a relief and can also construct her safe haven where she could turn when the situation becomes unbearable with the abusive partner.

Some women, especially those who found disclosure of abuse to their family as an act which would put further pressure on them, turned to friends to seek support. Sometimes friends, especially when they are common friends of the couple, provide support to the marriage instead of providing support to the woman who seeks for it. When women sought professional support they did resist abuse but they did so within a context that calls for personal change instead of structural changes and their attempts to acquire support can sometimes endure patriarchal systems and cultural scripts.

Some women seek help from professionals while they are actually seeking therapy for their abusive husbands. Since abusive husbands are reluctant to see a therapist because that would mean taking responsibility for their behaviour, some women see therapists in order to find out what is wrong with their abusive husbands. Women might not be informed or even conscious about the kind of support they need but when exposed to it they initiate channels of communication. As women narrate not knowing where to seek professional help from, they initiate informal talks—some of which are dangerous for their physical safety—with people who seem responsible to inform them. As the information provided is fragmented and sometimes blurred, some women turn to police and hospitals as the most dominant helping authorities where they are sometimes met with further dilemmas. Without a legislative context to protect mainly women's physical safety women refrained from calling the police. Therefore, it might be argued that when women do nothing to confront their abusive husbands it might be not because they do not resist

but because their resistance is not further sustained by structural factors. When women know from the beginning that even acquiring evidence for the abuse they suffer will involve them in a system within which the law, cultural norms and patriarchal ideology will further abuse them they might refrain from acquiring this evidence. Sometimes, this reluctance might be combined with the feelings they have for their partners whom they protect from vilification. From women's active initiatives to disclose abuse it becomes evident that the context within which women seek help and go public plays a significant role in both motivating women and providing helpful support or not. The context is also the interpretive mean through which the support-seeking acts of the women I interviewed acquire their meaning in terms of the people they contacted, the extent to which they were determined to escape the relationship and therefore women's staying/leaving dilemmas. Cultural norms, patriarchal ideologies and structural gender inequalities contribute to women's hesitation to seek support for escaping abuse. Within this context other factors are to be taken into consideration in unpacking acts of help-seeking like length and severity of the violence, children and emotional and material resources.

Finally, women's emotions towards their abusive partners might hinder women from seeking support more actively until they reach a point where all the contextual factors can support a more determined act of help-seeking. The women I interviewed provided narratives of help-seeking and disclosing abuse that coincide with those that women have narrated in relevant research (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Wilcox, 2006). However, the particularities of the Greek legislative and cultural context have an impact on both commonalities and differences of each woman's acts of help-seeking. Uniqueness of each woman's resisting strategies becomes more evident when interrogating women's active initiatives to resist their partners' abuse. I argue that when these initiatives are focused upon they reveal women's active resistance towards abuse and/or their abusive partners. They also imply that women who experience abuse and its negative

consequences on them initiate ways to maintain some level of self-determination although they still remain in the abusive relationship.

In terms of 'narrative resistance' some of the women I interviewed employed other people's voices to resist abuse and/or their abusive partners. Within their narrative accounts some of the women I interviewed constructed imaginary dialogues with their perpetrators in order to confront them. I argue that such imaginary dialogues are narrative devices to verbally express their resistance towards narrated abuse in ways that were not available when they were in the abusive relationship. Irony towards their abusive husbands' behaviour and opinions is evident in other women's narratives. I have attempted to highlight the importance of narrative context in order to provide alternative discourses to women who have experienced abuse, where they can construct their resistance towards abuse in narrative terms. Although the men whom they resist are not literally present in their narratives they are quasi-present, invited in their narratives in order to be resisted. Towards constructing their resistance narratives the women I interviewed employed some strategies some of which are common and some of which are idiosyncratic and instill their narratives. I have tried to contextualize their narrative strategies of resisting in terms of their current location and the influence of their social and cultural context on the narrative discourses available to them. I have argued that the narrative context provided at present to women who have experienced abuse leaves space for alternative discourses on abuse as well as on women's resistance towards it.

