

The Role of Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Class in Shaping Greek American Identity, 1890–1927

A Historical Analysis

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Massive emigration from Greece to the United States started in the 1890s. It was part of the “new immigration,” a term introduced in about 1880 to describe the wave of immigrants to the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the majority of whom came from Eastern and Southern Europe (Higham, 1967, p. 65). The arrival of these immigrants, who were considered as seditious and inassimilable by many, resulted in the adoption of the Quota Acts by Congress in 1921 and 1924 that set limits on immigration (Tichenor, 2002, pp. 143–145).

The majority of Greek-speaking immigrants came from the provinces of the Greek kingdom. However, from the beginning of the twentieth century, large numbers of Greek Orthodox Ottoman subjects started to settle in the United States.¹ According to the Greek administration, an immigrant was defined as “a Greek citizen settling in countries outside Europe, beyond the Suez Canal and the straits of Gibraltar and traveling third class” (*Metanasteusis*, 1906, p. 29). From 1890 to 1924, 397,987 Greek subjects and 102,476 Greek Orthodox Ottoman subjects migrated to the United States (Dillingham, 1911, p. 408, Thirteenth Population Census, 1910, vol. 3, pp. 216–217, cited in Kourtoumi-Hatzi, 1999, p. 53). The push factor for the majority of emigrants from the Greek kingdom was an economic crisis that hit the agricultural sector during this period, although the prospects for a better life should not be

¹ For methodological reasons, I use the term “Greek Orthodox” for members of the *Millet-i Rum*, the ethno-religious community under the head of the patriarch of Constantinople, and “Greek” for the subjects of the Greek kingdom.

underestimated (Papastergiadis, 2000, pp. 36–37, 47–48). As for immigrants from the Ottoman empire, according to, among others, the Greek consul in Trebizond (Trabzon), the most important reason for emigration of Greek Orthodox populations was the imposition of compulsory military service for Christian subjects of the Ottoman empire after the Revolution of Young Turks in 1908 (IAYE,² F. B53, 2412, 10.12.1911; Gordon, 1932, p. 306). In both countries, sources stress the role of travel agents who roamed the provinces describing bright prospects awaiting immigrants to the United States (IAYE, F. B12.1/1902, 07567; 29.5.1902, A12.1/1888, 07945, 13.7.1888; Ellis Island Archive, MSS. AKRF-91, Euterpe Bouki-Doukakis's testimony). Nevertheless, the conditions that immigrants encountered did not correspond to the image they had formed prior to their arrival in America.

In the following chapter I aim to explain the procedures that led to the construction of Greek American ethnic identity in the first quarter of the twentieth century, focusing on the ideological formation of the leading immigrant groups and their activity in local and national organizations and taking into account both Greek irredentism and assimilationist pressures in the American society. The decision to deal with Greek associations in the United States results from the lack of first-hand testimonies from immigrants. The available sources – dispatches from Greek and Ottoman diplomats in the United States as well as Greek-language newspapers – express the views of the local elites and the interests of the states that wished to control immigrants. My argument is based on these archival sources and is bound to the limits they impose. We can therefore only guess at immigrants' collective attitudes indirectly through the rare surviving letters and some interviews in the Ellis Island archive that do not necessarily deal with issues of collective identity.

A closer look at the sources of the early twentieth century, the period when the Greek American community started taking shape, reveals that the conceptualization of this community was not simply a reiteration of previously existing tendencies but the result of a long process that was inevitably bound to the socio-political and cultural currents in Greece and the United States, that is, to the social status of the Greeks in the United States and their relation to their country of origin and country of residence. As Ioanna Laliotou (2004, p. 11), has pointed out, “migrants become migrants in the context of their encounter with cultural traditions, racial stereotypes, and technologies of social integration in the countries they come from as well as in the countries they arrive at.” It is more accurate to argue that a unified identity was the outcome of specific conditions inside the Greek American organizations AHEPA (American Hellenic Progressive Association) and GAPA (Greek American Progressive Association) and the Greek Orthodox

² IAYE is the abbreviation for the Historical Archive of the Greek Foreign Ministry.

Archdiocese of America after World War I. While the Greek state had attempted to cultivate a pan-Hellenic identity among immigrants, not necessarily different from the ideological orientation of the Greek state, it was only after World War I that a Greek American ideology, and consequently a certain identity, was successfully framed. This identity, however, was not merely a reflection of the Greek national ideology, but was rather a construction along the lines of American nationalism. It was also supposed to serve as a bulwark against the xenophobic and racist climate prevalent in the United States during this period. Moreover, as Werner Sollors has pointed out, “the strengthening of ethnic consciousness often coincides with the rise of agitation against marginal men and disloyal group members” (Sollors, 1981, p. 274). The Greek American identity was primarily the outcome of a complicated process that has been little examined.

Some researchers have remarked that immigrants, when they arrive in their host country, are initially integrated within networks that are reproduced through family, local, occupational, or patronage ties (relational mode of identification) (Brubaker, 2004, p. 41). In the process of integration in the “receiving society,” immigrants start to identify themselves through their incorporation in groups, organized by race, social class, ethnic or national affiliation, language, and nationality (categorical mode of identification). Gradually, although relational identifications do not disappear, categorical identifications become more important for immigrants (Brubaker, 2004, p. 42). These categorical identifications serve not only as ways to conceive the present, but also as efforts to determine the future, and as a result define the position of subjects in the present and the future (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, p. 48). It is thus interesting to study through what processes, in order to achieve integration, a national categorical identification can be transformed into an ethnic one, by shifting the reference frame from homeland nationalism to host country nationalism. I will therefore try to define under what circumstances Orthodox Christian immigrants from Greece and the Ottoman empire adopted different categorical identifications, and how the content of “Hellenism” evolved first in a national and then in an ethnic frame.

As diaspora scholars put it, in order to achieve their foreign policy goals, homelands often try to utilize immigrants’ attachment to their place of origin and their sense of duty (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003, p. 4). Migration therefore offers national states the chance to broaden their range by developing transnational economic, social, and political links with their citizens who live abroad (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period when the nation-states of Europe were founded and a considerable part of their populations migrated to the United States, the strengthening of links with their citizens abroad became an important goal of state policy (Green & Weil, 2006, p. 11). The

Greek state was mainly interested in ensuring the continuing flow of immigrant remittances, as well as motivating immigrants politically with the aim to advance national propaganda and counterbalance any adverse propaganda from enemy states. This obviously opens up the question of institutions seeking to mobilize to their political project individuals who have emigrated mainly for economic reasons.

