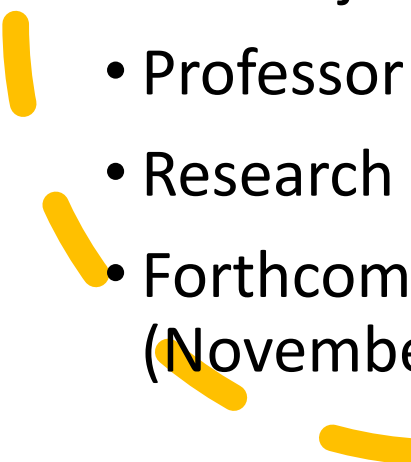


Female Investigative Reporters – surviving threats, harassment and violence

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Background and why interested in this

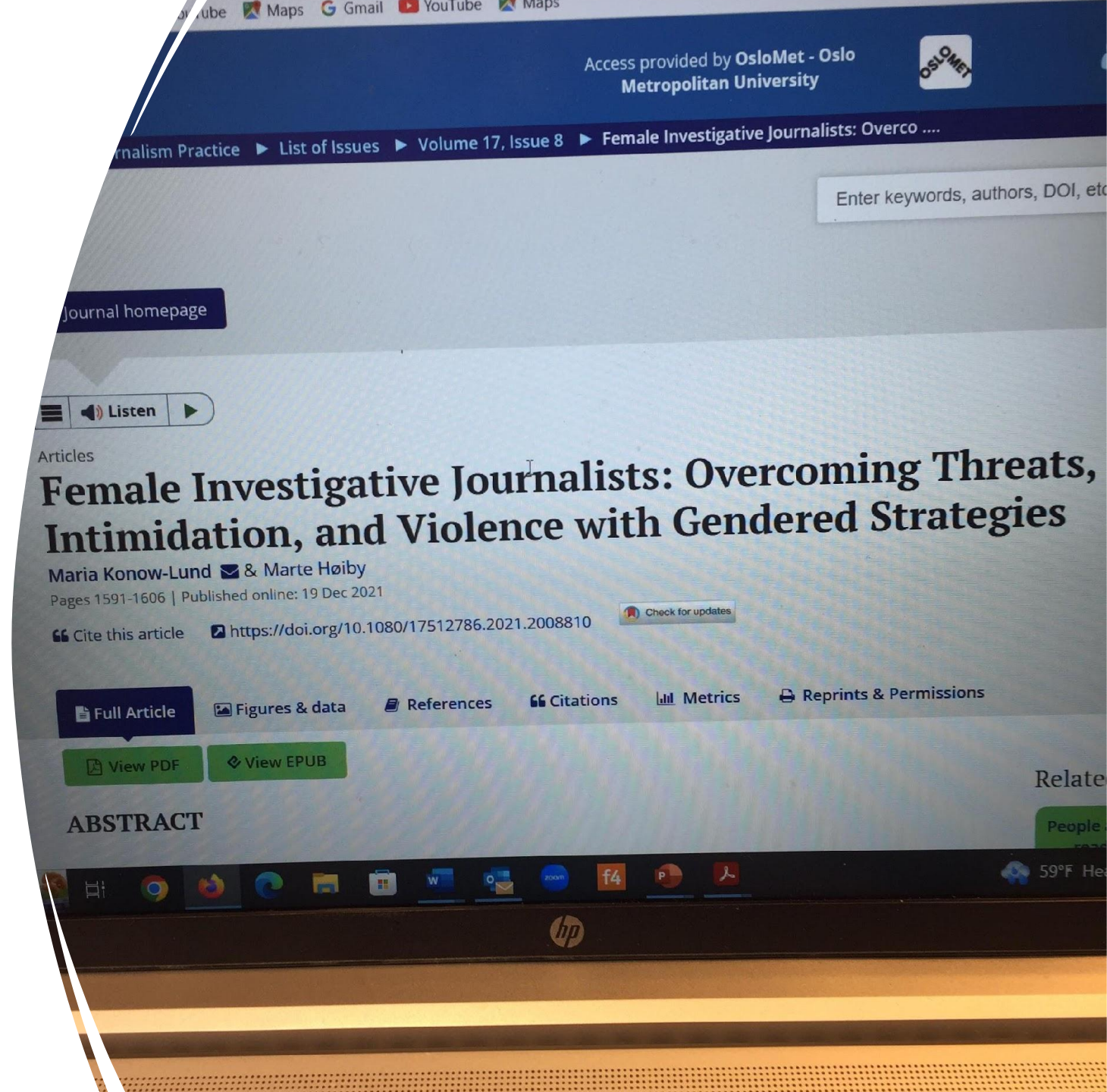
- Has worked as a journalist/ producer
 - Commercial television/ Norwegian Broadcasting
 - On the board for Investigative Journalists of Norway
 - On the board for Global Investigative Journalist Conference in Lillehammer
 - PhD in journalism
 - Professor in journalism
 - Research focus: journalism practice
 - Forthcoming open access book on Hybrid Investigative Journalism (November 2023)
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Inspired by
'Survival
Strategies' a
network at
GIJC



