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Geographies of place, culture and identity in the narratives of second-generation Greek-Americans returning 'home'

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Summary

This paper is concerned with issues of identity, place and belongingness in narratives of return migration. It is based on the oral testimonies and written narratives of second-generation Greek-American return migrants who have moved to Greece, their parents' country of origin. An important consideration in my analysis is the multiple interactions between place of origin and place of destination, network ties and global forces. The paper aims at understanding how these elements influence and shape return migrant behaviour and in particular to enlighten our understanding or return migration as a process that encompasses the combined notion of "place" and "identity" as the outcome of a continuous search for "home" and what this means. My objective is to examine not only the experience of return *per se* but primarily the meanings attached to this experience. Through this I hope to develop a clearer understanding of the concepts of identity and place and how these internalisations are articulated in praxis. One of the challenges of this research is to reveal the extent to which returnees' actions are reflective of conscious manifestations of individuals' identity, their self-sense and their positionality of place, real and imagined.

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Preface

This paper is a longer version of a paper titled "Greek-American return migration: constructions of identity and reconstructions of place" submitted for publication in the journal *Studi Emigrazione.* Both papers were written during my stay as a Marie Curie Fellow at the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex. I am indebted to my supervisor at the University of Sussex, Professor Russell King, for his guidance and support during my stay. Acknowledgement is due to all the postgraduate students on the Migration Studies Programme at Sussex for their interest in my work and for their stimulating questions during presentations of my research.

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I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. D. Mentzeniotis for his enduring support of my work and his generosity and invaluable help in locating research material. Finally, I am deeply grateful to the interviewees who shared their life stories with me. Any errors or shortcomings remain my sole responsibility.

1. Introduction

In a world of uncertainty and constant fluctuation, as demonstrated repeatedly by current events, we can no longer rely on the absolutisms of geographic positioning or of national identity. Concepts like *"identity"* and *"place"* have been challenged and intrinsically affected by a multitude of global forces. Yet the echo of Stuart Hall's claim that "Migration is a one way trip, there is no 'home' to go back to" (1987, p. 44), brings us in the midst of a heuristic dilemma associated with such notions as *"belonging"* or *"home"* and the imaginary or real boundaries of place in the case of return migration, the theme of this paper.

The long-lasting effect of migration on receiving countries is clearly reflected in the vast amount of literature on issues of immigration, assimilation, integration, multiculturalism and related issues of concern to the host country. But, as King notes: "Return migration is the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration" (2000). Although King's 1986 book *Return Migration and Regional Economic Problems* still remains the only book which provides a global overview of the theme of return migration, there seems to be a resurgence of empirical literature surfacing in the last couple of years. Unfortunately there is virtually no recent literature on Greek-American return migration, as emphasised by Kondis (1997). The only work on Greek-American return migration is Theodore Saloutos' (1956) *They Remember America: The Story of the Repatriated Greek-Americans,* which deals with the return experience of first-generation migrants. On a wider front Richard Clogg bemoans the lack of attention paid to the study of the Greek diaspora. In his words, "*Xeniteia,* sojourning in foreign parts, the diaspora experience, call it what you will, has been so central to the history of the Greek people in modern times that it merits much greater attention than we historians have so far chosen to give it" (1999, p.17).

This paper builds on aspects of current migration and identity theories which shed light on our understanding of notions of culture and place. My empirical focus is the shaping of migrant behaviour in the context of the return migration of Greek-Americans to Greece. An important consideration in my analysis is the multiple interactions between place of origin and place of destination, network ties and global forces. The paper aims at understanding how these elements influence and shape return migrant behaviour and in particular enlighten our understanding of return migration as a process that encompasses the combined notion of "place" and "identity" as the outcome of a continuous search for "home" and what this means. The paper is concerned not only to present aspects of the story of Greek-American migration but also to investigate the migrant sense of "self" and how this self-identification unfolds and presents itself in different places and contexts. The paper is organised into several parts. In the next I address questions of methodology; this is followed by a brief overview of the historical process of Greek migration and settlement in the United States. Then, the paper turns to current issues of Greek-American return migration and the conceptualisation of identity and place.

2. Epistemology and method

The purpose of this paper is to present some preliminary evidence about the experience of Greek-American return migration. My objective is to examine not only the experience of return *per se* but primarily the meanings attached to this experience. Through this I hope to develop a clearer understanding of the concepts of identity and place and how these internalisations are articulated in praxis. One of the challenges of this research is to reveal the extent to which the returnees' actions are reflective of conscious manifestations of individuals' identity, their self-sense and their positionality of place, real and imagined.

I take inspiration from Fielding's argument that "Migration tends to expose one's personality, it expresses one's loyalties and reveals one's values and attachments (often previously hidden). It is a statement of an individual's world-view, and is, therefore, an extremely *cultural* event" (1992, p.201). Within this framework, migration and return migration are both viewed as expressions of the cultural imaging of place, where the migrants' and returnees' evolving lives produce constructions and reconstructions of the extended social world, both in the home and the host country. Individual migrants are recognised as socially embedded, active, intentional agents who influence, as much as they are influenced by, the social context in which they are located.

This perspective follows Halfacree and Boyle's (1993) conceptualisation of migration, which emphasises its situatedness within everyday life, and leads to a biographical approach. This approach seeks to unfold the meaning of migration and the migrant's identity and sense of place by exploring the migrant's life course. Findlay and Li go a step further in their methodological contribution and introduce the *"auto"*- biographical approach; here the researcher attempts to raise practical consciousness to the discursive realm in order to

investigate how the growth of migration intentions over time are related to the self-defined changing cultural contexts of the migrants' everyday life (1997, p. 35). A similar approach was adopted in this study by encouraging returnees to engage in a process of self-reflection and to attempt to relate their actions, feelings and thoughts to the wider socio-cultural context of their changing place and positionality.

The epistemological foundation of this paper and my analysis of empirical data are based on a social constructivist (or constuctionist)[1] perspective with a phenomenological approach. Earlier representative works of this tradition include Berger and Luckmann's influential book *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967). A more recent definition of the position is given by Kenneth Gergen:[2]

> 'Drawing importantly from emerging developments most prominently in the history of science, the sociology of knowledge, ethnomethodology, rhetorical studies of science, symbolic anthropology, feminist theory and post-structuralist literary theory, social constructionism is not so much a foundational theory of knowledge as an anti-foundational dialogue. Primary emphases of this dialogue are based on: the social-discursive matrix from which knowledge claims emerge and from which their justification is derived; the values/ideology implicit within knowledge posits; the modes of informal and institutional life sustained and replenished by ontological and epistemological commitments; and the distribution of power and privilege favoured by disciplinary beliefs. Much attention is also given to the creation and transformation of cultural constructions: the adjustment of competing belief/value systems; and the generation of new modes of pedagogy, scholarly expression and disciplinary relations.' (1995, p.20).

My empirical material aims at demonstrating that identity and place are social constructions, "the product of specific historical and geographical

forces, rather than biologically given ideas whose meaning is dictated by nature" (Jackson and Penrose, 1993, p. 1). Hence, the spatial constitution of social life, as it relates to return migration, is articulated and shaped by the returnees themselves, and the epitome of this is the very process of their identity construction.

It was essential to the design of the study that the participants met certain criteria. The study was designed to include only those return migrants who were second-generation Greek-Americans, specifically those born in the United States to Greek immigrant parents. The participants had to have had a minimum return stay of at least six months. The six-month period was decided after ongoing discussions with people involved directly or indirectly with return migration and the perception of "initial adjustment". After speaking with officials from Greek-American organisations and social clubs, it was ascertained that six months is the minimum required time for the "actual return" to start taking place. Finally, it was also critical that all participants in the study expressed their willingness not only to dedicate their time but also to engage in self-reflection and to disclose personal data about their return experience.

