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Reactions of Greeks and Turks to Verbal Insults:

A Sphere of Ethnic Diversity

The Greeks of Istanbul constitute a Christian minority group within a greater Turkish and Muslim environment. Their origin, according to a nationalist historical paradigm is perceived reaching as far back as to the Byzantines, or according to a more modern interpretation, mainly to immigration of the last few centuries of populations from various areas of present-day Greece and Anatolia. [1] The legal, ethnic and social status of this minority has been a part of the Greek-Turkish conflict where the Greek part has voiced complaints for deliberate ill treatment of the Turkish side. In the sixties and seventies these Greeks, who in Turkish are called *Rum*, mostly migrated (some were expelled) to Greece and at present their number in Istanbul diminished from seventy thousands to less than five. The members of this minority group, who have a unique relationship with both the Greek and Turkish ethnic groups, were asked to express their opinions with respect to the effects of verbal insults in the two countries.

The grecophone Christian Orthodox population of Istanbul legally composes a minority group in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923. They are Turkish citizens but they are accepted as Greeks in Greece if they so desire. In Turkish they are called *Rum*, a word which originated from `Roman` and was traditionally used by both the Orthodox *millet* (as *Romios*) and

by the tourkophones throughout the Ottoman period. The present-day Greeks use the word *Hellene* to identify themselves but they also use the word *Romios* as a kind of synonym.

[2]

Here, the term `Greeks of Istanbul` will be used to refer to a `sample`, i.e., to the group of ten grecophones who have been interviewed.

The findings show that the Turks take verbal insults more seriously than the Greeks and react in general more tensely under similar situations. Especially insults which involve family members cause sharper reactions in Turkey. Under certain circumstances however, it is the Greeks who are more sensitive to `insults`. Here the perceptions of the sample and some related interpretations with respect to the two societies will be presented

Definitions, The Sample, The Method

`Verbal insult` here means vituperation, coarse and contemptuous language with the deliberate intention to insult, to offend, to degrade. Normally, a reaction and even fights are expected after the utterance of such insults. It is natural however that an `insult` can be defined and understood only subjectively: an insult is only what is perceived as such. Here a series of words and expressions have been presented to the sample and the interviewers were asked to comment on the possible reactions of the Greeks and the Turks. The different reactions of Greeks and Turks not only do they show that the parties react differently to the same words but that they have also a different concept of insult.

The sample consisted of ten persons, all Greeks of Istanbul, forty to fifty-nine years old, men and women equally divided who lived the greater part of their lives in Istanbul and now stay in Athens. Myself, as a member of the same group with a similar background, have also contributed by utilizing relevant personal experiences. The sample is small but the size is counterbalanced with the almost unanimous opinion. The people interviewed are in a perfect position to compare the two sides, the Greeks and the Turks. They have lived for decades in both Turkey and then in Greece, most of them continued to visit their native country, they are perfect bilinguals and they have been active citizens in the two countries.

The members of the sample were asked basically to comment on the reactions of the Turks and the Greeks in imaginary cases where members of each ethnic group insult verbally members of his/her own group. Inter-ethnic insults were not questioned. In other words the sample was asked to imagine they were only observers, not participating in the conflict and to say what they thought would happen if a Turk and a Greek each is insulted in his own country by one of his countryman. In each they were asked to compare behaviors.

The finding may be interpreted to reflect mostly the tendencies of Turks of Istanbul and of the Greeks of Athens respectively for a period between 1950 and 1999. The sample consists of a relatively homogeneous urban population and they reflect views that correspond to this environment. These observations are a valuable source of information. The same questions were asked to each of the interviewed; first about the Turks whom they experienced in Turkey and then about the Greeks whom they encountered in Athens. They were asked to compare the two groups, to try to narrate what would have happened in case the parties faced situations that can be considered as insulting. They were also encouraged to narrate incidents of insults in the two countries which they have experienced personally or as observers and to comment on related issues.