Within such a conceptualization resistance can be perceived as a process rather than a specific point. Throughout this process gender and feminine identity are not merely personal issues but concepts related and constructed by family and social environment, culture, religion and psychological load. The social context, perceived as family, friends, social policy/services and judicial system can play a crucial role towards 'escape'. At the same time the material reality of women who have been abused impacts on their agency which in turn shapes their resistance(s). It becomes evident from such an approach to resistance that the standpoint

within which such an approach is attempted has implications for the theorization of Greek women's resistance to abuse and informs social work policy and practice in distinctive ways. Therefore, my theorization of Greek women's resistance(s) to abuse is organically related to the feminist standpoint I embarked upon for my research. Having acknowledged that, I will discuss the implications of my interpretation with reference to Greek women's resistance(s) to abuse as contextualized by a feminist discourse which I will try to define.

My interpretation of Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance is about a "shift in viewpoint away from the realm of the individual to the realm of the social" (Elizabeth, 2003:62). The 'social' here is not to be considered as an abstract space but rather as what Dobash and Dobash (1979) referred to when introducing the 'context-specific' approach, within which women's abuse is interchangeably connected with its historical context and integrates the "isolated and seemingly unconnected aspects of social life" (Dobash and Dobash, 1979:27). How are women's abuse and resistance approached through this prism then? Before we can look for effective responses to women's abuse we could first approach it through its double identity: as both a personal and a social experience. In other words, women's abusive experience needs to be validated by being listened to and understood and on the other hand it has to be located within its social context. As Kelly (2000) puts it: "one challenge we all still face is how to make the voices and experiences of victims/survivors central in a respectful way, which neither uses them only to support our existing perspective nor neglects our responsibility to move beyond individual experience to encompass social context and ask why".

Within my research study, context is conceptualized as the interaction among several structural and social categories, cultural framework and personal biography that influence the construction of women's narratives of abuse, together with the narrative context. The women I interviewed share common 'contextual characteristics' such as gender and nationality but they also carry their unique biographic features. By interrogating women's narratives for commonalities and

differences (Fraser, 2003) through contextualizing them a dual task is accomplished: first, a common story of abuse can be constructed without essentializing neither the term 'woman' nor the term 'abuse' because that would mean erasing women's subjectivity. At the same time, by interrogating women's contexts of abuse a political narrative is created which points to the constraints posed on Greek women's agency and resistance. I argue that both these tasks can inform social work policy and practice in Greece.

Constraints of agency for Greek women are similar to those of other women researched elsewhere and some of these are financial hardship, material deprivation, unemployment, inappropriate or lack of housing (Kirkwood, 1993; Wilcox, 2006). For the Greek women I interviewed constraints of agency and resistance were also posed by the particular social and cultural context, where specific values and stereotypes oppress Greek women.

The influence of context is related with the narrative itself as the narrative context leaves space to women for narrating oppressive experience and disrupted events through which they pursue meaning and acquire coherence. Contextual factors intersect in each woman's narrative and construct unique narratives even when some of these factors are common. What mediates common contextual factors and the narrative provided is the located experience of constructing the narrative. The narrative interview occurs once and throughout its duration the structural, social and cultural factors influencing each woman's subjectivity interact with her personal biography and the context we have created at that particular moment. The narrative context provided the space for each woman to comply with, challenge and even transcend common perceptions and cultural scripts about womanhood, intimacy, marriage and social expectations towards constructing a common story of challenging abuse without essentializing women's experiences.

Within this narrative context each woman and I were met carrying our influences by the social context we inhabit. We all shared common structural characteristics such as our gender and nationality and with some we shared more. Each woman entered this narrative

relationship upon the social orbit she found herself at that time and was met with me who entered this narrative context as a young, educated, married and childless researcher. At the points where our social orbits met our relationship was developing evenly; women narrators perceived my understandings of being a woman in contemporary Greece as given. At the same time, as an educated researcher I was expected to carry knowledge on issues that my personal location did not allow me.

Sharing the same Greek cultural context smoothed such social divisions between women narrators and me. Their experiences of abuse were not familiar to me but the way such experiences of gender-based violence can be filtered through the Greek cultural context was. Most of the women narrated both being supported and further abused by their social contexts. Their parents made efforts to convince them to 'make the marriage work' as wives should do. Within such a cultural order women's experience of abuse was distorted as they felt they should leave but leaving carried the meaning of a cultural betrayal. When women tried to conform to such cultural scripts they narrated experiences of ambivalence, compliance and emotional distancing as personal resistance strategies which were then personalized by each woman according to further social and structural influences.