In my initial contacts with the participants we discussed my research, their participation, and I reassured them of maintaining the confidentiality of their identities and the privacy of other communications conducted in the future. Some of the participants expressed enthusiasm and interest about my work and my own personal background, which I openly shared with them. This I had anticipated, and the information disclosed was the minimum, to avoid creating any type of distance or power relation between us, but enough to build trust. The participants did not feel that they were being exploited for research purposes, but felt useful to the study. This type of openness may have some risks, but it undoubtedly has many strengths: the participants felt a sense of security in knowing that, although a researcher, I was really "one of them"; and they appreciated all the efforts I made to provide an atmosphere of trust and colleagueship which enabled them to engage in deep self-reflection, and to share feelings, behaviours and attitudes which are not always quantifiable and are missed in structured interview research.

This paper is based on the material analysed for seven participants who were among the first to operationalise their commitment to the study out of the initial 20 selected who expressed interest. As each of the stories progressed, I sought further clarification of my understandings since none

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[1] There are several collections of essays on this theme but an example of a recent text that presents a critical overview of many aspects of constructionism by many leading international contributors, linking this discourse to a wider context of social and political science, is *The Politics of Constructionism,* edited by Irving Velody and Robin Williams (1998).

[2] Another comprehensive account of key issues in the formulation of constructionism can be found in: Gergen, Kenneth J. http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/kgergen1/txt8.html

of the initial verbal encounters were taped to avoid hindering the flowing process of natural conversation. All participants then agreed to write about their experiences without having their stories interrupted or distracted by conversation. This was the second phase of the empirical material. The third phase was a final meeting some months later to balance my role as researcher, listener and conversationalist by going over my preliminary interpretations of their stories to verify that none of the information was misrepresented or misinterpreted from their viewpoint. The themes discussed were arranged in rough chronological fashion in the following way:

- Before emigration: reasons to migrate, family background information.

- Migration experience (USA): family-friends-school-social life.

- Return experience (Greece): processes of return and settlement, life in Greece, place-identity.

The narrative conceptualisation of identity emphasises the role of stories and storytelling in the process of identity construction and how vital they are as a mode of knowledge and discourse. Giddens (1991) explains that identity is constituted through the continuous formulation and reformulation of narratives of the self, while Yuval-Davis (1997) maintains that individual and collective identities are specific forms of narrative which constitute commonalities and differences between self and others. For these reasons and the ones outlined above, it was decided that this method would be particularly useful in discovering significant meanings that would elicit a better understanding of returnees' identities, values, goals, perceptions, decisions and consequently would capture a flow of meanings over time. In the same respect, Bottomley signals a warning that "in talking about cultural forms, there is a risk of solidifying what should be seen as a *process*" (italicised in the original). She goes on to explain her intention, which is "to emphasise the fluidity of cultural forms, to question static concepts of 'traditions' and institutions; and to try to reveal something of the flow of social relations in cultural processes" (1992, p. 7).

Interviews and narratives were conducted in the participants' native language, which was both English and Greek since all exhibited bilingual native fluency. Conversations would flow without any predetermined choice of language. The participants were asked to select the particular language that made them feel more relaxed so they could describe their feelings, thoughts and

experiences without translating. None exhibited a preference in language so all conversations were mixed. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants all names used in the paper are pseudonyms. Although this paper is based on fieldwork conducted over a four-month period of time, during the summer of 2001, ongoing contacts, written correspondence and participant observation, which began in 1994, continues to this day. Kinship/friendship/colleagueship relations have facilitated the building of participant networks with Greek-Americans in Greece and the United States. The vast majority of conversations were not formally scheduled encounters; they took place in the context of everyday social interactions and became part of my ongoing participation in the intimate space of their personal and family life. Natural conversations became the extension of life history and oral history interviews. While I recognise that this small group of return migrants is not representative of all Greek-American return migrants, nonetheless there is a lot to reflect on from their experiences shared herein.[3]

My motivations and research concerns extend beyond academic inquiry into the realms of my own national consciousness and belonging. Born and raised in the United States, daughter of Greek immigrants, having lived and received education in both the United States and Greece, haunted by Socrates' words "*The unexamined life is not worth living for*", I can *identify* with Karakasidou's (1997, p.xix) claim: "Perhaps in my search for what made my parents, different as they were, both Greek, I was also looking subconsciously for the basis of my own Greek identity". She goes on to explain her academic odyssey:

"Perhaps it was a progressive sense of cultural homelessness, born of spending more than half of my life in a foreign country and returning each summer to a Greece that seemed ever less familiar, that prompted my growing appreciation of comparative cross-cultural theory in anthropology. In any event, it was undoubtedly my training as an anthropologist that brought me to engage critically the basis of Greek national identity and to historicize modern nation building in the country of my birth. I make no claims to privileged knowledge of Greek culture, be it based on innate genes, national ancestry, or the intimacy of childhood socialization and native enculturation. On the contrary, it is often dif-

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[3] Further fieldwork will be undertaken in 2002, both to broaden the initial sample and to diversify the analysis with techniques such as diaries, tape and video recording.

ficult for native scholars to become conscious of, let alone to liberate themselves from, the assumptions of their own culture. It is the burden of culture that conditions one to look at the world in one way and not another" (Karakasidou, 1997, xix).

To the extent that it has been possible, I have followed ethnographic practice based on distancing oneself from native cultural assumptions and instead immersing oneself in critical introspection, in-depth reflection and active participation in the social phenomena I have aimed at analysing.[4] My research originated and continues to this day to be a social encounter that extends beyond as well as within the research project, insofar as I can now "listen beyond" what was said and explore the issues with greater critical awareness and insight. So, my choice of methodology has proven uniquely useful in unveiling the meanings and processes encoded in the very act of return migration.

Having considered methodological difficulties, much of the remainder of the paper will embody an analytical structure conveyed by three distinct narratives: what I term "ideology of home", "ideology of return" and "ideology of self", which respectively are reflective of the notions of *place, culture* and *identity.*[5] First, however, we need to briefly review the history of Greek migration to the United States.

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[4] There is a wide discussion in many disciplines about the researcher's involvement in the empirical work conducted. Questions related to objectivity and subjectivity on the part of the researcher have been addressed by many scholars in the areas of sociology, anthropology, philosophy and theory of science. For the most part it is widely accepted to allow the voice of the researcher to be incorporated in the scientific process of fieldwork (see e.g. Abu-Lughod, 1993, Bourdieu and Wacquant 1996).

[5] I would like to clarify my usage of the term "ideology". I recognise that the term has become fortified throughout the history of the social sciences by complex meanings primarily around issues of power and political substance, and is heavily loaded either from a Marxist, Althusserian, Gramscian or Foucauldian perspective. However my intention is not to place it within or deriving from any of these theoretical contexts. I am using it in its most simplistic form, that of its linguistic origin, from the Greek ideologia (*idea* and *logos*) meaning the "study of ideas" or the "discourse" or "speech of ideas". Therefore my informants' expression of their ideas of home, return and self, are their ideologies. The same holds for the usage of the term "geographies". Again, from the Greek, which means to write one's world. The geographies of place, culture and identity are the articulation of their new world. Hence their ideologies become the method of articulating their geographies.

3. Migration and Settlement of Greeks in the US: a brief historical interpretation[6]

The Greeks were among the last of the Europeans to have immigrated to the United States. Numerically significant Greek immigration did not begin until the 1890s. The peak of Greek immigration was reached in the period prior to and immediately after World War I: according to data from the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), more than 350,000 Greeks immigrated during 1900-1920 (Moskos, 1999, p.156). More came after World War II but in smaller numbers. In 1976, the INS estimated that 640,000 ethnic Greeks had come to the United States between 1820 and 1975. This figure is contested by many experts who hold it to be too small.

The Greeks who came to the United States in the main era of immigration during the early decades of the 20th century were in their predominance male and were the only fairly large European group of which more than half returned, reflecting the relative lack at that stage of family migration.

The bulk of Greek migrants came because of the economic opportunities America offered. Those who lived in the Greek-speaking areas of the Ottoman Empire came for both economic reasons and because they wished to escape the political and religious persecution of the Turks. In general, a combination of environmental and social circumstances led Greeks to their departure for the *"dreamland".* Agricultural difficulties deriving from poor soil conditions, floods and earthquakes leading to repeated crop failures and increased poverty levels as well as overwhelming taxation and governmental instability forced many to look to the United States as the land of opportunity.

