

# Narratives of Greekness in the Diaspora



Efthymia Papalexopoulou

**Abstract** The present study aims at analyzing the ethno-cultural identity of Greeks abroad. The basic axis of investigation is the field of Greekness and the analysis of its structural elements, as projected by the Greek people of the diaspora. The author's involvement in the program "Education for Greeks Abroad program – Paideia Omogenon (The implementation of the program had been assigned to the University of Crete and more specifically to the Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies (E.DIA.M.ME.) at the Primary Education Department of the University directed by Professor Michael Damanakis. The main goal was to maintain, develop and promote the Greek language and culture among Greeks and their descendants who live abroad through the improvement of primary and secondary Greek language education in the diaspora.)" gave her the research stimuli so as to approach the issue of the identity of Greeks abroad. Different types of diaspora with different historic circumstances lead to different types of interconnections between Greek populations and the national centre. Focusing on three different examples of diaspora, and more specifically on Greek students in Germany, the United States of America and in countries of the former Soviet Union, the study attempts to analyze their ethno-cultural identity, the basic axis of investigation being the semantic field of Greekness. Particularly, the chapter attempts to outline the way the Greeks abroad assume Greek-based traits of their identity, how they internalize them and what content they attribute to them.

**Keywords** Narratives of Greekness · Bi-cultural identity · Symbolic Greekness · Diaspora · Bilingualism · Bi-culturalism

---

E. Papalexopoulou (✉)  
University of Crete, Rethymno, Greece

## 1 Methodological and Theoretical Starting Points

The investigation of the different manifestations of Greekness in three different examples, aims to display the multiple meanings of Greekness, as they are mapped in the field of diaspora. While investigating these elements, the qualitative characteristics of the bi-cultural identity of Greeks abroad surface, expressing this identity “through their ability to be actively and critically occupied with the two cultures, to manage their bi-cultural and bilingual condition and to defend their bi-culturalism and bilingualism outwards” (Damanakis 2007: 35).

Greekness, like any other diasporic identity, is not constructed merely through the multiplicity of identity-related references of the host country and the country of origin, but through the synthesis of this multiplicity into a uniform narration. Consequently, among the Greeks abroad there are many “homelands”, the investigation of which the present study comes to serve, focusing, according to Damanakis, on “the synthesis of synchronic or diachronic elements relating to the Greek language and culture, manners and customs, institutions and traditions, meaning all the constructive elements of Greekness” (Damanakis 2007: 122).

The synchronic and diachronic elements of Greekness constitute the basic axes of investigation in this study since they describe “the ready-to-be-mined raw materials” of Greekness:

(a) Synchronic dimension of Greekness

The investigation of the elements that relate to language, history, religion, manners and customs, that is, to the dimension that refers to the factual elements, experiences and cognitive structures of the subjects at present.

(b) Diachronic dimension of Greekness

The investigation of the elements that concern myths, idealizations, symbolisms and ideological constructions that refer to the receptions and perceptions of Greekness found in the Greek-based past and transferred to the present of the subjects.

The fundamental research questions are the following: What are the qualitative characteristics of ethno-cultural identity of Greeks abroad; How are they projected; and What is the significance of this projection?

The sampling context of the investigation was the Greek students abroad who participated in the host programmes and the student theatre festivals, carried out by the “Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies” (E.DIA.M.ME.) in the framework of the program – “Paideia Omogenon.” The criterion being that the students belong to different examples of diaspora, i.e. migrant and historic, the sample composed had the following characteristics: Greek secondary education students abroad, aged 14–18, who studied in some type of Greek education abroad, and whose host country was Germany, the USA and the countries of the former Soviet Union (i.e. Georgia, Ukraine, Russia and Uzbekistan).

Based on the descriptive-biographical elements of the sample, the students from the USA, in their majority, belong to families of the same ethnicity, of third-generation immigrants and at the Daily Bilingual Greek-American School in Chicago and the Afternoon School in New York. The students from Germany belong

to same-ethnicity families of second-generation immigrants and basically attend Greek-only Schools, while the students from the former Soviet Union countries belong mainly to bi-ethnic families of third or fourth-generation immigrants and attend Greek language and culture lessons, either in classes incorporated into the mainstream school curriculum in the host country or classes taking place in the afternoon, outside the education system in the country of residence, usually under the auspices of community institutions.

