Diaspora 12:3 2003

Model Americans, Quintessential Greeks: Ethnic Success and Assimilation in Diaspora[1]

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People in media can help facilitate democracy or participate in its betrayal.

—B.J. Bullert (7)

Introduction: "White" Ethnicities as "Success"

To tell stories of ethnic success is to speak about the nation in all its benevolence and generosity. National ideologies such as the American Dream, mobility, openness, and inclusiveness come to life any time the nation's Others claim socioeconomic achievement. Stories of success turn the ethnic into the national as the former partakes of, and legitimizes, narratives of the latter. Alternatively, the ethnic can, on occasion, command the attention of the nation through the notion of success. The blockbuster status of the independent film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding,* released in 2002, is a case in point: the representation of an ethnic group within popular culture is such a hit that it generates a metadiscourse in the media about the film's unprecedented popularity, and that, in turn, becomes its own kind of ethnic success story. The 1998 Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) documentary *The Greek Americans* provides yet another example of ethnicity's impact on national cultural production. Indeed, the immense popularity of the documentary, largely framed as a tribute to Greek-American "success," led PBS executive producers to launch a new series, "Homelands," and to select Greece and Greek Americans as the first case study for this "new concept" that explores the transnational ties of American ethnic groups ("Return to the Homeland"). Ethnic accomplishment becomes a privileged metric for the national ranking of ethnicities, thereby raising many interesting questions: What is the cultural work of identity narratives that center on ethnic success? What kinds of issues does the success of popular representations of ethnicity raise? Furthermore, how do narratives of achievements by assimilated "white" ethnic groups intersect with the "assimilation" of racial minorities such as Asian Americans? And what are at the social and political stakes when "white" ethnics script their identities around achievement?

This article reflects on a "white" hyphenated space, Greek America, to probe into the ideology of ethnic success and how it relates to the construction of the categories "white ethnicity" and "diaspora." My argument is threefold. First I show that the above-mentioned metadiscourse on ethnic achievement fractures the idea of a uniform Greek-American success. Greek Americans who have distinguished themselves in exclusive institutions such as Hollywood have done so as assimilated artists and entrepreneurs, not as accomplished cultural producers committed to promoting Greek ethnicity. In this case, social and material prominence has not been translated into successful ethnic production. I point out that despite the open ethnic identification of high-profile officials such as Michael Dukakis, George Stephanopoulos, and George Tenet, or artists such as Olympia Dukakis and Melina Kanakaredes, identification with Greek cultural interests may be perceived as a hindrance in elite institutions. In view of this cultural reticence, I argue, that Greek Americans in positions of privilege are becoming attuned to the potential for economic and cultural gains associated with the making of narratives on Greek ethnicity under conditions of liberal multiculturalism and globalization. As a result, a discourse is emerging by which an assimilated ethnic elite reconfigures and imagines itself as a vanguard in Greek cultural production in the Anglophone world.

Second, I explore the process of ethnicization among economically, politically, and socially prosperous Greek Americans by closely analyzing a successful commodity that tells a story of ethnic success: the PBS documentary *The Greek Americans.* I establish that its narrative about ethnic socioeconomic success constructs Greek America as a homogeneous collectivity, in accordance with the script of American liberal multiculturalism. I argue that such an *ethnic* location represents yet another historical phase of Greek America's politics of assimilation into hegemonic national narratives about otherness. My diachronic analysis of Greek-American narratives of assimilation shows that the positive valuation of ethnicity has historically been deployed in Greek America as a strategy of inclusion, by which cultural boundaries are fixed and stabilized in view of the contingent place of the ethnic/immigrant Other in the national *as well as ethnic* imagination. By assimilating Greek America into liberal multiculturalism in this manner, the documentary sets the conditions for the positive valuation of Greek ethnicity and, in turn, legitimizes and encourages further cultural productions about Greek Americans.

The third thread of my analysis maps the vicissitudes in the relationship between ethnicity and diasporicity. The PBS documentary privileges the reconfiguration of a transnational identity into an ethnic one by naturalizing America as the proper home for

Greek Americans. Yet, I argue, the case of Greek America demonstrates that the formation of an ethnic identity has been entangled with narratives about national belonging and transnational origins. Historically, a specific cultural politics of assimilation and success in Greek America has centered on this challenge: How to reconcile the claim of deep comradeship and integration with the (American) nation with a simultaneous claim to the authentic cultural and racial pedigree of the ancient Greeks? Greek America's strategies of embracing assimilation and sustaining difference have taken place in relation to dominant narratives about others *and* to the transnational discourse of Hellenism. In such a politics, Greek America's quest for socioeconomic distinction is posited as a "historical burden" of the immigrant ethnic, who in this case adheres to hegemonic narratives of national belonging (to America and Greece) while also appropriating the cultural capital of classical Greece as its own ethnic heritage. These multiple claims dictate that a transnational connection become an integral element in the discourse of Greek Americans as successful ethnics.

Such an analysis cautions against a strong differentiation between assimilated ethnicities and diasporas. The historical analysis of Greek America in terms of specific modalities—class and ethnicity—that operate within relations of power takes the debate on the diasporicity of ethnic groups beyond ideal types (Safran), analytical dichotomies between "white" assimilated ethnics and diasporic transnationals (Clifford), or the descriptive enumeration of attributes in a diaspora–ethnic continuum (Cohen). Instead, it brings into focus the contested interests that are served every time a claim is made concerning the diasporic or ethnic status of a collectivity. An analysis of diasporas/ethnicities in terms of their politics makes it possible to identify the cultural work enabled through the deployment of such categories.

One must acknowledge the ideological implications of ethnic achievement for issues of racial poverty. "White" ethnic success has often been offered as evidence against progressive politics, which explain the social and economic stagnation of racial minorities in terms of constraints embedded in political economy, not biology or culture. In this essay, I criticize the PBS documentary's ideology of success. At the same time, I do not wish to perpetuate the view of "white" ethnicities as a mere accomplice in anti-minority identity politics. For this reason, I conclude my essay with a caveat. While I submit that Greek-American, and, by extension, "white" ethnic, narratives of success have been justifiably critiqued for (re)producing apolitical explanations of race-based inequalities, I refuse to accept the wholesale dismissal of the cultural relevance and the politics of "white" ethnicities by race-centered scholars. Such a generalized critique risks the acceptance of hegemonic narratives

of success as the sole expression of "white" ethnicities. There is no doubt that Greek America's assimilation into liberal multiculturalism and the politics of distinction generate a generalized narrative of ethnic homogeneity. The documentary fixes the meaning of ethnicity according to hegemonic expectations of otherness, and, as a result, it marginalizes counter-historical memories and alternative definitions of Greek-American identity and success. The cultural meanings of Greek America become "visible" primarily through the lenses of liberal multiculturalism. Yet scholars who dismiss "white" ethnic narratives as politically reactionary and culturally irrelevant conveniently forget that "white" ethnicities, like any other racialized collectivity, are heterogeneous social formations (Lowe). To avoid such a reduction, scholars must develop the analytical tools to identify and disseminate alternative narratives about the meanings and successes of "white" ethnics.

Situating the Problematic of Greek-American Success: *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and *The Greek Americans*

Socioeconomic success being a common *topos* in Greek America, references to the comparatively high educational and income rankings of Greek Americans are not absent from the documentary. Take for example Father Alexander Karloutsos's statement that Greek Americans "came over here as immigrants, and now they are the number one educated group in this United States, [and] number two group financially"[2] (*Greek Americans*). This ethnic success story does not eliminate but, rather, coexists with the deep-seated sensibility characteristic of a cultural minority. Greek America's visibility in the mainstream is uneven. On the one hand, popular ethnic practices such as dances and cuisine have been successfully turned into highly visible spectacles. On the other hand, cultural representation in the media and institutions of high culture lags behind. A discourse on the possibilities for reconstituting this imbalance was stimulated by the popularity of a success-story film, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding.* The release of the film generated interesting intersections among Greek diaspora media, Greek-American popular culture, and the media and popular culture at large. *The Hellenic Voice,* an English-language Greek-American newspaper, and *Odyssey,* an international popular magazine on Greek topics, both covered the film extensively, joining such media powerhouses as the *New York Times, Saturday Night Live, Nightline,* and *The Late Show with David Letterman* in bringing national attention to the film and its protagonists. The phrase "My Big Fat" penetrated the lexicon of the mass and ethnic media as well as popular culture, serving as an indicator of success. Its usages include the following: in *Odyssey,* to refer to professional success: "A Big Fat Success

Story: The Greeks of Hollywood" (Rubis); in the *New York Times,* to identify commercial trends in popular culture: "A Big Fat Increase at the Box Office"(Lyman); in *The Hellenic Voice,* to preface an enduring interethnic marriage: "A Big Fat Greek Life for Pennsylvania Couple" (Posten); in the *National Herald* to showcase the commercial growth of "My Big Fat Greek Market" (Marmarinos); and, again in the *New York Times,* to underscore literary achievement: "'Middlesex': My Big Fat Greek Gender Identity Crisis" (Miller). In the process, the film became a Golden Globe nominee and won the favorite motion picture award at the twenty-ninth annual People's Choice Awards.

This ethnic distinction propelled Greek-American institutions to reflect on the role of the media in the promotion of ethnicity. At the 1999 American Hellenic Education Progressive Association (AHEPA) Convention, for example, a symposium was organized on the Emergence of the Greek-American Community in Television and Media, which featured, among others, the producer and writer of *The Greek Americans,* George Veras. Furthermore, the English-language Greek media reflected on Greek America's cultural presence in American popular culture. Two magazines, for example, *Odyssey* and *Chicago GreekCircle*, featured cover stories—"The Greeks of Hollywood" and "Greeks Go Hollywood" respectively—that surveyed the Greek presence in Hollywood and sought to raise ethnic consciousness among its cultural producers and power brokers. This is particularly evident in journalist Anastasia Rubis's piece in *Odyssey,* in her interview with Jim Gianopulos, chair of Fox Film Entertainment: "Jim Gianopulos was so enthused when I mentioned that [writer and director] [Alexander] Payne was Greek ('No way') [that] he invited him out to a three-hour dinner" (36). By ethnicizing Hollywood, journalism mediates the creation of social and artistic networks where ethnic identity is made to matter among cultural brokers and creators. Ethnic collaboration, Rubis imagines, can be a key strategy for promoting Greek-American cultural production within the context of the upcoming Athens Olympics. She asks, "in 2004, with the Olympics as catalyst, why shouldn't there be a movie green-lighted by Gianopulos, produced by [Kary] Antholis [HBO Films vice president], directed by Payne, written by Pelecanos (a crime novelist) and starring [Nia] Vardalos (a Greek-Canadian actress and comedian), or a string of Greek-American actors working in Hollywood today?" (37). *Presented with the prospect of enhancing its cultural visibility, assimilated Greek America is launching a project of ethnicizing its artistic elite.*

Paradoxically, as *Odyssey*'s commentary projects an image of Greek America in terms of accomplishments, it simultaneously highlights the community's minority status in Hollywood. Stories featured in the same issue, for example, point to reticence among

Greek artistic and cultural circles to embrace ethnic identity openly and to promote Greek culture. According to Rubis, who interviewed her, Nia Vardalos "believes it is fear that is holding Greeks back from making a bigger mark on pop culture" (37). This unspecified "fear" is cited with Vardalos's comments urging ethnic confidence—"Maybe it's just time for us to believe in ourselves" (37). Similarly, Robert Krantz, director, writer, actor, and founder of the Ellinas Multimedia distribution company, employs the idiom of fear to explain the rarity of Greek-related mainstream stories and the absence of mutually supporting ethnic networks: "if Greeks aren't yet telling stories or championing each other, it's because we're not acclaimed, we've never done it before. There's fear'" (Rubis and Dabilis 49). Krantz, whose film *Do You Wanna Dance* "never found a US distributor … [on the grounds that] Greek … [is] not funny," envisions turning his company into "a Greek American Miramax, a company … [that] has successfully incorporated the Jewish experience in the souls of mainstream America through their [*sic*] films" (49). Ingrained in the social economy of "whiteness," assimilated Greek America now explicitly acknowledges a deep-seated anxiety over its ethnic location, unmasking its assimilative posture through a concern characteristic of minorities: how its difference is perceived and received by others.