According to social scientists, the ability to convince a group of individuals to consider themselves as part of a given community is necessary in order to mobilize them to achieve an ideological goal. The entrepreneurs of identity define the content of categorical identifications and impose on a given group forms of mobilization for achieving an ideal future (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, p. 49). These individuals seek to present themselves as expressing the voice of the nation and to promote a particular political project in order to obtain power, exert influence, and convince others to follow them (Chrysoschoou, 2004, p. 110).

Following the results of the studies cited above, I begin by defining how the putative leading immigrant groups may have substantiated and used the concept of “Hellenism” to mobilize immigrants and legitimize their influence. My study examines how their choices led to national or ethnic groupings and finally to the formation of a Greek American identity. This process consists of two stages. First, I examine how the leading immigrant groups and the organizations they created before World War I, independently or at the instigation of the Greek state, used national categories. Second, I analyze how, as a result of the rise of xenophobia as well as the change in the social structure of Greek communities after the end of World War I, new leading groups emerged that sought to describe a Greek American community as an integral part of the American nation. My main purpose is to examine “how, why, and in what contexts ethnic categories are used – or not used – to make sense of problems and predicaments, to articulate affinities and affiliations, to identify commonalities and connections, to frame stories and self understandings” (Brubaker, 2004, p. 25).

To reply to these questions, it is essential to study the influence of the “two national centers of Hellenism,” Greece and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in the construction, acceptance, and evolution of the leading groups, as well as the ideology of the political organizations that were founded in the United States in order to mobilize immigrants.

Previous researchers have noted how the Greek government tried to exploit Greek organizations in the United States. Nevertheless, the creation of these organizations has not been studied as part of the process that led to the construction of Greek American ideology. It is important to stress the effort of the Greek state to advance its foreign policy goals on the one hand, and, on the other, the struggle of the leading groups in the Greek communities to establish, by means of nationalism and with the support of the Greek

state, their power over immigrants. In order to study this process, we need to focus on the establishment of Greek organizations in the United States and the conflicts between immigrant elites and the foundation of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. To do this, we utilize the theoretical frame of categorical identification use by identity entrepreneurs. In what follows, I show how research questions are substantiated in the historical period under examination.

However, it should be noted that the available sources (the Greek- and English-language press in the United States, Greek and Ottoman diplomatic dispatches) do not provide adequate or unbiased information about the popularity of the nationalist or ethnic organizations with immigrants. Therefore, my analysis focuses on the ideological content of the discourses expressed by these organizations and the leading groups.

Local and Religious Identifications and the Influence of Greek Nationalism

As mentioned above in reference to the Greek communities and associations in the United States, we have to distinguish between immigrants from the Greek kingdom and those from the Ottoman empire. Although the two groups shared a common religion and in many cases a common language, they did not necessarily share common political visions.

For emigrants from the Greek kingdom, the “manifest destiny” of the Greek nation was very strong, expressed by a messianic nationalism in the form of the “Great Idea” (Μεγάλη Ιδέα) that envisaged the restoration of the Byzantine empire with Constantinople (Istanbul) as its capital. Nevertheless, this nationalistic fervor was combined with contempt for King George I of Greece and the country’s political and military elites, who were considered corrupt and were held responsible for Greece’s defeat by the Ottomans in 1897 as well as for the economic crisis that had forced them to emigrate.

On the other hand, emigrants from the Ottoman empire identified themselves with the ethno-religious group (*millet*) to which they belonged (namely, the Millet-i Rum, that is, the Orthodox community instituted officially in the Ottoman empire during the Tanzimat reforms under the authority of the patriarch of Constantinople) and with their hometown or county of origin, rather than with a political authority, that is, either the Ottoman or the Greek state. The Greek- or Turkish-speaking Orthodox emigrants from Asia Minor and Thrace did not necessarily identify themselves with the irredentist policy of the Greek state. Greek diplomats considered the immigration experience to be a way for immigrants to assimilate the dominant discourse of the “Great Idea” through social intercourse with Greeks

from mainland Greece. As the Greek consul in Adrianople (Edirne), Leon S. Matlis, wrote to the Greek foreign ministry (IAYE, F. B/44/1910, 1812, 5.7.1910), "All, without exception, have Greek as a mother tongue and are Orthodox Christians; nevertheless, there is a great need for the benevolent impact of frequent social intercourse with other Greeks in America. Unfortunately, the Thracians' national conscience, their patriotic feeling, is very little developed, and they need to be reborn by immersion in Matsukas' patriotic baptism."

For both Greek Orthodox and Greek groups, strong religious sentiments as well as close family and local ties were key elements of identification. This explains why Greek, Slav, Albanian, and Arab-speaking Orthodox Christian immigrants, irrespective of their ethnic origin, participated in the managing boards of the first Orthodox churches in the United States (Fitzgerald, 1995, p. 23; Kanoutas, 1918, p. 194). On the other hand, for most immigrants, *ethnotopika somateia*, that is, mutual help associations uniting immigrants from the same village or county, constituted the most powerful hub of social life and group identity. Usually, when in the host country, immigrants tended to settle in cities where people from their village or province of origin had settled previously (chains of emigration). Localism played an important role in social networks and, contrary to strong local patriotism and adherence to messianic nationalism, attachment to Greek state institutions and solidarity with Greeks from other provinces of Greece and the Ottoman empire were not self-evident. As the *National Herald of New York* newspaper noted as late as 1923, "The Greek shop owner not only would not hire American employees but even worse, if for example the owner hails from Sparta, he prefers to have Spartan employees, the Thessalian, Thessalians, the Thracian, Thracians and so on. The employees declare, 'I don't work in such a shop because the owner is from that province'" (Georges Papageorgiou, *National Herald*, 10.8.1923). For instance, in Chicago, localism led to the foundation of a second Orthodox church by immigrants from another province of the Greek kingdom (Holy Trinity Church, 1937, pp. 19–22; Kourvetaris, 1971, p. 50). As with other ethnic groups, it is therefore more accurate to state that immigrants from both Greece and the Ottoman empire were, at least in the first year of their stay in the United States, part of trans-local rather than transnational networks (Baines, 1991, pp. 28–31; Dicarlo, 2008, pp. 3–4; Gabaccia, 2000, pp. 3–6; Vecoli, 1964). This does not imply that the trans-local networks, and especially mutual help associations, did not diffuse a Greek nationalist discourse, but this was combined with distrust for centralized organizations, especially those under the control of the Greek state. As the Greek ambassador Lambros Koromilas pointed out, "they were thus thrown on narrow streets and into places of debauchery, working like helots, at the mercy of every villain; the only thing they understand from life in the United States is that

