

# Addressing women in the Greek parliament

## Institutionalized confrontation or sexist aggression?

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In accordance with numerous studies highlighting aspects of political and parliamentary discourse that concern the rhetoric of political combat, verbal attacks and offensive language choices are shown to be rather common in the context of a highly adversarial parliamentary system such as the Greek. In the present study, however, the analysis of excerpts of parliamentary discourse addressed to women reveals not just aspects of the organization of rival political encounters but, as far as female MPs are concerned, aggressive and derogatory forms of speech that directly attack the gender of the addressees. Drawing on data from video-recordings, the official proceedings of parliamentary sittings, and the media (2012–2015), the present study investigates aggressive/sexist discourse within this context. The theoretical issues addressed concern the impoliteness end of the politeness/politic speech/impoliteness continuum in the light of extreme cases of conflict in political/parliamentary discourse.

**Keywords:** political/parliamentary discourse, im/politeness, politic speech, conflict, aggression, sexism

### 1. Introduction

During a heated debate in the Greek parliament, the then Education Undersecretary George Stylios addressed the statement “You are not going to turn me into Kasidiaris” to his female colleague, Liana Kanelli (Official Proceedings 6/11/2014). The person mentioned in the statement (Ilias Kasidiaris), the spokesperson of the extreme nationalist party, Golden Dawn, had previously physically assaulted Kanelli amidst a political discussion panel on a breakfast news show of live television (Antenna TV, 7/6/2012). The violent incident had been officially condemned by all political parties except for Golden Dawn. Nevertheless, reference to it constitutes a verbal attack against Kanelli as it places full responsibility

for the aforementioned violent act against her on *her*,<sup>1</sup> indirectly justifying the attacker (Section 5.3, Excerpt 7). Despite the fact that physical attacks against women parliamentarians have never occurred before or after the incident in question, sexist verbal attacks and defamatory categorizations are rather common in the discourse of Greek MPs (Makri-Tsilipakou 2014, 33). The above mentioned statement therefore, forms part of a body of numerous incidents of sexist forms of reference and aggressive discourse addressed to women in public domains (also see Bou-Franch 2014) and serves as a starting point for the subsequent discussion.

Political and parliamentary domains, as numerous studies highlight, encompass conflict as an integral part of the organization of discourse and the rhetoric of political combat (Ilie 2001). In highly competitive parliamentary systems such as the Greek one, aggressive verbal attacks and offensive language choices are shown to be rather common (Georgalidou 2011; Tsakona 2011). In the present study, however, the analysis of excerpts of parliamentary discourse addressed to women reveals not just aspects of the organization of rival political encounters but, as far as female MPs are concerned, aggressive and derogatory forms of speech that directly attack the gender of the interlocutors.

Aggression and conflict are crucial aspects of human communication both in public and private domains. Disagreement, disputes and conflict are more often than not integral parts of social encounters, in the sense that they constitute powerful ways of displaying stance, organizing resistance and opposition (Goodwin-Harness 2006; Shantz and Hartup 1992), and rearranging social order (Goodwin-Harness 2006, 33). Aggression, on the other hand, is basically behavior aimed at hurting another person or thing (Shantz and Hartup 1992, 4). Social aggression is directed towards damaging self-esteem and/or social status and may take direct (verbal rejection, facial expressions and body movements, as in the above mentioned incident) and indirect forms (slandorous rumors and social exclusion) (Galen and Underwood 1997, 589). Distinguishing between aggression and conflict is not always an easy task. What is more, aggression and conflict are allegedly distributed differently among men and women, with men being considered more overtly aggressive and women being viewed as more protective of the face of their addressees. This hypothesis has been, however, contested as empirical studies show that females make use of assertive language and claim positions of power both within same and other sex peer groups (Georgalidou 2009; Goodwin-Harness 2006; Mullany 2007; Shaw 2009). In any case, aggression and conflict are constructed interactionally, by both men and women, via the turn by turn

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1. Further on during the episode Kanelli uses the tautology '*Have I made Kasidiaris, Kasidiaris?*' to wonder whether she should be held responsible for both attacks against her. She therefore, contextualizes Stylios' statement as an indirect accusation.

participation in actual conversational sequences (Dersley and Wootton 2001). In the present study however, we will deal exclusively with cases of male MPs addressing (or referring to) their female counterparts by means of aggressive and derogatory forms of speech.

As far as aggressive and derogatory forms of speech addressed to women are concerned, expressing opposition does not necessarily equal the attempt to strike a blow at another person's gendered identity – much less a physical blow as in the incident described above. Nevertheless, the line separating aggression from opposition and conflict, specifically when indirect forms of aggression are employed, may not always be straightforward, especially in highly institutionalized and adversarial domains such as the parliamentary. Despite this fact though, acceptable forms of opposition, as opposed to (sexist) verbal violence, should be distinguished from each other, at least, to some extent. To this end, the analysis of aggressive encounters and of the turn by turn negotiation of meaning is the analytical choice made in order to tackle the questions raised in this study. What is more, reference will be made to the contribution of the media to the reproduction and recycling of aggressive discursive choices as forms of confrontation (Androutsopoulos 2010; Archakis and Tsakona 2010; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2015; Georgakopoulou 2013).

In this context, drawing on data from video-recordings, the official proceedings of parliamentary sittings, press releases, as well as media interviews for a period of three years (2012–2015), the present study investigates verbal aggression and sexism within the context of political/parliamentary discourse in Greece. The theoretical issues involved concern aggression as face-threatening communication pertaining to the impoliteness end of the politeness/politic speech/impoliteness continuum (Section 2), in the light of extreme cases of conflict in political/parliamentary discourse that exceed the limits of expected political rivalry (Christie 2005). In particular, this study investigates how sexist verbal attacks are constructed as dispreferred, therefore impolite actions in the context of the Greek parliament, the explanatory power of on record rebuttals to them and the role of the overall cultural context authorizing sexist discourse.

In what follows we are going to discuss aggression and impoliteness in political encounters (Section 2), sexism as face threatening discourse (Section 3), the analytical framework concerning sexist aggression and impoliteness (Section 4), and the data (Section 5). Finally, Section 6 summarizes the findings of the present study.

## 2. Im/politeness in the context of rival political encounters

In Brown and Levinson's framework (1987), politeness is defined as a set of linguistic strategies designed to reduce threats to face and maintain communication. By way of contrast, impoliteness should have to do with face-threatening speech acts and the breakdown of communication. However, recent approaches to im/politeness highlight the essentialist aspect of the above mentioned definition which perceives meaning as embedded in linguistic devices rather than as constructed by interlocutors in discourse (Arundale 2010; Culpeper 2005; Eelen 2001; Watts 2010). Within both ethnomethodological (Arundale 2010) and social constructionist approaches (Culpeper 2005; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2013; Watts 2010) im/politeness is seen as an interactional construct accomplished by participants in discourse via concrete interactional action/reaction. Within this perspective, impoliteness comes about when the speaker communicates face attack intentionally and/or the hearer perceives or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking (Culpeper 2005, 39). In connection to the present study, the issue examined is how participants in political procedures construct threats to face<sup>2</sup> and in particular sexist attacks on the gender of their women counterparts.

By definition, parliamentary discourse is antagonistic as rival political parties strive to promote their ideological agenda and policies. Within codified and policed institutionalised practices such as parliamentary sittings, adversary politicians seek confrontation and conflict and often resort to speech acts that are designed to be face-threatening. What could be perceived as "systematic impoliteness" is expressed via criticism, challenges, ridicule and the subversion of opponents (Harris 2000). Nevertheless, such conduct is often rewarded rather than sanctioned.

