

**TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PARTICIPATION IN TWO  
U.S. GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCHES**

by

Christine Alex

Bachelor of Science, The Pennsylvania State University, 1996

Master of Arts, University of Pittsburgh, 2000

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FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

This dissertation was presented

by

Christine Alex

It was defended on

April 23, 2007

and approved by

Kathleen Blee, Distinguished Professor, Department of Sociology

Lisa D. Brush, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

Peggy Lovell, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

Edward Muller, Professor, Department of History

Kathleen Blee, Distinguished Professor, Department of Sociology  
Dissertation Director

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## **TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PARTICIPATION IN TWO U.S. GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCHES**

Christine Alex, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2007

This study provides new insights on the state of participation in a contemporary ethnoreligious group organization, the Greek Orthodox Church. I examine the ethnoreligious identities and practices of participants who were diverse along lines of church activity, gender, age, generational status, marital status, ancestry, and even religion in two Pittsburgh-area churches. Data were collected through one-on-one in-depth interviews as well as participant observation within the churches' organizations to capture the attitudes and experiences of the Greek Orthodox Church participant and to understand the reasons for participation amidst the predominant white ethnic climate of symbolic ethnicity. Two major themes emerged from the data. First, unmarried Greek Orthodox Americans in these organizations definitely considered how the ethnic/religious background of their chosen mate would impact their own, as well as their children's, future in the church. Second, participants of varying generational statuses referenced different sources of attraction to the church's activities: earlier generation (first and second) participants commonly identified the ethnic and ethnoreligious appeal of the church, while later generation (third) and convert participants acknowledged a primarily religious connection to the church. These findings suggest that theories of assimilation and symbolic ethnicity, which predict a decline in ethnic adherence, may not apply to ethnic groups who also

share an exclusive religion. On the contrary, the two organizations studied here are gaining membership as Greek Orthodox Americans increasingly marry outside their ethnicity/religion but bring in their convert spouses to the organizations. Given their changing social composition, however, these churches are facing a crucial issue for their future: whether to maintain the current balance of religious and ethnic activity or to change the focus of activities to cater to the growing interest in religious-based activity.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Introduction to the Chapter

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, white Americans have witnessed many changes with regard to what it means to identify ethnically in U.S. society. While second generation white ethnic-Americans born and/or raised in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century can remember the discrimination and perhaps embarrassment that was associated with being a “greasy Greek” or other recently-migrated group in the U.S. at that time, later generation white ethnic-Americans may have experienced the ethnic pride that was characteristic of the 1960s and later. Today, most white ethnic Americans may identify only sparingly or, as I will elaborate later, symbolically, with their ethnic heritage. In fact, fewer and fewer Americans are reporting any ancestry at all, according to the U.S. Census.<sup>1</sup>

Though the majority (81%) of Americans still identify at least one ethnic ancestry, the extent to which they identify with an ethnic-American group through cultural participation is more limited. And for some groups ethnic participation is often anchored by or conjoined with a religious observance. One such group is the focus of this research, members of the Greek Orthodox Church.

I studied the meaning of ethnicity and religion in the lives of participants in two Greek Orthodox churches south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These participants supported two vital

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<sup>1</sup> The proportion of American residents reporting any ancestry at all decreased between 1990 and 2000 from 90.4% to 80.9% (U.S. Census Bureau 2004).

Greek Orthodox American (religious and ethnic) organizations despite increased intermarriage, greater generational distance from original ethnic heritage, and suburbanization of their groups, all usual threats to ethnic organization. In this study I found dynamics in these two churches that may better be understood as opportunities for change and growth rather than as indicators of decline.

This is an ethnography based on fieldwork that included participant observation of ethnic- and religious-based church activity and in-depth interviews of church participants from many different backgrounds, experiences, and points of view. I analyze participant attitudes regarding ethnic intermarriage and attitudes concerning ethnic identity and what it means to participate in an ethnic institution by generational status. In this analysis I aim to understand how male and female participants of various ages, generational statuses, ancestry combinations, and organizational affiliations (ethnic/religious as well as civic) experience the Greek Orthodox Church (hereafter GOC). By better understanding these experiences, I attempt to understand what sustains the GOC organizations today.

## **B. Why the Church?**

I decided to study an ethnic institution because these are understudied in ethnicity research, which generally focuses instead on individual identities and affinities toward individual practice of ethnic culture. Although some social scientists dismiss the viability of any ethnic institutions today, Richard Alba (1990:209) argues that where they do exist, “[e]thnically based friendships and organizations offer an arena where the idiom of ethnicity – the sentiments, concerns, and outlooks that distinguish members of a group from others and contribute to the sense of a bond among them – can be developed and preserved.” Because of their separation from larger society

and their contained interpersonal dynamics and relations, such institutions are robust sources of data about the practice of ethnicity in modern U.S. society.

In selecting my unit of observation, I searched for a strong, visible form of ethnic organization. The Greek Orthodox Church, a house for Greek Orthodox Americans (hereafter GOAs) whose ethnic bond also comes along with an exclusive religious association, Greek Orthodoxy, was the obvious place to go. Greek Orthodoxy is the national religion in Greece, with approximately 98% of Greek citizens identifying as such.<sup>2</sup> In the U.S., the Greek Orthodox Church hosts both religious and ethnic/social events, making it the central organizing entity for Greek-Americans since their arrival into the country over a century ago. Although primarily Greek residential areas no longer exist in the Pittsburgh area, the locale for this research, the ethnoreligious<sup>3</sup> connection of Greek ancestry and Orthodox faith continues to bring together many types of Greek-Americans whose identification with one or both of those aspects of their heritage remains at least somewhat important. Because the Church is the strongest, most developed form of ethnic organization that exists locally today and because participation in such ethnic (though also religious) organization is rarer today than in previous decades, I chose to study its participants and find out what contributes to such an enduring ethnic and religious cultural practice and what participants gain from their affiliation with it. This study focuses on those who identify with at least one of the two aspects of group history (ethnic and/or religious).

Because of the ethnoreligious nature of Greek Orthodox Church participation, distinguishing between what is ethnic and what is religious can be difficult. People participate in religions for many reasons that are cultural or social, in addition to religious (Buckser 2000).

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Embassy of Greece. <http://greekembassy.org> (accessed on 07/09/2006).

<sup>3</sup> I borrow this term from Herbert Gans (1979) to express a group with an inseparable ethnic and religious bond. With regard to this study, since all institutions examined here incorporate both the Orthodox religion and Greek/ethnic traditions I describe the institutions as ethnoreligious in nature.

Since churches offer secular activities, religious affiliation can increase over time for secular reasons when people attend church to make or meet friends, even though their actual religious sentiments are declining (Gans 1994; Stolzenberg et al. 1995).

In the Greek Orthodox Church, according to Gary Kunkelman (1990), ethnicity drives religious association. According to Kunkelman, the Greek Orthodox Church houses ethnic rather than religious worship. He even goes so far as to say that, “[r]ather than ethnic religion, a religion of ethnicity has emerged as shaper of belief and behavior” (Kunkelman 1990:180). Yet, the relation between the ethnic and religious is symbiotic. As Kunkelman argues, ethnicity cannot survive without the Church, and once people are drawn to the church, they find ethnic identity.

Many studies concerning religion and religious organization are based on survey data (Gans 1994), but those based on ethnographic methods (see Cadge and Davidman 2006; Davidman 1990; Davidman 1991; Davidman and Greil 1993; Lichterman 2005) have added perspective to the sociology of religion literature in that they reveal more intricacies about participant reflections, interactions, and group processes both internally and as they relate to the outside world. Such methods of data collection are necessary to discern participants’ true beliefs, intentions, feelings, actions, and satisfactions. Religious beliefs and prayers are highly individualized activities, making the individual meaning attributed to such personal sentiments and activities difficult to observe or assess from an outsider position. Studying church participants in a natural group setting and through one-on-one interviews makes it possible to understand the meaning of ethnicity and religion not only through what respondents say, but also what they do and feel, and what ethnic/religious activities and feelings mean to them.

### **C. Outline of Chapter**

In this chapter I present definitions of ethnicity and provide a brief history of immigration and white ethnicity in the United States. I also discuss sociological theories that attempt to explain ethnic and religious trends. Then I present literature that pertains specifically to the trends of increased intermarriage and further removed generational status among ethnic-Americans today. This literature illuminates how and in what forms ethnic identification and participation survive, paving the way for my argument that theories predicting the demise of a meaningful white ethnicity may not apply to the ethnic experience in the Greek Orthodox Church.

### **D. White Ethnicity**

#### ***1. Definitions of Ethnicity***

The term *ethnicity* has many usages and accompanying connotations. Like the concept of race, ethnicity is an arbitrary social phenomenon that has had many changing meanings over the years and whose meaning is still contestable today.

Ethnicity can carry a biological connotation, as familial descent or historical national origin (Novak 1996). Alba (1990) distinguishes this objective form of ethnicity as ancestry. Ethnicity can also, especially more recently, refer to a more subjective orientation or identification with one or more of many ancestral heritages. Individuals who share an ethnic ancestry or even identity by no means attribute the same meaning to the ethnicity nor do they necessarily practice the same culture.

Increasingly, discussions around white ethnic identity have shifted toward discussions around white racial identity, a reaction to the diminishing impact of European ancestry on the



day-to-day life of most white Americans (McDermott and Samson 2005). Although whiteness is often described as invisible, taken for granted, residual and sometimes but not always privileged relative to other races, it is not within the scope of this study to address the racial undertones surrounding the GOC communities studied here. I do preface my analysis by stating that while the primary (though perhaps invisible or taken for granted) identity for the GOC participants is white American, their specific ethnic/religious identity is significant because of their voluntary participation in the GOC.

Concerning ethnic institutional participation, for the purposes of this study I define Greek ethnics as individuals who report a biological tie to, in this case, Greek ancestry and/or express an identification with the perceived culture and practices associated with that heritage. In this research, there are participants who do not carry a biological tie to Greek ancestry but who have identified with, adopted, and advocated for the culture; These participants most definitely contribute to the Greek culture studied here.

## ***2. When “White Ethnicity” was an Oxymoron***

Although those called white ethnics today are generally considered to be members of the white race, when south, central, and eastern European immigrants first arrived in the U.S. during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries they experienced racial discrimination from white ethnics from northern European countries. Being regarded as a racial/ethnic minority group had social, economic, and political ramifications (Lieberson and Waters 1988). Yet, white immigrants from south, central, and eastern Europe were not subject to the systematic legal discrimination that confronted African Americans; indeed, they were eventually regarded as whites themselves (Lee and Bean 2004).

An example of the process of ethnic groups becoming white is the Irish. Irish immigrants first came to the U.S. in large numbers during the Potato Famine in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. At this time they were stereotyped for their criminality, lack of education, and poor family values (Waters 2000). The Irish were sometimes even referred to by their already Americanized counterparts as “niggers turned inside out” (Ignatiev 1995: 41). Noel Ignatiev (1995: 186) emphasizes the critical difference between the Irish and African Americans at that time, however: “Because blackness was the badge of the slave in America, people from Ireland who went there entered the free labor system, which made them part of the dominant race. As unskilled workers, they occupied the lowest place within it.” The Irish and, later, the newer Europeans in America were poor but they were not enslaved. They were not legally excluded from education, employment, housing, and voting opportunities as were African Americans until around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. After a generation or two it would become more difficult to outwardly discern new from old white European descendents than to distinguish a black man or woman from a non-black person (Lieberson 1980), not only due to physical appearance but also due to the continued lack of access to resources, opportunities, and social settings. This left room for the ultimate economic and social advancement of Irish-Americans (and eventually of other European immigrant groups).

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, racial categories changed in different ways. Racial/ethnic classification on the basis of ancestry or perceived color became more complicated. For example, recent immigrants from Latin American may see themselves as mestizo while others may view them as white and yet others as black (Lee and Bean 2004).

### ***3. Theories of Ethnicity and Religion***

Since mass migration in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, theorists of various sociological schools of thought attempted to predict the future of ethnic identification, practice, and integration into U.S. society for migrant groups. Because the reasons for and receptivity of ethnic identification changed over time along with population trends and socio-political and cultural climates, theories have been updated, modified, and revamped over time.

**a. Assimilation.** Sociologists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century predicted that the newly-migrated ethnic groups of their time (primarily south, central, and eastern Europeans) would blend in with the mainstream American society and adopt what was considered American culture (though ever-changing and multicultural in itself), essentially leaving behind their ethnic roots and ways of life. This process of blending into a unified American culture was called assimilation. In 1945, Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole released their theory of assimilation or linear progression from foreignness to Americanization. They predicted that for every successive generation in the United States, a new, more advanced stage of assimilation or blending would take place for the group until eventually all later-generation groups would possess strictly American qualities and participate in American groups and organizations.

Milton Gordon expanded Warner and Srole's idea of assimilation to include seven dimensions. The broadest dimensions are cultural assimilation, or acculturation, and structural assimilation. Cultural assimilation was defined by Gordon (1964) as voluntarily relinquishing aspects of one's ancestral culture such as language, food, religion, holiday observances, etc. to adopt the dominant, in this case, American culture. Structural assimilation referred to joining organizations and institutions that serve a more integrated, distinctly American function, like integrated suburban neighborhoods instead of ethnic enclaves. This kind of assimilation required

that the dominant group allow the minority group to interact with them and become part of their social world. Gordon maintained that once these two dimensions of assimilation occurred for a particular group, the other five dimensions (marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behavioral receptional, and civic assimilation) would follow.

Traditional theories of assimilation have many limitations. First, they assume the migrants or migrant groups want to relinquish their cultural distinctions. Second, they assume that the dominant culture will accept the migrant/ethnic/racial groups (and under very specific conditions). Third, they assume this linear progression exists for all groups. Fourth, they assume that there is a distinctly American culture void of ethnic contributions. And fifth, they ignore contextual factors such as domestic and international politics.

**b. Pluralism.** When ethnic groups in the U.S. did not follow the anticipated sequence of assimilation, social scientists developed new theories of ethnicity. Pluralist theories (Greeley 1971, 1974; Novak 1973) state that ethnic assimilation is not inevitable, even with ethnic intermarriage and ethnic integration of neighborhoods. Stein and Hill (1977), for example, argue that identification with one's ethnicity can continue regardless of structural assimilation. They distinguish this as a new ethnic identification in which individuals selectively incorporate cultural aspects from an ethnic past. Stein and Hill (1977:21) describe this as a dime-store ethnicity, an ethnic selectivity that can be consumed or chosen: "One selects, tries, likes or dislikes, and returns for the same "purchase" or an alternate."

On the surface, the basic premise of pluralism, that individuals can be accepted by the dominant group as American but maintain their ethnic cultural distinctions, appears to promote inclusion of all diverse groups coexisting in the nation. However, acceptance of cultural distinctions is granted only by the dominant group; in the U.S.: whites. Groups who became

white thus did so by exhibiting similar traits to those already deemed white and by differentiating themselves from blacks (Lee and Bean 2004). Other racial groups, regarded as less similar to dominant whites, are not easily incorporated into this pluralist state.

**c. Symbolic Ethnicity.** Many later theories about ethnicity expanded on the dime store concept. Herbert Gans (1979) introduced the term “symbolic ethnicity,” which he describes as familial and leisure-time ethnicity (Gans 1992a: 175). This is ethnic identity produced by individuals, a choice void of an ethnic group’s influence or even existence. This form of ethnicity is regarded as predominant among later-generation ethnics who are not as involved in organized ethnic association or ethnic practice as earlier immigrants but still revere an albeit-distant ethnic culture. This individual identity serves as an effortless substitute for regular cultural practices within a group (Gans 1997).

Gans’ work on symbolic ethnicity sparked a number of studies. Richard Alba (1990) and Mary Waters (1990) demonstrate that many later-generation white ethnic Americans maintain a latent form of identification with an ethnic heritage, but without even a loose connection to ethnic organizations or source cultures. Instead, such symbolic ethnic identity feeds on symbols of ethnicity such as Americanized conceptions of ethnic foods at ethnic restaurants, festivals, and short-term vacations to the homeland. Alba (1990:25) illustrates how ambiguous such an identity can be:

The individual who consciously identifies as Italian American can interpret this identity in terms of a fondness for opera, a love of Italian cuisine (which now can be carried over to a high-status northern Italian cuisine quite unfamiliar to his or her ancestors and probably served to non-Italian guests), or a desire to combat

stereotypes of Italian Americans as Mafia-linked. There is, in short, no proscription about the significance of an ethnic identity for a person's life.

Symbolic ethnicity is, therefore, a token acknowledgement of ethnicity, not a continuous way of life. Waters (1990:150) describes choosing a contemporary ethnic identity as a win-win situation: "Having an ethnic identity is something that makes you both special and simultaneously part of a community. It is something that comes to you involuntarily through heredity, and at the same time it is a personal choice."

Symbolic ethnicity is notably characteristic of suburban dwellers. Waters (1990:98) summarizes why ethnic practice for largely suburban populations is unlikely: "The move to the suburbs of the increasingly assimilated ethnic group members is hypothesized to further reduce the salience of ethnicity and the ties to the ethnic group, because it is believed that the suburbs will act as great melting pots, exposing the white ethnics to heterogeneous social networks and institutions and markets not dominated by their own ethnic group." The dispersion of ethnic groups creates more contact with others, increasing the likelihood of intermarriage, increasing the number of children with multiple ancestry, further eroding ethnic identity, and so on (Alba and Nee 1997).

Predictions for what will happen with this type of ethnicity in the future are conflicting. Some argue that this form of ethnic identification, since it is symbolic and weak, may fade (Alba 1990). Others say that since such ethnic identification is easy and convenient to maintain, it may become a permanent source of part-time (not daily or even regular) leisure for Americans craving a basis for distinction (Gans 1992b).

Like other theories of ethnicity, symbolic ethnicity has its limitations. Because symbolic ethnicity, by definition, has different meanings to different people, it can not necessarily be

compared to traditional forms of ethnicity in which a shared culture is implied. Also, it is important to again remember that benignly attributing meaning to ethnic symbols is a privilege associated with whiteness. For minority groups, identification with a race/ethnicity/religion may carry along with it a greater possibility for discrimination.

**d. Symbolic Religion.** The concept of a symbolic identity may also be applied to religion. Gans (1994) describes symbolic religiosity as the consumption of symbols, here religious symbols, as a source of identification and sense of belonging rather than a source of regular group or organizational participation. He comments on its impact on day-to-day life as compared to symbolic ethnicity: “As a sacred rather than secular activity, symbolic religiosity is presumably not as often a leisure-time activity as symbolic ethnicity, but none the less, it involves the consumption of religious symbols in such a way as to create no complications or barriers for dominant secular lifestyles” (Gans 1994:585). While symbolic ethnicity applies to individuals who typically do not participate in ethnic organization, symbolic religiosity applies to individuals who may attend organized religious worship occasionally but more as spectators than as participants.

Though it is intended to differentiate the devout from the casual religious participant, a theory of symbolic religion is difficult to corroborate since both types of participants are likely to be found in the same or similar religious forums. Religion, whether symbolic or deep, is a highly individualized and personal practice. Determining whether one is merely consuming symbols versus participating sincerely is virtually impossible to discern from mere observation.

**e. Bumpy Line Assimilation.** Since both ethnicity and religion today have a greater variety of forms and purposes than in the past, predictions about their future can be tentative at best.

Attempting to accommodate for such irregularity, Gans (1992a) introduces a modification to the

linear progression or straight line assimilation theory, what he calls bumpy line theory. Bumpy line theory predicts bumps or inconsistencies or unexpected changes in circumstances which impact the assimilation of any group. Gans (1994) later summarizes that bumpy line theory accounts for “surprises that the future may hold in store.” Turns in the economy, specifically, can accelerate or deter assimilation for more recently immigrated groups. For groups that are subject to times with few economic opportunities, a plateau stage rather than steady decline may dominate for generations (Alba and Nee 2003). Bumpy line theory also suggests that complete assimilation will never really occur because no one standard of American-ness exists.

Assimilation is a matter of degree, with no discrete beginning or end.

While bumpy line theory seems to accommodate almost any social situation, it still assumes that assimilation can occur at least to some degree for any group. In reality, an enduring plateau, may be indicative of some persistent barrier to assimilation that begs to be studied rather than be dismissed as a stage.

**f. Invented Ethnicity.** Another school of thought also subscribes to the idea of cultural fluidity. Invented ethnicity proponents Werner Sollors (1989) and Kathleen Conzen et al. (1992) describe the components of ethnic identity as fabrications of the mind rather than actual cultural remnants from an authentic, though perhaps distant, foreign past. Sollors (1989:xi) in particular defines ethnicity as a cultural construction of “...widely shared, though intensely debated, collective fictions that are continually reinvented.” He describes ethnicity as an ongoing process, not a thing, that results from complex interactions and that must be understood in its “historical and dynamic context.” Ethnicity here has no direct tie to a particular or static immigrant culture. But Conzen et al. (1992) emphasize that immigrant groups were never homogeneous in and of themselves anyway (see also Gans 1997). Once in America, these groups created traditions that



could be used to symbolically or otherwise unify the group. And so, over time, the white ethnic invention of these traditions has taken on a life of its own.

This concept of ethnicity as invention signifies that although an expression of ethnicity exists, assimilation may have already taken place. The ethnic experience may be the result of a completely new association with a past that was never known to the (sometimes much) later-generation ethnic-American.

Invented ethnicity theorists expect that such ethnicity will last a long time due to its flexibility in accommodating the varying needs of white ethnics. Conzen et al. (1992:31) affirm such a prediction: “The selective refashioning of [Italian-American] ethnicity no doubt will continue as individuals dip into their cultural reservoirs and choose aspects that suit their needs at particular moments in time.” But, when such ethnicity is based on a fluid, dynamic conception of culture, its endurance remains questionable without a solid, common foundation.

In sum, ethnicity and ethnic attachments, though still pervasive, have increasingly been identified by contemporary theorists as shallow or weak attachments. In comparison to those who do not participate in any ethnically-based organized activities, ethnics who participate in organized ethnic activities may not fit the typical symbolic ethnicity/religion mold. In this study I attempt to understand the experiences of ethnic participants in the context of widespread symbolic ethnicity/religion. I explore the applicability of the above theories to such anomalous groups.

#### **E. How Does the White Ethnic Experience Vary Over Time and Among Individuals?**

Over time, as discussed above, assimilation, or the process in which previously distinct and separate groups become forged into one, is predicted by some theorists to progress more and

more for each new generation that is born in the United States. That is, for each new generation, ethnic customs carry less and less of a role in an individual's life. However, the end-point for such a process is debatable. Some say it has already happened and whatever ethnic customs are carried out are actually new inventions instead of continuations of a past culture. Others say it may never happen, that ethnic identification today is unobtrusive enough to last forever. However ethnicity changes in the future, it is clear that Gordon's (1964) third type of assimilation will play a significant role since the marital choices shape the ethnic identities and practices of future generations.

Generation and intermarriage are related since intermarriage is both an indicator of the degree of assimilation for an ethnic group and an agent of further assimilation. Alba (1995:13) refers to intermarriage as the "litmus test of assimilation," since those who marry outside their designated group lines (if they exist) do not perceive inter-group differences as significant enough to prevent marriage. Other scholars (Gordon 1964; Lieberman and Waters 1988) regard intermarriage as a contributing factor to and even a condition for the assimilation of a group on the whole.

### ***1. Intermarriage and Spousal choice***

Intermarriage is defined as "marriage across specified group lines" (Lieberman and Waters 1988: 168). This term refers to ethnic intermarriage and religious intermarriage, but for some groups who share both an ethnicity and a religion, ethnoreligious intermarriage would be a more appropriate term. Again, as with many social concepts, the definition of intermarriage is fuzzy. By whom are the group lines drawn? How are the lines drawn for those who were born with a particular ancestry or into a particular religion, but later denounced one or both of them for

another acquired identity? Or, more commonly today, how are the lines drawn for children of intermarriage who may possess or identify with multiple ancestries or religions?

As Lee and Bean (2004:228) describe, “At the beginning of the twentieth century, intermarriage between white ethnics was rare and nearly castelike, especially between “old” white ethnics and newer arrivals from eastern and southern Europe.” Today, only one-fifth of whites have a spouse with an identical ethnic background (Lee and Bean 2004) and given the fluidity of choosing to identify with one or another ethnic heritage, some are choosing to marry persons whose ancestries overlap in part, but not completely (Alba 1990; Waters 1990). In fact, Mary Waters (1990) finds that most of her study respondents who reported a partial ethnic overlap considered their marriages to be endogamous.