Through the multi-methodical approach, the accumulated research material was: (a) *empirical*, using a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, group activities and collected diaries, and (b) *archival*, using the material of the program Paideia Omogenon.

Categorization of the material was conducted based on two forms of classification:

- (a) Classification based on the qualitative characteristics of identity-related reports, and
- (b) Classification based on the host country of the Greeks abroad.

The following analytical categories emerged:

1. Biographical-descriptive elements of the sample.
2. Narration of the family biography.
3. The Greek language and its significance
4. Greek history and its significance
5. Tradition and Greekness: Greek Orthodox tradition and folk culture.
6. Narration of the contemporary Greek reality and its significances.
7. Elements of self-identification and the significance of Greekness.

## 2 Elements of Self-Identification and Significance of Greekness

On a first level, the analysis focuses on the way the students project their identity-related labeling, placing themselves ethno-culturally. On a second level, the findings are correlated with the semantic field of this placement, that is, with the content the students themselves assign to these identity labelings. On a third level, the findings are associated with the students' narration in relation to Others. There are three basic axes of students' narration of their dissimilarity: (a) the governing ethno-cultural Others, (b) the minority Others, and (c) our Others.

The students from the USA identify themselves mainly as Greek-Americans, basing the first compound of their identity, that of their Greek-descent structural elements, on the level of diachrony, while they project the predominance of their host country as that of a country that permeates status to the second compound of their identity. The Greek "root", the Greek-descent past and the orthodox faith permeate diachronic status, which is foremost found in moral regulating principles, to the projected reports. The second compound draws its elements from the level of synchrony, the socialization context of their country of residence.

However, the point that demonstrates great interest and seems to skim the students' narratives is the following: the Greek-descent context determines that of "being" and the context of their host country that of "doing". This distinction resulted from the words of the students.

The student US-10 states: "...I say that I am Greek-American. Greece is inside me and the USA is around me. That is what many Greeks say. I don't feel that I belong only somewhere. Here is my place of origin and it is the place with the greatest history and values..."

Although the student was unable to define his identity projections through specific accounts, he repeated emphatically the moral and value-connected depth that the Greek origin instills in him.

The student US-14 testifies towards the same direction on the final page of the questionnaire: "As for what kind of person I want to become, I look here....as for how I have to be in order to succeed what I want, I look there..."

The student US-6 mentions: "... I am a Greek-American. I am not an American whose parents come from Greece, nor a Greek who lives there. I am of both. But it is not accidental that we do not say American-Greeks! That tells something." Trying to explain his final phrase, the student continues: "...I feel that the root is the first and the fruits the second".

Still, in the case of the three students who self-identify as Greeks, the students themselves narrate their inner contradictions, and they, themselves, in their turn seem to solve them through the invocation of the emotional mind-set. The statement of a student (US-12) is characteristic: "...inside me I feel that I belong here. I am a Greek. And I think that what I feel, that is.... ok, I could speak better Greek and behave like a normal Greek, but it doesn't matter that much". The same student undermines the factual criteria of her Greekness (linguistic criterion) and the regularities that govern her and proclaims the emotional criterion as dominant. The invocation of the emotional element and its proclamation as the primary factor of identity is also attempted by the student US-2: "I am a Greek...I mean, not normal. I don't speak good Greek...but that will change. What I feel when I dance Greek dances.... how could I put it? I feel like a typical Greek and that counts.... I'll tell you something funny. Let's say that some people say that if you don't speak Greek, you are not a normal Greek. I'll tell something, somehow funny that I've heard. I mean, aren't there Greeks who do not speak the language? Those who have a problem and cannot speak at all and communicate with their hands...ok, it's a pity...but they are Greeks too...and I have a problem with the language, but I am a Greek!". Actually, the emotional mind-set is not only a communicative expression of identity-related assessments, but it appears to constitute the assessment tool that exceeds the contradictions and the divisive dilemmas of any rational foundation (Parkinson et al. 2005: 233). Thus, through an example narrated by the student, she herself projects factual identity-related criteria, and she herself cancels their identity-related influence. Ultimately, the criteria of Others' are displayed (linguistic criterion), which are further deconstructed via the salience of the emotional mind-set as her foremost criterion.

