GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
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Framing Domestic Violence

Armenian Women's rights organisations participating in the process of constructing domestic violence against women as a social problem

Abstract

The notion of domestic violence as a public issue, calling for official response, is relatively new in Armenian society. Since the late 1990s, a movement of making domestic violence visible as a societal matter has arisen and expanded, with support from an international women's rights movement. A growing amount of women's rights NGOs have emerged, that are besides working with awareness raising, offering social services to victims of domestic violence. No such services are provided by the state, nor does the organisations receive any support from the government. The NGOs' activities have by many been received as controversial and contentious. When making claims for legal change and official response, the organisations have been contested with threats, and accusations of destroying families and ruining national values. Even as the awareness about domestic violence have generally increased the last decade, there is no clear conception of it in terms of how to explain its causes, or deal with its consequences. When applying a human rights framework, the organisations need to reside a form of 'double consciousness', as they adapt to a 'universal' set of principles, but carry them out in a local context of particular conditions. The study aimed to examine what conflicting discourses NGOs faced and confronted in their work, and how this work was conducted. Qualitative interviews were made with NGO representatives from five different organisations in Yerevan, Armenia, working in the sphere of domestic violence. The study found that NGO members faced different conflicting discourses when conducting their work, and that they sometimes, in a pragmatic approach, needed to adjust their language and claims, in order to be approved of by a putative target audience. Through these actions of interpretations and adjustments, NGOs take part in an ongoing collective negotiation process of how to define and perceive domestic violence against women as a societal issue.

Key words: *Domestic violence, Violence against women, Armenia, Social constructionism, Social problems*

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Preface

I want to warmly thank all interviewees, for sharing their time and thoughts, and for welcoming me with openness and engagement. To everyone who helped facilitate the journey, the stay, the contacts made and the final steps; thank you. And finally, thank's to my supervisor, for the best of patience and support throughout the research process.

1. Introduction

In the summer of 2013, several Armenian Non Governmental Organisations (henceforth referred to as NGOs) working in the domain of women's rights and the issue of domestic violence, experienced a harshening climate in the social environment of their work. The catalyst was the adoption of a new law, called the Gender Equality Law, a couple of months earlier. After a period of large scale media attention and debates, the name of the law was changed into Law for Equality between Women and Men, thus demonstrating that the word gender was not accepted by its protesters.

At the same time, a draft law specifically addressing the issue of domestic violence had been submitted to the government, but rejected with references to, among other things, the lacking of economical resources and incompatibility with the Armenian national constitution. The following months, several well-known women's rights organisations were subjected to threats and attacks by ultra-nationalist organisations and activists, aggressively criticising their values and work. The women's rights organisations, being part of the network 'Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women' were by attackers accused of trying to break Armenian families and destroy national values. Misinformation was spread through national media about the aims and methods of the organisations, and staff members and activists were in the worst cases threatened to their lives.

Domestic violence against women has during a long time been perceived as a private issue in Armenia. As one women's rights activist puts it in an interview: "Unfortunately it (domestic violence) is not something that we talk about, and it is not considered a big problem. If it is a problem then you know it's a family thing, that the family should deal with on its own". According to a 2007 survey, where Armenian women were asked about their experiences of violence, 39 percent of the respondents answered they had suffered physical abuse, which in 85 percent of the cases were perpetrated by husbands. The survey also presented that a vast majority of the respondents (88 percent) thought that the best way to handle domestic violence was by private means, rather than through the authorities (Amnesty International 2008).

The notions of domestic violence as a private matter, and a phenomenon best kept within the family, can be seen as related to the notions of family to the Armenian society, often being described as a fundamental aspect of national identity, and as being connected to well explicated gender roles (Dudwick, 1997:235, Ishikanian 2004:267). This emphasis put on the family is said to have emerged from certain aspects of Armenian history. As stated in a 1998 United Nations Human Development Report: "A history replete with war, invasion, massacre, genocide and natural disasters shaped the Armenian family into a basic unit for viability and self-preservation" (Ishkanian 2004:267). Combined with an official neglect of the existence of domestic violence during the Soviet Union era (Atwood 1997:101; Fabián 2010:12; Reingardiene 2003:356), this creates a

framework for understanding the prevailing reluctance towards giving the issue public attention.

Domestic violence against women is a world wide phenomenon. Although it takes different forms and is portrayed differently in different places, an interrelation can be seen between a comparatively equal gender structure and a lower extent of gender based violence (Brückner 2006). This standpoint suggests that violence against women, universally, has a common ground in gender hierarchy structures, despite differences in expression and extent. The fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 states that "[…] violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women" (United Nations, 1996:75). This underpins the structural component to (domestic) violence against women, which means that unequal gender structures do not create individual violence per se, but give it a societal and cultural back-up (Levinson 1988).

Since the early 1980s, domestic violence has been a well highlighted subject in international human rights discourse (Merry 2006). The international women's rights movement developed arguments that presented domestic violence not as a cultural or individual problem, but instead as a violation of human rights from which the individual should be protected by the state or broader communities of states, and international bodies such as the UN. General policy recommendations on gender sensitive laws and policies, including demands on state intervention and support for victims, became part of an evolving international norm regarding how to address domestic violence against women (Fabián 2010). Questions regarding how to advocate domestic violence against women as a societal matter, is of big relevance to social work arenas globally, as domestic violence is a world wide phenomenon, and since different ways of portraying it, has direct implications on how to address it in terms of support and interventions.

In Armenia since the late 1990s, a movement of making domestic violence visible as a societal issue has arisen and expanded, with the support of both local, regional and international collaborations. The work of creating public awareness is still ongoing. Partly through the efforts of a number of NGOs and women's rights activists, the issue has entered official arenas such as news media and television shows, thus manifesting the existence of it as a phenomenon. Besides fighting for public awareness, an important part of these organisations' work is to offer social support to women being subjected to domestic violence, as there are no such services provided by the state. Despite a growing public attention, there is no public consensus regarding how to address domestic violence as an issue, in the aspects of how to explain its causes and and deal with its consequences. To claim for public response is shown to be a contentious activity, creating controversy, negative feelings and debate.

1.1 Aim and research questions

This study's aim is to examine how domestic violence against women is constructed as a social problem and a public issue, through the work of a selection of NGOs based in Yerevan, Armenia. It seeks to highlight the NGO representatives' experiences from their work with advocacy of the issue of domestic violence, directed to a public audience, and their social services work with individuals. The study strives to inquire how the NGO representatives experience their working conditions in relation to their specific context. To reach an understanding of this, the following research questions are used:

1) What conflicting ideas and values regarding domestic violence against women, do NGO representatives face in their work?

2) How do NGOs advocate the issue of domestic violence to a public audience?

3) How do NGO representatives handle conflicting ideas and values in their work with individuals?

1.2 Relevance and restrictions

This study will examine the question about how social work, and advocacy for social change, relate to preexisting societal ideas and values, and what conflicts are being confronted in the work conducted. It will not further analyse how widespread these ideas are or who represent them.

The study focuses on the current situation of the NGOs present in the study, and is not performed as an historical analysis.

The study will mediate the perspective of the NGO representatives, and will not voice experiences of women who have themselves gone through domestic violence. It will therefore not further discuss the forms, expressions or lived experiences of domestic violence in Armenia, but instead examine the experiences of people facing the violence in their professional or organisational roles.

1.3 Definitions

Domestic violence against women

As this study aims to inquire how domestic violence against women is being collectively defined in relation to a constructing process of it as a social problem, it is important that the definition used in the study is clearly explicated. The term domestic violence can include many forms of violence, and is not explicitly addressing violence against women. In this aspect it tends to neglect the gender aspect of it, as it refers to any kind of violence occurring in a household or between family members. My believe is that gendered power structures are crucial factors in the explanation of why domestic violence occur, why women are more

often victims of it, and why perpetrators are to a higher extent men. This is, according to me a deficiency of the term domestic violence. Albeit, despite these problematic aspects, the term domestic violence is used in the study, but referred to as a gendered problem, as it is explicated as domestic violence *against women*. This term was chosen mainly because it is the one referred to by the NGOs in the study. They define domestic violence against women as violence perpetrated by a partner, husband or parent-in-law. The violence is defined as physical violence (beatings, injuries), psychological abuse, sexual violence (imposed marriage, unwanted sexual acts, rape) and economical abuse (creating economic dependency, not providing money or food, not allowing a woman to study or work). They further stress that the perpetrator is alone responsible for his/her violent acts, and that no responsibility or guilt should be put upon the victim (Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women 2015).

This definition correlates with internationally established definitions. The United Nations' (1993) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) defines violence against women as "[…] any kind of violence that result in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, weather occurring in public or in private life". Gender based violence against women, either perpetrated by a State or a private person is further regarded as a violation of the women's human rights (Amnesty International 2008). Although men are also extensively subjected to acts of violence, such acts are not as likely to occur specifically related to their gender, neither is it as likely that the violence is perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member (Healy, Link 2011).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2002:89) defines what it calls intimate partner violence as "any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship", including acts of physical aggression, psychological abuse, forced intercourse and various controlling behaviours.

Hence, the term violence against women can include any form of violence perpetrated against a woman, either in the public or the private sphere, while the term intimate partner violence does not specifically address violence perpetrated against a woman, and is therefore not gender sensitive. The same is true for the term domestic violence, that include any form of violence occurring between the members of a family or household. Therefore, in this study the term domestic violence against women is used, in order to to specify the type of violence that is perpetrated against a woman in her home, and/or by an intimate partner/family member. It can thus mean violence perpetrated against a woman, either by a husband/intimate partner, or other family member, such as for instance a mother or father in law. When, in some cases, the term domestic violence is used in quotes, without specifying gender, it refers implicitly to violence perpetrated against women, as that is the focal issue of this study. The category woman relates to anyone who identify themselves as being a woman.

Non governmental organisations
An NGO is defined as a non-profit group that is task-oriented and organised around a common interest. NGOs are principally independent from the government and can be organised on a local, national or international level. The United Nations have developed collaborations with a large number of NGOs around the world. These NGOs can sometimes have a consultative position in specific UN departments and agencies (United Nations Rule of Law 2015). Representatives of NGOs are sometimes referred to as activists. When the term activist is used in this study, it refers to the members of the NGOs.

1.4 Abbreviations

NGO   Non Governmental Organisation
UN   United Nations
CEDAW   Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against
               Women
DEVAW   Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
WHO   World Health Organisation
CSVAW   Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women
WRCA   Women's Resource Centre Armenia
PINK   Public Information and Need of Knowledge
WRC   Women's Rights Centre
SWV   Society Without Violence
WSC   Women's Support Centre

2. Background; Armenia

To create a framework for an understanding of the social environment in which the organisations work and act, a brief presentation of the Armenian context is provided in the following chapter. To give an all-embracing, general presentation of the Armenian society, would be impossible, as it is as any other society complex, continuously changeable and full of nuances. The presentation is therefore to be seen as a selection of accounts that will serve to give a basic common understanding for the background context to which the research questions relate. Initially a presentation of the current situation is given, focusing on population, politics, civil society and domestic violence against women. This is followed by a brief presentation of important historical events and processes, and summoned in an analyse of the linkage between societal ideas concerning the roles of family, gender and nation.

2.1. Current situation

Territory, demography and population

Armenia belongs to the region of south Caucasus, situated in the highland between the caspian and the black sea and has borders to Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran. According to an official census conducted in 2011, the total of the population counted to scarcely 3,3 million inhabitants. About 400 000 of these are though, according to the national statistic service of Armenia, permanently living abroad. Approximately 65 per cent of the population live in urban areas, of which one third live in the capital Yerevan. Statistics, though unreliable in giving exact population figures, unequivocally point at an extent of depopulation. Since the independence in 1991, an estimated amount of one million Armenians have left the country, many as labor migrants (Utrikespolitiska institutet 2014). Migration pressure has been especially high in rural parts of Armenia. A substantial diaspora of Armenians, numbering up to eight million, are living outside of the country, predominantly in Russia, France, the USA, Latin America and the Middle East. The diaspora population plays a crucial role in the economic survival of Armenia, contributing both expertise and remittances to the country (Amnesty international 2008:9). Armenia was the first country in the world to convert to christianity, and under periods of muslim rule, christianity maintained the dominant religion. Today, the Armenian apostolic church is the predominantly largest religious affiliation in Armenia.

