

amine a variety of themes such as popular culture, political thought or history.

Authentic video from Greece can serve to reinforce anything from language to culture to vocabulary. A short segment of a film or television broadcast can be extremely educational if viewing is focused, if there exists a purpose for viewing which the teacher has made clear. Depending on the language of a segment, the teacher must prepare the class for the difficulties they may encounter. They need not understand every word for the experience to be profitable.

Partner activities can be used to mix students, thus using students with stronger Greek skills as a resource. A typical partner activity may involve a task which requires one student to seek information from his/her partner by asking questions in the target language. This communicative activity allows all students the opportunity to speak and practice the target language. It also allows the teacher to individualize by circulating the classroom.

The Greek community itself offers a wealth of resources, which teachers should incorporate as part of the classroom experience. Making community members accessible to students relates the Greek experience in a personal manner. These people can impart a unique perspective to concepts such as immigration, village life or education in Greece.

#### *Implementation of Strategies*

For the recommendations described above to become successful realities in the classroom, a Greek school teacher must be willing to step out of the role of Greek expert, disseminator of knowledge and keeper of discipline and allow students to experiment with and experience Greekness. The concept of teacher control becomes different as students undertake a new responsibility for and interest in their learning. The classroom activities can affect the desire of a student to return to the classroom.

The afternoon Greek school is a powerful tool in the preservation of the Greek language and culture. The decline in enrollment and the lack of majority attendance in the Greek schools are testimony that approaches must be altered and needs must be reassessed if linguistic and cultural survival is to occur. The words of Psomiades are significant and merit mention. Let us remember that . . .

While the loss of language is not the end of our Greek community life, it is certainly the beginning of the end of that life.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

---

## Education as a Means of Empowerment for Minority Cultures: Strategies for the Greek American Community

---

EVA KONSTANTELOU

IN MODERN SOCIETIES EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN invested with the responsibility of shaping a people's cultural identity and to a great extent have either replaced or complemented the role of more traditional institutions, such as the family, as agents of socialization. In culturally diverse societies, such as the United States, schools have become the terrains in which conflicts arise over whose culture and what values should shape curriculum. All ethnic groups have been sensitive to the power of education to either reinforce or weaken allegiance to one's ethnic heritage.

The Greek American community has a long history of attributing great value to education as a means of establishing itself in American society and of transmitting the Hellenic heritage to the new generations of Greek Americans. At the present moment in its history, with immigration from Greece decreasing to a near halt and with the fear that new generations of Greek Americans are increasingly losing touch with their Greek heritage, there is an acute awareness that "community survival depends on education"<sup>1</sup> In this article, I would like to explore how education can be used by the Greek American community as a means of intervening in the cultural practices and institutions of mainstream culture. First, I will examine how the issue of cultural diversity has been addressed within the context of American educational history. Second, I will theorize about minority majority culture relationships and propose a redefinition of the concept of "cultural pluralism." And third, I will focus on specific educational institutions within the Greek American community and outline the educational

<sup>1</sup> Harry J. Psomiades, "Greece and Greek America: The Future of the Greek American Community," Spyros Orfanos, Harry J. Psomiades, and John Spiridakis, eds., *Education and Greek Americans: Process and Prospects* (New York, 1987), p. 95.

philosophy that should shape their practices and aims.

*Cultural Diversity and the American School: The Legacy of Assimilationism*

The debate about how society and educational institutions should respond to the cultural diversity of the United States is approximately a century and a half old and its origins coincide with the emergence of the common school movement in the American Northeast after 1830.<sup>2</sup> Histories of American education have documented well the role of the American common school in the Americanization of the immigrants. From the beginning, assimilationism was the ideology that sustained arguments concerning the education of the immigrants. When in New York City, where the foreign-born accounted for over 50 percent of the population by the 1850s, a state assembly committee warned that "We must decompose and cleanse the impurities which rush into our midst," a magazine provided the following answer: "There is but one rectifying agent—one infallible filter—the SCHOOL."<sup>3</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by one of the most prominent educational leaders of the earlier part of the twentieth century, Elwood P. Cubberley, in the wake of successive waves of immigration that arrived at the shores of the United States after the 1880s:

Our task is to break up their groups or settlements, to assimilate and to amalgamate these people as part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conceptions of righteousness, law and order and popular government, and to awaken in them reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things in our national life which we as people hold to be of abiding faith.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Because the education of immigrant groups is interrelated with the establishment of common schooling, a definition of the concept of common schooling is in order. According to David Tyack, "During the middle decades of the nineteenth century the common school crusaders like Horace Mann thought to translate Americans' diffuse faith in education into support for a particular institutional form, the public school. In their vision the common school was to be free, financed by local and state government, controlled by lay boards of education, mixing all social groups under one roof, and offering education of such quality that no parent would desire private schooling. The common school was to be moral and religious in impact but it was not to be sectarian; it was to provide sound political instruction without being partisan," David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York, 1982), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York, 1983), p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Mark Krug, *The Melting of the Ethnics: Education of the Immigrants, 1880-1914* (Bloomington, 1976), pp. 7-8.

The resistance that common school reformers encountered by various ethnic groups was rooted in linguistic and religious differences. Suspicion of the common school was understandable given that, even though the nineteenth-century American public school was promoted as a non-sectarian religious institution, in reality it was profoundly shaped by the values of Protestantism. Protestantism, in this context, has to be understood not as religious dogma only, but as a "culture religion," namely a belief system which constitutes the foundation of the economic, sociopolitical, and educational institutions of the United States. The crusade to unify a culturally diverse population through education was one of the many components that defined the dominant social belief system in nineteenth-century America, namely Native Protestant ideology.<sup>5</sup> As David Tyack has commented, "the millennial vision of the Protestant-republican ideology gave coherence and resonance to the rhetoric of the common-school crusaders."<sup>6</sup>

Against this firmly rooted ideology which centered on the triptych of Protestantism, republicanism, and capitalism, the belief systems of various immigrant groups had to struggle for legitimacy. The reaction of the immigrants to the Americanization process was ambivalent. According to a historian of the common school movement:

For European immigrants the culture of the public school was often alien and the benefits uncertain. Still, the common school offered English literacy, math training, and an introduction to American society at little or no direct expense. Many immigrants therefore sent their children enthusiastically or obediently; others hesitated or resisted. The American immigrants' confrontation with the dominant culture involved a mixture of accommodation and resistance, of assimilation and cultural maintenance, of cooperation and conflict.<sup>7</sup>

Among the groups that most vehemently resisted the assimilationist ideology underlying the pan-Protestant morality of common schooling

<sup>5</sup> According to historian Carl F. Kaestle this ideology "can best be summarized by enumerating ten strands or major propositions: the sacredness and fragility of the republican polity (including ideas about individualism, liberty, and virtue); the importance of individual character in fostering social morality; the central role of personal industry in defining rectitude and merit; the delineation of a highly respected but limited domestic role for women; the importance of character building of familial and social environment (within certain racial and ethnic limitations); the sanctity and social virtues of property; the equality and abundance of economic opportunity in the United States; the superiority of American Protestant culture; the grandeur of America's destiny; and the necessity of a determined public effort to unify America's polyglot population, chiefly through education," my emphasis, Kaestle, *Pillars*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>6</sup> Tyack and Hansot, *Managers*, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Kaestle, *Pillars*, p. 161.



were Irish Catholics, German Lutherans, Reformed Protestants. Their strategies ranged from starting parochial schools as alternatives to public schools to advocating and succeeding in obtaining public-school instruction in languages other than English. The latter effort was more successful in the Midwest, where public-school officials were accommodating toward the immigrant groups, largely because in certain areas the immigrant population constituted a majority.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the successes of certain ethnic communities in having bilingual instruction accepted in public schools during the nineteenth century, eventually the ideology of assimilationism triumphed, aided by the changing role of the American school into the twentieth century—one in which intellectual aims gave way to utilitarian ones, as the school was called upon to assume the function of creating a well-adjusted, well-trained work-force for the needs of an industrial society. Intellectuals and educators who juxtaposed the ideology of cultural pluralism to that of assimilation and advocated respect for the immigrant's cultures were often regarded as subversives who undermine the cohesiveness of American society.