The element of status as a global power and as a technological advanced country constitutes the focal point of students' narratives in relation to their country of resi-

dence. These characteristics, nevertheless, are the core elements of the American identity. The American is chiefly displayed as the one who gave the Greeks the opportunity to become partakers of the western perception concerning development and progress. Of course, something like that, according to the students' narrations, is integrated into a strategy of benefit as students focus on the achievements of the Greeks and their contribution to the American society. "...The Americans are the ones who opened the door to let us in...and my parents say that they were way ahead then in relation to Greece. Ok, they were open-minded, and they did that to their own advantage. But they gave the chance..." mentions the student (US-8). Thereby, rhetoric is developed, within which the students consider that the power and the status of the ruling ethno-cultural group in the USA is due to the conducive historic circumstances.

The student US-10 states characteristically: "We are not the same...it is different to be fighting against the Turks and Germans, and different to be chasing the poor Indians... I believe that we would surely have progressed if we had not had so many enemies...it is not the same."

Whilst another student (US-5) points out: "...I know that when you step on two things, it is difficult...Greek-American, Italian-American etc. The hyphen in between hides struggle and distress says my father. And he does not say that only about the Greeks. About everybody. They had difficult times...I do not know details". However, when the students' narratives focus on our own Others, the following can be observed: while the students themselves try to deconstruct the significance of the criteria the Others set for their Greekness, for example the linguistic one, they themselves pronounce them significant when sighted by Other Greeks abroad. Thus, the Other Greeks abroad, mainly those originating from the countries of the former Soviet Union, do not know the Greek language and are judged upon that, while the students themselves from the USA both exonerate and legalize internally their own lower linguistic level in relation to that of those living in Germany, because the latter target at returning to Greece. "I do not know perfect Greek either, but at least I know some. The Others from Russia, Ukraine know some Pontic Greek words. Only. So what kind of Greeks are they? If I, too, tell you three words in Ancient Greek, did I become ancient? I am not saying that they speak like the German kids, but not like that. And the German kids know like that because they come here later and go to other school..." (US-12).

In the case of the students from Germany, the identity-related labelling is featured with clarity, since the students define themselves as Greeks. This self-definition is not displayed as simply interdependent with factual-synchronic identity-related elements, with the experience itself, but mainly as self-evident and directly attributed to incessant and flowing intake of Greekness. The student DE-5 states: "...I am 100% Greek. I am not different from the other Greeks. I know the language, the history, the traditions, I live like a Greek. I am not saying that I am. I live like that. After all, it could not have been differently. Since my family is Greek. Normally...". Primarily, the student emphatically highlights that she does not say that she is simply a Greek (I am not saying that I am), but that she is indeed, because she lives like a Greek (I live like that). Actually, the student distinguishes the "nominal" from the "factual" labelling. This discernment refers to the distinction between the nominal

labelling of a categorization and the experiential content that this distinction owes to have. Besides the plea to experience, the students simultaneously resort to the plea of diachrony so as to demonstrate the significance of this experience. Characteristically, a student (DE-8) mentions: "...I am a Greek because not only there do us all Greeks keep all the Greek manners but because all these are the most important of all other cultures. The Greek history, language, everything. And I feel proud because my home country is Greece and that I am not an immigrant from somewhere else. It is not the same..." This way the connection with the Hellenic reality does not only constitute a means of conserving an identity, but that of the Hellenic identity which appears to be appraised as the most influential of all.

However, the narration of the Self appears to be initially obeying a selective, and secondarily an instrumental process of emphasizing and keeping silent about identity-related reports. The self-positioning as Greeks is emphatically stressed, while the German context is simultaneously projected as a compensation for negative assessments that are credited to the Greek. This way the students' appropriate characteristics from both ethno-cultural contexts, stressing, nevertheless, that the elements of the host country do not abolish the significant ethno-cultural importance. And, definitely, it is not abolished in the least, but enriched without altering its ruling features either.

The student DE-9 states: "...okay, generally speaking, we, the Greeks have the greatest things. History, language, culture. But we also have some not that good. But that is changing. Anyway, I have got a few good things from where I live as well. For example, they say that we are a bit of a mess. I have learnt to be organized. But we have made the positive things of the Germans our own in our way as well So, I am a Greek without the disadvantages of a Greek!". However, this kind of instrumental-utilitarian selective characterization of one's Self seems to be integrated into a narrative disposition of experiences, that is, into an assessment.