Myself, also a member of the minority group of Greek of Istanbul, carried out the interviews, interpreted the findings but utilized personal experiences in both countries to reach to some conclusions as presented below.

### The Questions Asked

All the members of the group who were interviewed shared almost common views on the reactions and habits of the Turks and the Greeks with respect to verbal insults. They differed in details, for example in their speculations as of what could have happened eventually and in their interpretations as to the reasons of the behaviors. The Greeks of Istanbul did not anticipate different behaviors according to the education level and social status of the Greeks and of the Turks. In general the tendency was to judge the more educated people and those of a higher status in both countries to be more `polite` but the main difference was perceived to be basically ethnic. Class difference was not presented as a source of differentiation.

The sample was presented with various `verbal insults` which belong to different categories. The two main categories are the insults which are addressed 1) directly to persons, and 2) indirectly to group identity and group beliefs. As verbal insults of the first kind, the personal, were characterizations associating persons to negative images (animal, donkey etc.), apparent personal deficiencies, indicating low capacity or sexual trends which in both case infer low social esteem (idiot, gay, etc.) and others which normally are expressed as dishonorable actions. The sample was asked to comment only on some selected verbal insults, shown below in block letters.

Some examples of such personal insults in Turkish (T) and in Greek (G) are the following, all much more insulting than they would appear to an English speaker”:

T: **hayvan** (animal), **eşek** (donkey), **öküz** (ox), **ayı** (bear), **it** (dog)

G: **ζώο** (animal), **γαϊδούρι** (donkey), **βόδι** (ox), **σκύλα** (bitch - only for feminine)

T: **aptal**, **enayi**, **salak**, **hödük**, **geri zekalı**, **ebleh** (all mean stupid)

G: **βλάκα** (idiot), **μαλάκα** (idiot)

T: **ibne**, **puşt**, **götlek**, **ulan** (all mean homosexual, gay, poofter), **orospu** (whore), **piç** (bastard),  
**manyak**  
(maniac),  
**siktir**  
(close to 'fuck you'),  
**sikerim**  
(it is rather a threat of hurming and not a proper cursing)

G – **πούστη** (gay, poofter), **πουτάνα** (whore), **μπάσταρδε** (bastard), **γαμώ το** (fuck), **σικτ ήρ** (lose to fuck),  
**α**  
**γαμίσου** (fuck you),  
**κωλόπαιδο** (poofter)

T: **αğzına sıçayım** (shit in your mouth), **bok** (shit), **bok ye** (eat shit),

G: **Να σε χέσω** (I shit on you), **σκατά/σκατό** (shit).

Insults of the second group, addressed towards groups and group identities refer to family connections, religious identities and ethnic identities. Some examples of sexual content are the following.

T: **orospu çocuğu** (son of a whore), **piç** (bastard), **eşekoğlu eşek** (son of a donkey), **ayı oğlu** (son of a bear),  
**anani sikeyim** (I fuck your mother),  
**sülaleni sikeyim** (I fuck your family),  
**avradını sikeyim** (fuck your wife/woman),

G: **μπάσταρδε** (bastard), **γαμώ την μάνα σου** (I fuck your mother).

Other examples of `religious` and group insults are the following:

T: **gavur** (infidel), **götü boklu** (shitty ass, inferring the “infidel” since Muslims wash their backside after going to toilets), **kuyruklu** (with tail), **Yunan gavuru** (Greek infidel),

G: **Βλάχε** (literally Vlach, meaning stupid, uneducated), **Γύφτο** (literally Gypsy, meaning base, inferior personality) , ἀϊῆᾱᾱῆῆ (barbarian).

T: **dinini imanini** ... (your religion and your belief...), **kitabını sikeyim** (I fuck your book, meaning your holy book),

G: **Γαμώ τον Χριστό μου/σου** (I fuck my/your Christ!), **Γαμώ την Παναγιά μου/σου** (I fuck your/my Virgin Mary!).