Most immigrants came from the rural areas of Greece where family values were (and still are) of immense importance, and the need to earn a living and accept the responsibilities of an adult at an early age was a common phenomenon. Despite their young age and lack of experience, migrants departed with the plan to struggle, work hard, save and provide for their parents, sisters

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[6] For a more detailed account refer, among others, to: Saloutos 1964, Vlachos 1968, Tavuchis 1972, Scourby 1984, Monos 1986, Georgakas 1987, Kourvetaris 1997, Moskos 1999, and for a quite comprehensive bibliographic guide on materials relevant to Greek-American Studies, although not very recent, see the one compiled by then librarian and head of the Bibliographic Control Department of the Columbia University Law Library, Zenelis 1982.

and brothers in Greece, and eventually for themselves. Optimism, determination, self-discipline and an adventurous spirit, along with the hope and expectation of returning home, provided the fuel to sustain the plan and to alleviate the otherwise often unbearably difficult times of early immigration.

By and large, the Greeks settled and established themselves in the states east of the Mississippi River and north of the Ohio. Despite coming from a rural background, they showed a remarkable preference of living in urban areas. According to Saloutos, "in the city (the Greek migrant) expected to find a job with less difficulty, receive wages at the end of the day or week, be in the company of his countrymen, and enjoy the social life that would be denied to him if he lived in an isolated rural area" (1964, p.3). The pursuit of urban occupations can also be explained by the fact that agriculture provided little attraction for Greeks who associated it with misery and hardship in their native land. The earliest Greek immigrants gratefully accepted whatever jobs they could get in both heavy and light industry. Occupational opportunities were found in railroad construction, textile mills, meatpacking companies and mining. Others worked as bootblacks, waiters, vendors and clerks in stores that catered to ethnic needs. Daniels meanwhile mentions that "relatively large numbers of Greeks became small businessmen and, for reasons that are not at all clear, large numbers of these opened restaurants. These were not restaurants that featured Greek cuisine but were generally modest places that featured inexpensive general food" (1990, p. 203). The business represented a firm step on the ladder of entrepreneurial success for those who were initially in menial jobs.

But how is one to explain the Greek's accelerating role as middleman in such a short time given his pre-migratory rural status? One explanation is offered through the conditions set by a split labour market. Central to this perspective is that although ethnic antagonism may be generated because of class antagonism, one unintended consequence of a split labour market is that "it pushes the foreign born into their own ethnic enclave and into their own economic enterprises" (Scourby, 1984, p. 154). Historian William McNeill (1978) points out two aspects of Greek rural life that seem relevant to this issue. He notes that traditional peasant life was and remains market-oriented. This provided the villager with an orientation that augured well for urban living. Also, the closely-knit family relations and the emphasis on family life were centred upon viewing outsiders as "them" rather than "us". Given this family focus, the group was able to function as a buffer against the impersonality of competitive individualism. Traditional Greek life stressed the importance of buying and selling. This was a critical activity,

even when it occurred only a few days of the year. Prestige and repute in village opinion depended on how skilfully the head of the household made his deals (Scourby, 1984, p. 156).

Close family bonds and the provisions of mutual assistance are strong cultural explanations, which illustrate to a large extent the upward mobility aspirations of the Greeks in the United States. Their perseverance and determination to succeed led them to accumulate some capital, which in return enabled them to demonstrate their business skills. This inherent tendency of personal sacrifice for social gain reflects a serious concern with the establishment of identity. The vehicle of success becomes the major component of identity formation, and America becomes the instrumental geographical context where this ongoing process takes place.

Whether this behaviour can be labelled "*symbolic ethnicity*", as sociologist Herbert J. Gans (1979) does in distinguishing the instrumental component of ethnicity from its expressive one, is difficult to say. In essence, symbolic ethnicity provides a socio-psychological identity that requires none of the constraining organisational networks of the past. Symbols construct our sense of identity through direct experience which brings together time, space and meaning. This integration of symbolic meaning and experiential meaning enables us to place ourselves in a context of imaginative and realistic cultural narratives. Gans' position is that the current ethnic role in America is a voluntary rather than an ascriptive role, one that people assume along with the myriad other roles demanded by our society. The masking and unmasking allows the individual to play an ethnic role in terms of his/her own perception of ethnicity.

The role of ethnicity in shaping human experience and self-perception is essential. Without the experience of belonging, without the sense of being members of a collectivity which transcends themselves, their contemporaries and a particular chronological and spatial context, individuals are deprived of a guiding chart and a centrality upon which to build their lives.

4. Current issues of Greek-American return migration: conceptualising identity and place

People typically form their identities within the context of their ethnic backgrounds and the socio-political contexts in which they are socialised. Moreover people often construct autobiographies to place themselves in the social order and seek out settings and situations for confirmation (Harre, 1989). Hence, we find people constructing their identities and their self-images to fit

socio-cultural contexts and also constructing situations and contexts to fit the images they have of themselves (Fitzgerald, 1993).

The first principle of identity formation is participation in ethnic social networks. Individuals form relationships through their participation in certain activities. Heller sustains that, "beyond this principle, there is the consequence of continuous interaction over time within social networks: shared experience, shared knowledge, shared ways of looking at the world, and shared ways of talking" (1987, p. 181). This process of *"sharing"* reflects *"shared identity"* based on common patterns of thinking, behaving and interpreting the world; it reflects a *"shared culture"*. These factors enter into the development of identity under any circumstances whether or not the *"actual social networks"* and *"identity constructs"* developed by Greek-Americans remain stable over time and across social space. These principles illustrate that identity is grounded in social relationships, which are formed through interaction and active participation in ethnic social networks. Contextual factors (such as intra/inter-ethnic conflicts and identity crises) may arise and perhaps interfere with if not constrain the identity construction process. Language and religion play central roles in the formation of those social relationships and consequently in the maintenance of Greek identity. In the course of constructing and maintaining identity, common historical symbols are identified, shared, and passed along to future generations.

Identification appears to be one of the least well-understood yet discursively explosive concepts of recent years. It has been subjected to a searching critique conducted within a variety of disciplinary areas. The notion of a unified, integral identity is one which exposes us to a series of conceptual difficulties. The concept of identity explored here is not an essentialist, but a positional one. That is to say, the concept of Greek ethnic identity does not signal a fixed and stable core across time, unfolding from beginning to end through all the composites of historical time and space without change. As Hall points out, "identities are never unified and, in late modern times, are increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization and are constantly in the process of change and transformation*"* (Hall and du Gay, 1996, p. 4).

Identities emerge within the dynamic context of exclusion and difference. They are constructed in response to *"otherness"*, in that the process of "*becoming"* rather than *"being"* is articulated through the use of the historical, cultural and symbolic resources: not merely *"who we are"* and "*where we came from"*, but even further than that to *"what we might become"* and *"how we might represent ourselves"*. Stuart Hall in his enlightening introduction to *Questions of Cultural Identity* (1996) offers a wide-ranging exploration of this issue and asserts that: "Above all, and directly contrary to the form in which they are constantly invoked, identities are constructed through, not outside, difference". This entails the radically disturbing realisation that it is only in reference to what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside,* that the *positive* meaning of any term (and thus its *identity)* can be constructed (Butler, 1993; Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990). Hall continues: "Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, and to render 'outside' abjected. Every identity has at its 'margin', an excess, something more. The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure, every identity naming as its necessary… that which it 'lacks'" (Hall and du Gay, 1996, p.5).

Ethnicity too is constructed on boundaries (Barth, 1969). The "unmeltable ethnics" set limits in the preservation of their status. The "alien territory" of the host society is not an ambivalent context. Ethnicity acquires meaning, shape and form as a function of opposition in what differentiates one ethnic group from another. Ethnic identity is an affiliative construct in which individuals are viewed by themselves and/or by others as belonging to a group" (Cheung 1993, p.1216). Saharso extends the definition to include social processes that involve one's choice of friends, selection of a future partner, perception of one's life-chances, and the reactions of others in one's social environment. Both definitions involve boundaries that reflect a distinction one makes about *"self" and "other"* (1989, p. 97). From Fredrik Barth's seminal text (1969) which introduced the notion of ethnicity as the "social organisation of culture difference" to Geertz's definition of ethnicity as the "world of personal identity collectively ratified and publicly expressed" (1973, p.268) we have more or less found a consensus of agreement on a "basic model" of ethnicity. Thus, according to Jenkins (1999, p. 88):

- Ethnicity is about cultural differentiation.