Stanley Lieberson and Mary Waters (1988) find that intermarriage is higher for younger cohorts and for those with greater generational distance from immigration. And among intermarried couples, Alba (1990) finds that the majority of parents with children in the house are not concerned about whether their children identify themselves in ethnic terms. Overall, multiple ancestry seems to lead to weaker ethnic identity and more limited exposure to ethnic culture (Alba 1995).

Although many discuss intermarriage in the context of ethnic assimilation, Ari Nave (2000:339) finds that inter-ethnic marriage does not undermine the strength of ethnic boundaries. He states, “This is because demands for cultural congruency, combined with pressures to signal a single ethnic identity prevent children of inter-ethnic marriages from developing persistent hybrid cultural traditions to any significant extent. Consequently, ethnicity and associated cultural traditions can be transmitted largely intact, even in the presence of intermarriage.” But Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003:283) find that participation in one of the partner’s cultures is

likely to be reciprocated: “In effect, the once sharp religious boundary has been blurred, in the sense that rituals from both traditions are practiced.” So while a couple may tend to observe one culture’s practices over the other’s, the less practiced culture is still present.

In an analysis of U.S. Census responses, Waters (2000: 1736) addresses the tendency to single out one ancestry. She documents that intermarried parents filling out the census form simplify their children’s ancestries: “In situations where one parent reports one single White ethnic origin (X) and the other parent reports another (Y), a substantial percentage of the children (around 40%) are not described as the logical combination of parental ancestries (XY); instead, only one parent’s origin is reported.” She attributes such inconsistencies to age (as people get older, they report fewer ancestries) and to the marriage itself (when some people marry they change their ancestry to match that of their spouse). Sometimes, even upon having a child, the child’s adoption of one parent’s culture may prompt the other parent’s adoption of the culture as well (Nave 2000). Further, even intermarried parents can pressure their children to marry within the ethnicity adopted by the household.

In terms of religious intermarriage, findings indicate that religious origins play less of a role in one’s choice of spouse than in prior decades (Alba 1995). This trend may signify a lack of importance to either partner concerning his/her or the partner’s religion. Or it may be reflective of the reality that a spouse from another religious background is not likely to disrupt family relations and may even convert to the other’s religion or at least informally agree on a way to support both partners’ religious identities (Alba 1990; Gans 1994).

Today, discussions around intermarriage have shifted toward interracial marriage. Although rates of intermarriage between races have increased since the 1970s, this trend slowed

during the 1990s particularly among less educated groups, largely due to rising cohabitation and an influx in the foreign-born population (Qian and Lichter 2007).

## ***2. Generational Status (and Gender and Age)***

Generational status can be defined as the distance in one's lineage or descent from the point of immigration into the United States (Alba 1990). First generation refers to those born outside the country, second generation refers to those born in the U.S. with one or more parents born outside of the country, third and higher generation refers to those born in the U.S. whose parents were also born in this country (Farley and Alba 2002).

Generally speaking, ethnic behaviors and connections are strongest or most apparent among the generations closest to the immigrant experience and become weaker or less apparent among those further away so that the probability of identifying ethnically is greater among those who are closer to the immigrant experience (Alba 1990). That is, later generation Americans are likely to adopt American cultural ways and/or modify parental or old country ways so that the original values and behaviors characteristic of the immigrant group become altered or nonexistent. Therefore each successive generation that replaces the previous will be less ethnic-identified and the group as a whole will also become less ethnic-identified than their predecessors (Alba 1995).

Gender and age also have an impact on ethnic experience. In general, research shows that women are more likely than men to practice and promote ethnic culture to their families (di Leonardo 1984). Women are often expected to prepare the ethnic food, plan ethnic-based holidays, and pass on ethnic culture to their children. They are expected to more strongly identify with and participate on behalf of both their ethnicity and religion than men (Alba 1990;

di Leonardo 1984; Stolzenberg et al. 1995) and are expected to choose intra-marriage (Kalbach 2003; Kulczycki and Lobo 2002) more often than men.

With regard to religious participation, women tend to be more frequent participants than men, and women tend to invest more time in and develop more relationships from this participation (Stolzenberg et al. 1995). Gender also impacts one's entrée into the religion or religious group and the attraction or appeal to the group (Davidman and Greil 1993). For example, according to Lynn Davidman and Arthur Greil (1993), women react more to a feeling of interconnectedness with others than men do so they are often times targeted for recruitment via social networks. Men, on the other hand, tend to be recruited via a stranger approach. Women are viewed as accidental seekers of religion; that is, that these individuals tend not to deliberately seek a spiritual path but rather they enter it in response to a crisis or some turning point in their lives. Men tend to take more of a deliberate, active approach to finding a religion that suits their needs.

Once in the group, given that many religious communities are built around gender-specific roles, some more traditional and rigid than others, women and men may experience the culture differently. In the case of Jews, Lynn Davidman and Arthur Greil (1993) discuss how women and men experience and view the Sabbath differently. Davidman and Greil describe that, although both men and women appreciate Judaism's sense of community and value placed on family life, women's experience of the Sabbath represents time to spend with family, whereas men associate this time with rest in the context of time spent away from work.

In terms of age, younger persons tend to attribute less importance to their ethnic background than older persons (Alba 1990). But age is a difficult indicator to interpret because

its effects can be confounded with the effects of generational status as well as stage in the life-cycle (Stolzenberg et al. 1995).

### **F. Statement of the Problem**

While many contemporary theories attempt to explain the widespread declining institutional foundation for ethnic practice and identity, such theories may not apply to the Greek Orthodox Church and its participants. The generalizability of commonplace theories needs to be tested among many different types of populations – both at the group level and at the individual level. The Greek Orthodox Church and its participants present a unique opportunity to understand this exception to theories that predicted the end of ethnic practice outside of the home. Participants in the Greek Orthodox Church share an ethnic and religious connection that has continued despite increased intermarriage and generational distance from original Greek heritage. In contrast to the ethnoreligious connection and active participation often discussed in reference to Judaism in which the Hebrew language is used in services but not in daily life outside of Israel, the Greek Orthodox culture practices a vernacular in the church and in the secular, ethnic aspects of group life as well as in participants' homes. This language connects all facets of the culture and creates one “way of life,” as one of my study participants described it. While Judaism as a religion sounds a lot like an ethnic way of life in that it can be described as more an observance of law than theology and converting involves a change in behavior more than belief (Davidman 1991), the seamless connection between all aspects of practicing the culture is not evident in Judaism in the way that it is for the Greek Orthodox community. I use this case of the survival of ethnic institutions to explore the experiences of participants and the feasibility of such participation continuing in the future.

## **G. Research Questions**

For most white Americans, some version of ethnicity is maintained at the individual level of identification. And certainly ethnicity is maintained at the organizational level for a number of ethnic or ethnoreligious groups in the U.S. besides Greek-Orthodox/-Americans. Although this is a study of ethnic practice in two Greek Orthodox churches in the Pittsburgh area, the results may apply to other Greek Orthodox communities and perhaps other ethnic communities who also share one dominant religious background and organization. But the findings of this research may also inform a larger knowledge base about ethnicity in general and where, how, and in what form it can thrive as well as what kinds of meanings are attributed to it.

This study will focus on the following questions:

1. What are the preferences of unmarried Greek Orthodox Church participants regarding the ethnic/religious identity and background of a lifelong partner?
2. How do individuals of varying generational statuses experience the Greek Orthodox Church?

## **H. Conclusion**

In this study I observe the intricacies of institutional participation in two Greek Orthodox churches. I examine participant attitudes concerning spousal choice/intermarriage and participants' generational status and their interactions with gender and age. This research will expand current knowledge by illuminating how institutional participation, one of the strongest and most unique expressions of ethnic identity in the U.S. today, can continue to thrive in contemporary U.S. and even suburban society.



## **II. METHODS**

### **A. Introduction to the Chapter**

This study is the result of twelve months of field research, from January through December of 2001, in two Greek Orthodox churches outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the Greek Orthodox Church, ethnicity and ethnic practice are integral to the daily activities offered to participants. Although ethnic activity in the church may be confounded with religious and even social activity, the Greek Orthodox Church provides a confined institutional setting within which to study ethnic attitudes and behavior. This setting allowed me to explore my questions concerning the vitality of the GOC despite increased intermarriage and generational distance from original ethnic ancestry.

This chapter outlines the methods used to collect and analyze data for this study and the reasons for using such methods. The following is a discussion of ethnographic methods including my justification for selecting such methods and my orientation toward the study population. I include a discussion of my selection of churches and my methods of sampling and recruitment of research participants. I also discuss in detail my experiences as a participant-observer, the interview process, my method of data analysis, and my insider perspective as it relates to ethical issues in the research.

## **B. Why I Used Ethnographic Methods**

To gain a better understanding of how ethnicity is preserved in an organized form and how participant activity varies, I selected the Church, the core ethnoreligious institution for GOAs, as a central site. I chose to study Church participants with an ethnographic method so that I could understand the individual participants in their respective social context/s, not just as atomized units (Van Maanen 1988). Through participant-observation of church services, organization meetings, and activities as well as interviews with church participants, I examined the ethnic, religious, and social activities of participants in the two Greek Orthodox churches studied here.

In a qualitative study, data collection and analysis begin and are carried out simultaneously throughout the duration of the study (Fetterman 1998). As a result, each method I discuss below was evaluated and re-evaluated and reconstituted throughout the entire data collection and analysis process. Virtually none of the specific methodological and substantive topics outlined below were established at the onset of this study and unchanged by the end of it. The following discussion represents my final methodological and analytical decisions.

## **C. My Orientation Toward The Study Population**

A Pittsburgh-born second-generation GOA woman, I had already participated in some capacity in both churches studied here. However, as I entered my field of observation I emphasized my new role as researcher and investigator. I had to take advantage of my status as participant and yet attempt to re-immense myself into these two cultures distinctly as a researcher or observer over the course of twelve months of data collection. I needed to acknowledge what Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater and Bonnie Stone Sustain (1997) call subjective positioning and its possible effects on my study. Subjective positioning refers to my experiences as, in this case, a past and

present Greek Orthodox Church participant of these two communities. More specifically, my lifelong personal subjective experiences with Greek Orthodoxy and Greek-American customs both at home and at these two churches placed me in a unique position with a preconceived vision of the churches I was now trying to study as a researcher. I could not be an objective observer (not that I was trying to be) with so many past subjective experiences informing my perspective.

Chiseri-Strater and Sustain (1997) distinguish how fixed positioning, or the combination of the researcher's age, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion, affects research, findings, and interpretations. My orientation as a young, middle-class, GOA woman has guided my life experiences and perspective as well as my research experiences and perspective. In fact, my fixed positioning greatly influenced my choice of research questions and my specific interest in Greek-/Orthodox-based institutional participation. Further, the church communities I studied already knew me as a young, female, middle-class, GOA participant, not as a young, female, middle-class, GOA researcher. While most researchers' fixed positioning is presented to study participants at the time of first contact, most of my study participants had years to develop an impression of me and to foster a certain rapport with me. Accordingly, my study participants may have reacted differently to me or in front of me based on this previous personal relationship with me.

In this particular study, my subjective positioning affected my research more than my fixed positioning simply because my past experiences were directly involved with the church communities I was now studying. It was my experiences and participation in the churches that prompted my research questions more than simply my ethnicity, religion, and other static components of my fixed positioning.

In ethnographic research it is not only the researcher's positioning but also the relation between researcher and researched that is important. Michael Burawoy et al. (1991) elaborate on the issue of mutuality or dialogue between the researcher and her study participants in how subjects are represented in scholarly writing. That is, the way that a researcher perceives herself in relation to her study participants is reflected in the way she writes about them. Burawoy et al. suggest that an "I-You" relation between the observers and participants is optimal. An "I-You" relation implies that the researcher refers to herself as an independent "I" and to her study participants as an independent "You."

Burawoy et al. (1991) state that an "I-You" relation is superior to a "We" relation between the investigator and her study participants which is based on false consensus. When the researcher is too immersed in the culture being studied she may present the culture studied as his/her own as if that representation were agreed upon by all participants in the culture. The "I-You" relation is also superior to an "I-They" relation between researcher and researched that is too distanced. Attempting to remain objective and distanced from the researched and describe the group as if from outside is antithetical to the purpose of a qualitative ethnographic study.

The separate but intimate relation of "I-You" between me and my study participants proved to be optimal for this research because I was able to acknowledge honestly my position and sentiments as an inside researcher rather than as an inside participant or outside researcher. And I was able to understand my study participants as separate but empowered individuals who could express themselves by using their own voice. I considered each participant and his/her attitudes and actions individually as part of the group but not as representing the group on the whole. For this reason I include much of my study participants' voices in the following chapters

to represent the diversity of church participants and avoid imposed or forced generalizations about them as much as possible.

#### **D. Selection of Churches**

GOA institutional participants commonly identify their communities by the town in which the church is located. Initially I had planned to compare participants from two distinct boroughs/municipalities that contained two different church communities. But fluid GOA community boundaries made this method too cumbersome. Some residents within the same residential community participated in different Greek Orthodox churches. Conversely, not all participants in a Greek Orthodox Church lived in the same municipal community. Further, some GOAs in a given municipality did not participate in any institutions and others who were not GOA did participate.

Since the church communities were readily identifiable, observable, and accessible, I chose to research the communities associated with two Greek Orthodox Churches in greater Pittsburgh. Since I had grown up and lived in the Pittsburgh area for most of my life (including the duration of the study period) and had been involved in local GOC activities, I knew that studying two local churches would not only be logistically reasonable but also significant in terms of understanding the social underpinnings of my own heritage, upbringing and community. My perspective, positioning (subjective and fixed), and relationships with study participants allowed me to become better acquainted with my own group activities. Such an activity was personally significant to me and helped me answer my own questions about why I participated in the capacity that I did, how and why that changed through the years, and how I would like my participation to be in my future and in the lives of my children. I wanted to know more about my

community and appreciate its character rather than just continue to participate out of habit. This was also the perfect time for me to inquire about these churches because, as the literature predicts, I had become distanced from them since high school.

The two churches I chose (All Saints Greek Orthodox Church in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania) were interesting due to the geographic proximity to each other and their apparent socioeconomic differences (see Chapter III). Because All Saints' church participants included suburban dwellers and many of Holy Cross' primarily suburban participants or their parents grew up in urban surroundings, the attitudes of the two churches' participants were similar. While I did not initially expect to study two similar churches, this outcome was advantageous because it allowed me to examine my research questions in two distinct sites. This selection of churches in two separate yet proximate communities, in combination with my unique insider perspective on both churches, contributes to knowledge of ethnoreligious practice and its potential vitality today, contrary to much contemporary theory on the subject.

As I alluded to above and briefly discuss in the next chapter, the regions surrounding each church, though different, were insignificant in terms of providing a particular context to the GOC or its practices. In both churches, members were strikingly similar since the churches drew participants from all over the Pittsburgh region. Members did not exclusively reside in Canonsburg or Mt. Lebanon. All Saints/Canonsburg participants often resided in neighboring McMurray or North Strabane Township and Holy Cross/Mt. Lebanon participants sometimes lived in Bethel Park or Upper St. Clair. Further, All Saints participants sometimes resided in Mt. Lebanon and Holy Cross participants in Canonsburg.

Although geographic boundaries between church community members were fluid, the churches and their institutional boundaries themselves were very well-established. Each participant demonstrated unquestionable allegiance for a specific Greek Orthodox Church. These church participants were either born and raised in a particular church and established friendship networks, or chose a church based on other distinguishing qualities that were important to them. One study participant traveled 45 minutes from her home to attend Holy Cross activities instead of participating in the GOC only about 10 minutes from her home. She grew up in Mt. Lebanon and attended Holy Cross activities her whole life, but her move to the other side of town did not cut connections to friends that she had become accustomed to seeing and even calling family. Another couple lived in Canonsburg and were members at All Saints for their whole lives until their 30s when they began commuting to Holy Cross, because the priests delivered Sunday church services and sermons mostly in English instead of Greek, as in All Saints. Each participant had their reasons for choosing the church they attended, but I found no significant patterns on this dimension.

### **E. Sampling and Recruitment**

In ethnographic studies, sampling is an ongoing, unpredictable process (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). When I initially began this research, I anticipated sampling Greek-Americans in institutions to better understand the institutions themselves. However, once I became immersed in these two cultures as a researcher, I discovered a big portion of the institutional life that I had not noticed in years prior when I was solely a participant: that non-Greek-American participants were integral to the activity and survival of the modern-day GOC. This group of participants was important to sample because they had unique experiences and had presumably made great

sacrifices to be an active part of the GOC. When I stumbled across this crucial oversight I knew that focusing on recruiting non-Greek participants at each community would bring new perspective to my research. My unit of analysis, the GOC institution, offered me the opportunity to observe all participants, both Greek-American participants and non-Greek-American participants. Some non-Greek-American participants, usually spouses of Greek-Americans, were converts to Greek Orthodoxy but some participated without converting. Thus, my sample varied in both ethnic background and religion.

Studying institutions by sampling their participants was complex. Each participant, though in frequent contact with one another, had different ideas about what the institution meant in his/her life, and each led me to find out something new about the institutions in which he/she participated. So although observation of any social phenomenon is laden with conflicting interpretations, the multiple perspectives surveyed here further compounded, but at the same time enhanced, my task of trying to characterize one institution (at a time) based on the testimonies of its participants.

To begin the study, I went to the two churches and asked for their monthly newsletters that included a calendar of events offered to their respective community members. These newsletters also included a list of all organizations affiliated with the church, the names of their leaders, and their contact information. Having the list of organization leaders was also very useful so that I knew who to contact to get general information about the organization's meeting times/places and request permission to attend (when applicable). Having access before the events and having the leader introduce me was vital to my entry into the field. But the leaders' preface to me before attending a function surely influenced my (new) first impression of the event and the organization. For example, after having attended one of All Saints' Philoptochos



meetings, I called the president of Holy Cross' Philoptochos to introduce myself and ask permission to attend their next meeting, a board meeting. I was at first disappointed that just the board would be attending, expecting only 5-7 members present. But the president quickly informed me that about 25 board members were expected to attend. This number was about twice as many as those who attended All Saints' all-member Philoptochos meeting. By this point I had already assumed that Holy Cross' Philoptochos would be much more actively involved in the church than the All Saints group. But luckily I had the benefit of time to reorient my thoughts before attending. Otherwise, if my initial reaction were actually at the meeting itself, such astonishment at the board's size may have biased my perception of the meeting and its contents. Having the clarity to interpret the content of the meetings, I found that All Saints' Philoptochos discussed similar activities, only on a smaller scale.

I interviewed the parish priests and the organization leaders to get a longitudinal overview of each church's history, its community, and the status of its institutions as compared to the other church community and its institutions. The only priest in Canonsburg was 39 years old and had been serving there for 12 years, the senior priest in Mt. Lebanon was 60 years old and had been there for most of his priesthood, and the junior priest (young in age and seniority) in Mt. Lebanon was of Russian (Orthodox) descent and had only been serving there for a few years. Each priest had a different perspective - and these also differed from those of lay members and participants in the churches. For example, the priests emphasized their role in spiritually guiding their parish rather than promoting ethnic allegiance. This perspective shaped how the priests, especially the Russian Orthodox priest, saw their church's more ethnic-focused activities and participants.

During my interviews with the parish priests (and other church organization leaders) I asked them to refer me to participants within the institutions who might have some useful insights. They referred me to people who were particularly active and very often who were not Greek but would have a lot to say about their own participation and observations. I then located others who were not as active. Establishing many different networks was useful in tapping multiple perspectives and orientations to the GOC. I kept track of the network, referral, or event that brought me to each participant in this study. Identifying who and what brought me to which respondent, who was in frequent communication with whom and where, and what they had in common with each other, helped me to better understand the social environment that influenced each participant's interview responses and social interaction. I assessed whose responses were similar and whether interviewees had similar responses to those they referred to me or those in the same organizations. I assessed what kinds of bonds held them together -- ethnic, religious, generational, gendered, age or family/marital status, or some other.

From a list of church leaders elected to office by their fellow participants, I selected additional participants to interview. These leaders frequently attended conventions and other pan-Orthodox activities and tended to have a more global perspective about their organizations. I used judgmental sampling (Fetterman 1998), purposefully interviewing select individuals after having received knowledge about the institutions and their leaders. It was convenient that I had the leaders' names and phone numbers, but, again, I knew that these leaders, though knowledgeable about the institution(s) they led, each had their own agenda within their organization. Although they were able to comment generally on the changes they had witnessed over the years, they were particularly knowledgeable about the years they held office in the church.

These leaders led me to various snowball, or accumulated, referrals of other participants. Using this pool of prospective participants, I chose the additional participants in a purposeful way based on their affiliations and level of activity in the GOC. I also chose participants based on qualities that previous literature had found important to ethnic identity and affiliation. Factored into my sampling, I selected participants based on observed dating or marital choice, generations from Greek ancestry (non-Greeks being grouped as the furthest number of generations regardless of their own ethnic ancestry), gender, and age and family/marital status. I also tried to select people by matching their qualities to someone in the other church. That is, when I selected someone in one church who was of a particular marital status, generation, gender, age, etc., I tried to select someone with similar traits from the other church so that I could compare their background with their responses and activity. This comparison allowed me to assess how their perspectives varied by church context.

I made a spreadsheet of the variety of participant qualities I was looking for and, through observation and participant/informant referrals, made a preliminary list of potential participants. I decided that 15 participants from each church would provide enough diversity based specifically on attitudes/behaviors concerning spousal choice/intermarriage, generation (first-, second-, third-generation Greek-American or non-Greek-American born), gender, and age/family status. Since qualitative research requires open-ended inquiry, this number was an estimate. At approximately the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> interview in each church, I noticed that the interviews were getting shorter in length as the dialogue between myself and study participants flowed more easily and I could better anticipate the direction in which our conversation might go. Eventually, I found that I was not getting any new information as a result of my conversations with study participants (what qualitative researchers term “saturation”), but by this time I had already

scheduled appointments with the final interviewees and wanted to fulfill my initial expectation of the minimum number of interviews. Thus, the pre-determined estimate was adequate.

The potential participants on this list changed throughout the study, based on the terms of theoretical sampling. That is, in accordance with the procedures of purposive sampling in qualitative research, I non-randomly selected participants sequentially on the basis of earlier observations and findings. I modified the list of potential study participants as participants referred me to people who would be more appropriate in terms of having a unique trait, background, experience, or ethnic/religious practice within the institution/s. Also, as I was contacting people for interviews, I intermittently attended the functions/meetings/services in each community and in doing so met more potential study participants. Again, events such as these made me alter my initial grid of potential participants.

Shifting the course of research in this way turned out to be a great advantage of conducting a qualitative study. Through continuous reflection as a participant-observer and interviewer, I was able to alter the direction of the study as the participants demonstrated trends that were not anticipated. For example, long discussions about the continuing significance of spousal preference among single participants brought the issue of spousal choice to the fore. Too, the ancestry of the participants was a central factor that I initially had overlooked. Additionally, the strength of the women's philanthropic organizations made gender a more interesting factor. And when I discovered the salience of ethnic ancestry and identity issues, I made an effort to select participants who represented a variety of GOA identities and affinities, including some who characterized themselves as "very Greek," some who were "anti-Greek," some who only identified with being Greek-American and felt little connection to Greece itself, some who were brought into Greek-American culture through Greek Orthodoxy, and some who

only felt an obligation to participate in the religious-based institutions. Once I selected a study participant, I called and explained who I was (usually they knew me or the person who referred them to me or saw me observing a function they attended) and the purpose of my study, and told them that their responses to my interview would be greatly appreciated. I told them what kinds of questions I would ask and that we could meet at their convenience in terms of date, time and place. No one declined to meet with me.

I gathered data by participating in and observing select institutions and by interviewing 15 of each church's participants. "Participant" was defined as someone who attended GOA functions in and through the church and/or was a member of at least one formal institution affiliated with being GOA in at least one of the churches studied here. Since I sampled only 15 participants/leaders in each community my results are not necessarily generalizable to other ethnic/religious groups and perhaps not even to other Greek Orthodox Churches. Because I investigated ethnoreligious institution participants, my findings represent the most active type of white ethnic participant rather than the typical. So generalizing the results of this study to other ethnic groups is limited. However, the results of this research add to literature concerning ethnicity as it exists today in different types of communities with different histories, demographics, and social contexts. A study of ethnoreligious institutions, beyond just issues of ethnic or religious identity, adds fresh knowledge about the structural, social and geographic landscape of ethnicity and its possibilities today, especially in religious settings.