Interrogating the intersections of social, structural and cultural categories involved in women's narratives contributed in unpacking the unique yet common and political narrative of abuse and resistance.

My findings regarding the context of resistance coincides with existing literature that argues for the importance of highlighting the agency constraints in accessing and employing coping or resistance strategies (Campbell et al., 1998; Chantler, 2006; Hydén, 1999; Kelly, 1988; Lempert, 1996; Wade, 1997; Waldrop and Resick, 2004; Wilcox, 2006). Interrogating Greek women's narratives for resistance towards abuse and abusive partners revealed that women do resist, sometimes in overt forms and other times in unique ways. The context within which they make either deliberate or reactionary choices of resistance strategies plays a crucial role in understanding women's responses as active and situated. The context within which the Greek women I interviewed

experienced abuse and resisted provided constraints as well. As none of the women I interviewed narrated extreme physical violence they did not narrate threat for their life as a constraint towards resisting, however threat of retaliation included initiation of further abuse and escalation of abuse that was stressful for the women and therefore limited their access to open defiance with their abusive partners. From my analysis of Greek women's narratives of resistance it became evident that other predictors of coping strategies, such as severity of abuse and length of relationship (Waldrop and Resick, 2004) were not unilaterally associated with the forms of resistance women finally employed. Although the resistance strategies women employed were informed by their social, cultural, structural and personal resources context they were not related in a straightforward way. Situational factors impacted upon their resistance strategies and this finding challenges the accuracy of predicting factors on women's resistance. Structural constraints, oppressive social and cultural scripts and limited personal resources caused by gender-based socialization of Greek women had an extremely important impact upon their resistance strategies. Their narratives though revealed that simply challenging these constraints did not cause the shift necessary in order to challenge abuse itself. For the women I interviewed this shift happened as a spiral process consisting of movements inwards and outwards of abuse and marked by interchangeable subtle and open forms of resistance.

Within my analysis I attempted to unpack the contextual nature of resistance without aiming at relating these acts of resistance with the final escape from the abusive relationship or the challenging of patriarchal relations. However, I argue that by interrogating women's narratives of resistance a better understanding of their experience and of their needs as well as strengths is provided.

My analysis of Greek women's narratives of abuse was embedded with feminism(s). The patriarchal order within which Greek women are raised and socialized might justify the employment of a feminist analysis. However, contemporary Greek society is contradictory and within its context, feminine identities are negotiated particularly on

the grounds of marriage (Loizos and Papataxiarchis, 1991; Papataxiarchis, 1992). Reflection on this assertion led me to the hypothesis that women's self-conceptualization is located somewhere between feminism and something 'less than feminism' or 'a little differentiated from feminism' which could probably be attributed to a different kind of social and cultural reality they experience than the one evident when traditional feminism was developing.

None of the women I interviewed was involved in feminist movements neither were they identified with feminist discourses and political stances. However, as my analysis revealed all of them provided narratives of resistance to abuse through which they identified with feminist objectives of challenging gender-based oppression. The material conditions within which the women I interviewed experienced abuse and provided their narratives of resistance were almost common for all of them, however their identification with oppressive cultural beliefs and norms, though internalized by all of them, were not challenged to the same extent by all of them. Some of the women I interviewed narrated cultural scripts that oppressed them but did not criticize them as oppressive. Some were struggling with the implications of such oppressive cultural scripts while others explicitly resisted them. However, even this challenging of oppressive norms was not a straightforward stance.

Frosso resisted her father's conceptualization of the social category 'woman' but later challenged the usefulness of being involved in a women's group for her as she could not identify with the perceived misery such groups were involved with. Olga resisted her husband's abuse but did not turn out to devalue heterosexual love relationships as she narrated acquiring pleasure from her current heterosexual love relationship. All the narratives of the women I interviewed were shifting between stories of love and abuse and heading to the reconstruction of these stories for the sake of self-coherence. At the same time, all of the women I interviewed made references to their material conditions either as constraining factors towards their escape (Wilcox, 2006) or implicitly as influencing the way they entered their abusive heterosexual

relationships (Fraser, 2003). I argue that such reflections call for an interpretation and related practice to support them that value each woman's experience, needs and strengths while at the same time contextualize it in a common political story of abuse in Greece, which involves and unpacks structural and cultural constraints distorting women's experience of abuse and opportunities to escape.