- Although ethnicity is centrally concerned with culture it is also rooted in, and to some extent the outcome of, social interaction.

- Ethnicity is no more fixed or unchanging than the culture of which it is a component.

- Ethnicity is a social identity which is both collective and individual, externalised in social interaction and internalised in personal self-awareness.

Returning to the notion of difference, a critical point about ethnic identity is that the relationship between *"you"* and the *"other"* becomes the embodiment of the *"ethnic self".* Only when there is an *"other"* can you know who *"you"* are. Hall emphasises that "there is no identity that is without the dialogic relationship to the other. The other is not outside, but also inside the self, the identity. So identity is a process, identity is a split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the other to oneself" (Hall and du Gay,1996, p. 5).

The environment of difference has compelled Greeks to re-evaluate and stress their identity. Greeks in America safeguarded their status by unification under the protective context of an ethnic group; a function grounded in their common language, religion and culture. This identification process encompasses the adjustment to the cultural elements of their larger surroundings while retaining their *"Greekness".* This particular sense of solidarity along with the process of sharing a common culture strengthens ethnic identity. This feeling in turn grows and fills the vacuum of residing away from the homeland. Greek immigrants undoubtedly faced adverse conditions upon their arrival to the United States which in turn facilitated the formation of institutional as well as cultural agents that helped to promote and safeguard their ethnic identity. As Greeks began to assert their ethnic identity they simultaneously integrated into American society. Through this process, a new identity was formed, one that was neither entirely Greek nor entirely American, but an amalgamation of both, as subsequent generations have re-evaluated and reformulated their conceptualisation of ethnic identity.

When we allude to Greek ethnicity, Scourby maintains that "it is something that can only be understood within very specific contexts of social, economic, political and psychological variables". Although she is at pains to point out that the Greek-American community is not an homogenous one, Scourby questions, is there under the umbrella term "Greek-American", a common thread, one that pulls together the fracturing effect of generation, education, and class? "Is there an inexplicable bond among those who define themselves variously as Greek, Greek-American,

American Greek, or Greek Orthodox?" *(*1994, p.125).

From the perspective of cross-cultural psychology, identity is formally defined as: "that part of the totality of one's self-construal made up of those dimensions that express the continuity between one's construal of past ancestry and one's future aspirations in relation to ethnicity" (Weinreich, 1999, p. 137). This definition emphasises the continuity between current expressions of ethnicity, past conceptions of one's ancestry and future aspirations for one's progeny. In terms of "Greekness" ethnic identity can be measured by the degree to which individuals internalise the values, symbols and traditions of Greek heritage and to what extent they are practically expressed by the group members. A very interesting study by Constantinou (1989) aims to define the dominant themes of Greek-American ethnicity and to examine the intergenerational difference in this phenomenon. The study first identified three dominant themes, *Lingua, Cultura,* and *Politika.* Although each of these three themes is composed of several attributes, the Greek language, socio-cultural activities, and politics respectively form their core. Furthermore, a certain interrelatedness and interdependence exists between specific attributes of Greek-American ethnicity. The pervasive role of language and the Orthodox Church account for this overlap (Constantinou, 1989, p. 115). Quantitative analysis, using Multivariate Analysis of Variance, revealed a sharp intergenerational decline in the use of Greek, a less pronounced decrease in the interest in politics, and little variability in participation in socio-cultural activities (Constantinou, 1989, p. 99).

4.1 Identity under construction: building blocks and barriers

Even a brief review of the historical development of social stratification, economic and family patterns in Greece reveals some surprising contradictions. Herzfeld, a scholar who has transcended the level of experience and has truly "lived Greece", identifies a series of startling contrasts: "the ruins and hints of the Classical past mix with the bustle of modern urban life, the warm hospitality with a sometimes overt suspicion of foreigners, the paraphernalia of a functioning national bureaucracy with the omnipresent evidence of patronage and favor trading" (Herzfeld, 1986). Herzfeld's general thesis on Greek national identity and its relationship to the building of modern Greece is particularly relevant to this theme, as is the critical discussion of Greek national identity as a "stubborn stereotype" argued by Tsoukalas (1993, 1996).

The social construction of identity rejects any previous conceptions of identity as a natural, stable, unchanging structure; and explicitly reiterates individual and collective identities as intentional or unintentional consequences of social interaction. The social construction of boundaries produces collective identities. There is a twofold way these ethnic boundaries function: as a demarcation line between "us" and "them" inside and outside the familiar and the different; and also as an enclosure line which forms a basis of trust and solidarity, and a forum of communal expression which can transform strangers into members of the group. For instance, religious conversion and language or cultural acquisition in cases of intermarriage between different ethnic groups can be viewed as a means of consolidating a basis of legitimate acceptance to the group.

The process of the construction of the migrant self in the case of the Greek-American experience may literally happen in open, versatile social space but symbolically it also involves the locality of closed national space. The Greek-Americans as social agents either in or out of the host country tend to resist the disciplining process of fixed identities and both actively and passively legitimise their ethnic and social personhood. This of course does not imply a lack of coherence in their own and others' perception of "who" they are. Fragile and confused as they seem on the surface, essentially actions, relations and social positioning interpret identity. As we attempt to give meaning to such vague conceptualisations of "being" and "becoming", we come to realise that both choice and praxis are reflective of identity itself. Greeks convert the migratory experience into a symbolic discourse of a multifaceted struggle (on moral, ethnic/national, and social-political levels), which has turned into success, and the embodiment of the Greek spirit can be measured in terms of financial and family capital. By and large, the Greek migrants who return to Greece are those who have accomplished a great deal during their absence and yet have given up little or most likely nothing of their "Greekness".

The complexities arising from the struggle of identification emanate from the boundaries existing between the notions of "home" and "away". These dynamics of belongingness and displacement accentuate contradictions and paradoxes of a "here" here and a "there" there. This "here" and "there" dichotomy leads to a new process, that of "othering" or "otherness", which can be termed as the *other self*. Who then is this Greek-American, this "other" Greek? We now speak, in a postmodern language, about hybrid identities. Writing from a historian's perspective on the Italian migration experience, Donna Gabaccia helps us to

appreciate too the complexity of the question just posed:

> "Today, identities among the descendants of Italy's migrants differ as much among themselves as migrants once differed from natives. Although diaspora nationalism flourishes among the five million Italian citizens still living abroad, the much larger number of persons of Italian descent do not share it. Migrants' descendants have created their own civiltà italiana based on the thought, 'tutto il mondo è paese'[7]. Their italianità -where it has persisted at all- resides in the humble details of everyday life, not in the glories of any nation or its state" (2000, pp. 176-177).

4.2 Networks of socio-cultural identification: the Greek family and the Greek community

Beginning in the early 1990s a series of important studies were conducted in the United States regarding identity formation and family socialisation among second-generation immigrants[8]. A number of these studies explored the family dynamics and structure that influence and/or determine identity formation, language development and adaptation within the cultural environment.

In the portfolio of Greek-American studies the theoretical bases of analysing family structure privilege the functional perspective of traditional socialisation theory which argues that this process serves to reproduce social values and norms, thus preserving societal stability and order. In the context of ethnic family socialisation, the parents assume an active role in shaping children's ethnic identities: they teach, promote and practice the ethnic language, religion, culture and traditions in order to transmit national consciousness to their children. These traditional functionalist perspectives have been criticised for their deterministic view of social agents and society as a whole. They have ignored the multi-faceted capacities of individuals to construct, negotiate and interpret symbols and identities within their environments.

In the case of Greek-Americans we can distinguish two independent components that are also

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[7] In other words, all people everywhere are the same - it describes the world as manageable, and as a face-to-face community. The proverb strongly implies that all people can get along, for the world is just a global village.

