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Migration, Integration, Acculturation: Greek-Australian Women Across Generations

Abstract

In this paper I will discuss the major issues of acculturation as they have been researched, conceptualized and presented in the various disciplines since the sixties where the concept of acculturation was conceived, examined and articulated, mainly, in sociology and psychology in order to understand the phenomenon of migration and ethnicity matters; in the process I will discuss oral narratives that derived from a field research – which was undertaken by the author of this paper during 2009 – with the aim to expose and possibly to articulate a comprehensive process that would reveal the nature of acculturation amongst Greek-Australian women in three generations.

Migration

Greeks can be traced in Australia almost to the start of British convict settlement. The origins of their history in this country have been satisfactorily researched, studied and recorded (Tsounis 1971, Yiannakis 1996, 2009, Alexakis & Janiszewski 1998, Dimitreas 1998). According to Alexakis and Janiszewski, the first Greeks may have arrived in the year 1818. They stated that the *Sydney Gazette* of 1817 or 1818 "reportedly alleged that there was a danger for children to be out of home after dark, ...because of the presence of Irish, English and Greek convicts" (Alexakis & Janiszewski, 1998). The next significant presence of Greek migrants in Australia was during the

gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s when an increased number of Greeks were reported to have settled in the eastern states, particularly Victoria and New South Wales (Alexakis &Janiszewski, 1998, p.12). When Australia federated in 1901 the *Immigration Restriction Act* (which politically formalized "White Australia") was enforced to ensure that any "undesirable", non-European and non-white person was prohibited from entering Australia; the restriction applied not only to Asians and Middle Easterners but also to Southern Europeans, mainly Greeks and Italians. The number of Greeks at that time was, according to Australian census figures, 878 people (born in Greece).

It was not before the 1920s that Greek Orthodox communities were established in order to offer help to those who need it. The government's policy towards immigrants was not only to restrict numbers, but also to enforce strict assimilation upon all those that were living in the country. As late as the 1960s, the period of most post-war migrant arrivals – including thousands of Greeks – the Minister of Immigration, H. Opperman declared that "...*it is cardinal with us that Australia... should remain a substantially homogenous society, [with] no place in it for enclaves or minorities*" (Yiannakis, 1996, p.209). Significantly, according to Alexakis & Janiszewski, from 1953 to 1956, 29,344 Greeks migrated to Australia. The Australian government signed a revived migration memorandum in 1952, which included restricted countries, whereby Greece was welcomed along with Germany, Italy and Malta. Whitlam's Labor government (1972-1975) changed the racial "homogeneity" to "structural selection" and targeted not countries but immigrants that had the skills and social attributes required for Australia to develop its future aspirations in the modern world. In this framework the multicultural nature of social structure, already introduced to Canada, was introduced at a political level and gradually become accepted by the broader Australian society. Multiculturalism meant that the official governmental policies viewed different minority groups equally; their different cultural backgrounds were not only tolerated, but they were accepted as an enriching element to the rest of Australian society.

Multiculturalism

The policy of multiculturalism gave new hope to immigrants. The Greeks view this period as very important for the evolution of the Greek-

Australian community. This was the decade (70s) that witnessed the acceptance of the study of the Greek language as part of school curricula at every level, together with the foundation of Greek Studies Departments at universities. During the next decade (80s) the Fraser government consolidated the foundations of the previous Labour government and established the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), whereby ethnic groups could broadcast in their language. At the same time, social services had been established in many public institutions in order to cater for the needs of the older and newer immigrants. Multicultural policies made possible a new broader orientation for Australia's future and its people. As policies in education and other public institutions changed, people started to change too; a multicultural person after all is one that experiences the world differently; they have the advantage of selecting elements from various cultures and creating a unique self in a society that, as a result, becomes globally diversified. As Peter Adler stated,

> *The multicultural person is, at once old and new. On the one hand, this involves being the timeless "universal" person described again and again by philosophers through the ages. He or she approaches, at least in the attributions we make, the classical ideal of a person whose lifestyle is one of knowledge and wisdom, integrity and direction, principle and fulfillment, balance and proportion (Adler, P. 1977)... [The multicultural person] "seeks to preserve whatever is most valid, significant, and valuable in each culture as a way of enriching and helping to form the whole" (Welsh J., 1973, cited in Adler, P. 1977)*

