

“Bargaining With Patriarchy”: Newsroom Experiences of Women Journalists in Turkey and Greece

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According to feminist news critics, news structure has a gender. It is “masculine” because the codes and ethics of journalism have been designed in male-ordered newsrooms. Do female journalists make a difference in the news, or is journalism gender-blind? What strategies, interventions, and initiatives are women journalists developing (if they ever can) to cope with androcentric newsroom culture and practices? What are the consequences of their bargaining with patriarchal newsroom hierarchies and practices? The rich news criticism literature’s answers to these questions are as complementary as contradictory. Based on in-depth interviews with journalists from Turkey and Greece, this article pictures the hegemonic newsroom culture of the two countries and discusses the bargaining and/or consenting strategies of women journalists with masculinity through rereading the participant narrations.

Keywords: women journalists, Greek women journalists, Turkish women journalists, Greek media, Turkish media, feminist news criticism

Does Gender Make a Difference in Journalism?

The history of feminist criticism of journalism dates back to the end of the 1970s. Although media scholars have been criticizing conventional news making for nearly a decade, we had to await the feminist academics for the epistemological challenge to the theory. They questioned and deconstructed the

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masculinity of the journalistic values and practices, the structuration of the news and newsroom culture, their grounding codes, and the ethics of the profession (de Bruin & Ross, 2004). They brought the marginalization or exclusion of women journalists in/from the male-dominated newsrooms to our attention, by reflecting on print media's transformation by the late 1800s through commercialization and accompanying depoliticization of the media business (Chambers, Steiner, & Fleming, 2004; Kinnebrock, 2009). According to feminist theorizing, the role of women journalists would be "valued" only when the sector needed them again as a workforce during the First and Second World Wars. However, by that time, the codes of journalism had already been written within the masculine "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1977, p. 133), which keeps dominating whatever makes the news and newsrooms practices today, and they need to be criticized, displaced, and redefined.

Re-written *herstory* of the news media marks the changing moments of journalism. Women's increasing presence in newsrooms and administrative positions, their organized solidarity and/or empowering networks, the strength of women's movements, and the impacts of the second/third waves of feminism are seen as having created improvements in journalism (Joseph, 2004, p. 138; Mahtani, 2005) or "feminization of the news" by the 1980s in the sense of fulfilling the advertising targets through softer news and feature stories of women journalists to attract female readers (Frank, 2013, pp. vi–viii). In their discussion of the current feminization of the newsrooms (after the relative stagnation of 2005–2015), Lachover and Lemish (2018) note that the gendered characteristics of newsrooms do not guarantee any better journalism since "they are still expected to adapt to the enduring masculine culture, environment and professional practices" (p. 513). Thus, not only do the problems of women journalists in newsrooms such as discrimination, harassment, mobbing, pay gap, glass ceiling, and lack of job security still remain as cross-cultural issues but their "symbolic annihilation" also continues to be caused by the current media regime (Tuchman, 1978, p. 3), and the misogynic representation of women in the news continues by turning conventional news reporting into a women's rights-violating narrative form (Alankuş, 2016). All these issues require questioning of not only the practices but also the epistemological grounds and ethics of conventional journalism itself, on which the hegemonic² culture of the profession and its editorial values and practices have been coded, reproduced, and (inter)nationalized.

Does gender matter in journalism? Craft and Wanta (2004) claim that women journalists tend to cover more positive news and Ross (2007) emphasizes their tendency to use more women as news sources or to diversify the news. Joseph (2004) regards women journalists' news as not "event/end" but as "issue/process" oriented (p. 139). Craft and Wanta (2004) argue that when the number of women administrators increased in the newsrooms, both genders' journalism got closer in sharing similar agenda issues. On the basis of other research results in works by de Bruin (2000), Melin-Higgins (2004), and Steiner (1998), Ross (2011) claims that the influence of a balanced number of women and men journalists in the newsrooms over the produced content brings out women's distinct perspective in explaining the world. In the same work, Ross (2011) also underlines the importance of the "newsrooms' size" and argues that while larger newsrooms with a predominance of male journalists routinize a male-ordered perspective, the

² Pivoting Antonio Gramsci's (2011) use of this term, I refer to the dominant male-ordered ecosystem of the newsroom, the structuration of the news, and the profession that works mostly through the consent of female journalists. For the previous uses see also, Alankuş (2018).