[8] For some of the most important of these see Gans (1992), Jensen and Chitose (1994), Portes (1996), Portes and Zhou (1993), Rumbaut (1994), Waldinger and Perlmann (1998), Zhou (1997).

integral parts of the socialisation process of identity formation. One basic component is the active role of the family as the ethno-cultural transmitter toward children; the other component is the active role of the children as interpreters and receptors of what is transmitted from the parents. Members of the immediate as well as the extended family are all considered active agents in the socialisation of children and assume such a responsibility in its fullest potential. Not only parents and grandparents but also uncles, aunts and godparents reinforce cultural meanings and ethnic behaviours. Not only do they interpret and define ethnic symbols but also they utilise reward and punishment techniques in order to shape and project appropriate ethnic behaviours. Such techniques and schemes of punishment range from pure emotional (brainwashing, psychological blackmail and pressure, creating feelings of guilt, developing dependency syndromes, creating low self-esteem etc) to pure material ones (withholding goods and services, disowning from the family inheritance etc). Fortier reminds us that "projects of collective identity commonly involve the location of the family as a building block in the growth of the community" (2000, p.49) and takes it a step further in the realm of gender issues, to suggest that "in turn, the excavation of family values underscores and naturalizes the different positions of men and women in society".[9]

However, parents, family or a specific social group are not the sole determinants of ethnicity and identity. Not only do ethnic families differ in the ways they project and express ethnicity, they also exercise varying degrees of control, intensity and practice in affirming and expressing ethnic identity. For example, ethnic identity is often diluted as generation succeeds generation and more members of ethnic groups become Americanised (Cheng and Kuo, 2000). Furthermore, the characteristic of one's ethnicity is selectively preserved or expanded (e.g. extended familism or biculturalism) to serve as a family or group strategy for adopting the ethnic minority's social pattern (Stoller, 1996).

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[9] Although gender is a pivotal theme in the entire migration process it is not central to this particular paper but remains an essential component of a future research project. In addition to the representative works in the discourse of gender and migration mentioned by Fortier (2000) (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989, Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992, Brah 1992, 1996, Yuval-Davis 1997) some suggested text readings include: Buijs (ed.) 1993, Kofman et al. 2000, Kelson and Delaet 1999, Anthias and Lazaridis 2000, Sharpe (ed.) 2001, Gabaccia 1994, 1996, and (ed.) *Immigrant Women in the United States: a Selectively Annotated Multidisciplinary Bibliography*, 1989, as a reference tool for the American context.

The second component of family socialisation is the participation and involvement of children themselves in the construction of their own identity within the internal familial ethnic context and the external social environment. Greek families tend to cherish their cultural heritage and require their children to preserve and practice ethnic cultural values and norms. Retention and expression of ethnicity may be exerted through coercion and pressure to varying degrees (learning the Greek language and speaking it at home, making purchases from ethnic Greek stores, eating and cooking primarily Greek dishes, following Greek folklore, festivals and music, adopting Greek symbols and customs etc.). However, the traditional socialisation model according to which children are passive receivers of cultural transmission does not always apply: several studies have documented that family conflict caused by different levels of interest in preserving ethnic cultures between generations often leads second-generation immigrant children to resist ethnic identity formation (Rumbaut, 1994; Waters, 1994).

In a community, group members identify themselves and make connections with a place in several ways. For instance, they form a strong bond with one another and to a place. Community is formed from the collective activities of people who dwell there, who shape the landscape through their cultural activities, and from the distinctive institutions, forms of organisation and social relations within an area that is somehow bounded (Harvey, 1996, p. 310). For the traditional Greek culture with its strong familistic orientation, the family provided the introductory vehicle for relationships, and through it the individual was socially located into the kinship system, the community, and the church. It was within the context of the family that young Greek children developed their sense of being, their self-identity. The traditional Greek family was viewed as a life-long system of emotional support and, if need be, of economic assistance. A strong cultural value inherent in this familistic orientation was that of mutual aid within the family (Constantakos, 1993, p. 8).

5. Experiencing return migration: the articulation of identity. Some empirical evidence

One of the most important contributions of the Greek-American historian Theodore Saloutos, and the only study of in its kind thus far, is his book on the *Repatriated Greek-Americans* (1956), with extensive fieldwork in both the United States and Greece. Convincingly he asserts, "The experiences of Greek-Americans, as both immigrants and re-

patriates, brought humor, drama, tragedy, and success into their lives. To these people, nothing stood out more vividly than the emotional intensity with which the repatriates described what they had experienced" (Saloutos, 1956, p. 88) and through their stories Saloutos presents the multiplicity of problems, be they of a financial, professional, personal or social nature, that made their return to Greece both a "challenge" and an "adventure". A sharp interplay between fortunes gained and misfortunes suffered is a clear illustration of this theme. The participants interviewed, about half a century ago, all representatives of the first-generation of Greek immigrants, expressed intense disappointment and endured unpleasant and disillusioning experiences upon return, especially when subjected to family ordeals of having to provide financial aid to others and being rejected if not willing to comply with such demands. Saloutos records a series of complaints ranging from lack of facilities and conveniences to deceptive practices by locals; moreover the returnees were outcast or ridiculed for dressing, speaking and behaving in a different manner. Some of the subheadings Saloutos gives for his narratives are indicative of returnees' feelings of despair and frustration in their native country; for instance, *"I Left God's Country to Come to the Devil's"* (Saloutos, 1956, p. 95). So, although many feasts and celebrations preceded the much-anticipated event of departure for Greece, with compatriots all gathered for the final farewell, it was indeed succeeded by much misery and turmoil in the native land.

Let me now turn to the evidence of the narratives of the seven Greek-American returnees which I selected in Athens in 2001, almost two generations after Saloutos' pioneering study. Key demographic and migration characteristics of these persons are summarised in Table 1.

In retrospect in the present study what is characteristically common among all participants is the cross-sectional bonding of "home", of "return" and of the "self" through the experiencing of return migration, and subsequently the articulation of "place", "culture" and "identity" via this event. Almost schizophrenic, yet clearly articulated, the interchange between a temporary "home" in the country of birth (United States) and a permanent "home" in the country of their parents' origin (Greece) is for the second-generation return migrants a cognitive process of being. Here is one account, from Ioanna:

> Ever since I can remember, I have always felt that home was a different place. Home was a temporary term. As first-generation Greek-Americans, my Greek-born parents succeeded in raising my brother and me with actually three identities. At home, we were Greek. At school, we were American. In our social lives, we were Greek-Americans. What is my ethnic background you may ask? My response is: all of the above. We managed to maintain each successfully. I can say that now, after looking back and seeing that I was able to thrive in all of my identities. If there was one that would characterize me best now as an adult, I would say, I am Greek-American. … Our American address was temporary, and so was my mindframe.

Ioanna decided to move to Greece right after graduation from university, but her family remained in the United States. She lived in Greece for three years and she was happy but missed her family. When she met her Greek husband they both realised that they had the same financial insecurities so they set off for a "new beginning" in the United States. Finally:

> After taking the tremendous opportunity that the United States offered us at the time, we once again realized that we had to make a decision as to what we were to do, and where home would finally be. …

Upon return once again to Greece she tells us:

> I am here, and I am adjusting. Am I home? I don't know. I don't think I will ever know. I am happy with my decision, and I believe I have completed a cycle that my family had begun about 100 years ago. For me, I'm settled on Greek ground now. I am still waiting for my family. I hope to one day become a mother and shelter my children from the confusion that has been such a great part of my psyche. I do however hope to allow them to feel as though they have a choice like I had. I hope to teach them and help them understand that an identity as a home is always in constant change and that feeling like Homer is just fine.

This constant struggle between place and identity is also very much what Nicoletta means when she says:

> Generally, I find my Greek self fighting the Greek-American self. What's proper, what people will say? I returned to Greece in 1985-88 because it was the parents' dream but my father could not adjust so we all went back. After my studies, I decided I had to give it another chance. So in 1994 I returned and could not leave. I consider myself Greek-American and finally know who and why I am

the way I am. It takes time and thought but I have come to terms with it.