they are relieved from Greek laws and the pressure of their lender; the only thing that sustains them is the memory of their village” (IAYE, F. B12/1908, 25.3.1908). Under these circumstances, the Greek state tried to fight localism among immigrants from the Greek kingdom on the one hand, and, on the other, to convince Greek Orthodox immigrants from the Ottoman empire, irrespective of their mother tongue, that, based on their affiliation with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, they belonged to the same “imaginary community” as Greeks from the Greek kingdom and therefore should make financial contributions and undergo military training in order to be drafted into the Greek army in the event of a Greco-Ottoman war. I will now examine in more detail the development of immigrants’ attitudes toward Greece and the process that led to the construction of Greek American identity.

The Emergence of a Greek American Discourse

In 1890, the flow of immigrants from mainland Greece began. The first Greek communities were formed in New York and Chicago, and in 1894, the first major Greek-language national newspaper, *Atlantis*, was published in New York by Solon Vlastos. From about 1893, the Greek community in New York was divided into two factions, one patronized by merchants who had settled in the United States before 1850, and the other led by Solon Vlastos. The “Ralli faction,” which initially united the first merchants to settle in the United States after the Greek War of Independence, constituted the higher strata that were well integrated in the receiving country and did not highlight their ethnicity. Moreover, they felt that their social status was threatened by the massive arrival of poor Greek immigrants, as is evident from dispatches from the Greek consul in New York, Dimitrios Botassis (IAYE, F. A5/1894, 8.7.1894). On the other hand, Solon Vlastos gave voice through *Atlantis* to the newly arrived Greek immigrants, and later to the emerging lower middle class of the Greek communities.³ While the Ralli faction did not initially support Greek irredentism, *Atlantis* editor Vlastos expressed his nationalist ideas. This clash was, to a great extent, a product of the antagonism over the position of intermediary between the immigrants and the Greek and American state (IAYE, F. 115.1/1912, 12721, 16.5.1911;

³ Clashes of a similar kind erupted in other Greek diaspora communities. In Alexandria, the lower classes did not have the right to participate in the community, which was under the control of merchants. See IAYE, F. 92.1.3/1911, Greek consul in Alexandria Christos Mitsopoulos to Greek foreign ministry, 1295, March 21, 1911. In Brussels after World War II, the merchants who had settled in the city were annoyed by the massive presence of immigrant workers in the Greek Orthodox Church. See Venturas (1999), p. 118.

Kanoutas, 1918, pp. 220–222). We should nevertheless point out that the term factions does not imply well-organized groups but rather loose social networks, and that the loyalty of their supporters and even the attitudes of their leaders toward Greek state politics shifted according to circumstances and particular interests.

Solon Vlastos juxtaposed the cosmopolitan upper classes that made up the Ralli faction to immigrants, seen as bearers of Greek ideals. Until the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, he remained a staunch critic of the palace, corrupt Greek governments, and political forces that forced people to emigrate (IAYE, F. A.5.8/1894, 8.7.1894). As a supporter of progressive ideas, he castigated the corruption and machinations of Tammany Hall bosses and was critical of the Greek *padrones* (labor contractors) who exploited them in the United States (Contopoulos, 1992, p. 141). Nevertheless, the most interesting element in Vlastos's discourse was the combination of Greek messianic nationalism and support for immigrants' naturalization. Vlastos tried to introduce immigrants to US politics and was a staunch supporter of Theodore Roosevelt.⁴ In 1911, perhaps as a result of Vlastos's influence, the majority of the 2,000 New York Greeks who had taken American citizenship supported the Republican Party and had even founded a Republican Political Club (Fairchild, 1911, p. 152). One may assume that Vlastos was the first to try to forge a Greek American identity by underlining the influence of ancient Greece on American institutions and culture while simultaneously resisting Greek state interference in Greek immigrants' associations. At the same time, Vlastos fought against institutions under the control of the Greek state in the United States only when they threatened his own influence on Greek immigrants.

The first national organization that tried to mobilize Greek immigrants in the United States, the Panhellenic Union, was founded initially in 1907 as a federation of the Greek societies and communities in the United States (Burgess, 1913, pp. 63–67, 88–89, 153, 159; Kanoutas, 1918, pp. 214–215, 221, 223; Saloutos, 1964, pp. 246–247). Its aims were to assist immigrants to adapt to the American environment and become American citizens while keeping their ties with Greece (*Atlantis*, 11, 15, 16, 19.10.1907). At the same time, the new organization aimed to combat Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Young Turk propaganda in the United States (*Atlantis*, 28.9.1907). Adding to the intervention of the Greek state after the arrival of Lambros Coromilas as Greek ambassador to the United States in 1908, its main purpose became to control immigrants and promote a unified nationalist ideology. The foundation of the

⁴ In a series of articles under the general title "United States Are Governed by Patriotism," he presented the US Constitution (*Atlantis*, 4.5.1896, 22.10 and 19.11.1897, 26.9, 2 and 26.10.1900). He also wrote *History of the United States of America* in Greek.

Panhellenic Union constitutes the first step in the process of construction of Greek Americans as an imaginary collective subject.