### ***1. Description and Sampling of the Churches' Organizations***

In selecting core church organizations to observe, I referred to my newsletter list. Canonsburg's All Saints parish listed its most active<sup>4</sup> institutions affiliated with the church in the monthly

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<sup>4</sup> "Active" was defined as having a presence on the parish's monthly calendar and thus meeting at least once a month.

newsletter. They were the choir, which met weekly; the Philoptochos, the women's philanthropic organization which met monthly; Sunday (Orthodox/religious) School, which met weekly; GOYA, the youth organization which met bi-weekly or weekly if they were practicing for sports; Parish Youth Greek Dance, which met weekly; Greek Language School, which met weekly; and AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope, the men's and women's fraternal organizations which met monthly. For reasons addressed below, I focused only on the church itself and the Philoptochos or women's philanthropic organization. The parish itself was guided by 12 Parish Council members, 7 men and 5 women, plus 5 officers, 3 men and 2 women. I interviewed 3 of these members.

Mt. Lebanon's Holy Cross parish also listed its active institutions on the social calendar. The choir met weekly, the Philoptochos monthly, Sunday School weekly, Junior and Senior Greek Dance weekly, Greek Language School weekly, GOYA, and the South Hills'<sup>5</sup> YAL (Young Adult League) which was most often stationed at Holy Cross and met monthly. Holy Cross also had weekly Bible Study, something All Saints in Canonsburg did not have at the time of this inquiry. This parish was guided by 10 Parish Council members, all men, plus five officers, 2 men and 3 women. I only interviewed the president of the Parish Council at Holy Cross. As in All Saints Church, I only analyzed the church itself and the Philoptochos or women's philanthropic organization at Holy Cross Church in this inquiry.

In selecting the relevant institutions to observe I relied on past literature, reviewed in Chapter I. Since the Greek Orthodox Church is the main organizational body for Greeks in the United States, attending church services and other functions and interviewing church service- and function- participants was clearly essential to this investigation. And in selecting other

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<sup>5</sup> South Hills is a common local term referring to the communities south of Pittsburgh, including both Canonsburg and Mt. Lebanon.

organizations affiliated with but subordinate to the church I selected aspects of the church that were most important to this study based on observable characteristics that were known to impact ethnic identification in general.

First, the importance of gender to ethnic identity and practice prompted me to explore the core men's and women's institutions affiliated with the Church. How did each gender's organization compare to the other's and to the other church's? The Philoptochos was the strongest (in membership and activity) women's organization in both communities, in comparison to the other, the Daughters of Penelope. Holy Cross's AHEPA, the men's fraternal organization, and the Daughters of Penelope, its sister organization, were not listed in their monthly newsletter because they were viewed as not directly affiliated with the Church. The AHEPA, the dominant men's organization (also in membership and activity), did not permit non-members to attend meetings so I was not able to include the AHEPA as a participation-observation site. I did, nonetheless, interview AHEPA members and ask a few questions about the organization.

A second common, discernable indicator of ethnic identity is age, so I became interested in observing differences in age groups. The elementary through high school-age Sunday School group, the middle through high school-age youth group, also known as the Greek Orthodox Youth Association (GOYA), and the Greek Dance groups were all focused on individuals under the age of 18. I excluded youth-based groups, even though these are particularly formative years, from this inquiry because their participants were not adults yet and were presumably still under parental guidance, influence, and ultimately control. The Young Adult League (YAL), composed of 18-35 year-olds, was one group that met in the Mt. Lebanon area and was directed by a Holy Cross parish priest but was open to the entire South Hills area, including All Saints

participants. I did attend YAL meetings as a participant-observer and interviewed some of its other participants. It was not the observations, but the interviews that were important here because it was this group that was most interested in discussing the issue of spousal preference and intended choice.

And, finally, since ethnic identity for white Americans today is viewed as a source of differentiation or “spice” when compared to other Americans, I decided to observe displays of ethnicity to the outside community/ies. The most popular of such displays include summer and off-season mini Greek food fairs. This turned out to be less important in the end, but as will be discussed further below, my insider status may have been to blame.

The selection criteria I used left out institutions that may have shed light on several important issues. In retrospect a comparison of “Greek”- versus “Orthodox”-centered organizations, activities and their participants may have shed light on variations in participation based on attitudes and behaviors related to intermarriage, generational status, gender and age. Specifically, comparing the Philoptochos, the women’s philanthropic organization directly affiliated with the church, to the Daughters of Penelope, the women’s fraternal organization not directly affiliated with the church, would have revealed ethnic versus religious differences in composition, mission, and participant attitudes/behaviors within the organizations.

## ***2. Description of the Sample Population***

As established in the first chapter, I was interested in exploring attitudes of unmarried participants of varying backgrounds concerning spousal choice, or more specifically intermarriage, and in analyzing attitude differences by generational status of the participants, along with gender and age.



In order to examine intermarriage,<sup>6</sup> I chose participants in a variety of family situations, such as those who were children of ethnic intermarriage or who had long-term relationships with non-GOAs. I also asked the already-married (both intra- and inter-married) participants about their marital decisions. In All Saints/Canonsburg, ten participants were married at the time of inquiry and five were not married (see Table 1 below). Five (half) of the ten married participants married outside of their ethnoreligious group. Of the five who were not married, three were children of intermarriage, between a parent of Greek descent and one of non-Greek descent. I chose these participants to see how they defined “intermarriage” and how the ethnic/religious background of a potential mate impacted their own dating or marriage decisions as compared to GOA-only participants. The fourth unmarried participant was a child of two Greek and Orthodox parents and has since married another GOA. The fifth unmarried participant is still not married. Herein lies another advantage of insider status (to me, not necessarily to my study participants however). Because I was a regular attendee, I continued to attend church functions and assessed study participants after the conclusion of my formal data collection.

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<sup>6</sup> While I was open to interpreting the concept of marriage/partnership as being heterosexual as well as homosexual, both the literature and my trail of study participants guided me toward focusing exclusively on heterosexual relationships. It was not within the scope of this study for me to pursue why I did not encounter discussions about homosexual relationships but reasons may include that perhaps the GOC was not welcoming of homosexual couples or that my sampling method or my bias as a heterosexual prevented me from seeking them out.

**Table 1. Participants by Church Affiliation and Marital Status**

<b>Church</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Total</b>
All Saints	Married-Inter	5
	Married-Intra	5
	Unmarried	5
Holy Cross	Married-Inter	5
	Married-Intra	7
	Unmarried	3
Grand Total		30

In Holy Cross/Mt. Lebanon I surveyed twelve married participants, seven of whom married inside of their ethnoreligious group and five who married outside the group. Of the remaining three who were not married as of the time of investigation, two were not, to my knowledge, in significant relationships as of yet, and the third was also of 100% Greek/Orthodox heritage and has since married a fellow GOA.

With regard to generation, in All Saints/Canonsburg I interviewed ten participants who were either first or second generation GOA, three who were third generation, and two who were non-Greek-American born (see Table 2 below). In Holy Cross/Mt. Lebanon I interviewed eight first or second generation Greek-Americans/-Orthodox, four third generation, and three non-Greek-American born.

**Table 2. Participants by Church Affiliation and Generational Status**

<b>Church</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>Total</b>
All Saints	First	1
	Second	9
	Third	3
	Non-GOA-born	2
Holy Cross	First	0
	Second	8
	Third	4
	Non-GOA-born	3
Grand Total		30

To examine gender difference in All Saints/Canonsburg I interviewed eight women and seven men, and eight women and seven men in Holy Cross/Mt. Lebanon (see Table 3 below).

**Table 3. Participants by Church Affiliation and Gender**

<b>Church</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>
All Saints	Female	8
	Male	7
Holy Cross	Female	8
	Male	7
Grand Total		30

Age of participants was also central to the selection of a variety of participants. In All Saints/Canonsburg I interviewed five individuals who were under the age of 30, one between 30 and 49, six between 50 and 59, and three who were 60 years or older (see Table 4 below). The mean age for All Saints participants was 46 years old. In Holy Cross/Mt. Lebanon I interviewed five individuals who were under the age of 30, four between 30 and 49, two between 50 and 59, and four who were 60 years or older. The mean age for Holy Cross participants was also 46 years old. I grouped individual participant ages into the specified ranges in an effort to as evenly as possible distribute the participants. I also aimed to capture the age groups that were

associated with certain family/life-cycle statuses, i.e. under 30 participants were most likely to be unmarried, 30-49 year-olds were most likely to have young children and decide in what capacity they wanted their children to be involved in the Church, 50-59 year-olds were in a transitory stage, and over 60 year-olds were either preparing for retirement or already retired.

**Table 4. Participants by Church Affiliation and Age**

<b>Church</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Total</b>
All Saints	Under 30 years	5
	30-49 years	1
	50-59 years	6
	60 years and over	3
Holy Cross	Under 30 years	5
	30-49 years	4
	50-59 years	2
	60 years and over	4
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>30</b>

### **F. Participant-Observation**

Michael Burawoy et al. (1991) state that the value of participant-observation is that it allows the researcher to compare what people say they do with what they actually do. This statement applies no matter how close the participant-observer is to the group being studied. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) add that even when the researcher is studying a familiar group or setting, the participant-observer is obliged to treat the group as “anthropologically strange” in order to relearn the taken-for-granted of the group or culture. Having been a participant in both churches throughout most of my life, I had to learn to observe in a new, more scientific light. I had to compare what people said they did with what I observed them do during my participant-observation time, not what I knew about them before this study began.

Although I had been a participant in each of the two churches surveyed here and used my connection to the communities to gain access, it was important for me to present myself as a participant-observer when I was in the field. Keeping a notebook at hand while talking to people was essential for distinguishing myself as a researcher and for learning about the community's institutions and their participants as if they were unfamiliar to me, especially in the beginning stages of the research. Later, when I wanted to become more involved, I sometimes participated without making my observation obvious and then took notes afterwards so as not to accentuate my observer status. I found that when I looked more like a participant (without a notebook and with a friend to socialize with) than an observer (with a notebook and without a socializing partner), other participants were less curious about my intentions.

To gain access to participant-observation sites, I called the president of each organization and asked he/she if I could attend a meeting or get-together for my research on Greek Orthodox churches, their institutions, and their participants. All but one granted my request. The AHEPA meetings were closed to non-members and women, so I was not able to access information about the inner-workings of that institution or its membership. I was able to participate in and observe two Sunday church services, two Philoptochos (women's philanthropic organization) meetings, one summer food fair, one fall mini-food fair at each church, and two YAL meetings with outside establishment socializing afterward.

During participant-observation I was interested in the types of participants involved in each institution, their reasons for participating, their individual interaction with one another, the goals and outcomes of each institution, and the role of the institutions in the church community as a whole. I recorded the approximate or exact number of participants (depending on the size of the event), the ethnic background and generational status, marital situation, gender, and

approximate age of participants and leaders. If I was not familiar with some attendees' background information I asked informants who I knew had been involved in the institutions. If I was unfamiliar with a particular topic discussed or method of protocol during an actual meeting or other formal event I quietly questioned participants sitting near me or asked them or the organization leaders after the meeting. And when at a food fair or something more public and social in nature I asked a participant or leader my questions in context of casual conversation. Because I always had either an insider status within the institution or an inside connection through another member I felt very comfortable asking my questions and, on the surface, the institution's other participants seemed comfortable sharing their familiarity with the community and institutions with me.

### **G. The Interviews**

Following the instruction of Holstein and Gubrium (1995), I conducted active interviews with my study participants. Holstein and Gubrium present interviewing as a collaborative process between interviewer and interviewee. In this context interviewing is not an extraction of knowledge from an individual. Rather it is viewed as mutual conversation in which topics emerge through the dialogue between the interviewer and study participant, not through the elicitation of answers from the study participant by the interviewer. In this way the participant actively composes his/her interpretation of an experience with the interviewer instead of passively reporting an experience on his/her own. Active interviewing relies on subjectivity, mutuality, and, thus, a comfortable environment.

Most participants that I interviewed chose to invite me to their home, a few met me at their church or came to my apartment, two met me out for a meal at an establishment, one invited

me to his place of work, and one met me for a lunch break at a local library close to her work. Interviewing at the participants' homes was most beneficial so that I could see their actual everyday lifestyle in their natural settings. If the interview was conducted at the participant's home, I noted observable indications of Greek culture such as cultural artifact displays, speaking Greek, keeping Greek foods in the house, etc. For some participants, Orthodox artifacts such as religious icons, crosses, or even venerated souvenirs from a miracle that they had witnessed, were more prominent.

I also followed the direction of Chiseri-Strater and Sustain (1997) and noted subjective details of the interview relationship between me and the study participant, the disposition of the participant, my own feelings or reflections about the interview and the participant, and the things that I found interesting, surprising, or perplexing in an interview. Each of these recordings was cumulative; that is, they built on the ones before them. So if I noted something in one interview, I commented on the same issue as it became even more pertinent in the next interview.

Many of the study participants/interviewees were strangers to me but either my very loose connection to someone they knew or my mere status as a fellow GOA was enough for them to treat me like family. One participant who was previously a stranger to me said this about her GOA identity: "I mean it's a very important part of my life, and I feel a connection with you...BECAUSE of that." Because all of my participants knew me or trusted someone else in their community that knew me or just trusted our shared heritage, all interviews and experiences at all venues were comfortable. I became more a part of the two communities as I got to know their members more intimately.

All interviews were tape-recorded, and after the first few minutes, the recorder became inconspicuous both to me and to them. Study participants did not even look at the recorder or

alter their tone to speak louder or softer unless a personally-sensitive topic was discussed. My familiarity with the institutions and participants they were referring to in the interviews did, however, inhibit their responses in at least one case. One woman in particular covered the microphone when she told me about a personal/family issue concerning some friction between her family and her ex-in-laws, also members of the same community. Nonetheless, I truly was in awe at the information that people trusted me with. In such close-knit communities that are suspected of being very gossipy, each of my participants trusted me with either a personal sentiment, a family conflict, or a struggled life-decision they experienced due to their conflicted identity associated with their past, present or potential future participation in the ethnoreligious institutions studied here.

The interviews were open-ended and flexible so as to capture the thoughts of the participant, not only the thoughts of the researcher. Many topics emerged throughout the duration of an interview. As a result, the direction of my questions/probes varied in almost every interview until the last two or three interview sessions at each church. By this time I had become very familiar with what would be the dead topics, so to speak, and what would not. Some participants responded to questions matter-of-factly but most offered introspective thoughts and feelings. I also responded to participants if I too experienced a feeling, thought or moment like one that they had shared with me. I most often responded this way in reference to discussions about spousal preference with fellow young adults I was interviewing. For instance, when my study participants were analyzing aloud their preferences and hopes for their choice of partner or spouse I followed along in thought, for I was also, at the time, in the position of making such predictions and decisions about my own future. I honestly and actively responded to them and incited deeper conversations precisely because I was part of the group and these discussions were



part of my own decision process as well. This active interviewing, though extremely powerful may have been slightly too active. As I will discuss below, sometimes this sharing led to feelings of guilt on my part.

I first asked each participant closed-ended questions about how many hours per week or per month they spent participating in some ethnoreligious institution in their respective church (see Appendix A for Interview Schedule). I also asked which institutions they were involved in, which took the most time, which were most satisfying, which if any were family-oriented for them, and I noted the different kinds of institutions each participant participated in, religious, social, Greek-regional, etc. I then logged the number of hours, the number of institutions, institution types, and the number of past and present leadership positions each participant reported as his/her participation within the institutions.

In trying to define “active,” I established a range of participation. I grouped participants into three categories. The first group I call “passives.” These individuals reported participating in church activities and groups one to two hours per week or less during the time of inquiry. In All Saints/Canonsburg there were two women in this group, one was second generation and the other was non-Greek-American-born, and two young second and third generation men. The non-Greek-American woman was the only person in this group whose “passive” activity during this time was uncharacteristically less than her usual activity. In Holy Cross/Mt. Lebanon there were two young first /second generation women in this group. The second group I call “actives.” These individuals participated three to five hours per week. In All Saints/Canonsburg there were five in this group. These individuals were of all age groups, generations, genders and spousal choices. In Holy Cross/Mt. Lebanon there were seven in this “active” group, again exhibiting the same level of diversity. And the third group I called the “leaders.” These participants were

involved with church activities for six or more hours per week and were most often on a directory board or executive committee for an organization within the Church. In All Saints/Canonsburg the “leaders” included four middle- to retired-age second generation men and two young- to middle-age second and third generation women, respectively. In Holy Cross/Mt. Lebanon there were also six “leaders.” Five were second through non-GOA-born men of all ages and the sixth was a retired non-GOA-born woman. Table 5 below summarizes some of the traits of each of the interviewees.

**Table 5. Study Participants and their Activity Level  
(Sorted by Activity Level)**

All Saints					Holy Cross				
<i>Name*</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Generation</i>	<i>Activity Level</i>	<i>Name*</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Generation</i>	<i>Activity Level</i>
Daniel	m	29	3	passive	Anna	f	24	2	passive
Jody	f	59	Convert	passive	Chryssoula	f	32	2	passive
Koula	f	55	2	passive	Beba	f	65	2	active
Jimmy	m	27	2	passive	Bud	m	70	Non-GOA	active
Appolonia	f	25	3	active	Helen	f	26	3	active
Aspasia	f	25	2	active	Gina	f	52	2	active
Kelly	f	52	Convert	active	Pari	f	47	3	active
Margaret	f	67	1	active	Sofia	f	68	2	active
Stefos	m	70	2	active	Tony	m	25	3	active
Vangi	f	50	3	leader	Jerry	m	59	3	leader
John	m	39	2	leader	Matthew	m	35	Convert	leader
Dimitris	m	52	2	leader	Steve	m	29	2	leader
Perry	m	68	2	leader	Stelios	m	49	2	leader
Mary	f	27	2	leader	Terry	m	26	2	leader
Lakis	m	51	2	leader	Vanna	f	79	Convert	leader

\* Names have been changed to protect participants' anonymity.

Although the number of participants interviewed is small, some demographic trends are noteworthy. Overall, this study represents a greater number of active and leader participants, as the passive participants were more difficult to identify within the church (see Table 6 below). For those 40 years old and over at All Saints, the women’s activity was weighted toward the passives, while the men’s was weighted toward the leaders, and the opposite was true for the same groups in the under 40 category. At Holy Cross a greater proportion of men in both age categories were leaders than the women. While this sample does not claim to be statistically representative of the parish populations studied here, participant demographics influence the findings derived from this research and should be put into perspective.

**Table 6. Participant demographic summary: Church Affiliation, Age, Gender, and Activity Level**

Church	Age group	Gender	Activity Level			Grand Total
			a. passive	b. active	c. leader	
All Saints	40 and over	F	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	5 (17%)
		M	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	4 (13%)
	Under 40	F	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)
		M	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)
Holy Cross	40 and over	F	0 (0%)	4 (13%)	1 (3%)	5 (17%)
		M	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	3 (10%)
	Under 40	F	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	3 (10%)
		M	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	4 (13%)
Grand Total			6 (20%)	12 (40%)	12 (40%)	30 (100%)

In my interviews I asked open-ended questions about participation in institutions. When did their participation peak or when do they anticipate that it will and why? At lowest and highest points of participation what were the influencing factors? How did they view intermarriage, between people of different races, ethnicities, religions, etc.? What was/will be their decisions concerning marriage or choice of other long-term partner? And finally, at the end of the interview, I asked the participants to comment on anything that was either not covered or not covered enough during the interview. At this time I also asked if they could recommend others who might have something to say that would help me understand the institutions better.

The interviews lasted approximately one hour, but conversation and small-talk usually ensued for at least another half hour. I very often learned more in the after-interview conversation while my pencil was down and the tape recorder was off than in the actual interview itself. Many of the participants' actions were so standard to them that they forgot until it came up in casual conversation over coffee.

Most often the participants who invited me to their homes offered me goodies such as cookies, pie, coffee, etc., all especially prepared for my arrival. I interviewed five married couples but otherwise I only interviewed one family member at a time. The only difference I noticed between the single and couple interviews was that I may have received more complete information from the couples since they were able to help each other recollect activities or incidences. After the interviews, the entire household joined in the goodie-sharing and conversation. The family dynamics that I usually observed after the interview told a lot about the family's level of Greek-, American-, or Greek-American-ness, again, in terms of language spoken conversationally, as well as knowledge and discussion about upcoming Greek-centered

events. Religion was less often a topic of conversation or observable dynamic after the interview.

At some point before the end of the visit, many participants indicated that the interview session provoked them to reflect for the first time about the issues pertinent to this study. They often communicated to me that they learned a lot from the dialogue we shared about their own intentions, goals and satisfactions that come with their participation in the church and its affiliates.

Although I emphasized active interviewing techniques, my probes and responses did not capture all issues pertinent to each study participant. For instance, the woman who exhibited some hostility toward her ex-in-laws probably had more to say about intra-ethnic marital ties and their specific effect on her family, but I did not want to press participants about their sensitive personal affairs that remotely fell under the umbrella of my research. Further, the probes and responses I did communicate steered conversations in directions that were ultimately guided by me. Therefore, the range of participant sentiments and experiences represented here is limited according to my biases and sensitivities concerning this population.

### **H. Analytical Approach – Coding and Analyzing the Data**

Ethnographers collect and analyze their data simultaneously. My data analysis consisted of daily field journal entries and analysis based on thoughts, recent interviews and observations, and continued reflection after transcribing the interviews from audio tape to written document. I used NUD\*ST (QSR N5) computer software after all interviews were completed and transcribed to formally analyze what I had already informally analyzed throughout the data collection process.

Once I completed all interviews and observations I imported all of my transcribed field notes and interview manuscripts into a NUD\*ST-compatible format. I then re-read all transcripts and assigned nodes or topic identifiers to all data relevant to the research questions I had developed throughout the data collection/analysis process. By the end of this process I had established about 50 nodes or pertinent themes. I re-read each node's report of all quotes and notes under that theme. Then I re-grouped the 50 themes into about eight to ten more broad subjects and then to two general and recurring discussions about spousal preference/choice/intermarriage issues and generation-based differences. These are the major areas that I focus on in the following substantive chapters.

### **I. Insider Perspective and Ethical Issues**

In attempting to understand continued ethnoreligious institutional participation in the church, I needed to observe the social/cultural scene as an insider (emic perspective) yet maintain some sense of cultural context as an outsider (etic perspective) (Chiseri-Strater and Sustein 1997; Fetterman 1998). The following is a discussion of the complexities involved in carrying out such a task when the researcher is part of the community before the study and when the community is part of the researcher by the end of the study.

As a lifelong institutional participant in both Greek Orthodox Churches studied here I have a unique, informed as well as biased, perspective. Although I knew this going into my study, I was not initially aware of the full meaning of participant-observer and active interviewer. Through these roles I learned that it was not as much that my perspective informed the study, but rather more that my study informed my perspective. In fact, this research has changed my life

significantly through the insight I have gained as a GOA woman and as a social scientist studying two church communities and their participants with which I could identify.

The timing of this study also added a multitude of new insider perspectives as I, myself, entered new phases of my life. In the duration of this study, my own life-cycle events became intermeshed with the experiences revealed to me in my interviews with study participants. Throughout the twelve months of data collection and analysis for this study, it became time for me to decide on my religious home or church of choice and to become a godmother through the church, to deal with the passing of my second generation Greek-American father, and what it meant to me and to the GOA community, the church and its organizations, and to enter a new life in planning to marry a fellow GOA. All of the questions I asked of my study participants became questions I was forced to ask myself. And when I heard the responses of my participants I asked myself if their responses fit with my own perceptions of myself, my affiliations and my community. The answers I report in this research, therefore, reflect those constructed by my participants and often experienced by me, the researcher, as well. I am not just offering a written representation of a culture. I am analyzing and portraying a culture that I experienced, now through the eyes and thoughts of my study participants.

Every single participant was more than happy to help me out and, for those who knew me before, was eager to better understand what I have been doing all of these years since college. All participants were honored that their experiences would be useful to me, although many of them ended the interview by saying, "I hope that I have helped," as if their responses somehow were not good enough. My own participation in their institutions may have made them feel this way, "Why are you asking me questions that you already know?" "What more could I have to add?" As I assured my participants, I learned an incredible amount from each and every one of



them. And although their responses were kept in confidence I will always respect each of them for the introspection they displayed in order to help me understand their (and my own) experiences.

I did experience many moments of discomfort in asking fellow community members for their time and “putting them under the microscope,” as they sometimes may have seen it, for my research purposes. I felt guilty showing such profound interest in a group that I had not been deeply involved with for quite a while just to achieve my own academic goals. I felt that I was exploiting what I was supposed to know was a revered group or organization with missions greater than one person’s doctoral dissertation. These sentiments are reported by many social scientists, especially those using qualitative methods, but were compounded in my situation because I knew the people and the institutions both before and after the study.