The process of multiculturalism from political to both social and cultural has marked a significant progress in Australia. Multiculturalism is a notion that engages people in a society to accommodate a vision beyond the national borders, or to accept others within their national borders without any reservation. Technological inventions and innovations, as well as the accelerated mobilization of people around the world, have transformed the planet into a village. People have the ability to communicate instantly with any art of the world. These human organizations made possible intercultural communication and the creation of an a mentally diversified human being that receives cultural stimulus from different and various cultures. Australia by definition is a multi-ethnic country which is why multiculturalism is a process that could not be avoided. The path to multiculturalism in Australia, however, from political to social and cultural, was not always

a linear process of success (Smolicz, J.J. 1985). Failure to understand the aims of multiculturalism by a part of mainstream Australia, together with the lack of support by sections of the establishment within the Australian political arena, may sometimes have negative effects upon the process of acculturation to many ethnic groups, including Greek-Australians.

What is Acculturation?

"Acculturation is a dynamic multidimensional process of adaptation that occurs when distinct cultures come into sustained contact. It involves different degrees and instances of cultures learning and maintenance that are contingent upon individuals, groups, and environmental factors. Acculturation is dynamic because it is a continuous and fluctuating process and it is multidimensional because it transpires across numerous indices of psychosocial functioning and can result in multiple adaption outcomes" (Organista, P., Marin, G., Chun, K. M., 2010:105).

Since rates of international migration have reached unprecedented levels in many developed countries around the world, including Australia, psycho-social studies turned once more to the process of acculturation by articulating a genuine redefinition of both its process and nature. Thus, the research, study and presentation of the present oral narratives endeavors to provide Greek studies in Australia, and the psycho-social discipline, with an acceptable paradigm of acculturation that encompasses issues related to migration and ethnicity. This paradigm however would, by definition, be local and individual as well as global and collective.

The traditional studies have conceptualized acculturation as one-dimensional process in which retention of the heritage culture and acquisition of the receiving culture were generated as opposing elements of a single continuum (Gordon, 1964, et el.) According to this model, as migrants obtained the values, practices, and beliefs of their new homelands, they were expected to abandon those from their cultural heritage (Schwartz, S., 2010: 238). This was the model of one straight-line of assimilation that was introduced by official state policies from the migrant-receiving countries, including Australia, to which migrants and their immediate descendants were expected to strictly adhere to. That was refuted by social, but mainly, psychological studies.

Thus, during the 1980s, social psychologists – due to the influx of many traumatic psychological problems amongst the migrant groups – realised that obtaining the values and practices of the receiving (host) country does not automatically imply that the migrants will stop endorsing the beliefs, values and practices of their country of origin (Schwartz, 2010:238). Thus Berry, (Berry: 1980) developed a model of acculturation in which receiving cultural acquisition from the host country and maintaining heritage-culture retention incorporated multiple dimensions. Within Berry's model, these dimensions intersect to create four levels of acculturation indicating a process of change and transformation.

In his extended study on acculturation Berry (Berry, 1997, p.9) gives us a definition for each category of what the process really means. Consequently, *assimilation* means that people adopt the receiving culture and reject the heritage culture; *separation* occurs when people reject the receiving culture and preserve the heritage culture; *integration* is the process of adopting the host culture and preserving the heritage culture; *marginalization* occurs when people reject both the heritage and receiving cultures; also, in recent studies the term *enculturation* is used in order to signify the process of selectively acquiring or retaining elements of one's heritage culture while also selectively acquiring some elements from within the receiving cultural context. This category is later used alternatively or as a synonym for the term *biculturalism*, whereby the term applies to migrants or their descendants that speak both languages and retain both cultures in equal value. Researchers believe that Berry's model of acculturation would apply to a migrant's lifetime or longer, extending it to their immediate descendants of second or third and sometimes fourth generations. Padilla and Perez nevertheless (Padilla M.A., & Perez W., 2003) revised the literature of acculturation and proposed new approaches in the study of psychological acculturation, adding new strategic paths, new language, novel concepts and directions, in order to articulate a comprehensive awareness of intercultural contact. They stated:

...To shed light on these processes, our model will rely on the following constructs: social cognition, cultural competence, social identity, social dominance, and social stigma.