The statement of the student DE-20 is typical: "...I am lucky because I am a Greek and I have got a lot from Germany. It makes me a perfect Greek!". Of course, Greekness, as it is defined by the students themselves, seems to legalize, to an extent, a set of claims and rights.

The student DE-5 maintains: "...what I said to you...I speak Greek, I go to Greek school, I am a Greek and I am entitled to have certain things. I am not saying that I am a Greek. I truly am. I am not like the others who say something on purpose. I have got the qualifications..."

Since the students believe that they fulfil the criteria of Greekness (factual dimension), they consider that they can access a correlating set of claims and rights. This rationale, according to Damanakis, mainly characterizes the first generation of immigrants in Germany (Damanakis 2003: 46). Besides, Parents' Associations have played a significant role while demanding educational rights for their children (Michelakaki 2001: 60). However, in the context of this present study it could not be answered whether these rationales constitute the result or the criterion of the students' self-identification. A more general tendency of these students, on the one hand, is to display their Greekness as pre-existent of all sophisticated management and, on the other hand, to display the host country's identity-related influence to an extent that does not overrule the primary importance.

The student DE-2 characteristically states: "... we are to say that we are Greeks and that we have not been germanized. And as Greeks we can claim certain things". An effort towards this direction, that is, to weaken the host country's identity-related influence is surfacing, meaning an aimed and sophisticated relativization of the evident.

In the final production of the text of the group activity while the students were asked to self-identify on a collective level, the following is noted: "We are 100% Greeks. We have not been germanized. Germany is a parenthesis for us, as almost each one of us will study here. And we will be giving things to our home country. It is good for everybody". The reverse of the potential identity implications that stem from the objective bi-cultural reality they experience occurs through an instrumental-utilitarian management of identity reports.

Concerning the perception of other Greeks abroad, the students nominate the factual criteria of identity as the dominating ones and relativize the identity-related influence of faith and symbolic labeling. This way, Greekness is restricted to the regulative frames of a factual mapping for those students. Still, they emphasize that it is important to feel Greek, but it does not suffice in order for this to be a "reality". Some students' narratives include elements of ambivalence towards the Other Greeks abroad. This happens because, on the one hand, there is converging data with the Greeks who live in various countries of the world, whereas there is data of great divergence comprising those Greeks abroad who are "less Greeks" or "non-realistic".

A characteristic example of ambivalent elements is the statement of a student DE-20: "...here I have met Other Greeks who live in other countries. I feel that there are things that connect us. I cannot tell you what...because we come from the same home country. I don't know...but alongside with this I see that we are not the same. Namely, they do not know many things. Okay, they feel somehow Greeks they say. But that way everybody can say whatever he or she wants...Anyway, I don't feel them strangers...but not the same either...".

The attempt of self-identification of the students from the former Soviet Union countries primarily constitutes a constant effort to eliminate regularities that others have been set for them. Seven (7) students self-identify as Greeks and eleven (11) follow descriptive labelling (Greek-Georgian, a Greek girl who lives in Russia, a Russian girl whose ancestors' land is Greece, a Ukrainian girl who yet feels Greek etc.). In this context, rhetoric is emerging within which the elements that, according to the students, aim at placing them outside the semantic field of Greekness are removed. The students do not appeal to synchrony, resemblance and experience but refer to the notion of continuity on the level of ancestors, that is, they evoke the historic depth. The student GE-2 states: "...I am a Greek. Everybody may not understand it, but that is how I feel. We have kept our ancestors inside us for many years. And my ancestors are Greek, Pontiacs, and so am I... The Greeks have gone through so much these years and we must not forget that. That's why I say that I am a Greek".

Hence, the invocation of emotions and collective trauma legalize both identity-related placements and the request for recognition of these placements by the Others. In this context, the spoken narratives that mainly refer to the collective

trauma and to the struggle for survival of any Greekness, mobilize the emotional structures and define to an extent the terms of interconnection with the Greek-based context.

For the student GE-5 who determines himself as Greek-Georgian, his Greek origin is exhibited as a symbolic bridge between then and now (symbolic bridge) (Zerubavel 1995: 32). However, the student himself does not narrate the content of this symbolic bridge but that content arises as the natural consequence of his ancestors' participation in the struggle for the conservation of their Greekness. The survival of Greek-based elements appears to suffice by itself so as to shield the labelling. "...I am Greek-Georgian...I did not come from nowhere. I mean that Greeks managed to win despite being chased by everybody. But they made it and I must tell that and say that I am a Greek too because I bring with me things and I think they have to stay". Without being able to narrate "what exactly he brings" himself, he stresses the significance that he has to conserve them.

