Until the late 1980s/early 1990s, masculinities did not receive much scholarly attention, for they were often taken for granted, being seen as something natural and universal, i.e. as the norm. This has started to change since then and an “outpouring” of books on masculinities in a wide range of disciplines, ranging from psychology and sociology to media studies, was noted (cf. Coates, 2003; Kiesling, 2006). In relation to construals of gender on television, though, research has mainly focused on those related to women, as “masculinity and male heterosexuality continued to be understood as fixed, stable, unalterable” (Feasey, 2008, p. 2, my emphasis). Specifically, in the 1970s, men were not the object of investigation per se; they were rather compared only to women in studies of women’s construals on TV. In those studies, men were construed as active, authoritative, and dominant (cf. Gauntlett & Hill, 1999; Gunter, 1995), their work understood as crucial in their lives, opposed to marital and parental status (Gunter). Studies on “male” TV genres (e.g., adventure-action) were conducted in the 1980s investigating hegemonic

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masculinity. Findings pointed towards aggression, toughness, dominance, power, authority, and an emphasis on the male body as well as on technology (Hanke, 1992).

Cantor (1990), however, underscoring that gender construals are genre-dependent, made the point that construals of men such as just mentioned were absent in comedy shows, where instead men were portrayed as lacking authority. Construals of fathers also prevailed. At the same time, construals of men who did not fit the hegemonic model were also featured in TV series, such as in thirtysomething and L.A. Law. Herein, men were sensitive, expressed their feelings, were less sexist and showed interest in their relationships with women (Hanke, 1992; see the same author for the argument that such construals comply with patriarchal ideology). Similar construals were encountered in later studies, such as that of Inspector Morse, the protagonist being romantic, emotional and caring, and not afraid to express his feelings (Thomas, 1995), whilst “sensitivity and gentleness, and male-bonding” characterized the male characters of Friends (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 59). Equality between the genders was found to exist in a number of drama shows, too, in the 1990s (Gauntlett), whereas in “postfeminist” TV shows such as Sex and the City (S&C) men were made fun of and treated as sexual objects (Gauntlett; on men’s construals in S&C, see also below).

In Greek studies in particular, men were construed in a more positive light compared to women (e.g. Sarris, 1980/1992), namely as superior, having the role of women’s protector—sexually, professionally, and in terms of family life (Pantazi-Tzifa, 1984), as smart, active, financially successful (Doulkeri, 1990) and charming lovers who treated women as sex objects (Diamantakou, 2000).

This brief overview of men’s construals in TV shows indicates that either they are not dealt with fully, or in cases they are indeed the subject matter, research is not linguistic. Yet media texts function through language, the latter being closely linked to ideology and power1 (e.g. Fairclough, 1989). Hence, a linguistic analysis provides more nuanced meanings, more insight, about how media texts work, uncovering ideologies and power relations. What is more, media, TV included, play an important role in relation to gender, not only because they have been conceptualized as “central sites at which discursive negotiation over gender takes place” (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 41), but also because they are closely linked to gender norms (Feasey, 2008), conveying, defining, prescribing, or even attempting to challenge such norms. However, as Connell (1995, p. 68) contends “[d]efinitions of masculinity have mostly taken our cultural standpoint for granted.” Hence, there is a need to problematize them instead, shedding light on the various construals of masculinities. Indeed, given that masculinities (cf. Connell, 1995), including (male) sexualities (cf. Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Kosetzi, 2010), are social constructs, they can be variably construed at any given place and time, hence the plural, allowing for competing and conflicting masculinities (cf. Kiesling, 2006).

Taking into consideration the aforementioned theoretical underpinnings, in this paper I embark on an examination of the discourses on masculinities and male (hetero)sexualities in the Greek TV series Σχεδόν Ποτέ (Almost Never) (SP)2 as these

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1 Ideology is used here as “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9, my emphasis), and is also seen as not fixed, i.e. a person may shift ideologies.

2 The data analysed in this paper was collected for a broader study undertaken for my PhD research (Kosetzi, 2007). In that, the series SP and the audience (female focus...
emerge from/in men’s self-constructions and women’s construals of men, in an attempt to answer the question of the various ways masculinity is construed in the series in relation to the socio-cultural context in question.

**DATA**

*SP* takes place in Athens, Greece, and mainly follows the (sexual) relationships of four liberal, heterosexual, career women approaching thirty: Maria, a radio-producer; Kalia, a fashion shop owner and fashion designer; Vada, an actress; and Stephania, a pro bono lawyer that works in an institute for battered women. Maria is also the narrator of the series. The audience watches the protagonists as they meet in coffee shops, bars, restaurants and each other’s houses, where they have intimate conversations on problems in their love and sex lives, (over)analyzing them. Explicitly concerned with sex and gender relations—centralizing the heroines’ quest for the hard-to-find “Mr. Perfect”—the series is a worthwhile site for an exploration of discourses on gender and sexuality.

Men have a marginal role in *SP*. Their characters are not rounded or fully developed. This could be attributed to the fact that women *per se* are the focus of the series, but it may also be indicative of how men are treated by the specific protagonists, as analysis will probe. It is also important to mention that men in *SP* are heterosexual, heterosexuality being taken for granted. However, there is one exception of a gay character. This is Johnny, Stefania’s father. Johnny appears momentarily in the series, that is, he has a marginal role. The narrator of the series, by way of voiceover, refers to him as being sexually confused, his “new” sexual orientation also coming as a big blow to his daughter, causing her problems with men and general confusion. Apart from the marginal presence and this negative commentary on the character, his construal further reinforces stereotypes about gays, as he is portrayed as camp and limp-wristed (cf. Baker, 2005; Kosetzi, 2007).

The above-presented description of *SP* brings forward the existence of similarities with *S&C*. In effect, according to popular consideration in Greece, this series is the Greek *S&C*. This could be attributed to similarities between the two series in their main subject matter, i.e. the protagonists’ quest for Mr. Right, the number and delineation of the characters, the sub-topics dealt with, and the use of similar technical solutions (e.g., use of a narrator, characters talking to the camera in the initial episodes). The producer and the scriptwriter acknowledged similarities in terms of the broad topics. Similarities can further be spotted in men’s construals, which will be foregrounded in the analysis.

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3 For definitions of the terms, see below.

4 Nevertheless, they did not accept that their product was the Greek *S&C*, or that it was their intention to do so (Kosetzi, 2007). Such a “denial” could of course be attributed to their fear of being accused of lack of originality or even “copying” *S&C*. Indeed, the focus groups participants in this research attributed many characteristics of *SP* to *S&C*. 

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**groups** were analysed and interviews with the producer and the scriptwriter of the series were also conducted. The aim was to address the research questions of how changes in gender roles, relations and practices that one can argue that have been taking place in (urban) Greek society are construed in the TV series *SP*, as manifested in women’s construals, and of how these construals are consumed by young Greek women viewers. In particular, three episodes were analyzed chosen on the basis of what the focus groups had not previously watched. These constitute the data in this paper, too, the subject matter, however, being men’s construals.
In gender and language research there has currently been a shift in theoretical positions, i.e. from the position that people talk the way they talk because of who they are, to the consideration that people are who they are because of the way they talk, a shift associated with the “discourse turn” in social sciences (cf. discussion in e.g. Bucholtz, 2003). Hence, discourse analysis has been considered “a flexible and incisive tool for the study of gender” (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 64). I draw on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) both as a theoretical and methodological framework of analysis, considering it particularly useful because it is explicitly concerned with social issues and problems (e.g. Fairclough, 2001). The social issue I am concerned with here is changing gender relations in (urban) Greece, investigating one of its discursive aspects, i.e. men’s construals on fictional TV.