(Padila M.A. & Perez W., 2003) also indicate that the process of acculturation is not just a linear schema but a painful process that incorporates

variegated dynamics which interfere with the social construction of the host country and the psychological condition of the new and the old migrants. With the introduction of a new terminology, Padilla and Perez (2003) allow further investigation into the level of both social and psychological aspects of the acculturative process. They maintained *"cognitive processes stem from people's goals"* that are various in natures and multiple in sources. Most significant cognitive activity results from motivation. People are motivated by their pragmatic needs and social state of affairs, which determine their activities. People also have to be culturally competent in a particular society, namely not only to demand cultural acceptance but to also accept the different culture, as a cultural reality that they have to deal with, to relate with, to response with and to communicate successfully within a particular society. Social identity is, therefore a significant element in the process of acculturation. Brewer (Brewer, 1991, cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003) asserted that *"who holds that social identification is guided by two core human motives: the need to be unique and the need to belong"*, in other words, people need to different but the same, simultaneously.

In certain times, however, distinctiveness in the process of acculturation is rather a negative element; that is, in a society with cultural dominance, people of distinct cultural elements have additional difficulties to acculturate. Their distinctiveness easily provokes prejudices and discrimination by the dominant cultural group producing adversities and social stigmatization; the process of acculturation or adaption in that case is likely to be postponed or never to happen For these reason, theorists of both social and psychological disciplines re-evaluated acculturation, and they started to investigate an interdisciplinary and multidimensional process of acculturation that denotes more individual state of affairs rather than that of groups or societies.

Thus, (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, Szapoeznik, 2010:244), recent studies assert that acculturation is multidimensional not only in terms of the independence of heritage-culture orientations but also with respect to the components that are assumed will change. The vast majority of studies in the acculturation process have concentrated on behavioral acculturation; thus studies centered on individuals to investigate their responses to social "constructs" like language, religion and other cultural practices, revealed the acculturation process. This paper, gives emphasis to individual cases

in a particular group of people, where, although they settled in Australia since the 50s, their grandchildren are still considered "Greeks", and in the best of cases "Greek-Australians", but very rarely "Australians", contrary to other Europeans that even from the first generation are calling themselves "Australians" or considered to be by the dominant cultural group (Smolicz, 1985). Australia, however, has adopted many significant integrationist policies; it seems that although the majority of Greek-Australians are very well integrated there are still others that – probably because of a past traumatic stigma and distinct social identity – resist integration, which means that they never attempt to fully acculturate within Australian society.

Thematic analysis

This paper adopts thematic analysis as an appropriate tool to examine oral interviews of Greek-Australian women across three generations. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to identify themes that emerge as important. The process involves the "identification" of these themes through a thorough examination of the unprocessed data (oral interviews). Specifically, thematic analysis is:

> *Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants or it can be a constructionist method which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are effects of a range of discourses operating within society. It can also be a "contextualize" method, sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionist, and characterized by theories, such as critical realism, which acknowledge the ways individuals make meaning of their experiences and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings... (Braun V., 2008, p. 81).*

The process of thematic analysis presented in this paper demonstrates how emerged themes are supported by extracts from unrefined data to make certain that data analysis remains directly linked to the words of participants.

Acculturation, Separation, Integration or/and Biculturalism

The sample-narratives of this paper aim to reveal the process of acculturation in its different phases inter-generationally and to witness the

changes within the Greek family and surroundings. The analysis of the findings retains the same process in order to examine the influences on cultural retention or rejection from the first generation down to the third.

My sample also shows that gradual acculturation occurred from the first generation to the third –where the process is characterized with the emergence of different categories of acculturation such as separation, integration and finally enculturation (biculturalism). Thematic analysis will also help us to isolate patterns of meanings and themes that emerged from the raw material, and form the core of the analytical interpretations. I will attempt to examine the categories in the model of acculturation given by Berry, testing the relevance and application in regard to my sample. I could say that according to this sample the model of *behavioral acculturation applies*, where language, religion, traditional values and customs played a significant role in this process of acculturation in Australia. In the process, I will explore and analyze the narratives of three generations of women as they have been orally recorded by the interviewer. All interviewees were separately interviewed in order to avoid influencing each other.