small-size ones are more open to changes by women. Byerly (2004) argues that newsroom and journalism practices contribute to a masculine culture,

that remains decidedly white, male, and heterosexual in its values and standards; these in turn define a genre of news defined by an ideology of heterosexual, white male superiority that is sometimes reinforced by hostility to feminism and its followers. (p. 114)

A research based on interviews from 18 countries finds that “women and men [journalists] do not differ in any meaningful ways in their role perceptions on either individual level or in newsroom dominated by women or in socio-cultural contexts where women have achieved a certain level of empowerment” (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012, p. 257). According to Byerly and McGraw’s (2020) data analysis, there are positive correlations between senior-level women journalists in the news industry and the visibility of women in the news to a certain extent. But for a collective determining role or “critical mass effect” in the newsrooms, women journalists’ numbers at the senior professional level should reach 45% (Byerly & McGraw, 2020, pp. 217–219). By finding no meaningful relationships between a gender-egalitarian professional culture, and gender-aware and women-inclusive reporting, their suggestion is “to shift the central question from ‘when women make a difference’, to ‘what specific actors do’ with form and content when acting for women” (Byerly & McGraw, 2020, pp. 218–219).

Steiner (2005) questions the grounding epistemology of the gender approach and, by referring to Butler (2016), emphasizes the importance of understanding gender not “as a static and dichotomous set of differences between women and men, but as a performance, a relational act” (Steiner, 2009, p. 121). She also argues how an earlier discussion on “women make a difference” in journalism turned to a claim that women produce the same “unmarked” journalism as men to protect their status, jobs, and salaries (Steiner, 2009, p. 117). At this point, it needs to be highlighted that “unmarked journalism” or “gender neutrality of the news” is claimed to be “a form of gendering” since it takes conventional journalism for granted (Hearn et al., 2003, p. 176).

In brief, the research by critical journalism scholars using qualitative and/or quantitative methods and in different political and cultural contexts reveals controversial and inconclusive results regarding whether female journalists make a significant difference in the androcentric structuration of newsrooms, values, practices, and ethics of journalism.

In this article, on the basis of in-depth interviews of 32 women journalists from Greece and Turkey, I aim to compare the hegemonic newsroom cultures of the respective countries and the ways in which women journalists cope with their conventions and practices. Although the research delves into the women journalists’ approach to the disputed issues of the relationship between Turkey and Greece and examines their mutual reflections on the news media of the two countries, this part of the participants’ narrations is not the focus of this article. Additionally, the work is not framed within the context of whether female journalists of the two countries make a difference in the structuration of the news or news-making processes. Instead, my focus will be on the experiences of the participants and their strategies, initiatives, and interventions to deal with discriminating androcentric values and practices of the newsroom or put it differently, their bargaining with patriarchy.

I limited my research to the female journalists of Turkey and Greece; first, due to the characteristics that make both countries not correctly fit into any geographic, political, or cultural categories. Second, the two countries got their sovereignty vis-a-vis each other after 400 years of "togetherness." This history, with its positive and negative aspects, continues to play significant roles not only in their domestic politics and foreign affairs but also in creating similarities in their media regimes and women's status in these regimes. Turkey has started to be classified among the "competitive authoritarian" regimes (Esen, 2021, p. 153) and has become polarized along the lines of secular and neo-conservative political Islamic values, particularly after the failed coup d'état attempt of 2016 (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2023). But since the Islamist-conservative "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1994) of Turkey continues to require women journalists in the business as proof of continuing the "modern" face of the country, comparing the two newsroom regimes still remains meaningful.²

Turkey and Greece; "Faraway, So Close"

Since their establishment as sovereign states, the neighborly relations between modern Turkey and Greece have been going through several crises that are still fueled from time to time by creating a "cold peace" situation (Triantaphyllou, 2017), which usually happens when their domestic politics need a "cement" to unite the public around their respective governments (Heraclides & Alioğlu Çakmak, 2019).