Politics

The political situation in Armenia has since the formation of the national republic in 1991 been signified by instability and unrest. The nationalist rightwing Republican party HHK (Hayastani Hanrapetakan Kusaktsutyun) is the biggest one, and has been growing steadily after gaining power in 1999. The current president Serzj Sargsyan was elected in 2008, an election that was followed by large protests, in which protesters accused the government of electoral fraud and expressed a wide discontent over bad living conditions and poverty. In the big demonstrations, eight protesters were killed, and the leader of opposition was temporarily put in house arrest. During the following year, court trials were held against leading oppositional politicians, and some were imprisoned (Utrikespolitiska institutet 2014).

The elections for the parliament of 2012 was again preceded by protests and accusations directed towards the republican party for being corrupt. Even so, the election resulted in the domination of the Republican party, followed by Prosperous Armenia, described as a liberal conservative party. Sargsyan was re-elected in the presidential election of 2013 with over 58 percent of the votes. Although the elections were assessed to be generally well-administered, there are reports of voter harassments, vote-buying, mis-use of administrative resources to favour those already in power, and police unresponsiveness to citizens complaints (Human Rights Watch 2014). In 2014, Armenia joined the Russian led custom

union, a decision that caused protests from the opposition. The decision will entail a larger distance to collaboration with the European Union, and closer political and economical ties to Russia.

Several human rights organisations report that rights of expression, such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of assembly are limited in Armenia, and that hindrance of political activities and police brutality against activists of human rights occur (Freedom House 2014, Human Rights Watch 2014, Utrikesdepartementet 2011).

Domestic violence - extent and official response

Several statistical surveys and studies have been carried out the recent years that present concrete evidence of a widespread occurrence of domestic violence in Armenia. A quantitative study from 2007, in which 1006 women took part, found that 66 percent had experienced psychological abuse (of whom 46 percent had experienced it often or sometimes). In the case of physical abuse, 27 percent had experienced moderate physical abuse (16 per cent often or sometimes), while 12 per cent had experienced severe physical abuse (6 percent often or sometimes). In the cases of physical abuse, in 85 percent of the cases the husband was the perpetrator, and in 10 percent of the cases it was the mother-in-law. The study revealed that only 29 percent sought help in case of abuse, and in most cases from family members. Background factors to domestic violence were explained to be a range of causes, varying from drug and alcohol problems, poverty, inequality between men and women, and low educational levels (Amnesty international 2008).

A survey examining demography and health, conducted by the National Statistics Service of the Armenian government in 2006, revealed attitudes towards domestic violence. The survey presented that of over 6500 women respondents, 22 percent agreed with at least one of several specified reasons that justified a husband to beat his wife. The figure was higher for rural respondents, and lower for women with higher education or who had a paid employment. Among men, the percentage of justifying a husband's violent behaviour was higher (31 per cent).

There is no state organised or state funded support for women who have experienced domestic violence in Armenia today. The services that exist; hot lines, legal, psychological and social support, are all offered by NGOs. Currently there is only one shelter in Armenia, offering places for five families at a time. The shelter is run by an NGO.

Armenia has ratified all major relevant international human rights conventions. The conventions, according to the Armenian legal system, form a constituent part of the domestic legislation, and take precedence over national laws. These conventions include The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which therefor apply as a law to Armenia. The ratification of a convention includes the requirement on the ratifying state to regularly submit reports to the UN with details on the

implementations of the convention. The Armenian state has by the time of writing, not submitted such reports as scheduled. (ibid.:20-21). According to a comparative study, Armenia proves to be the country with least developed official response towards domestic violence, among a chosen amount of post-soviet countries (Russia, Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia) (Johnson, Brunell 2006), with no state intervention and a limited social movement on the issue, as a result of the government's failure to respect political rights (Johnson 2007).

The Armenian government has established some formal governmental agencies and posts addressing women's issues that fall under the rubric of family issues, but their objectives are not proven to be implemented in practice. There is no law in Armenia specifically addressing domestic violence, instead 'domestic violence crimes' are persecuted under more general provisions of the criminal code such as battery, assault and murder. There is no distinction made between a stranger or a family member perpetrating the crimes. This kind of gender neutral approach to the criminal code can work if the law is administered on a strictly equal basis. NGO representatives albeit give a picture that in practice preconceived ideas and values affect the situation negatively, impeding women to report domestic violence, for instance in the cases of police officers persuading women to withdraw their complaints. Violence against women fall within the remit governed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Armenian police, but only under the rubric of women's issues or juvenile crime, and the Department for women's affairs is a sub department of the Department for Women's and Children's affairs. Thereby, domestic violence is in no aspect of the governmental or state sphere, addressed as a specific issue calling for specialised interventions (Amnesty International 2008:23-24).

NGOs and domestic violence
The total amount of continuously operational NGOs in Armenia were in 2010 estimated to about 1 000 (Asian Development Bank, 2011). Among these, about sixty (numbers from 2013) are dealing with domestic violence and women's rights protection (Global network of women peace builders 2014:249). The women's rights NGO sector grew rapidly in the ending of the 1990s, with support from transnational feminist and women's rights networks. The event that had the greatest impact on the women's organisations in Armenia is said to have been the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995. As Armenian participating activists brought back global gender discourses and issues to Armenia, the interest in women's rights issues grew, as well as the opportunities for fundings. The sharp rise in women's rights NGOs during this period of time could be seen in many other countries and parts of the world and is therefore not a phenomenon isolated to Armenia. Within this transnational movement in the aftermaths of the Beijing conference, violence against women was the centrepiece and became a common ground for advocacy between women's rights movements globally (Ishkanian 2007).

2.2 Brief history

Foreign rule

Armenia has often been an object for rivalry between neighbouring super power states, such as the Persian and Ottoman empire, and during the past 2000 years, Armenia has experienced only short periods of independency (Redgate 1998). In the beginning of the 20th century, parts of Armenia belonged to the Ottoman empire. As living conditions for Armenians were very poor (Suny 1993), tensions and uprisings towards the Ottoman rule occurred, that led to persecutions and massacres of Armenians, later escalating to systematically executed mass murders incited by the Ottoman power. These events dated to the year of 1915 have been designated as the known first genocide in modern time. Estimates of victims killed have varied, but point at numbers between 600 000 and 1 million people. Some sources though estimates the number of victims as even higher (Utrikespolitiska institutet 2015, Redgate 1998).

The Soviet era

Between 1922 and 1991 Armenia was part of the Soviet union. The years of Stalin leadership, that lasted between the mid 1920s to his death in 1953, was signified by a brutal and dictatorial rule. During this period, all political expressions except for the ones in line with the communist party program were forbidden, and opponents of the regime were persecuted or killed. The Soviet rule also meant a comprising restructuring process for the Armenian society. Beginning in the 1920s, big investments were made in industries and infrastructure, educational and cultural institutions were established, and power plants built, providing the country with electricity. These investments were all part of a Soviet planned modernisation process (Suny 1993). Soviet leadership encouraged women to take part of the class struggle and the labour force, as workers were needed in the developing industries. The Women's Division of the Communist Party was formed, with the aim of women emancipation (Ishkanian 2007:505-506). Among women, literacy increased from 19 percent in 1926 to 62 percent in 1939 (Suny 1993). During the early years of the soviet rule, the regime made strong efforts to try to replace the citizen's loyalty to the family, with loyalty to the state and the party. Family was by communism portrayed as a backward institution, in need of transformation. Under the Soviet regime, intrusive control mechanisms, and 'inspection services' were imposed by the state, to inspect that families followed the Soviet legislation. These efforts made by the state with the aim to dismantle family loyalties, were contradictory seen to rather strengthen the family ties, as the family became a mode of resistance to the state (Ishkanian 2007:505-506).

During the second world war, Armenia fought against Nazi Germany, and emerged from the war greatly impoverished. Post-war time meant a new wave of infrastructural and industrial expansion. From the mid 1950's, under the rule of Stalin's successor Nikita Chrustjov, Armenia received a higher degree of autonomy from the central Soviet power. The memories of massacres in the early

1900's and the fear of Turkey is said to have made Armenians more inclined to accept subordination to the Soviet system longer than other Soviet states.

Independence and Nagorno-Karabagh War

Armenia has gone through many periods of economic hardships, wars and conflicts, but in the second half of the 1980's the country entered a particularly difficult and traumatic period of its history. The reform politics of Michail Gorbatjov - perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) opened up for a political discontent to be seen and publicly expressed. This more open discussion would soon turn to sensitive topics about nationality and territorial claims (Masih, Krikorian 1999:9). In 1988 an earthquake hit the north-west of Armenia and devastated large areas of land, destroyed one-third of the country's industrial capacity and led to the closing of the nuclear plant, providing for about one fourth of Armenia's electricity production. Widespread unemployment emerged as a consequence (Dudwick 1997:237). The same year, opening moves were made in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over the sovereignty over the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabagh. The mountainous region, officially under Azerbaijani jurisdiction but inhabited by a local Armenian majority, had long been subject for conflicts between the neighbouring nations. The Soviet regime had though put a lid on nationalist conflicts, but in 1991 when the the Soviet Union collapsed and Armenia proclaimed itself as a sovereign state, nationalist sentiments were free to flourish. The same year, the conflict escalated into a full-blown war that ended in 1994 with Armenian supported Karabagh forces controlling both Nagorno-Karabagh and seven regions surrounding it (Utrikespolitiska institutet 2014). The war resulted in up to 25 000 people being killed, and in mass mutual expulsions of each others ethnic communities, leading to about one million Armenians and Azerbaijanis being forced to migration and exile (Amnesty International 2010). Trading blockades, combined with energy crisis, waves of fleeing Azeri Armenians needing shelter, alongside with the earthquake devastation, meant a very harsh economical situation for the country, with the humanitarian difficulties reaching its peak in the mid 1990s (Masih, Krikorian 1999:113).

Since 1994 there has officially been a cease-fire between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but tensions remain, and the borders between the countries that were closed as a result of the conflict, still today remain closed. Nagorno-Karabagh is today governed as a self declared independent republic with close political ties to Armenia. Unrest and skirmishes has continued in the region and on the Nagorno-Karabagh borders, between Karabagh- and Armenian forces, and Azerbaijani forces. Russia is officially allied with Armenia in the conflict and have active military presence in Armenia (Utrikespolitiska Institutet 2014, Amnesty International 2008).

2.3 Family, gender and nationalism

As the   nationalism reemerged in the 1980s and 1990s, fuelled by war and the historic memory of the 1915 genocide, a conservative protectionist mentality was reinforced, honouring 'national' values. As a result, the image of the 'traditional' family, used as a representation of a unique Armenian essence, grew strong as a part of nationalistic rhetorics. In such rhetorics, great emphasis is put on the woman's role as a mother, and as belonging to the home and household sphere, thus impeding women from taking part of public and political life. In addition, the closure of child care facilities and the unemployment striking women the hardest, have made it more difficult for women to work outside the household sphere (Dudwick 1997:239). A structural dependency (cultural, economical) on the family, generally makes women more vulnerable to domestic violence, as it forms obstacles to leaving an abusive partner or family member, and to be self sufficient (Amnesty International 2008:18-19).

Linked to the idea of the 'traditional' family are notions of the complementarity of women's and men's roles in the family structure, described through metaphors such as the family as 'a fortress' in which the man is the 'outer wall' protecting from danger, and the woman is the the 'inner wall' that keeps the harmony and domestic order. Even if far from all Armenians accept or conform to these values, they need to contend with them, weather in the meaning of defying or adapting them (Dudwick 1997:235).

As mentioned earlier, the family as a social entity is often described to be a central part of social and emotional life in Armenia, and to have played a crucial role for survival during economical hardships, war and persecution. The emphasis put on the family is said to have emerged from the absence of statehood, thus creating a concept of Nation-as-a-family, a 'familialism'. The concept of familialism, carries an image of the woman as being a unifying power, within the family and within the nation. The Armenian woman, as a concept and category, is thereby seen to have played a crucial role in the forming of Armenian national history and culture (Ishikanian 2004:267). This points at a strong linkage between societal ideas of nation, family and gender, that can be seen to be derived from historical and political events and processes.

3. Previous research

Research projects carried out in the sphere of domestic violence in Post Soviet countries, point out that there are discursive conflicts between notions of 'traditional values' and the claims made on portraying domestic violence against women as a public issue. Anti domestic violence organisations are described to be working in an intersection between local and global discourses.