First generation: Separation

First generation participants came to Australia in the 50s or/and 60s as single women or as "brides" (Nazou, P. 2014). Some were married with very young children or none at all. The major similarities of the themes arising from this analysis include: low education or no education at all, difficulties with the English language, experiences of hard work in factories or in shops, isolation, inter-community relationships, and religion. Social interaction with the broad Australian society was and remained, very limited. As a result, the process of acculturation never eventuated. Most of these women never interacted with the broader Australian community even if they needed to come into contract with facilities, banks or other institutions. They were always accompanied by other members of the family, mainly children, who regularly played, and continue to play, the role of interpreter. The difficult political milieu within post-war Australia (the persistence of "White Australia") the dire economic situation in post-war Europe, particularly in Greece (whose infrastructure was complete destroyed, are other factors that we have to take into consideration.

Krystallo, 88 year old pensioner:

*...I did not came to Australia as a bride... a friend of my who had come with
her auntie called me...I did not came with DEME ...I paid my ticket and I
came alone... I came in 1956 and I never learn English...initially I wanted to
return to Greece because I didn't like here at all [Australia]... but I created
a family and I stayed...I kept all traditional values as I learned them from
my mother and I passed them on to my children and my grandchildren...
Religion for me is very important element in my life, other Greek values that
I maintained and taught my family are, respect for the elderly, ethos, love,
filotimo (φιλότιμο), respect for parents and grandparents and timi (τιμή)
[...] Education is always has been considering significant but could not afford
...because of the war ...we should have to work in order to help, in order to
live... I went in a foreign work since I was 9 years old.*
(Krystallo, Sydney, 2009).

It is obvious that Krystallo never assimilated, although she expected
to – acculturation is not evident. She never learned the language and living
all her life with her daughter and grandchildren not only obliged them to
learn Greek in order to communicate at home, but she also never ocialized
beyond the Greek community. During the interview she overemphasizes her
devotion to religious practices and how much her faith gave her strength in
order to survive various misfortunes in Australia. Additionally, by main-
taining strictly Greek values, customs and language among the members
of the family, she created a strong contrast with the receiving culture, in a
country which expected the migrants and their children to assimilate com-
pletely during the 50s, 60s and 70s. As we know in this particular period
the official policy of the state was the maintenance of "White Australia" –
and the Greeks, together with other southern Europeans, were quite dark-
skinned for the Australian racial temperament. Significantly, many of the
women in this category did not express any dissatisfaction for Australia.
On the contrary, they express their gratitude to this country which "saved"
them in a very crucial stage in their life:

*Although I do not have any Australian friend, I loved Australia very much,
because I liked the way of Australian living. I do not forget Greece, but my
family and I left Greece after the bitterness of war because we did not have
the means to live. Here we have everything and I liked it. When I am going to
Greece they considered me foreign, they do not accepted us as Greek because*

we had lived abroad. I confirmed that and since then I said "I am very well here [in Australia]" (A1 Maria, Sydney, 2009).

However, the lack of exposure, the lack of tolerance and social acceptance beyond the Greek community, family, church and institutions are the reasons why these women never felt the need to acculturate. The maintenance of traditional values beyond the first generation created a dilemma for younger members of the family who had to face the official policy of assimilation while at school, and while at home, were obliged to behave within the family's traditional rules. This is not unique to Greek-Australians though; it is rather a universal social behavior to many distinctive new migrants. As Stepick, Grenier, Castro, and Dunn, 2003, claim the presence of a *"large and influential heritage-culture community may also encourage young people to retain the heritage language, values and identity at least into the second generation if not beyond"* (cited Schwantz, 2010). Apparently, the Greek Community is one of those communities who maintain a strong cultural heritage, values and institutions, like language and religion. But for a long period of time the conflict between the two different worlds, namely the domestic Greek and the Australian mainstream public, affected and traumatized the second generation and postponed the process of a smooth acculturation or at least integration. This traumatic stigma is witnessed in almost all children of the second generation, especially women.