The faith in the power of the school to Americanize the immigrant and to create a more equitable and just society has been one of the most persistent themes in the history of this country. Yet, despite the popularity it enjoyed and still does, this view has not remained unchallenged. Works by revisionist historians who emerged from the radical political and intellectual milieu of the 1960s have challenged the belief in the triumph of the common school. In the revisionist interpretation, schools are seen as mechanisms that reproduce the power relations and inequalities in society. Moreover, the belief in the American public schools as a great equalizer is deemed a myth that conceals class and social distinctions in American society. On the issue of successful assimilation of various ethnic groups into American society, which has been largely credited to the American school, Colin Creer has remarked that it was not schooling per se which caused this assimilation; rather it was each group's place in the social hierarchy which determined the degree of educational achievement and subsequent assimilation. In other words, schools did not treat all ethnic groups equally, but favored those who brought with them to school a form of cultural capital (value system and beliefs) that coincided with or more resembled the value system (native Protestant ideology) which structured the American public school.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Tyack and Hansot, pp. 72-83; Kaestle, *Pillars*, pp. 136-81.

<sup>9</sup>Greer mentions Greeks and Jews as two examples of successful assimilation into mainstream American culture, and he claims this is due to the fact that Greek and Jewish life have been characterized by middle-class values, Colin Greer, *The Great School Legend: A Revisionist Interpretation of American Public Education* (New York, 1976), p. 96.

It is no coincidence that views challenging the role of the American school as "the great equalizer" were articulated at a time when protest movements for social justice appeared in the United States, led by individuals and groups that were excluded from the running of social and educational institutions. Some protests centered on the issue of the school's ability to honor cultural diversity and reflect it in its curricula. As has been stated, "like nineteenth-century immigrant groups, they wanted the public schools to legitimize cultural differences, to teach their own history, use their languages in the classroom, and honor a diversity not encompassed by Anglo conformity."<sup>10</sup>

This time the protesters were much more effective than their ancestors. The starting "resurgence of ethnicity" signified the different groups' desire to retain their heritage as a means of developing a sense of belonging and community. This ethnic revival, "reflected a pervasive alienation from the central ethos and institutions of mainstream society."<sup>11</sup> Since then the concepts of "cultural pluralism," "multicultural education," "bilingual education," have become part of the educational agendas of many school districts. Since 1968 the Bilingual Education Act (Title 7 of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act) has provided programs for non-English-speaking students.

So are we justified in believing that gradually the ideology of cultural pluralism has replaced the old one of assimilationism, at least in so far as education is concerned? Events that have taken place in the past decade indicate that this is not so. To the exuberance that followed the celebration of ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s, which in many instances found its way into the curriculum, the dominant culture responded with a backlash in the 1980s. A flood of reports and books which lament the sorry state of American education have entered the debate with a vengeance. Most reports agree that the problems of education are to be attributed to the fragmentation of the educational ideal that existed in earlier periods of American education, and that the emphasis on cultural differences and introduction of courses that explore them has led to a loss of common culture, and a lack of cultural literacy. From the "English Only" movement to dictionaries of cultural literacy we witness a xenophobic reaction of the dominant culture to the existence

The success of both groups is supported by U. S. census data. According to Charles C. Moskos, "A careful analysis of the 1960 census revealed that second-generation Greek Americans possessed the highest educational levels of all, and were exceeded only by Jews in average income. The same pattern was confirmed in the 1970 census, which showed that among twenty-four second-generation nationality groups, Greeks trailed only Jews in income levels and continued to rank first in educational attainment," Moskos, *Greek American: Struggle and Success* (Englewood Cliffs, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>Tyack and Hansot, pp. 224-25.

<sup>11</sup>J. A. Fishman et al, *The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival* (New York, 1985), p. 510.



of ethnic cultures. Even though lip service is paid to the reality of cultural diversity in American society, cultural difference is trivialized in the name of a much wished homogeneity. As a keen observer of the American cultural and educational scene has observed,

there is a strong impulse in American education—curious in a country with such an ornery streak of anti-traditionalism—to define achievement and excellence in terms of the acquisition of a historically validated body of knowledge, an authoritative list of books and allusions, a canon . . . This is a forceful call. It promises a still center in a turning world.<sup>12</sup>

“The still center” that these reform proposals want to recapture invokes the stability that existed in American education before various groups entered the educational scene dynamically, challenging the monopoly of the Anglo-Saxon heritage over educational institutions. Thus, it becomes clear that any discussion about “educational crises” cannot be removed from the wider social and political context within which conflicting interests and world views clash.