CDA being a heterogeneous field, I employ Fairclough’s approach to CDA (mainly the version outlined in 2001, 2003) because it links discursive to social changes. Fairclough explains his approach succinctly:

CDA is analysis of the dialectical relationships between discourse (including language but also other forms of semiosis, e.g. body language or visual images) and other elements of social practices [e.g. social relations and identities, productive activity, means of productions]. Its particular concern is with the radical changes that are taking place in contemporary social life... (2003, p. 205)

From his analytical framework, I conduct what Fairclough (2001, p. 239) names “interactional analysis,” which is “the analysis of actual conversations, interviews, written texts, television programs and other forms of semiotic activity,” including linguistic/semiotic analysis of text, interdiscursive analysis of interaction, and social analysis of interaction (2001, p. 240). I have, however, adapted this framework (Kosetzi, 2008) to also include analysis of irony, visual cues, the narrator’s role, and recontextualization where and as prominent in the data.5

Below I focus particularly on lexis, presuppositions, denials, and irony. These categories “emerged” as prominent in the data when I “immersed” myself in them, acting as “traces/cues” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24) in the discourse identification. In particular, lexis is important because of its ideological nature (cf. Vološinov, 1973, p. 13): it can maintain unequal power relations as it legitimates, dissimulates, and/or reifies a state of affairs (e.g., to call a sexually active woman a “slut”), or else challenge a state of affairs (e.g., to characterize motherhood as “not heaven,” as opposed to “something wonderful” which is a dominant conceptualization of motherhood; see Kosetzi, 2007). Therefore, the presence of one specific lexical item over another is important. Presuppositions are taken for granted assumptions, the aim being to foreground such assumptions and make them explicit. Denials, for Fairclough (2003, p. 47), imply “the assertion ‘elsewhere’ of what is being denied.” Regarding irony, I draw on Clift’s approach (1999) and the notions of “footing” and “framing” (Goffman, 1974, 1979). Unpacking this, Goffman draws a distinction between (1) the an-

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5 As there are no visual elements of interest to the points made in this paper, an analysis of these does not take place here. The same applies for “recontextualization.”
imator of an utterance, the person who articulates it, (2) its author, the person who “wrote” it, and (3) its principal, the person committed to its proposition. A person’s adoption of one of these perspectives is his/her “footing.” In irony, there is a “footing shift” from “committed participant to detached observer” (Clift, 1999, p. 532). When there is such a footing shift, “the ironist frames what is said, thus becoming principal of an outside—framing—meaning” (Clift, 1999, p. 533). In framing, then, one meaning is inside the other.

These features of the linguistic analysis, along with my own reflexive social and cultural understandings of the social context of Greece, as well as knowledge of the relevant literature, inform the interdiscursive analysis of the texts, interdiscursivity covering “how different genres, discourses or styles are articulated … together in the text” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 218). Discourses that surround masculinities are my concern here. As far as the naming of discourses is concerned, I rely on those identified in the relevant literature. In case discourses were not previously identified, I named them myself taking the above-mentioned features into account. Regarding the third component of Fairclough’s framework, the social analysis, this is based on available research on the Greek context, along with my own informed knowledge of the social context of Greece, thus situating the data and their linguistic/semiotic and interdiscursive analyses.

Within this framework, I have already employed a number of concepts that need definition and clarification. Central in the analysis is the concept of “discourses” as “particular ways of representing part of the world” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26; favoring myself, though, the term construe, see immediately below). This is of significance as it implies that different discourses construe the same “aspect or area of social life” from different perspectives (cf. Fairclough, 2003). According to the perspective adopted, a discourse manifested in a text may be, say, hegemonic or it may challenge hegemonic discourses. I have conceptualized a “challenge” to a discourse to be taking place when this discourse is simply criticized, but without being explicitly substituted by another one.

I also make use of the term “self-construction” when a person talks about him/herself (cf. Coates, 2003; Sunderland, 2004), but not when a person talks about someone else, as this other person may or may not take up this positioning (see discussion in Sunderland). Put differently, “construction” is seen as stronger, as it implies a change and a re-make of (a part of) the world, as opposed to “construal” (Fairclough, 2007). For this reason, when a person talks about someone else I employ the latter term. I also favor this term over “representation,” as the former may be taken to suggest a more active process and the latter an overly simple relation between language and the world (Fairclough, 2009).

Another key term already employed in the paper is that of “hegemonic masculinity,” a particularly widespread but also contested term. The term “hegemonic” derives from Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony as preservation of the status quo through consent rather than coercion. Connell (1995, p. 77) posits that hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that is “culturally exalted,” though not “a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same” (p. 76). In effect, it

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6 The term “construal” originally comes from Langacker (e.g., 2000).
7 For criticisms and addresses to the criticisms, see Connell and Messerschmidt (2005).
is not about how men are in real life, but it pertains to a model against which real men position themselves. Significantly, it opens out onto “multiple competing hegemonic forms at any time, some compatible, but some in conflict” (Kiesling, 2006, p. 296). This type of masculinity is further defined in relation to women, without implying that men dominate women in any universal way, according toConnell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) recent reformulation of the concept. Hegemonic masculinity is also defined in relation to other men, hence the plurality and hierarchy of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt), including subordinate masculinities, such as homosexual masculinity (Connell, 1995). In line with the nature of the notion of “hegemony” per se, highlighting struggle for domination between groups/ideologies, hegemonic masculinity is always contestable (cf. Connell, 1995, p. 76). This “contestation” comes in SP from female characters whose contributions provide valuable information on hegemonic masculinity.

**SOCIAL CONTEXT**

**Honor and Shame**

In order for the data and their analysis to be contextualized and better understood, vis-à-vis the theoretical positioning that masculinities are historical, the socio-cultural context where they are situated cannot be ignored. My account necessarily will be partial, as I have to focus on aspects that set the broader context and relate to gender and sexuality in ways relevant to the scope of this paper.

Despite differentiations from area to area, ethnographers of Greek society in the 1960s and 1970s underline that men are defined in opposition to women and as superior to them by and large. On the one hand, men are described as logical, endowed with intellect, and are thought to be responsible and brave. Women, on the other hand, are described as inferior, stupid, unreliable, irresponsible, modest, emotional, less rational compared to men, and vulnerable (e.g. Campbell, 1964; du Boulay, 1974; Friedl, 1962). Furthermore, men are the breadwinners, their place being in the public realm, see e.g. the market and the kafenia (coffeehouses), as opposed to women who are thought to be silenced, obedient to their husband and largely confined to the private sphere (e.g. Campbell; du Boulay, 1974; Friedl, 1962). In fact, women are seen to be “both functionally and symbolically” associated with domestic space (Dubisch, 1986b, p. 197), the latter reflecting even their morality. Dubisch explains: “If she has tended it properly, she has not had time to engage in mischief and her house is in order. If, on the other hand, she has engaged in improper behavior [such as illicit sexual activity or gossip (the pollution of words)], she has neglected the house” (1986b, p. 200).