The Greek state feared that immigrants might lose their “national character” through American cultural influence (Laliotou, 2004, p. 59; *Metanasteusis*, 1906, pp. 80, 99). Moreover, it was obvious for Greek politicians that the “seed of cosmopolitan ideas, inherent in the human soul, is not foreign to the Greek soul; the uneducated, peasants, shepherds, and the most humble are no exception, and it is especially them that we should indoctrinate in order for them to absorb the sentiment of nationalism” (*Metanasteusis*, 1906, p. 56). Thus the Panhellenic Union not only aimed to prevent the Americanization of Greek subjects in the United States, but also had to indoctrinate immigrants from both Greece and the Ottoman empire to ensure that they became or remained supporters of the Greek nationalist project. Furthermore, the Greek state wished to prove that it had become the sole center of Hellenism and controlled any tendencies that favored the autonomous development of Greek communities in the United States and the forging of any alternative discourse. Nevertheless, the effort to create, through the Panhellenic Union, a unified Greek community with a single identity under Greek state control and to suppress localism deepened preexisting divisions in Greek communities. The Panhellenic Union failed to combat localism and to develop a unified perception of Hellenism among immigrants. Arguably, it served instead as a site for conflicts between rival leading groups, that is, competing identity entrepreneurs.

Lambros Coromilas underestimated the impact of local divisions and centers of power and most importantly the clash between the Ralli and the Vlasto factions mentioned above. He instigated a revision of the Panhellenic Union’s charter, and the organization subsequently evolved from a federation of Greek societies to an organization with a strong central board and individual membership. The council members of the board belonged to the Ralli faction and subsequently published *Panhellenic*, a newspaper expressing their views (IAYE, F. 115.1/1912, 8280, 5.4.1911). According to the Greek consul in Chicago, Nicolaos Salopoulos, Vlastos, who favored the previous federal system and feared that the new board would use the Greek state’s support to curb his influence on immigrants, started a war that divided the Greek communities on the grounds that the Panhellenic Union did not express immigrants’ desires (IAYE, F. 115.1/1912, 1190, 29.3.1911). He claimed that the local branches of the Union were exploiting them and tried to replace the associations of immigrants who came from the same region (*Panhellenic*, 18.4.1911). Vlastos thus tried to protect his network of influence by appealing to the immigrants’ strong local ties and the bitterness they felt toward the Greek state, which they viewed as a corrupt mechanism of control. Vlastos did not propose to sever immigrants’ ties with Greece. He stressed that since Panslavism had destroyed the Greek communities in

Russia, Bulgaria, and Romania, the Greeks in the United States were the only group outside Greece that could support Hellenism (*Atlantis*, 28.10.1908). Nevertheless, as an advocate of naturalization, he did not believe that immigrants should be under the control of the Greek state. He also criticized the proposal to ban immigration from Greece, in line with official US policy expressed by the American consul in Athens, George Horton, that favored the continuing flow of unskilled workers necessary for the US economy (*Atlantis*, 4, 5, 6.2.1909; Kourtoumi-Hatzi, 1999, pp. 110–111). The fact that *Atlantis* had the biggest circulation among Greek-language newspapers in the United States proved that Vlastos's discourse – professing Greek nationalism but also declaring that by returning to the Greek state, with its inefficient administration and overtaxation, immigrants would jeopardize their prosperity – held an appeal for the emerging lower middle class in Greek communities. The board of the Panhellenic Union wrote to the Greek foreign minister, Lambros Coromilas (IAYE, F 93.1/1912, 27801, 11.12.1912):

This contradicts the calculations and the interests of the anti-national newspaper (*Atlantis*), which ... on the one hand untruthfully presents America as the “Promised Land where milk and honey flows” for Greeks in order to attract even more immigrants here and increase its sales, and on the other hand cultivates among immigrants aversion to their Fatherland, which it presents as the country of Hell and Gehenna, cursing for two decades now the King, Queen, Crown Prince, Princes and Princesses (even until two months ago) the Government and the Politicians, the Prime Ministers (even the current Great man), the ministers, the people, the country, everything – in order to prevent the return of the immigrants; in such a case it would lose its milk cow, what it terms the “thinking public.” (See also Laliotou, 2004, p. 151)

During the Balkan Wars, when the Panhellenic Union served as the unofficial recruiting office for the Greek army and organized the return of volunteers to Greece, *Atlantis* accused it of violating its charter by serving a foreign government (19.2.1913).

By the beginning of World War I this immigrant lower middle class had a considerable presence in the sector of grocery stores, flower shops, restaurants, and pastry shops in the United States (Kitroeff, 2003, p. 326). At the same time, the presence of Greek industrialists who had made their fortune in the United States started to strengthen the tendency toward a distinct Greek American identity that, while not negating its cultural ties with Greece, proclaimed loyalty to the United States. Even the Panhellenic Union started to express its independence from the Greek state. After the Balkan Wars, the Union board refused permission to the Greek diplomatic envoy Stephanos Kiouzes Pezas to control its books, declaring that agents of a foreign government had no right to interfere with an American association

(IAYE, F. 227 A.A.K. 1/1914, 1.3.1914). Nevertheless, the organization's inefficiency in addressing immigrants' needs and accusations of financial mismanagement were the main causes for its decline, and it continued to draw membership only in the northeastern cities. According to its critics, this was due to the pressure exercised on industrial workers and miners by "owners of gambling clubs, coffee shops, billiard halls, and labor contractors who served as the 'directors' and the 'associate directors' of the so-called 'Panhellenic Union chapters'" (*Atlantis*, 17.9.1915).

In January 1916, a new organization was formed at the instigation of Solon Vlastos called the Greek-American National Union, with a mixed board of Greeks and Americans. Its president was Euripides Kehagias, a tobacco merchant who made his fortune in the United States. The new organization accepted only those who were already naturalized as full members. It aimed to encourage immigrants to learn English, become acquainted with the US political system, and obtain American citizenship. At the same time, it offered social services to arriving immigrants and helped them secure employment (*Atlantis*, 23.1.1916). Contrary to the Panhellenic Union, which still professed that those immigrants should not assimilate and should return to Greece to contribute to its development, the Greek-American National Union declared its intention to encourage immigrants to take an active part in the political life of the United States (*Atlantis*, 25.1.1916). The Greek-American National Union did not manage to gain a large membership, probably because the public it wished to address was still not numerically considerable, but it was the first organization to express openly the idea that immigrants should shift their loyalty to the United States. Nevertheless, until the end of World War I, political developments in Greece had serious consequences for the development of Greek communities, and this was proved by the impact of the Greek National Schism, as explained below.