In a comprehensive review over the emergence of domestic violence as a public issue in Armenia, Ishikanian (2007) shows how many NGOs' engagement in the sphere of domestic violence against women, to a large extent coincided with the sudden availability of international financial funding. She argues that while

the issue of domestic violence was not at that point, locally recognised as a public issue, it was perceived by a public audience as being "artificially imported and imposed" (ibid. 490). This created a strong critique and criticism towards the anti-domestic violence movement, and one of the problems the NGOs had to face, became countering this resistance. Furthermore, the methods and models implied by the movement, such as shelters, were not directly implementable in the Armenian context, as there was no social structure supporting it, such as fundings for alternative housing for victims of domestic violence after the stay in the shelter. The prevailing 'familialism' culture was also said to form an obstacle for models to be implementable, as the fact of seeking help outside of the family was conceived as something controversial. Through interviews and fieldwork with six women's rights NGOs, she found that an important way for the organisations to give the issue legitimacy, was to use international discourses of democracy and human rights, framing the issue of domestic violence not as an issue of women's rights but as an issue of human rights, necessary for democracy building. Albeit this was in the study not proven to have any visible positive impact on the way that the issue was received within the public audience. Participants stressed the importance of being sensitive to local specific conditions in order to be successful. As a response to the criticism, many of the NGOs adapted to locally accepted pro-family discourses, by for instance framing their work as a way to strengthen families and keep them together, or by using a nationalist rhetorics portraying their work with strengthening families as a way of strengthening the nation.

An ethnographic field study conducted in a Kazakhstani anti domestic violence NGO, found that NGO members, in order to be legitimised, needed to encounter and balance between different actors' perspectives, both global and local. For instance, in trainings with police officers, they used a human rights framework to legitimise domestic violence as a public issue, but infused it with an ethnic-nationalist rhetoric, stressing that ancient Kazakhtstani culture was based on equality between men and women and that unequal gender structures had rather been imposed by foreign intruders. This was seen as a pragmatic approach, a way to gain ground for advocacy and awareness raising work (Snajdr 2010:123).

In a similar way, adaptions to locally accepted discourses was seen in a field study from a women's crisis centre in Russia. The study found that the staff members in the centre had different ways of framing the issue of domestic violence against women. This was demonstrated through the way they talked about both the causes of the violence, and the ways to deal with its consequences. She identified two different conflicting approaches among the staff members, which she called a feminist contra familist- approach. The former acknowledging gender structures as being a crucial factor behind the violence, while the latter had a gender-neutral viewpoint, in which the violence was constructed as a family interaction problem with no concrete gender actors. Between these two, the latter was seen to be more "safe"to use when communicating with authorities or in public debate, as it was more likely accepted. Furthermore, the study found that different ways of framing domestic violence was used in different contexts and

situations. This means that the different framing options did not only relate to the staff members' different individual standpoints, but the same staff member could use different approaches in different situations. The more official the context, the more likely was it that they used a pro-family approach, whereas in the individual client consulting or in the communication with international donors, a gender sensitive understanding was more often applied (Jäppinen 2011).

An interview study with NGO anti domestic violence organisations in Uzbekistan illustrated how staff members were cautious with the use of a feminist discourse, as it had strong negative connotations and was received with scepticism by a public audience (Horne et al. 2009:231-233). Similar findings were made by Brygalina and Temkina (2004:224) who, in an analysis of feminist organisations (including crisis centres) in St Petersburg, found that organisations strategically adopted particular frameworks in different situations. Even as they identified themselves as feminist organisations, and used a 'radical' rhetorics within feminist circles, many of them avoided to articulate feminist topics in contexts where they were not accepted, for instance when cooperating with authorities or in public debate. Such shifts in how to frame the issue of domestic violence seem to be a strategical choice for many involved in the crisis centre movement in Russia, as a way to handle shifting demands and expectations from, for instance, international donors and local   politicians (Johnson 2011).

When emerging in the beginning of the 1990's, the women crisis centres in Russia were more prone to openly identify themselves as feminist, while they later on tended to more often draw on a pro-family approach. One explanation, was according to a study of Johnson and Brunell (2006), that the centres in the beginning, were autonomous from the state (NGO driven), while   they, as the movement evolved, often developed cooperations with the state, or that crisis centres became state run and thereby under stricter policy control. In Armenia, on the contrary, there was a bigger reluctance within the anti-domestic violence movement towards using a feminist rhetoric as the movement emerged, than it seems in later studies (Iskanian 2004; 2007). This can be seen to correlate with the lack of a state funded institutional structure in the field of domestic violence in Armenia which means that the movement does not need to compromise with demands or institutional policies from the state, as they do not receive any active support (Johnson 2007).

4. Theoretical framework

4.1. A social constructionist approach

A social constructionist perspective rejects the conception of knowledge as an objective truth, and instead views our perception of the world and reality as a product of socially, culturally and historically specific ways of categorisation. The world as we perceive it, is an open-ended construction, built through social processes in which the language is a central aspect. Language is not a mere reflection of an objective truth. Instead it is seen as the channel through which the world is created and given meaning, structured through certain systems and discourses carrying values and ideas. Prevailing discourses decide what is acceptable, thinkable and utterable in a given time and context (Winter Jörgensen, Philips 2000).

Using a social constructionist framework in analysing social problems, it is through processes of collective definition that social problems emerge, rather than as discoveries of objective phenomenas being by nature problematic. Social problems are in this aspect "[…] the result of a process of definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem" (Blumer 1971:301). Kituse and Spector (1973) argues that such a process is contingent on the activities of groups or agencies making claims about why the putative condition is problematic, and how it urges amelioration and change. Such claims are not made in a social vacuum but are built upon values and/or interests, often resulting in the emergence of claims and counterclaims consisting of conflicting interest. Constructing a social problem requires the claims of a condition as; existing, being problematic and widespread, that the condition can be changed and that it should be changed. In its assertion of a condition as something that *should* be changed, the claims making process is a carrier of morals and values, and can never be neutral in its approach. Claims are defined as "[…] any verbal, visual or behavioural statement that seeks to persuade audience members to define a condition as a social problem" (Loseke 2003:26).

Social problems emerge and develop through collective and public processes of definition. Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) stresses the importance of taking into account the public arenas in which these processes take place, such as the mass media and the political debate. Public attention is not an infinite resource, and entering and remaining in a public arena calls for competition among claims makers. What relevance is given a certain problem, and its success in entering and remaining in public arenas, depends on how the problem definitions adapt and correspond to public discourse. Certain social contexts, structures and cultural believes offers certain frames of interpretation, as ways of interpretations is dependent on "[…] locally available resources for constructing instances of social problems" (Holstein, Miller 2003:73). The social problems work, i.e. the ongoing construction of a social problem is also contingent on the everyday mundane practices and organisational resources, a reason to consider

human services organisations to be important actors in the construction process of social problems (ibid.).

The claims making process in one given context can be affected by, and intertwined with, claims made in other contexts or places, and claims makers can explicitly seek to spread their message to other nations. How social problems claims disseminate, and to what extent, is dependent on a variety of causes. Channels available for communicating the claims, and the range of activity from the claims makers are important factors, but highly relevant is also the way that adopters of the claims are able to recognise the relevance of foreign claims. This is contingent on the ways the receivers can acknowledge similarities between the society that transmit the claims, to their own. The possibilities for a social problem definition to be accepted, is dependent on a prevailing social structure and culture that allows for recognition of the problem as existing and being problematic (Best 2001).

Claims makers are not merely carriers of societal extant ideas and meanings, but are rather active agents in both the creation of new meanings and the transformation of old meanings. The term framing, used is social movement theory, refers to the concept of an interpretive schemata that "[…] simplifies and condenses the "world out there" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment" (Snow, Benford 1992:137). The term framing was originally developed by Goffman (1974) but applied to social movement theory by Snow and collaborates (1986). Social movements are defined as: "distinct social processes, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action, are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, linked by informal networks, and share a distinct collective identity" (Della Porta & Diani (2005). When advocating for change, certain interpretative frames are used by claims makers to create or ameliorate opportunities for collective action by stressing or amplifying the importance of a certain condition (Snow et al.). Claims makers put forth their claims in a certain way, to attract a putative audience of followers. When doing so, they need to adjust their frames to the existing values and predispositions of their target audience in order to be successful (Tarrow 1992:189). Snow et al. (1986:477) use the term 'frame resonance' to define "[…] the degree of fit between the resultant framings, or product of that work, and the life situation and ideology of potential constituents".

4.2. Globalisation and international Human Rights

Broadly defined, the term globalisation refers to the increasing interconnectedness and integration of economies worldwide. This integration is carried out through the accelerated movement of finances, goods, services, labour, technology etc. The term globalisation further seeks to grasp and explain how the increasing transnational exchange, effects and restructures the relations between cultures,

nations and states. This involves the diffusion of political, social and cultural ideas (Wilson 2011).

Globalisation is sometimes portrayed as an opposing force to the preservation of local distinctiveness. In such a perspective it is targeted as a destructive force, by political movements seeking to strengthen a collective sense of cultural uniqueness. In this meaning, globalisation contradictory creates conditions for *localisation*, i.e. interests in emphasising national, cultural, religious, etc. bounded identification entities. Globalisation is also a trigger of conflict as it makes direct comparisons between groups more available. The creation of comparability is a central aspect of globalisation, and relates to the term standardisation, i.e. common measurements in production, language, political organisation forms etc. (Hylland Eriksen 2014:158-159).

The UN Declaration of Human rights can be seen as a form of global standards of ethics, through the ways it was widely and successfully spread during the second half of the 20th century. The widespread implication of its values is seen in the way that specialisations such as 'human rights and environment' and 'human rights and gender' are solidly established in the global discourse about justice and ethics (ibid.:169). Although the UN declaration of the human rights are conceived as universal, they are always carried out in a local context. Hence, in order to be effective, they need to be adapted to local structures of power and meaning, and a vernacular language (Merry 2006). Cox argues that globalisation has opened up for a 'new' form of global political structure that goes beyond national state boundaries, substantiated by global social forces advocating issues such as ecology, feminism and peace building (Cox in Paolini 1997:61-62). This relates to the concept of the "global civil society" in which NGOs and networks of NGOs play a central role for setting the political agenda, thus challenging the political power of the nation state (Della Porta, Tarrow 2005).

When speaking of human rights it is noteworthy to imply considerations of its heritage in western traditions of thought, such as the English bill of Rights and the French revolution that was coherent with an imperialistic political orientation (Staub Bernasconi 2011:32). Such a linear -historical development scheme for the emergence and implementation of human rights, carries a conception of western 'modernity' and European humanity, being a gift from 'the west to the rest' and thus belonging to a colonial discourse. This being said, using a human rights discourse does not necessarily and automatically lead to a reproduction of colonial and imperialistic structures. It is argued that human rights have also served as important means for *resistance* to imperialism (Sharma 2006:197-198).

5. Methodological framework

The empirical ground of the study consists of qualitative interviews with selected representatives from five non governmental organisations (NGOs) in Yerevan, Armenia. The interviews were conducted during a ten days stay in the city in November 2014. The primary aim of the stay was to meet with representatives of the NGOs and conduct interviews face to face, in order to take part of their experiences and knowledge. Qualitative research, with its interpretative and constructionist approach (Bryman 2008:340) aim to create an understanding of lived experiences through the personal perspectives of the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014:17).

5.1. Selection

Organisations

The selection of organisations was based on the organisations' specific knowledge base. This signifies a strategical selection (Bryman 2008:392). The organisations were found through the network *Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women* - a collaboration between organisations addressing the issue of domestic violence against women in Armenia. All of the organisations represented in the study are part of the coalition. The network was a good base for selection in regards to the research questions, as the study required people with experiences from working actively within organisations addressing domestic violence against women.

A requirement for organisations to participate was therefore that their work should address domestic violence against women, and furthermore offer social services as part of their organisation agenda. Although not all of the organisations worked specifically with domestic violence, but more broadly with issues concerning violence against women (e.g. sexual violence or in relation to LGBTQ-issues), all of them were in contact with domestic violence against women in their practices, albeit more or less explicitly. The organisations have a common agenda of bringing forth the issue of domestic violence against women as a public and political issue, expressed through the network *Coalition to stop violence against women*. The network is an umbrella organisation gathering NGOs and activists that work in the sphere of violence against women. The network was formed in 2012 as a response to a tragic domestic violence case, in which a woman was murdered in her home by her husband and mother-in-law. The aim was, as a coalition with joint resources, to lift the issue of domestic violence against women to public debate, raise awareness and call for official and legal response. The coalition today consists of a number of organisations and activists of which the following five organisations are among the most active:

Society without violence (SWV) offer legal, social and psychological support to survivors of domestic violence, or to families of murdered victims. In their social services, Society without violence focus on outreach work and collaborate with

the police and/or media to find families or individuals that might be in need of support. The organisation was founded in 2001.