The metacommentary generated by *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* foregrounds the fact that Greek-American assimilation has not erased enduring ethnic sentiments and commitments; rather, ethnic success has been achieved at the expense of constraining the range of identifications marked as ethnic. Moreover, participation in cultural powerhouses is associated with a deep-seated sensibility of cultural marginalization, which exhibits itself in a heightened awareness of ethnicity as a factor limiting social success. A number of questions then arise: Why do successful Greek Americans exhibit a minority's awareness of their ethnic location as a limitation on mainstream recognition? What kind of strategies would highly placed ethnic networks and the media deploy to mediate the fear and lack of ethnic confidence expressed by Vardalos and Krantz? Why do successful Greek Americans in the media, in an ostensibly multicultural America, only belatedly feel comfortable with openly promoting their ethnic culture when they enjoy economic success and when, *as proponents of symbolic ethnicity insist, there is no social stigma attached to "white" ethnics?*

To map the directions that such an inquiry might take, one could identify instances where Greek ethnicity is evaluated negatively. Ethnicization may work well in the sites of celebratory multiculturalism, but it can function as a structural constraint in the competition for social and political capital. Greek America, a collectivity that invests heavily in the ideology of the model American citizen,

has learned this lesson the hard way. Greek Americans have discovered that they can always be subjected to the power of the dominant society, and be re-ethnicized as foreign, despite their claims and protests. Watching country music celebrities in support of George H. Bush in the 1988 presidential election campaign make "fun of [Michael] Dukakis's name as unpronounceable and, by implication, foreign" (Alba 365), Greek Americans understood that when the stakes are high, only a thin line separates acceptance from ridicule.

One can examine the discourse of ethnic success by casting the net even wider, into the realm of national and international politics, as well as transnational relations. For example, the pre-eminent American Hellenic organization, AHEPA, underscored Greek America's assimilationist civic success when, in an open letter to US President George W. Bush, it renewed its pledge to national allegiance in the aftermath of the September 2001 terrorist attack against the United States (Banis). Self-representation in Greek America is linked with the consciousness of an ever-present possibility that nativists in the dominant society are in a position to interpellate ethnics as culturally and politically foreign to the nation. Here it is relevant to mention that a significant number of Greek Americans were particularly vocal, in their ethnic media, in expressing their discontent about the vociferous opposition of homeland Greeks to the 2003 US war in Iraq. In the political culture at the initial stages of the war, when criticism of US military action was stigmatized as unpatriotic, Greek Americans went to great lengths to differentiate themselves from the ideology of the Greek public. If, to borrow Matthew Jacobson's phrase, southeastern European immigrants were "probationary whites" early in the twentieth century, sectors of contemporary Greek America function as if they are "probationary Americans," having to prove repeatedly their cultural Americanness and political allegiance to the nation.

The formation of an assimilated Greek America preoccupied with its public self-image needs to be understood as a historical product of an ethnic politics that persistently seeks to avoid the social and political stigma America may attach to hyphenated Americans. Yet multiculturalism provides the conditions for the rewriting of Greek America's assimilationist narrative. There is an emerging awareness among Greek-American cultural producers that the mainstream is becoming increasingly receptive to stories about ethnicity. Of course, this trend cannot be dissociated from cultural and economic processes mediating ethnic representations in the American media. As the statement "Greek … [is] not funny" indicates, mainstream media define ethnicity as they sees fit, despite the popular success that Greek-American stand-up comedy currently enjoys

among ethnic audiences.[3] Furthermore, as shown by the failure of the 2003 CBS sitcom *My Big Fat Greek Life* (a television sequel to the film that was cancelled because of poor ratings), ethnicity may prove an economically non-viable product in the mainstream. Therefore, the power of the media to enable certain ethnic representations is not independent of market considerations at the national and transnational levels. For example, George Veras, president of Veras Communications, Inc. (VCI), points out that the strong interest PBS expressed in featuring a documentary on Greek Americans was partly a response to the commercial success of *Yanni: Live at the Acropolis* (produced and directed by VCI in Athens) among the broadcaster's Greek-American viewers. Veras reports that PBS executives identified the ethnicity of supporters by the endings of their names—"as" and "os"—when this documentary was broadcast for fundraising purposes ("Impact"). Media constructions of ethnic success stories are in fact sites where success, translated as profits generated by ethnic audiences that consume transnational spectacles, spurs further ethnic productions.

The analytical focus of this article, namely the documentary *The Greek Americans*, provides a point of departure for addressing issues raised by the success of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. It offers an opportunity to consider connections between ethnic success and a multiplicity of discourses on ethnicity, such as assimilation, multiculturalism, and cultural (re)production. The documentary and the film are susceptible to analysis in similar terms. Both appeared as products of Greek-American self-representation that circulated widely through the American national media. The documentary addresses Greek America's historical propensity for assimilation, situating in this way the current predicament of Greek America's assimilated artists and culture brokers described in *Odyssey* (Rubis). While the commentary surrounding the film underscores Greek America's reticence about its cultural identity, the documentary and its metadiscourse offer strategies for a positive valuation of Greek ethnicity. Not unlike the metacommentary generated by the film, the documentary belongs to a tradition of Greek America's reflexive awareness of the possibilities and constraints associated with ethnic representations. The documentary scripts Greek America in a way designed to legitimize its culture, proposing a model of Greek ethnicity that could serve as an example in future media representations of Greek Americans.

Yet the affinities between these two cultural products go beyond the fact that they raise similar issues. Both the film and the documentary belong to a concerted marketing effort to produce and disseminate commodities that have to do with Greek culture. Veras, for example, views ethnic success as a function of strategic marketing, ethnic solidarity, and consumerism:

> the way that Greek-Americans supported that show [*Yanni at the Acropolis*] on PBS is why today you have had two documentaries on the Greek-Americans, a third in production, a helicopter aerial show about Greece and, dare I say, the immense success of My Big Fat Greek Wedding'? My company did the groundwork marketing for that movie by staging private movie screenings. ("Impact")

The making of ethnic success, as I pointed out earlier, comes about as a result of market considerations and the cultural activism of gatekeeping producers of ethnicity.[4]

What is ethnic success, according to the documentary? What is at stake when an ethnic group organizes its narrative of success to "pat itself on the back"[5] (Veras, "Impact") through a cultural product that reaches into the very heart of America, its television sets? What strategies does the documentary deploy to foreground ethnic success, and what is at stake in this quest for distinction? I maintain that the documentary is yet another site where Greek America engages in a highly scripted deliberation on self-representation. As such, it generates a narrative of ethnic success that constructs Greek America in accordance with the dictates of liberal multiculturalism.

Such a strategy exhibits a genealogical affinity with Greek America's historical quest for social distinction through an articulation of middle-class status and culture, particularly the appropriation of the discourse of Hellenism. Confronted with multiculturalism, assimilated Greek America undertakes a project of cultural (re)production through tightly regulated self-documentation. The documentary inscribes Greek America within the national imaginary through a reconfiguration of its diasporic location as primarily ethnic, where prestige is conferred through an American ethnic identity constructed around cultural Occidentalism and socioeconomic achievement.

To account sufficiently for the cultural grip that ethnic success, understood as socioeconomic achievement, exercises upon Greek America, my analysis will necessarily span several decades and connect the documentary with extra-textual discourses. I will address early-twentieth-century nativism and assimilation in order to explain Greek America's preoccupation with class-based success. I will also discuss Greek Americans' historical ambivalence toward Greek popular culture in order to situate the documentary's reliance on positively valued ethnic stereotypes as a means of legitimizing cultural success. By considering such historical processes, I will be better able to identify enduring affinities between current and past Greek-American identity politics.

"Documenting" Ethnic Homogeneity

The Greek Americans is part of the heavily advertised PBS Heritage Specials series, which features a wide range of ethnic and racial groups, including Armenian, Chinese, Cuban, German, Greek, Italian, Jewish, Mexican, Polish, and Puerto Rican Americans. This serialization of cultural diversity signals the increasing but still tightly regulated inclusion of representations in the public sphere of "white" ethnics who are neither WASP, Jewish, nor Irish, exemplifying a particular moment in the politics of knowledge about ethnicity: *the adoption of mass technologies by ethnic groups as a strategy for authoring widely accessible self-representations.* Written and produced by Greek-American George Veras and narrated by Roger Caras, the documentary has been promoted as "the first ever, definitive television work that … tells our [Greek-American] fantastic story," enunciating an insider's production of cultural meanings. The commercially available video/DVD of the documentary contains footage not shown in the original television program.[6] Its director has enjoyed the limelight of the ethnic press, received invitations to speak to communities, and enjoyed wide-ranging honors and awards.[7]

The Greek Americans employs the ethnic *topos* of struggle and success. It presents Greek Americans as contemporary Horatio Algers who "started at the bottom," overcame nativist hostility and discrimination, and, while playing fair in a system that did not always do so, through hard work earned "a special place on the American dream scheme."[8] In this typical rags-to-riches narrative*, Greek Americans are portrayed as successful modern agents building upon the legacy of the immigrant past to project a future for Hellenism, whose guardianship they claim.* The documentary anchors Greek Americans to a past, a classic gesture of identity formation. The second part of the series, *The Greek Americans II: Passing the Torch,* addresses issues of cultural preservation to fashion possible ethnic futures.

Who speaks for Greek America here? The documentary showcases popular interpretations interspersed with *selective academic perspectives,* privileging the former as authoritative ethnic representations. Restaurateurs, not sociologists or historians, interpret immigration for the audience. According to Costas Spiliades, owner of Milos restaurant in New York, the Greeks, "out of a deep appreciation for the United States for accepting them during their times of hardship … were very ready to accept the demands of American society." Actors and political celebrities such as Olympia Dukakis and Arianna Huffington-Stassinopoulos authorize the meaning of Greek-American ethnicity: "there is an adventurous spirit and there is an entrepreneurial spirit in Greeks." "The best Greek quality is

a passion for life … the Zorba, the Greek quality of enthusiasm.… To be full of life, to really live life to the fullest" (*Greek Americans*). Corporate executives, not anthropologists or sociologists, interpret ethnicity: participation in ethnic networks "is a way of reaffirming their tribe … it is totally cultural; it is anthropological, Greeks do that a lot." "[*Philotimo*] is a uniquely Greek trait. It is [a] combination of perhaps unreasonable pride, a powerful beyond description force [propelling you] not [to] appear bad in the eyes of other people" (*Greek Americans II*).

The ethnographic orientation of our times is evident here. In witnessing Greek Americans anthropologizing Greek America, any traces of doubt that there might have been concerning the current immersion in the practice of "generalized ethnography" (Bazin) are dissolved. In a multicultural society, Jean Bazin writes, "everyone participates as his neighbor's ethnographer, representing the other's identity in terms of typical behavior. With everyone becoming someone else's native, modern (or postmodern) society must itself become a space of ethnographic inscription" (31).[9] The documentary participates in this process to produce and legitimize, as I will argue, an ideological consensus on what constitutes a Greek-American identity.

Although *The Greek Americans* relies on a plurality of ethnographic interviews and features a variety of perspectives, it ultimately regulates the production of meaning so as to manufacture ethnic homogeneity. The editorial intervention to control meaning is evident in the way the documentary circulates in the public sphere. The videocassette, sold during PBS broadcasting, features additional interview footage in a section supplementing the televised program. I focus on a disjuncture below:

> It wasn't easy but we [the Greeks] overcame [discrimination] with grace and humor. (Narrator, televised version)
>
> And so I had a great deal of difficulty growing up with WASPS. We moved to a community in Arlington that had very few, at that time, ethnic people there. And it is there that I became angry, and I had a great deal of anger about this; [this anger] came out in sports. It was my way of showing, not only that *we* were as good, but that they couldn't come near me, they couldn't you know … The thing I cherished the most was to have a weapon in my hand [laughs]. I laugh about this now, but I was a fencer. (Olympia Dukakis, actress and author, videocassette version; emphasis added)

These two excerpts seem incommensurable—in style, in form, and in the kind of truth they convey. Olympia Dukakis's confession

highlights the private, the corporeal, the subjective. It is assertive, authoritative, and attentive to deeply felt emotions. Discrimination, for Dukakis, has been productive, in the Foucauldian sense. It has prompted her to express herself from the subject position of an embittered oppressed minority, where both mind and body adopt an oppositional posture. Her emotional narrative communicates an "embodied knowledge," claiming a politics of location commonly adopted by minority subjects to articulate difference (Nichols). In this excerpt, the audience witnesses a Greek American speaking from a subject position not commonly associated with Greek America in the popular imagination; a successful artist publicly articulates a profoundly ingrained anger, which she directs toward the dominant society. Her comments reveal that traces of discrimination and distaste did not entirely disappear with the migration of the immigrants to the suburbs. She adopts a stance that could be interpreted as threatening, isolationist, disruptive, and exclusionary. In a documentary endorsing the view of Greek Americans as willingly and peacefully conforming to mainstream America, these comments by Dukakis constitute a subversive rupture.[10]

In contrast, the narrator of the televised text assumes a position of impartial omniscience. His detachment follows the conventions of "objective" journalism, serving to legitimize the production of general truths. In portraying Greek America's historical response to discrimination as a matter of dignified endurance, he defuses Dukakis's anger and privileges a uniformly non-confrontational stance. The editorial decision to exclude Dukakis's comments on discrimination sanctions homogenization by suppressing Greek American views that do not conform to the narrator's script.