The main way women could “acquire full status in the society” is through marriage (Lampiri-Dimaki, 1983, p. 177; cf. Campbell, 1964). In this way, they turn to the archetype of Panagia, the Mother of Christ—chaste, modest and respected (du Boulay, 1986; cf. Campbell, 1964)—as opposed to being Eves (see below). Their destiny indeed is figured as giving birth to and bringing up children (du Boulay, 1986), hence the social pressure on women to get married and have children is enormous. In order for a woman to get married, however, men in her family have the obligation to give to her future husband and his family a dowry. This obligation is seen as an “outward manifestation of masculinity,” as male honor would also depend on that (Friedl, 1962, p. 69; cf. Safilios-Rothschild, 1969). Comparing to women, the
social pressure on men to get married is considerably weaker. This entails that there is a heavy demand for a husband, men being valued more as husbands compared to women as wives. In turn, the implication is that men could “dictate[their] own terms for marriage,” and ask for as large a dowry as possible (Lampiri-Dimaki, 1983, p. 177).

Honor is indeed a male characteristic of outmost importance having various manifestations. For instance, it resided in men being respectable fathers, husband figures, and providers for their home, fulfilling the obligations to the family, and especially to its female members (du Boulay, 1974; Friedl, 1962). Honor is also associated with protecting manhood in instances of verbal abuse and quarrels between men as well as protecting women’s sexuality (Campbell, 1964), given that the latter is seen as a threat to a man and his honor. A telling narration is that of Friedl’s (1986, p. 46): “Both men and women warn their sons about the dangers of associating with loose women who can ruin a man’s life […]. They tell tales about how the wife runs around with other men, neglects her children and the household” (cf. Kennedy, 1986). Especially unmarried women are considered to be Eves (du Boulay, 1986): seductresses, weak and generally inferior.

Therefore, in order for women not to compromise male honor and consequently the honor of the family, they should demonstrate sexual shame (Campbell, 1964). They have to restrain their sexuality, sex taking place within the boundaries of marriage and for procreation. Hence, unmarried girls should be virgins, wives faithful, widows abstinent. Indeed, “honor and shame,” as just described, associated with morality, have been vital in Greek society. When men’s honor, and consequently the family’s and girls’, are offended, honor crimes are very common (Avdela, 2002; Safilios-Rothschild, 1969). These take place when a man has a relationship with a girl and does not accept to marry her when their relationship is revealed or when a man breaks his promise for marriage. In these situations, men are murdered (usually) by the girl’s brother, restoring his, the family’s and the girl’s honor, blood being the only thing capable to “wash away shame.”

Whereas control of sexuality holds for women, a man can have pre- and extramarital activities without endangering his family (du Boulay, 1974; exceptions discussed by Campbell, 1964). Generally speaking, men’s sexuality is considered natural, makes a man, manhood being closely associated with sexuality (cf. Campbell & Sherrard, 1968). If men want sex, women must not resist, willing or not. Male sexuality is also uncontrollable and can threaten women’s virtue, for instance through rape (Campbell, 1964), or it can be “self-centered,” in masturbation (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991b). According to another variation of heterosexuality, sex can take place outside marriage, outside procreation purposes. This is found in the context of the coffeehouse and is motivated by kefi (desire) (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991b, p. 225). Needless to say, women who are the sexual partners in this context are strongly criticized by married women. Another phenomenon associated with Greek men is that of kamakia (literally meaning harpoons) (Zinovieff, 1986).

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8 Apart from men killing men, honor crimes also occur with women as offenders and men victims, usually throwing vitriol to them. (In Campbell’s 1964 study, women do not have such an option. They are either killed by their brother or they commit a suicide.) What is more, there are cases where women—daughters/sisters/wives—do not lead a sexually moral life, and are consequently murdered by relatives (Avdela, 2002).
Kamakia are men—usually local and of low status—flirting foreign women with the aim of having sex, treating them as fish to spear, as prey. Men would take pride in how many women they would score, having a very low opinion of their morality and their Western backgrounds. The use of the term over the years extended to men flirting with women generally. Heterosexuality being taken as the norm, homosexuality is highly condemned. The word *poustis*, used for the “passive homosexual,” comes to be used equally for a man who is a coward, a liar, a thief, a man without honor, i.e. not a man; a man cannot live without honor (Campbell, 1964).9

**Criticism and Changing Contexts**

The above-discussed analyses that focused on men’s domination over women have been variously criticized. The first type of criticism refers to the fact that this kind of research reifies a dichotomy of the private and public spheres, stereotypes women and men presenting them through binarisms and polarization (cf. Friedl, 1986; Herzfeld, 1986), while men’s and women’s “capacity for variation and change” is largely ignored (Herzfeld, 1986, p. 215). Related to that, women’s power is largely unaccounted for, and women’s points of view about their self- and other perceptions are overlooked, being less accessible to researchers, as the “male world [is accepted] as the cultural model” (Dubisch, 1986a, p. 32, emphasis in original). Exceptions can be found when Friedl (1962, p. 50), for instance, supports that public male domination is a façade, since women have the power at home (cf. Campbell, 1964; du Boulay, 1986), especially regarding children-related issues; this is even more so with women owning lands as their dowries. Kennedy (1986) describes how men see women as able to exploit their sexual power to destroy them, that is, their honor.10 Still, public/private boundaries are not fixed, and prove community-dependent, complementary, and interconnected (Dubisch, 1986a, p. 12; cf. Campbell, 1964).11 At the same time, institutions may “span […] both private and public sectors of Greek life,” particularly the *nikokyrio* (household economy), with *both* men and women “deriving public prestige and social equality from the success of the nikokyrio itself” (Salamone & Stanton, 1986, p. 98). Even though only women go through a process of “learning” how to achieve it from the time they leave school...

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9 It also goes almost without saying that women are not seen to have similar to men’s “‘nature’ and ‘physiological’ problems” and the “possibility of sexual love between rural Greek women is ‘unknown’ in the sense of unconceptualized, and so unrecognized” (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991b, p. 229). The authors stress, however, that this is not the case in cities, with a visible lesbian culture. There are also exceptions in the dominant form of women’s sexualities, e.g. in cases of adultery (cf. Campbell, 1964; Kennedy, 1986), intercultural courtship (Zinovieff, 1991), and friendships with men where sex *does* takes place, but not for procreation purposes (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991a).

10 See also Dubisch (1986a) describing other forms of women’s power, “illegitimate” or socially disapproved ones, such as nagging, withholding sex, or using *poniria* (cunning deviousness). Importantly, however, these are negatively viewed.

11 Cf. Friedl (1986) for tasks performed with no difference either by women or men or by both; cf. Campbell and Sherrard (1968) for women and men being a complementary team.
until the time they get married, they have power due to the fact that their husbands must rely on them for guidance in order to become competent householders.