Taking this fact as a point of departure, Watts' (1992a) distinction between im/polite and politic behavior, the latter defined as socio-culturally determined behavior designed to maintain a state of equilibrium during on-going processes of verbal interaction (Watts 1992b, 50), seems to be applicable to speech events within parliamentary procedures (Christie 2005). Watts' model, allows for the explanation of how polite and impolite verbal actions can be constructed as marked, whereas politic speech, i.e. mutually acceptable interactive choices that maintain on-going communication, can be constructed as unmarked. It also allows for the explanation of how threats to face can be seen not just as acceptable, but as desirable in specific contexts. However, the distinction between acceptable and

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2. Face is seen as a social phenomenon arising in interaction rather than as an individual phenomenon involving person centered attributes (Arundale 2010). For a thorough discussion of *face* also see Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2013).

unacceptable face-threatening acts can only be retrieved locally as it pertains to the actual communicative choices negotiated by participants in specific events.

As was stated earlier, parliaments, as highly confrontational communicative contexts, welcome politic rather than polite verbal choices, and more often than not this leads to participants taking advantage of tolerance to bald-on-record face-threatening communication in order to (a) discredit opponents and (b) gain publicity. Verbal combats among parliamentarians are privileged by both conventional and new media and communication technologies by being reproduced and circulated to large audiences (Archakis and Tsakona 2010). In this context, aggressive incidents are particularly privileged, often as a form of “confrontainment” (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2015).

As far as the Greek parliamentary system is concerned, aggressive discourse by rival political parties is shown to be compatible with the lack of a tradition of cooperation even in the recent years of economic crisis and governmental coalitions. Direct and indirect attacks (as in the use of humor and irony) aim at the destruction of the political image of different opponents (Archakis and Tsakona 2010; Georgalidou 2011; Sifianou 2008; Tsakona 2011). Discoursal choices, in the case of the present study sexist verbal attacks against women MPs, thus, show how politicians resort to impoliteness in order to address multiple audiences and targets at the same time. They also show that the local organisation of the political system together with the role of the media in the formation of mediated dialogical networks (Nekvapil and Leudar 2002) that are based on the reproduction and distribution of such linguistic forms contribute to the blurring of ideological boundaries and possibly to the neutralization and reinforcement of beliefs that form part of sexist ideological biases.

### 3. Sexism as face threatening discourse

Violence against women is a much disputed social reality recorded and discussed in numerous studies (Bou-Franch 2013). Overt as well as indirect sexist categorizations deriving from patriarchal ideologies are expressed in discourse and attempt to render women invisible (as in sedimented forms of language sexism), define them narrowly or depreciate them. They even attempt to deny, minimize or even attribute blame for verbal or corporal violence against women to the women themselves (Bou-Franch 2013; Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2014). Nevertheless, language sexism seems difficult to define (Mills 2003). Within an essentialist perspective, second wave feminism sees sexist language as the use of statements that create unfair or irrelevant distinctions between the sexes, whereas

third wave feminism sees sexism as much less overt, residing in covert assumptions and kept in play at the level of presupposition (Mills 2003).

The so called 2nd Wave Feminist Linguistics considers the overall cultural context as the essential factor determining linguistic meaning. It deals with sedimented forms of sexism embedded within the morphology of the language system itself, as well as the language of women as a subordinate group based mostly on the stereotype of feminine linguistic styles of straight white middle class women (Mills 2003). Despite justified criticism that aims at (a) the essentialization of gender differences, (b) the perception of women as a homogenized group and (c) the less than sufficient analysis of verbal choices and multiple identities in specific conversational and institutional contexts, 2nd WFL has greatly contributed to the recognition of sexist language as a social problem calling for political action (Mills 2003). Thus, it has led to the politicization of the use of perceived sexist vocabularies as well as to policies dictating the appropriate linguistic reference to sexes and probably to less direct forms of sexist language uses.

On the other hand, 3rd Wave Feminist Linguistics focuses on the construction of meaning and variable gender (or other) identities within the local context of the interaction. It highlights indirect forms of verbal sexism, such as entailments and presuppositions, humor and irony, and discourse prefaced by disclaimers and hesitation, and it sees gendering as a process rather than a state of being (Mills 2003). As much as language sexism can be considered a global category, it is constructed via texts and interactions and is, therefore, only retrievable within specific linguistic choices and the way those are perceived by interlocutors and audiences within discourse. The local level of communication therefore is the critical domain in both the linguistic construction and the meta-linguistic analysis of sexism.

Nevertheless, Mills (2003) insightfully highlights the fact that 3rd WFL finds it difficult to refer to global, structural and systematic forms of discrimination and to the fact that locally expressed styles are authorized with reference to factors outside the local context, i.e. the hypothesized stereotype of gender behavior (Mills 2003, 5; Shaw 2000, 2002, 2009), and how women who deviate from it should be castigated and disciplined. In this context, women's linguistic choices that construct identities of power are treated as marked and women who deviate from the normative feminine conduct are subjected to verbal sexist abuse that is expressed locally and at the same time attributed to global structural parameters. The Greek Parliament offers abundant opportunities to study the phenomenon confirming Shaw's (2000, 416) finding that, despite the fact that both male and female MPs belong to the same community of practice, they do so on different terms according to gender.

#### 4. Sexist aggression and impoliteness: The analytical framework

A number of useful distinctions need to be made in order to exemplify analytical choices for tackling sexism in parliamentary discourse in the present study. On the one hand, parliamentary practices are seen as there and then social actions within actual speech events. That is, locally constructed intersubjectivity i.e., the communication of a sexist attack, is exclusively retrieved via the analysis of conversations informed by the Conversation Analysis paradigm (Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008; Schegloff 2007). Such an approach is compatible with third wave feminist linguistics as well as constructionist and ethnomethodological approaches to face and im/politeness (Arundale 2010; Culpeper 2005; Watts 2010). At the same time though, practices found in the data are also seen as part of structures, i.e. habitual ways of acting (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Christie 2005). Structures set the background against which communicative acts (or else practices) are interpreted. They are seen as dynamic ways of acting and assessing the actions of self and others and as subject to local renegotiation and change. This constitutes a less than essentialist outlook on them, also informed by theoretical assumptions pertaining to ethnomethodology and social constructionism. In any case, habitual ways of acting and reacting that are connected to institutionalized practices and cultural stereotypes cannot be exempted from the equation seeking to explain how locally expressed styles are authorized with reference to factors outside the local context (Mills 2003). Thus, following Mills (2003), a combination of both 2nd and 3rd Wave Feminist approaches is proposed.

In the context of interactional approaches to im/politeness and facework, the distinction of politic choices versus impoliteness can also be seen as a distinction between preferred versus dispreferred conversational choices (Pomerantz 1984), with politic choices constructed as preferred, and impoliteness as dispreferred. To define dispreferred communication, the point of view of the participants to actual talk-in-interaction is taken into account: Meaning is not brought along but brought about via the interactional work done by participants in actual communicative events. The analytic question is: Within the context of the interaction, how do participants contextualize sexist verbal attacks i.e., impoliteness defined as intentionally offensive acts (Culpeper 2005) which aim at the gender of the addressees?

Constructions marked as dispreferred define the limits of rival/aggressive discourse as a politic/unmarked choice within political combat. The breakdown of communication, retrievable in the local context of the conversation, can be considered a marker of dispreferred communicative choices. Nevertheless, since parliamentary sittings are highly constrained institutionalized procedures, break-

downs are not always possible or even eligible. Thus, sexist verbal attacks can be treated as part of the expected rivalry and not rebutted as abusive.