Throughout my many months as a participant-observer in these two churches, I felt that I, myself, was also under a microscope. I felt much more pressure to participate as a non-observer (or at least non-conspicuous observer) and to socialize more extensively with those who participated than I normally would. Judith Stacey (1988:23) depicts this discomfort with ethnographic process and product: “[E]thnographic method appears to (and often does) place the researcher and her informants in a collaborative, reciprocal quest for understanding, but the research product is ultimately that of the researcher, however modified or influenced by informants.” During and since the study, I helped out with each community’s food fairs, etc., as a substitution for study “compensation” or to “give back.” I also felt more of a propensity to participate out of the respect that I gained for the institutions through studying them and out of a consciousness and appreciation for my own reasons for participating that I acquired through this study. As for this project, although I have “helped out” at each community and been naturally

drawn to their activities since, I have not, as of yet, been able to reconcile this issue of inequality of return to my study participants. I may always feel indebted to them.

My insider status as a pure participant and formally as a research participant-observer may have impacted the individuals I was interviewing and the institutions I was observing. The genuine interest I acquired and displayed for participating in the church and its institutions and the freshness of having a new group member present within the smaller groups may have revived a particular organizational meeting or intensified an otherwise ordinary interview. That is, the mutual connections I established on the spot and in person may have altered the running of the particular meeting or the participant interview in ways that a closed-ended, faceless questionnaire or phone interview would not have.

This insider status and mutual connection had the power to blind me to assumptions about GOA life in the church that an outsider or more objective “I-They” proponent would have seen. I sometimes became too involved in my own interpersonal relations that I was familiar with and very likely ignored those that I was not familiar with and that may have shed light on other issues. And even in my own small-scale observations, what I did see was probably not near what an outsider would have seen and inquired about. Already understanding the culture studied led me to better understand what I found intriguing but also blinded me to things that I knew so much about that they were no longer intriguing. The food fairs, especially, were functions I had attended every year, seen all the people and food selections and dancing, etc., but was now not able to see much as a researcher. I was distracted by seeing and greeting people I had not seen in a while.

Conversely, when I attended functions out of interest in participating, I found myself continuing to think about my research questions. When I went with my own family to church or

to the food fair, for example, I did not know how to remove my research lens and enjoy the functions as I would have before this study. Even at these times, when I did not have my paper and pencil, I usually went home and recorded my thoughts and observations. I felt guilty for somehow abusing my position as participant and trusted community member to continually convert my own culture into a laboratory of sorts, but I also knew it was my responsibility as a researcher at that time. Issues such as these highlight the difficulties involved in trying to separate oneself from the field when already a part of it before and continuing to be a part of it after the completion of the research study.

Overall, at the end of each day I felt that I had gained another friend in my own community. I felt very fulfilled and much more aware of my own identity as a GOA. From the interviews, I recorded my reflections about myself and how they had changed after each interview as it corresponded with my life's activities and stages. And from the participant-observations, I tried to remain aware of the participants' perceptions of my presence, how I was relating to the group, and how I could continue to participate long after the observations and the study.

I truly had grown as a person along with each new revelation I had about the Greek Orthodox Churches I was studying. That is when I realized that my subjectivity in this research would have an impact beyond my dissertation years. It actually helped me gain a consciousness about my own life decisions and reactions that would have otherwise taken me years of reflection to understand.

## **J. Conclusion**

All of the methodological decisions I made throughout this study contributed to my understanding of how GOC participants and their activity varied from those of ethnics cited in previous studies. It was rather difficult to see some of these things since I was immersed in them historically and since qualitative method allows for such intimacy with the study population and organizational unit. But in the end it was the process itself that brought me to the product of this study – an in-depth understanding of the social dynamics contributing to the vibrancy of not only the GOC as an organization but also of my personal commitment to the GOC.

### **III. THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH AND MY OBSERVATIONS IN IT**

#### **A. Introduction to the Chapter**

This chapter includes a discussion of the history of the Greek Orthodox Church (GOC), Greek immigration to Pittsburgh and the founding of their churches, present-day Greek-Americans, the two churches studied here and their larger communities. Also, this chapter describes my observations in four of the activities offered in the two churches: Sunday church services, food/heritage festivals, the Young Adult League (YAL), and the Philoptochos (women's philanthropic organization). This participant observation was intended to expose the perceptions, experiences, and interactions among participants in the two Greek Orthodox Church communities studied here.

#### **B. History of the Greek Orthodox Church**

Although Orthodox Christians have the same basic religious beliefs as other Christians, they are different in that they follow eastern tradition (from Greece, Asia, and the Middle East) whereas Roman Catholics, for example, follow western tradition (from western Europe). During the Great Schism of the ninth through thirteenth centuries, Roman Catholics broke away from the once united church to pursue Latin, the language of the West, instead of the Greek language of the East (Dunaway 1995). The churches of the West centered around Rome, and the churches of the East centered around Constantinople. The Orthodox Church of the East maintained the same traditions as always but the churches of the West initiated changes in worship, theology, and church government that further distinguished them from their eastern counterparts. The western

church later fragmented into other denominations such as Lutheran, Presbyterian, Church of England, etc., and eventually into hundreds of different denominations. But the eastern, Orthodox Church maintained one united church with varying national jurisdictions such as Greek, Russian, etc. National distinctions do not signify differences in belief, worship or structure; they are only different cultural expressions of the same faith and doctrine.

In Greece, Eastern Orthodox Christianity is the dominant religion and receives state funding (U.S. Department of State 2007). In the U.S., although estimates vary, Americans who identify themselves as Orthodox comprise 1-2% of the approximately 159 million who identify as Christian.

### **C. The Greek Immigrants and their Church**

The peak Greek immigration to Pittsburgh and surrounding Allegheny County (1910-1912) consisted mostly of men coming in search of economic opportunity (Hartford 1944). Most planned to eventually return to Greece to either start a family or be reunited with the one they already had back home. Unmarried men who stayed in the U.S. often went back to Greece to find a bride and bring her back. They preferred to marry someone from their particular region in Greece, even if they had to wait years to return to Greece and choose a bride (Kiriazis 1989). If that was not possible, they would opt to marry an American woman who was of Greek heritage. But, at the time, Greek-American men rarely married non-Greek women (Hartford 1944). They did, however, eventually start marrying more non-Greek women by the 1920s (Kiriazis 1989).

As Greeks became permanent residents and reunited with their families they became increasingly concerned with the need for religious services, if not for general worship, for special life-cycle services such as for births, marriage, sickness, and death (Bodnar 1985; Hartford

1944). In 1904 the Holy Synod of Greece granted a request by Pittsburgh community members to send priests to accommodate the needs of this growing community of parishioners.

The attraction of the immigrant to the Greek Orthodox Church was very different from participant attraction to today's church – it was more out of necessity than choice. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century immigrants felt the need to participate in the church to create a religious/ethnic continuity between old and new worlds. Having a place where the Greek language and customs were commonplace was essential for an immigrant seeking to adapt to a strange land. The church was a source of social interaction for women and men of a common upbringing. It was a home base, somewhere they would feel welcome, comfortable, and familiar among similar immigrants with similar experiences.

Although Greek immigrants craved the continuity and connection to a past world offered via the church, they also used GOCs as resources for change and success in the new world (Bodnar 1985). John Bodnar (1985:148) depicts immigrants as drawn to churches not only for religious attendance but also for utilitarian purposes: “Immigrants participated in church communities not simply because they were drawn to particular forms of belief or ideology but because these communities continued to provide forms of mutual assistance which were an integral part of working-class life... Fellow church members could offer assistance during periods of unemployment or solace at times of death.” Such services were indispensable to immigrants who found themselves in a foreign, otherwise-hostile world. And even today, although GOC parishioners in the suburbs are connected to their communities in other ways, the

GOC continues to support fellow community members in need either informally as would family or formally via the philanthropic arms of the church.<sup>7</sup>

To summarize, during the early years of immigration, participation in the church was more for utilitarian purposes, more out of necessity. Today, participation in the GOC occurs out of a desire to be part of the GOC community for one reason or another, some of which will be explored in subsequent chapters.

#### **D. Pittsburgh-Area Greek-Americans, their Churches and Greater Communities**

Although this study is about ethnicity (and religion) within the context of the Greek Orthodox Church, it is useful to discuss the entire Greek-American population in the region. According to the 2000 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau 2000) there were 1,153,295 people in the U.S. who reported Greek ancestry, about 0.4% of the total population. In the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes both of the church locations studied here, there were 14,653 (0.6%) people who reported Greek ancestry, the vast majority of which (12,820; also 0.6% of its respective suburban populations) resided in suburban locations outside of Pittsburgh's city center. Participation in ethnoreligious activities in the Pittsburgh area remains robust despite the fact that Greek-Americans comprise a small part of the overall Pittsburgh area and are spread out throughout suburban areas.

I present the above broad geographical statistics because participants of the two churches studied here traveled from other communities within the metropolitan area. Because this research focuses on participants of the GOC specifically and not their surrounding geographic

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<sup>7</sup> Mutual socioeconomic support in today's GOC is now a byproduct of participation in the community; it is not a primary reason for participation today.



communities more broadly, it is somewhat misleading to rely on the demographic characteristics of the town in which the church resides. Nonetheless, it may be useful to note that 210 of Canonsburg's 8,607 residents (2.4%) report Greek ancestry as did 506 of Mt Lebanon's 33,017 (1.5%) (U.S. Census 2000). Although the demographics of these two communities are disparate,<sup>8</sup> their respective GOCs today are both influenced greatly by suburban, middle-class participants and culture.

### ***1. All Saints GOC in Canonsburg***

Canonsburg, a small industrial town approximately 20 miles southwest of Pittsburgh but in neighboring Washington County, was initially a destination and settlement for many immigrants seeking economic opportunities. Greeks migrated to Canonsburg around 1905 when they were informed of a new factory that needed workers (Kiriazis 1989). The tin mill in Canonsburg attracted many immigrants who were just passing through on their way to other U.S. destinations. The Greek-Americans who reside there today are for the most part descendants of these original migrants.

By July of 1918 Greek immigrants residing in Canonsburg decided they needed a steady place in which to conduct their church services (All Saints Greek Orthodox Church 1995). Having not yet brought their wives/families to the U.S., a group of 83 men convened, elected a community president and agreed to rent a hall for church services. This hall met the Greek community's needs until 1925, when their growing populace elected to purchase the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church on Blaine Avenue in Canonsburg's East End, where most Greeks in Canonsburg lived, for its own religious services. They named this community "All Saints." The

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<sup>8</sup> In Canonsburg, only 13% of the population 25 years old and over had completed a bachelor's degree, while 61% of those in Mt. Lebanon had. And median income (household/family/per capita) in Canonsburg is just over half that in Mt. Lebanon.

Greek Orthodox community made a home for itself there for 70 years and to four generations of now-Greek-Americans.

In May 1995 the parish built a new church outside of Canonsburg's compact city center and more accessible to the younger generations of parishioners (All Saints Greek Orthodox Church 1995). This new church, built on 11½ acres of land, sits on a hill adjacent to Interstate 79 on the corner of Morganza and West McMurray Roads in Canonsburg. Although the church's mailing address is Canonsburg, its actual location is in North Strabane Township, the intermediate between Canonsburg and suburban Peters Township. While the act of building a new church may suggest increased affluence of the parish, the donations of only a few parishioners or organizations may have contributed the bulk of funds necessary for such an endeavor. Regrettably, I did not pursue such questions through this research.

Along with the church's move outside of Canonsburg's city center, the parish also expanded its membership beyond the town's east-enders to include participants from more affluent communities like neighboring Peters Township. While the U.S. Census documents that the number of Washington County residents overall who identified Greek ancestry decreased from 1990 to 2000, membership in the GOC was on the rise, mostly due to an increase in younger Greek-American and non-Greek-American/convert participation. At the time of study, Canonsburg's parish served close to 730 members, over three times the U.S. Census estimate of the population reporting Greek ancestry in Canonsburg (see above). Again, due to GOC participant mobility within the metro area (living in one community and participating in the GOC of another community) and convert participation, U.S. Census population estimates are difficult to marry with GOC participant estimates.

Of the GOC participants, the church census estimated the gender ratio to be 52% female and 48% male. About 84% of parishioners were Greek Orthodox, while the other 16% were mostly married to Greek Orthodox spouses and had not converted to Orthodoxy but participated in church activities.

## ***2. Holy Cross GOC in Mt. Lebanon***

Greek immigrants began to arrive in Allegheny County, the city of Pittsburgh's surrounding county, in the 1890s to obtain employment in the steel mill (Hartford 1944). It was not until 1924 when Mt. Lebanon first experienced a rapid growth in population after the Liberty Tunnel was completed, providing easy access to Pittsburgh and Mt. Lebanon became a destination for those working in downtown Pittsburgh. Mt. Lebanon, a suburban community of 34,000 residents approximately six miles away from downtown Pittsburgh (Baldwin 1998), is now one of Pittsburgh's most affluent suburban communities.

The Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church of Mt. Lebanon was established much later than All Saints in Canonsburg as Pittsburgh Greeks, not migrant Greeks, moved to the suburbs after World War II. This church was founded after informal gatherings at family homes and eventually a formal meeting of 90 Greek families in November of 1950 (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church 1994). This group decided that they needed an established local community in their new neighborhood where, instead of attending Protestant and Catholic churches, they could attend their own churches, Sunday Schools, etc. So in 1952, these Greek-Americans purchased a small, two-story house to serve as a chapel and community center. In August of the following year, the more-established community purchased a property from the Mount Lebanon Lutheran Church on Academy Avenue in Mt. Lebanon and by April of 1954 held its first General Assembly meeting of 77 families. By 1960 Holy Cross's congregation included 250 families

and needed a new, larger physical church structure. The parish purchased an eleven-acre plot of land and constructed a new church in 1971. The church is located on Gilkeson Road, at its merger with Route 19/Washington Road in Mt. Lebanon. Route 19 runs straight into downtown Pittsburgh via the Liberty Tunnel and Liberty Bridge.

Most recently, as was the case for Washington County, the number of Allegheny County residents overall who identified Greek ancestry decreased from 1990 to 2000, membership in the Mt. Lebanon's GOC was on the rise. At the time of study, Holy Cross had about 1,500 members, three times the number of residents claiming Greek ancestry in Mt. Lebanon (see above).

A leader at Holy Cross estimated the gender ratio of parishioners to be 50% female to 50% male, similar to that in Canonsburg. He also estimated that converts to Orthodoxy, not non-Orthodox members, constituted about 13% of the church community. And of the Greek-American participants, first generation, Greek-born members only comprised about 5-10% of parishioners at the most, making this church community a highly Americanized one. About 90% of parishioners also lived within a five-mile radius of the church, so suburban residence did not make accessibility difficult here; virtually all participants had cars. In terms of social class, although the church did not collect data on income, according to the informant, parishioners were mostly of the middle to upper-middle classes who owned their own homes.

### **E. My Observations in the Greek Orthodox Church**

People participate in the Greek Orthodox Church in the U.S. for a variety of reasons, most commonly including religious, ethnic, social or a combination of all of these. Each church parish provides many opportunities for religious, ethnic, and social observance. Such activities include

participating in the church choir, the Philoptochos or women's philanthropic organization, Sunday School or religious school for school-age children, Bible Study classes for adults, Greek Dance classes for children and for adults, Greek Language School also for children and for adults, a local subsidiary of the Greek Orthodox Youth Association (commonly known as GOYA) for teenagers, Young Adult League (YAL) for young adults, and a locally-organized senior citizens organization. These groups meet weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly depending on the nature of the organization and its activities. For the leaders or officers of these groups, more frequent meeting and preparation time are necessary<sup>9</sup>.

For reasons described in the last chapter (see section II.E.1), within each GOC I observed four types of activities, each of which satisfied religious, ethnic, and social interests and drew a variety of types of participants: 1) the Sunday church service, 2) the church's Greek Heritage Festivals, 3) the Young Adult League (YAL), and 4) the Philoptochos.

### ***1. The Activities***

***a. Sunday Church Services.*** Church worship or, more specifically, the Divine Liturgy, occurs once a week on Sunday mornings. For many participants, this is where the most frequent contact occurs between community members. The service is led by a male priest in the altar while facing parishioners, the hymns are sung by a male chanter who is positioned at a podium at one end of the altar, and the songs of rejoice are sung by a (predominantly female) choir dressed in matching cloaks/robes who are gathered on the side opposite to the chanter or on a balcony, behind all the parishioners. The general parishioners are seated in pews facing the priest but alternate between sitting and standing in observance of certain prayers. Dress is not casual –

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<sup>9</sup> For some groups these leaders/officers are elected and for others they volunteer themselves. Either way, they tend to be well-respected long-time participants who have demonstrated leadership or experience in the respective group's activities.

women and girls for the most part wear dresses or skirts and men and boys wear suits and ties - though this code is becoming less rigid.

Depending on the church, the language of the service may be conducted fully in Greek, fully in English, or some combination of the two. Some parishioners follow along aloud in prayer and song while others are silent. Holy Communion, consisting of holy wine and bread, is offered to only those participants who have been baptized in the Orthodox Church. At the end of the service, announcements relevant to the parish at large are shared by the parish priest to those in attendance. After about an hour or hour-and-a-half service, the community meets for a social hour and/or for organizational meetings. For many of my study participants, Sunday church service and social hour was their main if not only regular, weekly participation in the church. For church participants of Greek heritage, church liturgy and the social hour following in and of themselves are meant to satisfy both a religious and cultural bond to the homeland of Greece and its customs as well as a social bond between people who perceive themselves as sharing a heritage and/or upbringing (Kiriiazis 1989).

***b. Summer Food/Greek Heritage Festivals.*** Food/Greek Heritage Festivals typically occur once a summer for a long weekend or a full week. Increasingly, at least in the Pittsburgh area, churches are hosting additional mini-festivals (one day or weekend-long) throughout the year. The festival attendees are mostly non-GOAs and non-GOC participants who just have an interest in experiencing the culture and/or cuisine. Many GOC participants, who are not working as volunteers, also attend to show their support as do GOC participants from neighboring churches. Catering to these populations, the festivals sell Greek foods, desserts, music, and cultural artifacts donated by church parishioners to share their culture with others in the community as well as to raise funds for the church. The festivals also offer dance performances in the evening

(by parishioner dance troupes and/or by professional dancers) supported by live Greek music.

Once the orchestrated dancing concludes, the general festival attendee audience is invited to dance in the traditional line dances or more contemporary “two-by-two” freestyle dancing.

**c. *Young Adult League.*** The Young Adult League is an organization for young adults (ages 18 to 35) who wish to convene, engage in athletic activities, Greek dances, philanthropic activities, religious summer camps, and other fraternizing types of activities. Young adults who are involved in the GOC community are well aware that these outlets are also commonly known as rich sources for dating and/or finding a significant other who shares this culture and experience. Parents, particularly of the first and second generations, of such young adults are also aware of this resource and encourage, if not pressure, their children to participate in YAL functions in hopes that they will one day meet a GOA partner, get married, and propagate the GOA culture as a new family unit. This image of the YAL and the pressure that accompanies it can serve as a deterrent to young adults who just want to participate for fun or to those who want to rebel against their parents’ wishes/hopes/expectations.

**d. *Philoptochos (Women’s Philanthropic Organization).*** The Philoptochos is a popular women’s philanthropic organization which attracts mostly middle-aged to older women. The philanthropic foundation of this group makes it stronger than the other, exclusively social, women’s groups. Women in the Philoptochos spend much time fundraising for the church or for needy families or other philanthropic initiatives, in addition to fraternizing with one another at larger social events. Depending on the demographics of the parish and the vibrancy of the organization, the Philoptochos can carry a reputation for being for the “old ladies” of the church, as one of my study participants told me. From what I have seen it can be cliquy and, depending on the diversity of the group, even divisive. As I describe further below, the Holy Cross

Philoptochos meetings consisted of divergent opinions on almost every issue, usually along the lines of young versus old participants. But for the most part the Philoptochos consists of women who are interested in spending time with other women in the GOC and making philanthropic contributions to the community.

## ***2. All Saints GOC in Canonsburg***

All Saints' church building itself has a modern structure. The defining feature of almost any Greek Orthodox Church is a round dome towering on the top of the church with a gold cross standing atop it. This church's stucco dome is plain and matches the dome's square foundation. The main base of the church is composed of matching soft-pink-colored brick but with alternating layers of chocolate brown brick, creating a striped effect. The roof is made of terracotta tile and each set of windows on the sides of the church is square and sub-divided into four smaller square windows. Since 1995 a matching tall narrow bell tower was built to the right of the front entrance of the church and is connected to the entrance by a covered walkway decorated with roman columns and scalloped archways over-head.

As one enters the church, a gorgeous mosaic icon of Jesus Christ greets its visitors outside above the two lofty wooden doors at the front of the church. The entranceway of the church is large and open and decorated with intricately carved light oak woodwork and multi-colored stained glass religious icons or depictions of Christ, the Virgin Mary and many Christian saints. The ceiling in this room is adorned with one huge gold chandelier that matches the others along the aisle of the main worship center inside the church.

The inside worship center is most unique for the vast amount of light shining into the room. Because the four-square windows in the church are clear and not color-stained glass the



church with its white walls, ceiling and ceramic floor tile is truly immaculate. Two rows of 16 wooden pews are separated by a center aisle that leads to the front, or altar of the church.

The altar's most distinguishing and unique feature is its ornately decorated wall. This wood-carved wall frames 14 different icons or biblical pictures that stand sacredly on each side of the center of the altar. While all GOCs have icons at the altar, All Saints' presentation would most definitely be considered elaborate. Above this woodwork and hand-painted icons are boldly, multi-colored icons or biblical recreations painted on the actual walls of the front of the altar. When looking straight up toward the sky you see the interior of the distinctive dome of the church – still undecorated. The dome will eventually be painted in the image of Christ but is still unfinished. When facing the altar, the side directly left of the altar in the front of the church is reserved for the choir, and directly right of the altar is for the chanters of religious hymns and songs.

Attached to the side of the church via a stairwell/elevator from the entrance of the church to the basement is the church's community center. This attachment includes a large hall full of tables for socializing, an industrial kitchen for cooking, especially during food fairs, offices and Sunday School rooms.

**a. *Sunday Church Services.*** In terms of church attendance, an informant told me that on an average Sunday morning about 150 adults and 90 children attended church services, about 33% of the parish population at All Saints. Given that Holy Cross' church attendance was also 33% (see Section III.E.3.a below) this representation is standard. Some members join in order to partake in a church sacrament such as a wedding or baptism but then never attend again; others may be college students who only attend when they are home; and yet others may be elderly and not able to travel to the church, etc. However, while 33% of all members were active and

participated in church activities regularly, the church census showed that at least 90% of participants who were converts to Orthodoxy were active in the church. Though I will address such differences more in Chapter V, the leaders in both parishes studied here attributed the greater active participation rates among the convert population than the GOA-born population to the fact that converts made a conscious decision and made a great sacrifice to enter a religion that most others in the church were born into. It seemed as if the experience of being first generation in this new religion resembled that of the first generation Greek immigrants to the U.S. who also felt a sense of closeness to and ownership of the culture they represented. Additionally, if the convert population continues to grow in these churches, I would expect the great majority of them to continue being active participants, which would greatly impact the social composition of the GOC in the future as well as the activities within it.

Given my experience attending All Saints' Sunday church services, I can say that the 33% of regular participants were predominantly female and middle-aged to elderly, and indeed a great number of converts were in attendance. The majority of the women who attended did not work outside the home, so this interaction was a source of regular social contact that they otherwise did not have on a weekly basis. While, for these women, church attendance did satisfy an affinity for religious observance, it also greatly impacted their social lives and sense of a routine and feeling of belonging.

Among the women, though the female GOA-born participants were more likely to have attended church services without a spouse, the converts attended with their whole family. Because most of the converts were married to GOA-born participants, they had the sense of first generation ownership of the culture in addition to the partnership from someone who grew up within the culture and had enough fondness for it that his/her spouse changed religions to

become a part of it. The convert's appreciation and sacrifice for the culture served as a constant reminder to the rest of the family that they, too, should appreciate the offerings of GOC culture.