Another major line of criticism refers to that the above studies do not account for variation; variation in terms of contexts outside marriage, between marriage types, and beyond rural contexts. Regarding the first, it is only later that different fields are investigated, for instance women’s friendships, being empowering for women, as they feel stronger, self-reliant, supported, recognized, and valued (Kennedy, 1986); the phenomenon of kamakia (Zinovieff, 1991; see above); and the coffee-shop (see Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991a). Variation occurs across three marriage types (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991a). The first type has to do with communities where men, when married, live near the houses where born. In these cases, they dominate, while women are silenced and limited to their roles of good housewives and child-bearers, being excluded from the public sphere. There is also the opposite pole, when married women live near the houses where born having themselves power. There is also a third type falling between the two poles, where there are minimal areas where men show superiority. Finally, Campbell and Sherrard (1968) describe how different the situation in cities is from that of the countryside: women work outside the home, even though husbands might not really approve it given the assumption that they are inadequate providers; fathers are less authoritarian; arranged marriages are a less frequent phenomenon; and although the institution of dowry remains strong, a girl’s job can be taken as an equivalent to her having a dowry. In affluent, upper-class families, differences are most pronounced.

In all the previous presented studies, masculinities are not the object of anthropological investigation per se, rather discussed in relation to women. This changes, however, in the 1980s, work by Herzfeld (1985) being a case in point. He describes that a man must, inter alia, know how to use a knife, keep his word, be generous with money and open to everybody, “stand up to anyone who dares to insult him. He must protect his family from sexual and verbal threats, and keep his household at the level that befits a ‘master of the house [nikokiris]’” (Herzfeld, 1985, p. 124). Any man who does not show power of mind and body is defamed as effeminate. Furthermore, men should be able to perform in public, in dancing, singing, drinking, eating, gambling. Still, in the 1980s, men spend their leisure time in coffee-houses, regarding these as their own space. Herzfeld also finds out that the attributes associated with men and women fall in the same pattern found in other studies: “men portray themselves as rational, self-controlled, and strong, in contrast to the affectionate but also gullible, incontinent, and often weak-willed women” (Herzfeld, 1985, p. 90), making, however, the point that such oppositions are “actively negotiated in social interaction” (p. 90). Women, once more, derive existential meaning from being married.

Scholarship in the 1980s branded work done in the 1960s and 1970s and the associated motifs of dowry, women’s chastity, and modesty, and family honor, as outdated and “socially inadequate” (Lampiri-Dimaki, 1983, p. 183). Reasons include the new social reality emanating from demographic, economic, political, legal, educational, and cultural changes,12 as well as proclaimed by the women’s

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12 Lampiri-Dimaki is aware that the changes she describes apply mainly to a “female middle-class élite,” which she sees as “pioneers of female progress in Greece, [and as] the living examples of the new role that the Greek woman is able to play and so help to alter the traditional image of a woman…” (1983, p. 192).
movement. Pertaining to women’s rights, changes occur in family arrangements, employment, social security, individual freedoms, and health care. For instance, civil marriage, consensus divorce, and the right of women to keep their family name after marriage are constituted. Dowry is abolished, as well as discrimination between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” children; abortion is legalized (General Secretariat for Equality [GSE], 2004; Lambiri-Dimaki, 1983). More recently, an increasing number of women is making considerable strides in the political, educational, and professional arenas. Their participation in national and EU parliaments, in higher education, and the public work arena has been increasing (GSE). In 2001 another revision of the Constitution included a new article according to which positive measures must be taken to promote gender equity (GSE).

As the linguistic/semiotic and interdiscursive analyses will show next, the masculine dimensions identified in ethnographic work of the 1960s, 1970s and the 1980s still exist, particularly men’s assertion of heterosexuality; avoidance of associations of manhood with feminine characteristics, such as emotionality and expression of feelings; men’s general struggle for dominance and control over women; and relatively weak social pressure on men to get married. Women, however, have come a long way since the publication of cited studies, as the changes in the 1980s point to, unavoidably affecting (the ways they treat) men (cf. Segal, 2007). To this analysis I shall now turn.

**Almost Never:**
**Linguistic/Semiotic and Interdiscursive Analyses**

Before proceeding to the actual analysis, I should clarify a methodological point. My focal point is occasions where male and female characters in the series SP position themselves in relation to explicitly gendered issues. Put differently, I did not just rely on the fact that there is a male speaker talking in order to draw conclusions on construals of masculinities, as his gender may not be necessarily relevant or foregrounded in the given instance, taking into consideration relevant criticism (see Stokoe & Smithson, 2001), and aligning myself with the view that gender and language researchers cannot “dispense with gender as an a priori explanatory category” (Swann, 2002, p. 60). The female characters, protagonists and secondary ones, position themselves in relation to the topic on innumerable occasions. In this case, only selected, typical examples can be presented here. The same, however, does not hold for men. Their positioning to gendered issues is especially limited, there being only two instances. This could be explained by the marginal role that male characters have in the series. This in turn could arguably be attributed to the fact that SP is not presented through men’s point of view, or even to the way the female protagonists treat men, namely attempting to challenge hegemonic masculinity. The same applies to Johnny who appears only twice in the episodes analyzed, making a very small contribution in just one instance relevant to gender discussed here.

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13 For a delineation of the feminist movement in Greece before the 1980s, see Kosetzi (2010).
14 That said, I should note that in terms of practices in the episodes analysed, there are a number of occasions where female characters are mistreated by the male ones (e.g. being insulted, cheated, threatened to be beaten up).
This can again be indicative of his role in the series and arguably of the role of gay characters in general in *SP*.

**Hegemonic Masculinity**

“Men are afraid of commitment.” According to this discourse, men are afraid to commit themselves to (marital) relationships. This has been especially pervasive in men’s magazines. In particular, Stevenson et al. (2000, p. 373) talk about aspects of masculine behavior such as “obsessive forms of independence (read: fear of commitment and connection) [that] have become the new focal point,” explaining that “marriage is ultimately seen as a way of feminizing and castrating men” (Stevenson et al., pp. 375-376). In *S&C*, one encounters “commitment-phobic men” (McCabe & Akass, 2004, p. 207; Cramer, 2007). Similarly in the Greek context, in a study in an Athenian high school Hiraklidou (2005) reports of boys’ fear of committing themselves to a relationship, while Kosetzi and Polyzou (2009, p. 161) note that in the prototypical and high-in-circulation men’s lifestyle magazine, *Nitro*, “(real) men” are construed as “unwilling to partake in anything more than sex,” barring commitment to a relationship and marriage. In *SP*, the following examples of this discourse are telling:

**Case 1**

In the street, CU of Elena, a lawyer, addressing the camera

> ELENA
> If I did not have so many clients with a divorce, I would not believe that there are also men who get married. Still, even those who get a divorce, prefer to use marriage as an example to avoid.

Elena presents to the audience both the “rule” and the “exception that proves the rule:” The additive conjunction (in Greek κι “also”) in there are also men who get married presupposes that all the rest do not get married, the rest being the norm and the ones who do get married being the exception. However, these once-married men have the opinion that marriage is to be avoided, connoting hence that it is something negative. Along the same lines is another “exception that proves the rule:”

**Case 2:**

A hotel bedroom door, ECU of a ‘Do Not Disturb’ sign, implying that people are having sex.