*Minority vs. Majority Culture: Toward a Redefinition of Cultural Pluralism.*

I propose that the social, political and educational needs of a group are better understood when assessed within the framework of the relationship between a minority and a majority (or dominant) culture. This relationship is certainly a complex one and one should avoid oversimplified conspiracy theories which invest the majority or dominant culture with all the power, while they relegate the minority culture to the position of the victim. Indeed, even at times when the dominant culture exercises its hegemony in an oppressive manner, the minority culture manages to negotiate the condition of its existence in a way that it remains a relative autonomy. To give an example from the Greek American experience, when the American public school degraded the heritage of the immigrant population and placed the students in classes for retarded children, Greek Americans through “grass-roots” community efforts managed to support their own schools and transmit their cultural heritage.<sup>13</sup>

Nowadays, in so far as educational strategies are concerned, I think that minority cultures should have a new agenda and extend their efforts

<sup>12</sup>Mike Rose, *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educational Underclass* (New York, 1990), pp 235-36.

<sup>13</sup>Alice Scourby, *The Greek Americans* (Boston, 1984), p. 48; Andrew T. Kopan, “Greek Survival in Chicago: The Role of Ethnic Education, 1890-1980,” in *Ethnic Chicago* (Grand Rapids, 1981).

beyond the establishment of separate schools. This agenda would insure that the ideal of cultural pluralism does not degenerate into a harmless polyculturalism which celebrates differences by treating different cultures as exotic “others.” As Fredric Jameson has perceptively remarked, most often cultural pluralism as understood in American society rests upon a kind of tolerance which says “let them have their culture, just so we don’t have to be interested in it.”<sup>14</sup> Or, as Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd have argued,

the semblance of pluralism disguises the perpetuation of exclusion, in so far as it is enjoyed only by those who have already assimilated the values of the dominant culture. For this pluralism, ethnic or cultural difference is merely an exoticism, an indulgence which can be relished without in any significant way modifying the individual who is securely embedded in the protective body of dominant ideology. Such pluralism tolerates the existence of “salsa,” it even enjoys Mexican restaurants, but it bans Spanish as a medium of instruction in American schools.<sup>15</sup>

What the above analysis suggests, is that the dominance of the majority culture rests on a sharp division between the realm of the private/primary relations (family relations, religious practices, cultural festivities) and the realm of the public/secondary relations (participation in educational economic and political institutions). The private sphere is allowed to exist in so far as it does not interfere with the business-as-usual institutional world of Anglo-Saxon conformity. So, for example, the community-oriented activities of Greek Americans (or other ethnic groups) are praised when confined within the recreational context of an annual festival, but are seen as having no significance as alternative ways of structuring the sociopolitical and economic institutions of mainstream society. Therefore the dominant culture whose value system (the pan-Protestant ideology) has structured the world of work and the world of school, manages to treat the practices of other cultures as colorful artifacts which give meaning to the private lives of members of the particular culture and add some spice to the leisure time of the rest of the populace. The concept of “tolerance,” with its connotation of benign neglect, describes a relationship between majority and minority culture that allows coexistence in the area of certain cultural practices (manner of dress, food preferences, song and dance), but denies any serious encounter between opposing ideologies that might lead to any challenges to the institutional realities of the

<sup>14</sup>Fredric Jameson, “Commentary,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 8 (1990) 135.

<sup>15</sup>Abdul Jan Mohamed and David Lloyd, “Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse,” *Cultural Critique*, 6 (1987) 9-10.



dominant culture.