It is within this diversity in Greek women's stories that the exploration of their contradictions and common concerns is necessary towards the accomplishment of the ultimate goal to change the oppressive conditions for women, while at the same time understanding and validating their differences and complexities.

These contradictory experiences and ambivalence they generate for women are evident in Greece (Igglessi, 1990) and provide a context within which Greek women's abuse by their male partners was analysed. Social transformations in Greece after the Second World War defined new needs and opportunities while at the same time traditional values are still internalized by women. This contradiction is experienced by women as an internal conflict between traditional, internalized patterns and a new 'better' reality which, however, is not clear, as evident both from policy and legislation (Igglessi, 1990). As a Greek feminist researcher notes (Igglessi, 1990), the Greek society, traditionally deeply oppressive for women, is nowadays characterized by these inherent conflicts. Contemporary values of self-actualization and equal treatment are all around, however, the process towards change does not construct a unified context regarding women's gender role. It is within this climate that violence by their male partners is experienced by Greek women and resistance is manifested in its various forms.

These theoretical suggestions were evident in the narratives Greek women provided and possibly explain the way Greek women form their resistances to abuse. The Greek women I interviewed narrated being in and out of their abusive relationships, perpetuating and challenging the patriarchal context within which they were shaping their resistances. At the same time some of these women were educated and employed while others were uneducated and unemployed. Rather than undermining their

resisting strategies, commonalities and differences among women point to the need for constructing a theory that both does justice to women's personal experience of abuse and resistance and involves structural components of oppression in the analysis of this experience. The Greek cultural context within which such a need emerges calls for paying attention to the way knowledge about women's experience of abuse and women's resistance to abuse is constructed. Some of the women interviewed in my research inhabited social locations from where to challenge oppression while they were also able to exercise power through their resistance strategies. At the same time all of the women I interviewed, homogeneous as they were in terms of cultural context influencing their gender socialization narrated similar cultural scripts regarding abuse and marriage. Therefore, the interplay between feminist and post-feminist theories was omnipresent.

It might be argued that throughout any feminist approach to domestic violence a theoretical aim needs to be identified towards changing women's condition which leads neither to an apolitical, nihilistic view, nor to a standpoint ignorant of women's subjective experiences. Therefore, the theoretical framework of my research was constructed as a dynamic process, an ongoing dialogue, which employs a structural analysis of women's position and on the other hand validates women's subjective experiences, which are situated within a complex and heterogeneous context.

The acts of resistance of the women I interviewed were analytically placed within feminism(s). The various forms of women's resisting strategies which challenge their depiction as passive victims and highlights their survival skills is the legacy of feminist research on women's abuse (Campbell et al., 1998; Chantler, 2006; Hydén, 1999; Kelly, 1988; Lempert, 1996; Wade, 1997; Waldrop and Resick, 2004; Wilcox, 2006). On the other hand, as women's narratives revealed resistance strategies as complex, situated, interchangeable, contextual and multiple they called for a theory that could encompass these traits of their experience, which traditional feminism can overlook. My argument is that in order for Greek women to unpack their resistance towards abuse

and provide some critical understandings of their experience of abuse within which resistance occurs a theoretical context is needed which encompasses the ambivalence social progress and traditional values have generated (Chatzifotiou and Dobash, 2001; Igglessi, 1990).

It then becomes evident that it is within this theoretical context that Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance might be interpreted if we are to understand the complexities they convey and politicize their local experience (Roche and Wood, 2005).

8.2 Informing social work practice through Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance

My analysis of Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance is stitched to the fabric of social work in terms of theory, methodology and practice.