ECU of half of Kalia’s naked body, lying on a bed, a tattoo on her hip, looking up at Panos who is getting dressed, walking away from the bed

MARIA (V.O.) introducing Kalia to the viewers

> [ ] why did she choose Panos, who is married, out of all possible men? Maybe, because he is evidently not afraid of commitment, as she says.

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15 The data is presented in two columns: camera shots and contextual information on the left and the dialogue on the right, with “traces/cues” in italics. Regarding camera shots, the ones used in the examples analyzed here are:

- Extreme Close-Up (ECU) “detail shot”
- Close-Up (CU) “Just above the head to the upper chest. Cuts just below the necktie knot”
In this excerpt there are several issues. First off, the denial in *he is evidently not afraid of commitment* implies that that other possible men are afraid. Panos, though, whom Kalia wants to marry, is the exception and is not afraid of commitment, because he has already committed himself, as he is married. The irony here is double. Having an affair negates the true meaning of (marital) commitment, namely fidelity, and at the same time, even though *he is not afraid of commitment*, he cannot marry Kalia, as he is already married with another woman. Further on this, Maria’s tone of voice and comment *per se* as narrator are ironic: Maria distances herself from what she “reports” to the viewers, *as she says*, implying that it is Kalia’s words and not her own. Put differently, Maria does not really believe that Panos is not afraid of commitment. Using Goffman’s terminology (1974, 1979), there is a “footing shift” here as Maria is just the “animator” and not the “author” or “principal” of the specific words, and a “framing” of the situation through mockery takes place.

**Self-construction.** In the above occasions, men do not speak themselves; instead, they are construed through the (scriptwriter’s presentation of) women’s views about them. However, there are occasions where men do speak for themselves on this issue:

**Case 3:**

At a restaurant, MCU of Stephania and Tellis. The former gives a present to the latter who does not like this gesture. TELIS

I didn’t get it. All of a sudden, we will exchange gifts, we will celebrate anniversaries, I will send you flowers on St. Valentine’s day? I do not know what you thought of me, but you will not wear the breeches.

... I know you, the hens, really well who have stayed on the shelf, and pretend to be liberated and are desperate to snare a man. You are mistake*. You were wrong to think something like that for me.

In this example, Telis interprets Stephania’s gift as an attempt to “keep” him (see “How to get your man and keep him”16), and thus as a way to get him to commit himself to her. This is unacceptable for him as he sees it to cost him his freedom (cf. Stevenson et al., 2000). Specifically, the expression *you will not wear the breeches*, meaning “you will not assume the power,” “you will not control me,” entails its assertion. Unpacking this, Telis sees Stephania’s action as an attempt to deprive him of control and hence of power. Therefore, he makes the point that he is not letting  

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16 “How to get your man and keep him” is found in “Western” magazines for women and adolescent girls, where advice is frequently given about what girls/women should do in order to get and keep a man (e.g., Gauntlett, 2002; Sunderland, 2004), based on the presupposition that there is a shortage of men (see “There are (no) real men” below). Due to this shortage, it is difficult for a woman to find one. Consequently, when a woman finds a man, she needs to do everything possible to keep him.
this happen. In the same vein is his accusation of her *snar[ing]* him, connoting an attempt to make him lose his freedom. At the same time, Telis constructs himself as a man in relation to a woman by trying to reject effeminacy, as it is men who “wear the breeches” and not women. Explaining this, if he lets women or this specific woman wear the breeches and snare him, then he will no longer be a man, or less of a man. Needless to say, he tries to avoid this at all cost, expelling femininity from him and asserting his masculinity.

For these reasons, Telis rejects the gift, and Stephania in essence, to whom he speaks in a degrading and insulting way, see the lexical items *hens, desperate* and the phrases you *have stayed on the shelf, you pretend to be liberated*, i.e. you are not liberated, and *You are mistake*.[17] In this way, he demonstrates his power over her, constructing himself as a knowing person who sees through women who act accordingly, expressing contempt for them at the same time. Aggression, manifested here through the verbal insults, and in turn domination, desire for control, and power are normative characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (cf. Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Politis, 2006). Similarly, men avoiding any associations with effeminacy is a common finding of studies investigating masculinities (e.g., Kiesling, 2006; Politis, 2006), typical at least of hegemonic masculinity as the latter is defined vis-à-vis femininity (Connell, 1995).

In another instance, the man explicitly articulates that he does not wish to get emotionally involved with the woman:

**Case 4:**

Kalia’s living room. Vada is watching television, covered in blankets. Paris (the guy she has sex with every Sunday, something he arranged) comes in, wearing his underwear and a sweatshirt on top. He kisses her and takes the remote control from her hand and switches off the television. MS of both.

PARIS: We must not watch television together.

VADA: What’s wrong now?

PARIS: When couples watch television together, bond and *I have explained to you, I do not want that*.

The “trace/cue” of the discourse in this instance is the denial *I do not want that*, i.e. I do not want the bonding. In order to show how important this is for him and how serious he is about not wanting the bonding, Paris employs deontic modality in his previous utterance in its negated form *We must not*. Simply put, for him, this is a strong imperative. Thus, he is just preoccupied with sex without emotional attachment along the lines of hegemonic masculinity (cf. Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Coates, 2003; for the Greek context, see Deliyanni-Kouimtzi & Sakka, 2005a; Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Polyzou, 2010).[18] In this way, he explicitly rejects com-

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[17] Telis uses the English word “mistake” (ungrammatically) to convey, *You are wrong.*

[18] Even in cases where in men’s magazines there is advice on how men can sexually please women, which contradicts beliefs about men being only interested in sex, show-
mitment. A common dichotomy of the male body can also be seen to be echoed here, that men use only the lower part of their bodies, i.e. their penis, when it comes to sex, where the sexual body resides, and not the upper where the psyche resides (Yannakopulos, 1998, p. 80).

Moreover, in this excerpt Paris makes the point that he runs the show showing his dominance over Vada, who (he assumes) wants emotional attachment and not just casual sex. A question to be begged, though, is whether the fact that Vada is a woman is the reason for such an assumption, given men’s belief that “women want […] more when men want […] just sex” (Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010, p. 369). This lack of emotionality and of expression of feelings has been associated with manhood, as opposed to emotionality and sensitivity seen as “feminine” traits. This is an association men always strive to avoid in order to avoid their association with femininity and its further link with weakness (cf. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi & Sakka, 2005a; Grigoropoulos, 2007; Politis, 2006; Seidler, 1989; but also Greek ethnographic studies discussed above). In other words, denying or suppressing the need for intimacy is key to hegemonic masculinity.

As already pointed out, Telis’s and Paris’s cases align with other studies stressing that tenderness and caring on men’s behalf are mainly a weakness and a failure of manhood, as opposed to (emotional) independence and an emphasis on numbers of conquests. However, these cases stand in some contrast to a study on societal conceptions of male identity conducted in the second biggest city of Greece (Grigoropoulos, 2007). Here, participants included under male characteristics both men being caring partners in the sense of expressing their feelings and lack of expression of feelings. In the same study, family and marriage are presented as pertaining to “indisputable social and moral laws that the man has to serve” (p. 188). Regarding the former discrepancy (expression of feelings), this can be attributed to some renewal in the ordering of masculinities, as the author himself also underscores. What, however, applies to both instances of discrepancy (expression of feelings and marriage), is that there is not one kind of hegemonic masculinity. In effect, hegemonic masculinity is time- and space-dependent, and what holds in one context may not hold in another.