If the dichotomy between the private world (where the minority culture exists) and the public world (dominated by the majority culture) is kept intact, then the individual is trapped between the Scylla and Charybdis, forced to give up one world for the sake of the other. In his powerful educational autobiography *Hunger of Memory* Richard Rodriguez recounts how he underwent the painful process of detachment from his Hispanic roots in order to become an American.<sup>16</sup> He attests that separation from his family was the price he had to pay to reach the high echelons of the academe and become a respected professor of English literature. His narrative is superb yet permeated by a fatalistic and totally uncritical attitude toward the demand of the dominant culture that he give up the intimacy of the family for the loneliness of the public sphere. There is no attempt to consider whether it would be possible for some of the qualities that structured his home life to be injected into his public life for the purpose of making it less alienating.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps what is needed now is a redefinition of "cultural pluralism," if the standard definition implies an arrangement in which the culture of the minority group is relegated to the private world of the home, whereas the culture of the majority group is left to dominate the public world of social and political institutions. Such a definition would connote not simply an arrangement that allows different groups to retain aspects of their cultural identity and merely coexist, but the creation of conditions in which the experiences of such groups could acquire the power possibly to modify the institutions of mainstream culture in creative interaction with this culture. It would also advocate the use of one's cultural position as a form of criticism of dominant institutions and practices.

Toward this goal I believe that educational institutions could function as mechanisms of empowerment for the minority culture and as a challenge to the practices of the dominant culture. Because educational institutions are places where values and dispositions are formed that allow the young either to conform to the social order or to challenge it through a critical intelligence, minority cultures could use mainstream

<sup>16</sup>Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (New York, 1983).

<sup>17</sup>Jane Martin, in her scathing critique of contemporary education, has used Richard Rodriguez's account as an example of the dichotomies upon which such an education rests: private/public, emotional/rational, body/mind, thought/action. Her criticism points to the majority/minority culture relationship within an educational context, with the majority culture functioning as the official culture of the school and requiring that children from minority cultures discard their cultural backgrounds at the gate. See Jane Roland Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman* (New Haven, 1985).

educational institutions or their own community-based institutions to articulate educational philosophies that enrich the debate over what our schools should teach and why.

### *Greek American Education: Past and Present Realities and Future Possibilities.*

As it pertains to the future of the Greek American communities, Harry Psomiades has stated that "the next two decades will determine whether or not they will ultimately succumb to the white death of assimilation demanded by the assimilationists or the darkness of an ever shrinking ghetto demanded by the equally chauvinistic separatists."<sup>18</sup> I suggest that education should perhaps become the ideal mechanism that points to a way out from the either/or dilemma, namely assimilationism or separatism.

The educational agencies that could sustain the effort of upholding the culture of the Greek American community have already been in place and have done valuable work in the past. First, I would like to name them and then to delineate the educational philosophy that I think they should adopt as a strategy for influencing mainstream institutions and cultural practices. They are: the Greek-American day schools (23 of them), afternoon language and culture schools (about 400), which together serve approximately 33,000 students ages 6-15,<sup>19</sup> public school bilingual classes, teacher-training programs that prepare language teachers, and the Modern Greek Studies programs that exist in many Universities around the country generously funded by the Greek communities. The role of the Greek Orthodox Church as a unifying institution in the Greek American community has been acknowledged by many writers on issues of Greek American education.<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of this article I would like to focus on the two areas I have been involved in and I know best, Modern Greek Studies programs, and teacher education programs.

To start with the programs of Modern Greek Studies, it has been recommended that such programs should strengthen their ties with the Greek American community by enlarging their curricula to include the rich Greek American experience in addition to the transmission of the Greek heritage. We should seriously engage ourselves with the views

<sup>18</sup>Psomiades, "Greece and Greek America," p. 91.

<sup>19</sup>Greek Orthodox of North and South America Yearbook (New York, 1990), p. 83.