We find the same type of certainty in Panagiotis' short-lasting dilemma, initially a brief sense of loss, but then confidence of being in the "right place":

> Although I was young I felt that I lost a lot of things, I felt that I lost my friends and that I lost America. Now if you ask me to go and live in America I would answer definitely NO. I think that Greece is one of the most beautiful places in the world. This is one reason that I wouldn't go back because I am of the thought that we have one life and we should live it… .

Penelope was clear about intentions right from the start, explaining that:

> Moving back to Greece was in a way returning back to our (family) base. I could never fulfil the "identity" of being only American.

The process of identity formation through the realisation of "belongingness" actualised in return migration is the apex of the blending of these three distinct yet interconnected *ideologies* of *home*, *return* and *self*. Andreas realised that:

> The fact that my parents sold everything and decided that it was time to move to Greece all changed my life. Although every beginning is hard, as the Greek saying goes, I learned to appreciate the environment as well as my people. All my life I had nowhere to look for my own people until I went to Greece. I took time to learn the language and viewed this culture as my own. I had a difficulty finding friends, but I knew I belonged. I got to know my roots and met elders, whom are treated differently in Greece than in the United States. They told me stories about my ancestors and history first on. I matured and gained self-respect, and even became responsible and realized who I was. I came to the conclusion that I am American, but I have Greek roots. Greece helped me realize this love for country, and I feel first that I am American and then Greek. Greece helped me acquire the knowledge necessary to progress, America will help me put that knowledge to use.

As the life stories flow so does the distinct imaging and imagining of home which is a flow of concrete conceptual processes. The disorientation around positionality figures prominently in all the narratives and it is only when the agenda of place is actualised in return migration that this leads to the construction of a hybridised identity. The identity of second-generation return migrants is a provisional one, contested and constructed through the human geography of "placeness" or what they perceive as being actually "homeness" and belongingness. This is not an identity devoid of all meaning. They have questioned the spatial dislocation of their identity, they have sought answers to their own ontological and existential tribulations and with an anti-essentialist alternative plan have finally negotiated and translated their identity. Through their transient lives the symbolic geographies of the home-place materialise in the context of the cultural geographies of the return-place, and their fluid and fragile identities form a new geography, one that is constitutive of belonging and place. As the term *geography* etymologically suggests, they are literally writing their own world. The narrative of return is not simply a locational occasion, not a stasis but an occurrence of praxis that embodies being: the "who I am" in the "where I am". The hyphenated experience becomes a living and lived space where identity is constructed; defying logic, the "who we are" is at times in two places at once; seemingly marginal, outside and within place it generates this new geography. There is a dialogic and dialectical relationship inextricably connected to but not bound with personal and family histories. The returnees are "homeward unbound" because their "personal plan of action" allows them to literally move beyond the collective to the autonomous, the individual choice of return. This reflexive dimension of return is embedded within a mind-set centred on a sense of belonging but neither trapped in the rootedness of a static notion of home nor a fixed identity. It encapsulates praxis which overrides traditional conceptions of individuals as members of insulated fixities of particular social and cultural fields. This emphasis on the dynamic and shifting qualities of identity formation is in line with the search for the modern self "as inextricably tied to fluidity of movement across time and space" (Rapport and Dawson, 1998, p. 4) in a society and space "simultaneously realized by thinking, feeling, doing individuals" (Keith and Pile, 1993, p.6), only to realise that "home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the constructions of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become…" (hooks, 1991, p.148).

5.1 Narrating the self and narrating the national: images of "home" away from "home" or the lived experience of return migrants

If there is one thing, actually two, to be learned from the development of ethnic and migration research, it is that on the one hand there is no single definition of such concepts as ethnicity and identity, and on the other that their complex, multi-faceted nature requires analytic tools from a multiplicity of disciplines that will incorporate a diversity of analytical constructs, views, assumptions and levels that cross, intersect and override disciplinary boundaries.

In the Greek literature (mainly historical and ethnographic) on identity construction there seems to be a clear interest in gender and national identity issues, in the relationship between the rural and the urban, and in the assimilation of Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace Greek refugees of the 1922 war between Greece and Turkey (for a list of bibliographical sources see D. Gefou-Madianou, 1999). Recent events, however, have shifted the emphasis to ethnic groups and their political negotiation of national versus local identities. More specifically this was accentuated by the post-1989 movements of ethnic groups to Greece (of Greek origin as well as economic migrants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds), the situation in the Balkans following the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, the "Macedonian issue", and concerns raised over issues of European integration, multiculturalism and multiple identities. The conceptualisation of Greekness as an absolutely fixed organic and homogenous entity that is articulated through the construction of Greek ethnos, the Greek State and Greek Orthodoxy as one unit has been questioned as particularly problematic (Pollis 1992, Abatzopoulou 1997, Frangoudaki and Dragonas 1997). A rejection of essentialist approaches to identity has given way to new perspectives in understanding both the "self" and the "other". Identity may be influenced by heritage and origin but it is not determined by space or biology. As we try to locate our own personal landscape we realise that we are also part of other people's landscapes. These ongoing processes are never complete and fixed, they are fluid and interactive. Current literature shows us that we *construct, invent, translate and negotiate* our identities within a multiplicity of shared roles.

Undoubtedly recent global migration trends and the transformation of Greece from a sending to a receiving country have decidedly served as a turning point in re-evaluating what constitutes "Greekness".[10] It is encouraging to observe that at least some researchers are indeed investigating the ways in which the presence of immigrants (often perceived by the public as massive and threatening in many ways) as foreigners within the Greek national territory has led to the re-definition of Greek national identity (Psimmenos 1995, Petronoti 1998, National Center for Social Research: Ourselves and Others 1999, Triandafyllidou 2000, Marvakis et al. 2001). Noteworthy also is the fact that the impact of recent migration to Greece and the interaction between various ethnic groups and native Greeks are being examined closely by some scholars conducting field work over the last few years (Petrinioti 1993, Psimmenos 1995, Fakiolas & King 1996, Romaniszyn 1996, Karydis 1996, Lazaridis 1996, Vaiou & Hadjimichalis 1997, Iosifides 1997, Petronoti & Zarkia 1998, Marvakis et. al 2000).

On the other hand we are also confronted with studies by scholars of the Greek diaspora who maintain that Greek-Americans and Greeks in other countries represent an ethno-religious cultural group with its own historical national identification, cultural and religious physiognomy. That is, Greek-Americans can be studied as an ethnic group with its own historical and socio-cultural dynamics, characterised by a sense of peoplehood and ethnic consciousness (Kourvetaris 1997). The Greek-American experience, migration and settlement process, are not a single event but rather a series of processes and interactions within a context of particular chronological, social, political, economic, historical and spatial context. Both Psomiades (1987) and Moskos (1999) suggest that this experience is better understood not primarily as part of a Hellenic diaspora but in the broad context of ethnic experience in the United States. Kourvetaris (1997) argues that the Greek-American experience cannot be understood if severed from its roots in modern Greek culture. Greek-American studies on ethnicity and identity can help identify contemporary applications of those concepts within this new context of globalisation and multiculturalism.