The current discussion about the changing role of social work in contemporary times (Parton, 2003) and reflections on 'what works?' in social work (Taylor, 2006) are located within uncertainty and complexities with which current social work practice is faced (Parton, 2003; Hall and White, 2005). A partial answer to that complexity has been a turn to narratives within social work research and practice (Butler, Ford and Tregaskis, 2007; Denzin, 2002; Fraser, 2003; Hall and White, 2005; Sherman and Reid, 1994; Shaw and Ruckdeschel, 2002; Riessman and Quinney, 2005; Wilks, 2005). Embedded with this discussion about social work practice in the 'narrative era' are discussions about social work theory and research (Beresford, 2000; Denzin, 2002; Butt and Parton, 2005; Hall and White, 2005), production of knowledge for social work (Scourfield, 2002; Taylor, 2006) and relevant implications for social work values and ethics (Scourfield, 2002; Wilks, 2005). Current scholarship on social work provides insights about a reflexive practice, where the narrator/service user and the practitioner/researcher are both involved in the process of meaning-making and knowledge construction within which values are situated, relational and negotiated (Beresford, 2000; Butt and Parton, 2005; Scourfield, 2002; Taylor, 2006; Wilks, 2005). It is within this framework that some recent research on women's

abuse has taken place (Eisikovits, Buchbinder and Mor, 1998; Enosh and Buchbinder, 2005a; 2005b; Fraser, 2003; 2004; Roche and Wood, 2005; Riessman, 1994; Wood and Roche, 2001) and informed my research practice and therefore guides my implications.

My objective to relate my research process with social work in order to provide some implications is embedded not only with current debates about social work theory and practice but also with social work practice in Greece especially as undertaken with women who have experienced abuse by their male partners. Domestic violence as an area of social work research and practice is rather recent in Greece posing challenges to current social work education, research, policy and practice. Within the context of 'domestic violence' social workers in Greece are now faced with the need to redefine their duties, techniques, perception of and knowledge about women who have been abused by their male partners.

The discussion I initiate about social work practice with women who have been abused draws from my narrative research findings. As there is no published literature on feminist narrative methodology towards researching women's abuse in Greece my task provides space for originality yet generates risks of remaining uncontextualized by an existing corpus of research. Informed by these considerations my analysis provides implications for social work that challenge traditional practice by questioning its theoretic framework and by introducing some implications for social work practice with women who have been abused by their male partners.

Located within the wider feminist context my narrative research has been open to complexity and ambiguity. Complexity and ambiguity is the context within which contemporary Greek women form their identities (Igglessi, 1990). At the same time the contemporary Greek family encompasses both modern and traditional values, perceptions and stereotypes (Chatzifotiou, 2005). The narrative context provided space for women to speak the unspeakable and reflect on their experience without considering the implications their narrative might have for the kind of support they would be provided. Olga's disclosure about her

current relationship with another man which she had not confessed to her counsellor provided insights about the judgments made about a woman who has been abused by helping services as a compliance with a wider patriarchal context which puts constraints on women's pleasures. Frosso's reluctance to be involved in any kind of women's helping agencies due to the perceived misery these groups perpetuate provided implications for challenging meta-narratives regarding women's lives as merely oppressed. Vasso's narrative of depression which now she reflects upon as being 'O.K' challenges traditional social work tendencies to work within a medical framework which provides support according to essentialist diagnoses. These women were able to reflect upon their objections to the kind of help provided while at the same time they spoke of uncertainty, abuse and resistance.

Their written feedbacks regarding the experience of narrating their stories highlight some issues that could inform social work practice.

Dimitra wrote that while at the beginning she felt hesitant later she felt relieved and forward looking. Frosso wrote that it was a victory for her not to cry during her narration and that it was helpful for her not to be oriented towards what she should say and to what extent. Vasso felt she was being actively listened and reflected upon our mutual exchanges of feelings and thoughts that cannot be articulated and that the interest of the interviewer, freed from judgmental and defence, provided her motives to go on. Anthi wrote that by listening to her narration she had the chance to reflect upon her management of her abusive relationship and felt stronger. Although women's feedback is situated within the context of our narrative interview which conveys different meanings than that of the professional help context, it provides some insights about social work practice, which I try to explore.

The women that provided feedback underlined the need for a reflexive talk about their experience. Unpacking this statement, I believe that women speak about their need to narrate rather than just answer questions. I argue that behind this need to narrate there is a need for reconstruction of their stories and their selfhood as a protagonist of these stories. I argue that the role of the narrator differs from that of the service