Mainstream media, on the other hand, play a vital role in the relationship between the two countries as shown by the provocative cases of the "September events"/"Septemvriana" 6-7, in 1955, and the Kardak/Imia islets crisis³ in 1996 although there were relatively happy breaks as well.⁴ The comparative works on news media of Greece and Turkey offer several complementary explanations for the phenomenon: The state- and government-centered characteristics of both media regimes, their mutual otherization in nation-state building (Heraclides & Alioğlu Çakmak, 2019; Lazarou, 2009; Millas, 2004; Özkırımlı & Sofos, 2008; Papathanassopoulos, Karadimitriou, Kostopoulos, & Archontaki, 2021; Theodosopoulos, 2006); a strong press and party parallelism (Frangonikolopoulos, 2010; Iosifidis & Boucas, 2015; Tılıç, 1997; Yıldırım, Baruh, & Çarkoğlu, 2021); transformation of media regimes through

² For a deeper analysis of "new gender regime" in the Turkish media see, Özcan (2019).

³ In 1955, cooperating with the Turkish Intelligence Organization, and through fake news, Turkish news media triggered ethnic hatred toward the non-Muslim minorities including Greeks who were Turkish citizens. The provocation turned out to be a pogrom, and it caused their mass migration to Greece. In 1996, Turkey and Greece came to the brink of war due to territorial claims over the desert islets of Kardak/Imia in the Aegean Sea. The role of the news media on both sides was more than provocation since the journalists were among the ones who were competing to plant the respective country flags on the rock pieces there.

⁴ By the late 1990s, the rapprochement policy of the two foreign ministers (George Papandreou and İsmail Cem) created a friendly climate although it did not last long (Özgüneş & Terzis, 2000). Another happy break was when Turkey's candidacy to the European Union was supported by Greece in the early 2000s and the following developments particularly in the economic relations, which made both sides enjoy its benefits. While things did return to a tough stance in foreign affairs, especially by the Turkish AKP's third election period in 2016, and several crises followed since, the countries are back again to a new rapprochement period.

changes in ownership structure and commercialization in Greece by the 1980s and in Turkey by the 1990s (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021; Yanardağoğlu, 2021); the prevalence of opinion-based journalism over fact-based journalism in both countries (Sunar, 2009); the large diversity in the number of the media but low levels of pluralism (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2023; Symrniaios, 2013), which became worse by 2010 because of the punishment and reward mechanisms of the AKP government in Turkey (Yeşil, 2018) and the measures of economic crises in Greece (Symrniaios, 2013); "Elite and government sources-based" (Hadjidimos, 1999, p. 13; Tılıç, 1997) and "us versus them" or "blaming the other" sort of news reporting that particularly works when the relations between Turkey and Greece are the issue (Kostarella, 2007; Lazarou, 2009; Millas, 2004; Sunar, 2009; Tılıç, 2006; Yumul & Özkırmırlı, 2012);⁵ last but not least, independent media's weaknesses (Boucas & Iosifidis, 2020; Kızılkaya, 2019; Papathanassopoulos et al., 2021).

Although Hallin and Mancini's (2004) work does not analyze the Turkish media regime, their "polarized pluralist model" (pp. 73–74) under which Greece is classified with other Southern European countries provides a frame to understand the Turkish media regime as well. For instance, in the two countries, the press is elite and commentary-oriented, and journalism carries the characteristics of advocacy journalism. Strong ties among the media owners/professionals, political parties, and governing elites are explained by a high degree of ideological polarization and the strong role of the state in society. External pluralism, the relatively small circulation of the print media, and the corresponding centrality of the electronic media can be listed among the other similarities. Although resemblances to the Greek model still exist, Turkey's media regime today represents more of a hybrid model with the characteristics of competitive authoritarianism (Tunç, 2018), particularly after the fourth election period of the AKP government.⁶

The resemblances between Turkey and Greece persist across women journalists' status. Their numbers increased in the sector by the 1980s and mainly by the beginning of privatizations in Greece (Panagiotopoulou, 2007) and the imprinting of women's editions of newspapers in Turkey (Kılıç, 2013). The glass ceiling marks the sector, and the number of women in high-rank positions is below the world average.⁷ Increasing new working (home-office) conditions offered to the women make them isolated, with a precariat status in the labor market, which makes it quite easy to discard them. Multiple employment is an income-raising choice, especially by 2010, due to the economic crisis in Greece and the government's total control over mainstream and state media with nepotistic employment strategies in Turkey. Lower wages compared with their male peers, inability to bargain for wages, and lack of job security are the challenges that women

⁵ Galtung (2000) and Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) list these as the typical characteristics of war journalism as opposed to peace journalism. Reflections of the participants on mainstream/war journalism's role in the two countries' relations and their approach to peace journalism will be the subject of another article.