Generally speaking, though, the discourse “Men are afraid of commitment” is supported by the results of a 2009 panhellenic research, according to which 60% of men run away from a relationship when the partner attempts in a cunning way to make them commit/marry, 25% when she wants cohabitation, and 34% when she assumes men’s roles (Ta Nea online, 2009), the latter being Telis’s example. Personal experience as a person living in contemporary Greece confirms the panhellenic research in the sense that men in Greece are afraid of serious commitment/marriage. Furthermore, the age men get married at nowadays in Greece has been increasing, as men expect first to settle down professionally and thus financially, which takes longer than in the past (mainly) due to prolonged education. Specifically, in 1980 men got married at 26 on average, in 1999 at 30.3, as
opposed to 35 in the 2000s (Ikones, 2009, p. 78). Moreover, both in the past (as discussed) and currently, the social pressure on men to get married has always been much weaker in Greece in comparison to women. The word used for an unmarried man, *ergenis* “bachelor,” bears no negative connotations. On the contrary, it implies someone who actually enjoys life, while unmarried women are *gerontokores* “spinsters” and being “left on the shelf” (see Telis’s example, too) with all the negative associations, and is indicative of the social pressure on women to get married, as if they do not, they face the risk of being labelled as such.

**Alternative Discourses**

I now turn to opposing discourses that challenge the established status quo, as hegemonies are always contestable. Challenges to hegemonic masculinity have indeed been identified in men’s TV construals. For instance, emotionally expressive heroes that go against the stereotype of emotionally restrained hegemonic masculinity have been found in soap operas, in science fiction, and fantasy TV (Feasey, 2008), as well as in other TV series in the 1990s. At the same time, challenges to the importance of the father’s role/construals of problematic father figures have been noted both in soaps and in adult animation (Feasey, 2008). The challenges to hegemonic masculinity present in my data are of a different nature, though, and come from female protagonists, not from men themselves.

“**There are no (real) men.**” This discourse relies on the presupposition that “real,” i.e. heterosexual men, are scarce, the reason being their turning gay19 (see Charitou, 2005). This indeed points to a recent social phenomenon according to which women are single complaining about not finding a (real) man to have a relationship with. The insinuation of homosexualization is an attack to hegemonic masculinity according to which men are heterosexual (cf. e.g. Coates, 2007; Connell, 1995; and in the Greek context, Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Grigoropoulos, 2007; Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Politis, 2006; Polyzou, 2010). In SP:

**Case 5:**

In a coffee shop, MCU of Theoni, THEONI

addressing the camera

Until now I thought that the problem was demographic; that men are fewer than us. However, I came across the last census results that say that thank God they are more [than women]. Since we are single, where has the surplus gone? I refuse to believe that they are all gays.

Theoni commences her complaint by articulating that *Until now I thought that the problem was demographic; that men are fewer than us*, echoing what Faludi (1999) called “man shortage.” Nevertheless, “man’s shortage” is dismissed with the use of the oppositional *However*. Thus, the reason women are single is not that there are not enough men, but that men “have turned into” gays. This is implied in her direct question *where has the surplus gone?, and stated explicitly in I refuse to believe that they

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19 This complaint has been extended in the literature to other non-hegemonic masculinities, such as “metrosexuals” or “technosexuals” (Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009).
are all gays. The denial per se entails that the belief that men have turned into gays exists. It is also worth commenting that it is women who are articulating their interest in finding a man and not vice versa (too). Johnny, the gay character of the series, also articulates this discourse:

**Case 6:**
In a coffee shop, MCU of Johnny, **JOHNNY**
addressing the camera

I am sick and tired of hearing **women complain that there are no men.** If they mean what I understand **why am I single as well every weekend?**

Johnny explicitly refers to the fact that women complain about the scarcity of heterosexual men: **women complain that there are no men.** However, his further comment challenges in essence the reason provided by women for this scarcity, i.e. men’s homosexuality—**why am I single as well every weekend?** Elaborating on this, if men were turning into gay, he, being gay, should have found a male partner. Since he cannot find one, he does not accept that this is the reason why women cannot find a man. The very fact, though, that he “turned gay” after a point in this life is ironic, as it could be seen as the biggest proof of women’s complaint and of the discourse itself. It should not be overlooked, either, that Johnny actually asserts the discourse that there no men, no matter what the real reason is. Regarding himself, his lament over not having a partner constructs him as unhappy, especially accentuated by the frequency of the phenomenon **I am single every weekend,** matching the tradition of construals of gays as confused and unhappy on global TV (cf. Feasey, 2008; Hermes, 2006; but also Connell, 1995 on subordinate masculinities), and in Greek media particularly (Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Polyzou, 2010).

“**Men as (sexual) objects.**” *SP* draws heavily on the discourse the sees men in terms of physical appearance and sexuality. This is also a historically newer discourse pointing to social change, as it is a recent experience for *men* to be “expected to spend time in the gym, working to develop ‘tight, toned’ bodies” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 78), and there being a growing preoccupation with appearance in men’s magazines and advertisements aimed at men (Gauntlett). Men in *S&C* are defined by their “anatomy and how they perform sexually. In this sense, they are objects” (Cramer, 2007, p. 421), their sexual performance being “subject to laughter and scathing review” (Gauntlett, p. 60). In other words, women are no longer the object of gaze, but instead the subject, leaving men “to foreground their own to-be-looked-at-ness” (McCabe & Akass, 2004, p. 7). In *SP*, occasions where the heroines explicitly refer to men in terms of appearance and sexual attributions abound. Here, I limit myself to a case where the man is objectified in terms of appearance, and another one where men are sexually objectified:

**Case 7:**
At the hairdresser’s **STELLINA**

I form relationships with *mediocre* men [in terms of looks] and “hit” a *good-looking one*-mainly as a one-night stand-just in order to feel good, to boost my self-confidence.
In this example, men are objectified in a number of ways and through a number of linguistic means. Through lexis used for a description of physical appearance, men are defined in terms of their looks—mediocre, good-looking. Importantly, this is the only way they are defined. Beauty is the prime criterion for men’s classification and categorization; there are mediocre men and good-looking men. Additionally, they are the object of this woman’s actions, the passive recipient of her initiatives (I hit), where Stellina is agentive and construed as a “hunter” through a predator image-metaphor. One step further, men are construed as having a purely utilitarian function. They are used for the specific woman to feel good about herself. Put differently, they are not construed as individuals and as human beings in their own right, but in relation to what they offer to women, which is also limited to one domain, i.e. sex.

Moving further to men’s objectification, in the cases where men cannot perform sexually, they are criticized by women:

Case 8:

Coffee shop. Angela goes in front of the camera. MCU

Just once or twice? Lately, this has been happening to me all the time. And they offer me loads of excuses. I cannot complain. Once, a man told me that it is the first time this is happening to him, the second guy that he has drunk a lot, the third guy that he is stressed, the fourth that I remind him of his mother and he feels threatened by his father, the fifth got blocked because he likes me a lot, the sixth that he had hormones given in the army. I honestly cannot remember for how many months what we call “normal” has not happened to me: i.e. to go with a man and have sex all night long like animals.