The gender divide also appeared in the roles during service. Most of the choir members were women (15/18 – two of which were also convert women), older men played a supportive role escorting parishioners to their seats and caring for candles lit by parishioners. The male priest, alternating equally between the English and Greek languages for sermons and prayers, conducted the service. While the gender diversity in the choir and escort roles varied over time, in the GOC the priest was always male – this tradition does not change.<sup>10</sup>

While some may have attended church services for the religious aspects, some for the ethnic connection, and some for mere social interaction, most participants continued the experience by mingling during coffee hour after church. Typically, one of the church's organizations rotated sponsoring the social/coffee hour and providing refreshments, snacks, as well as serving them. While most everyone was polite to one another, and many spent this time with their families, the ethnic-generational and age differences in cliques were very clear. The middle-aged non-GOA-born women were drawn very obviously together, while the retired, second-generation men migrated toward one another. This trend was partly because participants took the opportunity to discuss other business regarding the respective organizations with which they were involved. So the women got together to talk about the organizations relevant to their own demographic and constituencies and the men to theirs, etc. The participants who were parents of adolescent children were the only ones to cross the boundary of their particular demographic group – this population was impacted by their kids, who did not see generational differences between one another. Impacted by their stage in the life cycle, while many middle-

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<sup>10</sup> I should also note that Greek Orthodox priests are permitted and in fact encouraged to marry and procreate, but only before they enter the priesthood. So, while the Greek Orthodox religion is patriarchal in its leadership, its leaders typically practice what they preach in terms of propagating marriage and family.

to older-aged adults in this study (moms in particular) reflected that the time in which they were most involved in the GOC was when their children were involved in GOC activities, I noticed these same parents of once-adolescent-aged children later withdrew from their more diverse GOC surroundings and again became most involved with those most similar to them (in age and ethnic-generational status).

***b. Summer Food/Greek Heritage Festivals.*** At All Saints representatives of all ages and ethnicities of the GOC population volunteered at the Greek food/heritage festival. They helped out at the gyro stands, the bar, the dessert table, the back room storage, the buffet food service line, the kitchen, the gift shop, and the church for tours. Though participants pulled together as one to showcase their culture and to raise money for their respective church, like every aspect of American life, the festivals had their share of segregation. The kids (ages eight to sixteen) typically helped out by staffing the more simple and self-service stations such as the gyro stand or the salad station. Women of all ages participated in traditionally female roles such as serving food items in the buffet line or at the dessert table (which incidentally also included American desserts) or selling ethnic/religious artifacts (including religious icons, jewelry, and cookbooks) at the gift shop. Middle-aged to older men, almost exclusively, served drinks at the bar, led efforts in the kitchen, and chaired the overall event. The older men typically cleaned tables and made themselves available to socialize with guests. In the kitchen, Greek-born women managed the cooking of Greek items such as “keftedes” (fried Greek onion-y hamburgers). Later-generation and convert women were managing more basic items such as salad preparation. And second-generation older men were handling the grill items.

Though many generations were represented among the festival volunteers, through my insider status I was able to observe that the clear hierarchical chain of command was a source of

conflict at the festival. While in paid work, employees have a clear understanding of their role in the employer hierarchy, in volunteer settings, everyone wants to feel useful and no one wants to be managed by someone who, every other day of the year, is just a fellow church participant. In this case, the leaders of the festival were men who were long-time participants of the church. While it is true that such participants had more experience planning such events, the rigidity of the above-mentioned roles and responsibilities was clear. Male festival leaders were the ultimate decision-makers and this left little room for discretion or creativity among lay volunteers and plenty of room for tension. For example, the older first generation (Greek-born) women were responsible for cooking the traditional Greek fare in the authentic, old-world style that is so attractive to non-GOA festival attendees. Due to this degree of specialization (and honor), these women felt they should work autonomously and sometimes found it difficult to take direction from a male festival leader who had no idea how to prepare and cook these items. These women felt a great deal of ownership of these processes and were quite vocal about any disagreement they had with a festival leader.

More subtly and perhaps because of an absence of feeling of ownership, there was frustration among younger or newer participants of the church who were directed by older or more veteran participants. For instance, I witnessed some reactions in the food serving line with respect to who got to serve which items. The salad assembly part of the line was reserved for the youth or later generation GOC participants. Among the already prepared items, serving one of the casserole dishes (such as “pastitsio”/Greek lasagna or “moussaka”/Greek eggplant casserole) was considered a high-status item. Yet when frustrated, volunteers, who may have wanted to serve a different food item in the food line, rolled their eyes or whispered to someone else their sentiments rather than confronting a fellow volunteer.

While the varying generations of participants were treated differently and reacted differently from one another, these examples reflect a clear hierarchical structural based primarily on gender, secondarily on generational/ancestral seniority, and then on age. In a voluntary organization based on tradition, such interpersonal relations reinforce and reproduce intended roles particularly for women and men in the organizations. In these organizations, at the end of the day, women are expected to take orders from men. They could be vocal or quiet, but regardless, these women continued to serve their dedicated role at the festival during my observation period and probably have continued to ever since.

Similar to how I viewed female GOC participants' reactions to the gendered hierarchy, Adrienne Rich (1979:37) describes Virginia Woolf's (1929) writing as guarded. She elaborates on the tone of her prose and how it is intrinsically gendered: "...I recognized that tone. I had heard it often enough, in myself and in other women. It is the tone of a woman almost in touch with her anger, who is determined not to appear angry, who is *willing* herself to be calm, detached, and even charming in a roomful of men where things have been said which are attacks on her very integrity." Just as Rich recognized the tone in that writing, I saw a sense of vulnerability among the females in this study in their interactions with the men. Rich's observation from decades ago still applies to the female participants in this study who were reacting to their assigned roles within the church. No matter how they felt about their respective roles, they continued to serve in those roles year after year.

During the day, food was the main festival attraction. In the evening, attendees also watched the kids' parish dance troupes perform to live Greek music. There were about three different groups differentiated by age ranges who performed for about three songs each. Although this was the highlight for parishioners who had kids performing or who used this time

to celebrate their own culture and interact with fellow GOAs, the food seemed to be the stronger force which drew non-GOA participants to the festival. The guests were otherwise mostly non-GOA families who wanted to treat themselves to rich Greek foods.

*c. Young Adult League.* There was one Young Adult League (YAL) in the South Hills of Pittsburgh which was comprised of participants from All Saints and Holy Cross, as well as from other area churches. Since participants from All Saints were fewer in comparison to Holy Cross', I comment on my observations of this group below, in the section describing my experiences at Holy Cross (see section III.E.3.c).

*d. Philoptochos (Women's Philanthropic Organization).* At All Saints Philoptochos meetings, there were typically about twelve attendees who were mostly first or second generation GOA-born middle-aged to retired-age older women. One-third of those in attendance were four officers. All four of these elected officers were by definition leaders of the group and its most active participants. They were all also non-GOA born and converts to Orthodoxy. Unlike the Food/Heritage Festival, because the orientation of the Philoptochos was primarily philanthropic and not ethnic-based, these converts were entrusted with effectively leading the (predominantly GOA-born) group and engaging participants. These four women did just that, and my study informants even perceived this group to be one of, if not, THE strongest groups within the church.

Indeed, most participants in this study identified the Philoptochos as the strongest, most active and influential organization in the church. One participant and Philoptochos member directly attributed the group's strength to the "focus" that its convert leaders brought to the group. She experienced the leadership changes over the years and saw stark contrast once the convert leaders brought fresh thought, ideas, and direction to the former "old ladies" group.

There was another factor at hand in the All Saints Philoptochos, however. Also present at their meetings was the parish (male) priest, who served as a consultant for the topics on the meeting's agenda. I found his presence to be more directive than consultative though. Perhaps because the group's leadership was non-GOA born and less experienced with church goings-on (and perhaps more malleable as relative newcomers), his approval was needed for many projects to proceed. Whenever there was disagreement in the meeting, he would assert himself and make the final decision for the group. As a result, this group was not independently run. In fact, the Philoptochos' reputation was also not independent of the parish priest's endorsement and advocacy. In fact, this all-female group gained legitimacy and support not only because of the parish priest's advocacy as the symbolic and quasi-leader of the Philoptochos, but also because he was a male. His leadership and authority meant that much more because as a male, he could in effect "carry" the women to success in the organization.

Their meetings themselves consisted of about an hour of discussion around their activities including fundraising, sending get-well cards to parishioners and others outside of the community, and progress on any ongoing philanthropic projects. There was not much disagreement among members, as the parish priest's words were often relied upon for final decisions. As a result, the meetings progressed smoothly and were non-controversial and non-confrontational. Afterwards, the participants stayed for another hour or so to socialize around the "pot luck" of food they each brought to share with one another.

### ***3. Holy Cross GOC in Mt. Lebanon***

Coming from the city of Pittsburgh, the church itself becomes visible about 500 feet prior on the peak of a rolling hill. The church stands tall, nestled among a forest of trees, above, below, and on both sides. Again, the first thing you encounter is the view of the gold dome and cross



situated boldly atop the church's solid white foundation. No matter the season, the church's dome emerges dramatically to any passerby coming from downtown Pittsburgh. Since the church rests on a precipitous hill, the incline to the church is also very steep and the entrance road windy. Once you reach the top, you see the entire image of the church that from far away is partially hidden by the robust trees. This church consists of one large rectangular structure with three tall, vertical arches each equidistant from each other that extend past the height of the rectangular structure but not past the omnipresent dome. Each of these arches also has one small cross standing on top. Within and between the arches are elongated, narrow elliptical-shaped color-stained glass windows bearing elongated pictures of Jesus Christ in his biblical surroundings. The church's actual foundation, a white rectangular community center, extends beyond the perimeter of the church itself leaving room for an outdoor porch for summer socializing outside the church, especially during the annual summer food fair.

Overall, because Holy Cross's church is older, it exudes a more traditional and conservative feel than the modern, open structure at All Saints. When entering the church through the black doors you immediately feel a darkness and warmth that is very different from when you walk into All Saints' bright and open interior. The woodwork is much darker, the entranceway and inner worship area do not receive the same amount of light as All Saints'. Stained glass windows separate the entranceway from the inner worship area. This church's entranceway is much less intricate and more solemn than Canonsburg's. The inner worship area consists of more pews, 18, on each side of the center aisle. These pews are made from darker, almost black-colored wood and are much longer than Canonsburg's. The floor is covered with darker army-green linoleum, and the elongated stained-glass windows on the inside make for a darker, yet beautiful and more sheltered environment. Each window depicts a significant event

in the life of Christ. A sunny day especially brings out the beauty of these elaborate windows. From any pew in the church you can look up and see the inside of the dome decorated with an icon of Christ and small, round yellow-tinted windows that especially bring light to the dome and therefore some throughout the church as well.

The altar is shorter in length than Canonsburg's and the icons decorating its walls are fewer and gold-based instead of wood-carved. These icons are somewhat subdued in comparison to the presence of a large hand-painted icon of the Virgin Mary and child looming above the altar. The choir in this church is located on a second level balcony in the back of the church.

The community center beneath the church hosts the priests' and other administrator offices, Sunday School rooms, a kitchen, and a library. But in September of 1993, in response to the needs of a growing parish, the community built a new, adjoining community center. The community center is similar to the church in size and in its multiple window and door archways, much like those protecting the exterior of the church. It is used most for basketball and other such indoor sporting events, banquets, and for the food fair.

*a. Sunday Church Services.* In terms of church attendance, similar to All Saints, only about 33% (500 participants) attended church regularly, half of which included Sunday School children. Although regular church attendance at Holy Cross compared to All Saints in percent, in number, Holy Cross's membership and attendance were over double that of All Saints'. This was the largest parish in the Pittsburgh area.

When I attended Sunday church services at Holy Cross I was overwhelmed by the number of participants as well as by their diversity in race/ethnicity, age, and gender. In terms of race/ethnicity, I saw African American, Latino, blonde- and red-headed participants, alongside

the traditional Mediterranean-looking individuals. At All Saints the non-GOA born participants were, for the most part, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) and did not stand out as much as the more diverse non-GOA born participants at Holy Cross. The relative diversity at Holy Cross created an environment that attracted participants who appreciated this modern vision of the church. One Holy Cross married GOA born couple in their late 40s that I interviewed (Stelios and Pari), though they lived in Canonsburg, switched their church membership precisely because of the diversity of the parish. They said they preferred Holy Cross's greater diversity in participants, language, as well as thought.

The aforementioned diversity at Holy Cross also impacted the languages in which the church service was carried out. More prayers were carried out in English than at All Saints, but Holy Cross had a third language component to its service; part of the service was actually carried out in the Spanish language to accommodate its Latin-speaking participants. As I discuss in Chapter V, many traditional GOA-born participants reported some feelings of territorialism and did not want to see their old-world church practices altered to cater to non-GOA born participants. However, the growing presence of later generation and convert participants made such sentiments the minority.

In terms of age and gender, at Holy Cross there were more middle-aged families (including both women and men, as well as small children) as compared to the greater proportion of older women more typically seen at All Saints. Even among the older population, there was a greater proportion of male participants at Holy Cross than at All Saints. And there was a greater proportion of young adults participating at Holy Cross than at All Saints. In embracing its diversity, Holy Cross seemed to have attracted the younger and other nontraditional GOA born participant populations who felt more welcomed and comfortable and supported in this

heterogeneous parish. A larger parish, such as Holy Cross, also offers more room for variety and acceptance and, therefore, change.

Due to the large size of their parish, Holy Cross had two male priests instead of one, and the one was non-GOA-born. Similar to All Saints, there were men caring for the candles purchased and lit by the parishioners. Different from All Saints, Holy Cross had two greeters (one woman and one man) at the entrance of the church to welcome participants. Indeed, Holy Cross' emphasis on greeting attendees was part of this welcoming culture they were interested in maintaining.

***b. Summer Food/Greek Heritage Festivals.*** One week before the annual Greek Food and Heritage Festival at Holy Cross, I happened to pass through the festival preparation area immediately after one of the interviews I conducted at the church. This was a rare opportunity for me to view the circumstances leading up to the actual event and to better understand the dynamics of its planning stages as well as its execution. I found the older GOA-born women in particular, who did not work outside of the home, spending over twelve hours a day preparing food for the festival. While younger women were assisting, they were clearly following the lead of the elder GOA-born volunteers. For the elderly women, spending such a great amount of time on their feet was very apparently tiring for them. Nonetheless, after all the years of participation in the festival, this demographic group continued to serve a very clear hard-working support function in the preparatory stages of the festival. Within their preparation group these older women served as leaders to the younger women, but outside of that role they were subject to the decision-making of male festival leadership.

At the festival itself, as in All Saints, volunteer duties were differentiated by gender, age, and generational status. The Holy Cross youth (mostly girls) served at the gyro stand, the

middle-aged men and young boys tended at the “souvlaki” (Greek-seasoned shish kabob) grill and at the bars, predominantly second-generation middle-aged women served food in the buffet lines, older women of the second-generation served at the dessert tables, and middle-aged men cleaned tables. Other than those in the depths of the kitchen (mostly the dedicated elderly women referenced above), the great majority of volunteers were American-born. As for the converts, though the convert women participated in the same roles as GOA-born women, I found the non-GOA-born men to represent more supportive, back-room types of activities such as transporting food from the kitchen to the food line, etc. In all, Holy Cross’ diversity across the parish – in the general church service and other primarily religious-based activities – did not correspond with the highly segregated volunteer functions at the ethnic-centered festival. That is, although the church welcomed diverse individuals, the roles within the structure of the festival were well-defined and instituted. “Volunteering” for duties typically occurred by advertising or passing around sign-up sheets at the church or via a festival coordinator contacting prospective volunteers. Either way, the target volunteer populations for each function were commonly known and subtly reinforced year over year. Again, as in All Saints, the functions were assigned primarily based on gender, secondarily on generational/ancestral seniority, and then on age.

The actual festival at Holy Cross was much more physically dispersed than at All Saints. There was an upstairs kitchen and a downstairs kitchen, indoor and outdoor buffet lines and bars, as well as seating which spanned the entire perimeter of the church building. Similar to the festival at All Saints, guests were predominantly non-GOAs, most of whom were middle-aged couples with their children. In the evening, dance troupes and live Greek music were featured but there were also adult and professional dance groups represented here. At the end of the day, the atmosphere at both churches’ festivals catered to the ethnic component of the culture and

attracted similar (even sometimes the same – since the two churches neighbored one another) crowds.

*c. Young Adult League.* As mentioned earlier, there were not two YAL organizations, one exclusively for All Saints and one for Holy Cross. Instead, there was one YAL organization consisting of both churches' young adults. This group met informally, and its participation fluctuated from meeting to meeting, function to function. Participants tended to travel in pairs – friends would join together and sometimes even bring other acquaintances from other GOC communities. Though some of these functions had religious and/or ethnic underpinnings, such gatherings among young adults inevitably resulted in predominantly social interaction that lacked any common cultural themes other than the sense of understanding one another's background. The meetings/socials I observed were informal gatherings at a bar and were purely social in nature. Such meetings did start with a brief informal agenda addressing any upcoming events of interest to the group (such as church activities calling for volunteers or national YAL functions occurring out of town).

Given the young adult age group targeted by the YAL, many of its participants used the organization as a vehicle for meeting a potential partner who shared this sense of understanding. Not surprisingly, only my unmarried young adult study participants, who in subsequent interviews revealed that they preferred a GOA-born partner, participated in the YAL. Married and even unmarried young adults with a steady significant other only very infrequently attended these social gatherings. Other than marital status, other attributes were equally represented among participants. Again, due to the social orientation of the group's functions, all types of participants were welcomed to join.

The only source of differentiation was according to church affiliation – the All Saints young adults were more comfortable socializing with one another, and the Holy Cross young adults were more drawn toward mingling with each other. But because the two churches’ participants did cross paths through the years, inevitably most from one church knew those from the other church for quite some time. Church affiliation contributed to another difference among participants. The participants from Holy Cross were more frequent participants of the local organization’s activities, traveled more for national YAL conventions, and went out of their way to socialize with All Saints participants more than the reverse. These qualities, along with the observation that the parish itself is more culturally diverse, lead me to believe that Holy Cross fosters more of a cosmopolitan, interactive, and welcoming culture that is transmitted into the YAL organization.

While all types of young adults were welcome to join the YAL, it was not appealing to all. One study participant, Chryssoula, had some experiences in which her peers in the GOC were gossiping about her during her teenage years. From that point on, she avoided the social functions geared toward her peer group and only attended church-wide functions with her whole family. A young adult (married to a non-GOA born man) during this study, Chryssoula chose not to participate in the YAL for reasons associated with her past experiences. Negative experiences or social rejection associated with the GOC, such as that experienced by Chryssoula, may deter a participant from returning to some or all of its functions, but my focus on the GOC itself made it impossible to explore reasons for defection from the GOC overall.

*d. Philoptochos (Women’s Philanthropic Organization).* At Holy Cross, I participated in their board meeting, which consisted of 23 of the Philoptochos’ most active participants/leaders, about a quarter of its full membership (about 100 members). This group was the organization’s

decision-making unit, led by four officers; general, non-board members were not invited to attend. The women in attendance were younger to middle-aged participants, and most were later generation. In fact, just as in All Saints, the president of this organization was a non-GOA-born woman.

Among this 23-person group, almost all participants contributed to the discussion making it a vibrant meeting. Also a noteworthy observation, neither of the parish priests attended these meetings, which seemed to offer greater opportunity for dissent, creativity, leadership, and independence among the participants than I noticed in the All Saints meetings I attended. There was an elder woman who served as an advisor-type figure here and offered valuable counsel when certain decisions were up for discussion; she did not, however, present herself as having ultimate authority as did the priest at All Saints' meetings. When there were conflicting opinions, it was usually a matter of young versus old and neither "side" consistently came out on top, so to speak. They discussed the fall mini-food fair that they led, a September 11<sup>th</sup> fundraising drive, donations to the Salvation Army, and other miscellaneous philanthropic activities.

## **F. Conclusion**

The two GOC sites studied here, though neighboring one another, differed in several ways. First, their histories established different foundations for participant activity and experience in the GOC. All Saints' foundation in a traditionally working-class industrial town was initially very different from Holy Cross' establishment as a suburban parish. Second, their contrasting parish and local community demographics, especially income and education, made the context of GOC practice different as well. Third, the diversity of the parish populations and accompanying



GOC practices (such as language used in church services) catered to and attracted different types of participants.

Because observation alone does not tell the whole story, I also rely on interviews with participants about their own experiences within the organizations. However, the differences demonstrated in parishes did not translate into any meaningful differences at the individual level. I attribute this unexpected level of similarity between the communities' participants to one simple, but powerful concept: traditionalism. Within the context of religion and ethnic practice, willing participants submit to the long-standing traditions that serve as the foundation for culture. Although the traditional aspects of religious life oftentimes contradict modern influences of the outside world (Davidman 1991), participants adhere to and in fact participate because of these traditions that guide their lives and give their lives meaning. These traditions, in this case shared by the two communities studied here, have the power to impact participants similarly across time and place regardless of demographic variability.

## IV. MARITAL CONSIDERATIONS

### A. Introduction to the Chapter

Marriage has been referred to as a “litmus test” (Alba 1995) or “measuring stick” (Rosenfeld 2002) of assimilation as well as a predictor of assimilation. That is, one’s choice of spouse or intended choice of spouse is both an indicator of his/her beliefs and practices (which may already be the product of assimilation) and a prediction of future participation as well as the participation of their spouse, children, grandchildren, and so on. In this chapter I explore how unmarried Greek Orthodox American participants in All Saints GOC and Holy Cross GOC consider what is desirable in the ethnicity and religion of a marital partner.<sup>11</sup> Married GOA-born participants and non-GOA-born participants (who, in this study, were all married) are not represented here because I focus on young GOA-born adults who are in the process of prioritizing their expectations for a partner and for whom issues of what is desirable ethnic/religious affiliation and participation are key. I analyze the perceptions of these young adults in the GOC about marriage and explore how their perceptions vary by gender, generational status, and ancestral composition. Because GOAs share both ethnic and religious heritage, I examine both ethnic and religious components of intermarriage.

Research shows that participation in institutions and personal identification with the group promotes endogamy (Kalmijn 1998: 400; Stevens and Swicegood 1987: 81). Institutions promote endogamy by facilitating intragroup social interaction and socialization. The stronger one’s feelings of group identification, the more the internalization of norms of endogamy, and

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<sup>11</sup> While I asked questions of the unmarried participants so as not to assume heterosexuality or intention of marriage, all participants expressed an interest in marrying and referenced selecting a heterosexual partner. It was not within the scope of this study to further pursue issues of sexuality within the GOC communities studied here.

the greater likelihood of endogamous (marrying within one's group) or homogamous (marrying one with similar characteristics) marriage more generally. These relationships are not unidirectional, however, for one's decision to marry endogamously or exogamously (marrying outside of one's group) can also influence further participation in the group.

Marital decisions are important and oftentimes highly sensitive issues because they have the potential to impact future generations. Some scholars argue that intermarriage decreases the salience of cultural distinctions in future generations as children of mixed marriages, even when their parents socialize them into the culture of a single group, are less likely to identify with that group than their single ancestry counterparts (Alba 1995; Kalmijn 1998; Kulczycki and Lobo 2002). According to this perspective, an ethnically mixed ancestry leads to weaker ethnic identity, limited exposure to ethnic culture, and potentially the demise of an ethnic group and its practices. Others, like Ari Nave (2000:339), argue that intermarriage does not necessarily weaken ethnicity. Children of multiple ancestries, he finds, often identify primarily with one ethnicity. Too, a child's adoption of one parent's culture can prompt the other parent's adoption of that culture as well. And even parents who themselves inter-married often pressure their children to marry within the ethnicity they adopt.

Nazli Kibria (1997: 525) challenges the traditional, dichotomous view of in-/out-marriage: "rather than being seen in absolute terms, the definition of outmarriage is most aptly viewed as a continuum on which marriage partners are placed, based on the *degree* (emphasis original) to which they are perceived to share ethnic membership." Here, two ethnics with the same heritage may view themselves differently based on varying degrees of identity with that heritage and/or practice of its culture. On this continuum, a hierarchy of preference allows

ethnic group members to identify certain aspects of ethnic/religious identity/practice that they view as more desirable or essential than others.

The impact of religious intermarriage on the future of the religious group is also debatable. Some social scientists (Alba 1990) say that the trend toward increased inter-religious marriage signifies a lack of importance to either partner concerning his/her or the partner's religion and thus perhaps already a weakened religious identity to be passed on to children. Regardless of prior identity, some (Alba 1990; Gans 1994) argue that a spouse from another religious background may convert or informally agree on a way to support both partners' religious identities going forward.

This chapter is divided into two major parts. First is a general discussion about the state of intermarriage today in the U.S. and a description of how marital preference/choice varies according to structural, group, and individual factors including gender, educational attainment, generational status, and ancestral composition. Second is an analysis of my data on how GOA GOC participants with varying outside, social group, and individual influences saw their own marital preferences.