The articulation of home is signified through the conceptualisation of home as physical space as well as symbolic belonging to a space, which includes symbols of social and cultural meaning. Home then is understood as a new context, which encompasses those meanings that define, develop, modify and produce our sense of belonging. Decorations and food, symbolic images and practices that nourish the soul of the ethnic group members and alleviate some of the nostalgic cravings of "home" are common. Ideologies of "home" in the Greek-American case are consistent and they slightly differ from family to

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[10] Only in the last couple of years in Greece do we encounter open discussions, a limited number of academic courses taught and a few Ph.D. dissertations supervised in some Greek Universities on issues of ethnicity and migration.

family. The perception of the country of origin as "home" is highly intense for all Greek-Americans, with the exception of an even closer bond to one's village or region of birth or parental extraction. Most Greek-Americans express and implement the desire to purchase a house or land in Greece, usually in addition to the family house or cottage. Most times it is one and the same. Dilapidated ruins of houses turn into modern villas even in the remotest of areas. "I don't want to leave my bones here" and "I want to visit my parents grave and be buried there where the soil is sweet", are frequent refrains among first-generation Greek immigrants in the United States. It is important to note, however, that their children (second generation) and subsequently their children (third generation) may possibly feel like strangers in the ancestral homeland - in a sense they experience a new type of migration. Takeyuki Tsuda (2000) admits: "I no longer considered Japan to be my true homeland. America was. My first sojourn in Japan had taught me that. When returning to Japan for dissertation fieldwork, I had not referred to it as kikoku" (repatriation). Tsuda justifies it by stating: "This is the sense in which the 'return migration' of second and third generation diasporic descendants to the ancestral country of ethnic origin can be a search for a homeland abroad. However, since the ethnic homeland has only been imagined from afar, return migration can challenge and disrupt their previous feelings of nostalgic affiliation toward it " (p.6). Here we are confronted by two opposing facts: on the one hand absence from one's ethnic homeland produces a strong feeling of nostalgic longing and identification and therefore leads to the rediscovery and reaffirmation of the conceptualisation of a "homeland". On the other, when return migrants are marginalised and socially alienated as foreigners in their ethnic homeland, this constitutes ethnic rejection in one's homeland and therefore leads to the estrangement from a homeland. What is important to point out is that in both cases there is a common denominator, which is the negotiation process of cultural belonging to a homeland and consequently the negotiation of a hybrid identity that will to a degree dominate. What is crucial in the Greek- American case is to investigate how they concretely establish a dual and hybridised identity. In this case movement has provoked a multiplicity of alterations and transformations in terms of identity and belonging.

It is proposed that a conscious plan of action is devised and implemented by Greek-American return migrants and this enables them to overcome barriers of resettlement and to successfully move from one cultural context to another without becoming disoriented or estranged from their ethnic environment. This constitutes a learning process that enables them to navigate through a two-fold cultural landscape, it gives them the flexibility and freedom to "customise", and in a certain

sense to personalise their belonging; and it makes them masters of their destiny and those who accept, reject and adjust whatever remains acceptable in order to complete the ethnic portrait. Returnee narratives and participant observation have refined the initial argument about the "personal plan of action" described above and provide evidence for the notion of a conscious process of readjusting, reacculturating and reassimilating into their own home culture after living in a different culture. Some of the quoted interviewee statements eloquently capture the spirit of this process, but especially the cases of 'double return' by *Ioanna* and *Nicoletta*. In both these cases, the returnees not only left the United States, their country of birth, education, employment and residence, but also decided to do so for a second time, despite leaving behind their immediate family (parents, brothers, sisters), their extended family and friends, as well as their material possessions and their careers. It is also interesting to observe that in both cases their initial return to Greece was the same, a period of three years (but with the difference of a decade) and their second stay in the United States was more or less between four and six years. Other cases of double return are those of *Socrates* and *Andreas*, who also consciously made their final decision of return to Greece after a counter-migratory experience in between without their families. They all shared the feeling that "when arriving in Greece there is always a feeling of going home, the feeling of peace, the kind of peace one feels only after arriving home, that unique sense of comfort and relaxation".

5.2 Constructing, contesting and negotiating the "place" of identity: the ambiguity of spatial context

Several studies[11] have demonstrated that many ethnic groups exhibit a strong degree of solidarity even under deterritorialised circumstances - what has been presented by Zelinsky and Lee (1998) as "an alternative model of the sociospatial behavior of immigrant ethnic communities" or "heterolocalism". These types of aspatial ethnic communities are a reflection of those non-spatial communities that are not limited by geography, as in the case with virtual communities and the Internet. In addition to the aspatial we are confronted with a new series of literature on transnationalism and trasmigrants. Although very intriguing a theme, it is not within the scope of this paper to discuss in detail transnational practices.[12] What concerns

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[11] For example Kendis (1989) deals with Japanese, Boone (1989) examines the Cubans and Basch et. al (1994) the Haitans in this deterritorialised context.
[12] These concepts have drawn much scholarly attention in the last couple of years and a multiplicity of works already exists. Among many, refer to

me at this point is how place is perceived by return migrants: how this particular landscape is constructed, reconstructed and possibly even contested and contextualised to fit their particular life narratives.

Relph (1976) devotes an entire chapter "On the identity of place" in his book *place and placelessness,* and in noting how fundamental the notion of identity is in everyday life, he looks at both individual and community images of place, presents a typology of identities of places and elaborates on the development and maintenance of identities of places. His basic premise coincides with the focus of this paper. He argues that "identity is founded both in the individual person or object and in the culture to which they belong. It is not static and unchangeable, but varies as circumstances and attitudes change; and it is not uniform and undifferentiated, but has several components and forms" and then goes on to emphasise a vital point of reference, namely that, "it is not just the identity *of* a place that is important, but also the identity that a person or group has *with* that place, in particular whether they are experiencing it as an insider or as an outsider" (1976, p. 45). The images of identities of places are reconciled with the identity of the subject itself, in this case the migrant, the returnee. The images of places are constructed and reconstructed during the processes of social interaction and symbolic representation of culture in the context of a bipolar relationship between the host country and the home country and the struggle to define their meaning and representation. Images of places are defined through the use of common languages, symbols, and experiences (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, pp. 32-36, pp.130-132) and identities of places become meaningful, like images of places, through the interaction of what Gurvitch (1971) refers to as the three opposing poles of the *I, the Other, and the We* (p.xiv), exemplified at the stage of "secondary socialisation", that of group attitudes, interests, and experiences (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, pp.163-173). This is precisely what Relph poses as the distinctive element in individual perception of place:

> "Within one person the mixing of experience, emotion, memory, imagination, present situation, and intention can be so variable that he can see a particular place in several quite distinct ways. In fact for one person a place can have many different identities. How, or

whether, such differences are reconciled is not clear, but it is possible that the relatively enduring and socially agreed upon features of a place are used as some form of reference point" (1976, p. 56).

Place is also allocated perspective when searching for that inbetweenness and the role it has in social life; the critical dimensions of locational meaning rather than sense of location. That is how place should be comprehended if we are to pinpoint the identity of location and not merely the physical space of location. Space is socially constructed and place is socially articulated. As Tuan states: "Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning" (1974, p.213). As argued by Entrikin (1991), place is always understood from a particular point of view and is both a context for our actions and a source of our identity, existing always on the border between a subjective and an objective reality. The significance of place in modernity is exactly this kind of "situatedness" and the interconnected issues of identity and action. Conceptualised also through a rather critical narrative of such notions, Entrikin emphasises that: "Place serves as an important component of our sense of identity as subjects. The subject's concern for this sense of identity may be no different in kind from that of the geographer, in that the geographer's aim of accurately representing places can also be tied to concerns for social action and cultural identity" (1991, p.13). Apparent in all the narratives I have thus far collected is this notion of the returnees' existential as well as cultural interpretation of the material, physical sense of place in terms of the social construction of their conscious representation of identity through the *home-place.* This home-place becomes the embodiment of their comprehension of identity; as they seek to mediate their positionality as insiders in the country of return they are simultaneously particularising an identity discourse. Place and identity are then viewed, experienced and articulated from points in between and the access to this inbetweenness is the significance of their ability to actively implement the "personal plan of action" upon return.

In the same vein, Doreen Massey (1994) explains that

> "The identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple. And the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counterposition to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in

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www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk for a list of working papers from the Transnational Communities Project, recently published books and articles include for example: Vertovec 1999, 2001, Al-Ali et al. 2001, Castles 2000, Faist 1999, 2000, Riccio 2001, Portes 1999, Pries (ed.)1999, 2001 etc.

part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that 'beyond'. Places are viewed this way are open and porous …" (p.5, italics in the original)

"Just as personal identities are argued to be multiple, shifting, possibly unbounded, so also, it is argued here, are the identities of place … " (p. 7)

"… place is interpreted as being important in the search for identity in this supposedly troubled era of time-space compression" (p.10).