Women's resource center Armenia (WRCA) was founded in 2003, and their main objective is to emancipate women to become active members of society through education and support. This includes workshops and trainings, such as language courses and art workshops. Since 2008 they run a sexual assault crisis centre, operate a hotline and offer social, psychological and legal counselling.

Women's right centre (WRC) was among the first NGOs in Armenia and has operated under different names since 1987. They are active in the current form and name since 1997. Their services on domestic violence include a hotline, a drop-in centre with legal, psychological, and social support and organised support groups for both women and children.

Public information and need of knowledge, Armenia (PINK) was founded in 2007 and mainly focuses sexual rights and LGBTQ-issues. The organisation runs a hotline and offers psychological, social and legal support. They offer trainings on sexuality and sexual reproductive health and organise activities to promote diversity and human rights.

Women's support centre (WSC) was founded in 2012 as a branch to the charitable organisation Tufenkian foundation. They run a hotline and have a centre for legal and socio-psychological consultation to survivors of domestic violence, both women and children. They also run a shelter with room for five families.

In the initiating contact with the organisations, the swedish network *Kvinna till Kvinna,* (Woman to Woman) who are collaborating with two of the organisations in the network (Women's rights centre and Women's resource centre), helped providing with names and contacts to coordinators within the organisations. The remaining three organisations were contacted through information available on the organisations' websites. In some cases, the organisations were not reachable through email-contact, whereas representatives already in contact, helped providing with information, such as alternative e-mail addresses or telephone numbers to people they knew personally or through the collaborations of the organisations. The selection was thereby partly based on the social contacts that that the interviewees had, as their recommendations directly guided the choice of participants. Such a selection process signifies a "snowball selection" (Bryman 2008:434).

All of the organisations are based in Yerevan, which as a city is not representative for other Armenian cities, nor the country at large. Smaller cities or regions have different economical, demographical, social and cultural structures than the capital. The economical resources are mainly concentrated to Yerevan, thus creating a gap between the capital and the regions.

Even if based in the capital, all of the organisations collaborated with either individual activists or social workers in other regions, or had smaller sections of their organisations placed outside of Yerevan, and/or carried out projects around the country. Sometimes the participants referred to projects being conducted in the regions.

Interviewees

All in all twelve participants were interviewed. Since the research questions concerned the public (awareness raising, advocating policy change) as well as individual (psychological support, legal counselling etc.) work of the organisations, a broad spectra of experiences and competence was aimed at. Through the initial contacts with selected representatives of the organisations, specific persons were then recommended for interviews, which means a snowball selection was used. The participants' positions in the organisations therefore varied, their titles being; PR-consultant (2), project coordinator (3), client consultant i.e. psychologist or social worker (5) staff consultant/supervisor (1) and director (1). Some of them were full time employees and some of them worked part time. This was due to irregular fundings and project based finances, that gave shifting opportunities in having payed full time employees within the organisations.

Some of the participants had gotten involved in their current organisation due to their educational background, such as social workers or psychologists, or academical degrees such as social or political science. Others had gotten involved through activism, volunteering, sheer personal interest, or a combination of these. Two of the participants had for long periods of their lives lived outside of Armenia, and therefore had significant work and/or study experience from abroad.

5.2. Interviews

In total, seven interviews were conducted. The interviews lasted between forty and ninety minutes and all took place in the offices of the organisations. The interviews had a semi-structured form. They were based on a question guide (appendix 2) which was the same for all interviews, but the participants were encouraged to add information they thought of as relevant. The questions were grouped under four themes; *the constitution of the organisation, the activities/ tasks of the organisation, context and conditions of work* and *experiences/ personal views*. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Three of the interviews were carried out with one single participant, whereas the other took the form of a pair- or group interview with two or three participants present. The pair- or group interviews were put together by the participants themselves. As I had specifically required to interview staff members/ representatives with different tasks and positions within the organisations, it occurred that the person I had been in contact with (coordinators or PR-consultants) had invited co-workers to take part in the interview. One possibility would have been to interview the participants one by one, but as the participants

themselves suggested the interviews to be made jointly, and as I did not find it to be disadvantaging for the interview situation, I proceeded with the group interviews without questioning their wishes. The question guide was used in the same way as in the single- person interviews. I asked questions that the participants responded to. The difference was that the participants in the group interviews often discussed the topics together. They sometimes helped each other explaining situations or phenomenas to me, that were brought up during the course of the interview. Mostly, I posed the questions openly, i.e. for any of the participants to respond, but in some cases I addressed a question specifically to one of the participants, based on this person's position within the organisation. Although the group interviews were not organised as such, they had similarities with focus group interviews. In qualitative research, focus groups are used with the aim to stimulate different views upon a given subject, and to gather a wide range of perspectives and opinions through the discussions of the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014: 191).

All of the interviews were conducted in english, which for most of the participants was a second or third language, next to Armenian and/or Russian. Two of the participants were native english speaking, as a result of partly growing/living in english speaking countries. Combined with my own mother tongue not being english, this meant a language barrier that supposedly effected the outcome of the interviews. It should be said though that all participants had a good level of english, and when in some cases a participant did not feel fully confident with the english language, there was always some other representative of the organisation present that did, who could interpret certain words or meanings that were not clear.

5.3. Method of analysis

As my knowledge about the situation for NGOs in the anti domestic violence sphere continuously grew with the information received during the interviews, the focus of the interviews was continuously re-negotiated. I shaped my follow-up questions in accordance with what the interviewees expressed as relevant, and as new aspects were brought up. Kvale and Brinkmann (2014:236) suggest that the analysis of the material is initiated already during the course of the interview, as the interviewer continuously concentrate and interpret the meaning of what is being said, and "send back" the interpretations to the interviewee through follow-up questions and confirming statements. This means that my own knowledge about the focused themes in the research, developed during the course of the interviews, and that this can be seen as the starting point of the analysis of the material.

As the interviews were conducted during a short and intense period of time, the transcription and coding of the material was not initiated until all interviews were conducted. I chose to transcribe the entire interviews word by word, to be able to read them through throughly. Only parts that did not relate specifically to the research questions were left out, and practical information

about the organisations that did not have an analytical value. The process of transcribing interviews, means a translation of verbal language to written language, and is hence a transformation between two different 'rhetoric forms'. Pauses between words and different tones used in the verbal language can affect the meaning of what is said (ibid. 218). I chose not to focus directly on the language in the interviews, but instead on the content and meaning. Therefore I did not explicate pauses in the transcriptions, as I did not consider them to be relevant for the content.

The transcribed interviews resulted in an extensive amount of written material. In order to make the material more comprehensible, and to enable a methodical analyse, I used a method described as 'meaning concentration'. This means that longer quotes are reformulated into concise meanings or keywords, that can be related to each other and grouped under themes that can later be analysed through theoretical frameworks (Kvale & Brinkmann: 245-249). I did several readings of the transcribed interviews. The first reading of the material was made without directly processing it, but instead to get an idea of what I found to be the main concepts in it. In a second reading, I made notes after quotes, that concluded what I thought of as the core meaning of them. These were later grouped under different themes. Initially, a big amount of themes were identified, such as *making domestic violence visible, conflicting ideas, law and official response, working tools, claims and counter claims,* and *the use of human rights.* These themes were later renamed and grouped under three main headings, relating to the research questions; *conflicting discourses*, *advocacy*, and *individual social services work*. Under the main headings, ten sub-themes were used: *public-private matter, gender and feminist discourses encountering 'pro-family' values, foreign claims and 'western' values, mass-media, to call for official response, different conceptions of violence, to face taboos* and *to offer alternative frameworks*. The themes and sub-themes that were developed continuously in the processing of the material served as a base for searching relevant theories and literature.

5.4. Literature review
In the search for relevant literature and research, the data bases SSCI, Social Services Abstracts and Sociological abstracts were used as the main search motors. The search words "domestic violence", "violence against women", "women's rights" and "crisis centres", combined with "Armenia" and "Post Soviet countries", resulted in a big amount of articles and a couple of thematic anthologies on the issue. From articles concerning the relationship between anti-domestic violence movements and its social contexts, were selected. Furthermore, articles concerning the relationship between local agendas in post soviet countries and international domestic violence and human rights discourses were included.

The research projects used in the study are all carried out in Post-Soviet countries. The review does not cover research of domestic violence globally, since that would include a wide amount of studies. On the other hand, to use only research regarding domestic violence in Armenia in specific, would not be

sufficient as a knowledge base, since there is a limited amount of research projects (in English) addressing domestic violence against women in Armenia. The decision to use post-Soviet countries as a demarcation was furthermore made upon the aspect of these countries' shared history, on the assumption that earlier imposed Soviet policies regarding gender, family life, etc., have created similarities in preconceived ideas about domestic violence in society at large.

5.5. Trustworthiness

Traditionally, in quantitative as well as qualitative research (though derived from quantitative research), the terms generalisability and validity have been used to measure the quality of a research project. It is albeit arguable what role and relevance should be given these terms in qualitative research. The terms are problematic since they assess the levels of which a study can be reproduced and used in comparable terms, and as it focus the quality of clinical measurements (Bryman 2008:351). Since one of the   ground premises of qualitative research is it's focus on the particularity and specificity of given situations, and since lived experience and social context can never be precisely reproduced (ibid.:369), the terms have been altered and replaced by other means of assessments, more suitable for qualitative research; *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (ibid.:354-355).* These 'research values' have been considered and aimed at during the research process, in order to ameliorate the trustworthiness of the this study.

Transferability
Results from this study are not generalisable, as the participants to their small amount, are not to be seen as representative for a larger population. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews, in aspects of their open character, could not be reproduced. Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) instead suggest that the researcher must aim to give a comprehensive description of the situations and contexts analysed, to give the opportunity to future readers/researchers to decide if and to what extent it is transferable to other given contexts and situations, i.e. decide the transferability of the study. Such an approach makes it more relevant to view the research results as analytical generalisations, in which the specific observations and results from a study can serve to actualise or illustrate different theoretical concepts and constructions, and in relation to earlier research create a wider understanding of a phenomena or situation (Yin 2011:102). Interviews with NGO representatives in this study, show tendencies that relate and connect to findings from other studies presented in the previous research. In that sense I find it possible to analytically generalise the results to other studies and situations, if at the same time taking into consideration, and being sensitive to, the specificities of this study's given context.

Credibility

The quotes and analysis have been sent to the participants for voluntary feedback and comments. Such a respondent validation is a way to assure that the interview data presented in the study have been correctly recited and interpreted (Bryman 2008:353). One participant replied, and was satisfied with the result, whereas the rest did not reply. The quotes are thus not validated by the majority of the respondents, but all were given the opportunity to make corrections.

Dependability &Confirmability

This study strives for a high dependability, which means to present detailed and comprehensive descriptions of all stages of the research process in order to ameliorate the possibilities of auditing. By this study, I do not claim or strive to give a holistic description of Armenia, politically, socially, culturally or any other way, nor the domestic violence movement in Armenia at large. The confirmability of the study is primarily to be assessed by its auditors, through the descriptions of the research process. I have aimed at maintaining an openness towards the research topics, and not to manipulate the results based on my personal viewpoints and opinions. I strive to make my own point of view transparent to the readers by explicating my preconceptions and through reflections upon my position as a researcher.

5.6 Preconceptions

My interest in the women's rights organisations in Yerevan started when reading an article published on the website of the Swedish non-profit organisation Kvinna till Kvinna (Woman to Woman) that illustrated a harsh situation for the organisations. My only connection to Armenia was, at that time, through a friend of mine, who had spent a couple of months in Yerevan a year earlier, as part of an "art and activism"-project. Her personal stories and experiences made me feel drawn to visit the country and the organisations, and when I later read the article, it strongly caught my interest. Hence, the stay in Armenia was my first visit in the country and region, and my knowledge about Armenia was restricted to the information I could find in literature,newsmedia, etc.

I have during a long time been interested in questions regarding gender equality, and my standpoint as a feminist is sure to have affected my choice of research topic. I have albeit never worked with or been engaged in questions regarding domestic violence against women, or other forms of violence against women.