⁶ The 2023 report of the Center for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom classifies Turkey with the highest risk record. Greece's classification, on the other hand, is with the medium risk (Bleyer-Simon et al., 2023, pp. 148–149).

⁷ See Byerly (2011) for a comprehensive cross-globe research ("Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media") that covers 59 countries (Greece and Turkey are not included) and finds that the journalistic workforce is made up of 35.1% women while the ratios of women on governing boards and in top management across is 25.9% and 27.3%, respectively.

journalists in both countries have to deal with (Kılıç, 2013; Panagiotopoulou, 2007). Besides, women journalists become subject to mobbing, hate speech, sexual harassment, cyberbullying, and violence, although these issues have not been publicly spoken about yet in both countries.⁸

Women Narrate ...

This research is based on 32 in-depth interviews with women journalists in Turkey and Greece (16 from each country), which were conducted between 2018 and 2021. The interviews were face-to-face with four exceptions and a minimum of one and a half hours long with audio recordings.⁹ The participants were in the age range of 36 to 84 years. Nearly half were active in the profession, and the others were either retired (in Turkey's case, forcibly) or unemployed. Most of them were from (mainstream and alternative) print media although there were broadcast journalists or cross-working professionals.¹⁰ The journalists were reached by implementing snowball techniques as well as through my acquaintances. My interaction with the participants was the experience of "co-production of knowledge" (Mason, 2002, pp. 62–63) instead of collecting the data. The interviews with the women journalists of Greece became less productive due to using a third language (English) in the communication. In the next section, through my rereading of their narrations (Smith, 2015),¹¹ I will be highlighting their reflections on their newsroom experiences (deVault & Gross, 2007; Scott, 2007), their strategies, initiatives, and interventions (Byerly, 2004) for dealing with the assumed hegemonic culture of the profession.

You Are Not Welcome

Feminist rereadings of the print press history offer a picture of newsrooms where the very first female journalists in the "modern" sense were not welcome, or their presence was conditionally tolerated. As worldwide comparisons give perceptive insights, neither newsrooms nor news is gender neutral. However, depending on the socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts of the countries, their gender equality index and the strength of their feminist movements, and the "performative gender roles" played in the newsrooms, changes do take place in male-ordered newsroom cultures and journalism practices, but

⁸ Regarding the violence against women journalists in Turkey, available data are only about the violence by the Turkish police; see the report by Women Press Freedom (2021). For some examples of Greek cases see, Pazianou (2021).

⁹ Due to the pandemic, four interviews were conducted online. One of the interviews from Turkey had to be done by taking notes since the participant did not give approval for audio recording.

¹⁰ Working simultaneously for different media (papers, journals, radio, and television) has been a common practice in Greece (Panagiotopoulou, 2007), particularly after the economic crisis of 2010. In Turkey, it started with the AKP's gradual control over media ownership and by putting opponent women's names among the first to be fired. The phenomenon currently has been increasing due to the deepening economic crises of the last three years.

¹¹ Smith (2015), who uses "narrative analysis" in her research, describes her method as "inviting participants not only to discuss what has happened to them . . . but also reflect on what those events mean" (p. 28). My analysis in the article is based on participants' reflections on their experiences.

without any structural transformations. Female journalists' narrations of the two countries suggest the following image concerning their newsrooms.

Women journalists in Greece and Turkey, who started journalism in the late 1970s and early 1980s, were not welcome in the newsrooms, or at least, neither male peers nor newsrooms were prepared enough to accommodate them. FÖ (Tr., 73)¹² said that when she started as a parliamentary correspondent, an Ankara representative of a long-established newspaper said, "I haven't even let a female fly in for 17 years." In the same newspaper's Istanbul office, when the number of women reached three, the editor-in-chief grumbled, "There are women all over the newspaper" (NU, Tr., 73). The editor-in-chief of one of the most influential newspapers said, "I don't like working with the women here" on NA's (Tr., 68) very first day in the office. Similar anecdotes were presented by the journalists of Greece. For instance, RA (Gr., 61) says that when she moved from Athens to Thessaloniki as an experienced journalist in 2000, the local office of her left-wing newspaper did not accept her since working with women was not their tradition in the local branch. Although EC (Gr., 67) says, "There was no discrimination between male and female peers" in the left-wing newspaper where she had worked, she notes, for instance, that her news about women's issues was "swept under the rug" by the editor. She also adds how the male crime reporters gave her a hard time when she particularly criticized their discourse on femicide cases.