<sup>20</sup>Michael Vapori, "Η Εκκλησία και η διατήρηση και προαγωγή της Έλληνικής γλώσσας στην Αμερική," A. Farmakidis et al., eds. *The Teaching of Modern Greek in the English-speaking World* (Brookline, 1984), pp. 71-75; Emmanuel Hatzimmanuel, "Hellenic Orthodox Education in America," Harry J. Psomiades and Alice Scourby, eds., *The Greek American Community in Transition* (New York, 1982) pp. 181-89.



of scholars such as Moskos and Psomiades who believe that the Greek American experience is better understood not primarily as part of a Hellenic diaspora, but in the broad context of the ethnic experience in America.<sup>21</sup> As Moskos has stated: "Rather than viewing Greek American ethnicity as an increasingly pale reflection of an old country culture, we would be better advised to consider and respect it in its own right."<sup>22</sup> Regardless of the position one takes concerning the nature of the experience of Greek Americans—there are those who argue that the Greek American experience cannot be understood if severed from its roots in modern Greek culture—<sup>23</sup> it is true that a sensitivity toward the rich Greek American experience has been long overdue. The integration of Greek American Studies with the currently existing programs of Modern Greek Studies will give more power to those programs and will allow them to develop close ties with areas that represent the experiences of the various ethnic groups in American society (such as Black Studies, Chicano Studies, etc.). Their focus should be interdisciplinary and encourage scholarship which draws from a variety of disciplines. If scholars want to function as social critics, then they should try to escape the ghetto of narrow specialization and let their work be informed by research in other disciplines.<sup>24</sup>

Since my own interests lie in education, I would like to emphasize the need for preparing teachers who could assume the responsibility of implementing the educational projects of the Greek American community. Enthusiasm about teaching, which is generously displayed by the great majority of teachers in Greek schools, is an important element in the educative process, but it needs to be informed by sound professional development of teachers. Professional development entails not only acquisition of skills and methods of teaching, but also a broad general education which insures that we are not merely preparing narrow specialists, but, intellectuals capable of cultivating in their students the ability to inquire critically into their surrounding conditions.

<sup>21</sup>Moskos, *Greek-Americans: Struggle and Success*, pp. 144-49; Psomiades, "Greece and Greek America," pp. 91-102.

<sup>22</sup>Moskos, *Greek Americans*, p. 148.

<sup>23</sup>See George A. Kourvetaris, "Conflicts and Identity Crisis among Greek-Americans and Greeks of the Diaspora," *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, 27 (1990) 137-53. Professor Kourvetaris argues that "the kind of Hellenism that Moskos is talking about is one diluted beyond recognition" (p. 148). Kourvetaris believes that only the connection with the Greek *paideia* (culture) will revitalize the Greek American experience which is otherwise doomed to blend and totally assimilate with the dominant Anglo-American culture.

<sup>24</sup>See Gregory Jusdanis, "It's All Greek to Them: Modern Greek Studies and the Academy." Paper delivered at the Symposium of Modern Greek Studies Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 1989.

In agreement with the proposal that "the Greek American schools must begin to view themselves as part of the larger social system and actively establish working relationships with each other and with a variety of outside agencies,"<sup>25</sup> I would add that the Greek American community should enrich its teacher-training programs so that they prepare teachers not only for the Greek American schools but for the public school system as well. An argument for this proposal is that future public school teachers who are recruited from within the Greek American community and are exposed through their studies to the realities of multicultural education in this country, would, because of their own bicultural identity, become more sensitive to the diversity of cultural backgrounds among their students. The task for teacher educators to prepare culturally sensitive teachers is well articulated in the following proposal:

It seems that if teacher educators allow prospective teachers to ignore the cultural differences that do exist, these teachers will be ill-equipped to teach children whose cultural/social class background does not match their own; but learning about other cultures is not a simple endeavor. One needs to be sensitive to and aware of past and present patterns of prejudice and discrimination and attempt to see the school experience from the perspective of the cultural other.<sup>26</sup>

Greek American teacher training institutions are in an advantageous position to prepare the type of teacher presented above, because they can utilize the rich lessons of a bicultural experience.

As previously mentioned, educational institutions and the enthusiasm to make them work are already in place. However, these must be guided by a philosophy of education that will enable them not simply to maintain the cultural identity of the Greek American community, but also to take a critical look at both the experiences of the Greek American community and the mainstream culture in order to determine whether some basic values that have sustained the Greek American community are worth extending into the wider culture. The formation of a sound educational philosophy entails two things: a critique of the values that form the core of mainstream American culture,

<sup>25</sup>Spyros D. Orfanos and Sam J. Tsemberis, "A Needs Assessment of Greek American Schools in New York City," *Education and Greek Americans: Process and Prospects*, ed. Spyros D. Orfanos, Harry J. Psomiades, and John Spiridakis (New York, 1987), p. 201.