[\[3\]](#)

There is naturally a wide range of verbal insults in each country. For example, in Turkish: *anasını siktiğim* (the one whose mother I fucked), *amına koyduğum* (the pussy of whose I put, meaning 'fucked'). But there are also signs with fingers in both sides which signify heavy insults; the open hand with the fingers wide open is very popular in Greece.

The words presented to the sample and asked to be commented on are the ones in block letters above and common in both countries and thus suitable to make comparisons. Insults related to religious and ethnic characteristics were not introduced to the sample because corresponding insults do not exist in both sides. For example, the Turkish side uses insults which are against the belief of the `other`, whereas in the Greek case there are cases in which the Christian religion itself is insulted. Actually, the `Christ-Virgin` insults should not be interpreted as `Christian` *per se*, but as `religious` in general and also directed to the religion of the `other`. As for the version `Fuck my Christ` can be interpreted as a form which lessens the effect of an insult which would be `Fuck *your* Christ`. Eventually, in case of doubt of noticeable correspondence, Greeks of Istanbul were not asked to comment on dubious expressions which can be misinterpreted.

### How do Turks and Greeks React to Insults?

The general impression of Greeks of Istanbul is that the verbal insults in Turkey have more serious consequences. Whatever the reason of the insult, the samples believe that it is more likely that a fight will follow among Turks who exchange insults than among Greeks. A war of words in Turkey will normally have serious consequences, like ill feelings difficult to heal and physical injuries. The Greeks will take cursing more lightly. Almost all members of the sample also agreed that the Turks would consider verbal insults which are directed to the `family` as a very big offense; whereas they expressed their surprise for the reaction of the Greeks (of Greece). They shared the belief that the Greeks will keep relatively calmer in similar cases. It is also significant to note that there is an abundance of insults directed to the family in Turkish but a limited popular repertoire in Greek.

The sample was given numbers from 1 to 10. Here are some distinct observations with respect to insults in the two communities, the Turks and the Greeks:

No. 6 said Turks will resort to insults less often and will try to avoid verbal controversy; Greeks have a `bigger mouth` and insult more often. In Turkey however, if they insult verbally, they will end up fighting or at least they will not talk to each other again. In Greece insult seems as a part of daily conversation. No 7 said Greeks would answer back, will try to come even by reciprocating; Turks would react physically, they will fight. Generally when the Greeks face verbal insults they *may* react; in the case of the Turks they would *surely* react. Rude insults,

such as `shit on you` or `fuck your mother` are very dangerous in Turkey. In Greece somebody would use these words and just walk away, in Turkey he would stay to fight even if he knew that he would be beaten. It is a matter of pride and honor to face the challenge.

No. 5 said that after he migrated to Greece and got established in this country he had gradually changed his behavior and now he does not get as angry as he used to in Turkey. When somebody swears to him now he behaves like the locals: `This may be due to my getting older`, he added. When Turks insult orally it is as if they see the action actually happening. In Turkey one insults the mother of somebody only if he has decided to have a real fight and which may be also deadly dangerous. In Greece in similar situations you may have a small incident.

No. 8 said that if a Turk who is indisputably superior in social rank insults a socially lower Turk, the one hurt may accept the insult submissively. In Greece one insults and feels relaxed; in Turkey the more you insult the more you get angry. In Turkey one uses rude words if one wants to fight, in Greece one does not expect to fight. As for me, I remember that when I was serving in the Turkish army I said `çocuklar` (boys/children) instead of `friends` as I was supposed to. The reaction of both the soldiers and of the officer was that the word was insulting since it could infer that the soldiers were my children, a situation which in turn and in an indirect way could be interpreted as me having `fucked` their mother!`.

No 9 said that Greeks would not take seriously the words `Να σε χέσω` (shit on you), since the Greeks anyhow say so often`

Χέσε

μας

!`, (`shit on us!`).