Let us consider the following excerpt in which the then leader of the Opposition Antonis Samaras (Nea Demokratia<sup>3</sup>), in the midst of the critical debate on the referendum (June 2015), referring to the House Speaker Zoi Konstantopoulou (SYRIZA), in her presence, addressed the Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras as follows:

- (1) 28/6/2015: Parliamentary sitting on the referendum  
 “(...) και ’σεις κύριε Τσίπρα, να τη μαζέψετε”  
 “(...) and you Mr Tsipras, you should control her”

Samaras switched to the vernacular to address the Prime Minister with a bald on record directive to “control” the then House Speaker of the Greek Parliament, Zoi Konstantopoulou<sup>4</sup> simultaneously portraying her as an unruly minor in need of a guardian (also see Excerpt 3), and the Prime Minister as the guardian. Due to the importance of the debate, his attack remained uncontested. The fact that offensive speech acts such as the above are not necessarily marked as dispreferred in the immediate context of the interaction puts forth critical questions: What is the role of the overall cultural context authorizing sexist discourse and sexist verbal abuse and what, on the other hand, is the explanatory power of on record rebuttals to it? What is more, what is the role of the media in recycling dominant (sexist) value systems by reproducing (Excerpt 4) – or even inviting (Excerpt 5) – sexist verbal attacks as media spectacles (Androutsopoulos 2010; Georgakopoulou 2013) and forms of “confrontainment” (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2015)? Combining interactional as well as critical approaches to discourse, these are some of the questions we will try to address in the analysis of the data.

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3. Political parties in the Greek Parliament 2012–2015: Nea Demokratia (ND), Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), Greek Communist Party (KKE), POTAMI, Independent Greeks (ANEL), Golden Dawn.

4. Since Konstantopoulou’s election in February 2015 several heated debates preceded this incident contesting her choice to undertake overt political stances as the Speaker of the Greek Parliament.



5. The analysis of the data<sup>5</sup>

In the context of Greek linguistics, sexist language use in private interactions and the public sphere have been discussed in several studies (Alvanoudi 2014; Georgalidou and Lampropoulou 2016; Lampropoulou and Georgalidou 2017; Makri-Tsilipakou 2014; Pavlidou 2002) The present study<sup>6</sup> investigates aggressive/ sexist discourse against women parliamentarians drawing on data from video-recordings, the official proceedings of parliamentary sittings, press releases, as well as media interviews, for a period of three years (2012–2015). The excerpts used in the analysis were chosen because they pertain to an extensive dialogical network of sexist verbal abuses that were uploaded and commented upon in You Tube, blogs and news sites. They come from (a) recorded procedures of parliamentary sittings that have been transcribed by the researcher (Excerpts 2, 6, 9), (b) the official parliamentary proceedings (Excerpts 3, 7, 8), (c) media reports on conversations during parliamentary committee sittings not available to the public via publicized official proceedings (Excerpt 4) and (d) media interviews and panel discussions with members of the parliament also transcribed by the researcher (Excerpts 5, 10). The analysis of the data is qualitative, informed by conversation analytic, social constructionist and critical approaches to discourse.

5.1 Sexist rival discourse: Female incompetence

In Excerpts 1 (Section 4), 2 and 3 male MPs construct their female counterparts as incompetent either by dismissing their actions/requests as unfounded and/or by inviting male counterparts to take action in order to control the situation. The first excerpt discussed in this section (Excerpt 2) comes from the 2nd parliamentary sitting for the election of the President of the Greek Democracy in December 2014. It is chosen as indicative of both sedimented language sexism and the way

5. Transcription symbols used for Excerpts 2, 5, 6, 9 & 10:

-	self-repair	<u>underlined segments</u>	speaker emphasis
/	interruption	(...)	omitted discourse
(.)	pause	(( ))	extralinguistic information
=	latching	.	falling intonation
[ ]	simultaneous speech,	,	short pause
:	extended sound or syllable	;/?	rising intonation

Excerpts 3, 7, 8 & 4 retain the form in which they appear in the official proceedings of the parliament and the internet site from which Excerpt 4 was retrieved.

6. The present study is part of an extensive project of analysis of sexist discourse in the Greek public sphere that has also been discussed elsewhere (Georgalidou and Lampropoulou, 2016; Lampropoulou and Georgalidou, 2017).

female speakers who do not conform to the perceived standards of linguistic and parliamentary order are rebutted.

MPs are called via the procedure of the roll-call vote to either state the name of their chosen candidate or their presence in the procedure which equals to a negative vote. Excerpt 2 consists of a hypercorrection on the part of the Speaker (Danis Tzamtzis, ND) with regards to the ‘grammatical standard’ of the generic masculine that has been established in Modern Greek (Alvanoudi 2014). Based on the perceived exclusive use of the male gender, even when females are addressed, Tzamtzis, via repetition, repairs the statements of all women MPs who choose the participle *παρούσα* ‘present-feminine’ (turn 3). In turn 4, Stambouli (SYRIZA) challenges the repair requesting the official recording of the feminine form of the participle. In turn 7, Tzamtzis, with a bald-on-record directive, i.e. a bald-on-record impoliteness strategy (Culpeper 2005), orders his interlocutor to learn grammar portraying her as incompetent as far as the grammatical use of Greek is concerned. Via the activation of the presupposition of incompetence, he directly threatens the face of his fellow MP. Despite the fact that the process of voting goes on uninterrupted, there are critical comments and protests on the following days, both in various media and in the subsequent 3rd sitting for the presidential election, in which discernibly more women MPs chose the feminine form.

(2) 23/12/2014: The second vote for the election of the President of Greek Democracy

Participants:

Danis Tzamtzis ΔΤζ /DTz (Teller, ND)

Markos Bolaris ΜπΜ/BM (Independent)

Afrodite Stambouli ΣΑ /SA (SYRIZA)

1. ΔΤζ: Σταμπούλη Αφροδίτη
  2. ΣΑ: Πα[ρούσα]=
  3. ΔΤζ: [Παρών]
  4. ΣΑ: =να γράψετε κύριε Πρόεδρε. [Μας έχετε αλλάξει φύλο], [σε όλες]
  5. ΔΤζ: [Μπόλαρης Μάρκος]
  6. ΜπΜ: [Παρών]
  - 7. ΔΤζ: Να μάθετε γραμματική. Μπόλαρης Μάρκος.
  8. ΜπΜ: Παρών
- 
1. DTz: Stambouli Afroditi
  2. SA: Pre[sent-feminine]=
  3. DTz: [Present-masculine]
  4. SA: =write down Your Honor. [You have changed our sex], [to all of us]
  5. DTz: [Bolaris Markos]
  6. BM: [Present-masculine]
  - 7. DTz: Learn grammar. Bolaris Markos.
  8. BM: Present-masculine

Excerpt (3) is part of a longer episode involving the PASOK MP Mihalīs Kassis' verbal attack against Zoi Konstantopoulou (see also Excerpt 8). Kassis invited Konstantopoulou (SYRIZA) to illegally collect benefits, indirectly referring to family benefits that had been mistakenly credited to her mother's salary. After Konstantopoulou's strong protests (Excerpt 8) the House Speaker (Ioannis Drivelegas, PASOK) calls *her* back to order ignoring Kassis' derogatory insinuations of fraud. Instead of addressing the reason for Konstantopoulou's strong protests, he addresses Panagiotīs Lafazanis, the spokesperson of SYRIZA, at least 5 times (immediately preceding discourse), with the request to take action. Similarly to Excerpt 1, the stereotype activated is that of an irrational female (reminiscent of an unruly minor) who needs to be controlled by a rational male guardian, i.e. the stereotype of incompetence. In turn 3, Konstantopoulou strongly reacts against the House Speaker ordering him to apply parliamentary regulations, thus marking his contributions as unacceptable. The episode goes on for several turns, leading to the temporary breakdown of the procedure.