Consequently, students do not appeal so much to the historic incidents but mainly to the accompanying emotion. This emotion, on the one hand, asserts a kind of moral vindication, through the conservation of their any Greekness, and on the other hand, constitutes a basic axis of reference that legalizes their ethno-cultural identities.

The student GE-3 characterizes his Self as a "normal Greek", attributing emotional instead of factual characteristics to the notion of normality, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, attributing properties that are not so much the ones he bears in him but qualities that have to be conserved in the collective memory to the notion of a Greek. More specifically: "I feel a normal Greek. I mean I feel that way...and the Greeks have gone through a lot. I may not remember details...but I know they suffered and we have to remember that".

A basic mechanism for the advocacy of these stands the distinction the students make between what "identity seems" and what "identity is".

The student UA-6 mentions: "I feel a Greek. I may not live like a Greek girl lives but what matters is that we have our ancestors here. Meaning that we have them themselves...even if it doesn't show. We know that some don't agree, because we don't know the language. But we have the very same ancestors." The same student notes down in her diary: "We don't lie. We are Greeks even if it appears to be complex. We have the same ancestors from the very old times". The potential objections of the Others concerning the student's self-identification, due to the lack of factual criteria of Greekness (...even if it does not show), seem to be solved at least on the level of their display through the emphasis given to the notion of "ancestral depth" (ancestral depth) (Zerubavel 2012: 37).

In the case of the student UA-8, exactly because he appeals to the "ancestral depth", he considers that the rest of the elements of identity are potentially reversible because of the identity-related will. Specifically, he states: "...I may feel confused, but I am a Greek. The Others don't see it. In a way they are right because I don't speak the language well...My ancestors are Greeks, my parents too and way backwards...and I will learn the language to make it look better". For this student,



the narrative of his Greekness is primarily based on the distinction between what “identity seems” and what “identity is”. And this happens because during the group activity he makes the following suggestion to the rest of the team: “...let’s say that we may not look like Greeks, but we are...I mean it does not matter if we seem...”.

Actually, the basic regard of the students is bridging the gap, as they themselves project it, between the regulative deficiencies in relation to the assumed criteria of the Others concerning their Greekness and the way in which they perceive this Greekness. This comes as an answer to this emerging mismatch. For instance, language learning (something that has been projected as a primary target) appears to be functioning ostensibly. And that is because although the students themselves attribute reduced significance to the linguistic criterion, as the criterion of Greekness, they quote that criterion when they seem to request the recognition of their Greekness by the Others. This paradox seems to be resolved with a second reading when one is to realize that the invocation of the will to fulfill the synchronic elements of identity can be realized only in an attempt to make this identity distinguishable.

The student UZ-2 explicitly states her identity labelling in the following manner: “...I feel a Greek. My parents are Pontiacs. And I know that some people look at us in a strange way but that is how I feel. And let them say...I mean, because I am not like the Greeks here? If they had gone through what our parents did...I would have wanted to see them there. And little by little we will become too. I know how to speak Greek, not well but I know. That is how I feel, and I am not confused!” Keeping distance from the projection of contradictions and ambivalences, the student shields her identity-related self-placement mainly through an effort to eradicate the potential objections of the Others. She does not principally refer to the content of her Greekness but focuses on the deconstruction of the supposed content that can be attributed to it. This way the emotional mind-set is the mere analytical tool of classification she performs, since it is sufficient to disconnect the “how the identity seems” from the content of her identity.

In the students’ attempt to narrate the dominant ethno-cultural Other, a transition from “is” as a hetero-identification to “we” as a self-identification is observed, since actually there is an alternation of the narrator’s identity. This alternation, and the transition from the Self that narrates to the Other, to the Self that narrates as if it were the Other, seems to be related to the ambiguous and ambivalent character of the self-placement itself.

The statement of student GE-5 is characteristic: “...The Georgians are different. They have a dissimilar character. We keep things more to ourselves and we can’t afford to lead a life like people here. Of course, they respect the Greeks and we have no problems with them. They admire us for our culture...”.