5.7 Reflexivity

My position throughout the study has been the one of a visitor, using my specific scheme of interpretation, affected by my preconceptions and ideas. This has, inevitably, affected the knowledge produced in this study. It is certain that my position as a 'foreigner', without any deeper knowledge about the Armenian context, had an impact on the research process in different ways. I find it important to explicate in what ways my own position as a researcher might have

affected the outcome of the research. I furthermore find it important to reflect upon what role social science research in general have in the construction of its research targets i.e. the people and phenomena that it portrays.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2014:122-124) describe the interview situation as a context of knowledge production, in which knowledge is created and shaped within the social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer is in this sense not barely an observer and listener, but rather has an active part in continuously interpreting and producing knowledge. Me as a researcher, my interpretations and ideas, is thereby part of what knowledge is being produced and how. One can further argue that also the participants' interpretations of the researcher might have influences on the knowledge being produced (Yin 2011:50). My position as a european/swedish person/university student/social worker may have affected the outcome of the interviews, since there are presumably some general pre-conceived ideas about my values and ideas, bound to my nationality, e.g the idea of Sweden as a welfare state and a country with well developed gender equality policies. Also my generational belonging (age 28) and the fact that I explicitly call myself a feminist may have created expectations affecting the selection of what was said and how it was explained. My personal interest in questions of gender equality and women's rights, meant that I shared many interests with the NGO representatives, and I found this to be a way to easily connect with all of the participants. It became clear that the participants, in their roles as organisation representatives, were used to interview situations, and/or to talk about and reflect about the given topics. I found this to have a facilitating impact on the interviews, that were, from my point of view, carried out in an easygoing atmosphere, and that the participants were very engaged with the topics of the interviews. The language barriers that existed, would probably have been deeper if the topics of the interviews were new to the participants. On the other hand, the participants' strong organisational engagement in the topics, probably meant that the interview data largely reflected the interests and views of the organisations, and that these were portrayed from their best sides. Even though I, in my position as a researcher made efforts to ask open questions, and not to impose my own values and opinions to the interviews, my own preconceptions inevitably affected what questions were asked and how they were interpreted. The interview data should, according to Rapley (2001:304) not be considered as a a reflection of the interviewees reality outside the interview context, but rather as a representation of a reality that is constructed jointly by the interviewer and the interviewee.

By writing an essay about organisations and their work, in a country I do not know in other means than being a visitor and an outside interpreter, I take the risk of reproducing stereotype and undifferentiated representations of what I meet. This is a question many scholars needs to confront when moving beyond their immediate context. Since my own position includes an identity of being a 'westerner'/european/scandinavian, I find that also a consideration of post colonial structures needs to be taken in mind, as I am describing an 'un-western'

context. Mohanty stresses that all international feminist research must place itself in the global power relations in which the 'western world' inhabits a hegemonic position within the knowledge production, giving a preferential right of interpretation, and the right to formulate ideals. She further argues that when analysing life situations of 'non-western' women, there is a risk of reproducing a stereotype colonial conception of *the repressed woman,* thus putting pre-conceived dichotomies at play. This includes portraying western women as modern, educated etc. in relation to non-western women as subdued, uneducated and so on (Mohanty 2003:36-39). Much of the earlier feminist research conducted in post communist countries, especially by western scholars, is criticised of bearing an undertone of western triumphalism and the comprehension of 'west' as unproblematic in relation to 'east' as problematic (Fabián 2010:5).

Furthermore, western feminist discourse is criticised for constituting women as a group simply from the assumption that they are being repressed on common patriarchal grounds. This tends to portray the repression of women as universal and without relations to historical or social context. Such an analytical frame result in a representation of women as being essentially powerless and repressed, even weak, and the analyse tend to focus on finding proofs for this essential repression. The analyse should instead, according to Mohanty (2003:39) focus on identifying *which* material, ideological details in a given context *make* women powerless as a group. This being said, to consider domestic violence against women as a world wide phenomenon with common structural grounds, is not the same as viewing it as being identical or straightly comparable. Every social context creates its own specific frames for experiences of violence or repression, taking into consideration the differences in the expression, extent, consequences, etc. If not being sensitive to these differences there is a risk of neglecting certain experiences, and again producing knowledge shaped of assumptions arriving from hegemonic ideas (Yuval-Davies 1993:3).

5.6. Method discussion

In proportion to time limits and the given size of the study, I found qualitative interviews to be a suitable form of gathering empirical material. If more time and space was at hand I would have chosen to alter the interview data with other sources of information such as including written material from the organisations, and making participatory observations in organisation activities. Such a triangulation of sources is a way of making the knowledge base of a study broader (more material), and deeper by the possibility of finding contrasting and/or supporting positions to add to the interview data (Bryman 2008:354.) It would furthermore have been a way of highlighting potential differences between how one talk about situations and how one act. More time would also have given the opportunity to visit organisations and/or activists outside of the capital city, to reach a more nuanced understanding of the anti-domestic violence work in different contexts and conditions. Given the limits, I found qualitative interviews

to be the most relevant form of inquiry, as the research questions regard the experiences and knowledge of the NGO representatives - information that could favourably be shared through an open form of interviewing.

Since the participants all mastered a good level of english, and due to a lack of finances, I did not use a translator for the interviews. Certain nuances and meanings might have got lost as both me and the interviewees used a second or third third language (english), and with other resources I would have preferred to use the help of a professional translator during the interviews.

I found the group interviews to stimulate to a bigger variety of information and shared viewpoints than the single-participant interviews did. In that aspect, I consider the group interview situations to have been positive for the research process. The drawback of group interviews though, is the possibility that the participants may strive for mutual consensus, that might restrict them from expressing certain opinions. Another critique against group interviews is that the researcher has less control over the interview situation (Bryman 2008: 463). I did albeit find that the interview questions were covered and answered in the group interview just as good as in the single participant interviews.

Due to time- and geographical limitations, I had no chance of doing follow-up interviews. As I, after analysing the material, could not go back for further inquiries, the interviews might to a certain degree lack a critical perspective. When I met with the representatives of the NGOs, I already had an idea of what I wanted to inquire, and I needed to use the time efficiently. This might have reinforced my preconceived ideas of what I wanted find, which might have narrowed my interpretational frames, and affected the ways in which the material was analysed.

In aspects of the limits derived from language barriers, an 'outside perspective', and restricted time limits for material gathering, the degree of validity of this study is arguable. Questions about the quality of the information I was able to gather through the interviews, and my possibilities of analysing it in a nuanced and multifold way, in relation to the Armenian context, are highly relevant. With these questions in mind, I chose to use a big amount of quotes in the analysis, in order to primarily highlight the voices of the informants, and to be explicit about the ways I interpreted them.

5.7. Ethical considerations

Participants were informed that the information shared in the interviews was to be used exclusively for this study, to be published in a research report. Before the participants agreed on taking part of the study they were informed of the aim and central questions of interest of the study, both in the initialising contact email and in an information letter that they were given at the time of the interview(appendix 1). They were in this letter also informed that they could at any time cancel their participation in the study. All participants were informed that their names would be anonymised in the final report. Many of the participants expressed that they did not find it necessary to be anonymous, as they are in their roles as representatives

of organisations part of a public arena. Anyhow, in order to eliminate all risks of the participation in the study being of any harm for the informants, the names were anonymised in the report. One can argue that interviewees are constructed in different ways depending on the interview context. When interviewees are chosen on the basis of their specific knowledge about a context or given social practices, the interviewee is given the position of the *expert*. Such interviews are often more focused on descriptions and facts, rather than on emotions and personal experiences (Kvale, Brinkmann 2014: 129). The information shared through this study was thus not of a private/confidential character. The potential confidentiality of the information shared by the informants rather lies in the standpoints that they express, that might be in opposition to dominating political forces in Armenia, and therefore might be considered to be risky to utter.

6. Result/Analyse

The analysis is divided into three parts, beginning with a section presenting the informants' descriptions of different discourses that they face through their work, and how these come at conflict with their aims and activities. This is followed by a section describing how the organisations reflect upon the ways they advocate the issue to a public audience. Informants describe what channels they use to reach out to a public audience, their experiences of the processes, and the response that they get. The final part of the analysis present the informants' experiences of the individual social services work conducted through the organisations. They describe different situations that can occur in relation to different ideas and perceptions regarding domestic violence against women, and how the work is affected by prevailing discourses. It further present informants' reflections upon how the organisations can work in order to change the situations for the women they meet.

      The names of the informants are replaced by randomly selected letters, and the organisations are presented with abbreviations.

6.1 Conflicting discourses

Private or public matter?
Many of the informants describe how domestic violence in Armenia often is perceived as something best kept within the family, to be handled between family members. This reflects the importance and centrality of the family as a social entity, both in aspects of social well-being and security. Many informants stress that the cultural emphasis put on the family has many good sides and that it, for many, is an important or crucial part of social life. When it comes to the question of making domestic violence visible as a societal issue, there are albeit some problematic aspects to it. There seem to be a tendency that the privacy of the family is given a higher priority than the well-being of its individual members.

Family is, in such aspect, seen as a private sphere that should be protected from insight and interventions from the 'outside'. A conflict can be seen between the organisations' work with highlighting domestic violence as something that should be intervened with and the protection of the family privacy. As one informant puts it:

> A, SWV: Because some times there is a huge ignorance of this issue in the society. They say that family is a very dark corner, and it's hard to tell who is right and who is wrong, and that's why they think that it is not their right even to intervene in these situations, concerning the domestic issues.

In the quote, the informant refers to 'they', and by this points at members of the Armenian society in general. Hence, she describes such a viewpoint to be a popular agreed upon perception of domestic violence against women. The notion of the family as a private sphere that should be secured from external intervention, is not unique for an Armenian context, but can be seen in relation to the ways that social life has been organised around work and economical structures, related to industrialisation (Regardiene 2003:354-355). It carries the dichotomy of public/ private, which is seen to widely affect the conception of domestic violence. This is seen in the ways it gives the violence occurring in the private sphere a "natural" or "personal" contingency, and in the ways it carries ideas of femininity and masculinity. In such a division, masculinity stands for the public life, whilst femininity is connected to the private household sphere. An internal hierarchy between these, gives the masculine/public sphere a higher value than the feminine/private (ibid.). As a result, violence perpetrated against a woman in the domestic sphere, tends to be obscured and neglected. One informant express how these conceptions affect the ways domestic violence is being (or not) covered:

> B, SWV: […] women are always considered to be part and belonging to this private life and whatever comes to be associated with the women's lives come to be connected very close to her husbands life, to her children. So a woman can't have her own life. And in this patriarchal society it's really very visible and it's one of the main reasons that these issues are very hard to cover, because they are just considered to be part of the private life, part of belonging to somebody's life.

These ideas are, according to informants, reflected in the ways officials, such as police officers and social workers respond to and signify domestic violence; it's causes and the ways to handle its consequences. One informant talks about the way a police officer reflected about her work within the NGO:

> C, WRC: […] even a very high level policeman said to me, 'why do you intervene in this family, this is a typical family, one day they laugh

together and the next day they fight against each other, the third day they have some problems, the fourth day they love each other, this is like family, don't intervene in this family'.

The violence is in this case naturalised and reduced into being an everyday, commonplace phenomenon that does not call for interventions, and is thus far from being considered a crime. When making domestic violence visible in public debate, or just by the fact of offering services to victims of domestic violence, NGOs challenge this view. Another informant gives a picture of how the state social services handle the issue of domestic violence when working with cases:

D, WSC: They group it under like unhappy family, like family with problems, so they just say that it's a problematic family, sure we will keep an eye on them, but they don't realise that if it's domestic violence, on the outside for example, the abuser is not gonna show his problems. Social workers don't really have that, don't believe that there should be a huge difference for instance between domestic violence and other sorts of social issues.

These examples of officials' responses to domestic violence give a picture of a situation in which domestic violence is naturalised, as it is conceived as a natural part of family life. Even if social workers, as quoted above, view it as a problematic issue, it is not considered to be connected to gender issues, as it it equated with other social problems that can occur within a family. In those cases the social workers do not recognise, or consider the specific factors of domestic violence against women. Considering Holstein and Miller's (2003) statement, suggesting that the way a social problems is constructed, is widely affected by the ways that human services agencies deal with an issue, these responses are considered to have a huge impact on the way domestic violence is being perceived as an issue. Through such mundane practices, conceptions of domestic violence are being constructed in acts of every day life, and thus have consequences for the conditions of the NGOs work.

Furthermore, notions of gender roles, connected to the public-private discourse tend to affect the organisations' work. 'Traditional' gender stereotypes such as the man being the provider of the family, and the emphasis put on a woman's role as a mother or wife, make it harder for women to leave an abusive relationship, or to be economically independent. As one informant puts it:

B, SWV: Even if you see that this woman has suffered so much, she was hardly alive, her two children were there, they saw all this but she took them and went back. She even took back her case from the court. It's really ridiculous and you see that you're working with these women but there is this pressure from society on a woman who's without a man. In Armenia, if not in Yerevan because it's a capital city, but in the regions, a woman is not considered to have a value if she's alone. For a woman, the

aim of her life is to marry and to give birth, if not it's like you wasted your life. Like all of your work, your career, it's all because you didn't manage to, not as if you're using your life in another way, but that you're wasting it. So this is like cultural stereotypes.