### (3) Official Proceedings (5/5/2014)

Participants:

Ioannis Drivelegas HS (House Speaker PASOK)

Panagiotīs Lafazanis PL (SYRIZA)

Zoi Konstantopoulou ZK (SYRIZA)

1. ΠΡΟΕΔΡΕΥΩΝ (Ιωάννης Δριβελέγκας): Μα, τι πράγμα είναι αυτό; Δεκαπέντε χρόνια στη Βουλή δεν το έχω ξαναδεί. Κύριε Λαφαζάνη, είστε Κοινοβουλευτικός Εκπρόσωπος. Σας παρακαλώ πολύ να πάρετε θέση!
2. ΠΑΝΑΓΙΩΤΗΣ ΛΑΦΑΖΑΝΗΣ: Δεν είμαι.
3. ΖΩΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ: Να εφαρμόσετε τον Κανονισμό.

1. HS: But what is this thing? I have been fifteen years in the Parliament and I have never seen this before. Mr Lafazanis, you are the Spokesperson. I request that you express your opinion on the matter!
2. PL: I am not.
3. ZK: Apply the regulations.  
((several turns of strong protests follow temporarily breaking down the parliamentary procedure))

## 5.2 Sexist rival discourse: Female sexuality and irrationality

In Excerpts 4, 5 and 6, male MPs indirectly attack their female counterparts via sexist insinuations on their sexuality and state of mind by means of humor and irony. Excerpt (4) comes from dialogues during parliamentary procedures reported in the media and activates the stereotype of sexual deprivation. The actual proceedings of the procedure are recontextualized by the press, as sexist insinuations concerning female sexuality are placed in the foreground of the reports. Reference

to hormonal anomalies (i.e. the excess of the male hormone testosterone) is also reported in other parts of the text that are not discussed here. The incident is an example of how the press mediates parliamentary discourse by making specific choices as to the episodes that will attract the interest of the readership as a form of confrontainment (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2015), i.e. aggressive discourse that aims at gender/corporal traits of the persons of reference, thus fossilizing gender (and other) stereotypes.

In the specific excerpt, taking advantage of a pun that revolves around Greek terms that refer to pregnancy and delivery, the then leader of PASOK Evangelos Venizelos wishes Zoi Konstantopoulou (SYRIZA) to get pregnant soon (turns 4, 6). He, therefore, activates the presupposition of the sexually deprived female based on the stereotype of unmarried, childless women resorting to anti-social behavior (spinsters). In tandem with his initial reference to the delivery process (turn 2) and Konstantopoulou's humorous response in turn 3, Venizelos attempts to resolve incongruity by denying the literal meaning of his wish (turn 4) and by insisting on the interpretation of pregnancy as a metaphor concerning rhetorical strategies (turn 8). Nevertheless, his insinuations activate an indirect sexist attack to the face of his female colleague, further corroborated by means of the ironic<sup>7</sup> denial. The attack pertains to indirect forms of sexism highlighted by 3rd Wave Feminist Linguistics (Mills 2003), and according to Culpeper (2005) constitutes an off-record impoliteness strategy i.e., a face-threatening act performed by means of an implicature. The immediate reaction to it is rather mild (turns 5, 7). However, due to its offensive content, the episode was reproduced by several media at the time.

- (4) (<http://www.megatv.com/megagegonota/article.asp?catid=27371&subid=2&pubid=30892468>)

Dialogue during parliamentary procedures reported in the media (3/4/2013)  
Participants:

Zoi Konstantopoulou ZK (SYRIZA)

Evangelos Venizelos EV (PASOK)

1. Z. Κωνσταντοπούλου: Αφήστε με να κάνω την ερώτηση. Επαγωγικά γίνονται οι ερωτήσεις.
2. Ευ. Βενιζέλος: Επαγωγικά, ματευτικά. Για της ματευτικής.
3. Z. Κωνσταντοπούλου: Αν κυοφορείτε κάτι, ελπίζουμε να είναι καρποφόρα η κατάθεσή σας.
4. Ευ. Βενιζέλος: Ναι, κυοφορώ. Σας εύχομαι να κυοφορήσετε κι εσείς συντόμως.
5. Z. Κωνσταντοπούλου: Για ποιο λόγο;
6. Ευ. Βενιζέλος: Είναι μια ευχή. Εγώ κυοφορώ.
7. Z. Κωνσταντοπούλου: Μάλιστα.
8. Ευ. Βενιζέλος: Διανοητικά δεν λέμε; Διανοητικά δεν με ρωτήσατε αν κυοφορώ κάτι;

7. For a discussion of humor, irony and puns in political discourse see Tsakona 2013, Tsakona and Papa 2011.

1. ZK: Let me ask the question. The questions are made inductively.
2. EV: Inductively, dialectically. By means of the dialectic method. ((the Socratic method of inquiry – the Greek term literally refers to the process of delivering a child))
3. ZK: If you are pregnant with something ((i.e. information)), we hope that your testimony will be fruitful. ((taking advantage of the delivery/pregnancy metaphor introduced in turn 2))
4. EV: Yes, I am pregnant ((intellectually)). I wish you too get pregnant soon.
5. ZK: What for?
6. EV: It is a wish. I am pregnant ((intellectually)).
7. ZK: Yes.
8. EV: We mean intellectually, don't we? You asked me whether I am intellectually pregnant, didn't you?

Excerpt 5, is part of the dialogical network informed by texts such as the ones presented above and has been included as indicative of how the media recycle and authorize sexist attacks. The person invited in the night entertainment TV program on Antena TV Channel is a popular member of the Greek parliament, Gerasimos Giakoumatos (ND). Giakoumatos has in the recent past repeatedly engaged in verbal attacks against Zoi Konstantopoulou, MP of a rival political party (SYRIZA). At the beginning of the interview, he is invited to make a comment about his colleague. The request is posed by one of the hosts of the program, Grigoris Arnaoutoglou, and is followed by a comment by the hostess, Maria Bekatorou, “Look now how he ((Giakoumatos)) is going to be pissed off ((laughter))”, contextualizing the event as humorous. Sexist humor is produced by the activation of the presupposition of the sexually deprived woman (“in my prayers... I say God, when is our beloved husband of hers the marine going to disembark”) as a cause for unfeminine behavior on her part. The excerpt generated laughter on the part of both the hosts and the hostess of the program and the participating audience. It highlights sexist verbal attacks by male politicians as media spectacles (Georgakopoulou 2013) and as an acceptable form of entertainment (Culpeper 2005). What is more important is that it recycles – therefore legitimizing – sexist verbal discourse against women parliamentarians that do not conform to the stereotype of feminine parliamentary conduct. The fact that the incident has been uploaded and circulated by numerous news sites and blogs on the internet (though sometimes contextualized as a *χυδαία* ‘hideous’ attack) further reinforces this interpretation.<sup>8</sup>

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8. It is extremely difficult to measure the reactions of audiences and distant recipients of such events. Nevertheless, publicized comments exhibiting negative evaluations of female social identity and/or recontextualizing violent incidents are used for generating and/or sustaining violence against women (Attenborough 2014; Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2014, 244).