Adherence to a particular kind of narrative *form* provides yet another mechanism for naturalizing Greek America as a homogeneous entity. The documentary adopts the conventions of realist representation, plotting its narrative through an unfolding sequence of photographs, videographic footage, newspaper clips, interviews, and commentary. Video footage from family gatherings and community festivities or photographs serve as indexical evidence, supporting narrated historical or social facts. Furthermore, images of dancing in a festival or of a Greek Orthodox liturgy construct the uniqueness of a Greek-American ethno-religious culture. They function as a metalanguage, naturalizing practices as authentic expressions of Greek Americanness.

The documenting camera visits a wide range of diverse yet familiar Greek-American sites. It zooms in on the dancing stage of a Greek festival, represented as the inclusive space where the Greek flair for celebration is realized, the "zest for life" and Zorba-like spirit are performed and shared. It surveys the interiors of Byzantine-style Greek Orthodox churches in the United States as "time capsule[s]" where the "ritual and the moods all reflect ancient

traditions." It dwells on narratives about hardships overcome, ethnic pride, and success, juxtaposed with images of Greek immigrants at work. The camera visits eating establishments, from fine restaurants to Greek-owned diners, as archetypical icons of Greek-American entrepreneurial success. It favors interview segments with Greek-American celebrities, politicians, and business executives to elicit statements on the meaning of Greek-American identity ("Greeks have been a powerful force for some basic values: the emphasis on family, on education, on the church, and on hard work"), visualized through corresponding archival footage.[11]

The documentary seeks to contain the diversity of ethnic and class positions it features through the regulatory intervention of the objective narrator. For example, the Greek-American working class is depicted as having aspired to the American ideology of success. Thus a Greek immigrant hot-dog vendor shown at work represents a stage in a process of inevitable progression: "every slap of mustard means another book in the hands of a well-educated and hardworking disciple of the American dream." The authoritative narrator interjects spoken testimony to control the production of meaning. Thus a young Greek-American's statement, "I don't believe in ever losing Greece, the Greek spirit in me," is followed by the narrator's commentary, which interprets "Greek spirit" for the audience: "working six days a week, twelve hours a day, he [the father of the interviewee] tries to give back that spirit … to his daughter: the spirit of work, the spirit of family."

Faced with such a scripted representation of Greek America, a viewer who is familiar with Greek America's wide range of chroniclers and commentators, both in print and on the podium, will be gravely disappointed. John Kallas's subversive wit, Harry Mark Petrakis's oratory, Dan Georgakas's research on Greek-American radicalism, and Helen Papanikolas's public critique of racist attitudes among "white" ethnics are nowhere to be found in the documentary. They have no place in this "definitive" rendition of Greek America.[12]

The Greek Americans features no Greek-American poets or writers, such as Harry Mark Petrakis, George Pelecanos, Nicholas Samaras, Olga Broumas, or Jeffrey Eugenides. Greek America's labor historians, such as Dan Georgakas and Gunther Peck, are not represented. There are no traces of Greek America's intellectuals with the sociological and literary imagination to provide insights, open up new paths of creative inquiry, illuminate what the narrative's obsession with socioeconomic success prevents viewers from seeing. Their perspectives could potentially have destabilized the documentary's concern with a particular politics of knowledge: the reproduction of the narrative of Greek America as an ethnoreligious Greek Orthodox collectivity and a community with an idealized immigrant past. Such a scripted narrative demands that

only those intellectuals who function as "traditional intellectuals" (Gramsci) and legitimize dominant ideologies in the public sphere speak for the group. The confluence operating in the documentary between selective academic and popular knowledge highlights once again the homogenizing orientation of the documentary. For example, the naturalization of Greek identity as an ethno-religious one is achieved when a chorus of popular voices is complemented by a scholar's, all conflating Greek and Greek Orthodox identities:

> We have the uniqueness of having a heritage and a church that match. (George P. Stamas, co-chairman, Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering)
>
> The church has been very responsible for maintaining the Greek culture. (Dino Anagnost, composer/conductor)
>
> And then we get the irony that Anthony Quinn, of Mexican Irish descent, becomes the prototypical Greek … I understand he converted to Greek Orthodoxy a few years ago. So the greatest Greek of them all has become a Greek. (Charles Moskos, sociologist)

The selective omission of intellectuals and artists could indicate the documentary's emphasis on producing a coherent, monoglossic narrative out of a diversity of perspectives and disjointed visual fragments. The circumscription of Greek America's heterogeneity and complexity is apparent in editorial strategies regulating the production of meaning, manufacturing consensus out of popular representations of Greek America. "Generalized ethnography" functions as a glue that selectively endorses and, in turn, legitimizes two ideologies pertinent to Greek America: the rags-to-riches narrative of struggle and success and the ideology of an inclusive American society. Although they appear fragmentary and diffuse, these oft-cited ethnic *topoi* do not lack ideological unity. They are all part of a "single stream of dominant ideas' into which everything and everyone has been absorbed" (Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance" 434). As Antonio Gramsci suggests, this intellectual unity is the prerequisite for forging and sustaining hegemony through the institutions of civil society and the state. Once established, it becomes deeply ingrained in the individual consciousness, constituting conceptions of the world that are taken for granted.

The (Re)Production of Ethnicity and the Question of Audiences

The Greek Americans is implicated in the politics of ethnic (re)-production and the national discourse on multiculturalism. It

addresses a national audience ambivalent about immigration and difference and predisposed to embrace integrationist perspectives. It also presents itself as an explicitly preservationist cultural project, calling attention to its mission to transmit to future generations an integrationist model for Greek America: "We love being Americans. But we also love our heritage. We love our culture, we love our language. Will we be able to translate all of that to our children and to their children?" (George Tenet, CIA Director).

Such an unambiguously affirmative stance toward the Greek language has not been the historical norm in Greek America, despite considerable individual and institutional investment in language retention. In the 1920s, for example, Greek community leaders in Ohio thought it necessary to invite American scholars to defend the Greek language publicly. In an era when the public use of immigrant languages was stigmatized as un-American, non-Greek authorities endowed the Greek language with universal prestige, to convince the immigrants that they "have underestimated the power their [Greek] native tongue yields to the world" (Alex iii). In the early immigration years, cultural particularity was worth retaining only on the grounds of its universal appeal, an idea that remains consistent with Greek immigrant aspirations for national inclusion today.

Counteracted by assimilation pressures, this strategy for language preservation was not historically effective. Even in the multicultural present, American-born Greek Americans are often embarrassed by aspects of immigrant culture, and their sensibilities are offended by the use of Greek language in certain contexts (Chock, "Irony"). Despite a certain rate of language maintenance, the current shift away from Greek language retention (Demos), particularly in suburban Greek America, offers no evidence of a linguistically thriving community.[13]

A similar case can be made with regard to Greek-American predispositions toward Greek culture. A significant segment of Greek America is often ambivalent about, if not outright hostile toward, immigrant culture. Since the turn of the twentieth century, native Greek popular culture has been a source of embarrassment for Greek America, as it interfered with the quest for inclusion in American modernity. Superstitions, dream books, folk healing, and haggling meaningfully organized aspects of immigrant life but were perceived by the dominant culture and many immigrants as signs of lack of coevalness (Fabian), backward remnants of a traditional life that needed to yield to modern habits of prescribed contact, rational predictability, and scientific inquiry. In an age obsessed with conformity, the accents of immigrant parents only reinforced feelings of inferiority in their children, adding to the sense of otherness they endured at school. Regulation of adolescent behavior by vigilant, authoritative parents buttressed the notion that

immigrant culture represented constraining tradition, in stark contrast to the American ideals of liberty and choice. Many Greek Americans were caught between the obligations exerted by immigrant traditions and the visions of self-determination promised by American modernity.

Furthermore, many Greek Americans erect symbolic boundaries to disassociate themselves from the perceived "foreignness" of the immigrants. The designation of post–World War II Greek immigrants as "Displaced Persons," a "generic expression [used] by the second and third generation to describe negatively recent arrivals from Greece" (Moskos 60), as well as their Orientalist designation as "lazy" (Karpathakis) and a potential threat to Greek-American morality (Patrinacos), indicates the extent to which immigrant culture is often considered a sign of radical difference, vulnerable to the stigma America attaches to its non-assimilated minorities.[14]

It is in such a context that *The Greek Americans* makes a case for the value of ethnicity to a Greek-American audience often skeptical about the relevance of Greek culture. *The effectiveness of the narration, therefore, rests on its capacity to attach positive value to Greek ethnicity.* To this effect it resorts to rhetoric, designed to convince, rather than describe or identify the truth, and employed to induce attitudes and dispositions to act, legitimizing ethnic (re)production.

The emphasis the documentary places on stereotypical self-ascription is also closely linked with multicultural politics. Along with other minorities, early Greek Americans were subjected to negative stereotypes and felt their powerful material and psychological consequences. Greek Americans are historically situated, then, to recognize that it is vital to create positive narratives of self in relation to changing definitions and criteria of national belonging. Stereotypes, Michael Herzfeld writes, "are both instrument and symbol of hegemony" ("Hellenism" 222). Greek Americans have learned this lesson well. As we saw earlier, in spite of their eagerness to conform and distance themselves from a position of alterity, they can always be subjected to the power of the dominant society to demarcate boundaries between the domestic and the foreign.

Paradoxically, while Greek Americans currently describe themselves as "super Americans," "honorary Americans," and "disciples of the American dream," they still operate within the logic of minority discourse. Minorities coerced into a "negative generic subject-position" invest to transform this location "into a positive collective one" (JanMohamed and Lloyd 10). Realist representations establishing the "facts" of collective success exemplify once again Greek America's vigilance on the politics of representation. Greek America's historical experience in mobilizing identity politics as a means

of cultural hegemony informs its self-presentation in the new hegemonic formation, liberal multiculturalism.

In addition to its reliance on positive stereotyping, the cultural politics of *The Greek Americans* touches on the significance of ethnic belonging in the current context of rapidly changing communities and cultural de-centering. In view of fragmentation and the scattering of meaning, fluidity, and contingency—all in a context of rampant cultural commodification—coherence, stability, and continuity have become the central ingredients of narratives seeking to anchor individuals in enduring structures of collective belonging. If the paradigm of symbolic ethnicity emphasizes the contextual fluidity and even superficiality of "white" ethnic identities, claims about cultural belonging are expressed in terms of primordial ethnic ties. Access to an authentic, deep truth provides not only *an effective center of identification* but also the means of appropriating exclusive rights to a particular identity.

Consider, for example, the following statements featured in the documentary:

> It's just the magic of being Greek that I cannot quite explain.
>
> Part of the Greek heritage is zen-like, there is this spiritual bond, this passage from one generation to another. I don't really think that you can put your finger on it; it's just there. (*The Greek Americans II,* videocassette version)
>
> I think that at an almost a primal level, from that visit [to Greece], I understood what it meant to be Greek.

The connection of ethnic sentiments with primordial authenticity takes place here through the deployment of a New Age vocabulary about accessing a hidden, metaphysical self. Outside the grasp of rationality and language, the ethnic self becomes a mystical primitive, marked as Greek yet simultaneously canceling its specificity as it becomes part of the New Age generalized discourse on the spirituality of the self. Not unlike the characters of Amy Tan's novels (Ma 113), Greek-American executives and professionals ethnicize the primitive, counterbalancing anomie with feelings of deep belonging. In this articulation, ethnicity resonates with the sensibilities of "white" middle-class audiences familiar with New Age ideas as it simultaneously inscribes an acceptable location for assimilated professionals on the map of multiculturalism.

In its rhetorical strategies, as I have shown, the documentary relies on the production of tightly controlled scripts organized around positive stereotyping. Legitimized by naturalist representations, stereotypes constitute powerful rhetorical tools capable of

inciting action and demarcating moral boundaries. The documentary could be seen, then, in terms of rhetorical strategies that construct a positively valued past and present as a necessary condition for ensuring a cultural *future* for Greek America. From this perspective, *The Greek Americans* and *The Greek Americans II: Passing the Torch* generate dialectical identity narratives. Ethnic affirmation is constructed through a positively valued past and present focusing on middle-class values of family, work ethic, and church. In turn, ethnic affirmation opens up future possibilities of cultural becoming.[15] In order to inspire and convince, this dialectic extracts from the complexity of history a thread of socially approved values and predispositions that are subsequently highlighted as *the* components of a distinct Greek-American identity. In the process, *The Greek Americans* produces an ideal community, endorses an ahistorical perspective, and advocates an ideology of cultural difference.