Finally, Massey brings us to a realisation central in this paper:

"There is, then, an issue of whose identity we are referring to when we talk of a place called home and of the supports it may provide of stability, oneness and security. There are very different ways in which reference to place can be used in the constitution of the identity of an individual, but there is also another side to this question of the relation between place and identity. For while the notion of personal identity has been problematized and rendered increasingly complex by recent debates, the notion of *place* has remained relatively unexamined." (p. 167)

Ioanna's powerful realisation illuminates this point:

Once you assimilate to a new society, it is very difficult to completely strip yourself away from the place that you were living before. You are never at home. I would always be in a state of confusion as to where home was.

The same kind of confusion arising from a "hyphenated existence" is what Ilianna admits to experiencing when she tells us:

Today I am trapped in a dual situation, as far as the Americans concern I am a Greek, while as far as the Greeks concern I am a person with strong American characteristics. I guess this is what makes me a Greek-American. Being a Greek for me means my heritage, the land where my grandfathers walked. It is always connected to my father's dream to come back. Being an American at the same time, means memories from my childhood, the land that gave my family an opportunity to achieve something, the key that enabled us to have a better life.

In the case of Socrates, the return experience is used as a critical tool of personal empowerment:

I loved living in the States but I also love living in Greece. Personally I am still in a confusing state; I also went to the army (in Greece) for six months because I was half American. I see from my own eyes many Greek Americans complaining, for example my family here sometimes says why we moved back and so on. For me it is a privilege to have two identities because it opens my mind almost about everything, I have experienced things in two different views.

In her written journal Penelope poses an important question to herself and highlights the core of her answer in a parallel relationship between "inheriting" and "knowing":

But how is your ethnic identity really constructed? Is it based only on your perception, or is it affected by the way of living? My ethnic background is basically Greek, mixed with American folkways. Looking back to the history of my family, I would have to say that knowledge has been an indisputable factor, of inheriting other ways of living. I inherited the history of my forefathers, but I came to know the history of America too. For America I feel gratefulness, for the quality of life, that offered to my grandparents, when they needed it. Being Greek does not oblige me, in no way, to forsake the pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

The experience of belonging, of being members of a collectivity, emerges as a guiding theme in all the narratives, made up of socio-cultural constructs that fit each particular geographical context. There is no static notion of home, no fixed identity. The *ideologies* of *home*, *return* and *self* are reconstructed by the returnees themselves into *geographies* of *place*, *culture* and *identity*.

6. The ambivalent "Ithaca" and remapping the voyage of return: longing, belonging, or the exilic state of despair?

"This issue of what constitutes Greek identity remains unresolved even today", Kourvetaris asserts (1987, p. 4). But do we really need to "resolve" or declare what "Greekness" is? Perhaps we have to move "beyond the Greek Paradox", to borrow Tsoukalis words, to a situation where we can extrapolate from a context of transition, and at times rupture, the meanings that empower but

also fragment identities. In his essay, "The Ends of Migration", Nikos Papastergiadis examines the relationship between the experience of migration and the forms of representation that are utilised to make sense of the self in a foreign place, and in addressing these fundamental questions he puts forward a revealing framework:

> "The radical transformations of modernity have fundamentally altered the form and representation of identity. The social and the personal are always intertwined. Migration often accentuates the complexity of this relationship. Physical bonds might be severed but symbolic links and cultural values persist within the memories and adaptive practices of migrants" (1998, p. 171).

Diasporic imaginations extend beyond geographic boundaries into a cultural journey above and beyond spatial belongings and formulations of amorphous placeness. Their journey involves the construction of identifications involving and revolving around concepts of home and a bond with notions of solidarity, warmth and security that family and family relations generously offer. Although dominant themes in the returnees' narratives, home and family are simultaneously the distinct stimuli that empower the articulation of this strategic plan to return and negotiate this hybridised identity. For second-generation return migrants, this illuminating transformation that takes place brings a compelling juxtaposition of country of origin and country of return to the decision-making process. Interestingly enough the country of birth becomes the country of sojourn and the country of (ancestral) origin becomes the country of return. It may seem ironic that the country of birth and initial permanent residence is transformed into the lived experience of migration for the second generation and the country of parental extraction is decisively the chosen country of return in search of a homeland settlement. But, by constructing and articulating ideologies of home, return and self, these migrants (and subsequently "remigrants" or returnees)[13] are able to transcend cultural and geographic boundaries, thereby demonstrating that identity may perhaps be fluid but that it also solidifies when agents

choose to do so. As their identity is constructed, reconstructed, translated, invented and reinvented, the journey approaches its destination for these restless travellers, a destination that is perhaps an amalgamation of both "hope" and "despair" (Ghosh, 2000).

In trying, however, to speculate about the possible future tendencies of return migration, we are confronted by many dilemmas, many blurred concepts and many puzzling questions. Thomas Faist (1997) tells us that:

> "Regarding return migration, it is likely that each type of migration has a differential impact on the propensity to go back to the country of origin, depending on whether it be permanent migration, recurrent migration or temporary migration. These types of movement involve widely differing levels of commitment on the part of the mover to origin and destination"

and specifies later that,

> "In the case of permanent migration, we would expect that ties and linkages, of both material and symbolic nature, gradually decline as time passes. In the second generation we would expect these ties to the communities and countries of origin to be less prevalent than among first generation. Yet, it is an open question for empirical investigation whether facilitated means of transportation and exchange of information and goods could prolong the period in which strong and symbolic social ties are maintained to the country of origin" (1997, pp.267-268).

A first response to this anticipation which actually disqualifies such a pattern, at least as seen in the light of empirical evidence discussed in this paper, is that second-generation ties are maintained and that they are strong. The symbolic transformed into the real cannot be overlooked when individuals of this generation make conscious decisions to return to their parents' country of origin, some counter-migrate and then return once more; but still they consciously construct their sense of identity and sense of place above and beyond the imagined or the parental imaginary. Peter Murphy (1998) begins his analysis of nationalism by using a maxim: "No one can have two countries". Murphy is attempting to present the norms that, first, dual or multiple geopolitical identities are impermissible and second, that geopolitical allegiance must be to a "land" (1998, p. 369). We have demonstrated that there is danger in seeing place and identity as something static, monolithic, essential and solid. Multidimensionality and

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[13] In the limited amount of literature that exists on return migration, the terminology and typologies that have been suggested are based on various categories such as migrants' intentions (King et. al 1983, 2000), classification based on the level of development of the host country (King 2000) and various stages of acculturation of migrants in the host countries (Cerase 1974, King 2000). In addition to the issues of return motives, the studies mentioned above have also examined the problems return migrants face in readjusting to the home environment after return.

multiplicity, fluidity and change are vital aspects of critical geographic thinking when trying to comprehend such difficult concepts. Return migrants tell us that they can have two countries and that they do indeed feel allegiance to more than one land. Their return, a planned process of identity search, is still an unfolding process and possibly will be for some time to come. Whether in a context of hope or despair, what they have realised is important for them and what they have demonstrated through their narratives is the fact that they have decided this process: whether contingent, necessary or selective ties to people and place have stimulated their plan, it is their plan. Their life histories are the seemingly complex interwoven cycles and waves of their personal landscape, the one they carry with them in any *patrida* they journey to. May they always have safe trips and pleasant memories.

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Table 1: Details on informants' life histories

Migrant	Sex	Age on return	Age now	Place of birth	Year of parents emigration	Year returned to Greece
Ilianna	F	12	21	Astoria, New York	1965	1992
Socrates	M	12	23	Chicago	1960	1990
Ioanna	F	23 and 30	30	Chicago	1970	1994-1997 and 2001
Nicoletta	F	14 and 23	30	Chicago	1957	1985-1988 and 1994
Panagiotis	M	8	22	New York	1960	1987
Penelope	F	9	20	New York	1960	1990
Andreas	M	18 and 19	23	Poughkeepsie, New York	1975	1996 and 1997-2001

Table 1 continued ...

Migrant	Education	Occupation	Marital status	Living arrangements
Ilianna	First degree	Student	Married	Homeowner
Socrates	First degree	Student	Single	With parents
Ioanna	Masters	Lecturer	Married	Homeowner
Nicoletta	Masters	Lecturer	Single	Homeowner
Panagiotis	First degree	Student	Single	With parents
Penelope	First degree	Student	Single	With parents
Andreas	First degree	Runs family business	Single	Homeowner