Surely, in the case of our own Others, the students’ narratives focus on the differentiation of the Greekness of Other Greeks abroad from the Greekness, as it is defined and displayed by them themselves, something that is exclusively due to the extremely difficult historic circumstances that restricted to a great extent the access to the Greek-based context.

The student GE-2 points out referring to the Other Greeks abroad: “we have the same home country from the early times. It is “ours” (in Pontiac dialect). We do not look alike but we are...we do not know so much because we couldn’t...they are way ahead but they didn’t go through the same...”.

### 3 Manifestations of Greekness on a Mid-Macro Level

The students in this sample associate themselves with the historic and socialization aspects of their host countries while basic manifestations-shades of Greekness are illustrated in parallel.

For the students in the USA, the synthesis of synchronic and diachronic elements of Greekness constitutes the basic characteristic of their narrative. The Greek-based elements have an enriching function, since they do not comprise any obstacle whatsoever for the inclusion and advancement in the society of their host country, but they further seem to attach an ethical and value-related content to the contemporary experience that only Greekness bears. The narrative of the Greek-based elements of their identity is primarily a narrative of properties and secondarily that of factual content. And these properties constitute pre-notes of Greekness, that is narrative parts that even if their contents are not familiar (cognitive and factual elements), the students seem to discern how crucial it is for someone to appeal to them.

However, it has to be highlighted that the students participate in forms of education whose principal orientation is the smooth inclusion in the American society and any Greek-descent elements function complementarily and enrichingly. The Greek language, the elements of Greek history and civilization comprise a means of re-negotiating the interconnection with the Greek-born context, a means of regaining the “root”. Besides, the revival of ethnicity in the USA during the 1970s led the Greek immigrants to an effort of reconstructing their Greek-based ethno-cultural reports. During this reconstruction, the synchronic elements of Greekness composed the “raw material” of their identity-related reports. The Greek history with emphasis on Ancient-Greek ideals and the context of the Greek Orthodox tradition constituted basic reference points even for opposing forces that developed in the field of community-organization of Greeks in the USA. Thus, the mapping of Greekness on the basis of their ancestral past, as determined by the Ancient-Greek legacy and the conjunction of identity and Orthodoxy, defined to a great extent the qualitative terms of the interconnection of the Greeks abroad and the national centre.

Through the findings that concern the group of students from the USA, two fundamental manifestations of Greekness surface. Both manifestations, beyond their differentiations, actually describe the creation of a “third space” that is characterized by discontinuities, and which cannot be analysed by resorting to starting-point identity-related affiliations since the identity-related reports are not reduced merely to a nationalistic speech or to a restricted public narrative of a nation-state (Bhabha 1990: 211).

- Greekness that has as a starting point factual material of restricted scope and aims at the demonstration of value-related and ethical status that this Greekness bears. Towards this direction Greekness seems to be structured on the basis of an ethical model and a concomitant identity-related debt. Thereby, the Greek origin prejudges a certain kind of ethical mission. The invocation of the Greek-descent past constitutes the focal point of the reports. Ultimately, assessing exceeds doing and the fantasy of the experience exceeds the experience itself.
- Greekness that is based on the synchronic and diachronic elements of identity aiming at the projection of synthesis. Nonetheless, what is emphatically stressed is that the Greek-based elements of their identity specify the way they experience what stems from the context of their country of residence. It is a value-related arrangement, not of experiences, but of identity-associated influence. In this way, the experience is displayed on the level of synchrony on the one hand and, on the other hand, on the level of emerging moral-shaping Greekness that affects the experience itself and gives it a special status.

For the students from Germany, the structural elements of their Greekness have a factual content. It is about Greece-oriented Greekness, since the students do not draw their identity-related reports merely from the Greek-based Greekness but from the Hellenic context, something that attributes a verifiable character to their Greekness. Their Greekness does not only denote identity-related reports on the level of synchrony but also a set of aspirations and rights that relate to instrumental utilization (Damanakis 2007: 141). In this context, the following paradox emerges in the first reading: the students give prominence to the enriching function of ethnicity, but this enriching function refers to identity-related influences of the governing ethno-cultural group, that is to the context of their host country. So, aspects of “Germanness” enrich their Greekness.