<sup>26</sup>Daniel P. Liston and Kenneth M. Zeichner, "Teacher Education and the Social Context of Schooling: Issues for Curriculum Development," *American Educational Research Journal*, 27 (Winter 1990) 624.



along with a critique of the dominant educational philosophy of the American educational system which is shaped by and in turn helps form those values.

Most views on the position of the ethnic group vis-à-vis this "common," or rather Anglo-Saxon culture, seem to take the existence of this culture for granted and consider a certain degree of assimilation to it not only inevitable but also desirable, as long as the minority group is allowed to retain a degree of its ethnicity, usually in its primary relations. Given that all groups will meet and interact on a common ground, one might argue that this space should not be considered a fixed reality but a malleable, negotiable one. In the past, driven by the desire to succeed in an oftentimes hostile environment many members of ethnic groups conformed to the mainstream culture rather uncritically. However, the lesson that the 1960s ethnic revival and sociopolitical movements taught us was that the desire to pursue our dreams should be accompanied by the ability to look critically at the culture we become a part of. Many became critical of success informed by the doctrine of utilitarian individualism, which dictates that individuals can "do their own thing," acquiring in the process a certain immunity to suffering, discrimination, and social injustice.

Following this criticism of a basic value in contemporary American culture, competitive or utilitarian individualism,<sup>27</sup> it is worth examining whether certain values of the Greek American culture could challenge the individualist ethos of the dominant culture. Studies of the Greek American culture are quite revealing in this respect. One such study which meticulously researched processes of continuity among Greek Americans, found that Greek Americans have maintained an equilibrium between adopting the dominant culture and adhering to tradition and heritage.<sup>28</sup> Greek American culture has also been found to deviate from Milton Gordon's findings in regard to cultural assimilation (acculturation) and structural assimilation. Gordon's distinction between acculturation and structural assimilation and its application to the Greek American case is summarized as follows:

Acculturation refers to the acquisition by the immigrants and their descendants of the cultural behavior—language, norms,

<sup>27</sup>Utilitarian individualism which has come to dominate twentieth-century American culture is not the only strand/tradition in American culture. There have been other traditions emphasizing citizenship and democratic participation and a communitarian ethos. For an excellent discussion of different traditions within American society, see Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York, 1985).

<sup>28</sup>Chrysie M. Costantakos, *The American-Greek Subculture: Processes of Continuity* (Ann Arbor, 1971).

customs—of the new society. [Structural] assimilation implies the entrance of the ethnics into the very fabric—the social cliques, business life, civic associations, and, eventually, the families—of the society. Usually acculturation proceeds faster than assimilation. The pattern for Greek Americans, however, is different. Acculturation has probably lagged behind assimilation.<sup>29</sup>

In that case, if Greek Americans have retained many of their cultural traditions, such as the Greek language, their religious affiliation, and norms that govern contact among community members, it is most likely that they are in a better position to resist the values that structure the institutions of mainstream culture compared to groups that have assimilated culturally. For instance, as an alternative to the rampant individualism of the dominant culture, the Greek American experience could suggest that individualism is certainly prized (it was after all a fierce individualism that helped generations of Greek immigrants to survive in this land), but always within the context of community; a community that nurtures and sustains individual effort, but does not allow it to lose sight of its commitment and responsibilities to familial and religious ties.<sup>30</sup>

Greek American educational institutions could be in the forefront of cultural resistance, first through imparting the Hellenic heritage and second through engaging in social criticism of many practices of the mainstream culture. In this latter endeavor the Greek-American community will join many other non-Greek individuals and groups that have expressed their concerns over the potentially destructive values that are at the core of the so called "common culture" and of the educational institutions that sustain it. I have always been fascinated by the educational ideas of John Dewey and other progressive educators who seem to have been forgotten by the educational establishment in this country largely because their ideas opposed the rampant utilitarianism and technocracy that dominates much of modern education. Dewey had stated that "education should recapture the community of the remembered past," and he consequently encouraged his students to relive the history of their communities by engaging in various cooperative activities. Actually the link between Dewey's educational ideas and the struggle of the Greek-American community for cultural survival is to be found in the work of Jane Addams, the legendary social worker, activist and founder of Hull House, the famous settlement

<sup>29</sup>Moskos, *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success*, p. 147.