- (5) <http://www.newsbomb.gr/politikh/parapolitika/story/573526/xydaia-epithesi-giakoumatoy-kata-tis-zois-konstantopoyloy#ixzz3dj7RELWf>

Event: “The Kardashians”, a night entertainment TV program on Antenna TV Channel (2/5/2015)

Participants: Gerasimos Giakoumatos (MP-Nea Dimocratia), Maria Bekatorou (hostess), Grigoris Arnaoutoglou (host), the audience

Gerasimos Giakoumatos: Εγώ κάνω μια- (.) στην προσευχή μου το βράδυ μέσα απ’ τ’ άλλα που λέω που την καταλαβαίνω και την αγαπώ πάρα πολύ λέω Θεέ μου ((κάνει το σταυρό του)) τότε θα ξεμπαρκάρει ο αγαπημένος μας ναυτικός ο άντρας της.

Gerasimos Giakoumatos: I say a- (.) in my prayers at night among the other things I say, I who understand her and love her very much, I say God, ((he crosses himself)) when is our beloved husband of hers the marine going to disembark.

Excerpt 6 is another example of sexist attacks against women MPs during parliamentary sittings, this time by Adonis Georgiadis (ND). In the first part of the turn, Georgiadis attacks Zoi Konstantopoulou (SYRIZA), insinuating aberration (“it is absolutely obvious that she needs it ((help)) and we should somehow help her”). In the second part, he attacks Rahil Makri (ANEL) insinuating sexually provocative conduct (“the image of Ms Rahil Makri on the railings was really beyond every expectation”). Both comments comprise off-record impoliteness (Culpeper 2005) and indirect sexist verbal attacks via humor and irony. The speaker refers to strong protests outside the premises of the state TV channels that were shut down by the governmental coalition of New Democracy and PASOK. He confirms Konstantopoulou’s request for help taking advantage of the incongruity produced by the different interpretations as to the nature of the requested help, e.g. legal or medical/psychiatric, again activating the stereotype of female incompetence and irrational behavior. In the case of Rahil Makri, the phrase “on the railings” has various connotations as it indirectly refers to the Greek idiomatic phrase “the railing of the hooker”<sup>9</sup> used by Greek speakers in informal contexts when things get out of hand. It is further contextualized as marked via the stressed first syllable of the word “κάγκελα” (railings) and the use of the scholarly full form of the prepositional phrase “εις τα” (instead of “στα”, onto the/on the) which further stresses the incongruity among the formal parliamentary context and reference to colloquial expressions containing sexual connotations. The attacks are contextualized as both impolite and sexist by the strong reactions of other MPs and the temporary breakdown of the procedure.

9. The phrase originated in scenes taking place outside harbor railings where prostitutes used to wait for sailors to disembark.

(6) Parliament 10/11/2013: Motion of censure on the government of ND,  
PASOK

Adonis Georgiadis: Ευχαριστώ πολύ κύριε Πρόεδρε (.) Θα ήθελα να ξεκινήσω την ομιλία μου με τα χθεσινά γεγονότα στην ΕΡΤ, και την εικόνα της ε: κυρίας Κωνσταντοπούλου να: καλεί σε βοήθεια. Θέλω και 'γω απ' την πλευρά μου να πιστοποιήσω, έχοντας ζήσει με την κυρία συνάδελφο στη λίστα Λαγκάρντ για περίπου πέντε μήνες, ότι είναι απολύτως προφανές ότι την χρειάζεται και θα πρέπει με κάποιο τρόπο να τη βοηθήσουμε. Επίσης, θα πρέπει να πω ότι η εικόνα της κυρίας Ραχήλ Μακρή πάνω εις τα κάγκελα, ήταν πραγματικά πέραν [πάσης προσδοκίας.]  
 HS: [Παρακαλώ X12]  
 MPs: ((strong protests))

Adonis Georgiadis: Thank you very much your Honor (.) I would like to begin my speech with yesterday's events in ERT ((state TV channel)), and the image of Ms Konstantopoulou calling for help. I, too, on my side, want to certify, having been with Ms Colleague in the Lagard List ((committee)) for five months, that it is absolutely obvious that she needs it and we should somehow help her. Also, I should say that the image of% Ms Rahil Makri onto the railings was really beyond [every expectation.]  
 HS: [Quiet, please (x12)]  
 MPs: [strong protests]

### 5.3 Sexist aggressive responses to conflict

In Excerpts 7, 8, 9 and 10, male MPs respond to harsh criticism by their women counterparts via resorting to sexist aggressive attacks. As the following excerpts show, women who mostly become the target of attacks are the ones who adopt the type of aggressive formalized parliamentary debating techniques developed by male MPs (Shaw 2002), thus threatening the perceived male-order. For example, in Excerpt 7, the then Education Undersecretary Yiorgos Stylios (ND) responded to Liana Kanelli's (KKE) criticism (turn 3) by the statement "You are not going to turn me into Kasidiaris". The person mentioned in the statement (Ilias Kasidiaris), the spokesperson of the extreme nationalist party, Golden Dawn, had previously physically assaulted her amidst a political discussion panel on a live breakfast news show on Antenna TV (7/6/2012) (see Section 1).

The violent incident had been officially condemned by all political parties except for Golden Dawn. It had also been extensively discussed in the social media, where Kasidiaris himself posted a statement saying he regretted causing damage to the image of his party, while blaming his adversaries for his actions (Georgakopoulou 2013, 6). Opinions varied according to the political stance and affiliations of users, with a number of them justifying the attacker on the grounds of Kanelli's perceived lack of deference, i.e. activating patriarchal strategies to minimize abuse by assigning blame on the victim (Bou-Franch 2013; Bou-Franch

and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2014). By the same means, reference to this incident in the verbal episode under scrutiny constitutes bald-on-record impoliteness (Culpeper 2005) as well as a sexist verbal attack against Kanelli as it places full responsibility for the aforementioned violent act against her on *her*, indirectly aligning with those who justified the attacker (turn 5: “You need Kasidiaris ((i.e. beating up)), Ms Kanelli but Stylios is not going to become Kasidiaris!”). It also activates sexual stereotypes of dominance/submission. The attack is again contextualized as unacceptable as the episode goes on for several turns of strong protests on the part of Kanelli and her walking out of the sitting.

(7) Official Proceedings (6/11/2014)

Participants:

Yiorgos Stylios GS (Education Undersecretary, ND)

Liana Kanelli LK (KKE)

Ioannis Drivelegas HS (House Speaker, PASOK)

1. ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΣΤΥΛΙΟΣ (Υφυπουργός Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων): Κύριε Πρόεδρε και κυρία Κανέλλη...
  2. ΠΡΟΕΔΡΕΥΩΝ (Ιωάννης Δριβελέγκας): Κυρία Κανέλλη...
  3. ΛΙΑΝΑ ΚΑΝΕΛΛΗ: Να απαντήσετε μόνος σας, που θέλετε να μου κάνετε μάθημα μεγαλοστομίας, χρησιμοποιώντας την Άρτα και το χωριό σας για προεκλογικούς λόγους!
  4. ΠΡΟΕΔΡΕΥΩΝ (Ιωάννης Δριβελέγκας): Κυρία Κανέλλη, ο κύριος Υπουργός σας άκουσε.
  - 5. ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΣΤΥΛΙΟΣ (Υφυπουργός Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων): Κύριε Πρόεδρε και κυρία Κανέλλη, τις εξετάσεις τις δίνουμε στον ελληνικό λαό. Η κ. Κανέλλη θέλει να με κάνει Κασιδιάρη, αλλά δεν θα γίνω Κασιδιάρης! Θέλετε Κασιδιάρη, κυρία Κανέλλη, αλλά δεν πρόκειται ο Στύλιος να γίνει Κασιδιάρης! Να το γνωρίζετε αυτό.
  6. ΛΙΑΝΑ ΚΑΝΕΛΛΗ: Παρακαλώ;
  7. ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΣΤΥΛΙΟΣ (Υφυπουργός Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων): Θέλετε να με κάνετε Κασιδιάρη, όμως δεν θα γίνω Κασιδιάρης, διότι έχω περάσει τις εξετάσεις αριστεύοντας και διότι δίνω εξετάσεις στον αρτινό λαό και στον ελληνικό λαό κάθε μέρα και δεν με ενδιαφέρει η δική σας η βαθμολογία, η προσωπική.
  8. ΛΙΑΝΑ ΚΑΝΕΛΛΗ: Κύριε Πρόεδρε, θα τον επαναφέρετε μετά από αυτό ή όχι;
- 
1. GS: Your Honor and Ms Kanelli...
  2. HS: Ms Kanelli...
  3. LK: Address your answer to yourself, since you intend to give me a lesson of bombast by referring to Arta and your home-village in order to be reelected!
  4. HS: Ms Kanelli, the Minister has listened to you.
  - 5. GS: Your Honor and Ms Kanelli we are examined by the Greek people. ((using the metaphor of taking exams at school)) Ms Kanelli wants to turn me into Kasidiaris, but I am not going to become Kasidiaris! You need Kasidiaris, Ms Kanelli, but Stylios is not going to become Kasidiaris! Know that.
  6. LK: I beg your pardon?
  7. GS: You want to turn me into Kasidiaris, but I will not become Kasidiaris,



because I have passed my exams with honors ((I have been evaluated excellently)) and because the Artan people and the Greek people examine ((assess)) me every day and I am not interested in you personally grading me ((in you assessing me)).

8. LK: Your Honor, will you call him back to order after this or not?

Excerpt 8 is the part of the episode that precedes Excerpt 3 (Section 5.1) involving Mihalis Kassis' (PASOK) verbal attack against Zoi Konstantopoulou (SYRIZA) insinuating her lack of integrity. Kassis responds to a censorious question on her part (turn 2) by inviting her to illegally collect child benefits (turns 3 and 5), indirectly referring to family benefits that had been mistakenly credited to her mother's salary. Following her strong protests, he repeatedly prompts her to step on the seats (turns 12, 13) invoking the sexist stereotype of a totally irrational/hysterical female. Both his attacks constitute deliberate threats to Konstantopoulou's face, and are constructed as marked, i.e. impolite (Arundale 2010; Culpeper 2005; Watts 1992a) in her responsive contributions requesting his being called back to order (turns 8, 11). It is also worth noting that the House Speaker refrains from rebuking the offender. On the contrary, he rewards his disrespectful bald-on-record directives (turns 3 and 5: "(You) go collect some family benefits") and the aggravation of his attack (omitted turns and turn 9: "Me, I will not be deterred, Your Honor, by those things"; i.e. Konstantopoulou's strong protests against his defamatory insinuations) by inviting him to keep the floor (turn 10). He thus breaches parliamentary regulations.<sup>10</sup> What is more, in turn 7, he aligns with Kassis in his attempt to silence Konstantopoulou (turn 5) refusing to acknowledge her right to defend her integrity. The attack is marked as dispreferred by the strong protests of the offended party and the temporary breakdown of the procedure.

#### (8) Official Proceedings (5/5/2014)

Participants:

Ioannis Drivelegas HS (House Speaker, PASOK)

Mihalis Kassis MK (SYRIZA)

Zoi Konstantopoulou ZK SYRIZA)

1. ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΚΑΣΣΗΣ: Συνάδελφε, μη μιλάς. Να ακούς. Θα μάθετε να ακούτε ((addressing third party)).
2. ΖΩΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ: Σε ποιον απευθύνεστε;
- 3. ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΚΑΣΣΗΣ: Εσείς πηγαίνετε, να εισπράξετε κανένα βοήθημα.
4. ΖΩΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ: Σε ποιον απευθύνεστε, κύριε;
- 5. ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΚΑΣΣΗΣ: Ηρεμήστε και πηγαίνετε να εισπράξετε κανένα βοήθημα. Μη συνεχίζετε!
6. ΖΩΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ: Σε ποιον απευθύνεστε;

10. Parliamentary regulations (articles 77, 78) forbid indecorous behavior and offensive expressions against the integrity of fellow parliamentarians. They determine penalties for offenders that are nevertheless rarely imposed in the Greek Parliament.

7. ΠΡΟΕΔΡΕΥΩΝ (Ιωάννης Δριβελέγκας): Γιατί διακόπτετε;
  8. ΖΩΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ: Να τον ανακαλέσετε στην τάξη! ((several turns aggravating conflict))
  9. ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΚΑΣΣΗΣ: Δεν καταλαβαίνω εγώ, κύριε Πρόεδρε, από τέτοια πράγματα!
  10. ΠΡΟΕΔΡΕΥΩΝ (Ιωάννης Δριβελέγκας): Εντάξει, συνεχίστε.
  11. ΖΩΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ: Κύριε Πρόεδρε, θα τον ανακαλέσετε στην τάξη;
  - 12. ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΚΑΣΣΗΣ: Καθίστε κάτω! Ανεβείτε και πάνω στα καθίσματα! ((several turns aggravating conflict))
  - 13. ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΚΑΣΣΗΣ: Εγώ χαίρομαι, κύριε Πρόεδρε, με το να ανεβεί και πάνω στα καθίσματα, ειλικρινά!
- 
1. MK: Colleague, don't talk. Listen. Learn how to listen. ((addressing third party))
  2. ZK: Whom are you addressing?
  - 3. MK: You go collect some family benefits.
  4. ZK: Whom are you addressing, sir?
  - 5. MK: Calm down and go collect some family benefits. Do not continue!
  6. ZK: Whom are you addressing?
  7. HS: Why are you interrupting?
  8. ZK: Call him to order! ((addressing the House Speaker)) ((several turns aggravating conflict))
  9. MK: Me, I will not be deterred, Your Honor, by those things!
  10. HS: OK go on.
  11. ZK: Your Honor, will you call him to order?
  - 12. MK: Sit down! Step on the seats now! ((several turns aggravating conflict))
  - 13. MK: I am glad, Your Honor, even if she stands on the seats. Honestly!

The next two excerpts come from both parliamentary (9, a committee hearing) and media (10, a political panel discussion) contexts. A number of interesting comments on aspects of the conversational organization and turn constructions could be made for both. What I would like to focus on is the strategy employed by both Evangelos Meimarakis (ND) and Grigoris Psarianos (Potami) in structuring and licensing the aggravation of their attacks: They both resort to the use of derogatory terms addressed to themselves as if paraphrasing previous discourse (Excerpt 9: “You have me like an animal”, Excerpt 10: “Once again I am a germanotsolias”, i.e. a traitor), which were nevertheless ascribed to their women interlocutors. This is one of the three strategies<sup>11</sup> employed by male abusers in order to (in this case implicitly) assign blame for the abuse to the victims themselves (Bou-Franch 2013; Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2014). Both attacks were contextualized as unacceptable and led to the temporary breakdown of the procedure (Excerpt 9) and the walkout of Theano Fotiou (SYRIZA) from the TV studio (Excerpt 10).