According to Angela, a man not being able to perform sexually is a common phenomenon. Just once or twice? Lately, this has been happening to me all the time. Along the same lines is the list of men and the list of the reasons men offer when they cannot perform sexually. These lists are notable exactly due to the number of men and of the reasons offered, as they reveal the extent of the phenomenon. Angela further characterizes the reasons that men use as excuses, i.e. not real. Moreover, her tone of voice is ironic when she comments, And they offer me loads of excuses. I cannot complain, which is an oxymoron, as it is actually exactly what she is doing. In her listing these excuses and using the words these men have used in cases where they could not perform sexually, and not her own, a “footing shift” is marked. Angela is just the “animator” and not the “author” or “principal” of the words spoken, i.e. “framing” it. In other words, Angela is distancing herself from what is said and is ironic, the object of the irony being particularly significant. Elaborating, given that men’s sexual performance is central in hegemonic masculinity (cf. Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010), in all the cases that Angela recounts, the specific men’s masculinity is an issue, since they have failed to fulfill their role. Indeed, “the social ties which bind masculinity with sexual adequacy, and sexual adequacy with penile potency” (Segal, 2007, p. 184) are very strong. In this context, Angela shows no sympathy or understanding, and takes into no account other aspects of men’s relationship to women—love, sharing, companionship. Men’s sexual ability, or, more precisely, the lack thereof, is what men are reduced to, this is what defines
them and becomes the only criterion they are judged by—“only” being the key word pointing to men’s objectification.

In the same excerpt, however, whereas men’s failure to sexually perform is established by Angela, men’s sexual drive is asserted in the denial that she is employing in I honestly cannot remember for how many months what we call “normal” has not happened to me: i.e. to go with a man and have sex all night long like animals. That said, this is an exception in SP. Moreover, the reference is made to men who are actually not presented in the series and the situation does not apply currently (for how many months). All these parameters negate the importance of the comment. Indeed, the rule in the series is that male sexual drive is challenged, to an analysis of which I now turn.

**Challenging “male sexual drive.”** It is noteworthy that SP is largely framed by an absence of “male sexual drive” (Hollway, 1984) in the sense of it being presented as biological, natural, instinctive, and uncontrollable. This lack contrasts with the long tradition of how male sexuality has been conceptualized in Greek society, in the past as well as in more contemporary research (e.g. Polyzou, 2010). However, it could be attributed to the fact that the heroines are construed as sexually active and assertive; they themselves seek sex and do not expect men to do so, which would construe the latter as showing biological and uncontrollable sexual drive.20 Specifically, there is a case of a male character, Steve, who refused Vada’s invitation to spend the night together, i.e. to have sex, as he had to get up early for work the next morning and had to be well-rested. Here is Vada’s reaction and Kalia’s comment:

**Case 9:**
At Kalia’s apartment

VADA
Did you get anything? He left without asking my phone number and was bored to fuck me. Or did I just think so?

KALIA
That’s not news. Don’t take it personally. It’s the new trend. They [men] are just content to realize that you fancy them and are bored to have sex. [ ] This does not eliminate the possibility that he is vegetarian and that he will not touch the prey.

Vada construes her partner as showing no sex drive, as he is bored to have sex, something that Kalia confirms. However, Kalia does not stop there. She goes further and provides two explanations for Steve’s behavior. One is that this is about a new trend, a general phenomenon and not a marginal case. Indeed, Drakoula (2009) describes the model of the “asexual” man in Greek society, where he may date and flirt women, but does not have sex with them. Women complain about the situation and the fact that they are single. The other explanation Kalia offers is that the man is gay, revealed through a predator-image where the man is the hunter, who,

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20 This discourse “encourages […] misrecognitions—men’s denial of need and vulnerability, women’s denial of their own power in sexual relationships” (Segal, 2007, p. 181), even though the latter could be seen as not applying here.
nevertheless, does not touch the prey, being vegetarian. Hence, if a man shows no interest in sex, a strong possibility is that he is gay, given that “sex is [perceived to be] the way in which you prove yourself to be a ‘real man’” (Seidler, 1989, p. 39). Put differently, manhood is not only strongly linked to sexual activity as in case 8, but significantly to heterosexual activity, lying as a matter of fact at the heart of manhood and avoiding at any cost any associations with homosexuality (see e.g. Coates, 2007; Connell, 1995; and the Greek studies, Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Deliyanni-Kouimtzi & Sakka, 2005b; Grigopoulos, 2007; Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Politis, 2006; Polyzou, 2010). Even though “work” could be seen as another “core” hegemonic masculinity feature (cf. Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009), the female protagonists seem not to take work and it being a priority over sexual activity into consideration, and draw instead conclusions about the man’s sexuality.21

“All men are a bad lot.” Men’s evaluation by the heroines does not stop in the former’s appearance and sexuality. It also extends to their personality, treating them as problematic and defective products (see also the motto of earlier decades that “all men are pigs” articulated by women). This discourse is such an instance, a discourse that emerged from my data, a large part of the episodes analyzed revolving around it. In S&C, too, men are seen to be construed as “freaks” with pathological, sexual, psychological, and financial “deficiencies”/“abnormalities,” and as defective products (Greven, 2004). In Greven’s words, whereas the “consumer women [i.e. the heroines] now have the ability to scan and survey, buy and return, the gendered goods are generally degenerate, already in the process of decaying” (p. 40).

Case 10:

At the hairdresser’s, Vada wants to have her hair died olive green. Stellina attributes Vada’s need for change to the fact that she broke up and tries to dissuade her. MS of Stellina

STELLINA

I am telling you, do not have anything done on your hair for the sake of any asshole. All right? Let me tell you the other thing, too. If he were not [an asshole]—which seems to me highly unlikely—, then you could have the change. Have it for your sake. But, he is an asshole and you are doing him this favour...

This discourse is identifiable in the repeated derogatory lexical item asshole, also inferred through ellipsis in two more occasions If he were not [an asshole], which seems to me highly unlikely [that he is not an asshole]. Stellina offers here no explanation for her accusation, but still finds the man Vada was in a relationship with the one to blame. On top, she takes this for granted, which seems to me highly unlikely, leaving no room for debate. In another case, even a man makes use of this discourse:

21 There is another male character also uninterested in sex, preferring instead to watch televised football matches and TV programs commenting on the matches (with his friends), while Vada with her friends are ready to have sex with them. In this occasion, however, sex is turned down for another “core” element of hegemonic masculinity, what has been named “Sporty masculinity” (cf. Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Politis, 2006; also Connell, 1995). This is about hegemonic masculinity being “linked to athletic prowess […]. In the Greek context, masculinity is often linked not only to playing but also to watching sports, especially football” (Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009, p. 157).
Case 11:
Stephania at Markos’ taxi

**MCU of Markos**

[MARKOS] Would you like a cigarette?

**MCU of Stephania**

[STEPHANIA] I do not smoke, even though I should take it up.

**CU of Markos**

[MARKOS] Dud boyfriend?