Gender and feminist discourses encountering 'pro-family' values
There are many different approaches to domestic violence. The mere fact of recognising it as an issue, and even as a problematic issue, is not per se equated with a gendered approach to it. Claims about social problems do not only give attention to the conditions, they also include different problem definitions, which include a certain "interpretation of reality". Which "reality" that comes to dominate the public discourse, widely affects the ways the social problem is to be conceived, and what policies are going to be implemented. This suggest that one given social problem can be framed in a variety of ways (Hilgartner & Bosk 1988: 58). The problem definition seems to be a question of relevance for the NGOs in the domestic violence sphere in Armenia. Many informants describe that the word *gender* and the concept of *feminism* are perceived as controversial amongst a broader public audience. In an historical aspect, feminism was, during the soviet era, presented as a bourgeois and counter-revolutionary ideology, and has also among women's rights NGOs been rejected and ridiculed (Ishkanian 2007:495-496).

The NGOs in the Coalition network, as they describe it, have slightly varying approaches regarding how to present themselves in relation to gender discourse and feminism. The Women's resource centre explicitly present themselves as a feminist organisation:

> E, WRCA: This is like one of the specifics of our organisation, because we have in our country a lot of pro-women organisations that say simply that men should not beat women because they should respect them. And this is very hard, and affects our work a lot. Because when you talk about violence towards women and then afterwards comes to the social norms that you need to follow, with the specific gender roles, it really doesn't help the situation but makes it worse, to tell the truth. We are among a very few organisations in the country that openly talk about the feminist approach and of course we are being talked of a lot on this issue. Because this is things that makes us vulnerable on the other side for the media, because we had a lot of approaches to the feminism, and people do not understand what feminism is. That's why we have a lot of misinformation on this issue, but we are proud to be visible as a feminist organisation, because this is the thing that we do.

In terms of 'framing', this approach can be seen as an example of 'frame transformation' which means a movement's wish to bring forth a radically new set of ideas, implying that "[…] new values may have to be planted and nurtured, old meanings or understandings jettisoned, and erroneous beliefs or "misframings" reframed" (Goffman 1974:308). It is clear that the organisation, when imposing a feminist agenda, and openly identifying themselves as a feminists, take the risk of being misinterpreted and given negative attention. On the other hand, with this approach, they do not need to compromise with their aims and objectives, but can openly present their ambitions and working methods framed in a feminist agenda with overt intentions of changing general conceptions of gender stereotypes.

Snow et al. (1986) argue that in most framing processes though, except for the most radical and transformative ones, claims makers must, in order to be successful in reaching their objectives, operate within the life-world of the society participants and target audiences. The term 'frame extension' refers to a movement's attempts to "enlarge its adherent pool by portraying its objectives or activities as attending to or being congruent with the values or interests of potential adherents" (ibid.:472). In that sense the organisation might adjust their rhetorics so that it aligns with preconceptions and values of their putative target audience. As one informant puts it:

> B, SWV: […] we identify ourselves as feminists, but in public discourse you wouldn't go out and say that this organisation is feminist. Because sometimes if you need to help people, you need to be also in their…that they can feel that you are on the same place. You don't need to be too diverse from them, it will only make things worse, and you can't get access to them. But however important it should be that we identify ourselves as feminists, it's not of less importance to have access to the people you're working with. Because otherwise you will be marginalised from the society that you are working with. It won't do any good, neither to you, nor to the people, so you need to also be reasonable, rational about your actions.

The quote illustrates a pragmatic approach to the work and activities of the anti-domestic violence movement. Similar to findings made in women's rights organisations in other post soviet countries (Jäppinen 2011, Horne et al. 2009, Brygalina & Temkina 2004) the organisations might need to sacrifice some of their primary statements, such as calling themselves feminist, in order to reach out to putative clients, at least when communicating with a public audience. The quote above gives a clear example of how the organisations are not operating in a social or ideological vacuum. There is an inevitable normative and moral aspect to the work being conducted, and if not attuning to a popular moral set of values, the organisations will not be able to reach their target audience, and thereby not be able to conduct the work around which they are organised. On the other hand, adapting to prevailing discourses and beliefs, might reduce the capacity of

creating change. That is, if the organisation draw on a perspective and rhetoric that doesn't challenge preexisting values and ideas. Using such an approach might result in reinforcing ideas that they originally aimed to change. Another reason not to use a gender discourse, is according to one informant that it creates negative attention:

> D, WSC: So that word in particular (gender), we have actually debated it, should we keep using it to show people that this isn't a scary word, it doesn't mean what you think it means, that gender equality actually means equality. But there was also a flip side of it, that maybe we should stop using it for just a little while, so as to not attract extra negative attention, or extra criticism and be able to continue our work.

The quote suggests that the use of a contentious language can create backlashes that obstruct the organisations from conducting their work, as misinformation tends to spread easily. As claims are built upon certain values and interests, countermovements often emerge in response to the claimants. In Armenia, organisations with nationalistic and patriotic values, make claims for the preservation of 'traditional' or 'pro-family' values. They therefore have an interest in contrasting 'the wealth of the nation' and the 'protection of the Armenian family', to the work conducted by anti-domestic violence NGOs. Many times, the NGOs have been accused of breaking families and destroying national values:

> D, WSC: […] that (extreme nationalist groups' activities) really is a root to that renewed hatred toward the work that we do. We are called that we destroy families, we are traitors of the nation cause we are trying to tear up traditional values, having women divorced and turning their children to become gay, absurd things like these. The sad thing is that these things that they say, they catch peoples attention, they are so absurd that people can't help but stopping.

Foreign claims and ˈwesternˈ values?
Hilgartner & Bosk (1988:61-62) suggest that the constructing process of social problems include a certain degree of drama. As claims and counter claims often apply to people's emotions, the outcome of the 'competition' between social problems, in entering and remaining in public arenas, is to a high degree depending on the ways they are cast in dramatic and persuasive terms. To give the claims a character of 'common sense and plain truth', is more efficient than to use sophisticated problem analyses. Linking the family to the nation is a way of using preexisting values in order to bring forth ones claims efficiently. The nationalistic sentiments in Armenia is to a high degree reinforced by latent conflicts with neighbouring countries, and building on actual fears in relation to the dramatical historical events that the country has experienced. As one participant puts it:

D, WSC: And it is scary. If you tell an average Armenian that there is some women's organisations who are trying to tear up families and get women divorced, which in some cases, women do get divorced. Then that average person is going to be terrified, thinking that 'oh no, Armenia has demographic problems, they are not gonna have more children, what are the men supposed to do, isn't that enough that there are already more women than men in the country', you know, this renews all their fears.

Applying to nationalistic sentiments can be seen as a way of "speaking to" pre-disposed 'truths' that are more or less taken for granted in everyday life. Which 'truths' that will apply to receivers of claims, is contingent on the available 'conditions of interpretations' in a given context. Such conditions are dependent on the 'material and cultural setting' in which social practices are constituted (Holstein & Gubrium 2003:197). Material factors such as the historical and economical specifics of the Armenian nation can explain how certain conditions of interpretations of domestic violence have evolved. Other contrasting frames of interpretation can be seen to have emerged as a result of globalisation, providing new ways of communication, and a larger exchange of ideas and knowledge. As one informant states:

C, WRC: […] during the Soviet Union, people…the border was closed. Not any connection, not any relationship with abroad, with other countries. Now we have a very big movement and communication. I participated last time in Geneva-Beijing conference, and there were two Armenian women's organisations, we are more but two were there from a very deep region. Because the relationship with other countries increase, and they get information from conferences, meetings, from other countries, from movies. There is lots of information everywhere, from a lot of sources. When I am leaving for another country and the airplane is full, these people come from other countries, they participate in some meetings, conferences, meetings with relationships, maybe they were guests in this country and they saw, because it is open.

Many informants argue that anti domestic violence-claims are often perceived as being in-authentic and imported from abroad. Such a view might be a result of the fact that the anti-domestic violence movement to a high degree was introduced to Armenian NGOs by transnational organisations and networks (Iskanian 2004; 2007). One participant describes that this perspective is promoted by the government, in political debates:

B, SWV: But there is the propaganda that comes from the state that those NGO:s are working from the west and being financed from the west, that there is no such real problem in Armenia, but as they get the finances to do their projects, they make a fake imitation of the problem so that they

could work. Because if there is no problem they can't get financing in solving this problem, so they need the problem right now right here in Armenia so that they could get funding for doing things.

Hilgartner and Bosk (1988:64) suggest that certain problem definitions fit particularly well with broad cultural concerns, and that they benefit from that fit in the competition with other problem definitions. Informants stress that the mere fact of offering social services to victims of domestic violence is sometimes, by counter movement organisations, portrayed as being a western phenomenon. In this sense, the mere existence of the organisations is described as a threat to Armenian national values:

> F, WSC: And a lot of the NGO:s have these sorts of social services which have been demonised by pro-Russian and sort of extreme groups as this western thing, as like western values that aren't Armenian. So Armenia is set up in contrast to western values and western things.

This quote gives a clear example, not only about how nationalist rhetorics is formed into counter claims towards the anti-domestic violence movement, but also how the claims made are perceived as foreign, and not adaptable to an Armenian context. As Best (2001) argues, claims must, in order to apply to peoples minds, be recognisable, i.e. the 'receivers' must be able to acknowledge some similarities between the society representing them (in this case the 'west'), and their own. It becomes obvious that in the process of transnational dissemination of claims, larger structures of national and global politics and economical structures come to play. A common way of framing domestic violence against women has, globally, been to claim it as a violation of the human rights. Since the 1990s, the UN declaration of human rights and the CEDAW convention has emerged as an important tool for legitimising the issue of domestic violence (Merry 2006). It seems though that there is, embedded in the the international human rights discourse, an inevitable tension between general principles and particular situations. The 'universality' of the human rights means that they are formed in a way to make them applicable to a 'standardised' society, and there is a big distance between the global sites where they are formulated, and the specific situations in which they are implemented. In order to be effective, the 'universal' principles need to be translated into local terms, contexts of power, and meaning structures. There seem to be a lack of sensitivity for the local context, and a conception of the local customs and traditions as being a threat to the 'unified modernity' that human rights triumph upon. In this gap, NGOs tend to play a crucial role in translating international human rights discourse into vernacular language and contextual specifics (ibid.). The gap between foreign or 'universal' perspectives and principles, and the uncertainties in how to combine, adapt and balance between these, is sometimes by informants described as a dilemma:

> F, WSC: So much of our resources are from places not like us. Like how we are working for campaigning, for awareness raising, for language, for everything. And they are in totally different contexts, so its not even mentioning stuff like it's not even mentioning, something that's hugely profound here. So we only try to implement that, leaving that part out, and that's just not gonna work. Or we are realising, that doesn't mention this hugely profound thing so… I think this struggle is constantly happening. Because activists too are like part of it. Because of course you don't wanna reinvent the wheel, so of course we should work with what other people have done successfully and usefully.

The Human rights can be used as a concrete tool in the legal outcomes of a domestic violence case, as illustrated in the quote above. One informant gives a picture of how the organisation uses the CEDAW convention in their work with domestic violence victims:

> C, WRC: […] our lawyers are responsible for explaining to this woman all legal documents, local, national, international. What we adapted, how you can use it. Because very few women knows we can use the CEDAW convention as a tool in court.

The human rights are also described to have the function of providing a framework for portraying the issue as less threatening, in the way that it avoids the risk of the claims being perceived as a critique to local/national culture and practices:

> B, WSC: Because it's beyond any cultural stuff and if you explain people not because your culture is wrong, but you say that this is basic human rights, and all people should be this and that and you don't stress this being a woman or man, being Armenian or Turkish, having this or that culture, so you appreciate their own cultural tradition but, from the human rights perspective you give them another view point. I think this is very important.