user in terms of pre-conceived ideas about what and how is to be said which might be further oppressive. I also hear from women's feedbacks that if there is some identification between the role of the researcher and the practitioner in terms of their common struggle to make meaning and construct knowledge for practice (Butt and Parton, 2005) this role is that of a person who is in the 'not knowing' position and participates actively in the construction of the narrative. I argue that such a configuration of the practitioner's role challenges traditional social workers' role of professionals who are in a position to know what is best (Fraser, 2005) and towards such a 'safe knowledge' they have internalized cultural scripts and uncontested values informing their practice. I do not claim that challenging this role is an easy task and this is why I argue for a reflexive practice which monitors personal constraints. I conceptualize reflexive social work practice to be open to ambiguity, to challenge oppressive cultural scripts and to monitor the impact of such scripts on social work practice; provision of help becomes a kind of artistry informed by the knowledge produced by those who have the experience of 'the problem'. Throughout this process the practitioner is not simply performing art, as I argue that such a stance might jeopardize women's interests and emotional well-being, but rather abandons the position of knowing 'what to do' for that of 'how to do it' (Parton, 2003). Women's feedback on the narrative experience highlighted the importance of reflexive practice in this sense, since non-judgemental comments, active listening and co-construction of the story and avoidance of orientation on what needs to be said were valued as helpful.

When social work conceptualizes Greek women's experiences of abuse and resistance(s) as personal and social, diverse, complex and located within structural and cultural constraints of their agency I argue that certain implications for practice are generated and feminist research is related with policy and practice (Hester, Kelly and Radford, 1996).

A feminist-informed social work practice with women who have been abused by their male partners can redefine the problem (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989) by reference to the context of social power relations which are gendered as male domination and female subordination

(Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Itzin, 2001; Kelly and Radford, 1996; 1998; Mahoney, 1994; 1998; Stark and Flitcraft, 1996; Wilcox, 2006). It becomes evident that such a definition of men's abuse towards women deflects blame from women for their perceived victimization which has characterized social work practice with women who have been abused by their male partners (Farmer and Owen, 1998; Hester and Pearson, 1998).

When blame is deflected from women space is opened up for exploring women's strengths as feminist social work suggests (Dominelli, 2002; Dominelli and McLeod, 1989; Hanmer and Statham, 1999). It would be simplistic to say that any woman's action or inaction towards abuse could be renamed as resistance; rather, I argue that by carefully reflecting on women's responses to abuse and searching for resistance within the social work context women can reflect upon their actions and inactions and reclaim responsibility or deflect blame by re-interpreting their responses as active. Towards this aim the impact of the context within which such actions and inactions were employed is fundamental in understanding how these responses are constructed and situational rather than expected, predicted and simplistically divided into action or passivity. The social work context can provide space for alternative scripts of abuse and resistance and in the case of Greek women's narratives of abuse and resistance many of the women interviewed seized the opportunity to challenge oppressive cultural scripts and social norms as well as conceptualizations of their responses as passive.

My interpretation of Greek women's narratives suggests that for social work practice to be of some help for women who have been abused a possible way would be to employ a critical stance towards any narrative provided for explaining abuse by considering structural inequalities and gender oppression as evident in women's narratives while at the same time be attentive to each woman's biography and complexity. Not all women who experience abuse in Greece inhabit the same social locations and therefore a careful appreciation of each woman's position would do justice to her experience of abuse and access to opportunities for resistance. Simultaneously, 'Greek women' is not an

essentialist notion within which their experience can be analyzed. The narratives that Greek women provided imply that women's experiences need to be valued for their uniqueness or difficultly to be categorized.

I argue that in order for women's abuse and resistance to inform practice and promote social justice and change it needs to be undertaken as a political task. Towards such a task I argue that social work practice with women who have been abused by their male partners is two-fold: first, it needs to consider, analyze and challenge the social, cultural and structural context within which Greek women experience abuse part of which is social work practice itself. At the same time social work practice can be attentive to Greek women's micro-politics of everyday resistance and search for 'resistances'. As my analysis revealed instead of employing pre-defined categories of women's resistance to abuse, forms of abuse can be constructed and situated within women's narratives from which they acquire their meaning. When social work is attentive to both the personal and social context of abuse and resistance it can possibly realize the task of bettering women's emotional and material realities (Dominelli, 2002).