[\[4\]](#)

If you say `fuck your mother` in Turkey, you may end up with a bloodshed. No. 10 said that Greeks use the insulting words `in a packet`; they use all the words they know on each incident; Turks have a hierarchy of insults, they use them in grades and escalate the fight with words according to the situation and the intent. He also added: `what actually shocked me, is that the Greeks use insulting words against each other and then they may remain, say, in the same bus traveling together as though nothing has happened; in Turkey they would get off and fight to settle their differences`.

All Greeks of Istanbul that were interviewed were in agreement that in both countries the rudest and most `dangerous` insult was the one associated sexually with the family: `I fuck you mother`; but in Turkey it was much worse to utter such an insult.



As sample No 2 of this group, I personally find myself in tune with all of the above observations. My personal experience in Turkey and in Greece is not different. In my thirties in Turkey I was caught in a fight after I exchanged only three syllables with a stranger. I was driving and he as a pedestrian `challenged` me by obstructing my way; he shouted `çüş` to me - I had almost run over him - and I `oha` to him and then I stepped out and we fought! In Turkish they say 'çüş' to stop a donkey and `oha` to move a cow.

In Greece a few times I was `provoked to fight` - or more precisely, I interpreted and decoded the behavior of the Athenians as such - due to their `insulting language`. However, when I attempted to sort out differences in the `Turkish way` as I was used too, to my great surprise I found out that people were not ready to escalate the controversy. These kinds of experiences were narrated by almost all the interviewed sample as they compared Greeks and Turks. They pointed out the `strange` attitude of the Greeks who insult each other and then behave as if nothing had happened!

I am also convinced that I have `changed` after started living in Greece and now I have a tendency to use verbal insults more freely in Greece than I used to in Turkey. My father once in Athens stepped out of the car I was driving as a protest to my rude talking when I `normally shouted` a very common `name` to another driver. My attitude was unacceptable to my father who lived all his life in Istanbul. Actually, I find very `realistic` all the observations of the Greeks of Istanbul mentioned above.

I served in the Turkish army and I lived for sixteen months on a twenty-four hour basis with Turks of all social strata in Anatolia, sharing the same living quarters. I remember, because I was then deeply impressed, that the Turkish soldiers could tolerate harsh beating as a means of army discipline from the officers, they could also take personal insults like `animal`, `donkey`, insults which are quite harsh in Turkish, but they would revolt to insults that involved their families or the ones that hinted their sexual integrity (gay etc.). The officers knew it and they normally refrained from insulting the `family`; the sphere of the family involved real dangers. I remember a soldier who was beaten in the presence of his squadron up to the point where blood was coming from his nose and his mouth but later he only complained for that the officer calling him `son of a donkey`.

I also had noticed that the soldiers were too sensitive to some words. Once for example, they reacted to my use of `ulan`, a word used widely in Turkey and which according to the intonation may mean from a innocent `my good man` to a rude `bastard`. Etymologically the

word means `boy` implying a `gay`. What then surprised me was that the soldiers did not react when the officers addressed to them with the same `ulan`. It was not the word itself but the relationship of the insulting-insulted that made the great difference. They could take the insult from a `superior` but not from me who was `equal` to them.

Then I shared living quarters with Greeks in a construction company in Saudi Arabia, observing them. I do not forget either, because I felt deeply insulted, how Greeks with whom I worked together, a few times called me, as they called each other, `malakas` (stupid / masturbator). Greeks use this word, which means something like `jerk`, so freely and so often among themselves that it has become something like a symbol of `Greekness`. Once in the middle of an Arabian desert when I said to a Bedouin that I was a `Yunani` (a Greek) he pointed at me, nodded in apprehension that he had understood and he shouted `O yes, malakas, malakas!`.