In 1915, civil strife, known as the National Schism (Διχασμός), erupted in Greece between pro-German King Constantine and the liberal prime minister, Eleutherios Venizelos, who favored Greek participation in the war on the side of Entente powers (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2002, pp. 284–285). The National Schism stirred up great passions among Greek citizens that led to violent street clashes and attacks on political adversaries. In the United States the two rival factions, namely, the members and opponents of the Panhellenic Union, tried to use the political divisions in Greece to strengthen their legitimization. Ever since the formation of the first Greek communities in the United States, the rival leading groups had to seek legitimization either from the Greek government or from the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Solon Vlastos received the honorary title of "exarch" from the patriarch of Constantinople, Joachim III. As noted by Professor Amilkas Alivizatos, Vlastos subsequently used this title to pose as the protector of the Orthodox

religion and the Greek communities in the United States (IAYE, F. B35.4/1918, 9152, 11.7.1918). Also in 1916, King Constantine decorated Vlastos for his contribution to the war effort during the Balkan Wars. The Panhellenic Union board made the point that although Vlastos had previously been a stringent critic of the Greek dynasty, in subsequent years he became an ardent supporter of King Constantine and a leader of the royalist factions in Greek communities in the United States (IAYE, F. 93.1/1912, 27801, 11.12.1912). He boasted that “the honor made by the Greek King in the name of the Fatherland, following that by the Great Church of Christ through Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III, imposes on American Hellenism, and above all on *Atlantis*, to have as its common motto, ‘For Fatherland and Religion’” (*Atlantis*, 6.2.1916). This ideological shift was not only due to Vlastos’s ambition to be recognized as the representative of Greek Americans, but also followed the growth of royalist feeling among lower-middle-class Greeks and the majority of immigrants after the Balkan Wars. Many believed that King Constantine was meant to fulfill the messianic prophecies, that is, to conquer Constantinople (Istanbul) and restore the Byzantine empire.

In order to counterbalance Vlastos’s influence on Greek immigrants, the Panhellenic Union board decided to publish a new newspaper, which, due to the tense political climate and the support of the Liberal Party in Greece, managed to gain the appeal that the declining Panhellenic Union could not achieve. The *National Herald* supported Venizelos’s policy favoring the alignment of Greece with the Western Powers. Since the diaspora merchants who controlled the Panhellenic Union depended on British capital, it was obvious that they would side with the Entente.

In January 1916, representatives from the diaspora Greek communities in the countries of the Entente powers as well as Egypt participated in a congress in Paris to condemn the attitude of King Constantine and express their support for Greek participation in the war on the side of the Entente powers (IAYE, FA52/1915, 86, 4.2.1916). Nevertheless, this position rescinded their opposition to the irredentist policy favored by the Greek lower middle class and civil servants in the Greek kingdom (Tsoukalas, 1977, p. 364).

In the United States, the communities among which the Panhellenic Union had a strong presence decided to appoint a representative to the Paris congress. The list of these cities confirms the view expressed in *Atlantis* that the Panhellenic Union held ground only among the industrial workers of northeastern cities (*National Herald*, 27.1.1916). Still, it would be inaccurate to argue that only the social class of the supporters of each group explains the support for Prime Minister Venizelos by the Panhellenic Union and King Constantine by its opponents. Factors such as the trans-local ties of immigrants to their village and the influence of local leaders in Greek communities played an important role. Moreover, since Greeks had one of the highest return rates, immigrants were interested in political

developments in Greece. Owing to these factors, support for one or the other group could shift. Nonetheless, the National Schism led to the consolidation of two rival factions, the Liberals and the Royalists, who expressed themselves through the two national Greek-language newspapers, the *National Herald* and *Atlantis*. The reasons for the conflict predated the National Schism in Greece. As the Greek envoy in Chicago, Stephanos Kiouzes-Pezas, wrote to the Greek foreign minister, Nicolaos Politis (IAYE, F. B35.4/1918, 11961, 3/16.10.1918):

From the beginning and in several circumstances I have underlined that our co-nationals in New York are deeply divided over personal and not political reasons. They are only to a lesser extent interested in political issues. Vlastos, the editor of *Atlantis*, is no more interested in the person of the ex-King than Tatanis, the editor of the *National Herald*, is in essence interested in Venizelism. These issues are, for them, merely pretexts used in order to satisfy their personal passions and this is proved by the following: the division of the Greeks in New York into Vlastos's friends and enemies existed long before the current disagreement between the Prime Minister and the ex-King, as is shown by my detailed dispatch on the situation in New York that I submitted to the ministry in 1914.

The special envoy to the United States, Professor Andreas Andreadis, noted that the National Schism served as an ideological cover for the divisions between the two factions along which were aligned the local communities' rival leaderships (IAYE, F. A/AAK13/1919, 3.9.1919). Subsequently, the conflict between Solon Vlastos and the Panhellenic Union, transformed into one between Royalists and Liberals, created a stir in Greek communities quite apart from its social and ideological background, because rival leading groups at the local level aligned with one or other faction in order to strengthen their position.

Greek American Middle-Class Identity after World War I

Immigrants' attachment to affairs in their homeland, as exemplified by the impact of the National Schism in Greek communities, strengthened xenophobic feelings in the United States during and after World War I. The American government and several pressure groups considered immigrants with "dual loyalty" as a potential danger for the United States. Especially after the American declaration of war on Germany, the US administration did not favor institutions under foreign state influence and discouraged the use of foreign languages in public, while some even advocated a ban on the foreign-language press. Both *Atlantis* and the *National Herald* participated in the Union of Foreign Language Press Publishers that was founded in

1919. Moreover, *Atlantis* reiterated its support for naturalization. In a series of articles in English, the paper underlined its contribution to familiarizing immigrants with US institutions and its exhortations to Greeks to contribute to the Salvation Army and to enroll their children in the scouts. The newspaper insisted that “one of the greatest Americanizing forces in the country, namely the Foreign Language American press, is called upon to play a most important part in fusing all the various racial elements of the land in a single national body” (*Atlantis*, 16.5.1919). At the same time, it suggested that the US authorities should simplify the naturalization procedure.