Strategies of the women of both newsrooms were foremost "working hard" to prove themselves. In the narrations of journalists in Turkey, "working hard" sometimes meant abuses of their commitment to the job by the male fellows. NB (Tr., 60) says,

There were times when meetings at the parliament lasted until the morning. I was the youngest . . . solid [male] reporters would make me sit in the general assembly hall till the end and ask: "You sit here, take notes . . . give us seven copies later. We are going to have a drink."

Nevertheless, she justifies the situation by saying, "They knew that I would do my best . . . Because I was very enthusiastic about the work."

"Working hard" is not valued most of the time by their peers within competitive newsroom dynamics. NA (Tr., 68) says that when she was promoted, male peers used to whisper behind her about "being a 'tumbler' (cambaz) who came to this position by acrobatics." AS (Gr., 51) instead pinpoints how the senior female peers were suspicious about her presence and professional performance and said, "She is very young, what does she want? What if somebody has placed her here? What if she is in a relationship with someone?"

Female journalists' counter mechanisms were as diversified as males' resistance. ZO's (Tr., 76) one was ignorance; "They valued me, but they also looked down on me and made fun of me . . . They hit on me.

¹² Initials denote the names of the participants. In the case of two Turkish and one Greek participants their name has been changed per their request. Tr. and Gr. denotes Turkish and Greek participants accordingly. Numbers denote the ages of the interviewees.

Frankly, I never cared because I loved what I was doing." EC (Gr., 67), although she defined herself as a feminist, developed another strategy and performed a "genderless" role. When she expressed this to her editor, he responded, "You say so, but you do not know how we perceive you." Another participant, who played a genderless role as well, offers a similar anecdote concerning her male peers' counterpose. Once they said to her, "We were looking at your butt while you were passing through" (GB, Tr., 62). EK (Gr., 65) instead accepted the compliments of male fellows "up to a certain level" but says she knew their tactic "was sometimes to do with putting a woman in her place." She demanded a column from her editor and succeeded in getting it.

Girls Go to the Foreign News Desks

Female journalists, in general, were expected to cover culture, art, and magazine issues or make "soft news" in the sector. Turkish and Greek news media were/are not exceptional. When these now-elderly participants were pushing the borders back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and, for instance, wanted to issue a women's rights violation, their news was either rejected or ridiculed. EC (Gr., 67) says apart from sweeping such news of hers under the rugs, she heard her editor saying, "Now women showed up, they want rights." ZO (Tr., 76) gives a similar example:

"When I brought news about issues like violence against women, nursery at the workplaces, Kurdish/Turkish women status in the rural areas, etc. male editors would always argue . . . come on, I'm tired of, women again! No way!"

She adds, "But I stubbornly tried."

Foreign news desks used to be the first career step for women journalists in Turkey and Greece if they were fluent in foreign languages. İÇ (Tr., 75), who has had a political activist background, says, "I was sent to foreign news just because I am a woman, of that I am sure." They were primarily working desk-bound and translating foreign news. But even there, they were only conditionally free about what to write. For instance, FT (Tr., 73) says even though she was reporting from Brussels about Turkey and European Union affairs, for instance, expectations from her were rather "amusing stories," not "serious matters." EM (Gr., 49) narrates how she was having a hard time convincing the editors to allow her to do a full investigative analysis. She adds, "The foreign news desk was run only by female peers, but the heads were always males." Another striking anecdote about the status of female reporters on the foreign news desks is offered by FT (Tr., 63). She pinpoints that although they were warning the news editors of the politics desk about a future crisis, their third-page news was taken as "Again Greek and Turks news? Leave it; we are fed up with it!" But as soon the Kardak/Imia crisis hit in 1996, the "girls" were skipped, and control of the first page was taken over by the "boys" to the extent of triggering the crises by planting Turkish flag in the desert islets.¹³

In Turkey, writing a column on business and finance was rare for women. When NU (Tr., 72) became a business section columnist at the age of 30, the editor-in-chief decided not to use her photo in

¹³ Frank (2013) explains this newsroom pattern as, "Men's news is to write on the front page that a fire happened, women's news is to write inside why the guy lit the fire for the third time" (pp. vi-viii).