The likelihood of interpreting Greek America in multiple ways makes urgent *the editorial effort to tightly script Greek America as a uniformly successful, American ethnic group.* Such a politics of representation is not an isolated occurrence but an integral component in Greek America's public self-presentation. Greek America has historically generated reflective narratives claiming ethnic locations in conformity with hegemonic social structures. In order to contextualize this logic of conformity, it is necessary to adopt a more general view of Greek-American cultural productions and link the documentary with early Greek immigrant identity politics.

Authentic Americans, Quintessential Greeks: Early-Twentieth-Century Assimilation and the Politics of Immigrant Belonging

The PBS documentary situates Greek America's propensity for assimilation in historical terms. When the narrator proclaims, "this boundless spirit [embracing and respecting other people and their culture'] has served us well for four thousand years. We understand assimilation; how to be part of another culture without losing our identity or roots," he underlines Greek America's capacity for integration into the host society as well as a reflexive engagement with the politics of representation.

If immigrants, as a marked category, are subjected to the disciplinary gaze of the dominant, reflecting back on the center becomes necessary for the negotiation of power relations. This is an inextricable feature of modernity, as Anthony Giddens has argued. The surveillance of dominant structures initiates a reflective process aiming at the "smoothing of the rough edges such that behavior which is not integrated into a system—that is not knowledge-

ably built into the mechanics of system reproduction—becomes alien and discrete" (Giddens 150). Immigration as a discourse delineating the boundaries of the nation initiates a process of reflection on processes of inclusion and exclusion. Often mediated by native elites, the politics of immigrant belonging resemble an anthropological hall of mirrors. Negotiation requires a vantage point capitalizing on the knowledge of the system and its mechanisms of power, from which point it is possible to reflect and deliberate on strategic positioning. Subjected to the gaze of the dominant, immigrants set up a system of counter-surveillance. Subjected to national scrutiny, the immigrants, not unlike anthropological "natives," gaze back. The dominant "observers [are] observed," as George Stocking has aptly put it in another context, so that the Other can identify strategic locations for self-representation.

At the height of American nativism in the 1920s, for example, George Horton, an influential politician who served as US consul general in Athens and as American consul in Smyrna, advised "every Greek" in America to combat "sly anti-Hellenic propaganda" by not speaking "ill of another Greek in public" and to "[c]hoke down your jealousy, or antipathy, or political difference" (Leber 184). "Whenever you speak of a Greek say [that] [h]e is a very fine fellow,'" he cautioned members of AHEPA (184), unmistakably delivering a powerful lesson in immigrant politics: public self-presentation matters in America.[16]

Yet such mediated reflexivity in matters of public presentation was not discovered in the diaspora. Rather, it has deep roots in Greek immigrants' cultural background. "There is a Greek saying," ballerina Helene Alexopoulos comments in the televised version of *Greek Americans II: Passing the Torch:* "It's better [to poke] your *eye* than your name" (this dictum translates, "better to lose your eye than your good name"). "[There is] this overwhelming sense of you having to do well, not simply for yourself, but for everyone else." The ubiquitous Greek phrase "What would people say?" conveys the notion of public evaluation inherent in the traditional Greek code of honor. The reputation of collectivities in various segmented levels of identification—the family, the village, and the nation (Herzfeld, "Hellenism")—relies on the regulation of public knowledge, of what is permitted to be shared with others and what is zealously kept away from the collective gaze, and its inherently disciplinary evaluation. This cultural predisposition was finely tuned in the American context, often articulated by cultural elites. Immigrant cultural codes dictated that non-conformity to socially authorized expectations could result in stigmatization and even ostracism. The editing of collective self-representation in conformity to dominant scripts functioned as a mechanism of social control sanctioning assimilation.

In view of such a deeply felt sensitivity to public evaluation, contemporary audiences cannot perhaps ever begin to imagine the extent of immigrant shame resulting from the symbolic and even physical violence fueled by racialized nativism. Nativists dehumanized Greek immigrants; the following signs, appearing respectively in restaurants and newspaper advertisements, speak volumes about the extent of immigrant humiliation: "No Sailors, dogs, or Greeks allowed" (Akrotirianakis 26) and "John's Restaurant, Pure American. No Rats, No Greeks" (Leber 104). Greeks, along with other southeastern European immigrants of the time, were haunted by racialized theories and practices challenging their mental and racial fitness for equal inclusion in the nation.[17] The immigrants were seen as entities alien to the national body, ultimately unassimilable. As the influential academic nativist Kenneth Roberts puts it, "an ostrich could assimilate a croquet ball or a cobble-stone with about the same ease that America assimilated her newcomers from Central and Southeastern Europe" (4).

Furthermore, racial nativism dismissed wholesale the immigrants' campaign to present the Greeks as heirs of ancient Greek civilization. As a source of prestige as well as a strategy to distance Greek immigrants from their southeastern counterparts (Anagnostu), the notion of Greek continuity became the subject of sarcastic dismissal in the writings of Roberts:

> The Modern Greeks like to have visitors believe that they are descended straight from the true Greeks of the days of Pericles; but if they are, then every Greek bootblack in New England is descended straight from Plymouth Colony. The Greeks of to-day—except on some of the Greek islands, which have been comparatively free from invasion and immigration—are descended from Asiatic and African slaves, Italians, old Bulgarians, Slavs, Gepidæ, Huns, Herulians, Avars, Egyptians, Jews, Illyrians, Arabs, Spaniards, Walloons, Franks, Albanians, and several other races. History has an unfortunate but incurable habit of repeating itself,—and a word to the wise ought to be better than a jab with an eight-inch hatpin. (232)

Similarly, popular classifications placed the Greeks as undifferentiated members of a racially inferior Mediterranean race:

> The driver mounted his quickly emptied wagon, with a curse upon the "Dagos," and the crowd informally discussed for a while the immigration question; its verdict being, that it is time to shut our doors against the Greeks, for they are a poor lot from which to make good American citizens. (Steiner 283)

They were also racialized as non-white, along with other immigrant groups of the time: "in Utah, Greeks were thought to be lawless, dirty, lewd, and lazy, images that paralleled then current national stereotypes of African Americans in the South" (Peck 167).[18]

Racist nativism, then—and its political arm, immigrant restrictionism—posited a moment of crisis in American modernity as it sought institutionally to locate the immigrant once and for all outside the polity. The republican promise of universal inclusion through civic and cultural assimilation was pre-empted, as the newcomers were seen as genetically unfit to partake of the obligations and rights of citizenship. In a ruthless political program of exclusion, nativists sought to ban immigrants from the polity, fixing immigrant identities as a badge of incompatible, threatening difference.

If nativism barred the immigrants from the polity, the assimilationist brand of "progressive racism" (Michaels) placed the immigrants in an ambiguous, unstable location, a potential component of the nation but also outside it. The following comments by anthropologist Henry Pratt Fairchild indicate that the national inclusion of southeastern European immigrants into the racialized nation was seen as a process of natural selection, while class status served as a mirror of racial fitness:

> The business of the alien is to go into the mines, the foundries, the sewers, the stifling air of factories and work shops, out on the roads and railroads in the burning sun of summer, or the driving sleet and snow. If he proves himself a man, and rises above his station, and acquires wealth, and cleans himself up—very well, we receive him after a generation or two. But at present he is far beneath us, and the burden of proof rests with him. (237)

Linking race, class, gender, and the nation, this commentary underlines the pervasiveness of social Darwinism in narratives of assimilation. Here, the assimilation of the immigrant is framed generationally, as the author builds on a central motif of what Werner Sollors calls "genetics of salvation" (88). American identity, according to this concept, is "safely and easily received" by the native-born by virtue of birth and descent, "but [it is] something that foreign-born workers would have to strive long and hard to achieve" (Sollors 88). Here, the labor conditions of industrial capitalism function to test racial immigrant fitness. The transformation of wage labor, a class location associated with non-whiteness, into middle-class respectability, a sign of republican "whiteness," mirrors racial inclusion. Not unlike the Protestant covenant with God, material wealth guarantees immigrant national salvation.

Though the notion of the unassimilable foreigner (the nativist project) and the immigrant as a potential national subject (the assimilationist project) seem mutually contradictory, they are in effect dialectically related. The stigmatization of the incoming immigrant as irreducible alien fuels the need for those "foreigners" desiring national inclusion to demonstrate their claim to nationhood. Shedding the stigma of second-class citizenship means conforming to the assimilationist prescription of proper Americanism. The two scripts operate dialectically to discipline immigrant conformity. This is so because the assimilation of certain classes of immigrants into American "whiteness" posed no challenge to the logic of racial nationalism, which consistently projected a class-based model of racial stratification within a group.

This dialectical connection is manifested in the way a certain class of Greek immigrants pursued assimilation by rewriting the immigrant past in terms of *racial* continuity, claiming the ancient Greeks as their authentic ancestors. This approach was a necessity for those Greeks who were already American citizens or aspired to become so, since it was their ancestral identity that ultimately determined their full access to an American political and national (racial) identity. As Walter Benn Michaels observes, "the Johnson Act's technology for making crucial the ancestry of those who might become American required that the ancestry of those who already were American be made crucial also" (30). Thus, though coerced to forget their past, the immigrants had to reflect on how to rewrite their ancestral ties in a manner compatible with the dictates of racist *and* republican nationalism.

In an ingenious case of identity politics, early Greek immigrants were able to construct a powerful identity narrative around the designation "American Hellene." This dual identification transcended the assimilationist fear of hyphenated national identities while enabling the immigrants to claim authentic access to the discourse of Hellenism. Since early in the twentieth century, when AHEPA launched the project of institutionally legitimizing Greek Americans as the racial and cultural descendants of classical Greeks, the discourse of Hellenism had been an enduring theme in Greek-American cultural politics. In a host society positing the ideals of classical Greece as its cultural and political model, the immigrant claim was plain: as racial descendants and cultural heirs of classical Greece, Greek immigrants were not only endowed with the potential to embrace "Americanness," they had access to "ur-Americanness."

AHEPA successfully negotiated the historical burden imposed by the dominant society to substantiate the immigrant claims of continuity with the ancient Greeks and, by extension, the right to be included in the American national imaginary. Its self-reflexive

project of "ethnogenesis," the conjuring up of a new identity, was scripted by the dictates of American assimilationist modernity. Class location was crucial in the legitimization of the immigrants as "American Hellenes." Within the then-popular discourse of social Darwinism, Greek America's early middle-class status—achieved through small business ownership—served as a mirror of racial fitness and therefore as a criterion for inclusion in the American nation. Socioeconomic mobility served as a necessary index of immigrant "racial endurance" and enabled access to American fraternal organizations positing middle-class status as a badge of respectability. It constitutionally endorsed the precepts of "hundred percent" Americanism by distancing itself from labor activism as it cultivated an identity of American middle-class respectability and patriotism through affiliation with the modern paragons of Americanism: masonry and the American Legion. Thus, Greek America's penchant for assimilation should be understood as an articulation of class interests and culture.[19]

In addition to endowing Greek immigrants with social distinction, acquiescence to the anti-labor politics of the "hundred percent" Americanization movement made AHEPA complicit in the ideological neutralization of the politically working-class as un-American. With no discursive site to accommodate immigrant labor unionists or alternative non-conformist identities, AHEPA located Greek America's non-middle-class "others" outside the national imaginary. Furthermore, it taught a valuable lesson to Greek America: ethnic representations that comply with dominant ideas return social dividends. "Whiteness" comes packaged with privileges, as the following public reception of the national AHEPA convention by city officials in Columbus, OH, testifies:

> Persons coming to Columbus during this convention will not need a key to the city for no door will be locked to exclude the fine citizenship that composes the personnel of this national organization. The public buildings, the churches, the schools, the parks, the universities and in fact all of the city is pleased to open wide the door of hospitality to the patriotic citizenship of Greek ancestry that has made this country its adopted home. (Convention Album)

Assimilation disables the stigma of political and cultural non-conformity and, in turn, enables class-based ethnic interests. The current Greek-American fixation on entrepreneurship and socio-economic success reflects the extent to which Greek America has internalized America's stigmatization of poor, non-conforming minorities. While America keeps evaluating the performance of ethnic groups in its own terms, Greek America apotheosizes American

mythologies of success. As the PBS documentary demonstrates, Greek Americans translate their astonishing material and symbolic investment toward proving their self-worth into a badge of distinction: a group "specially anointed, in a special time, in a special place." Greek America's hard-earned social distinction evidently frames the ethnic group's pompous embrace of the American Dream:

> You find the Greeks who believe in the impossible, you know, to dream the impossible dream. They came over here as immigrants, and now they're the number one educated group in this United States, number two group financially, everything is possible if you believe in yourself. And in America, everything is possible if you believe in America. (Reverend Father Alexander Karloutsos, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America)

The notion of the Greek ancient past as a historical burden that requires a certain kind of cultural performance—early-twentieth-century Greek immigrants were coerced to substantiate, in action and deed, appearance and behavior, their claims to a Hellenic identity—carries over into the logic and politics of the documentary. "How would you like to have the responsibility for your actions measured against one of the world's greatest civilizations?" the narrator concludes in *The Greek Americans,* attesting to the firm grip Western Hellenism exercises on Greek-American identity.[20] This connection could be said to inform a dialectic in the making of Greek-American identity. Wholly contrary to present celebrations of postmodern identity as unconstrained choice, Greek Americans do *not* dissociate their identities from a set of culturally constituted duties and obligations. This point is stressed in *The Greek Americans*. The narrator emphatically announces it: "thousands of years of Hellenic culture. . . . How do you compete with Aristotle and Plato and Aristophanes, and all these cats?" and "We expect the highest level of accomplishment; it is the standard for Greek Americans." George Stephanopoulos legitimizes it: "To be Greek is to be good in what you do." And Olympia Dukakis enunciates it in her personal determination to demonstrate achievement. Ethnic success, measured in terms of high national rankings in educational and socioeconomic standing, has become a dominant index for translating Greek identity into an ethos of striving for social distinction.[21] This understanding of cultural identity as a burden requiring behavioral manifestation exhibits affinities with the case of diasporan Armenians under the conditions described by Khachig Tölölyan. Tölölyan recalls an era when the claim to a transnational Armenian identity was linked with subjection to demanding duties and obligations, "but the dominant view was that just as being the citizen of a

nation-state had a cost (taxes, the draft, obedience to laws), so also membership in a diasporic branch of the transnation must have a cost, a demonstration of loyalty that undertook the responsibility of sacrifice" ("Rethinking" 15). The specific definition and manifestation of duties and obligation demonstrating ethnic belonging in diaspora are historically contingent. In the Greek-American case, cultural identities are constituted at the intersection between ethnic narratives about the self, the transnational discourse of Hellenism, and the host society's representations of its Others.

Authentic Americans, Quintessential Greeks Revisited: Multiculturalism and the Politics of Ethnic Belonging

Multiculturalism poses a challenge to the Greek-American predilection for assimilation, as it raises the issue of accommodating cultural particularity in the quest for equal inclusion for all in American society. In this dynamic, assimilation pulls Greek America within the orbit of power structures, mainstream institutions, and decision-making processes, rewarding members of the group with social approval and prestige. Ethnic belonging, on the other hand, as a primary mode of identification and collective mobilization, may lead to a centrifugal process of interethnic strife and disunity. In order to neutralize the potential disjuncture between integration and fragmentation, the documentary undertakes a dialectically related, twofold intervention. First, it participates in the national discourse on liberal multiculturalism, representing Greek Americans as national subjects embracing ethnic integration. Second, it projects a positive valuation of Greek ethnicity to advance cultural (re)production. Its task lies in re-inscribing Greek Americans as simultaneous model Americans and quintessential Greeks under conditions of multiculturalism.

In view of its ideology of inclusion, how can Greek America claim access to an authentic, originary Greekness and, at the same time, request full membership in the American national community? The documentary cancels the potential conflict between Greek America's "Greekness" and its "Americanness" by reterritorializing the former as a legitimate part of the (American) national "whole." To accomplish this feat, it privileges the reconfiguration of Greek America from a diasporic location of potentially disruptive difference, associated with transnational political and/or cultural commitments to a homeland elsewhere, to an inclusive, indigenous, ethnic identity. The idea that America represents the modern, natural homeland of Greek Americans is at the core of the documentary's politics of inclusion.

Greek immigration to America entailed a paradoxically familiar return, according to *The Greek Americans*. Wandering restlessly since the era of Alexander the Great, the descendants of the ancient

Greeks found redemption in America when they encountered the deterritorialized institutional context of ancient Greek democracy.

> We've made our impact on the world over the centuries, but we've only been in America since the 1800s. For us, coming to America meant you could take care of your family. We've always been searching for new challenges since the time of Alexander the Great. We found it in America, even though the journey, at times, has been painful. (narrator)

> The roots of what this country has become were set in Greece. And America took it, opened the doors, opened the opportunity and made a contract with everyone that said if you work hard, if you play fair … the sky is the limit. And that's the ultimate culmination of democracy. (Peter Venetis, president of Atlantic Bank)

Here, the perpetual quest of a "racial" group for its "natural" cultural state (re)discovers in America the fallen Classical Greek world restored. A people is bound to find redemption not in the "natural" soil of its birth, the Greek peninsula, but in the diaspora, where it reterritorializes its identity in relation to dominant ideologies. *Diaspora, in this perspective, entails not the commonly theorized movement away from a homeland but, rather, a journey toward a deterritorialized home.* It embodies the culmination of a process as it sets in motion a project of (re)acclimatization. In this view of diaspora, creating a home in the host society becomes as important as tracing past origins (see Bakalian). As Avtar Brah observes, "diasporic journeys are about settling down, about putting roots elsewhere'" (182). Greek America capitalizes on the American political identification with the principles of ancient Greek democracy by reconfiguring this "elsewhere" into the restored originary homeland.

The implications of this construction are significant in reformulating the meaning of being in diaspora. Rather than looking back nostalgically toward a lost center, a collectivity reflects on its identity as a process of becoming. Rather than viewing assimilation negatively, a group engages tactically with dominant cultural expectations of conformity. The past does not become *the sole* compass of identity; rather, relative positioning vis-à-vis hegemonic constructions of self and "other" occupies center stage.

The historical quest of an ethnic group to reterritorialize its diasporic location to one integrally linked with the host nation is an enduring theme in the making of Greek-American identity. It entails a foundational narrative, connected with AHEPA's cultural project, that posits America as the natural location of the Greek

immigrants and reconfigures their identities in relation to a *normative, national* American self. Reclaiming a home and refashioning inclusive identities in diaspora do not take place in a vacuum, however. This quest is activated within dynamic political economies centering on changing constructions of the nation and its Others. It inherently involves negotiation and acute knowledge of the host society's context-specific boundaries of national inclusion. Its effectiveness cannot be dissociated from a strategic politics of representation. Therefore, *The Greek Americans* rewrites AHEPA's earlier cultural project to naturalize Greek immigrants in America as American Hellenes within the context of multiculturalism.

The documentary begins where early AHEPA left off. While the latter sanctioned the forgetting of popular culture under the reigning paradigm of assimilation (Anagnostou, "Forget"), the former re-inscribes Greek America culturally. Here the ideology of inclusion is constructed through permeable boundaries between Greek ethnicity and American culture as well as through boundaries of differentiation between Greek Americans and Greeks in Greece. A crucial strategy of this process of ethnicization is to Occidentalize Greek America; such a construction expands the range of Americanness to include the Occidentalized ethnic Greek. In this formulation, the exclusive logic of identity formation (one is not an X because one is a Y) is challenged by the mediating category "Occidentalism." In America, where Occidentalism is posited as the cultural model of preference, one can be an "originary" *Western* Greek and therefore integrally belong to cultural Americanness.[22]

Several narrative threads in the documentary point to a view of Greek immigration as a process integrally linked with cultural Occidentalization. Immigration—the story goes—initiated an unspecified process of cultural selection whereby Greeks in America "brought the best of the Greek culture" (commitment to hard work, charity, community involvement, and education), "these . . . wonderful things that we should keep up," with them while they "forgot the worst" (*Greek Americans II,* videocassette version). Capitalizing on the discourse of heritage, which involves selective cultural (re)-production, a point of view in the documentary reactivates the concept of *palingenesis* (rebirth), a central notion in Greek-American identity narratives (see Kalogeras, "Narrating").

The demarcation of *palingenesis* around the theme of cultural perfection in diaspora draws a boundary between Greek Americans and Greeks in Greece, disrupting the view of Greek Americans as a natural diasporic extension of the Greek homeland. This perspective is consistent with the documentary's presentation of Greek Americans as an American ethnic group whose loyalty, cultural affiliation, and sense of belonging make for a uniquely American

formation, reproducing in this way the hegemonic view of Greek-American identity as "not that of a transplanted Greek, but rather the sensibility of an American ethnic" (Moskos 146).[23]

Cultural distancing as a direct outcome of immigration is accomplished by aligning the Greek-American self along values privileged by Occidentalism—individualism, discipline, order, and equality. Thus images of Zorba the Greek, the consummate embodiment of undisciplined emotionality and non-productive (in a capitalist sense) sensual abandon, are repeatedly tempered by an emphasis on the Greek-American work ethic. Assertions such as "[we are] good at work, great at play," "at the root, we're all about hard work," and "Greeks, as much as we like to have fun, we're also workaholics" point to the "taming" of an Orientalist stereotype through the appropriation of Occidental values.

Occidentalism is expressed through a critique of those cultural dispositions that tend to counter it. If Greek individualism has consistently been deployed as an argument for Greek immigrant fitness in America, the "negative variety" of *eghoismos* (competitive self-regard) brings to the fore disruptive atomism (see Herzfeld, "Hellenism" 224). In this instance, immigration as a new beginning is associated with a particular interpretation of *eghoismos.* According to Herzfeld, the term *eghoismos* captures at once two meanings: positively valued individualism and negatively valued, disruptive, atomism. This semantic coherence fractures into an Occidental and Orientalist model of national identity once the cultural orientation of Greece (Western or Eastern?) is at stake ("Hellenism" 224). In Greek America, *eghoismos* is criticized as the "Greek ego, our Achilles heel." Threatening collective action, it becomes an element of unruliness and uncivil divisions. As a result, it is singled out as an unwanted anomaly in the Greek-American self.

The critical singling out of *eghoismos* points to the "incomplete" Occidentalization of Greek Americans. It also draws boundaries between Greek Americans and Greeks in Greece. Unlike the latter, whose Western self is confronted by an internal "Oriental" Other—marking a historically constituted ambivalence that makes Greeks less-than-authentic Occidentals (Herzfeld, "Hellenism")—Greeks in America are constituted as emerging Occidentals whose identity is constructed in relation to an ur-Western ("white") American Other. Occidental perfection—the cultural model of preference in America—enables Greek Americans to disavow any association with minority status and therefore claim the status of honorary Americans, in fact "America's ambassadors in the world." According to this logic, the indigenous ethnic identity that emerges as the end result of a diasporic journey guarantees a privileged location devoid of non-Western, "Oriental" "polluting," and therefore "corrupting," elements.

Ethnic Occidentalism, in this case, becomes a strategy of inclusion at yet another level. As the documentary Occidentalizes the cultural specificity of Greek Americans, it participates in the typification of ethno-racial difference. Bonnie Urcuioli argues that inclusion in ethnicized America is accomplished through the construction of identity around American middle-class values. Becoming an American involves a class-based definition of identity, cross-cutting racial and ethnic fault lines. Indeed, the similarities in the identity discourse of ethnic and racial groups are remarkable. Asian Americans, for example, value achievement as "a way to honor their families" and, as a result, devote themselves to classical American virtues—hard work, discipline … [while making] enormous sacrifices to educate their children" (San Juan 145). This view is not far removed from Greek-American representations of self: hardworking, pro-education, and family centered. This identity construction resolves a classic American dilemma regarding how to construct unity out of plurality, singularity out of diversity, oneness out of many-ness (Walzer). *As cultural belonging becomes the dominant mode of group affiliation* and collective mobilization, it threatens to fracture the nation into distinct, incommensurable groups. In a society confronted by the potential conflict between "oneness" and "many-ness," the centering of identity on mainstream middle-class values enables ethnic and racial groups to stand metonymically for the American cultural whole.

In its integrationist politics of difference, ethnic Occidentalism opens a discursive space to expand the range of Americanness: "What is more American than having a delicious slice of lamb gyro at the festival?" the narrator asks, pursuing a politics of assimilating Americans *into* Greeks: "It makes you feel like one of us.… The Greek food, dancing, cooking, talking and singing … we want you to be part of us." In this dialectical logic, ethnic practices become American even as Americans assimilate to ethnic culture. The discourse of liberal pluralism enables ethnic representations to expand the "vocabulary" of the host nation. In expanding the cultural category "American," the power relations inherent in the process of assimilation seem to balance somewhat, as ethnics can now sponsor their own politics of countercultural assimilation. In this instance, ethnic culture, long subjected to assimilative pressures, becomes the site of American assimilation into ethnicity. This "leveling of the playing field" is not without its ideological implications. Commodified liberal multiculturalism manufactures cultural equality as it defers addressing inequality in the social and political realm. Greek America's participation in the discourse of multiculturalism is consistent, therefore, with a long tradition of fortifying the former's position in relation to hegemonic formations. What could be perceived as a counter-assimilationist politics of difference may

indicate "another stage of assimilation," this time in the new historical bloc of liberal multiculturalism (Jusdanis, *Necessary* 171).