### The Identity of the Greeks and the Turks

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□□□ □It was after I migrated to Greece that I noticed some differences between the Greeks and the Turks, behaviors regarding insults being one of them. This awareness which occurred after coming to Greece was expressed by other Greeks of Istanbul, too. The people interviewed normally expressed their views on Turks and Greeks relatively, comparing the two parties. Comparison was the means of perceiving and expressing the existence of trends and special features. When parties were limited to their own environment, within a world of `habitus`, they could not notice some features and peculiarities of certain communities.

The Greeks of Istanbul who were interviewed did not seem to notice however, that they distanced themselves, first from the Turks and then from the Greeks of Greece. They used a discourse full of a sense of surprise, of criticism, of disapproval, of contempt, of ridicule when they explained how the `other` behaved. First they spoke as non-Turks when they explained the behavior of the Turks and then as non-Greeks when they described the Greeks of Greece. They reacted to the Turkish behavior judging it as too harsh, aggressive, austere, perceiving it as the

result of primitive sense of honor and they sounded like Greeks as they criticized the `other`; but then when they talked about the Greeks they seemed to disapprove them as well, as if they meant that the Greeks were too conciliatory, soft-hearted, pliant, submissive and even without pride, dignity and honor.

The members of the sample as a whole placed themselves `in between` the two groups and they criticized both the Turks of Turkey and the Greeks of Greece. They did not specify what the proper way of behavior ought to be. However, through their behavior on matters of verbal insults they seem to tend to be closer to the Turkish practice. Their behavior in Turkey was rather in tune with their environment and out of tune in Greece. The people interviewed seemed to have experienced a cultural shock when they faced the locals and their reactions to insults in Greece. In Istanbul they came to age in an environment where the attitudes of all parties were predictable.

The Greeks of Istanbul seem to be more at odds with the practices of Athenians than of inhabitants of Istanbul. They appear to be `accustomed` to what the Turks do but not so much to what the Greeks do. The `free` usage of insulting characterizations, especially the use of `malakas`, `shit on us`, `fuck my Virgin Mary` is shocking to the Greeks of Istanbul. They seem to be much closer to the Turkish practice in which a more discrete wording is practiced in general. Some Greek verbal insults which seem `strange` to the Greeks of Istanbul (and personally to me too, H.M) are absent in the Greek language used in Istanbul; i.e., these insults do not exist in the insulting repertoire of Greeks of Istanbul.

On the other hand, the usual Turkish cursing where the insult is attributed to the `family`, e.g., `son of donkey` etc., is not widespread among the Greeks both of Greece and of Istanbul. The same applies to insults associated to a group through religion (the Turkish `infidel` for example); such insults are not popular in the Greek insulting pattern.

A conclusion which can be drawn from this special position of Greeks of Istanbul is that `ethnicity`, in the sense of a common Greek language, a Christian Orthodox religion, a sense of ethnic identity (common history, descent, ancestry) etc., are not enough to compose a common and accepted behavior. A common ethnic identity, even if it is readily accepted by the people involved, can not conceal some significant distinct behavioral features which have a regional or inter-ethnic origin. Other social forces, apart from the ethnic one, may better explain the difference between ethnic groups. Some `Greeks` can behave differently than other `Greeks` and in some specific cases closer to `Turks`. The different behaviors connected to verbal insults can be the result, not only to national e.g., Greek and Turkish characteristics, but also to religious, to cultural, social, regional etc., features which can be perceived as factors

independent of `ethnicity`. [5] National identity is not enough to identify the behavior of groups and sub-groups of people which are generally perceived as ethnic entities.

### Turkish and Greek Societies and Some Differences

In spite of the above mentioned reservations with respect to the capacity of `national` paradigm, still some general results can be drawn about the insulting habits of the two nations and societies, i.e., the Turks and the Greeks.