The lexical item **dud** alludes to this discourse, where men are seen as the reason for women’s problems/as the problem itself. It is noteworthy that this reason is offered instantaneously as the first and only (?) reason for a/this woman’s problems. Here, Markos could be making use of this discourse through the given characterisation of a man, but this could be because he is speaking on Stephania’s behalf, i.e. it is something he would expect a woman to articulate.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Analyzing the Greek fictional TV series, *SP*, the aim of the paper has been twofold: on the one hand, it intended to shed light on the various (fictional TV) construals of Greek masculinities including male heterosexualities in order to make this diversity more visible and, on the other, to improve the cultural understandings of the conflicting masculinities in Greek society. Hence, I investigated how masculinities and male (hetero)sexualities are discursively constructed by exploring the ways the male characters both construct themselves and are presented by the heroines in terms of gender and sexuality.

Analysis, specifically, shows that the male characters in the data—who are not even secondary characters—construct themselves according to features of hegemonic masculinity: they are heterosexual, controlling, and domineering, rejecting any associations with femininity. They are also afraid of commitment and have sex without any emotional attachment. Such findings are also reported both by ethnographies in Greece in the past and by other contemporary studies. A gay character is also included in the series and hence homosexuality is not “utter taboo.” However, his role is marginal and the way he is construed still perpetuates the definition of homosexuality as negative masculine identity. These facts point to/can be attributed to that social attitudes towards gays have been slowly changing on the one hand, and on the other that there is still a long way to go for their equal status in Greek society due to stereotypes and homophobia (cf. Deliyanni-Kouimzi, 2005; Kosezti, 2012; Politis, 2006; see also Campbell, 1964). Mediated construals of masculinity and sexuality privilege an essential heteronormativity.

Men’s self-constructions come in opposition to their construals by the female protagonists. Although the latter also recognize that men are afraid to commit themselves to a (marital) relationship, they articulate opposing discourses, evaluating men in terms of personality and sexual performance, treating them as problematic and defective, objectifying them sexually, complaining that there are no longer real men, as the majority of them have turned gay, and questioning their male sexual drive and hence their manhood.

This “struggle” lies at the very essence of the notion of “hegemony” and can be explained through a number of prisms. Aligning myself with the theoretical posi-
tion that media constitute cultural fields where struggles of meanings—including gendered meanings—take place, and that there is a dialectical relationship between media and society, i.e. the media both shape and are shaped by society (e.g. Fairclough, 1995), all this shapes and is shaped by the wider socio-cultural context of Greece. This is a context which can be seen in a transitory phase regarding gender and sexual roles, relations, and practices. For instance, men leave a relationship when the woman wants marriage or cohabitation, or assumes men’s roles and get married at an older age than they used to, and women make considerable strides in various fields of the public sector. Such changes lead to further changes in personal relations: women are single and complain about not finding a (“real”) man to have a relationship with, leading them to question the heterosexuality of men (case 5); women question men’s sexual drive, again making assumptions about them being homosexual (case 9); women assume the role of the “hunter” (case 7) previously exclusively associated with men, given the long tradition of men’s uncontrollable sexuality and especially the Greek phenomenon of kamakia (see above); finally, women treat men as problematic objects (case 10), including as (problematic) sexual objects (cases 7, 8).

Hence, the coexistence of hegemonic masculinity and of discourses oppositional to hegemonic masculinity can be taken as evidence of the shifting nature of masculinities in contemporary Greece. Men’s self-constructions along hegemonic discourses could be seen as backlash to feminist progress, as delineated earlier: men might feel the need to protect their “threatened” masculinity and reassert it (cf. Benwell’s, 2003, p. 14, similar claim in relation to the British context regarding the so-called “crisis of masculinity” given changing gender roles). Furthermore, men’s given self-constructions could also be in line with men’s still dominant position in many domains in Greek society: men still occupy higher ranks than women, are less illiterate and less unemployed than women, and spend considerably less time on housework and childcare, while there is still a gender pay gap (see Kosetzi, 2007). Hence, discourses associated with features of hegemonic masculinity suggest that men still manage to hold on to what has been traditionally male.

An alternative but related explanation for the prevalence of hegemonic masculinity in the data could be its male audience. Quite unexpectedly for but happily welcomed by the producers, men also watched the series (Kosetzi, 2007). Given that TV series are products to be consumed, driven by market forces, they have to be appealing to male audiences (and thus, to advertisers); hence, they have to reproduce, promote, and “sell” these hegemonic images of masculinity. Put differently, they should not threaten the status quo if wanting to retain male viewers. SP need not be an exception. That said, the target group of the series has been primarily women. Thus, the incorporation of alternative discourses which in essence criticize men and their behaviors and roles could be attributed to a need on the scriptwriter and producers’ behalf to keep the main target audience happy, for the exact same reason. Profit runs TV, after all.

The alternative discourses employed by the heroines may alternatively be attributed to the fact that they are scripted as professionally successful, financially independent, and sexually liberated. They can afford assuming a critical stance. This in turn could be seen as result of women’s achievements and considerable advances in a number of areas in the—mainly—public sphere, which arguably have an effect on the personal sphere. The changes in women’s roles and lives in turn entail
changes in men’s, too, the former influencing the latter.  

Concluding this paper, two final points should be made. The first has to do with a lack of a wide range of masculinities in the series that would correspond to the multiple masculinities on offer in contemporary Greek society. The men’s, including Johnny’s, not-round characters and limited role in SP could be a reason for such a lack. Hence, it is far from my intention to claim that only hegemonic masculinity, its being challenged, and subordinate masculinity obtain in Greece. This lack, however, should not be seen as undermining the findings of the study, myself concurring with Feasey who argues,

[t]he lived experience of masculinity will always be more complex and fluctuating than those representations of manhood and the male role being depicted in contemporary television programming, however, this does not detract from the power of the medium to define norms and conventions, to provide ‘common-sense’ understandings of gender and sexuality and to portray what is considered to be both ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate social relations.’ (2008, p. 155)

As a second and related note, I do align myself with the theoretical position that there is not a single kind of hegemonic masculinity (Kiesling, 2006), as what is hegemonic in one (micro-)context can be subordinate in another. Thus, the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity identified in this study should be seen within the given context, acknowledging the complexity of the term. Nevertheless, the findings of men’s self-constructions according to hegemonic masculinity fall in line with other recent Greek studies drawing on discourse analysis both of popular culture (Kosetzi & Polyzou, 2009; Polyzou, 2010) and of male identities (see e.g. Archakis & Lampropoulou, 2011; Deliyanni-Kouimtzi & Sakka, 2005a, 2005b; Grigoropoulos, 2007; Hiraklidou, 2005; Politis, 2006). Importantly, though, these studies did not identify any challenges to hegemonic masculinity or any alternative discourses to hegemonic ones, as the present study. Without denying the importance of such alternative discourses, however, alternative to hegemonic masculinity discourses have significantly not been employed by men themselves for self-construction. Neither has an alternative, positive form of masculinity superseded that of hegemonic masculinity. This is what is needed indeed.

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22 One could even argue that the alternative discourses could be attributed to the similarities between SP and S&C. However, there is a need for the discourses that circulate in a series to be anchored in given social contexts in order negative consequences to be avoided, see e.g. low ratings.

23 Grigoropoulos (2007) points to renewal of masculinities when the respondents refer to men being caring partners.


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