The pressures on immigrants to assimilate created a sentiment of uneasiness among Greeks in the United States. However, improved working conditions, the institution of the 8-hour workday, and wage increases during the war raised the living standard of immigrants. On the other hand, the drafting of approximately 60,000 immigrants into the US army boosted the number of naturalizations. After the war, workers who were hired to replace those who had been drafted were fired. Despite this, as Professor Andreas Andreadis noted, they had accumulated a considerable capital, which they invested in small-scale businesses, hotels, and pastry and flower shops (IAYE, F. A/AAK13/1919, 3.9.1919). Although the majority of Greek immigrants were still blue-collar workers, the lower middle class was strengthened (Scourby, 1991, p. 49). At the same time, the number of Greek industrialists, wholesale merchants, and scientists who composed the upper middle class increased considerably. The appearance of a Greek American middle class was pivotal for the assimilation of Greeks after the end of World War I in American society. Many immigrants returned to Greece after the war but did not stay permanently because of the conditions there and the attitude of locals who treated them as “Americans.” As the Greek consul in Seattle, Christos Liliopoulos, noted (IAYE, F. 48.4/1921, 1/14.10.1920), “Unfortunately the Greek who returns from America feels, however unfair this may seem, in his fatherland and in his contacts with the Greek public as foreign as he feels in this country. He is the ‘American’ in the towns and even in his village, while in America he is ‘Greek.’ The Greeks in Greece, except his relatives of course, treat him always with hesitation, as if he were a total stranger, and in some cases treat him even with contempt.” Vlastos had already warned that “Those who return to Greece resemble someone who leaves a blooming garden for a barren field full of thorns” (*Atlantis*, 11.7.1919). The diffusion of returnees’ negative impressions strengthened the belief that Greeks in the United States were henceforth a distinct part of “Hellenism.” Nevertheless, many men married during their stay in Greece and brought their wives back with them, thus ending the previous disproportion between men and women in Greek communities. The increasing number of families in Greek communities proved that large numbers of immigrants considered their stay in the United States to be permanent (Saloutos, 1964, p. 236).

From this it can be deduced that after World War I social conditions favored immigrants' assimilation. This was achieved through the new ethnic organizations that were formed after the war and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. As with other ethnic groups, a new identity was constructed in this period. This ethnic identity gradually supplanted local immigrant identifications and introduced a common symbolic system by reinterpreting elements of the preexisting immigrant culture (Conzen, Gerber, Morawska, Pozzetta, & Vecoli, 1992, p. 23).

After the war, American government pressures led even the Panhellenic Union to declare that henceforth it aimed to make "the Greek immigrant capable of obtaining American citizenship, absorbing the ideals, the customs, and the moral principles of Americans ... of understanding what Americanism means" (*National Herald*, 2.7.1919). On the other hand, it still insisted that "our hope to exist in the future as a nation obliges us to think in a Panhellenic rather than in a local way" (*National Herald*, 23.9.1919). The Panhellenic Union board continued to underestimate the impact of a long stay in the United States, where immigrants were receivers of a systematic propaganda campaign calling on them to absorb and internalize American national symbols and to assimilate to the native culture. On the other hand, the Greek state did not have the means to cultivate and impose on immigrants its unified vision of Panhellenism since immigrants "escape the power of the nation state to inform their sense of collective identity" (Kearney, 1991, p. 59). Thus, although immigrants were eager to send money to Greece in cases of emergency, they were unwilling to accept any form of indirect taxation by the Greek state and showed distrust toward the Greek government and its officials (IAYE, F. B35.4/1918, 9152, 11.7.1918; see also Bodnar, 1985, p. 128). Moreover, after the end of the Balkan Wars, the number of those who could not return to Greece because they did not wish to serve in the army grew. Agamemnon Schlieman, Greek ambassador in Washington at the time, wrote to the Greek foreign ministry that "It is normal that they feel tired and as a result express aversion toward wars, because of their bitter experiences, although they returned not long ago to general acclaim and admiration" (IAYE, F.B.46/1915, 40397, 5.11.1914). These factors contributed to the cultivation of a separate form of selfhood among Greeks in the United States. As the Greek ambassador in Washington, Georges Roussos, wrote to the Greek foreign minister, Nicolaos Politis, "American Hellenism should not be considered as colonial Hellenism, since it has achieved its self-sufficiency and self-existence" (IAYE, F.41.2.1/19263964, 10.11.1918).

On the other hand, the strengthening of the Ku Klux Klan during the interwar period was perceived as a visible menace to Greek immigrants. The Ku Klux Klan proclaimed an embargo on all businesses that did not have native clerks or a mixed clientele (Schaefer, 1971, p. 148). Ethnic seclusion,

the inability to communicate in English, the high crime rate, and frequent clashes within Greek ethnic enclaves enhanced the negative image Greek immigrants presented to natives. Greeks were not perceived as a priori belonging to the “White” race (Georges Petrinou, *National Herald*, 19.7.1923; see Anagnostou, 2009). As the *National Herald* noted, “we have lost any appreciation and sympathy from American public opinion and we are considered as inferior to the Turks and even the Chinese.” Even the concentration of Greeks in big northeastern cities was interpreted as a reaction to racism in the Midwest and Southern states (Kitroeff, 2003, p. 354; Saloutos, 1964, p. 248). Many believed that immigrants’ seclusion contributed to racism and suggested that “Greeks should demolish the China wall that they have built to separate themselves from natives and should act as Americans and not as Greeks” (Serapheim Canoutas, *National Herald*, 4.4.1923). The Greek ambassador in Washington, Georges Roussos, pointed out that “ever since America entered the Great War, it aims at the Americanization of Greek and other immigrants through moral pressure and other means. Unfortunately there are Greeks who have bent to this pressure because of their material interests and not only openly display their Americanism but also induce others to the Americanizing crucible, beginning with naturalization that America pursues systematically” (IAYE, F. 41.2.1/1926, 3964, 10.11.1918). Members of the emerging middle class after World War I hoped that by abandoning external Greek cultural characteristics, they would distance themselves from the prevalent negative stereotypes about Greek immigrants. This tendency appeared during the previous decade and found expression in the Greek-American National Union, but the prevalent xenophobic and racist climate in the 1920s further strengthened it. The need to convince natives that members of the Greek middle class deserved to be considered as White and therefore as first-class citizens led to the foundation of the American Hellenic Progressive Association (AHEPA).