Gendered Strategies

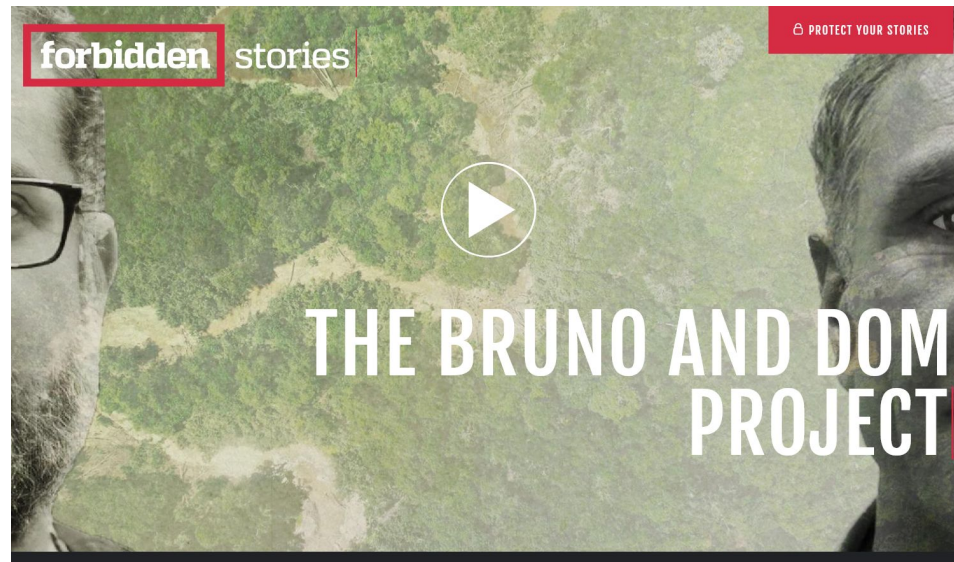
- Published in 2021 with Marte Høiby



Why interested in this topic?

- When working as investigative reporter I experienced harassments from sources
- Found it difficult to talk about at the workplace – did not want to come through as using gender as excuse
- #MeToo – changed something, introduced a solidarity
- The Arizona Project (1976) – where has the solidarity amongst female investigative reporters and between Global South and North been?

Innovating a new solidarity – The Forbidden Stories



- Laurent Richard – Charlie Hebdo
- Established Forbidden Stories in 2017, Paris
- Builds upon the predecessor The Arizona Project
- First collaborative story on Daphne Caruana Galizia, Malta.
- Still – where has the solidarity between female investigative journalist been for 40 years until MeToo?