Second generation: Integration

Second generation migrants were expected to have assimilated or at least integrated into the host country. J. Schwartz, B. Unger, I. Zamboanga, Szapoczik, 2010, said that , *"by definition, second-generation migrants are born in the country of settlement, and at least some problems and issues related to migration-such as pre-migration trauma, being undocumented and not knowing the receiving country's language – likely do not apply"*. It is true that the children of the first generation migrants did not have the problem of language, lack of exposure or inability to communicate with the rest of the community. But this is only one side of the coin which leaves out the other side: the painful process that many of the second generation women experienced. The major themes that emerged from the analysis of the data are confusion in the teenage years, racism at school, growing up in a constant social change, living in two complete different worlds – that of the family and the

Greek community and that of school and the broader Australian community – attempts to assimilate, rebellion and slow process of integration. The following is the confession of *Agni*, a second generation young woman, who had a very traumatic experience in her formative years; racism, confusion, struggle to assimilate, rejection because she was non-blonde. The following is what Agni said about her experiences as a second generation migrant.

Agni, 49 year old office administrator:

...Until a certain age I didn't know the difference between the two languages [English and Greek] ...I spoke them both at home and in public ... then in my formative years I didn't want to speak Greek ... [the language was one of my indicators that signified my migrant background], because it was an embarrassment to be a migrant's child .... Only the Anglo-Saxon's children were accepted in those days... I had very difficult years at school .... The kids teased me, especially the boys; because I have olive colored skin with black, curly hair ... I was the stereotypical child of Greek migrants... I didn't like to be called Greek .... I didn't want to look like a Greek... so, I rejected everything Greek, language – I didn't want to go Greek school - appearance – I tinted my hair blond so I would fit in with the Anglo-Saxons... I had very traumatic teenage years. Now, however I appreciate that my mother pushed me to go to Greek school ... everything in my life is Greek, and I feel good... I speak Greek at home...I go to church [although not very often like my mother], I speak Greek to my children [third generation] and I feel that I am Greek who happens to be born in Australia (Agni, Sydney, 2009).

Agni represents these second generation children that in one way, or another rejected the family's values and tried unsuccessfully to assimilate in order to be accepted amongst their peers. Out of desperation she completely rejected the values of her heritage cultural values and for a period of time imagined herself as equal to her peers by trying to transform her appearance and not speak the language. But this is not a healthy process for acculturation, especially when at home there is a constant reminder of who you really are. This changed in maturity, apparently when multiculturalism became the dominant ideology in 80s and 90s. Many young women in those days recognized that two languages, two cultures and different values are not a negative element after all . Thus Agni accepted her heritage and returned to the cultural values of the country of her family's origins, and she

acculturated; she rediscovered her roots during her regular trips to Greece where she reconnected with her relatives which in turn reinforced her cultural values of her origins. During the interview, she spoke with bitterness of those years that supposedly were meant to be a happy childhood. She was the *"typical Greek migrant girl!"* after all; she felt that she carried with her all the stereotypes of her cultural background. Agni's experiences also became a driving force to teach her daughter Natalia, the advantages and disadvantages of both cultures, and gradually to integrate into Australian society. Soula (teacher, 2009) additionally remembers that in her formative years at school she felt the difference of being Greek. She said being in school, where the majority of the students where Anglo-Australians, functioned as a stimulus to understand that she was different; but instead of attempting to assimilate, she distanced herself from her peers and she started to think of her own heritage and identity. She reportedly said: *"I remember in high school as I growing up I felt that being Greek wasn't good [...] I remember once my Anglo-Australian friends making a comment, talking about wogs generally, and then one of them looked at me and said ....'We do not mean about you'. So from that moment on...I thought, but I am a wog. I do fall into this category, and that's when I started to change..."* The process of acculturation has to do with acceptance and tolerance from the dominate culture as well. If migrant children were welcomed and accepted as equal by their peers at school, and in the broad community, acculturation would have been an easier process and likely to have been achieved sooner.