AHEPA was founded in 1922 by two traveling salesmen who understood the danger posed by the Ku Klux Klan to Greeks in Southern states (Malafouris, 1948, p. 206; Marketos, 2006, p. 131; Saloutos, 1964, p. 249). The aim of the new organization was to “cultivate genuine Americanism, devotion to US political institutions, and enhance solidarity among Greeks in the United States” (Malafouris, 1948, p. 206). Prospective members had to be American citizens or fulfill the criteria to become so, belong to the White race, and believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ (Saloutos, 1964, p. 249). AHEPA thus guaranteed members Whiteness, religiosity, and loyalty in trying to achieve acceptance within the American middle class (see Anagnostou, 2004). At the same time, the organization decided that its working language would be English and thus tried to dissociate itself from the practices and customs criticized by Americans and to constitute itself as the leading group

of the Greek American community (Malafouris, 1948, p. 209; Saloutos, 1964, p. 253). Some priests proposed that AHEPA constitute the secular branch of archdioceses, an Orthodox equivalent of the Knights of Columbus (Saloutos, 1964, p. 251). Notwithstanding this, because of the increasing number of Greek conversions to Protestant churches, AHEPA distinguished Hellenism from Orthodox Christianity, thus recognizing the multiple identifications of Greeks in the United States, and adopted ancient Greek heritage as a general identifier. AHEPA declared that “The fanatical cry of the old Panhellenists, ‘Pas Hellen Prepei na Einai Orthodoxos,’ is outdated. We are Greeks, but we did not inherit our present religion from our ancestors, the ancient Greeks, as we did our blood and traits. ... There are thousands of true-blooded Greeks who are members of other churches. Must we deny their race owing to that? Finally the AHEPA is not a doctrinaire cult” (*Archon*, I, 8.1927: 4–5; Saloutos, 1964, p. 254). Its founders hoped that Greeks would achieve acceptance within the leading group of White citizens by discarding modern Greek cultural characteristics and emphasizing their ancestry from ancient Greece, since the dominant discourse considered classical Greece as having furnished the cultural background of American identity (Anagnostou, 2004, p. 26). Therefore, AHEPA claimed Greek Americans’ distinctiveness “as being a national ethnic subject with reference to nationalism in the United States” (Laliotou, 2004, p. 121). Many Americans contested modern Greeks’ descent from ancient Greeks and did not accept that immigrants were the inheritors of classical civilization (Anagnostou, 2003, p. 298). Nonetheless, the use of the classical past constituted the only way for the aspiring Greek American middle class, which AHEPA represented, to gain acceptance as White Americans (Kitroeff, 2003, p. 355; Marketos, 2006, p. 134).

The discomfort of some at AHEPA’s urge to Americanize and use English in public spaces led to the founding of GAPA (Greek American Progressive Association) in 1923, an organization that advocated maintaining Greek cultural characteristics and the Orthodox faith while pledging loyalty to American political values (Marketos, 2006, p. 136; Saloutos, 1964, p. 255). The insistence on retaining Greek cultural characteristics resulted from the fact that GAPA’s members came from the lower immigrant strata (Kitroeff, 2003, p. 355). Although the *National Herald* initially praised the foundation of AHEPA, it later shifted its allegiance to GAPA (Marketos, 2006, p. 137). Its editor, Fr. Demetrius Callimachos, stressed that the “Greek community in the United States had the historical responsibility to retrieve these particular aspects, which [Callimachos] referred to as ‘Hellenism,’ to make them central elements of modern Greek culture, and thus to prove the organic relation between Hellenism and Americanism” (Laliotou, 2004, p. 153). By mid-1923, even the Panhellenic Union tried to rebrand itself as the “union of American citizens of Greek origins that would not mingle with

political clashes in our homeland (Greece),” but it had already been superseded in this function by AHEPA and GAPA (*National Herald*, 9.5.1923). The dissolution of the Panhellenic Union after 1924 was a result of immigrants’ emancipation and marks a shift in relations of Greek American leading groups with the Greek state. Although AHEPA and GAPA held different positions on assimilation and integration, both pledged allegiance to the United States. Contrary to the Panhellenic Union, they thus served as an intermediary mechanism in the process of immigrants’ classification, surveillance, and discipline by the American authorities (see Foucault, 1995, p. 164). In this context, the assimilation of immigrants did not require the dissolution of ethnic organizations but their transformation into institutions that would reinterpret ethnic background in order to render it compatible with American nationalism and middle-class social values. Ethnic organizations showcased the core values, thus shaping a collective body defined by mostly middle-class ethnic elites. That is, they expressed the acceptable limits of collective difference in the host society and were, in their turn, supervised by state institutions (see Foucault, 1995, p. 177). Central authorities transferred the function of supervising possibly seditious foreigners to social networks encompassing ethnic groups. The system of Greek American values therefore enhanced putative members’ group solidarity and mobilized the ethnic group still under construction to defend its “traditional values” and its cultural capital, but also to advance its wish for the recognition of its members’ status (Anagnostou, 2004, p. 50; Conzen et al., 1992, p. 6).

State power and efforts at ethnic cohesion, however, were not able to prevent the creation of social movements and alternative networks that proposed alternative group identifications (Brubaker, 2004, p. 43). Immigrants in the United States often contested official ethnic identifications in the frame of social movements that were based on class conscience expressing a *counterhegemonic* discourse. During World War I the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) started to approach immigrant workers. Contrary to the official discourse, the IWW interpreted “Americanism” not as the adoption of middle-class values but as the claim for “quality of life,” that is, an 8-hour workday, salary increases, and improved work conditions (Anagnostou, 2004, p. 51; Barrett, 1992, p. 1009). After the October Revolution in Russia more radical Greek socialists participated in the US Labor Party and published the newspaper *Workers’ Voice* (Karpozilos, 2004, p. 28). The big strike wave during 1919 caused panic among the leading groups of Greek communities. The Union of Foreign Language Press condemned “any form of Bolshevism.” The *National Herald* published anti-communist propaganda almost daily and proclaimed its readiness to denounce any subversive activities to the authorities, stressing that “it is everyone’s duty to inform on agitators and underminers of the regime, pointing out what common sense indicates” (*National Herald*, 21.10.1919). The newspaper also expressed its