her corner. She comments, "They thought that it would not be serious enough for a young woman, with a childish face, in her 30s to write a column on financial issues." She also presents an anecdote about how her knowledge was checked on the phone several times to determine if she wrote the column or if someone else had written it. In Greece, instead, politics desks belonged to the males for a long time. The participants, who had even said, "There was no gender discrimination where they worked" emphasized the exclusion of the women from those desks (NV, Gr., 60; EM, Gr., 49). EC (Gr., 67) says, "I worked between 1974–1996, and during all these years until the newspaper closed down, none of the women journalists had been able to make news on politics." For MH (Gr., 61), "only after 30 years of hard work" could she become the chief editor of the foreign news section. When AP (Gr., 44) negotiated with her chief editor in 2016 about having a daily column on current affairs, he hesitated and made it weekly at the beginning. Her column could be made a daily one only after a year, on the grounds of waiting for the readers' reactions because there was no precedent of a female journalist who wrote daily on politics in her well-established newspaper history. LP (Gr., 50) underlines, "We are still less in politics." The narrations by the participants make one wonder if the issue is related to individual solid political ties of the male reporters who do not want to share the prestige and power of their affiliations.

What if She Is Promoted

One participant from Turkey was promoted to editor-in-chief in 1993 and was the first woman in this position. She narrates what happened when she attended the news meeting as editor-in-chief for the first time:

When I walked in, everyone acted as if I didn't exist. I didn't expect the guys to include me, but . . . I at least consider myself . . . I was not an outsider . . . Before being promoted, I was the news director, and they were very pleased with me . . . They continued their conversation, so I waited and stood for almost 15 minutes, or what felt like such a long time . . . I felt like resigning and slamming the door, but I thought if I quit, how would a woman enter through this door again? (NA, Tr., 68)

She also adds that even when she became the editor-in-chief, decisions still were taken by her senior male peers, and NA (TR., 68) was not the only one who had to deal with the problem. AP (Gr., 44) describes how the mid-level administrators (news editors) were "invisible" in the established newsroom of her paper. EB (Gr., 61) says she used to hear from her male peers, "Come on, you are a woman, don't tell me what to do." SP (Gr., 51) remarks,

I was the first woman to be an editor-in-chief and head of the office . . . only a few of the men in the office congratulated me on my appointment as they thought that a managerial position was not fit for a relatively young (I was 43) woman.

But she also adds how harder it was for her to cope with the reactions of women peers rather than male ones.

The references to competition among the female peers were several, as between senior and junior females, single ones with no kids and married ones with kids, to name a few. The reasons could be anything—their promotions, hard work, outlook, dress, sex appeal—but there was almost always something. Some participants said they preferred peer males in the higher ranks due to the more mannish behavior and pressures from female bosses. But a few of them questioned the systemic reasons for women's backbiting, which shapes the newsroom culture and the profession.

Two of the participants' narrations about the newsroom competition are significant in terms of representing similar recognition but opposing counteractions. AS (Gr., 51) says, "It is a male environment . . . you have to be very tough to survive in the profession . . . you cannot make a change; you have to change" and we learn she ultimately quits as she could not stand the ill effects on her health. FT (Tr., 73) makes a similar reflection: "It [newsroom] is their lordships' and they make you wear their [male] weapons," but her response was to play the game the other way around—by making herself immune to the competition and even building solidarity with the fellows. But she could do that "because things were different before the 1990s" or when the media owners were still from the profession, and the sector was not as competitive as it is now. The strategy of a journalist (YE, Tr., 36) from the younger generation of Turkey, instead represents a "new" version of "bargaining with the patriarchy" (Kandiyoti, 1988, pp. 274–290)¹⁴ for self-empowerment. She says,

They had to promote me to the editor-in-chief position . . . but they did not. In response to this, I did not cooperate with the new administration, and they could not do anything to me. Because I am backed . . . and if President Erdoğan did not back us [women] we would not be able to stand on our own feet in such a masculine environment. (YE, Tr., 36)

YE (Tr., 36) recommends to women in the sector, "Have a good CV, stay quiet, act strategically, and go low profile." On the other hand, her profile represents a *mélange* of "Islamic-nationalism" with neo-liberal values, as her answer on wage negotiations implies; "Of course, I bargained for the salary. I play along with the rule of the capitalist system and receive an ultra-high salary."

A Room for Only Males

Sexist jokes, swearing, boys' club rituals, and even privileged spatial uses of the newsroom are the primary masculine indicators of the *hegemonic* newsroom culture that lead women to develop a number of bargaining mechanisms.