Third generation: Enculturation or/and Biculturalism

It is not a surprise then that Natalia (Agni's daughter) went to Greek school from primary to university and learned about Greek culture in both everyday practices, within the family and within an institutional setting. Third generation women carry with them their mother's and grandmother's memories. Most of them live in the same house, or their grandmother is close enough to be looked after by the family. Most of the third generation women speak Greek at home in order to communicate with *yiayia*. Often they go together to the Greek Orthodox Church and, although they do not understand the 2000 year old language of church, they respectfully attend it. Common themes that emerge from the data are that acculturation moves slow and selectively, the retaining and maintainance by choice of heritage,

the distinctiveness of Greeks in the Australian society due to their Mediter-ranean complexion, Australia-ness is more complex than that of Greekness. As Smolicz said (Smolicz, 1985, p.18.) *This differential treatment of minorities is particularly galling when one considers what Australians of Greek ancestry are often called, and the way even grandchildren of immigrants from Greece are often labelled as "third generation migrants".*

Natalia, 20 year old student:

Natalia stated
...the way my family has brought me up is the way I am today. And that does reflect in my everyday activities and the way I think, and my mentality... and I do find myself different from others ... my friend might move out with her boyfriend. We do not accept that kind of thing in my family. You have to get married in order to move out, and I accept that because you are too young to move out. But again it is a good experience and to experience life that way, so there is always two sides to the stories, and I am torn apart between morals and values and experiencing one thing and experiencing another. I do feel like I am different to my mother and grandmother, but I do hold that inside what they have taught me...So part of me and growing up I feel that I am Australian and that Greek is my background and I want to learn more about it, because I have no idea about it and that's way I am learning about Greek culture now at the university. I was brought up in Australia, even though I am in a Greek family which teach me things here and there, and their culture and traditions but apart from going to church and going to Greek dancing, Greek school, it still wasn't the same. I got a taste of what it is like, what Greek dancing is, Greek music, Greek culture and then when I went to Greece I was aware of everything I knew, but it was different there. I however will pass down to my daughter the values that I received from my mother and grandmother. I think when you become a mother you bring the values from your mother and what she taught you, and that's the only way you know... and set them in the path... Sometimes there is a conflict because I was brought up in a different environment to my mother and grandmother, but I do appreciate the knowledge and where they come from. I integrate both their mentalities into one to form my own... (Natalia, Sydney, 2009).

Natalia made a very significant point at the end of the interview; al-though young, and contrary to the dilemmas and conflicts within her fam-

ily, she has already internalized what she was taught by her mother and grandmother. She finds herself different from others not only in Australia but also in Greece; she realized that whatever she learned here as being genuinely Greek, it was different from Greece itself. This means that the Greeks in Australia are developing a different aspect of Hellenism in this country. As for Natalia, she is still in the process of enculturation, the process of continued discovery and re-discovery of herself; a development that actually signifies the process of becoming. She nevertheless admits that her mother's teachings and her grandmother's Greek advice blended with her own experiences in order to form her own perception of life. Natalia thus represents all those third generation children who prefer to synthesize their heritage culture together with the receiving cultural practices – in everyday life – in order to stream it into one form of acculturation. Then we could claim that Natalia signifies a case of multidimensional biculturalism where it manifests itself in terms of practices, values and/or identifications.

In conclusion, I would like to say that with this research, and in particular with this paper, I have tried to investigate the psyche of Greek-Australian women in Australia. I consider that future research to investigate Greek-Australians and whether they have effectively assimilated would certainly complement my current endeavors. In a nutshell, I would say that in this paper I have attempted to penetrate and eventually to touch Greek-Australian women's conscience in regard to their process of acculturation in this country. Undeniably, there would be a considerable amount of Greek-Australians or Australians of Greek descent that not only have be efficiently integrated beyond recognition, but also assimilated, especially if they have mixed marriages, where the point to be equal and different is their mutual reference to Australian identity, whatever that means There are a lot all of young people, second or/and third generation that do assimilate, but not completely, especially if they keep their surname intact. Religion is a strong element that remains active in almost all Australians from Greek heritage families. Language, also, is another element that has been re-discovered by a significant number of third generation or assimilated second generation Greek-Australians who appreciate its value in education and knowledge.

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