In particular, the verbal episode in Excerpt 9 is initiated by the House Speaker's indirect criticism aimed at members of the committee that had left the previous

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11. The other two being deny and minimize the abuse.

day postponing their statements (turn 1). In the subsequent unit of the same turn, Konstantopoulou invites Petrakos to take the floor. Meimarakis interrupts him (turn 4) requesting the right to speak on a personal issue. In Petrakos' attempt to maintain the floor (turn 5), he responds with an on record rejection (turn 6 "No, I will not allow you"), defying parliamentary regulations in that he infringes upon the House Speaker in her right to coordinate the procedure and the turns of the speakers. He goes on addressing the House Speaker on the issue of determining the closing time for the discussion. His contribution is followed by several (omitted) turns of debating over the closing time, his making the complaint without having been given the floor and indecorous behavior on his part, thus aggravating tension.

In turn 7, he finally escalates his attack with an on record face-threatening act that declares his lack of respect towards Konstantopoulou ("you do not inspire my respect"), which constitutes bald-on-record impoliteness (Culpeper 2005). In the subsequent unit of the same turn, his referring to her in the 3rd person ("we are waiting for two and a half hours for (.) Mrs Her Ho:nor") constitutes an indirect form of sexism (Mills 2003). The choice of the third person reference term in the House Speaker's presence, the use of the address term "Mrs" after a minimal pause, in excess of the required honorifics ("(.) Mrs Her Ho:nor") and the prolonged stressed vowel in the honorific (Πρόεδρος/ Her Ho:nor) construct irony based on the incongruity between the expected reverence towards the House Speaker and the ironical "excessive politeness"<sup>12</sup> employed by the speaker. The ironic outcome is in tandem with the previous statement as to his lack of respect towards her.

The attack is, according to the speaker, licensed by his being treated "like an animal" by the House Speaker. Sexism is produced not just by employing direct and indirect forms for attacking Konstantopoulou's face, but by indirectly contesting her authority as the then Chair of the committee (and the then House Speaker of the Greek Parliament) to coordinate the procedure (turn 6). What is more, her delaying the opening of sittings is indirectly attributed to the alleged female incompetence in time management, thus recalling the stereotype of women making men wait unreasonably (turn 7).

(9) (<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=BEzHG6x5TnI>)

Institutions and Transparency Committee, 26/5/2015

Agenda: "The Siemens scandal"

Participants:

Evangelos Maimarakis EM (ND)

Zoi Konstantopoulou ZK (House Speaker, SYRIZA)

Athanasios Petrakos Π/P (SYRIZA)

12. Also see Culpeper 2005 for a discussion of sarcasm/mock politeness as a strategy of impoliteness.

1. ZK: (...) Εχτές περιμέναμε με τις ώρες ακόμα κι εκείνους που επιφυλάχθηκαν να τοποθετηθούν και εξηφανίσθησαν απ' την επιτροπή. Ελάτε κυρία:-κύριε: Πετράκο.
2. P: <X> ευχαριστώ [πολύ κυρία Πρόεδρε]
3. ZK: [Ελάτε κύριε Πετράκο]
4. EM: [Επειδή- κύριε Πετράκο] με συγχωρείτε ένα λεπτό=
5. P: =Αν μου επιτρέψετε= ((addressing Meimarakis))
6. EM: = Επί προσωπικού. Όχι δεν σας επιτρέπω. ((addressing Petrakos))  
((several omitted turns aggravating conflict))
- 7. EM: (...) Και δεν θα μου κάνετε μαθήματα συμπεριφοράς εσείς, όταν με τη δική σας συμπεριφορά δεν μου προκαλείτε τον σεβασμό. Μ' έχετε σα:ν ζώ:ον εδώ πέρα και περιμένουμε δύομιση ώρες (.) την Κυρία Πρό:εδρο. Ωραία, σας περιμένουμε. Μας προσβάλλετε κι από πάνω; Λοιπόν, άντε μπράβο. Άντε μπράβο.
1. ZK: (...) Yesterday we waited for hours even for the ones who reserved their right to take stand and disappeared from the Committee. Come Mrs:-Mr: Petrakos.
2. P: <X> thank you [very much your Honor]
3. ZK: [Come on Mr Petrakos.]
4. EM: [Because- Mr Petrakos] excuse me for a minute=
5. P: =If you allow me= ((addressing Meimarakis))
6. EM: =(I request the right to speak)) On a personal issue. No, I will not allow you. ((addressing Petrakos))  
((several omitted turns aggravating conflict))
- 7. EM: (...) And you are not ((in a position)) to lecture me on how to behave, when with your behavior you do not inspire my respect. You have me li:ke an animal here and we are waiting for two and a half hours for (.) Mrs Her Ho:nor ((ironically)). Ok, we are waiting for you. Will you offend us on top of everything? Well, enough. Enough.

Excerpt 10 is an episode that took place during a live evening political commentary program on Mega TV. Grigoris Psarianos (Potami) not only attacked Theano Fotiou (Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity, SYRIZA) verbally, but he also repeatedly pointed his finger at her pushing her shoulder. Both gestures constitute inappropriate (the former) and aggressive gesticulations in the Greek sociocultural context. What is more, he summoned her by means of the colloquial address term “re” (turn 3), which is exclusively used in either informal contexts among friends or during aggressive verbal conflicts. He also used the rather old-fashioned summon “psit” (turn 6), used either for waiters<sup>13</sup> or cats, i.e. minors and/or persons of lower social status. Both Fotiou (turns 10 and 16) and the hostess of the program Olga Tremi (turns 7, 12 and 14), repeatedly addressed him with requests to stop the harassment. He responded to Tremi’s requests with a denial to comply with her pleas (turn 9, “No Mrs Tremi excuse me”), justified by criticism

13. Together with the address term “child” as in “Ψιτ, παιδί!”

on the part of Fotiou (turn 1) that he sides with the creditors,<sup>14</sup> which he repeats four times either in the interrogative (turns 3, 6 and 15) or in the affirmative form (turn 9). In turn 11, he paraphrases Fotiou's perceived offence aggravating its content by attributing the term "germanotsolias",<sup>15</sup> the synonym of a traitor, to himself.

He thus justifies the aggravation of his attack in turn 13 in which he refers to Fotiou by the outright derogatory phrase "the neomnemoniak laughing stock" followed by a tag-question seeking confirmation ("eh?"). The episode ends with Fotiou walking out of the studio, thus marking the whole incident as totally unacceptable (turn 16). Psarianos wishes her goodnight addressing her by her first name following the title Mrs, a combination basically used to address older men and women acquaintances in informal contexts. Fotiou leaves the studio despite pleas by both the hostess and the host to stay, and the discussion continues with them reprimanding Psarianos for his conduct. On the following days the episode was extensively circulated and discussed in the media and the social media.

Aggression and bald-on-record impoliteness against Fotiou also constitute indirect forms of sexism embedded in (a) the summons "psit" accompanied by the pointing of the finger and the pushing, (b) the use of the Greek offensive expression *σούργελο* ('laughing stock'), which is mainly (albeit not exclusively) used to refer to women whose conduct or appearance is considered ridiculous, and (c) the use of the informal address term "Mrs Theano" during a political discussion panel on television. Fotiou's walkout from the studio further contextualizes this interpretation.

- (10) <http://www.topontiki.gr/article/132335/psarianos-se-fotioy-eisai-neomnimoniako-soyrgelo-video>  
Mega TV, "Mega online", 11/6/2015

Participants:

Theano Fotiou Φ/F (Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity, SYRIZA)

Grigoris Psarianos Ψ/PS (MP-Potami)

Yiannis Vroutsis Βρ/Vr (MP-ND)

Olga Tremi Τρ/Tr (Journalist-hostess)

Nikos Evangelatos (journalist-host)

1. Φ: Είσαστε με τους δανειστές και λέτε ψεύδη αυτή τη στιγμή διότι [το ένα/] [Από πού]
2. Τρ: [προκύπτει αυτό που λέτε;]
3. Ψ: [Ποιος είναι-ποιος είναι] [με τους δανειστές ρε; Εεε;]
4. Φ: [Θα σας πω εγώ. Διότι αυτό που λέτε/]
5. Βρ: [Να μιλήσω εγώ; Να μιλήσω εγώ;] Πού τα ξέρετε τα θέματα αυτά/

14. The European Union and the IMF which give loans to the Greek state on condition of austerity policies.

15. Greek soldier in the traditional evzone costume of the Greek independence warriors working for the Nazis during German occupation in the 2nd world war.