Merry (2006) argue that examining the ways that human rights are implemented in different contexts, can be a way of creating an understanding of how new frames of meaning and interpretation emerge in a globalised world. The 'universal' aspects of the human rights can, similar to using an un-compromised feminist discourse, be seen as a way of performing 'frame transformation'. Staub-Bernasconi (2011) calls the UN declaration of human rights a "pragmatic utopia" that sets high, and probably unreachable goals, but with an explicated consigner (the state that has ratified the document). This gives the opportunity to specifically address the asserts of human rights to the state that is responsible for

implementing them. It seems though that the mere fact of creating awareness of rights is not sufficient for achieving change:

> E, WRCA: When we went (to a rural area) and talked about this topic they said that 'we are aware about these issues' and that 'we have rights but it's impossible to speak about them, impossible to talk and impossible to change'. And very few women said that they had ever dared to claim for their rights, or say no to this and that question of families and husbands. Even if the awareness of the population is higher, nothing is changed because this is the way that they are used to live.

According to Merry (2006), NGO activists need to residue a 'double consciousness', as they work in the intersection between the local and the global, when they advocate international discourses and act them out in local contexts. One participant expresses how there are dilemmas in regards of using foreign 'western' methods:

> F, WSC: There is constantly, like one of the most important things is that constant struggle of like, when do we like impose a value and when do we not impose a value? Like how do you strife that balance? You know if your ultimate goal is non violence in Armenia, how do we work within an Armenian context? But then if an Armenian context says violence is okay, then how do you work with that? And what's the balance between those two things? I think that's a question that nobody has yet figured out.

According to many informants, this 'double consciousness' can cause situations in which NGO representatives need to almost forcibly impose their perspectives and 'truths' upon their clients and target audience. Just as there are are different ways of framing domestic violence, in the means of defining its causes, consequences and proposed responses to it, there are different definitions, or rather unclear definitions of what violence and domestic violence consists of.   The NGOs, through their definition that correlates with international documents, sometimes need to convince women that they are subjected to violence:

> B, SWV: The reality is that besides fighting for the issue you also have to fight for the acceptance of it as an issue. It's very painful and also funny that you have to convince women that they are being subjected to domestic violence before like starting to help them.

In this sense it is clear how prevailing and dominant discourses concerning domestic violence affect the work of the NGOs. A first step, before even introducing their services or working methods, tends to be the establishment of a common platform of interpretation of their shared 'reality'.

6.2 Advocacy and public debate

Mass media

Mass media, such as newspapers and television, tend to be important arenas for making domestic violence visible in the public debate. The informants describe that they often engage in domestic violence court cases. This is said to be a way of supporting victims, as well as to create medial attention. Visualising the existence and consistency of domestic violence is a way of producing 'hard facts' that can underscore the urgency of the problem:

> E, WRCA: […] when the police couldn't prove that it wasn't violence, it was a success of ours. Showing that you know, 'here, this is domestic violence, they proved it, yes this woman was constantly beaten up. So you know we have these cases'.

Newspapers covering court cases, and television talk shows inviting coalition members for debate has not always been the standard. To merely get the issue of domestic violence broached in the medias was something the movement was working hard to achieve at an earlier stage (Johnson, Brunell 2006). Today, a concern for the coalition is rather *how* the issue of domestic violence is being presented. Informants describe that they find articles covering for instance court trials to be of varying character. They sometimes tend to be neutral and informative can also have a victim-blaming, sexist or humiliating tone. Framing domestic violence as a crime, urging legal intervention, means calling for collective action, while framing it as a private problem, and/or blaming the victim, neglects public responsibility. One informant describe how conflicting perspectives compete for medial space.

> F, WSC: It feels to me from a still somewhat outside perspective that it's like this race. Like how many horrible articles are gonna come out versus how many good. And can we bring enough good journalists to write the right things?

The ways stories about domestic violence are portrayed in the media, are described to affect the situations for victims. Many informants express that media often spread an image in which victims are accused for themselves causing the situation they are in, i.e. victim blaming. According to informants, such conceptions of domestic violence victims, make it harder for abused women to come forward, and for the organisations to reach them. As one informant describes the situation:

> D, WSC: But the thing is that our journalists aren't professionally… They don't have the proper training to talk about domestic violence, let alone talk to domestic violence victims. They might say something thats very

stereotypical or sexist. They might when they are talking to a victim, accuse her for staying that long with the abuser or for doing something wrong, you know double victimisation. So it's a very sensitive issue that very slowly I think that our journalists will know, but they are not at that level yet.

The coalition conduct trainings for journalists, but find their resources being insufficient in the means to have a large scale impact. The journalists covering court cases are hardly ever the same, and to reach out to the whole staff of journalists would be an impossible task. One participant albeit argues that even though the journalists covering domestic violence cases are not flawless in their portrayals, the media attention given domestic violence topics is positive:

> A, SWV: I can see that mass media is working, even though there are problems in how they interpret our issues, but at least they talk about these actions and these issues and other problems, and that's really important. Your voice have been heard. I can say that we got the support from the mass media that we wanted, even if it's not perfect, we got the support. And this makes us stronger to put pressure on the government.

Other informants, on the contrary, describe that media attention is not always beneficial for the movement. According to other informants, mass media is a channel for spreading hateful propaganda about the organisations and their activities. One informant gives an example of a newspaper that published lists with names of activists in the women's rights and LGBTQ-movement. NGO members were portrayed as traitors of the nation and as a threat to the Armenian society:

> G, PINK: Then one newspaper published an article how this ministry of youth is supporting and sponsoring the perversion in Armenia, how they are giving money for spreading homosexuality. After that, the head of the organisation was invited to the ministry and they kindly asked us to put out their logo from our website.

There are no laws against hate-speech in Armenia (Human Rights Watch 2014), which means there are no legal obstacles for newspapers to publish offensive information. As illustrated in the quote above, negative and falsely posed statements, published in news paper articles, can create direct consequences for organisations, as it affects the ways in which they are perceived by a public audience. In this example, it meant that the government, that earlier had supported the organisation (a couple of years ago), did no longer wish to be associated with the organisation. Kituse and Spector (1973) bring to the analysis of the emergence of social problems, the aspect of different interests behind claims making. They differ between interests and values, suggesting that values are based on moral or

ideological indignation, while interests are defined as 'real' or material advantages being the outcome of a given line of activities. Mass media can be seen to be driven by both/either economical interests and/or ideological and moral values. Anyhow, the fact that principally any kind of information can be published though mass media, affect the ways possible of using them as public arenas for claims making. Informants describe how mass media have been an important channel for extreme nationalist organisations to spread propaganda against the organisations in the coalition, thus reinforcing negative sentiments towards the women's rights NGOs. Another informant albeit states that even negative information can be a way of creating awareness around the issue of domestic violence:

> B, SWV: Even if it's a hated debate, even if gets only backlash right now, but you know at least people are talking about DV. Some years ago you wouldn't even have heard what is DV, what is civic activism, what is feminism? And now you hear people saying that feminism is bad, but at least they know there is the word feminist. Everything starts from there so.

Even if negative, the attention can be seen as a way of staying active and visible in public arenas. To maintain visibility in public spaces, such as media debates, is according to Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) an important factor for claims makers to succeed in their social problem construction processes. Visibility can, even in negative contexts, be a way of establishing an issue as being of public relevance.

To call for official response
Informants describe that the NGOs currently do not receive any support from the government. This is by informants depicted as to bring both negative and positive aspects. According to informants, the lack of engagement means that the government does not intervene in the activities or agendas of the organisations, and that the organisations in that sense are free from pressure and demands from politicians. On the other hand, the lack of engagement also means a lack of political will, when it comes to legal and official interventions. An important activity for the coalition has, according to informants, been the advocacy for the adoption of a domestic violence law. Informants stress the importance of a legal framework specifically addressing domestic violence against women, both in terms of creating legal status for the issue and to reinforce the possibilities of preventive work. One informant express how a domestic violence law would signify an important signal for the government to take on more responsibility:

> E, WRCA: And we are not the ones that are supposed to take this responsibility, that is also a question you know. That's why right now we are working on this domestic violence law so that the government finally takes the responsibility for the citizens of their country. That a woman

who wants to leave this environment knows that there is a law and that the care should be taken of me.

As there is no state structure providing support to victims of domestic violence, the informants describe that they are confronted with a huge need amongst victims of domestic violence, when it comes to social support. In aspects of long-term interventions, such as provision of housing and employment, informants describe that the lack of resources becomes very noticeable. The lack of a supportive structure, is by informants said to be a factor that discourage victims of domestic violence to seek help, and impede them from leaving abusive relationships. Structural conditions, such as the lack of institutionalised support, and secure financial fundings, thus highly affects affects the prospects for the NGOs to conduct their work successfully. This implies that the NGOs' advocacy work, that aims to create official response and legislative changes, is significant for their individual social services work. One informant express that formally, preconditions exist that would allow for supportive official policies, in aspects of interventions towards domestic violence. As the Armenian state has ratified all important documents when it comes to human rights and violence against women, they are officially responsible to take actions against it. The problem is, according to the informant, the lack of political will:

> B, SWV: But still the main reason, we guess, is the lack of political will because it's not on the priority list. Though we have as a state, signed all the documents of empowering women's rights, even some additional protocols of european convention but it's all on paper. We even have an action plan on gender discrimination, but it's also just on paper.

Referring once again to Kituse & Spector (1973), actors in public arenas can be driven by interests or values, or a combination of these. Value groups can gains allies in other groups that have a vested interest in their position. At the same time they can be opposed by groups who have an interest in the situation staying the way it is, to maintain a status quo. The supposed lack of political will among politicians in Armenia can be seen as a way of passively expressing their interest in maintaining the situation as it is. Generally, politicians do not seem to have any motive for changing it's policies, as the political pressure regarding questions of domestic violence has until now, according to informants, mostly have been carried out by smaller segments of society, such as the NGOs.As one informant puts it:

> E, WRCA: So I would say that really we are doing a lot of things and we are doing it on a grass root level. We are helping a lot of women, but if you talk on a general level, what NGOs do, they are just helping to overcome already existing violence and being an alternative voice, 'you know, there is some other opinion as well'. But it's not about changing the

society in general. Because in a society like ours we really need a lot of time and a lot of forces to get involved. It's not possible right now. Because the government itself is very patriarchal and they are not for gender equality and it's impossible to make a change or a revolution in society when your head is not for you.

One informant albeit express that international political involvement seem to have an impact on the situation:

D, WSC: That's the main thing, but also the government, you know some government agencies, some political individuals, very few, very select, but they do want to do something. On a personal level they feel compelled. Even foreign diplomats, for example the US ambassador, he's been very vocal about it. He tweets about it, he comes to our events, he supports us, he helped with these ads. So we also get a lot of support from diplomats from the international community. And a little international pressure doesn't hurt. The counsellor of european commission for human rights was here a moth ago. He met with us NGO:s, he came to our shelter, saw the work we do. The main reason we wanted him to put out there when he is meeting our politicians, our government, was to pay attention to the topic. Don't ignore it, it's there and its not gonna go away if you ignore it, it's only gonna get worse, and if you can, please support us in any way. After that the response was really good. The police department, the ministry, they were all more pro, more positive towards meeting with us, maybe have a collaboration, so that is helpful always.

This can be seen as an effect of the globalisation and the way the 'global civil society' (transnational NGOs and networks with a shared political agenda), has emerged as an important actor on the global political scene, as described by Della Porta & Tarrow (2005). National politicians are in that sense challenged in their political power, as local NGOs are achieving a stronger position in regards of their possibilities to affect the political agenda.

6.3 Individual accounts of domestic violence
Different conceptions of violence
Many informants have stressed that, even though domestic violence is more often talked about today, both among 'common people' in vernacular language, and in public debate,   the issue is still somewhat a taboo. Through the informants' descriptions, it seems that it is possible to talk about domestic violence in a general sense, and to acknowledge the existence of it. When it comes to coming forward as a victim, it albeit seems to be harder. Many informants talk about the social stigma related to being a victim of domestic violence. This can, according

to one informant, be seen in the ways women often does not seek help before the situation has gotten very severe:

> F, WSC: Here we really only get to see the people who are going to die if they don't leave, it's gotten to this point, that's the time when people leave. And that's true everywhere, but is like really true here. We only see people if they are afraid of their own safety or for the safety of their children.

NGO staff members describe in many ways, that when it comes to working with individuals, the fact that the language is discursively restricted becomes clear. Many stress that the conceptions of violence often differ, or is unclear among the women seeking support. This affects the concrete work being carried out. As one informant puts it:

> F, WSC: Here I would say probably like 100 percent, most of the women, if they come here and you ask them the question, they don't have a full and clear understanding what it even means to be a survivor of violence. They know that what's happening for them feels really bad and they are scared for their children and they are scared for them selves. But like even this concept of violence is very confusing here.