The narratives of the Greek women I interviewed provided implications for social work practice with women who have been abused pointing to the need for unpacking the social, cultural and material constraints that can be posed on women's agency. Instead of posing erroneous dilemmas about staying/leaving on women who experience abuse, social work can interrogate the complexities of Greek women's lives shaped by their context and undertake responsibility for perpetuating or challenging this oppressive context. All of the women I interviewed narrated at some point of our interview facing difficulties with their finances or with acquiring a job since they had nowhere to leave their children. Such difficulties are reinforced by the care-giving ideology which at several instances might be internalized by social work practice. When the Greek social work practice espouses the cultural norms and beliefs shared by women's social environment it undermines any effort on the part of the woman who experience abuse to reclaim their autonomy and dignity that social work is committed to promote.

However, acknowledging that the Greek women who ask for support at agencies where social workers are occupied are abused by their partners signals a crucial decision that has to be taken by social workers: are they to support women towards regaining their autonomy, are they to protect their children by prioritizing their needs instead of their mothers or are they to contribute to sustaining the family? These questions are posed by the social and cultural context that both women and social workers inhabit and have to be answered not only on the grounds of social workers' diverse identities (White, 2006) but also in accordance with the Greek social policy on the issue. I argue that there is contradiction evident in social workers' role when practising with women who have been abused. The legislative framework within which social workers carry out our practice with battered women provides implications about what our values and aims should be. In the causative report of the new legislation on domestic violence it is clearly stated that "the aim of the current law is to address the issue of domestic violence on the grounds of the principles of freedom, self-determination and dignity of the person, in order to reinforce the harmonic coexistence of persons within the family framework" (Artinopoulou, 2006:201). The family then becomes a cultural and social value which social work has to promote and it is towards maintaining the family that women's interests and safety might be ignored. Such a legislative framework mirrors the Greek cultural framework within which family is traditionally respected (Artinopoulou, 2006) and within which social workers are raised, educated and practice social work. As my research suggested the women who have been abused might themselves sometimes display loyalty towards values and cultural scripts that undermine their autonomy and self-actualization and I argue that this is a blurry moment when social workers can further oppress women on these grounds by not challenging women's positioning vis-à-vis abuse. It must be clarified here that by challenging women's stereotypical perceptions of abuse I do not mean to falsify their experiences and realities; nor do I imply that the family in Greece has to be dismantled in order for women to live free from abuse; rather, as my interpretation of Greek women's narratives suggested, I

argue that through a feminist informed listening that seeks and builds on women's strengths women's resistance(s) to abuse and therefore their agency can be brought to the fore. When women are supported to undertake agentic actions social work can be said to realize its aims by being faithful to its values.

As mentioned above, social workers in Greece practice social work within statutory and non-statutory agencies which operate in accordance with particular policies, theoretical and political orientation and resources. When I interviewed Greek women who had been abused and especially when they were narrating asking for help from formal agencies I often thought that each of these women could probably have avoided much further harm had she acquired the information and support she needed directly and easily. When this lack of information is related to social work, apart from suggesting that social work can do much in disseminating information and sensitizing the public, I also suggest that social work can play a crucial role in undermining gender oppression and stereotyping relevant to women's abuse through campaigning. I argue that social workers –as well as other professionals occupied with the issue- can be much more effective towards this aim as their professional profile can render their views more penetrative to the Greek public. However, if social work is to challenge stereotypes such as 'women-masochists' or 'women-victims' with an absent agency for whom professionals and all others around them know what is better it must abandon the stance of knowing better and employ one that asserts that women themselves know differently and that this knowledge is valuable in promoting women's needs and interests. In order for social work to explore and build on women's agency when dealing with abuse by their male partners, I argue that social work needs to abandon the traditional 'professional-client' model within which pathologizing is more possible to happen and listen to what women know differently so that alternative suggestions can be made to accommodate each woman.

The social and cultural context within which social workers in Greece deal with issues of domestic violence is also characterized by a focus on children. The Greek welfare system is divided into Directorates,

one of which is the Directorate of Family Protection. One of its structures and activities is about children and family (Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, www.mohaw.gr). Social workers who are all supervised by the Ministry are most likely to form their practice in accordance with these priorities and face crucial dilemmas when working with women who have been abused and have children. In such cases, we, as social workers, usually expect women to display agency and resistance to abuse—especially when abuse is exercised over children as well—while at the same time we are challenged by women's resistance to abuse when it threatens the stability of the family which we think must remain 'for the sake of the children'. I argue that social work could and should unpack and reinforce women's resistance to abuse for the sake of their children as well – it is a matter not only of safety and respect of rights but also a conscientization of children that acts of abuse and violence are unacceptable regardless of who might enact them.