The Turks seem more sensitive to matters of group identity and especially to matters of `family`, `descent`, `forefathers`, `parentage` etc. Traditional societies are expected to have stronger family bonds. The Muslim societies are more sensitive to family connections, too. For example the range of adjectives used to specify relationships between members of a Muslim family is richer than that of the Christians (e.g., two different words to distinguish `uncle` from the father or mother side etc.). A Turkish young lady whom I interviewed exceptionally on these matters, narrated to me that her mother was very upset when she once, as a small child, had said `eşekoğlu eşek` (son of donkey) to her sister, a very mild insult if uttered without stress, which would correspond to, say, `idiot` in the West. Her mother had then explained to her that this word was against the dead and her grandfather, too. The Turkish lady added that she still feels that `insulting` a family member is very bad, all Turks feel like that`.

The Greeks seem to be more `at ease` and more `flexible` with verbal insults than Turks. They swear more freely, using insulting characterizations against individuals, families and even pious symbols and they do not react so violently when they face similar insults. One explanation of the difference between the two ethnic groups may be that those `bad word` are not insulting in the case of the Greeks. It is not the degree of tolerance to the `same` insult that is different

but simply the perception of insult is different in the two societies.

However, a closer inspection may disclose much more complex relationships. There may exist other factors which *also* determine the distinct ethnic behaviors. For example, a study on verbal discourse of Greeks related to talking to children and to status of power, shows a `disbelief regarding verbal utterances`. [6] This study showed in the Greek case a `disjunction between words and action (40)... [T]he link between word and action - between statement of intention and commitment to act - is not a direct one (45)... Statements will not be taken at face value` (47). The same `disbelief` may exist in Greek discourse in general, also influencing `verbal insults`. Greeks, in opposition to Turks, may not associate words with actual situation.

The Turkish society seems to have a different perception about `words`: they are taken on their face value, there is a link of word and action, etc. This difference was clearly noticed by some Greeks of Istanbul, too. One may even notice some linguistic peculiarities in Turkish and Greek. The `word` ('söz' in Turkish and 'λόγος' in Greek) in both languages also means `promise`; as it is in English: `I keep my word`. But in Greek the plural of `word` ( λόγια ) means `empty words` or `words, words`. In Turkish `laf` is used to denote `empty words`. `Söz' in Turkish has a solemn character. If singled by itself it directly means `promise!` But it is more like an oath. In Turkish there is a saying which equates `word` as `promise` to God: `Söz bir Allah bir', which means something like `There is only one word and there is only one Allah`. The particularity of God is the basic principle of Islam.

The Greeks of Istanbul having lived in a Muslim environment the last decades they might have been influenced with this solemn understanding of `words`. This may be one explanation of their relatively developed sensitivity, literal interpretation and of identification with particular verbal insults.

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There is however, an apparent paradox with respect to insults in the two societies. As it has been mentioned above, there are cases in Turkish society where insults are tolerated at a greater degree than it is in Greece. A typical example is the case of army training. In the Turkish army the demonstrating officer scolds the soldier with insulting remarks. These words are carefully selected not to be directed to the `family` but personally to the individual who is being

`trained` (e.g., they may say 'donkey` and not `son of a donkey'). A similar, but not the same, `rude` address can be heard in Turkey in cases where an undisputed `superior` scolds his inferior. This parlance relation can be heard quite often in Turkey, for example in a bus station where the drivers shout at their `assistants, in sites where the engineer `directs` the unskilled workers, etc.

The `inferior` Turk does not normally answer back when insulted by a `superior`. Nor is this unequal relationship considered a very dishonorable situation for either the `superior` or the `subordinate`: it is seen as a consequence of a socially accepted relationship. Almost all the examples given previously above and where the Turks were reacting with fervour against insults, were cases where the insults were exchanged between equals or among people unknown to each other, e.g., in the street, where a hierarchy was not apparent. In a hierarchical society an insult can be thought of playing the role of a code, demonstrating a power relation. Therefore, between unequals, insults can be tolerated, whereas between equals the same insult can be perceived as a challenge to the status of the insulted. Then the cursing assumes another meaning: it is a fight of status, of superiority, of power on an environment where superiority/inferiority consciousness is relatively strong. [7]