Informants describe the term for domestic violence, which is the term dominantly used in the public debate, to be very broad. The direct translation would be 'family violence' which can be interpreted in varying ways. For instance, it could include violence perpetrated against children or between siblings. Furthermore, the word for violence is by informants described to be diffuse. There are no distinctions made between violence perpetrated by a stranger on the street, and violence perpetrated by a family member in the home. Many informants stress that the uncertainties regarding conceptions of violence cause difficulties in their social services work. According to informants, many times only physical violence, is perceived as a violation, whereas economical, psychological or sexual violence is not perceived as such. One informant describes how sexual violence is not conceivable as a violation:

> B, SWV: If your husband wants sex its okay. He shouldn't even ask if you want it or not, so its not even violence. So sexual violence can't be in the frames of family. This is the perception of it in Armenia and sometimes women are, they don't get that they are being subjected to violence because they also are born in this society and they are brought up in this square, and they also think that this is not violence, so they are not even complaining, because the things are the way they should be.

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To face taboos

Informants thus state that sexual violence is by many not perceived as a violation, and that rape within marriage does not exist as an "available category". As the concept is not publicly recognised, it can not be used to express a violation. Informants also stress that sex and sexual violence are very hard to talk about in general. One informant, formerly working in the USA in the field of domestic violence, express that there are big differences between the countries, when it comes to handling the issue of sexual violence in social services work:

> F, WSC: […] if you don't talk about sex, how do you talk about sexual violence? How do you talk about rape within marriage? And also being very conscious of that. In the states if I was working with somebody and rape was happening within their marriage, I would be much, much quicker as somebody who was working with them to try to work with them to see if there was a part of that that they were ready to work on. But here our psychologist tells that like sometimes they don't even get to that, because it's just not something that people are ready or accountable to talk about. Because they have no, literally no experience talking about sex ever. So how are you gonna talk about your worst sex experience ever? So just trying to think about not to step on some of the core values of Armenians.

The Women's resource centre run a hotline and a crisis centre for victims of sexual assault. Staff members working in the centre describe it to be hard to reach out to putative clients. So far, the informants describe that they have received quite few cases, and that this might be a result of the taboos surrounding sex. One informant, working with awareness raising about sexuality, express that amongst the people she meet, sexuality is often correlated with homosexuality:

> G, PINK: We can not start like talking about sexuality because people don't believe that they have a sexuality. And when you are talking about sexual orientation it's all the time associated with homosexuality. But heterosexuality, bisexuality and all other sexualities are sexualities as well. So we have to start from the very, very beginning. In Armenia the sexual health, sexuality issues, are not covered. Even in public schools, people don't learn anything about their sexuality. So it's really very hard to talk about it. Because it is considered to be an immoral thing.

The NGO staff members face the mentality of victim blaming when working with women subjected to violence. They describe this to be another reason for victims not coming forward to seek help. One of the informants expresses that it is more legitimate to talk about violence perpetrated against children, whereas women are conceived as being responsible for causing the situation:

H, WRCA: […] everyone can understand that it (sexual assault) is bad for the children because it is a child. But when you speak about women and sexual assault they always ask what wrong she did.

To offer alternative frameworks

Many informants describe that they experience it to be difficult to for many women to come forward as a victim, due to a social stigma. One informant suggest that an important part of the organisation's work is to empower women that have come forward as victims:

D, WSC: The social stigma is so, so awful that just the thought of telling someone about thinking of getting divorced is awful so, it's a huge step if someone actually decides to do it, they are very fragile at that point. So our work here is to empower them. To give them the power to be able to go through all that awfulness to you know, reach the results that they want.

Some of the organisations arrange activities, such as art workshops or language courses, and use their offices as meeting points for women to meet and share experiences. The creation of meeting points is by many informants described to be crucial in the work of spreading awareness about the issue among the women themselves. To work with the victims' feelings of guilt and shame, is stressed as an important and initial part of the therapeutic work. As one informant puts it:

I, WRC: Because they, first of all they think that it is their fault that they were raped and they don't want to speak about that with anyone. And when we talk to them we try to make them understand, and explain that it's not her fault and that she can ask for help from someone in her support circle.

A crucial part and function of the NGOs' work, is by one informant described to be the provision of alternative frames of interpretations regarding the issue of domestic violence against women:

B, SWV: This is all becoming part of this social construct that we are being in, so you need to wide open your eyes to see other opportunities. And this is the first step. Thats why we, whatever we do in all regards of women's right, not only domestic violence, we need to provide women with these alternatives, that there is another option. Even not necessarily the materialisation of this option, but at least knowing that it's possible to have another option. This is also very important, because for some people it's just the first thing to know that we have this, beside this reality there is another reality, which is quite as real as their own one. So you need to

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show them. And this is what we mainly do. What we always do, not
depending on our other work.

The quote can be seen to illustrate that work of offering alternative frameworks,
is crucial in all work and activities carried out by the organisation. It is expressed
through the advocacy for the issue in public debate, as well as in the individual
social services work.

7. Concluding Discussion

The NGO representatives describe that they, when conducting their work, face
different ideas and values that come at conflict with their principal standpoints.
Informants describe that these ideas derive from different spheres of the society;
through the contact with local authorities such as police officers and social
workers, amongst politicians and in public debate, through the propaganda from
ultra nationalist organisations, and in the contact with social services clients. This
concludes that, through the NGOs' work surrounding the issue of domestic
violence against women, different conflicting discourses are activated.

The organisations' shared problem definition, portraying domestic
violence against women as a public issue, a gendered issue, and a violation of
human rights, stands in contrast to a perception of domestic violence as a private
issue and a family matter. Furthermore, the work of the NGOs, also actualises
discussions concerning concepts of *the local* and *the global* contexts. The NGOs
have introduced certain methods and models to the field, that were originally
developed in Europe or the USA, such as hotlines and shelters. Informants
describe that these have, by many, been perceived as alien and incompatible with
'Armenian values'. One can also argue that the very problem definition of
domestic violence against women as a public issue, initially evolved in the
Armenian context as a concept "from abroad", as it at the point of emergence, was
not recognised as a public issue in Armenian society. These tensions regarding
different meanings and interpretations of domestic violence against women, create
conflicts that seem to reach beyond the questions regarding the immediate
'matter'. Strong feelings surrounding the issue of domestic violence against
women seem to relate to delicate questions regarding national identity and the
survival of a local uniqueness. Methods, models and principles are thus not to be
seen as ready made solutions or recipes for amelioration, given from an active
transmitter (transnational movements) to a passive receiver (local NGOs). Instead,
NGO activists tend to be highly active in the process of negotiations between
different interpretations regarding domestic violence against women, as they, in
their work, on a daily basis make ideas and principles fit into local contexts of
meaning. Some issues are hard to reach, due to taboos, some are hard to grasp
because of different conceptions of meaning, and some are even intangible, due to
the lack of expressions for certain concepts. The informants' accounts illustrate

that the language is discursively bound, as phenomenas that does not exist in a moral or social aspect, are not utterable in words. The social work of the organisations is thus highly affected by prevailing discourses in the local society, and on global arenas. On the other hand, the NGOs, through their work, are active in shaping the discourses as they, in their very problem definition, challenge preexisting ideas and notions of domestic violence against women. In this sense, their work tend to both constitute, and be constituted by prevailing discourses.

The use of global human rights and women's rights discourses seem to have opened up opportunities for an alternative framing of the issue of domestic violence (as a public issue), and as a way of legitimising it as such. The use of a human rights framework is described as a way of avoiding the risk of being offensively perceived as criticising cultural values, by a public audience.

It is not only through the framework of human rights and transnational feminist discourses, mediated through the NGOs, that alternative interpretative frameworks have been made available. The growing access to information from different sources makes ideas and knowledge spread easier, thus opening up for different kinds of views and perspectives. A bigger variation of public arenas are made available through the access to internet and social medias.

The fight over space and visibility in public arenas illustrates that there are different forces and interests coming to play in the process of collectively defining domestic violence against women. NGO representatives have described this process as a sort of competition, a battle between different perspectives and viewpoints, with an outcome that greatly impacts the organisations' working conditions and possibilities to make change. The fight over space in public arenas is a fight over the power and possibilities of changing and negotiating discourses. Different interests come to play in this process. Politicians, journalists, state officials, transnational organisations- and networks, ultra-nationalist organisations- and activists, human rights- and democracy activists, social workers, international diplomats, etc., all have different interests, positions and possibilities to influence the definition process.

There seem to be a strong linkage between the organisations' individual social work, and their work with advocacy of the issue in public debate. This is seen through the ways that public discourses tend to affect the individual social work conducted by the organisations. The organisations need, in order to be able to conduct their individual social work and reach out to putative clients, sometimes draw on a pragmatic approach in which they partly adapt to prevailing discourses. They need to take in to account different discursive and normative contexts.

Domestic violence against women is a world wide phenomenon, with extensive consequences for the members of different societies and social contexts. To inquire the ways in which it is constructed as a societal issue and a social problem in one given context, can hopefully contribute to the stimulation of knowledge that is relevant for social services practices in other societal contexts. Given its own specific conditions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Information letter

GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
INSTITUTIONEN FÖR SOCIALT ARBETE

INFORMATION ABOUT BACHELORS ESSAY ON WORK RELATED TO THE PROBLEM 'DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN' IN YEREVAN, ARMENIA

My name is Hanna Mächs, I am a third year student of social work at the University of Gothenburg. This study is part of my bachelors essay, the third year examination work. I will hereby give a brief information about the study and interviews.

Aim of the study
My understanding is that the work with raising public awareness of the question of domestic violence against women, in Armenia today, meets resistance from parts of the surrounding society. I would like to have an insight in how this work is conducted, both when it comes to social services and advocacy for policy change.

The aim of the study is to reach a wider understanding of how to work with the question of domestic violence against women in a context where it is not fully accepted as a social/societal problem. How is the question of domestic violence against women being constructed as a social problem?

Process
The study is based on qualitative interviews, where I ask the participants open questions which are free to be interpreted by the participant. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. After the transcription all recordings will be erased. Participants will be anonymised in the analysing process and no personal information will be published in the final essay.

The essay will be published on the website of the University of Gothenburg during the spring of 2015.

After the interviews
You are free to at any time cancel the participation in this study. If you after the interviews are made, have any questions, please contact me:

————————————- (email-address)

————————————- (phone)

Thank you for participating!

Kindest regards,
Hanna

Appendix 2

Interview question guide

The constitution of the organization

What are the aims and goals of the organization?

How long has the organization existed?

What has the development looked like? Changes in size, structure, activities etc.

Who was the initiator of the organization?

Do you collaborate with other organizations/networks?

Do you have any specific local connection? Are you working within a specific area?

Are you bound to any religion/religious group?

Are you bound to any political party/organization? Do you have a official political standpoint?

Since how long are you active?

What made you become active? In the issue? In the organization?

How many are active in the organization?

Are there employees / salaried within the organization?

Are there volunteers?

Are there any specific requirements to become active?

Are there different positions and responsibilities within the organization?

How is the organisation being financed?

Do you have any active collaborations with your financiers?

Do you receive any support from the government?

The activities/tasks of the organization

The people active in the organization, what professional/other skills do they have?

What does the practical work consist of?

Do you have a specific target audience?

What does the contact with the clients look like?

Do you work with with both women and men? In what ways? Active decisions?

Do you work with entire families?

Do you think of domestic violence as a gendered problem or neutral to gender?

How do you reach out to presumptive clients?

How many are taking part of the services? In what specific ways?

Context and conditions of work

Does the organization have any contact with the authorities? E.g. social services,
police, schools, etc.
-what are your experiences of it?
-what reactions do you face from them?

Does the organization have any correspondence with politicians?
-what are your experiences of it?
-what reactions do you face from them?

Does the organization have contact with the media / journalists?
-what are your experiences of it?
-what reactions do you face from them?

Is there any of these that you find especially important to collaborate with?

Experiences/individual views

Which of the organization's functions do you consider to be most important?

Which of the organisations aims do you find most important?

What is, according to you, the hardest part of the work?

What motivates you in your work?

What kind of reactions do you get from your surroundings?

Have you experienced any change in public attitudes regarding violence against women since you were first engaged with the question?
    -In what way?
    -What do you think this is due to?

Do you think the organisation has any impact on changing public attitudes towards violence against women?

Do you think that should be an aim for your organization?

What do you think are the most efficient ways in doing so?

Are there any obstacles?

Have you seen that the work of the organization have had any visible impact?
-on society
-on specific individuals?

Do you consider the organisation a women's rights organization?

Is the organisation a feminist organisation?

In your view, what are the most important things in society to change in order to stop violence against women?