The Greek Americans organizes its narrative around the ideology of liberal multiculturalism. Festivals, attachment to ethnic roots, and immigrant values become tropes to assimilate difference to the conventions dictated by liberal pluralism: ethnic food, dancing and singing, appreciation of tradition and roots, and community spirit all become signs of ethnic difference. Colorfully exotic and non-threatening, depoliticized, celebratory, and commercialized, difference, in this context, works to affirm the notion of America as an inclusive cultural democracy. Playfully enacted in festivals and parades and artfully manipulated as lifestyles of choice, postmodern identities are largely perceived as a commodity-centered play of signifiers within the context of cultural tourism and leisure consumerism. Spectacle oriented, they celebrate identity, heritage, and roots, becoming liberal multiculturalism's visible and public sign of cultural diversity.

Yet, as Gregory Jusdanis observes, this model "applies primarily to the identities of white' Americans of European descent." In contrast to the politicization of identities observed among racial minorities, "white" ethnics "may parade [their identities] in ethnic festivals [but] must keep them out of politics" in "exchange for their admittance into the civic public sphere" (*Necessary* 170). Private and non-confrontational, they buttress the ideology of America as an inclusive cultural democracy as they refrain from confronting structures of inequality and exclusion.

The documentary's Occidentalist cultural model enables a "white" ethnic group to claim access simultaneously to "authentic" cultural Americanness and to ethnic Greekness and, in so doing, to avoid the stigma of a minority. Yet, not unlike Orientalism, which chokes Asian America in a "deathly embrace" (Ma), Occidentalism also stifles Greek America as it circumscribes ethnic identity exclusively in terms of normative American expectations of otherness and, as a result, marginalizes alternative definitions of Greek-American identity and success.

Beyond the Duality of "Assimilated Ethnic–Diasporic Transnational"

To say that *The Greek Americans* homogenizes Greek America is not to argue that it effectively manages to contain the latter's meaning completely. To the contrary, the representational medium itself, visual imagery, problematizes narrative authority. In visual representations, Nicholas Mirzoeff suggests, diaspora offers itself to be seen through a "multiple viewpoint (6); it "cannot be represented from the viewpoint of one-point perspective" (2). Images, he con-

tinues, "create multiple visual and intellectual associations both within and beyond the intent of the producer of that image" (7). Inextricably linked with polyvocality, diaspora becomes "an inevitably plural noun" (2) that resists reduction to a single meaning.

The documentary's reproduction of Greek Americans as an American ethnic group, rather than as a Greek diasporic one (Moskos 146), is undermined by images of festival dancing. This visual representation, interpreted by interviewees as the embodiment of the "Zorba spirit," could indeed point to a distinct Greek-American genre, the ethnic festival, which took root in America during the post–Civil Rights era. But alternative interpretations are available here, enmeshing Zorba within a web of associations pointing to the transnational dimension of Greek America. The international popularity of Michalis Cacoyannis's 1964 film *Zorba the Greek* not only expanded many tourists' itinerary to include Greece but also proved instrumental in spearheading Greek-American cultural revitalization. Within the emerging industry of domestic ethnic tourism, too, Greek-American festivals showcased the Zorba imagery to attract suburbanites seeking exotic thrills in their own backyards. It is impossible to separate the transnational undertones associated with Zorba dancing in a Cretan landscape and Zorba-like performances of masculinity in Greek-American festivals. Moreover, when Greek festival organizers invite the public—as they did in Columbus, Ohio, in 1998—to imagine the festival as a place that transposes its visitors to Greece, they point to transnational associations that configure Greek festivals as both diasporic and ethnic. To insist on the legitimacy of only one identity is to reduce ethnicity to a monolithic whole.

I have argued here that Hellenism, a discourse that Greek America has appropriated to configure its fixed transnational connections to ancient Greece, has been crucial in sustaining the Greek-American ethos of socioeconomic success. This connection enables it to make a case about its Greekness as well as its political and cultural Americanness. In this respect, AHEPA's early-twentieth-century cultural politics underscores the impossibility of total forgetting in American assimilationist modernity. Becoming modern, that is, an American national, was linked with the construction of a transnational past. As Paul de Man's reading of Nietzsche shows, forgetting in modernity becomes an impossible project, since "the more radical the rejection of anything that came before, the greater the dependence on the past" (400). The "combined interplay of a deliberate forgetting with an action that is also a new origin reaches the full power of the idea of modernity," de Man (389) writes, underlining the impossibility of becoming modern in/as an act of total forgetting.

> Modernity invests its trust in the power of the present moment as an origin, but discovers that, in severing itself from the past, it has at the same time severed itself from the present ... the rejection of the past [by a critical historian] is not so much an act of forgetting as an act of critical judgment directed against himself. (390)

It is this predicament that defines the Greek immigrant experience in American modernity: to become modern means to turn reflexive regarding the location of the *ethnic* past in relation to the nation. It is through this movement, mediated by power relations, that particular transnational discourses intersect with discourses in the host society on culture, class, and race. Following this logic, the nationalization of an ethnic group cannot be reduced to an indigenous ethnic phenomenon. Rather, ethnicity in diaspora is constructed at the intersection of transnational and national discourses.

AHEPA has been one among many immigrant institutional sites producing a specific narrative of American national and transnational affiliation. At first glance, AHEPA's political and cultural distancing from Greek nationalism could be interpreted as further evidence for the view of Greek America as an American ethnic rather than diasporic formation. But my analysis implies otherwise. It is no longer possible to analytically separate a transnational/diasporic identity (understood as a relation to a culture claimed as ancestral) and an ethnic identity (understood as a hyphenation in relation to the host national culture). Rather, such formations are constituted as articulations of transnational *and* national discourses. To affirm this is also to resist a linear reading of AHEPA's assimilationism. The association's alignment with "hundred percent" Americanism does not translate as a total transformation of a transnational group into an American national one. AHEPA's narrative of total assimilation was fractured with contradictions as well as with conscious efforts to nourish transnational relations with Greece, including philanthropy, and to support immigrant institutions such as Greek language schools (see Leber). AHEPA's American modernity was "incomplete" insofar as its annual conventions were seen as occasions to continue the traditional practice of arranged marriage (Papanikolas 217). Moreover, as early as 1932, with the occasion of AHEPA's "excursion to Hellas," endogamous marriage was lauded in moral terms: "But of course the moral effect, which cannot be estimated in dollars and cents, is of immensely greater value. The many marriages between excursionists and girls back home' constitute some of the greatest of the benefits derived from these excursions" (Chebithes 130). As Yiorgos Kalogeras (Introduction 49) observes, it was not that in

early Greek America transnational ties were gradually eliminated; rather, immigrants continued to connect with Greece, even as the center of their political and cultural affiliation was shifting toward America.

We can similarly challenge the PBS documentary's privileging of ethnicity over diasporicity by turning to extra-textual discourses on Greek-American transnational connections. In keeping with its integrationist politics, the documentary evades potentially controversial issues such as Greek America's dual political allegiance and multidimensional forms of transnational belonging. Highly visible Greek-American *institutional* sites—a crucial attribute of any diasporic collectivity, according to Dominique Schnapper and Khachig Tölölyan ("Elites")—that sustain transnational links with Greece are not covered. *Nowhere to be found in the documentary are the enduring connections between Greek regional societies in the United States and the regions of immigrant origins.* There is no mention even of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), whose aim has been to strengthen relations between the United States, Greece, and Cyprus. Similarly, the AHEPA/AHI project Plant Your Roots in Greece, a plan to reforest the Greek mountains and countryside, is not featured. The Greek-American involvement in the Athens Committee of the Chicago Sister Cities International Program, an initiative that began in 1997 to increase trade and promote cultural, educational, and technological exchanges between Chicago and Athens, is not addressed. The documentary shows no interest in the English-language magazine *Odyssey*—an illustrated bimonthly founded in 1993—which, according to Anastasia Panagakos, creates "a different type of consciousness among diasporic Greeks" (212), appealing "to those who see themselves as part of a global Greek *ethnos*" (213). Last but not least, there is no interest in exploring the complex subjective links between individual Greek Americans and Greece (Anagnostou "That Imagination"). In fact, the ethnographic complexities of Greek America's transnational connections may be one reason that Veras adopts a diaspora discourse in his public speeches and interviews. Commenting on his recent production *Homelands: Greece,* for example, he states,

> *we found that,* whereas before many first generation immigrants came to America to work 40–50 years with full intent to go back and retire in Greece, more and more second and third generation members are torn between living in both cultures. They are driven by their American side, but they can only feel their Greek roots by living back in Greece, although working there is difficult." (qtd. in "Return to the Homeland"; emphasis added)

Here, then, the idea of America as a natural homeland of Greek Americans is disrupted. Where diasporas are heterogeneous and contested, national, ethnic, and transnational connections cannot be represented as unambiguous, fixed forms of belonging.[24] Various constituencies *within* an ethnic/transnational collectivity negotiate their location in the host society differently, fracturing the notion of a monolithic ethnic collectivity. Counteracting the tendency to homogenize such formations leads to the critical task of identifying the manner in which the construction of the "ethnicity" or "diasporicity" of a group works in specific locations within the system. As Brah argues, the analytical power of the category lies in the light it sheds "on the configuration of power which differentiate[s] diasporas internally as well [as] situate[s] them in relation to one another" (183).

Whether read deconstructively or situated in relation to extratextual discourses, ethnicizing narratives—such as *The Greek Americans*—that make a case for the indigenousness of an ethnic group at the expense of its transnational ties are caught in a false dichotomy between ethnicity and diasporicity. This analysis of Greek America as a category constructed at the intersection of national, ethnic, and transnational discourses should serve as a cautionary tale for scholars. Diaspora must not be conceptualized as a single category stretched out along a continuum extending from a pure, ideal type to the opposite end of assimilated ethnicities. *Ironically, this approach to diaspora inevitably reproduces the positivist understanding of ethnicity as a set of cultural attributes whose relative distance from an imagined original indicates degrees of assimilation.* The problem here is that objectivist social analysis is taken as the sole measure of knowing ethnicity. Customs and habits are enumerated and tabulated to capture objectively the entirety of culture; they are then statistically analyzed to furnish proof of cultural loss and decline. Statements about cultural preservation and decline are collected and singled out as evidence of the place of tradition in a knowable ethnic culture. Tradition is seen as a totalizing cultural resource that is generationally depleted until drained.

Similarly, a measure of objectification is not absent from some studies conceptualizing diaspora. When the category is defined in terms of an original model and is subsequently classified along a linear continuum ranging from pure to contaminated types, such a framework misses the notion that diasporas are contested discursive practices, constituted at the intersection of various modalities within power relations. The most productive way to approach the "ethnicity/diaspora" debate will be in terms of historically specific, contested articulations deployed in a field of power relations (see also Brah). By shifting emphasis to the ideological work of the

concept "diaspora," such analysis escapes the logic of the binary "assimilated ethnic versus diasporic transnational" and answers the question of why certain transnational connections are privileged while others are rendered invisible.

By Way of Conclusion: "White" Ethnicities, Stakes, and Possibilities

The serialization of multiculturalism through PBS's Heritage Specials series may be approached through what Robert Dunn calls "democratic particularism," the accommodation of persistent ethnic calls for cultural inclusion in the public sphere as a capitalist strategy of constructing equality in the face of growing socioeconomic inequalities. In this view, "democratic particularism" works as a palliative, "substitut[ing] for social equality [a system] in which *culture* is democratized through a semiotics of difference" (146).

The Greek Americans contributes to the process of "democratic particularism," as it celebrates cultural inclusion but avoids addressing the social and political causes of inequalities. This privileging of culture in the documentary works in three dialectically related loci: the inclusive nation, ethnic socioeconomic mobility, and group homogeneity. The validation of the nation as an inclusive formation, furnishing opportunities for ethnic socioeconomic success, fosters the explanation of inequalities in terms of cultural values or individual choice, not of government policies or social marginalization. The construction of Greek-American ethnicity in terms of an ideal, homogeneous, ahistorical community in turn confirms the narrative of the benevolent nation by deflecting internal dissent and deactivating criticism. Endorsing all these positions, the documentary becomes a powerful ideological tool, neutralizing initiatives to critique social, racial, and economic injustices.