Finally, I would like to clarify a few points regarding my perspective of social work practice with women who have been abused. Considering the relativism my perspective might imply I refrain from suggesting that firm political ideologies could work best for social work practice with women who have been abused. Insisting on a gender-based perspective I argue that abuse by male partners and women's experiences of it must be contextualized and re-politicized without employing absolute, universalized truths about what is better for women, because women know best what is best for them, if only we can co-operate to unpack the dynamics and structural support of their abuse so that their knowledge is more conscious.

For social work to employ a gender perspective in working with women who have been abused social work education needs to be informed by such perspectives which would prepare social workers for working within such a contested and highly politicized field of practice if domestic violence in Greece is not to be confined in its psychosocial characteristics which jeopardize women's, children's as well as men's needs.

What becomes evident is that social work practice with women who have been abused by their male partners in Greece needs to be contextualized within a relevant policy and research. A gender-perspective on the issue needs to pervade the Greek policy and legislation in order for social work practice to be able to promote relevant ethics and values. In terms of services provided for women who have been abused by their male partners in Greece there is a great need for more shelters and counseling services especially in cities other than those where there are some shelters currently running as well as helplines where women could seek support. Information regarding services provided for women who have been abused should be directly provided by all public services as many women especially in rural areas are unaware of services provided and that was the case for some of the women I interviewed. The fact that initially most of the women who suffer abuse contact the police suggests that the police staff should be adequately informed and trained to support and refer women to relevant services. Services for women who have been abused by their male partners could be developed by local authorities and a national plan on addressing women's abuse by their male partners should be developed and implemented. Towards this aim all civil servants employed by social services as well as the police should be trained on how to initially support and refer women who have been abused to relevant services. In these services the staff should be supported by protocols that ensure recognizing, monitoring, counseling and supporting women who have been abused by their male partners. Co-operation and networking amongst national and local services is crucial towards this aim but also towards ensuring support for women on a more long-term basis. Women who have been abused by their male partners and resort to shelters soon find themselves resourceless and socially isolated. Shelters and counseling services should work with women towards acquisition of housing and employment which should be provided by the state on beneficial terms.

Regarding the general public pre-conceptions and cultural myths and stereotypes should be challenged by national policy through

campaigning and prevention programmes in schools and within local communities.

As discussed earlier the issue of violence against women is under-researched in Greece. Acknowledging that lack of research has implications for relevant policy and practice, further research should be undertaken and supported by the Greek state regarding the prevalence of the phenomenon as well as regarding the implementation of the recent law for addressing domestic violence and the evaluation of relevant policy at national and local levels. Research would also be helpful with regards to attitudes and social representations of women's abuse by their male partners by both the general public and the professionals who are called to address the problem. My research findings revealed that in many cases the women I interviewed were constrained by oppressive cultural stereotypes as employed by their social networks including professionals. Further aspects of women's experiences of abuse by their male partners should also be researched as their implications would contribute in supporting women's needs and pursue policy changes informed by women themselves.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

Throughout my thesis my main argument has been that the Greek women I interviewed have narrated resistance(s) towards their partners' abuse and that these resistance(s) are contextualized, diverse and complex. By interpreting Greek women's coping strategies as resistance I have tried to highlight both women's strengths and the multiple constraints on women's agency posed by the social and cultural context of Greek women, which is at the same time common and unique for each of them.

I have acknowledged that my interpretation is one out of many possible interpretations of Greek women's narratives that could be attempted locating my standpoint to be informed by feminism and redefining it as a standpoint that attempts to unpack structural, social and cultural oppressions upon Greek women as well as women's diverse personal and social positions.

As my research is disciplinary related to social work I have argued that social work practice in Greece can be informed by scrutinizing Greek women's resistance(s) to abuse in order to provide more effective emotional and material support while at the same time narrating the collective story of Greek women's abuse and resistance(s) by locating it within its social and cultural context.

As a last reflection on my research and 'knowledge' produced I acknowledge that my thesis is partial, contested, open to criticism and I hope that it will at least extend the discussion of abuse towards women by their male partners in Greece and contribute to relevant social work practice that supports women in its everyday practice while politicizes Greek women's experience(s).

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