Based on the location and time-related criteria, that is the geographical proximity with Greece and the time phase of migration, it is made clear that the Greekness in these students’ case transpires as an experience in the realm of a synchronic interconnection. It concerns the most recent case of immigration to a country in Europe and is characterized by geographical proximity to Greece. Therefore, the terms of access to the Hellenic context and the circumstances that allow for human mobility in general, generate an interconnection between the diasporic population and the national centre where the structural elements of this interconnection base on synchronicity. At this point it is worthwhile to highlight the following: the factor of temporary stay in Germany which had been cultivated in the conscience of the Greeks abroad, both via the terms of the Greek-German contract and the stand taken by Greek governments, is gradually deconstructed and it appears to yield its position to another perception where Greece constitutes a “space” where they are primarily “entitled” to return. And this right is authorized through the projection of the unchangeable-in-time, experientially verifiable and consubstantial with the Hellenic Greekness of theirs.

Hence two more manifestations of Greekness emerge:

- Greekness with factual content, as a result of the interconnection on the level of synchrony with the Helladic context, which enriches the bi-cultural reports of the Greeks abroad without caging the subject into a one-dimensional destination, that of the country of origin. The semantic field of such Greekness is structured through synthesis and multiplicity and therefore the invocation of the synchronic elements of Greekness comprises, for the Greeks abroad, the result of synchronic proximity with the Greek-based frame. In the context of such narrative, even the assimilation of cognitive structures and ethnicity does not constitute a problem to the extent, of course, in which this assimilation leaves room for dialogue with the ethno-culturally different, and consequently leads to the enriching of the identity of the Greek abroad.
- Greekness with factual content, which is value-relatedly and emotionally charged to such a degree which entrenches and generates inescapable confinements of the Greek abroad in a Helladic manifestation. In this case, these confinements do not only seek to exceed the self-evident, that is the pluripotent character of the diasporic reality, but to nullify each attempt of enrichment and interaction with the ethno-cultural context of the host country. Actually, it concerns a Greekness that is structured in another country in order to be functional in the country of origin. Thereby, the invocation of the synchronic elements of identity is not displayed merely as a result of the contemporary proximity with the Greek-based context, but perhaps as a starting point for personal pursuits and targeting. Such is the case of the Greeks who are members of “parallel communities” in Germany (Damanakis 2007: 117). Nevertheless, such a consideration equally stems from a set of motives for attending Greek-only schools, the focal point of which is studying in the Greek tertiary education, as from the perceptions that are expressed by the Parents’ Associations of these schools concerning “authentic” Greekness (Damanakis 2007: 114). It has to do with a case of instrumentalization of the ethno-cultural diversity that contains profound ethnocentric elements once the Greek communities are perceived as suburbs of Greece. The Greek abroad is found confined in a perception of latent extension (the members of the “parallel communities” consider that the only shift that has happened is the geographical one since they are Greeks who happen to live outside the Greek territory) and in a perception where cognitive structures related particularly to the Greek language are the only reliable and internally legalized way of transition and return to Greece.

In the case of the students from the countries of the former Soviet Union, their Greekness is based in a symbolic “space”, where the main mapping tools move on the level diachrony. It is about “symbolic Greekness which appears as allegiance to descent, as a set of convictions and emotional charge, as a credo, as a myth, unaccompanied by synchronic, discernible traits, but at the very best it is accompanied by a number of Greek-derived cultural and linguistic residua, that is, by ‘cultural residua’” (Damanakis 2007: 139). It is obvious that the term “cultural residua” does not lend itself to quantitative measurement (assessment of Greekness indicators) but

relates to the feeling of “belonging” to a collectivity, meaning that it is of a subjective psychological nature and maps mental structures, convictions and the symbols in which the self-identification of a Greek abroad is founded. The Greek-based traits of the identity of the students seem to have a compensatory function. One such function, however, refers to the realization of the loss of factual reports and to the attempt of regaining and eventually restructuring familiar ethno-cultural traits. Loss and reconstruction constitute basic components of the compensatory function. Yet, the notion of loss presupposes that at least the diasporic subject realizes the absence of a number of familiar identity-related reports. For these students, who belong to families of Greek descent in the third or fourth generation, “the absences seem to be present” via the elements of oral tradition.