- 6. Ψ: Ουε, ψι:τ ((pointing at her and pushing her shoulder with his forefinger)).  
Ποιος είναι με τους δανειστές; [Εγώ;]
7. Τρ: [Ε: κύριε] Ψαριανέ
8. Φ: Σας παρακαλώ κυρία/
9. Ψ: Όχι κυρία Τρέμη παρακαλώ πολύ, [ότι είμαι με τους δανειστές]
10. Φ: [Ναι ναι θα υψ-μην υψώνετε τώρα-]  
[Σας παρακαλώ κύριε]
- 11. Ψ: [Πάλι γερμανοτσολιάς [είμαι, έτσι;]]
12. Τρ: [Ναι ναι ναι] αλλά να σας πω όμως μην το κάνετε ((the pointing and the pushing))
- 13. Ψ: Το νεομνημονιακό σούργελο. [Ε:;]
14. Τρ: [Μην το κάνετε] Μην της- μην της κάνετε όμως  
((the pointing and the pushing))
15. Ψ: [Είμαι με τους δανειστές εγώ;]
16. Φ: [Σας παρακαλώ κύριε.]
17. Ψ: Εντάξει. Να φύγω κυρία Τρέμη; Να  
[φύγω; Αν καλείτε αυτούς τους ανθρώπους να φύγω]  
[Καληνύχτα κυρία Τρε-κυρία Θεανώ]
1. F: You side with the creditors and you are lying at this very moment because  
[the one/]
2. Tr: [Where does]  
[what you are saying come from?]
3. Ps: [Who sides-who sides] [with the creditors re? E:h?]
4. F: [I will tell you. Because what you are saying/]
5. Vr: [Can I speak? Can I speak?]  
How do you know about these issues?/
- 6. Ps: Oueh, psit ((pointing at her and pushing her shoulder with his forefinger)).  
Who sides with the creditors? [Me?]
7. Tr: [E:h Mr] Psariane
8. F: Please Ms/
9. Ps: No Ms Tremi excuse me, [that I side with the creditors]
10. F: [Yes yes you will rai-do not raise ((your voice))  
now-]  
[Please sir]
- 11. Ps: [Once again I am a germanotsolias<sup>16</sup> [am I not?]]
12. Tr: [Yes-yes-yes] but let me tell you  
though, don't do it ((the pointing and the pushing))
- 13. Ps: The neo-mnemoniac laughing stock. [E:h?]
14. Tr: [Don't do it] Don't do her- don't do  
that ((the pointing and the pushing)) to her though=
15. Ps: =[Do I side with the creditors, me?]
16. F: [Please sir.]  
Ok. Should I go Ms Tremi? Should I [go? If you are inviting these people  
I'm going]
17. Ps: [Goodnight Ms Tre-Ms Theano]

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16. See footnote 14

On the whole, women politicians become the target of indirect sexist attacks based on insinuations of sexual or mental inadequacies (Sections 5.1 and 5.2, Excerpts 1–6). In Excerpts 4–6 in particular, humor and irony are used as weapons allowing male adversaries to become implicitly aggressive (Georgalidou 2011, 105). Women also become the target of bald on record insults and aggression (Section 5.3, Excerpts 7–10), all the more when they address their men counterparts with remarks that entail criticism and conflict (Shaw 2002). Last but not least, they can become the target of corporal violence as in the extreme case of Ilias Kasidiaris' assault against Liana Kanelli<sup>17</sup> and Psarianos' aggressive gesticulations against Theano Fotiou, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity (Excerpt 10). Analysis of the excerpts discussed above highlights aspects of sexism against women within political procedures that call for further analysis of the issue, not just as a phenomenon concerning the organization of discourse in politics, but as a social problem as well.

## 6. Discussion: Exceeding the limits of the expected

If politic uses of language constitute unmarked linguistic choices, this is not the case of discourse addressed to women members of the Greek Parliament. Despite the fact that the collapse of formal parliamentary procedures is not always possible within sittings, cases of intense protests, temporary breakdowns and even the walkout of offended parties impede discussions in process. Reactions such as the aforementioned ones contextualize impoliteness, i.e. the unacceptable use of abusive linguistic forms that clearly exceed the limits of politic speech in contexts of expected political rivalry.

Yet, these quite clear cases of contested abusive language are not all there is to be said about sexist verbal attacks in public political discourse. If one looks at single cases, separated from the overall context created by the way women politicians are portrayed in public discourse, then the phenomenon of sexism as a serious social problem escapes our attention. Uncontested abuses as well as the reproduction and recycling of sexist verbal attacks by the media as merely entertaining, allow for the neutralization and, therefore, the acceptance of sexism as a social reality.

What is more, as the hypothesized stereotype of gendered behavior informs interaction, women who speak assertively are considered aberrant and aggressive because they are judged against a stereotypical norm of deference (Mills 2003, 5). Women who adopt the type of aggressive formalized parliamentary debating techniques developed by male MPs (Shaw 2002), and thus threaten perceived

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17. And Rena Dourou (Antenna TV, 7/6/2012).

male-order, mostly become the target of direct attacks and indirect insinuations referring to their sexual status, as either a-sexual or sexual objects. As much as overt sexist aggression is hard to deny, sexism at the level of presupposition is much more difficult to challenge since the assumptions upon which it is based should be made overt (Christie 2005; Mills 2003, 9).

In this context, the analytic approach for the present study is primarily based on the analysis of discourse units as there and then social actions. However, actions are also seen as dynamic practices informed by habitual ways of acting within the highly institutionalized environments of parliamentary procedures. Therefore, a combination of interactional and critical frameworks makes possible the multidimensional approach to complicated phenomena, such as the distinction between expected rivalry and sexist verbal abuse. In such a framework, impoliteness is used as a technical term useful in the local analysis and documentation of dispreferred verbal acts marked as unacceptable, i.e. non-politic choices by participants in specific interactions. Detailed analysis of excerpts of discourse addressed to women politicians reveals forms of the political combat that exceed the limits of expected politic choices. Sexist insinuations and offensive remarks presuppose female inadequacy and aim at the gender rather than at the political stances of the addressees.

Despite the fact that conflict is an integral part of political (and social, Goodwin-Harness 2006) procedures, aggression, i.e. behavior aimed at hurting another person (Shantz and Hartup 1992, 4), and sexist aggression in particular, not only compromise the participation of women in political procedures but also shift the interest of audiences from what should have been at the core of politics: Debating political agendas. Sexist episodes that become viral media spectacles and forms of confrontainment further reinforce this tendency.

The present study attempted to highlight instances of sexist language abuse in political/parliamentary discourse and the fact that despite analysis and documentation of the phenomenon within 2nd and 3rd wave feminist linguistics, it still remains a social reality that calls for both scrutiny and social action. Having focused on a relatively small data sample, more research along these lines is needed to further examine subtle instances of “underground” sexism (Mills 2003), the extent of the phenomenon in other domains of public discourse, as well as the role of traditional and new media in its resilience.

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