<sup>30</sup>The traditions of Greek Orthodoxy have unquestionably played an important role in upholding the value of communal ties against the individualist ethos of American society which is an element of the Protestant tradition.

project in Chicago. Jane Addams, a close friend and disciple of John Dewey, was one of the strongest supporters of the Greek American community. In an excellent study of the evolution of the Greek American community in Chicago, Andrew T. Kopan has acknowledged Jane Addams's strong support of the Greek American culture.<sup>31</sup> On numerous occasions she had opened Hull House to Greek Americans to organize their meetings, educational activities, and social events. In true Deweyan fashion she recognized the community-centered activities Greek Americans engaged in as a way of counterbalancing and challenging the fragmentation of mainstream culture.

### Epilogue

In this article so far I have discussed the possible uses of education by the Greek American community as a means of asserting cultural difference and of intervening in the institutions of mainstream culture. My article is consequently of a programmatic/normative nature. As an educator and social critic I am interested in the liberating potential of education and in imagining that which is not yet. However, I realize I should also take into consideration the work of many sociologists and other researchers who have studied the Greek American community and whose findings suggest that the possibilities I have outlined are seriously curtailed by certain trends that show that the dominant culture has already directed the Greek American community into the path of assimilationism. The conditions that I have laid out, namely the critical attitude toward the dominant values of mainstream culture and an educational philosophy that values critical thinking, some scholars claim are not dominant trends in the Greek American community. Charles Moskos, for example, has examined Greek American social history as essentially a process of "embourgeoisement," signifying the early immigrants' desire for acceptance into the American middle class. As he states, "the middle class always served as the reference point for Greek immigrants. Individual striving was considered more important than group betterment."<sup>32</sup> A congruence with the dominant values of American society has been found also in regard to social conservatism and anti-intellectualism among Greek Americans. Citing a 1972 national survey of college freshmen, Moskos observes that "compared to the national norm, Greek American students, nearly all of whom can be presumed to be either second or third generation, were found to be significantly more conservative in their political views, less sym-

<sup>31</sup>Kopan, "Greek Survival in Chicago: The Role of Ethnic Education, 1890-1980," pp. 109-116.

<sup>32</sup>Moskos, *Greek Americans: Struggle and Success* p. 141.

thetic with criminal rights, and much more likely to regard higher education in instrumental rather than in intellectual terms."<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Kourvetaris has noted that "... the very affluence and social mobility of Greek Americans is precisely one of the major factors of assimilation and, therefore, bespeaks a decline of Greek American ethnic identity. Ethnicity is sacrificed at the altar of economic success."<sup>34</sup> Kourvetaris also criticizes Greek Americans for having fallen victims to the anti-intellectualist orientation of American society and for celebrating only the dionysian and culinary aspects of Greek American culture instead of focusing on the Apollonian or more intellectual dimensions of Greek culture as well.<sup>35</sup>

Certainly the above trends and processes in Greek American culture merit consideration for our assessment of whether resistance to certain values of the dominant culture is feasible. However, we should keep in mind that cultures are dynamic entities that nurture considerable diversity in their midst. Recently there have been signs—organization of conferences, publications on Greek American culture and education—indicating that a dialogue is under way within the Greek American community concerning its position within American society. Consequently, a development of a more critical posture than the currently existing one is a possibility. This is all the more likely if the Greek American community rekindles the interest of younger generations in Hellenic matters and explores questions of multiculturalism in American society through education.

<sup>33</sup>Charles C. Moskos, "Greek American Studies," Harry J. Psomiades and Alice Scourby, eds., *The Greek American Community in Transition* (New York, 1982), p. 53.

<sup>34</sup>George A. Kourvetaris, "The Futuristics of Greek America," See above pp. 35-45.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* p. 13.