The documentary's reliance on popular interpretations of Greek America as a successful, homogeneous group links ethnicity inextricably with hegemonic structures as it promotes a particular national ideology, what Ruth Hsu calls a "rehabilitative concept of ethnicity" (1). Such an ideology depends on the belief that "the nation is open and inclusive, that it is democratic and egalitarian, and that it welcomes any race, creed or religion" (2). The concept buttresses the ideology of the American dream, since it "functions first as proof that America works, that its principles and beliefs are well-founded" (3). The hegemony of such a worldview springs from its capacity to bolster the discourse of liberal multiculturalism in America. In this case, ethnicity becomes an ideology legitimizing hegemonic narratives such as the American Dream, Individualism, and America-as-Progress, ideas that have become part of the American imagining of the self.

Given the ideological bent of the documentary's rhetoric, it comes as no surprise that the stereotypically affirmative representation of Greek Americans as model Americans is replete with historical omissions. For example, one will find no references to the Greek-American Left and its early class struggles against capitalist exploitation. Greek Americans "never came here to change the world, they came here searching for a better life," says the distinguished sociologist of Greek America, Charles Moskos, in one stroke effectively dismissing not only Greek-American radicalism ("Immigration"; Georgakas, "Greek-American") but also projects of social activism such as the Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee (HANAC) and Elpides, a social service organization for Greek women in crisis. The conformist ethos of "not rocking the boat," the discourse of socioeconomic success, and a particular understanding of what it means to be an American (keeping social activism, confrontational politics, and radicalism, among other things, at arm's length) frame the documentary's representation of Greek America.

The selective construction of ethnic pasts around middle-class values serves as yet another site reproducing ideologies of national belonging. This is the case when *The Greek Americans* posits a continuity between the immigrant past and the Greek-American present far removed from the circumstances of immigration. The immigrant fathers and mothers, grandmothers and grandfathers, are represented as "modern Greek heroes" whose work ethic molded future generations of Greek Americans and laid the foundations of their success.

To structure a telling of a Greek-American past around emotionally charged stories is to pay tribute to the sacrifices and hardships endured by the "pioneers," as turn-of-the-twentieth-century immigrants are often called. By positing hard work and cultural values as the sole etiology of Greek-American success, *The Greek Americans* reproduces a politically charged ideology of ethnic mobility. The notion that ethnic and racial groups were able to turn "sweat into capital" (Thomas Sowell, qtd. in Takaki, "Introduction" 6) because of their ethnic culture's compatibility with dominant norms (hard work, discipline, perseverance, industry) is routinely employed by academics to explain differential economic success among ethnic and racial collectives. It constitutes the core of what Stephen Steinberg calls the "Myth of Ethnic Success" (82), the ideology that posits "cultural values as the fulcrum of success (86–7) and organizes what Sylvia Lazos Vargus labels "white ethnic immigrant narratives," the claim that immigrant virtues alone were crucial in overcoming ethnic prejudice. The political stakes in this kind of argument are high. To argue that groups have been able to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps is also to suggest that

poverty can be explained in terms of lack of effort and cultural predisposition, not constraints imposed by racial and political economies. Such a reading privileges a view of America's attitudes toward its Others in terms of an "American ethnic pattern" of inclusion, not in terms of a history of colonization, discrimination, and oppression, an "American racial pattern" of exclusion (Takaki, "Reflections" 36). Crucially, it provides the "theoretical justification" that fuels "the intellectual assault on affirmative action" (26).[25]

My discussion of Greek-American cultural politics therefore provides ammunition for a research agenda that increasingly dismisses European ethnicities as ideologies in the service of anti-minority politics. Intellectuals narrating the plight of subaltern groups and advocating their rights are not willing to forgive European immigrants who opted for the privileges of "whiteness." Suspicious of any claims to a meaningful ethnic "white" identity, resentful of assertions of socioeconomic distinction, impatient with narratives of past discrimination faced by "whites," race-centered scholars dismiss the notion of meaningful European ethnicities as ahistorical narratives, ideologies diverting attention from the importance of race as a structural principle embodying unequal power relations. In this view, public ethnic celebrations only circulate the notion of America as an egalitarian cultural democracy, attracting public attention to the dancing stage of a Greek-American festival, not to the social desperation and hopelessness caused by race-based discrimination, immigrant exploitation, and poverty.

It is important to mention here that minority discourse appropriates the conclusions of the popular sociological paradigm of "symbolic ethnicity." This paradigm presents "white" ethnic identities as situational, thin, superfluous, a matter of choice, and often commodity-centered expressions; in so doing, symbolic ethnicity theory provides theoretical ammunition to race-centered scholarship. Scholars such as Michael Omi and Charles Gallagher selectively draw from Richard Alba and Mary Waters, two major advocates of symbolic ethnicity, to reinforce the notion that "white" "ethnicity is in the name only" (Gallagher 349). According to Gallagher, "white" ethnics resort to narratives of past discrimination, which he calls "immigrant tales," in order to participate in the discourse of victimization and thus assert "that no single group has a monopoly of being a victim" (349). This critique serves as a site of political contestation, reducing agency among whites to reactionary politics, such as challenges to affirmative action. Moreover, Omi capitalizes on Alba's view of the "twilight of white ethnicity" to reinforce the notion that "most whites do not experience their ethnicity as definitive aspects of their social identity" (182). Omi concurs with Alba that "the specifically ethnic components of white identity are far receding with each generation's distance from the

old country" (182) and that, "increasingly, whites are seeing themselves as a new panethnic group—Euro-Americans" (183).[26]

Of course, analyzing ethnicity in terms of racial political economies is an extremely valuable project in exposing race-based historical inequalities.[27] I have undertaken this critical reading of Greek-American cultural politics to highlight the point that "white" ethnic successes can in fact become ideological tools whose celebration of ethnicity obfuscates class- and race-based inequalities. In this emerging historical moment in Greek-American cultural production, my aim has been to contribute to the discussion of the political effects of media representations of "white" ethnicities on the marginalized, the exploited, and the non-conformist. But I am by no means prepared to dismiss the cultural relevance of Greek-American or, for that matter, "white" ethnicities. An alternative reading of Greek America, capable of naming its multidimensional components and its progressive politics, becomes a necessary project if academics wish to avoid the reductive position that "whiteness" embodies a historical *telos* of meaningful ethnic practices.

Our sense of such practices must be expanded. The PBS documentary *The Greek Americans* does include statements from Greek Americans that could inform an analysis of Greek-American ethnicity as a set of practices addressing issues of pedagogy, aesthetics, and ethos. I have already examined Olympia Dukakis's testimony indicating her oppositional posture. Elsewhere, she comments on her father's scholasticism: "My father did the same thing in a scholastic way. He was always studying, he was always learning, he always had a project." For Thalia Assuras, national correspondent/anchor for CBS News in New York, there is value in the aesthetic appreciation of material culture such as food: "If you're going to have a good glass of wine, you have to have a good glass of wine. You can't drink it like that, it has to be good." For Dean Skelos, a New York state senator, his experience at his immigrant grandfather's bakery is conveyed as a lesson in non-authoritative pedagogy:

> My grandfather never liked to give a direct order. He would say to me, "Dean, why don't we make some apple pies?" and the next thing you know, I would be sitting there making 200 apple pies and my grandfather would be out on another project. That was his way of saying, "Dean, you make the apple pies."

The sources of these immigrant practices, which Greek Americans value, are diverse. They may come about as a result of particular histories of immigration, different class locations, cultural backgrounds, or even a family's philosophical or ethical

stance in life. It is perhaps this condition that resists classification of these practices as ethnic, precluding their consideration as successful cultural scripts that have worked well for individuals, families, and groups. References to manners of enjoyment and work habits (how to work, not hard work as a ticket to success) often elude ethnicization. While food, dances, and values such as "love for family" and "success" have undergone an "ethnographic operation" (Bazin) that marks them as ethnic, the esthetic and ethical practices have slipped away from cultural taxonomies and classifications. In other words, many practices associated with the ethnic experience are not considered part of the national vocabulary on ethnicity. This is particularly true when ethnicity is understood through a limited set of cultural traits and markers such as language or dress; now that these are lacking, the enduring reality of meaningful white ethnicities is made invisible. As Renato Rosaldo has observed in another context, "those who most nearly resemble ourselves' appear to be people without culture'" (79). By this logic, ethnics are not properly ethnics because they are not sufficiently cultural. With no markers to convey cultural specificity, "white" ethnicities are increasingly dismissed as superficial and trivial, relegated to the sphere of leisure and consumption. The complex web of embodied practices that organizes individual action is ignored, not because of the inconsequentiality of these practices in an individual's life but because of the lack of an adequate model to accommodate their complexity and ethnic relevance. The task ahead of us, therefore, is to identify discursive spaces of alternative ethnic practices and politics that can restore to theoretical visibility the persistence of white" ethnicities.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Eric Ball, Gregory Jusdanis, Anthony Kaldellis, and Artemis Leontis for valuable comments. I benefited from discussions with students and from the insights by Vangelis Calotychos and Amy Shuman, who invited me to present this work in their seminars. Suggestions from Khachig Tölölyan helped me clarify my arguments when I needed it the most. MaryLaura Papalas offered valuable research assistance.

2. On the basis of the 1990 census data, 1,110,373 individuals, or 0.4% of the total US population, identified their ancestry as Greek, which represents an increase of 13.55% over the 1980 census. As Stavros Constantinou points out, out of "thirty-three ethnic groups with more than 1 million people . . . Greek Americans ranked thirty-first" in population size (97). Constantinou's analysis of the US census and Greek-American demographic sources published by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America documents "considerable variation in educational attainment, income, employment, and spatial distribution" (92). He reports that 5.2% and 7.3% of Greek-American families and persons respectively live in poverty. In terms of national educational attainment figures, counting graduate and bachelor's degrees and high school diplomas, "Greek Americans ranked forty-first, thirty-first, and thirty-first, respectively, among sixty-eight major ethnic groups" (100–1). Greek-Americans "exceeded the income of the total population in all categories tabulated by the census" (101), but a different ranking results when their rates are compared to those of other ethnic groups. "Greek Americans ranked eighth in median household

income," for example, "among sixty-eight major ethnic groups, after the Russians, Maltese, Israelis, Egyptians, Latvians, Austrians, and Romanians (in descending order)" (101). Comparative ranking of ethnic group achievement is highly contested, as indicated by Internet discussions (e.g., www.dienekes.com/blog/archives/000015.html). Hierarchical distinctions may be ideologically appropriated by racialized and racist discourses on race and intelligence.

3. The growing number of comedies, music, and films primarily targeting Greek-American audiences testifies to a growing interest in ethnic representation that is lacking in mainstream entertainment. Stand-up comedian Basile, for example, has become a popular hit in Greek-American communities.

4. This marketing interest has been intensified by the commercial prospects presented by the 2004 Olympic games in Athens (see Veras, "Media"). Since the Olympics, VCI—whose president was part of the NBC production team of the Games—has emerged as a key marketer and producer of Greek culture in the English-speaking world. It has been signed by MacGillivray Freeman Films to sell and market the 2006 release of *Greece: Secrets of the Past*, and assigned by the Onassis Foundation to produce a documentary on Alexander the Great, based on the foundation's 2005 New York City exhibit Alexander the Great: Treasures from an Epic Era of Hellenism.

5. George Veras's complete statement is this: "as a group, we have never made a conscientious effort to pat ourselves on the back and point out our accomplishment to others. Most of the time, we are too busy accomplishing and enjoying the doing of life'" ("Impact").

6. *The Greek Americans* was followed in 1999 by *The Greek Americans II: Passing the Torch,* also produced by George Veras and broadcast on PBS. Both were also commercially released on video-cassette. More recently, VCI and PBS affiliate WLIW New York produced two additional documentaries on Greek America and Greece, *Homelands: Greece* (2004) and *Yanni's Visions of Greece* (2004). The last decade has seen a spate of documentaries on Greek Americans, particularly on regional histories such as those of Ohio, Utah, and, more recently, California. It is unfortunate that the bilingual documentary *Greeks and Americans,* directed by filmmaker Tassos Rigopoulos and produced in Greece by NET (New Greek Television), has not been given the attention it deserves in Greek America.

7. George Veras is emerging as a much-sought-after cultural "translator" of Greek America. He enjoys visibility in community and cultural events, where he is regularly invited as a media and cultural expert to give speeches or serve as a master of ceremonies. It is a measure of his success in prestigious Greek-American circles that AHEPA assigned to him the production of the AHEPA Millennium video. *The Greek Americans* has been exalted by community leaders but has also generated criticism over its simplified representation of Greek Americans. Ann Giannotis (writer, producer, and director of *The Greeks of Southern California through the Century: The Pioneers, 1900–1942*), for example, was reportedly "anxious to hit a much higher level of seriousness than media fare like the PBS films about Greeks in America" (Georgakas, "Documenting" 110).