### **B. Intermarriage in the U.S. Today**

Today there are many options for choosing a life partner, including not choosing one at all. But according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2005), most Americans (about 90%) marry at some point in their lives. Average age at first marriage, however, has changed dramatically over the years. From 1970 to 2000 the median age at first marriage for women increased by 21% from 20.8 to 25.1 years of age; the median age at first marriage for men increased by 16% from 23.2 to 26.8 years of age (U.S. Census Bureau 2001).

Intermarriage rates have been increasing for all groups since the 1960s (Waters 2000). There has also been an increase in marriages between persons whose ancestries overlap in part, but not completely (Alba 1990; Waters 1990). Mary Waters (1990) finds that those who have a marriage with partial ethnic overlap consider their marriages to be endogamous.

Religious differences have, throughout the last few decades, also been declining in significance as barriers to marriage (Alba 1995; Kulczycki and Lobo 2002). As of the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, estimates show that about half of all Catholics and Jews marry within their faiths if religious upbringing rather than current religion is used as the measure (Kulczycki and Lobo 2002). Similarly, at this time, among the smaller population of Greek Orthodox in the U.S., about 40% of marriages recorded by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese were between two Orthodox partners<sup>12</sup> (Kourvetaris 1997).

Marriage patterns more generally arise from the interaction of three major influences: marriage market constraints/opportunities, social group influence, and individual preference for certain characteristics in a spouse (Kalmijn 1998). I expand upon such considerations below.

### ***1. The Marriage Market***

Haya Stier and Yossi Shavit (1994:80) demonstrate that while individuals tend to be attracted to those with whom they share common values and cultural traits, such selection criteria can be constrained by the availability of individuals in particular age cohorts, especially when age at first marriage is high. They describe the dilemma of the marriage squeeze, which limits women's choices as they age in today's society:

In most societies, males marry women who are younger than they are by about two years. Thus, mate selection is constrained by the relative size of male and female birth-cohorts. ... When they are young, people (but especially women)

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<sup>12</sup> This figure does not include any marriages occurring outside the GOC.

still face a relative abundance of potential mates of like characteristics. With age, the conditions in the marriage market deteriorate for women. The norm dictates that they should marry older men, but with age the pool of eligible older men is constantly shrinking as these men can marry ever-younger women. Consequently, older women suffer even greater squeezes which force them to compromise preferences and to cross ethnic and educational lines in pursuit of males.

Such a squeeze becomes even more relevant for women with other criteria they are not willing to compromise, such as religious affiliation or geographic location.

Availability of intra-ethnic/-religious mates can be further constrained by the size of the ethnic/religious group itself. Locale-specific demographic patterns such as geographic segregation and size of local migrant group can affect availability for in-group contact versus out-group contact, which can in turn impact one's marital choice (Alba and Golden 1986; Kalbach 2003; Kalmijn 1998; Lieberman and Waters 1988; Qian and Lichter 2007; Stevens and Swicegood 1987). Specifically, individuals belonging to geographically dispersed and/or small ethnic/cultural groups may not be able to find marriage partners from the same ethnic/cultural group as themselves. Factors such as these can contribute to one's decision to intra- or inter-marry and ultimately potentially to his/her participation within a social group (Kalbach 2003).

## ***2. Social Group Influence***

Lieberman and Waters (1988) and Umaña-Taylor and Fine (2003) find that informal attitudes and opinions about intermarriage from parents and other outside influences, in addition to the attitudes/opinions adopted by the individual him/herself, affect preferences and decisions about marrying someone from inside or outside the ethnic group.

Another form of group influence on ethnic patterns of marital choice has to do with the orientation of the group itself. Allan McCutcheon (1988: 216) finds that for groups whose ethnic and religious identifications are coupled, “a decrease in ethnic consciousness increases the likelihood of religious intermarriage.” Therefore, if exposure to the ethnic/religious group is limited, a relatively weak ethnic identity not only increases the likelihood of ethnic exogamy but also of religious exogamy.

### ***3. Individual Preference***

Individual decision-making regarding the selection of a marriage partner prevails today in U.S. society more than ever. Lieberman and Waters (1988: 166) underscore that, “[t]he shift to marital choices based on romantic love or other individualized decisions will undercut the direct impact of the family on the marital decision made by young adults.” Since marital decision is now largely the result of an individualized selection process, experiences such as those in the labor market, movement out of the family home, and spatial mobility in general significantly limit the ability of the family to influence their children’s marital choices, although family influence is instilled during childhood and adolescence.

Increased levels of education can also affect the influence of ethnicity/religion on marital choice. Higher education tends to weaken ethnic attachments as it often leads to movement away from an individual’s local area of residence and away from family and ethnic/religious community of origin, and increases contact with potential mates from other groups (Lieberman and Waters 1988). Higher education can also contribute to a more individualistic attitude and can minimize the importance of ascribed characteristics in deciding who to marry (Kalmijn 1998). Those who are more highly educated are also more likely to delay age at first marriage and thus get caught in the marriage squeeze described above (Lieberman and Waters 1988).

Therefore, more educated individuals are more likely to outmarry than those with less education.<sup>13</sup>

Gender also impacts ethnic identity and intermarriage. Women tend to view their ethnic backgrounds as more important than do men (Alba 1990) and are expected to uphold ethnic tradition more so than men (di Leonardo 1984). Therefore, oftentimes women show greater propensity than men to marry within the group (Kalbach 2003; Kulczycki and Lobo 2002). On the other hand, now that women are marrying at older ages and higher education levels and are therefore caught in the marriage squeeze, they may choose to seek out more educated men than ones of similar ethnicity (Stier and Shavit 1994).

Generational status, the number of generations from original ethnic ancestry, has an impact on marital preference/choice. Kulczycki and Lobo (2002) find that recent immigrants are more likely to have a stronger cultural adherence to marital ideas of their country of origin than is found among their U.S.-born offspring. Therefore, at least second generation ethnic-Americans have more Americanized ideas concerning marital choice/preference than their first generation counterparts (Kalbach 2003; Lieberman and Waters 1988).

Multiple versus single ancestry can also influence marital preference/choice. If one has multiple ancestries, that is if his/her parents are of different ancestries, the cultural aspects of one ancestry will in a sense compete with those of the other(s) (Alba and Golden 1986; Kulczycki and Lobo 2002; Lieberman and Waters 1988). The result is that those of single ancestry can afford to spend more time/contact with others who share that same ancestry and find a mate from that group easier than someone of multiple ancestries who may be dividing time among groups. Even among those who marry within the group, there is variation in spousal choice for those

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<sup>13</sup> Since my sample of GOAs was highly educated (five of the unmarried participants had post-graduate degrees and the other three had bachelor's degrees), education is not used in my analysis.



with single versus multiple ancestry. Lieberman and Waters (1988) find that those with single ancestry who marry within the ethnic group, most often choose a spouse who is also of single ancestry. Likewise, those with multiple ancestries who marry within the group also tend to choose a spouse with multiple ancestries. Kibria's (1997) discussion about the degrees of ethnicity applies here in that those of similar generational background are choosing to marry one another even within the ethnic group.

The marriage market, social group influence, and individual preference can shape a variety of marital preferences and decisions. I examine these experiences below, related to my study population.

### **C. The Attitudes Expressed by Unmarried GOC Participants**

In this chapter I only discuss GOAs who have not yet married. The GOAs who were married (both endogamously and exogamously) and the non-GOA-born GOC participants are discussed in the following chapter. Table 7 below shows all eight GOC participants (five from All Saints, three from Holy Cross) who were unmarried at the time of this study. The cross tabulation divides this group by their amount of activity (passive, active, leader; less than or equal to two, three to five, greater than or equal to six hours per week, respectively) and by their primary type of activity (religious, ethnic, or both equally).

**Table 7. Unmarried Participants – Amount and Primary Type of Activity**

Primary Type of Activity	Amount of Activity		
	Passive	Active	Leader
Ethnic		Aspasia (AS) Helen (HC)	Steve (HC)
Religious	Daniel (AS)	Appolonia (AS)	
Ethnic/Religious	Jimmy (AS)		Terry (HC) Mary (AS)

AS = All Saints participant  
 HC = Holy Cross participant

The eight unmarried GOC participants (four women and four men) all expressed an intention to marry at some point in the future. In fact, four have since married. The average age of the unmarried group was 27, 26 for the women, and 28 for the men; none were age 30 or above. Five were second generation GOAs and three were third generation. Five had single ancestries, and three had multiple ancestry composition. And finally five were participants at All Saints and three were participants at Holy Cross. The three general sources of premarital influence (the marriage market, social group influence, and individual preference) cited by Kalmijn (1998) are a useful guide for the analysis that follows. My study participants had plenty to say about each of the three broad sources of influence weighing on their preferences. Understanding the influence behind each participant’s intended marital decision provides further context around his/her location on the continuum of preferred marriage partners.

### *1. The Marriage Market*

Although the participants of this research had a community of fellow GOAs (the HC community larger than the AS community), some were concerned that this included many GOC participants with whom they had too much in common or too much prior involvement. John, an AS leader, explained this opportunity/constraint conundrum to me:

For example using yourself. You were born and raised knowing very intimately every young man within your age group. One would possibly not think of dating one of them because they're more your brothers than they are a possible mate. Though you enjoy their company very much, you've done many socials with them, dances, sporting events, through the church. The thought of "hmm could this person be a possible mate?," not even an issue of course.

So for many who had grown up together in the GOC with an extended family type of feeling, the probability of finding an available romantic partner who was in the community but not in this extended family was limited.

Several participants mentioned this narrow window of opportunity as they tried to look for a partner within the GOC but one who was not too familiar. They dealt with this problem by adopting a hierarchy of preference under these circumstances: if finding a GOA-born partner was too difficult, they would accept a non-GOA-born partner of another Eastern Orthodox denomination. Those who expressed such a preference hierarchy included some of the most active participants and leaders in the GOC, including Terry, Mary, and even multiple ancestry Aspasia who only identified with her Greek background. Although these active participants/leaders expressed a hierarchy of preferences for a GOA born partner or a non-GOA partner who would convert to Orthodoxy or embrace the culture, it was not necessarily their

active involvement in the GOC that influenced such preferences. The causation may have been the reverse: their devotion to ethnicity and religion may have been influenced by a search for a mate who fit these preferences.

So, while GOC participants theoretically had a community of potential partners, practically speaking, each participant had concerns about the limitations of these communities. Terry, a second-generation HC leader, expressed concern about finding a mate who was not only GOA-born but also Greek-speaking, active in the GOC community, and interested in raising children within the GOC/GOA culture.

Terry worried more broadly about struggles that might arise within the church in the future, between those who favored Americanizing the church and those who appreciated the archaic, traditional Greek aspects of the church. He referred to this struggle because he saw that the people around him were less committed than he was to maintaining the traditional aspects of the GOC and that the probability of finding someone with a similar commitment to his was limited. This limited availability of potential like partners made him think that his choice of marital partner, either GOA or non-GOA, could bring this struggle into his home:

I do see in the future in general a struggle for people like me who, and our generation, who are still very closely tied with the culture and, I just see a big struggle, because most of my friends, my closest friends are like me, not all of them are, and then I guess I think the majority of people in our age group are not as committed to it, or it's just not as important to them, maybe because they're second or third generation and their parents aren't even like me in that sense. So I do see a struggle in the future in maintaining Greek school programs and things like that. I see a struggle in my own home, I don't speak perfect Greek, and I

don't know if the person I marry will speak any Greek at all, but I think that's gonna be a struggle too, to raise my children the way my parents raised my sisters and I. I think that's gonna be difficult, I WORRY about that, as long as my parents are around it won't be as much of an issue, but I think that's gonna be a struggle.

Consistent with the literature about intermarriage's diffusing effect on ethnic/religious identification in future generations, unmarried participants like Terry personalized the fear about maintaining the Greek culture and language in future generations, especially if he chooses a non-GOA-born partner.

While Terry was concerned about maintaining the traditional features of the church and the Greek culture in generations to come, he was willing to consider marrying someone who was not necessarily Greek, given the difficulty in finding someone who matched his exact specifications:

I don't know who I will marry and I know that I could very well meet someone who's NOT of Greek descent or from Greece that I may end up marrying, but they'd have to be the right kind of non-Greek so to speak. So my hopes are to marry someone who is Greek, actually the more important thing though to me is that they're Orthodox Christian. So I would have no problem marrying someone who's Russian Orthodox or of any of the other jurisdictions.

Second to a GOA-born spouse on Terry's hierarchy of preference, an Orthodox Christian of non-Greek descent would give him partial cultural overlap and more assurance that at least religious values would be upheld within the home. As an afterthought, Terry added that he would also

consider marrying someone who would convert to Orthodoxy as well, but this seemed like a last resort to him.

Terry was not the only unmarried participant whose hierarchy of preference included a religious component. Mary, the second-generation 27 year-old AS leader, described her hierarchy of preference in the context of religion. Neither she nor Terry were interested in even considering changing their own religion, but they entertained the idea of marrying someone who would enter their religion:

It would be IDEAL to find someone who's Greek Orthodox. It's important in the respect that I will NEVER convert, be of another faith, attend other churches, I mean never say never but, ya, it would not be my choice, my children absolutely without a doubt will be raised in the Orthodox Church and understand it MORE than I did and I think I've had a pretty solid upbringing but you know there's always more to learn. Ya, ideally it would be Greek Orthodox but if someone was willing to learn about the church and possibly convert, that would be fine. But it's so much easier when it's already a given and already a part of your life, doesn't have to be Greek, there are a lot of different Orthodox jurisdictions, but ya, I think that makes a difference, so I would say, I would never not date someone because they weren't Orthodox, but if I had a choice, the choice is obvious.

Given her marital preferences, in practice Mary extended her opportunities to meet a potential partner by not only participating in Greek Orthodox activities but in pan-Orthodox settings as well where Serbian and Russian Orthodox participants commingled. On the whole though, Mary gave equal attention to the Greek and Orthodox sides of her heritage by serving in senior positions within the regional Greek Orthodox Diocese as a Diocesan representative for the

national archdiocesan board, participating in the YAL (Young Adult League - social club), attending church, and devoting time to many activities affiliated with Greek and Orthodox organizations around the world.

Although Aspasia, an active second-generation GOA but of multiple ancestry, wished to marry a GOA, she was skeptical about the availability of such a match. She was looking for someone who understood her attachment to the culture, but, unlike Terry, she did not have explicit criteria for what qualities she wished her partner to possess other than that understanding. With regard to the ethnic/religious orientation of her potential mate, Aspasia replied:

Sometimes it really does [matter] sometimes it really doesn't [matter]. I would love to marry a Greek who wants to continue with the traditions, I think that would be obviously kind of hard marrying a non-Greek. But then I think sometimes you reach a certain point where you realize that may not happen and I think as long as I would have a significant other that would embrace the culture, that would... I don't know that's tough. It depends. You know, when I stand in church on Sunday, you know, I want to marry a Greek. I don't know. I don't think it would deter me if somebody's non-Greek.

Although Aspasia's non-GOA-born mother adopted and advocated GOA/GOC culture to her family, Aspasia's preferences for her own spouse were wavering perhaps because she felt confident that a non-GOA spouse would not deter her future participation in the culture the same way that her father's choice did not hinder the family's participation.

While Aspasia was prepared to select a non-GOA born partner who would at the very least appreciate and share the GOC culture with her, she did have opportunities to find a partner

at one of her GOC functions. Aspasia attended church, the YAL functions, Greek dances and social functions regularly, chaperoned GOYA (Greek Orthodox Youth Association – youth group) functions, and attended and volunteered at the food fairs, primarily social-ethnic functions which were centered around being Greek more than being religious. Aspasia did also complement her GOC activity with non-GOC activity, however.

Although Aspasia and others were aware of the limitations of finding the right GOA-born partner for them within the GOC community, they were willing to compromise varying aspects of their selection criteria except their future children’s involvement in ethnic and religious culture. Aspasia was “only half Greek” and unsure of where her hierarchy of preferences would lead her, but she was very sure about what she wanted the end result to be for her future children:

I want my children to experience the faith, the same things that I did, the same traditions, whether or not I marry a Greek person, my children will be baptized Orthodox and I want them to experience everything I did because I’m only half Greek but I mean I still, I’m going to carry on these traditions for the rest of my life and you know so my children are going to be exposed to it.

This adamancy about children’s faith and culture was constant among unmarried participants at all levels of GOC activity. The hierarchy of preference for these participants had a very clear end point: partnering with a non-GOA born individual who accepted that their offspring be raised within the GOC.

While all unmarried participants in this study were sure of their expectations for their future children’s religious/ethnic upbringing, the participants referenced in this section expressed different strengths of preference with regard to their future spouse. Terry and Mary, both leaders and of full Greek ancestry, had thought a great deal about their hierarchy of preference given the



limited availability of fellow GOAs who matched their exact criteria in terms of degree of ethnic/religious identification. Aspasia was less active in the GOC and had multiple ancestries (though she only truly acknowledged her Greek/Orthodox heritage), and her wishes were much less specific in terms of matching her preferences to potential availability in the marriage market.

## ***2. Social Group Influence***

Parental pressures and preferences were the only outside influences mentioned by participants who were deliberating their preference for a spouse. Though all unmarried participants had at least some influence from their families regarding their choice of partner, only some acknowledged it as a factor in their decision. These participants represented all levels of GOC activity, but all were of single ancestry including Terry, Helen, and Jimmy.

Terry, who expressed uncertainty about the availability of other potential mates with his fervor for the traditional GOC culture, also addressed the influence he received from his parents:

Well, my idea of who I'm going to marry if I get married someday has never really changed. I've always thought I would marry a Greek, I've always wanted that, my parents were never really forceful about those kinds of things, but we always knew how they felt about it and how they felt was that our lives would be more enriched and perhaps even easier if we had married within our culture.

While Terry and his family felt that marrying within the culture would be ideal, it was clear that whoever Terry chose as a life partner would have to accept and understand his own dedication to ethnic- and religious-based activities.

Terry attended church regularly, was a member of the AHEPA, the Pan-Ionian Society (philanthropic, regional), a regular at Greek dances and Greek food fairs, and subscribed to Greek newspapers and news internet sites. He paid fairly equal attention to the Greek and

Orthodox aspects of his culture and highlighted that participating in such group-sharing activities helped to maintain his strong identity with and participation in both the ethnic and religious influences in his life. When I asked him how participating in these group venues impacted his own cultural identity, he responded:

Well, out of sharing it comes the maintaining of it, I'd say that's the first thing and most important thing because practicing makes perfect so to speak and that's a sure way to maintain everything I've been immersed in my entire life as far as the Hellenic culture, the church, everything. In sharing it, I participate in social activities that I enjoy. If I go to a Greek night or a dance, I'll usually Greek dance, which I like and that's a nice thing to share with people and most people don't dance on their own at home. Out of sharing it also comes the appreciation for it and the demonstration of respect I think and respect for my parents or ancestors in general.

I found this demonstration of respect for parents/ancestors to be an interesting, intangible form of group influence. The impact of generations of lineage seemed to have some bearing on all participants, given their insistence on future generations adopting the culture they and their ancestors have been practicing for hundreds of years.

Helen, the third-generation HC active participant, also referenced her parents as influences on what she considered to be her own choices. She repeatedly made references to her parents' involvement in and pleasure from her participation in GOC activities, indicating that in participating Helen was also demonstrating respect for her family. In reference to the marriage issue, she indicated in casual conversation after the interview that, "There's something about Greek parents that makes us want a Greek partner." The choice that results can either be

interpreted as a product of socialization or as a genuine interest in preserving the sanctity of one's cultural upbringings. "Greek parents" were an influence nonetheless.

Some participants at varying life stages felt family pressure to marry a GOA was a deterrent to actually doing so. Jimmy, a second generation 100% GOA who at the time of this study was dating (and has since married) a GOA-born woman, commented that in the past he chose not to date GOA women because he felt family pressure (his and theirs) to date them only if he would consider marrying them. But once he felt more mature and prepared for marriage, he began to value the GOA connection in a potential mate much more. He described the opportunity to feel even more Greek in the company of his then-girlfriend, now-wife:

Now I guess I'm a little more mature and I think when I'm with her I feel a little more Greek because her family's VERY Greek, very Greek, focused on Greek community and Greek things, and they cook all the time at their house and they have Greek meals and they go to Greece every summer and the majority of their family's not here, the majority of their family's in Greece so they're very in touch with their Greek side and they call Greece all the time, they must spend a couple of hundred dollars a month on Greek phone calls alone. So they're VERY Greek and I think I feel a little more Greek when I'm especially in their house, they speak Greek continuously in their house, they don't speak any English at all.

Jimmy enjoyed his girlfriend's overwhelmingly Greek surroundings and he, himself, felt a stronger connection to the Greek culture as a result. Much like Helen, while Jimmy acknowledged that parental pressures had an impact on his earlier dating experiences, he later came to value his parents' influences on his own.

Jimmy, a passive participant, discussed the obstacles he encountered in finding time outside of work to participate in church activities:

It's time constraints. ... It's tough. And I guess I'm at the point now where it's like I try to get involved as much as I possibly can but you can't, but you try to stay somewhat visible because there's gonna be a time when I want to get involved and I don't want to be completely out of the loop either.

Jimmy's interest in participating more in the future was not unrelated to his intent to commit to a fellow GOA woman. Although he participated infrequently in church services and in his regional-Greek association, these connections were important to him. Jimmy maintained many close friendships with fellow GOAs he met through the GOC activities throughout this life, including Terry. He described these friends as family, and while he did not regularly participate in GOC activities, he regularly associated with the friends he made through past religious and ethnic GOC activities.

All of the participants who explicitly referenced their parents' influence, eventually adopted the same guidelines in deciding what type of person they should marry. First out of respect for their parents (or, for Jimmy, disrespect), these participants were well aware of their parents' wishes but later realized that they, too, wanted the same thing.

### ***3. Individual Preference***

Because of the younger ages and greater representation of later-generation and multiple ancestry participants in this unmarried sample as compared to those who were married, most of these respondents referred to making a marital decision based on their own experiences and preferences. Again, none of these decisions could have been made without prior outside influences, but the participants viewed their intended choices as personal decisions to be weighed

against the other outside influences. Participants who mentioned personal choice included Jimmy, Steve, Helen, Appolonia, and Daniel. The preferences and intended decisions of these participants varied according to their generational status and ancestral makeup.

Jimmy (passive) and Steve (leader), though on opposite ends of the GOC activity spectrum, were both second-generation participants who made a firm decision to marry only a fellow GOA-born (Greek and Orthodox) woman. Jimmy emphasized the influence of his parents earlier in his life, but he later discussed that maturity brought him to see for himself the value in dating a GOA-born woman. Like many unmarried participants, he made a direct connection between his choice of partner and the upbringing of his future children. Although influenced by his family of origin, he had his own expectations for what he would accept and what he would not accept for his own children. Ultimately, he viewed marrying a non-GOA as a liability to the perpetuation of the GOA culture in his own family:

I think I start placing more value on dating a Greek girl now as I'm getting older because I'd like to see my kids raised the same way I was and you can marry outside of the community or outside of your ethnic background and at the time she might say "Ya, I'm gonna raise them Greek, I'm gonna convert," or this and that, but that's not a guarantee in life, I don't care what anybody says, there's nothing guaranteed. ... I dated one girl for like 2 and a half years who was Catholic. And I know there's no way she would convert to Orthodox, but she said she would raise my kids Greek, you know Orthodox, if needed be. But sometimes you can't go by what they're gonna say because when you're not around, like if I had to work every Sunday, I can't be there to make sure that they're gonna go to church and be raised Greek Orthodox or go to Greek school or whatever, it's not a

guarantee and I guess I wanna have that comfort and that stability, knowing that my kids are gonna be raised, even if they're not raised exactly how I was raised, close enough to it by growing up in the church.

Jimmy was much more skeptical than other unmarried participants about a hierarchy of preference. He felt that expecting a non-GOA woman to convert would not be a reliable enough assurance that his children would be raised adequately in the GOC and as a GOA in general.

Another participant who seemed sure of his wishes, Steve, an HC leader, was most definite about choosing a Greek: "100%, I wouldn't even consider it [not being a Greek]. I want a Greek person. I've thought about it, but I would never do it [marry a non-Greek]. See, that's who I am." Steve was much more active in Greek versus Orthodox activities, so it would make sense that his choice of spouse would include a GOA since a non-GOA could convert to Orthodoxy but could never be Greek.