A research
gap of 40
years of the
lost
generation

A senior global north reporter:

‘We were raped’ she said – “and nobody cared. It was part of the culture at the time, and it was just how it was. Now I just want to forget and move on.”

A recent example - At the same time, a previous journalist student of mine, Ragnhild Ås Harbo, publicly shared her story on sexual harassment when being an intern in a Norwegian newspaper during the MeToo-phase.





- I do not blame others for not telling their story. I completely understand them. But it would have been great if others had come forward in order to not being all alone with this. (Ragnhild Ås Harbo the magazine The Journalist.)

RQ

How do female investigative reporters handle and overcome threats, harassment and violence?

To what degree do victims experience there is a solidarity and support for them?

Do they have solutions to how they can feel safer?

'Hegemonic masculinity'

- A 'blokey' newsroom culture
- "Traditional gender system" (Lobo 2017)
- How gender is "present in the process, practices and ideologies of journalism" (Ruoho and Torkkola 2018, 67)

Who were interviewed – what they have in common



- 12 female reporters and 4 men
- How we found them
- Journalistic research on social media
- Common denominators



Findings and results

Variations of intimidations

- Sources/ authorities reached out to the woman's family
- How to control the woman

Variations of threats and violence

Online and face-to-face threats

How they talk about this

- Prefer not to refer to gender
- 'a reporter is a reporter'.
- But yes - gender has an affect on work
- Shame



- Sources went to the female journalist's father. The father was very strict— she came from a very strict family, and so he stopped his daughter, the female journalist, from going to work for a while. So, she was a well-established journalist, but at the end of the day she was a member of the family too. So, sources would use the family in two ways: they threatened the family, and they made the family control the woman.


- (Informant, Egypt)

•An African female reporter at first insisted that she had never experienced harassment or intimidation, but during the interview she revealed that she had in fact been the target of both sexual harassment and threats. (Informant, Africa)

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- **“A man just walked into the room where I was, and he gave his name and said, “you’ll be killed”. I didn’t really realize what he was saying, and I did not take it seriously. He repeated ‘you will be killed’. [...] He then asked me how much my life was worth. I felt it was a weird conversation, but I didn’t realize how serious it was until I called my boss and said I had this peculiar experience.**
 - **My boss immediately said, “you’d better leave the country” and he got me a car and I had to leave. Only a day later I was like, oh my God, what just happened? I was in shock. (Informant, Balkans)**



•This senior African reporter (Nigeria) just barely avoided being raped by a male police source. She explains how she calmly convinced the man that he wanted to rape her, why did he not do so early in her career. He had been a longtime source. He then let her go. (Informant, Africa)



•One African female reporter proudly talks about her participation in an international cross border project but then she hides her face while telling her male colleagues and bosses implied that the reason for being picked out to participate was that she had been sleeping with the Western editors/ leader of the investigation . Then again, she says that the newsroom which basically consist only of men is a great environment and does not come with any challenges. (Informant, Africa)

Get yourself a male fixer

- In some cultures, female reporters cannot enter certain villages or environment. Due to this some female reporters asked their husband or others to help out as a fixer.

Coping mechanism from interviews

- 1. Never meet a source a private place
- 2. Avoid being too attractive
- 3. Walk strange and unattractive as a man
- 4. Avoid specific events – for example events where men has been drinking
- 5. Avoid certain cultural restraint (for example rural areas)
- 6. Be ready to explain why you are working - and are not at home with kids
- 7. Seek your parents' support
- 8. Prepare family/ relatives on risk for sex-shaming online
- 9. Get yourself a male fixer

Conclusion

- Forthcoming studies needs to emphasize the importance of solidarity between female investigative reporters globally
- Both practitioners as well as academics need to consider solidarity and global interdependence amongst female investigative reporters
- Gendered strategies must be studied more and in depth
- The need for solidarity has to be analysed and considered as a way for more resourceful reporters to protect those reporters operating in difficult and challenging areas