opposition to collective wage bargaining and even to the idea of strikes. Moreover, it blamed strikers for the “unbearable needs of life since ... in the past workers were happy with their wages and their life conditions [...] workers strike, not because they are not paid enough, but because others are better paid and work less” (*National Herald*, 13.4, 4.11.1919). These views were held not only by a few newspapers. Nicolas Kassavetis, the semi-official representative of Greek propaganda in the United States, warned that “even Bulgarian agents work in order to poison their feelings and present them to the American authorities as seditious, anarchists, and a menace to order” and justified authorities who deported striking workers, stressing that “America rightfully will strike any foreign elements that undermine social peace” (*National Herald*, 12.2.1919). Furthermore, he exhorted immigrants to adopt “American liberal values” and to keep their distance from those who hid behind the mask of “protecting their interests.” Thus he stressed that Americanization consisted not just in assimilation but also in rejecting communism. Communism for Kassavetis constituted a negation of both Greek culture and American ideals. On the contrary, Solon Vlastos, under the influence of progressivism, acknowledged that the labor movement was a product of industrial societies and believed that Greek industrial workers should participate along with their American colleagues as long as they did not adopt “extreme socialist, bolshevist, and anarchist ideas” (*Atlantis*, 23.6.1919). Vlastos therefore, unlike his liberal adversaries, considered labor unions as a means of assimilation and advocated the need for “harmonious collaboration between capitalists and workers.” Nevertheless, this attitude might also have been affected by the fact that socialists in Greece collaborated with the anti-Venizelist coalition.

While stressing the importance of ethnic organizations and social networks, the role of the Orthodox Church in framing Greek American identity should not be underestimated. The establishment of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America was the result both of the Greek state’s desire to keep immigrants under its influence and of the pressures for Americanization. The delayed appointment of a bishop for Greek churches in America was connected to the xenophobic climate in the United States during World War I, and the obstacles that the American government started to place in the functioning of immigrant nationalist organizations and schools. The Greek ambassador in Washington, Georges Roussos, wrote that “associations with a national character will not have in the future the necessary freedom of action” (IAYE, F. B35.4/1918, 9152, 11.7.1918), stressing that “the need to use the church and only the church becomes imperative due to the assimilationist efforts that are accelerating. Every means is used to achieve the Americanization of strangers, naturalization is facilitated, the authorities and even private citizens exert pressures on immigrants whenever this is possible” (IAYE, F. B 35.4/19183964, 24.11.1917).

The appointment of a locum tenens in America by Archbishop Meletios of Athens during his visit there was a turning point for the construction of the Greek American ethnic group, since it was the first time an institution that envisaged uniting the Orthodox Greeks in the United States had been organized. Contrary to Venizelos's hopes, the organization of the Archdiocese contributed to Greek immigrants' disengagement from Greece as well as to their Americanization. In 1922, when Meletios became patriarch of Constantinople, he revoked the decision of 1908 and instituted the Autonomous Archdiocese of North and South America under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate. Theodore Saloutos believed that Greek Americans' dependence on the Patriarchate of Constantinople and not on the Church of Greece signified their dissociation from Greek nationalism (Saloutos, 1964, p. 107). Moreover, he considered that the Patriarchate's ecumenicity allowed the Archdiocese of America to describe an Americanized version of Orthodoxy, compatible with the Greek American identity that had been under construction in this period (Saloutos, 1964, p. 110). Although in 1931 the Patriarchate revoked the autonomy of the Archdiocese at the Greek state's instigation, this did not suspend the process of church Americanization (Manolis, 2003, pp. 246–292). Thus for the majority of immigrants, the Archdiocese constituted the most important tool in the process of their ethnicization.

In conclusion, Greek American identity, as it was framed after World War I, was an expression of an aspiring middle class within the Greek communities. Unlike the elites that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century who used different versions of Greek nationalism legitimized by the Greek state and the Constantinople Patriarchate, those that appeared after World War I constructed a Greek American identity compatible with middle-class values and tried to distinguish themselves from lower-class immigrants whose attitudes strengthened xenophobic sentiments. For this reason, they reinterpreted the attributes of "Hellenism" and defined the limits of Greek American community in a dialectic relation with dominant culture and the other ethnic groups in the United States. The new elites endeavored thus to diminish reactions of the dominant ethnic culture (ethno-culture) agents by underlining "the sidestream ethnic culture's compatibility with American values and ideals" (Conzen et al., 1992, p. 6). Acceptance by the American middle class presupposed the "negation of barbarous cultural traits," that is, elements that referred to Balkan Greece and adopted ancient Greek heritage as the sole cultural background. Nevertheless, this discourse excluded lower-class Greek immigrants who had not achieved economic success, were not naturalized, or could not even communicate in English. The Archdiocese unified Greek immigrants around a common identifier, religion, acceptable to both the majority of immigrants and the American government. Ethnic

national associations and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese became the main institutions that contributed to the development of Greek American identity during the interwar years since ethnic elites held an ambivalent position toward Greek nationalism in order to stress their loyalty to the United States. However, the elements that defined Greek American identity were renegotiated with the arrival of immigrant waves from Greece after World War II, and especially after 1965, and the change in Greek Americans' social status in the United States. The new wave of immigration from Greece contributed to the strengthening of immigrants' relations with their ethnic roots. Besides financial success, it reinforced Greek Americans' "ethnic pride" and their claim for visibility in American society as successful ethnics.

Greek Americans are considered today as an example of a well-integrated ethnic group. Nonetheless, until World War II many social scientists in the United States maintained that their "siege mentality," combined with their "backwardness," would obstruct their integration into American society. In the century that has elapsed since the beginning of their immigration from Greece, they have become an interesting example of both the diversification and adaptation process of an ethnic group with a cultural background considered as alien in the host society and of the evolution of host society attitudes toward immigrants. A question that remains valid for Greek Americans is whether ethnicity will retain its importance without the influx of new immigrants, or whether the Orthodox religion will eventually become the main reference for future generations (Manolis, 2007). In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate the processes that led to the construction of Greek American identity and the role of elites as a functioning intermediary between immigrants on the one hand, and the Greek and the US administration on the other. Although historical processes are not repeated, older migration experiences might serve as an insight to trends among current immigrants in contemporary Western societies.

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