Helen mentioned above that her parents' encouragement of her participation in GOA/GOC activities and dating impacted her own desire for those things. But Helen also realized from her own experiences to what degree she had internalized her parents' influences. When I asked her if she required that a potential mate be Greek, she clarified her hierarchy of preference and also brought up a personal experience in which she encountered difficulties with a non-GOA partner:

Greek not necessarily. Orthodox, yes. And if there was to be someone who's not Orthodox, which there was, ha ha, he wouldn't necessarily have to convert, but he'd have to agree that the children be raised Orthodox and support that. That would be my big thing, but if I have the option of Greek Orthodox or non-Greek Orthodox, I'd go Greek Orthodox if it came down to it.

In my interview with Helen, she indicated that her past significant other did not work out at least partly due to the ethnic/religious difference. She realized that her own standards, not her parents', prevented this relationship from progressing. Helen has since married a fellow GOA-born man.

Appolonia, a generationally distant and mixed-ancestry AS participant, was searching for a mate with whom she could share a spiritual connection. She said that being of Greek descent and being Orthodox in faith "completely affected" her eventual choice of marriage partner, "the religious much more than the ethnic, but the ethnic too." Consistent with this emphasis on a religious connection to her potential spouse much more than an ethnic one, her lifestyle was more Orthodox than Greek. Her home displayed many religious icons and few artifacts of Greek culture, and she did not cook Greek food, etc. Lacking the spiritual connection or common religious bond she was looking for in a partner, her boyfriend at the time of the study was a source of friction in her life. When she discussed this with me I commented, "but you're still with him," and she responded, "NOT FOR LONG, HA, HA." Indeed, Appolonia has since ended the relationship and married a non-GOA born GOC participant.

Daniel, a third-generation multiple ancestry GOA, infrequently participated in church services and Greek dances. He was a passive participant and was unsure if GOC participation was right for him other than just for tradition and holidays. His generational distance, multiple ancestry, and weak GOC connections left him almost void of outside influences on his intended decision. He had no preference for the ethnicity or religion of his significant other. When I asked if he wished his then-girlfriend (and non-GOA) to adopt the religion, he said, "No. It would be nice and she does love the church, she told me that, but I am hands-off. If she wants to

do it she can do it and I let her know it would be nice. She does pray a lot, she's very enlightened." He, like Appolonia, a fellow generationally distant participant of multiple ancestry, prioritized a spiritual connection more than a denominational religious connection, but when it came to his future children, his preference was clear: "I would like them to be Orthodox." Daniel since married his then-girlfriend in a traditional ceremony in the GOC.

The responses of participants in this section who referenced intending to choose a spouse based on personal preference varied according to single versus mixed ancestry status. Those with single ancestry knew that they did not want anything to jeopardize their expectations for a future life in the GOC and thus knew that they wanted to marry a fellow GOA. The mixed ancestry participants, on the other hand, valued the religious or spiritual connection they hoped to find in a spouse. Although these mixed ancestry participants identified primarily with their Greek/Orthodox background than with any other, the ethnic aspects of their identities were not strong enough to make marrying a GOA a priority.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Generally speaking, the later generation and multiple ancestry GOC participants more often discussed their dating/marital options in terms of individual choice rather than in the context of marriage market availability and group influences, which were more often cited by the earlier generation and single ancestry participants. In terms of gender, contrary to what prior literature suggests, the men (regardless of GOC activity) expressed unwavering convictions more so than women about their choice of marital partner. These particular men were second generation ethnics, with 100% Greek ancestry. They were raised in traditional, patriarchal homes where the man was the sole breadwinner and the woman was the stay-at-home mom in the family. These



men also had one other thing in common: they lived in their parents' home. Their parents raised them to preserve the man's place in the family - to be all but financially taken care of by women, either a mother or a wife (preferably, a Greek one).

Although the ultimate marital choice for many of these unmarried participants is unknown, everyone expressed great interest in passing their ethnic/religious traditions, culture, and participation on to their future children. I did not expect this consistency in preference from all types of participants from different backgrounds, levels of ethnic/religious identification and GOC activity. I expected that those who were less interested in the GOC's activities would be ambivalent about its influence on the lives of their future children. But the unanimity of sentiments regarding cultural continuance leads me to believe that ideas about marriage and family become diffused in institutions such as the GOC, regardless of amount or type of activity. Being a part of an organization, even on the periphery, exposes participants to common cultural expectations communicated, explicitly or subtly, by the leadership. By voluntarily joining or maintaining affiliation with an organization, a participant is already submitting to some basic understanding of what it means to be a participant. Furthermore, through church newsletters, sacramental ceremonies, and other regular activities available and offered to all participants, these expectations are continually reinforced. While I remain curious as to how a GOA who does not participate in the church feels about the issue of endo-/exogamy, unfortunately it can not be determined from this study.

Regardless of whether GOC participants in- or out-marry, their persistence in assuring that their spouse be or become Orthodox, adopt the Greek Orthodox culture, and/or contribute to raising their kids within this culture, will keep the GOC alive. However, if participants' hierarchies of preference continue to evolve and bring more "acceptable" scenarios into the fold

(such as marrying a non-GOA who agrees to participate in Greek/Orthodox culture and the GOC but wishes to devote an equal amount or more time to his/her culture of origin), the future profile of the GOC, its participants, activities, and perhaps vitality will likely change dramatically in coming years.

## **V. GENERATIONAL STATUS AND NON-GOA PARTICIPANTS**

### **A. Introduction to the Chapter**

For new entrants into a society, ethnic institutions assist migrants in adapting to a new setting where friends or associates act as “substitute kin,” and fraternal associations serve as an extension of kinship ties to an otherwise isolated migrant (Smith 1985). But for some later-generation ethnics who have assimilated into the host culture, these institutions still provide a sense of extended family and valued traditions.

Later-generation ethnics participate in ethnic-based institutions today for different reasons than did their immigrant predecessors. Pien Versteegh (2000) describes the situation for second-generation Polish-Americans who continued their membership in Polish organizations out of choice rather than necessity: “Defending the interest of the group was not important anymore, but through the ethnic networks there remained the feeling of belonging to a group. Some values were adapted, others were cherished” (EBSCO html p. 17 of 27). This group no longer felt the need to congregate for group preservation purposes; they just enjoyed the sense of community they felt as a result of belonging.

Of course, not all ethnic Americans participate in ethnic institutions. Participation hinges on, for one thing, the strength of one’s ethnic identity, which is then strengthened further by participation. Identification with ethnicity tends to be strongest among the generations closest to the immigrant experience and weaker for those further away (Alba 1990; Lieberman and Waters 1988). First generation immigrants tend to identify greatly with their ethnic/religious heritage and therefore participate on behalf of that heritage for various reasons including to serve

financial and communal need for adjustment in a new environment (Dhingra 2003:275). Second generation ethnic Americans also tend to practice ethnic culture even when there are competing interests and commitments. The second generation is in a liminal position, close to the immigrant experience and yet in the fold of the American experience. Jean Bacon (1999:147) comments on the communal sense of ethnic identity and participation for many second generationers when she writes about the collective ethnic identity among children of Asian Indian immigrants: “Everyone knows someone who is involved in the second generation organizations, and most people at least occasionally attend organization-sponsored events, or participate in chatrooms with other members of the second generation.... Few members of the second generation remain so isolated that they are unaware of the collective, generational sense of ethnicity based in second generation formal organizations.” Third generation ethnic-Americans tend to identify with their ancestry more symbolically or superficially (Dhingra 2003). In this chapter, I examine how participants’ experiences in the GOC vary according to generational status (for Greek Orthodox American-born (GOA) participants) or non-Greek ancestry (for non-GOA-born participants).

Although previous research has addressed ethnic religion’s role in the adjustment process of immigrants and maintaining group identity and culture, its effect on later-generation ethnics has not been documented to any great extent (Chong 1998). One such study is Kelly Chong’s work on second-generation Korean-Americans. He finds that second-generation Korean-Americans display a high level of ethnic religious participation despite a considerable level of economic and cultural integration into the mainstream society. This group is motivated by a feeling of racial marginalization as well as a desire for ethnic fellowship and to preserve their ethnicity and culture for future generations.

In terms of gender, since women are more likely than men to practice and promote ethnic culture to their families (di Leonardo 1984) and are expected to more strongly identify with and participate on behalf of both their ethnicity and religion than men (Alba 1990; di Leonardo 1984; Stolzenberg et al. 1995), their participation from generation to generation will impact the vitality of ethnoreligious organizations. Youth participation is also important to the future of ethnic religions. Ram Cnaan et al. (2004) argue, contrary to predictions of secularization theory (Berger 1967) that the importance of religion will weaken over time and society will become more secular, that youth in America today report that they view religion as very important. The parents of today's youth, largely of the baby boomer generation, report encouraging their children to find personal meaning in religion which may take forms other than attending religious services. So a decline in participation in an organized religious activity, an obvious form of religious observance, may not be a good indication of secularization if people begin to participate in more individualized or perhaps symbolic (Gans 1994) forms of religious practice. It is thus important to analyze changing forms of ethnic religious identification and participation on their own terms and not as simple indicators of ethnic deterioration or resurgence.

No matter in what form, Paul Eid (2003:33-34) highlights that in the U.S. "between 60 and 66 percent of people continue to identify with the religious group to which they belong, whether effectively or nominally. In other words, people still harbour a sense of belonging to a wider community of believers with whom they share a common memory, common institutions, references, and rituals – be the latter performed regularly or only circumstantially to give meaning to key life events." The impact of increasingly symbolic and individualistic interpretations of religion is clear among succeeding generations of immigrants. Thus, focusing on GOC participants, a group which does actively participate in organized religious (and ethnic)

activities, provides an interesting contrast to the general patterns of declining ethnic religious organized participation over generations.

## **B. Later-Generation and Convert Participation Today**

### ***1. Why Do Later Generation Ethnics Participate Today?***

For groups whose ethnic and religious group are one in the same, it is difficult to discern which qualities of the group attract its participants. Some people may be more oriented toward the ethnic aspects of the church and others may be more drawn to the religious aspects. For example, Paul Eid (2003:43) finds in his study of Arab-Canadian ethno-religious identity that “religious social affairs draw a majority of Arab second-generationers together who are strongly committed to ethnic identity maintenance, but only moderately (or averagely) committed to religious identity strength.”

The religious versus ethnic participation of participants can be affected by the range of both types of activity offered by the institution. As Alba and Nee (1997:835) indicate, “The desire to find ethnic modes of behavior and expression, [then], is likely to succeed where the supply-side of ethnicity is fairly rich in possibility.” So if many options are provided by a group, potential participants are more likely to be attracted to the activities associated with that group. Joanne Van Dijk (1998) elaborates on this idea of what is also termed “institutional completeness” (Breton 1964), when an ethnic group maintains a large number of organizations such as churches, newspapers, and welfare organizations. She notes that where there are high levels of institutional completeness, immigrants in particular tend to be closely integrated within their group and the level of ethnic persistence tends to be high. Thus, the supply of ethnic-

versus religious-oriented activities impacts individual demand/participation in those respective activities.

In the context of a modern society, religion can clash with some of its basic tenets: cultural pluralism and individualism, rationalization, and the changing of women's roles (Davidman 1990). The principles of freedom more than obligation, pragmatic thinking more than leaps of faith, and feminism more than subordination of women may not correspond with the oftentimes traditional principles on which a religion is founded. Each religion responds to modernity in different ways such as by resisting it and encapsulating its participants within the religious community or by adapting and accommodating its teachings to incorporate modern views of the world. An example of the adaptation method, modern Orthodox Judaism prioritizes women's roles in the home but also allows for secondary fulfillment outside of the home (Davidman 1991). Indeed, there is a delicate balance to maintain on the part of the religious institutions: appealing to the search for traditional, spiritual direction in life while also allowing for modern lifestyles and personal fulfillment.

## ***2. What about Religious Converts?***

How do ethnicity and religion interact for religious converts whose ethnicity is different than that of the majority of church participants? H. B. Cavalcanti and H. Paul Chalfant (1994) find in their study of American converts to Russian Orthodoxy that converts expressed "a continued search for a religious faith that could provide a community of faith in which they were comfortable." These converts highlighted that conversion was not the result of an individualistic search for a doctrine most appropriate for them as much as an attraction to the collective life of the church. According to Cavalcanti and Chalfant (1994:449), "[c]ollective life is the creative energy that makes a group out of individuals and infuses them with a shared world view."

Especially, when prospective converts are accepted by a “high-boundary”<sup>14</sup> group, they are likely to develop a strong religious or spiritual connection with others in that group (Jenkins 2003).

How does converts’ participation fare once they have entered their new religion? The findings are disparate. C. Kirk Hadaway (1980:452) finds that converts are more serious about their faith than those born into the religion. He explains this is the case because converts are “seekers” who, because of a strong intrinsic commitment, are seeking a church that corresponds with their beliefs and sense of community. Those born into the religion, on the other hand, are viewed as having inherited the church of their parents. They attend because of tradition more than personal religious fervor. Alternatively, John F. Seggar and Reed H. Blake (1970:204) find large numbers of convert participants who only meet the minimal requirements for membership, but then fall away or become inactive.

Some researchers have found that participation in an ethnic/religious community can be appealing to various types of individuals in a context of flexibility rather than rigidity. Andrew Buckser (2000) found in his study of a Jewish community in Copenhagen, Denmark that although this community exhibited extensive interaction with non-Jewish culture, it maintained membership and vitality by providing flexible contexts for participation so that Jews with diverse understandings and interpretations of the culture could partake in it collectively. This community provided a symbolic space where members could construct their own understandings of self and group. The members shared a distinction in the most general sense from the larger Danish society, but they did not necessarily agree about what Jewishness meant, what it imposed, and what practices it espoused. Therefore this group offered room for pluralism within

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<sup>14</sup> Kathleen Jenkins (2003: 407) defines high-boundary groups as those with “high levels of social and ideological encapsulation,” characteristic of groups such as Greek Orthodox Church participants who generally share one exclusive ethnicity and religion.



an already distinct group. In sum, in the absence of distinct neighborhoods, with increasing intermarriage rates, and the diminishing of distinctly ethnic behavior and even occupations, the ethnic/religious organization can merely provide an arena in which a person can identify and participate on behalf of his/her ethnicity/religion regardless of its different meanings attributed by each member. This flexibility can, therefore, accommodate participants of varying generational statuses and ancestries and varying needs for ethnic/religious culture.

Along with the flexibility, Christerson and Emerson (2003) state that for multiethnic congregations in particular, “having common but abstract principles are highly important for multiethnic congregations” (p. 179), so as to maximize participation but also minimize conflict. They also discuss that to thrive, multiethnic congregations must “devote much effort to developing cross-ethnic networks among its congregants” (p. 166). Therefore, the authors emphasize that flexibility and abstraction allow for individual identification within the church, but commonalities and networks are also needed to sustain the church and its diverse settings in the long run.

As seen from the literature, generational and ancestral (for converts) differences in participation in ethnoreligious institutions exist among many ethnic American (and Canadian) groups. However, the potential conflicts associated with such differences can be minimized in flexible environments which emphasize the value of cross-group networking. Furthermore, future participation hinges not only on the supply of ethnoreligious activity but also on the reasons why later-generation ethnic-Americans continue to choose to participate when it is no longer crucial to their adaptation in the U.S.

### **C. Reasons for Participation**

In this section I describe the reasons for participation described by GOC participants of varying generational statuses who were both interviewed and observed as part of this study. The tables below display the positioning of each participant by generational status/ancestry, amount (Table 8) and primary type (Table 9) of activity. The majority of participants in this study were first or second generation Greek-Orthodox American and participated equally in ethnic-based as well as religious-based events. Participants of the third generation and non-GOA born participants more often participated in predominantly religious-based activities.

**Table 8. Crosstabulation of Participants – Amount of Activity by Generational Status**

Generation	Amount of Activity		
	Passive	Active	Leader
First/ Second	Anna (HC)	Aspasia (AS)	John (AS)
	Chryssoula (HC)	Beba (HC)	Dimitris (AS)
	Koula (AS)	Gina (HC)	Perry (AS)
	Jimmy (AS)	Margaret (AS)	Mary (AS)
		Stefos (AS)	Lakis (AS)
		Sofia (HC)	Steve (HC)
			Stelios (HC)
		Terry (HC)	
Third	Daniel (AS)	Appolonia (AS)	Vangi (AS)
		Helen (HC)	Jerry (HC)
		Pari (HC)	
		Tony (HC)	
Non-GOA- born	Jody (AS)	*Bud (HC)	Matthew (HC)
		Kelly (AS)	Vanna (HC)

\*Denotes only non-Orthodox participant.

**Table 9. Crosstabulation of Participants – Type of Activity by Generational Status**

Generation	Primary Type of Activity			
	Religious	Ethnic	Equal	
First/ Second	John (AS)	Aspasia (AS) Steve (HC)	Anna (HC) Beba (HC) Chryssoula (HC) Stelios (HC) Dimitris (AS) Koula (AS) Jimmy (AS) Margaret (AS)	Lakis (AS) Stefos (AS) Sofia (HC) Perry (AS) Terry (HC) Mary (AS) Gina (HC)
Third	Appolonia (AS) Daniel (AS) Vangi (AS) Jerry (HC)	Helen (HC)	Pari (HC) Tony (HC)	
Non-GOA-born	Jody (AS) Matthew (HC) Vanna (HC)		*Bud (HC) Kelly (AS)	

\*Denotes only non-Orthodox participant.

***1. Why Do Later Generation Ethnics Participate Today?***

In the current climate of widespread symbolic ethnicity and religion, organizations such as the GOC, where later generation participation remains active, provide unique opportunities to understand reasons for ethnic/religious participation. Although they are broad categories, religious, ethnic, and a combination of both types of interests capture the basic motivations for participation in contemporary GOC activities.

*a. Religious Bond.* For the majority of third generation participants in the sample, a connection to Greek Orthodoxy and to the GOC's religious-based activities such as church service, bible study, and, for the women, Philoptochos, anchored participation in the GOC. Three out of the four participants in this category who participated primarily in religious-based activities also had multiple ancestral background. Given the combination of being further down the generation chain than others and of possessing other ethnic heritage, the primarily ethnic aspects of the GOC did not resonate with third generation GOAs. They felt more comfortable and welcomed in the Orthodox activities of the church, which did not impose any ethnic barriers to participation, such as the Greek language or Greek dancing. Even if parts of the church service, for example, were carried out in the Greek language, the activity itself was welcoming and all-inclusive: a participant could choose to sing along with the hymns or sit quietly and pray.

Appolonia, a third generation active AS woman of mixed ethnic heritage, told me about her participation more in the religious aspects of the church, given her place on the generation chain. When I asked her if her participation in GOC activities had anything to do with her ethnic affinities, she replied: "It had more to do with it when I was younger I think. As I got older it has less to do with it. I think because I relate less to them, so far down the generation chain. ... Although I still identify with my heritage because that's important to me as all of my nationalities. I try to recognize them all. But I support Orthodoxy and the Orthodox ways." Of course Appolonia's sentiments reflect an interaction between her multiple ancestry status as well as her generational status. She was torn between multiple ethnic heritages and practices, and she also did not have that first or second generation exposure to a Greek-speaking family member. Even though Appolonia had competing ancestries, she grew up in the GOC and identified primarily as "Greek" rather than as any of her other heritages. As she grew up, her Greek peer

group became geographically dispersed, and while their Greek-born and -speaking parents helped them maintain a Greek identity, Appolonia found herself better equipped to identify with the religious part of her heritage.

Daniel, a third generation AS passive man also of mixed heritage, discussed the distinction between participating in the GOC out of an ethnic versus religious connection. He described a feeling of inferiority compared to other GOAs he encountered in the GOC based on “feeling” less Greek compared to others. When I asked him what attracted him to the GOC, the social, religious, ethnic, or some other draw, he responded quickly, “The religious, definitely... I don’t feel as Greek as other people. Maybe I put that on myself. I say I’m Greek, Italian, and Polish but I was raised Greek Orthodox. And I feel more Greek than... I mean I don’t feel Polish or Italian, you know [laughs]. But at the same time I don’t think I feel quite as Greek as someone else.” Daniel, like Appolonia, was generationally distant and also had competing ancestries, and felt more Greek than anything else. But somehow he felt as if that was not enough to fully partake in and feel drawn to ethnic-based activities within the GOC. His passive status was not unrelated to these feelings of inferiority and displacement.

Primarily religious-based engagement in the GOC, like that of Appolonia and Daniel, was a product of both internal and external forces. Their individual preferences and affinity for religious activities drew them in, but their perceptions of how well they fit in with the rest of the participants also played a part. Appolonia and Daniel also had multiple ancestries, which further differentiated them from the way they perceived other participants in the GOC.

One participant, though equally involved in religious and ethnic based activities, was a second generation AS leader who, at this time in her life, was interested in learning more about her religious heritage, which was in the past overshadowed by her ethnicity. While Eid (2003)

found that religious functions drew participants who were more enthusiastic about their ethnic nature, Mary had a profound interest in upholding her connection to Orthodoxy via the GOC. She explained how having a Greek-born father made identifying with her ethnicity easy. Ethnic aspects of her culture, such as language and music, were easy to pick up given her high exposure to it in her childhood home. The challenging part for her was understanding more about the religion that, to some degree, was only emphasized in the church. She elaborated, “I have no fear of losing the Greek part of my life because it was so strongly interwoven with growing up with the music and the food and the family. So I think that comes a little more at ease, you don’t have to learn so much about it, there’s so much to do in learning about the church.” While the Greek aspects of her life were more sensational and easier to practice day-to-day in the context of her Greek-speaking dad, Mary, later in life, sought to understand more about the religion that supported her ethnic practice. In their analysis of immigrant Thai Buddhists and third-generation Jews, Wendy Cadge and Lynn Davidman (2006) found that even when their study participants described their religious identities as ascribed, or a matter of birth, they still needed to choose to participate in the religion in order to feel true membership in their respective community. So even though Mary felt she was born into her religion, she also chose to learn more about it as an adult so that she could feel truly integrated in her culture.

The religious bond these three participants described did not discount their bond to their ethnicity, but for varying reasons they felt more attracted to and connected to their religion at the time of this study. However, as Appolonia and Mary mentioned, at different stages of their lives, their comments may have differed.

**b. Ethnic Bond.** In general, the second generation participants were most interested in participating in the ethnic facets of GOC life. For even passive second generation participants

such as Chryssoula and Jimmy, the connection to Greek aspects of the culture remained important. They participated in the GOC, though irregularly, because they viewed it as a conduit to the authentic culture of Greece that they enjoyed so much. Chryssoula said she listened to Greek music in her car and Jimmy described Greek music as essential to any GOC function and as a common cultural bond in the GOC community. Jimmy, though not an active participant, relied on GOC activities to keep his connection to the ethnic aspects of the culture alive. He said: “When you go to a Greek function, you get a couple songs in your head, you get in the mood, so you get in your car and you listen to them or at home you listen to them for a day or two which is kind of cool because if you don’t have the festivals and the bouzoukia [Greek string instrument] going on here at all then you lose completely.” For Chryssoula and Jimmy, the ethnic aspects of the culture they craved were accessible outside of the GOC, via music and family, and only periphery involvement otherwise satisfied their needs. Their infrequent activity should not be interpreted as a disinterest in the culture propagated by the GOC.

One second generation AS leader, Lakis, participated equally in religious and ethnic activities but the pride driving his participation was ethnic based. He described how ethnicity provides a sense of distinction and foundation:

I always use colors as the analogy... If you look at America in a cross-section, everything’s gray. But when you have that ethnic heritage, it makes you blue or you’re Irish and you’re proud of your green, it basically just gives you that, you stand out a little bit and you have something to hold onto and I think that the reason a lot of the younger generation is so lost is because they have nothing to cling to. And this gives our kids a sense of purpose and a sense of family and a sense of well-being, and I think that really helps.



It was clear that Lakis had thought through this sentiment before.

Lakis later mentioned his wish to instill in his children the sense of tradition and family that he cherished even though he was married to a non-GOA-born convert. He revealed a “tug and pull” relationship with his wife in reference to her support for their children’s active participation in the GOC. Specifically, when I asked him, “Is it important to you that your children are very involved in a lot of Greek things?,” he responded: “It’s important to me, it might not be as important to my wife because she’s not Greek, so I guess there’s a tug-and-pull type of situation where she might think that maybe her being involved in a [secular] choir is more important than maybe going to Cretan [Greek-regional] dance practice. So there is a tug and a pull but I would like, myself, personally, that they be more involved.” Although marrying a non-GOA-born woman did not affect his own activity within the GOC,<sup>15</sup> Lakis’ choice of partner surely influenced the ethnic- (as well as religious-) based participation of his later generation children. Lakis feared that the “tug and pull” between his and his wife’s priorities would eventually lead to his kids’ disinterest in their ethnic heritage and a lack of color in their lives, to use his analogy.