8. All unattributed quotations are from the televised version of *The Greek Americans*, unless otherwise specified.

9. As further evidence of this ethnographic tendency, it is relevant to note that the film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* is seen as an ethnographic datum through which audiences can access themselves as well as cultural Others. In the words of writer/director Alexander Payne, "my Korean future in-laws went to see *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* to do research on me" (qtd. in Rubis and Dabilis 44). Similarly, as reported in *The Hellenic Voice* in 2002, interethnic Greek-American families approached the film as a real representation of their own lives, appropriating it as their own: *My Big Fat Real-Life Greek Wedding* (Posten).

10. Phyllis Chock points out that anger and resentment in Greek-American women's narratives enable the re-articulation of naturalized "domains of family, nationality, and gender" ("Self-Made" 242). She argues that stories of ethnic socioeconomic success validate national ideals of mobility and therefore naturalize the inclusion of the breadwinner immigrant/ethnic male into the nation. The association between family upward mobility, maleness, and nationality reproduces gender hierarchies for those women whose economic contribution to the household is limited to the

domestic sphere. Relegated as economically unproductive and outside the nation, these women are placed in an inferior location in relation to men. In her attentiveness to women's point of view, Chock maps out an alternative script of gendered Greek America wherein success is redefined in terms of "personal worth" and "citizenship" rather than of socioeconomic achievement. *The Greek Americans* offers a fertile site to examine Greek-American constructions of gender, particularly in its attempt to create a cross-gender consensus on the meaning of Greek America. A gender-centered perspective is beyond the scope of this essay, however. For an analysis of the role of emotions in disrupting dominant ideologies of "white" ethnic success see Anagnostou, "Through the Lenses."

11. The majority of the individuals interviewed for *The Greek Americans* belong to the professional class. Presidents of corporations and CEOs are generously represented, among other high-profile artists and politicians. The perspectives of immigrant and ethnic wage earners are marginalized. This is not unlike the case in the Armenian diaspora community, which "maintains its affluent image in American society by distancing itself from the lower-class domestic workers" (Ishkanian 406). Veras has given speeches on the cultural function of Greek-American professionals (e.g., "Role").

12. George Veras answers the criticism that the documentary was "an East Coast' biased program" by pointing to restrictions imposed by a "very limited budget" ("Impact"). This reasoning makes even more curious the choice to feature Midwest-based Greek-American scholars and leave out New York–based ones.

13. Charles Moskos reports a case of "acrimonious dispute" in 1972 when the "large majority" of second-generation Greek-American residents and "some of the new immigrants" actively opposed the introduction of Greek language classes in an elementary school located in Chicago's new Greektown (84). Opponents of bilingual education "argued that the bilingual approach would retard the immigrant child's entry into the American mainstream, that it subjected Greek American pupils to a questionable and unproved teaching method [. . .] and that it would stigmatize Greek-American youth as being akin to the poverty stricken Spanish-speaking population" (84). *The Greek Americans* makes no explicit effort to capture the linguistic diversity of Greek America. There is a vast difference in the sociolinguistic dynamic between, say, fourth-generation Greek Americans living in suburban Columbus, OH, and those Greek Americans who still reside in immigrant, though ever-changing, enclaves such as Astoria in Queens, NY.

14. Inattention to heterogeneity results in ethnic typification, as is shown by the following encyclopedia entry: "Greeks share the American work ethic and desire for success and are largely perceived as hard-working and family oriented. They are also said to possess a Zorba'-like spirit and love for life. However, many Greek Americans perceive the recent Greek immigrants as foreign' and often as a source of embarrassment" (Jurgens 578). The often antagonistic, frequently paternalistic, repeatedly hostile, occasionally sympathetic, at intervals collaborative and mutually supportive, and now and then mistrustful webs of relations linking Greek Americans, Greek immigrants, and Greeks in Greece deserve an in-depth study.

15. The second documentary in the series, *Greek Americans II: Passing the Torch,* which addresses cultural preservation around issues such as interethnic marriage, does venture into critical reflection and includes diverse perspectives. Statements such as "I have been thinking, what are we doing lately?" or the recommendation to "change the educational system, which to some degree is non-existent," challenge the documentary's often self-congratulatory rhetoric. Similarly, remarks such as "you got a drop of Greek blood in you, you are Greek" and "Hellenism is about a state of mind" point to incommensurable understandings of Hellenism. Yet these quotations are presented without the benefit of an analytical commentary, resulting in an awkward pastiche of uncontextualized points of view.

16. The public presentation of immigrant community as being in harmony with itself was not independent, at the time of its articulation, from the demands of republican ideals of self-disciplined cooperation as an essential ingredient of American citizenship (see Jacobson).

17. As Dale Knobel has shown, nativism has been a persistent organized movement, not an occasional aberration in American nationalism. J. Reynolds Scott-Childress argues that racial classifications figured prominently in American nationalism, providing what some felt was a

much-needed corrective to the emphasis political scientists have placed on civic assimilation in American polity. For a discussion on racial classifications of southeastern immigrants see Bendersky; Jacobson. For a detailed analysis of Greek America's assimilation into "whiteness" at the time see Anagnostou, "Forget."

18. Non-whiteness, however, was not a fixed racial category in the West. Mexicans, Italians, and Greeks occupied several racial fault lines within the "black/white" dichotomy, their racial status placed "within a varied hierarchy containing several gradations of both whiteness and non-whiteness" (Peck 168).

19. I use the term *articulation* in the manner proposed by Stuart Hall ("Cultural Studies"), who deploys it to identify the joint operation of disparate social forces forming historically contingent stable unities. In early Greek America, American nationalism, ethnic class interests, immigrant culture, and Hellenism articulated to produce an enduring assimilationist ethos.

20. This specific negotiation of the "burden of antiquity" (Clogg 1) in diaspora must be seen in relation to a series of historical entanglements of Greek people with the discourse of Western Hellenism. In the case of early-nineteenth-century Greek nation building, for example, the political necessity to legitimize modern Greece as a resurrected ancient Hellas and, therefore, *de facto* European fueled the urgency to demonstrate the continuity between ancient and modern Greeks. Crucial in this case was the function of academic disciplines such as folklore (Danforth; Herzfeld, "Ours Once More"), history (Kitroeff), language (Joseph), and literature (Lambropoulos) as national institutions.

21. Greek Americans have invested considerable symbolic and material resources in sustaining their claim to be guardians of classical Greek culture. This investment is evident in a wide range of civic, educational, and cultural activities. AHEPA and community organizations fund the making of floats with Greek classical themes (a rose-covered Parthenon, ancient Greece as the birthplace of democracy) in the annual New Year's Day Rose Parade in Pasadena, CA; the estimated cost for the 2001 entry was between $100,000 and $200,000 (Niarchos). Greek Americans in Ohio have been mobilized to "ensure the success of The Cleisthenes Project,'" a plan to "bring state recognition to persons who have had a significant impact on democratic governance" ("Cleisthenes Project"). The Cleisthenes Project Executive Committee, chaired by a Greek American, will finance the making of plaster busts of the "Greek statesman Cleisthenes, the Father of Democracy" and of Thomas Jefferson. It will also support the unveiling ceremony at the Ohio Statehouse, in Columbus, and civic programs designed to promote education about Ohio's "shared cultural and political history." The project, which "provide[s] a linear connection to the system of government that the free world enjoys today," symbolically positions Greek Americans as heirs of classical Greek culture and exemplary American citizens. The Greek-American connection to classical Greece has also been expressed in terms of material and symbolic support to departments of Classics. Recently, Greek Americans lobbied intensively against a plan to eliminate the Department of Classics and its curriculum at Wayne State University. The Greek-American Hellenic Society *Paideia* of Michigan is also fundraising to benefit the department's plan to establish an endowed chair.

22. Occidentalism is theorized in terms of complex conceptual and political nuances rather than a set of fixed attributes (Carrier, Introduction). For the purposes of this essay, the term "Occidentalized ethnic Greek" refers to Greek-American self-representations in alignment with values central to an American Western identity, such as democracy, individualism, civic responsibility, order, rationality, and discipline.

23. This view has been promoted consistently by sociologist Charles Moskos and has been challenged by Gregory Jusdanis ("Greek Americans"). I should note that Moskos and Jusdanis draw from incompatible definitions of diaspora. The former primarily reacts to the notion of diaspora as an organic, ethnic, and racial extension of the nation-state, a transnational national community; the latter emphasizes the transportability of cultural systems, their historically contingent transformations, and their availability in constructing ethnic or diasporic identities. Victor Roudometof and Anna Karpathakis show that the degree and substance of transnational ties divide Greek Americans in New York City. The transnational national ties sustained by post-1965 immigrants bring them into "direct conflict with the older, more established generation of

their fellow Greek Americans," who "have developed a more romantic or nostalgic attachment to Greece" (41).

24. The promotional text for this third documentary in the series diasporizes Greek America, as it frames transnational links in relation to the ideology of ethnic Occidentalism: "VCI will track Greek-Americans who have returned to Greece, not only to re-discover their cultural roots in food, music and song, but more importantly, the spirit of democracy, love of learning, and an introspection that somehow has been carried down from their ancient forebearers [*sic*]. Stories include Foreign Minister George Papandreou, who grew up in Canada and the United States, and today is at the forefront of resolving the Cyprus crisis. Also, over 100 doctors [have] dedicated their lives to building a $150 million dollar hospital in Greece. It is a documentary of giving back to the birthplace of many of the foundations of Western Civilization, that somehow lives in all diaspora Greeks today" (VCI). And in his commencement address to graduates of the private Anatolia College in Greece—where he has served on the board of directors—Veras configures Greek identity as diasporic cosmopolitan: "This physical departure that has gone on for centuries has created a Diaspora that has made being Greek really being a citizen of the world—isn't that part of what being Greek is all about?" ("Journey"). This co-optation of diaspora discourse needs further study.

25. Cultural explanations of Greek-American success abound both in the academy and in popular culture. The "Achievement Syndrome" that sociologist Bernard Rosen (132) documented among Greek Americans as "careful attention to standards of excellence" (137) is translated as a badge of collective identity in the Greek Independence Day parade in New York. Displayed in the banner "Excel in Education: Think Greek," it has become a fixture of the event, and it features in *The Greek Americans* as a visual frame of interviewee comments on education and civic accomplishment. Furthermore, Caesar Mavratsas makes a case for the importance of immigrant cultural values in explaining the Greek-American propensity for entrepreneurship. This economic ethos provides a "comparative cultural advantage" (Peter Berger, qtd. in Mavratsas 117 n. 3) in the ethnic labor market. Although this may indeed be the case, any explanation of this sort of immigrant competitive advantage needs to consider the context in which cultural values are enabled. In the racially segregated American South, for example, the remarkable rate of socioeconomic mobility observed among early-twentieth-century Greek immigrants cannot be understood apart from a hierarchical system of racial privileges. In the presence of a large and heavily discriminated-against African-American population, immigrants from southeastern Europe were situated on a fault line in the "white–black" continuum, reaping the relative benefits of "honorary whiteness." Within this system they were positioned to exploit wider economic niches than African Americans, catering through their business to both whites and the "colored district" (Odzak). For a sociological study taking into consideration both cultural factors and structural constraints affecting minority socioeconomic mobility, see Wilson.

26. Omi readily admits that pan-ethnic "consciousness and organization are, to a large extent, contextually and strategically determined" (181). Yet, curiously, he reserves the application of this notion for the Asian-American case. His argument that whites form racial alliances in order to articulate, advance, and address their "interests as *whites*" (183, original emphasis) is useful in anticipating racially polarized politics and the rise of a "new white nationalism" (see Swain). Yet his dismissal of any alternative relevance to "white" ethnic identities promotes a narrowly race-centered instrumentalist perspective. He defines ethnic culture in terms of waning ethnic practices such as language, endogamy, and tradition (all only dimly, if at all, preserved, as he suggests, following Waters) to subsequently argue for the attenuation of meaningful "white" ethnicity. In doing so, however, *he cancels the possibility that ethnic whites could re-articulate their identities through alternative symbolic markers.* The emergence of white pan-ethnicity by no means signals the disappearance of specific ethnic identifications, as *The Greek Americans* makes abundantly clear.

27. We must remind race-centered scholars, however, that by pointing an accusing finger solely at European ethnics as privileged "whites," they reproduce an essentialist understanding of race, a concept they set out to challenge in the first place. Not only the Irish, the Jews, and southeastern Europeans but also Chinese immigrants sought "white" privileges by distancing themselves from African Americans (Koshy).

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