Based on the criterion of historical authenticity, indeed, populations of Greek descent in these countries lived in separation from contemporary Greece for many years. Historic resettlements, expulsions and massive displacements of Greek populations in these countries, redefined the hearths of the Greek presence but also the way of their self-organization on all levels. There were times when the Greeks abroad had no access to the contemporary-factual context of Greekness. Oral tradition constituted the sole vehicle of intergenerational conveyance of any Greek-based traits. This vehicle not only determines the way of this conveyance, but the content of the traits conveyed as well. Consequently, in this case Greekness is based in orality, that is in the “narrative of the Greece-based past through the inclusion of this narrative in the daily routine of the group” (Damanakis 2007: 146).

In this context three more shades of Greekness surface:

- Greekness that is structured in the distinction of the identity-related “seeming” from the identity-related “being”, where the absence of synchronic traits of identity is fully disengaged from the self-interpretation of the Self. Through a symbolic engraving of an ancestral journey, the historic depth of Greekness is displayed as the existential “being” that exceeds the everyday “doing”. The emotional mind-set constitutes the main tool of this exceedance.
- Greekness that is projected exclusively with symbolic and deductive terms, mainly as an identity-related debt. In this case, dramaturgy and extremely difficult circumstances of survival of any Greek-based traits seem to generate identity-related affiliations through the invocation of collective memory. These narratives (of trauma, persecution, survival) constitute, “foundational stories” (foundational stories) that yield encrypted explanations of the identity of the subject (Chamberlain 2009: 185). Actually, “I owe to be Greek” encapsulates also the fear of betraying the ancestral journey, a journey of drama and, accordingly, worth remembering.
- Greekness with exclusively and merely symbolic and emotional content, where the structural elements of interconnection with the Greek-based context are not collective memories but mainly their properties. In this case, the Greeks abroad invoke the properties of a deductively structured Greekness, properties that have a particular formative action in the narratable material. So, the emotional mind-set constitutes that element that gives these labeling the necessary internal legalization, at least in terms of their projection.

It is advisable to clarify that the content of symbolic Greekness, as crystallized in the three aforementioned manifestations, is not structured from the remnants of a Greece-oriented Greekness, hence the case is not that of a Greece-oriented Greekness in decadence. Instead, it involves different starting points in the historic and socio-political context that led to different courses and consequently to different ways of mapping the semantic field of Greekness. The enrichment of a symbolic Greekness with factual, synchronic elements of identity is rightful once it is legalized by the need Greeks abroad have to defend their Greekness whatsoever. It would be futile perhaps, though, to expect any deframing of this Greekness by the symbolic and emotional mind-set-related interconnections with the Greek-based context and a radical change in its narrative parts.

The aforementioned shades of Greekness are not obviously the single ones; still, they could be used as working hypotheses, though, when the issues of identity in the diaspora are touched upon. The Greek abroad lives and socializes among identity-related reports, rich in alternative contexts and inexhaustible in fantasies of “space”. The Greeks abroad are not homogenous and therefore their Greekness is always uttered in plural. Its various manifestations lie enriched not only in historic and social contexts, as defined by the characteristics of migratory flows, the structures of self-organization and the policies of the host countries, but within the formative effect of “subjectivity” (Maver 2009: x).

## References

- Bhabha, H. (1990). The third space. In R. Jonathan (Ed.), *Identity. Community, culture, difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Chamberlain, M. (2009). Diasporic memories: Community, individuality and creativity: A life stories perspective. *Oral History Review*, 36(2), 177–187.
- Damanakis, M. (2003). *Greek schools and mother tongue classes in Germany (1986–98)*. Rethymno: Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies (E.DIA.M.ME.), University of Crete. [In Greek].
- Damanakis, M. (2007). *Identities and education in the diaspora*. Athens: Gutenberg. [In Greek].
- Maver, I. (2009). Introduction: Positioning diasporic literary cultures. In M. Igor (Ed.), *Diasporic subjectivity and cultural brokering in contemporary post-colonial literatures*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Michelakaki, T. (2001). *The Greek education policy for the children of Greek immigrants in Germany, (1975–85)*. Rethymno: Centre of Intercultural and Migration Studies (E.DIA.M.ME.), University of Crete. [In Greek].
- Parkinson, B., Fischer, A., & Manstead, A. (2005). *Emotion in social relations. Cultural, group and interpersonal processes*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Zerubavel, Y. (1995). *Recovered roots: Collective memory and the making of Israeli National Tradition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Zerubavel, E. (2012). *Ancestors & relatives. Genealogy, identity & community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.