The case is different in Greece where the Greeks are, as it has been shown above, more apt to insults. The paradox may be explained with the power relationship that is predominant in each society. Greek society is a highly egalitarian one. Historically the Greeks were one single *millet* under a dominant Muslim state which in turn was represented by dignitaries of `another religion`. The subjects of this `Rum millet` were left to themselves without real `superiors` - and especially without a traditional aristocratic class. Once the `Turkish yoke` was over an egalitarian spirit dominated among the Greeks of Greece. When verbal insults are seen in this context, than insult is understood and perceived as a play of words, as a `dialogue`, at worse as a fight among equals, but without a threat of a change of social status. Whatever happens, the status of the people involved is not endangered. Once equality of status and power among participants is assumed or accepted, the parties are not offended.

The situation changes however, when Greeks face other Greeks who appear with a somehow recognized `superiority`. This superior status may be apparent due to a particular legal or by other, historically speaking, newly introduced criteria, such as wealth, managerial position etc. In these cases, that is, when inequality is accepted, introduced or inferred, shouting and verbal insults attain a new dimension. Then the insulting words assume an `injuring` effect in an egalitarian society. In such a case verbal insult is a means of asserting a hierarchical relationship, the superiority/inferiority relationship influencing the insulting/insulted

individual. This may be the reason that harsh words between `unequals` is relatively rare in Greece: it can not be witnessed either in the army, or in every day life as between the `boss` and his subordinate. If this ever happens a strong reaction is not surprising.

(5412 Words)

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[1] For the history of Greeks of Istanbul see: a) Alexandris, A. (1983). *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974*, Athens: Center for Asia Minority Studies, b) Millas, H. (1994). `Rumlar` (`The Rums`), *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi (Istanbul Encyclopedia)*.

[2] The use of `Hellene` and `Romios/Rum` is very complex. Their use has changed the last centuries and various Greek and Turkish groups use these terms denoting something different. For example the Turks presently distinguish the `Yunan` (Greek) from the `Rum` who does not carry a Greek citizenship; therefore `Rum`s are the Greek-Americans too. The Greeks of Greece may use the two words as synonyms but `Hellene` sounds more glorious than the humble `Romios`. The `Greeks of Istanbul` distinguish themselves as `Romios` and use the word `Hellene` to specify a Greek (Hellene/Romios) of Greece. So they may say `X got married` meaning two members of their community formed a family, or they may say `X married a Hellene` which means X married somebody from Greece. Turks may use the words `Grek` (Greek) and `Helene` normally meaning ancient Greeks, mostly understood as a distinct race than the modern Greeks. Turks believe the Rum people of Istanbul speak a language of Rum (Rumca) whereas Rums say they speak `Ellinika` (Hellenic/Greek). In short, the Turkish side makes a distinction on citizenship not considering Rums as Greeks; the Greeks of Greece see only a `Hellenic ethnic group` irrespective of citizenship; and the Greeks of Istanbul, by the use of `Romios`, make a distinction between grecophones of Istanbul and citizens of Greece.

[3] This kind of cursing which is associated to piety is known in Greece as `Χριστοπαναγιές`

(Christ-Virgin) cursing and it is opposed by religious people by the popular slogan `Μην βρίζεται τα θεία  
!` (do not curse the pious symbols!).

[4] This expression in Greek is used in the sense of 'leave me alone!'.

[5] See for example Hirschon: 1998 and especially pp. 30-33 for cases where Greeks from Anatolia (Turkey) came in contact with Greeks of Greece due to the forced exchange of population between Greece and Turkey in 1923.

[6] See: Hirschon, R (1992). `Greek Adult's Verbal Play, Or How to Train for Caution`, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 10.

[7] For a similar power relationship see: Tannen, Deborah (1986). *That's Not What I Mean! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Your Relationship With Others*, New York: William Morrow & Company, pp. 101-117.