¹⁴ The term is used by Kandiyoti (1988) to explain the non-Western, Asian, Middle Eastern woman's self-strengthening strategies in the private sphere through which she gets a status. I am freely borrowing her term to refer to the new double face of patriarchy. It is "new" in the sense of its restoration (Kandiyoti, 2013) by increasing the systemic violence through its body politics against the resistance of "bad girls" (Turkey's president Erdoğan recently called them "sluts" in a public speech). "Good girls" of Islamic governing elites instead are backed and find "comfort" within the nepotic relationships.

FÖ (Tr., 73) says when she was appointed to the İstanbul bureau of her paper as the news editor, there was a room where only male peers met and backroom deals were fixed. She learned no woman used to enter that room, but she insisted and got in and joined them.¹⁵ EM (Gr., 49) says, "Journalists in Greece swear a lot . . . I was used to doing that . . . as a kind of self-protection strategy." Then she adds, "I became part of this boys' club. I used to watch football and races with them, go out for drinking." NA (Tr., 68), who had once not been given a seat in her first meeting as the editor-in-chief, explains that after a while, she started to socialize with them by going for a drink, which was an after-work luxury afforded by mainly single women with no kids. AS (Tr., 44) notes how swearing was the daily routine of her newsroom, and the atmosphere was terrorized by the editor-in-chief's testosterone-dominated authority. When she was subjected to his nasty words, she quit work for alternative media with a much lower salary. LP (Gr., 50) notes,

To survive you had to take for granted that there would be sexist jokes . . . you learn to get used to them . . . but these were the guys who were not harassing us . . . I have to be fair. These were the guys who had been brought up like that . . . They would make these cruel, stupid jokes, but they would not hit on you.

By normalizing this verbal sexism and not associating it with harassment, she finds a "comfort zone" in the heterosexist male order newsroom which in the end benefits the androcentric culture. Though, when a senior journalist's verbal harassment continued, she had to threaten him with complaints to the bosses before he stopped. In one of the Turkish cases, responding negatively to the sexual attention of a male manager resulted in the interviewee receiving a lower salary and she ultimately quit the job.

Responses about sexual harassment in the newsrooms were either glossed over or narrated cautiously as not theirs but others' stories. A few participants exposed the harassers (including their physical but primarily verbal harassment) on the condition of keeping their identities anonymous. The issue remains taboo, which participants did not feel free to talk about.¹⁶

We learned from the participants of Turkey and Greece how they find their ways and "make their corners" in the newsrooms. When a fired molester returned to his post, female journalists of the newspaper succeeded in stopping him with the support of the head of the executive board, who was the daughter of the owner (NA, Tr., 68). Under her administration, women journalists of the newspaper with some male fellows initiated a group to change the news language toward women.¹⁷ With this "internal"

¹⁵ Two of the participants from Turkey mentioned the missing women's toilets in their offices when they started work. NU (Tr., 72) remembers a male peer was insistently using the only WC's urinal while she was in and she regrets not having a word with him as a shy young woman.

¹⁶ The "Me too" movement of 2021 was not echoed among the women journalists of Turkey. For the Greek cases, see Pazianou (2021).

¹⁷ In Turkey with the efforts of female journalists and feminist activists, the term "violence against women" was replaced by "male violence" since it was hiding the perpetrator. In Greece, the word *gynaikoktonia*, meaning women are killed because of their gender, replaces *anthropoktonia* (homicide), due to the increasing number of cases.

initiative (Byerly, 2004, p. 120), the group could create a certain degree of awareness and success; yet, it faded in a year due to counter-lobbying by senior male fellows, who blamed the group for creating a "second newspaper." This case is significant in terms of representing the degree of male resistance to the women's interventions and how they defend their "lordships" even if the motive comes from the very top, but a woman "at the end."

Not "The End" to the Story . . .

One participant from Greece (MH, Gr., 61) lost her hair because of a treatment she was receiving and had to leave her TV program. She says, "If I were a man, I would not be hearing the things I had heard when my appearance changed." Her experience sums up how women journalists' experiences were and still are different than their male fellows' in the news media as is the case in politics, on the street, and in private and public spheres.

The research participants were from middle-class families, with a few exceptions. Identity wise, there was one Jew and one Kurd from the Turkey side, and one Italian from the Greece side. The rest did not mention any ethnic/religious identity other than the majority population of their respective countries. Their ages ranged from 36 to 84 years, and 31 of them were higher-education graduates with at least a bachelor's degree. They were mostly divorced or unmarried and positioned politically from Left to central-Left and central-Right, with the exception of two participants from Turkey who represented the "Islamic-nationalist" (Aslan, 2015, p. 10) line. Only three of the participants defined themselves as feminists. In short, profile-wise, there were similarities and differences among the participants on both sides and among each side as well. Analysis of the women journalists' narrations demonstrates the similarities between the newsroom cultures of the two countries though their counterstrategies differ on an individual level.

The narrations prove discrimination against female journalists in the newsrooms of both countries even though it is often not phrased as "discrimination" by the participants. But, even those who do not recognize their subjection to one or another kind of discrimination offer a variety of counter experiences and coping strategies. They "maintain their corner with hard work" even if the cost is undertaking the male fellow's job. They join the "old boys network" and accept the "honorary male" status (Robinson, 2005, p. 91; 2008, p. 132).¹⁸ They reject "wearing male weapons," step back, and go low profile or develop counterstrategies. They perform a genderless role or the opposite. They try to ignore the masculine habits of the newsrooms including the verbal harassment up to a certain point and prefer not to act directly against and speak up publicly about it. "Bargaining with patriarchy" (Kandiyoti, 1988) or even joining the "restoration of patriarchy" (Kandiyoti, 2013) provides them a certain level of comfort of a room of their own. Some move further and open cracks within the system. "Sisters" walk through these cracks and widen them even if they cannot shake the male dominance of the newsrooms for the moment.

¹⁸ See Robinson (2005) for strategies of the female journalists pictured by different researches.

One way or another, female journalists in the two countries make their marks in newsrooms and news-making practices.¹⁹ Participants from Turkey seem to be more prone to struggle, although this argument and its reasons are open to debate. This observation of mine might be related to the limits of my research, my disadvantages in developing a better interaction with participants from Greece, or the status of women in Turkey in general, which has been in a gradual decline over the last 15 years. In fact, with the turn of Turkey's regime into one of competitive authoritarianism, the "feminization of the newsrooms" in the pro-government (previously "mainstream") media gained "a new gender order" in which conservative women columnists were the main beneficiaries and "free" as long as they are in alliance with the misogynist power holders and not a threat to the establishment (Özcan, 2019, pp. 167, 129–131). In this regime, opposition women journalists were choosing to or being forced to opt out, sent to magazine desks, and a new "class" of young journalists with the stereotypical feminine look (complemented with a new group of commentators with headscarves²⁰) were famed as news presenters on the condition of being loyal to the new conservative male order. However, this "new feminization" of the profession in Turkey, which goes hand in hand with the rise of anti-feminism and misogyny in the public discourse (Özcan, 2019, p. 129), and its dissimilar Greek version need deeper analysis and this is beyond the scope of this work. This research assumes that the masculinity of the newsroom culture and codes and ethics of journalism turn conventional journalism into a women's rights-violating form and needs to be restructured. The literature gives controversial results regarding whether women journalists make changes in the conventions that are overwhelmingly based on a binary gender approach (Geertsema-Sligh, 2020). I argue that women journalists make changes in journalism but not in the sense of replacing its very structuration as long as they define themselves within the hegemonic ideology of the profession. This ideology and its androcentric practices, I assume, can be shaken only through a feminist ethical positioning although it need not necessarily be represented by women.

Steiner (2009) claims that gender roles, when creatively performed—although it is often the opposite—provoke the more of the same and are carried on. In the cases in this study, we see the efforts of these creative performances, however, we do not know yet if they will be more structural based on "awareness of feminine otherness" (Lavie, 2005, p. 25) rather than "feminization of the news" and newsrooms.

It is difficult to foresee what the experiences of young women journalists in the future newsrooms will be or even if the newsrooms will remain so in a spatial sense and where journalism and the industry are headed, although all are determining factors. However, we may claim that the multiplicity and creativity of the narrators' gender performances alongside the various levels at which movements by women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other persons struggle against different faces of patriarchy will be weaving will determine how the story unfolds.

¹⁹ According to Melin-Higgins (2004) female journalists develop a more fragmented professional identity (as cited in Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012, p. 275).

²⁰ Two of the participants from Turkey were working at top-level positions in pro-government media and expressed particularly their gratitude to the president for their presence at the posts.

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