Uncharacteristic of the typical convert, Jody, a non-GOA-born passive but once active participant in mostly religious activities, also reported enjoying the ethnic aspects of the GOC and its culture because she, too, grew up in ethnic surroundings of her own:

Well, I think that I appreciate [GOA] family orientation a lot because I was raised in an Italian household even though my father was Polish, we really had much more ties to the Italian community because the whole neighborhood was Italian and I really do appreciate family and I like traditions and the Greeks have a lot of

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<sup>15</sup> Lakis reported spending half of his time participating in church-related activities. I probed and asked, “Half of your out-of-work time?” He replied, “No, half of my time, period.”

traditions. And so I carry on those traditions, some Italian, some Polish, and some you know a lot Greek now that we've adopted. But also socially I enjoy the dancing and the fun, we have a lot of fun and that's always great.

Jody identified greatly with her own ethnic heritages and had an affinity for ethnic traditions in general. But she went out of her way to practice the specifically Greek traditions for her family. Jody discussed making "finikia," a Greek cookie that involves a lot of time to make. She said, "Even to this day if I'm a little bit busy and can't make finikia which take a little longer, I'll say I'm not making finikia then I'll force myself to make them because I think that's important, it's a tradition." Jody's insistence on making finikia is something that even few GOA-born participants would insist on doing.

For these second generation participants, as well as for Jody, pride in Greek tradition, music, and cuisine, inspired participation in the GOC's activities, however frequently or infrequently. This pride extended beyond the GOC into their homes, their cars, and everywhere they went.

*c. Combined Religious and Ethnic Bond.* Some participants could not separate their interest in ethnic versus religious aspects of GOC offerings. Stelios, a second generation HC leader, attributed his active participation in the GOC to what he viewed as an inseparable tie between ethnicity and religion in the GOC. He described his pride in the ethnic and religious unity within his church: "There's a direct tie between the nationality and the religion, and that's where the difference lies. We're Greek and we're Orthodox, we go to a Greek Orthodox Church. Other people, they're Italian, they're Polish, they go to a Catholic church, it's like the United Nations." Sofia, a second generation HC active participant also valued the connection between Greek and Orthodox aspects of her GOC life. She said, "I mean it all ties together. We're fortunate to have

all that in one group.” The double pleasure of having two sources of identity and practice intersect in one place can be attractive, especially given the increasing diversity in interest and identity among participants, as demonstrated by the participant profiles in this study.

However, in the face of a more diverse GOC population, the question over the weight religion or ethnicity should carry in the GOC has become a source of tension. Terry, a second generation HC leader, was the most vocal about this issue. He felt strongly that the church should continue to maintain both Orthodox and Greek traditions. He described his mixed emotions concerning the move toward emphasizing the *Orthodox* in Greek Orthodox so as to be more inclusive of the increased convert presence in the church:

There are more mixed marriages and our parish in particular has probably the largest number of converts out of any in the diocese and that’s great. I think it’s wonderful, but there are I think some converts and even some Greek that are further removed from Greece than I that are not as, they don’t consider the Hellenic [Greek] aspect of the church as important as I do.... The ethnicity to some is really, in their opinion there’s no need for the emphasis on it, there’s no need for Greek school, according to some, there’s no need for a festival, which I would be very sad to see go.

Such fears, if realized, could dramatically change the direction and social landscape of the church.

Although the third generation and convert participants did not show much variation in participation by gender, first and second generation participants, and more specifically those who participated equally in religious and ethnic activities, differed in their participation in organizations *outside* of the GOC. Many of the female first/second generation participants

indicated that their participation in GOC activities, whether frequent or rare, was their only source of group interaction at the time of this research. On the other hand, most of the males in this category were also very involved in other, non-GOC community activities. Many of these men were thus leaders in their outside communities as well as leaders (actual or symbolic, based on past activity) in the GOC. It seems that, for women, participation in the GOC was their main source of community involvement more generally, and for men, it was an extension of their leadership role in the community at large. This finding is a function of gender in that many of the women in this study never worked outside of the home and had a very different experience from the men, who all worked outside of the home, even throughout retirement (i.e. Perry and Stefos). Given that the younger women in this study were more active in non-GOC activities than their older female counterparts, age, generation (cohort generation, not ethnic generation), and stage in the life-cycle also played a part (Stolzenberg et al. 1995).

This section identifies three different patterns I found among participants' experiences in the GOC and the culture it supports: some emphasized religion, some emphasized ethnicity and some emphasized the connection between both. While later generation and mixed ancestry participants tended to highlight the religious aspects of the GOC that drew them in, and second generation and single ancestry participants tended to value the ethnic and ethnoreligious aspects more, the qualities driving those preferences were quite interesting. For example, Daniel and Appolonia did not simply like the religious activities of the church for their content; rather, they felt more welcomed and accepted and comfortable there based on how they viewed fellow participants in those activities. And while Chryssoula and Jimmy did like the content of ethnic centered activities, Lakis commented more about his feelings of pride in identifying with a cultural history. Stelios' and Sofia's appreciation for the convenience of having both types of

activity in one place differed from Terry's sense of advocacy for retaining the ethnic along with the religious aspects of the church. In all, these patterns revealed that although some participants indicated a similar 'end' or reason for participation (an attraction to religious or ethnic or both types of activities), the 'means' to that end varied for each participant.

## ***2. What about Religious Converts?***

The converts became a necessary part of this study because although marriage across ethnic/religious boundaries was on the rise in the GOC, the non-GOA-born spouses were joining the church as active participants rather than the GOA-born individuals becoming less active in the church. In fact, although theories addressing generational status predict a decrease in ethnic identity and participation as the number of generations away from original heritage increases, church leaders at both parishes indicated that participation in their church had increased significantly over the years despite an absence of large-scale migration from Greece. One leader stated that, "the membership has been on the increase and I haven't seen a decline at all. Quite the contrary, I've seen growth." And another leader also indicated that, "Parish membership has increased *tremendously*" and the number of parish families doubled in the last ten or so years. Both leaders credited increased convert participation as a contributor to this increase.

I wanted to find out how the convert population experienced the GOC as well as how the GOA-born population perceived them. So, I first spoke to the spiritual leaders/priests of both GOCs to assess how converts have adopted and adapted the GOC's qualities, both ethnically- and religiously-speaking. One church's leader highlighted converts' spiritual focus in the absence of ethnic distractions. He explained:

Well there is a different dynamic at work for the convert, there's no question about that. They do not have the maintenance of their ethnic tradition so therefore

from the point of view of approaching the church purely as a spiritual institution, they can focus more clearly on those particular values, they understand that the church is about Christ, the Gospel, and focus primarily on religious issues of that nature.

On the other hand, he also emphasized the importance and uniqueness of ethnic tradition in the church. Surprisingly, he added that this uniqueness contributes to the attraction of converts:

However, having said that we must also recognize that the ethnic element of the church, which is really a very important element, has been able to maintain a continuity with the generations that the Protestant church has not been able to do because of a lack of sense of identity. And that sense of identity, not only with the faith which is of course paramount, but also with the ethnic tradition allows the Orthodox Church to grow within that traditional base. Most Protestants don't have a tradition they can follow. So they can skip from one denomination to the other like it was nothing. It's not as important to them to be faithful to a particular tradition. Whereas a historical church like the Orthodox Church emphasizes both the religion and the ethnic character of the church and allows for continuity. So I can go back, see back many generations in my own family, my children will do the same thing and your children's children will in all likelihood do the same thing. But it shows that there is that sense of a connection. And that's something that has drawn the converts. They have found in that something that they can identify with because they like that part of our church that IS rooted in something that has that kind of a value to it.

Although convert participants in the GOC engaged more in religious- rather than ethnic-based activities, the ethnic foundation of the church was appealing to them nonetheless, as was indicated by Jody's remarks in the last section when she commented that she enjoyed practicing Greek traditions.

Wondering how the converts received the Greek aspects of GOC life, I asked another leader, "Do the converts tend to take on some of the Greek aspects of life, like learning the language and...?" He indicated a mixed response, "Some do, in some cases, they like to have some familiarity with the language, but most don't." He later advertised the church philosophy of acceptance without imposition by saying, "In other words here we don't give the message to a convert that you have to become a Greek first before you can become an Orthodox Christian."

In response to the question about convert participation in the long term, this leader explained:

We're finding that the converts are the most religious...they're far more committed to the faith, they're the ones that go to confession, participate in services the most, and who are the most active in terms of really understanding and involving themselves in the faith. And of course because they made the commitment out of, it wasn't something that wasn't a birthright, it wasn't something they were born into, but they made a very conscious decision in their lives after many times a long spiritual journey to embrace the faith. So it was a great cost to themselves. They switched from what they were before to come to us and has to have a far greater appreciation of the value of it. Whereas the ethnic members in general do not have a very strong sense of the value of their faith because they never had to fight for it, they never had to think through the meaning

of it for their lives, it was just something they inherited, and as a result they were never able to have that sense of maybe ownership as much as they should.

Whereas the converts have a much stronger sense of ownership since they paid a much bigger price to acquire it.

As Hadaway (1980) found, the leaders of the two churches studied here viewed convert participation as strong, focused, and enduring. In fact, when I asked another leader to compare convert versus GOA-born participation in the religious aspects of the church he playfully responded, “The converts win. If it was a basketball game, they’re up by 20 [laughs]... It wasn’t a habit, it wasn’t inherited, that they mishandled it.”

Furthermore, converts were not restricted to participant status in these churches; they were also leaders within the church’s organizations. Convert participant Kelly, a leader herself, discussed GOA-born versus convert leadership in the women’s AS Philoptochos: “We have probably 50 members [in Philoptochos] OK and we might get 10-14 in a meeting, and that’s typical. I can tell you that all of the officers ARE NOT Greek. We’re all Presbyterians I guess.” Kelly also inferred that, given their more recent leadership roles, convert women brought modernity, youth, and a revitalization to the Philoptochos in particular. She explained, “It’s interesting because when I first, when we got married and I started in the church, I was told you have to join the Daughters [of Penelope], because the Philoptochos is the old ladies. I mean and that’s the attitude people have. And that’s completely changed now.” Indeed, when I sat in on the Philoptochos meetings, they were tailored for middle-aged female participants rather than “old ladies.”



Lakis offered a similar observation about the AS choir and the allure of the GOC to converts on the whole, “If you look at our choir and you look at the people in our choir at the church, most of them are converts and are not of Greek origin... So it’s an amazing phenomenon. But I think Orthodoxy provides stability and it’s a whole way of life rather than just going to church on Sunday and if you encompass the whole genre it’s really just a way of life and a lot of people that enter it, like it.” This way of life that includes not only religious direction but also ethnic flavor (the choir sings both English and Greek hymns) can be attractive to those who had neither or who did not have them in one place before.

Even the governing body of the church, the parish council, had convert representation. Stelios, an HC leader, described, “We have a lot of converts on the Parish Council. There’s 15 people, we probably have five [converts], which is a pretty big number.” He then qualified that of the five, four were married to GOAs and one had converted without the spousal tie to the church.

At least one non-GOA participant in particular, however, did not see himself as fully accepted by the GOAs of his church. Bud, a non-GOA-born active HC man who did not convert to Orthodoxy, had an experience that was different from the non-GOA-born women:

It’s tough to break into a community. We’re located close to this one particular church. They treat us very well. BASICALLY. Some don’t, but basically they treat us very well. And even so, you just don’t know a lot of people who are REALLY good friends, you know, like you grew up with... If you’re not grown up with the group as a man, I noticed this among the men over here, if you didn’t grow up with them even though there are a lot of strangers coming in, they’re all of Greek background, you’re just not part of the group, you just aren’t. You know,

you can go there and work and whatever, but you're just not part of the group unless you grew up with the background.

Though Bud was active in both ethnic- and religious-based events, he seemed to have never fully transitioned as a full participant of the church. Bud attributed his woes to his status as a man, but he also never converted to Orthodoxy and remained part of his church of upbringing. It is likely that this combination of attributes contributed to his feelings of isolation from the rest of the group.

Bud was my only male non-GOA-born participant in this study. There were others in the community but they were definitely not as involved in the GOC as the non-GOA-born women. Therefore, Bud's remarks about not being embraced by the GOA men may be reflective of a bigger gender issue occurring in the non-GOA and/or convert sub-community. Unfortunately, this interesting finding was not apparent to me until after the study was completed, so I was not able to adequately capture the female versus male non-GOA experience in the GOC. Also, all non-GOA-born participants in this study entered the religion via marrying a GOA. I did not explore how experiences varied based on the convert's source of recruitment into the GOC, and I did not pursue questions about the price paid by converts, so to speak, for entering the religion or participating in the GOC, more generally, and potentially abandoning another religion or culture or way of life.

Although Bud was also in a different situation from many other non-GOA participants in that he and his wife never had children, some of the other converts sampled in this study had surprising things to say about *their* posterity. Both Jody (mentioned above) and Vanna, convert participants, appreciated the Greek and Orthodox aspects of the GOA culture and were in fact committed to passing along that culture to their children. Vanna, a leader in primarily religious

activities, discussed that her grandchildren (of mixed heritage) had not been baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church and that this “disturbed” her greatly. Converts like Vanna did not enter the GOC for their own sake; they joined as committed participants to its current state but also to its future and that of their children.

#### **D. Conclusion**

While, on the whole, third generation GOAs and convert participants felt most connected to the religious activities in the GOC, first and second generation GOAs valued the ethnic as well as ethnoreligious (combination) activities more. For those later generations and converts who only minimally identified with the Greek aspects of the culture, they appreciated the religion’s tie to the ethnic history and traditions, upon which the church was founded. For the first and second generation participants who equally participated in ethnic and religious activities, gender impacted what role the GOC played in their lives: for women (particularly older women), as a primary source of group interaction or, for men, an additional outlet for leadership in the broader community.

For groups who share one religion and one recognized ethnicity, and particularly for groups like GOAs who share a religion that is specific to their ethnic group and not broadly shared with other ethnic groups, religion interacts with ethnicity to provide sanction and legitimation for ethnic culture, values, and practice via the church, even for the later-generation and convert participants. This link between ethnic and religious that was so appealing to participants of all generations including the converts will, however, become an increasing source of contention, as Terry’s sentiments indicated. GOC participants exhibited reverence for both Greek and Orthodox culture, but given the varying interests of the generational statuses, the

proportion of ethnic versus religious activities may need to change in order to accommodate the demand. If later generation participation continues and convert participation continues to grow alongside intermarriage rates, over time, the ethnic cultural traits that came so naturally to earlier generation participants like Mary may be difficult to find. Regardless of its future, the delicate balance I observed in the GOC attracted and engaged, at least to some degree, participants of many generational statuses and ethnic/religious origins... a noteworthy accomplishment among white ethnic/religious groups today.

## **VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **A. Theoretical Foundation for this Research**

In response to the large body of literature documenting the demise of white ethnic and religious practice in the U.S., in this study, I examined some of the attitudes and participation trends among participants in two GOCs whose membership is growing rather than diminishing. I was interested in exploring why and how participants participate in ethnic organizations and practices when their social situations might predispose them to the more symbolic mode of ethnic participation. I was trying to understand what attracted (and how the church accommodated the interests of) those who might be viewed as least likely to participate in white ethnic organizations such as those who are many generations removed from immigration and those of mixed ancestry, who have married outside the GOA community, who are converts to the GOC, or who reside in suburban communities.

I was particularly interested in exploring the marital preferences (for unmarried participants) and generational statuses of these participants because these factors are predictive of future behavior and trends for church participation overall. Among the unmarried, how they thought about their expectations for the ethnic/religious background of their spouse served as an indicator of the importance of ethnicity and religion in their lives. Whatever decision they made about the ethnic/religious background of a spouse would have an impact on their family's future participation in the church. And with respect to generation, I was interested in observing if there were differences in the experience of participants of each generational status that might suggest

trends for future generations of participants. I was also interested in how converts and non-GOA-born participants experienced the church, given their increased representation in the parish population. To answer these questions, I explored how unmarried participants viewed their own marital prospects in the context of desired religious/ethnic characteristics of a partner and reasons why participants of varying generational statuses and ancestral backgrounds were attracted to and engaged in GOC activities.

Since Warner and Srole (1945) first introduced the idea that ethnic maintenance would decline with every successive generation in the U.S., scholars have been quick to associate any change in the *way* ethnicity is practiced with the predicted demise of ethnic distinction. Specifically, theories of pluralism, symbolic ethnicity/religion, bumpy line assimilation, and invented ethnicity all imply a weakening of identity and its corresponding ethnic/religious cultural foundations despite the continued significance of ethnicity and religion in the lives of white Americans.

This research presents a case in which the premise of these theories does not apply. The qualities of white ethnics that are typically associated with contemporary ethnic identity and practice (later generation, mixed ancestry, etc.) do not have the same impact within the context of the GOC and perhaps within ethnoreligious organizations more generally. Rather, this population serves as a prototype for the preservation of ethnic/religious organizational practice among later-generation and otherwise structurally-assimilated (Gordon 1964) group participants. The results from this study can therefore inform under what conditions ethnic practice can be sustained and even cultivated to attract new participants.

The Greek Orthodox Church participants I studied identified greatly with and in fact participated in organized activity on behalf of their ethnicity and/or religion. Although

participants of the GOC did not escape assimilative forces such as intermarriage and suburbanization, the compromise between traditional and more modern aspects of the organization (i.e. multiple languages represented during church services) allowed for all willing parishioners to find an activity in which they were comfortable participating. Not all parishioners felt comfortable in all activities, but the variety offered a supply for each type of demand (Alba and Nee 1997). The traditional/ethnic aspects of the churches, such as Greek language in the church and Greek heritage festivals and other activities emphasizing the Greek aspects of the culture, are being challenged by their increasingly diverse parish populations who identify more with the religion that requires no biological tie to a culture. Given such questions confronting the changing face GOC, the future focus of its activities remains uncertain.

### **B. My Research Questions**

This research asked the following questions:

1. What are the preferences of unmarried Greek Orthodox Church participants regarding the ethnic/religious identity and background of a lifelong partner?
2. How do individuals of varying generational statuses experience the Greek Orthodox Church?

### **C. Summary of Findings and Contributions to Theory**

With regard to marital preferences of unmarried participants, based on predicted strength of ethnic identity (Alba 1995; Kalmijn 1998; Kulczycki and Lobo 2002) and the influences of marriage market, social group, and individual preference (Kalmijn 1998), I expected earlier generation and single ancestry participants to communicate more assured preferences for a GOA

partner and later generation and multiple ancestry participants to be more ambivalent about the ethnic/religious background of a prospective partner. Generally speaking, the later generation and multiple ancestry GOC participants more often discussed their dating/marital options in terms of individual choice rather than in the context of marriage market availability and group influences, which were more often cited by the earlier generation and single ancestry participants. This finding is reflective of the proximity to genuine ethnic culture that early generation and single ancestry participants share. The competing interests of more Americanized activity and/or of another ethnic culture are not present for these populations.

Stated preferences themselves also varied along the lines of generation and ancestry, with earlier generation and single ancestry participants showing greater interest in marrying a fellow GOA than later generation and multiple ancestry participants. Although not all of the participants who were unmarried at the time of this research have since married, the ultimate choice of those who have married did match that of their preference. While my findings supported prior research, this study can serve to re-emphasize the subjectivity of the term “intermarriage.” Many participants in this study created a hierarchy of preference in which their first choice would be to marry a GOA-born partner, but they also pre-justified their second choice – to marry a fellow non-Greek but Orthodox-born individual. These participants created a back-up plan so as to broaden their choice of prospective spouses, and this plan was considered within the realm of an intra-group union. Theories addressing religious/ethnic/racial intermarriage need to consider the perspective of the individual and whether or not he/she considers the marriage to be endogamous. As Qian and Lichter (2007) indicate with regard to changing U.S. Census designations, understanding how individuals classify themselves is crucial to an interpretation of intermarriage.



A function of gender, I also anticipated that women would reveal more certain expectations to marry a fellow GOA than men (Kalbach 2003; Kulczycki and Lobo 2002). Contrary to what prior literature suggests, the men (regardless of GOC activity) more so than women expressed unwavering convictions about marrying a GOA partner. These men were second generation ethnics with 100% Greek ancestry who were raised in traditional, patriarchal homes, so generational status and ancestry also played a major part. Women's acknowledgement of the "marriage squeeze" may have influenced them to perceive fewer options and thus plan for foregoing some of their marriage criteria. In addition, representative of today's U.S. society, the unmarried women in this study were equally if not more educated than the men, which may have contributed to the variation in their remarks. Therefore, while theories of intermarriage emphasize the role of both gender and education independently, their interactive effects can also contribute to sociological theory on the topic.

Additionally, based on the literature cited above, I expected to see variation in adamancy for the participation of future offspring in the GOC and GOA culture more broadly. Surprisingly, all unmarried participants, regardless of gender, generational status, ancestral background, etc., expressed great interest, even insistence, upon passing their ethnic/religious traditions, culture, and participation on to their future children, regardless of the ethnic/religious orientation of their spouse. At least some unmarried participants feared that even if a non-GOA spouse agreed to raise their children in the GOC, there would likely be some "tug and pull," as one of the intermarried participants experienced, between the parents in the face of competing interests and activities. Again, the power of traditionalism (see section III.F) seemed to traverse all boundaries on this issue.

With regard to varying experiences according to generational status, as I expected based on prior studies (Alba 1990; Lieberman and Waters 1988), I found that earlier generation participants were more drawn to GOC activities by their ethnic flair or for the combined ethnic and religious focus whereas the later generation and non-GOA born participants felt more drawn to the religious aspects of GOC life. Most participants, however, appreciated the connection between ethnicity and religion in the GOC regardless of their participation in one or the other. Even the later generations and converts who only minimally identified with the Greek aspects of the culture appreciated the religion's tie to the ethnic history and traditions.

The relative attraction to religious- or ethnic- based activities (based on generational status and/or ancestry) split the GOC, however, between traditional and modern champions of the church. Vasilikie Demos (1988:60) describes one example of increased Americanization, the shift from all Greek to some of the English language in the church service, as a tension "between the particularistic Greek ethnic aspect of the church and its more generalizable spiritual mission." A product of age, generational status, ancestry, and even gender, some of the traditional participants (most often older, first/second generation, and/or Greek-only men) feared that the increase in non-GOA born entry and participation in the church would de-ethnicize the church's activities, including the language of the church service. Although the combination of religious and ethnic tradition appealed to the non-GOA born participants, it was the religious features of the church that retained them as active participants in the church community. Therefore, catering to this growing population of non-GOAs by moving away from ethnic-centered activity would modernize the church, making it more appealing to non-GOAs and more amenable to growth but disappointing to the GOAs of the traditional mentality. The quandary can be summarized as follows: The GOC is faced with deciding to move the church in the direction of modernization,

allowing for more Americanized, less ethnic activity and increased growth as a parish, or deciding to stay true to the ethnic tradition of the church, risking its attractiveness to the ever-growing, later generation and convert populations. These questions mirror the issues facing other, more conservative groups such as the Orthodox and Lubavitch Chassidic Jews who are also reacting to modern forces (Davidman 1991). While sociological theory often attempts to bifurcate explanations for social phenomena between, for instance, attraction to religious or ethnic activities, this literature highlights that addressing some balance may be more reflective of reality.

Although the future of the GOC is unknown, currently, with respect to the broad question of why the GOC continues to attract participants (and increasingly new participants who once had neither Greek nor Orthodox ties) who are more than symbolically tied to the church, I found that the church offers opportunities to connect with a personal and familial history, a community of individuals who share religious beliefs, traditions, and cultural values, and a microcosm of fraternity and philanthropy, all of which contribute to sense of belonging in an otherwise vast world. Additionally, in today's society, the idea of a "one-stop-shop," regardless of the product or service, can be very compelling.

#### **D. Implications**

Although increasingly ethnically-diverse participants (particularly at Holy Cross) are entering the GOC, so far, the GOC still maintains an ethnic tie to the religion that it supports. The church has, however, changed by sponsoring practices and activities that offer variety and flexibility (Buckser 2000), which in turn draw many types of participants. Whereas many prior studies have documented the reasons and conditions under which white ethnics do not participate in

organized ethnic activity, this study shows that participation does exist for select groups and individuals within a particular context and for various reasons.

Perhaps the most important factor impacting the churches studied here, the ethnic tie to a distinct religion carries much of the support for ethnic activity among these participants. The church offers weekly reinforcement of not only ethnic-based practices and a sense of community, but also of religiously-tied activities which are believed to be ordained by a higher being. Combined, these factors create a powerful lure, especially to individuals who crave a sense of belonging and tradition. As shown in this research, such individuals can be young, male, highly educated, later generation, convert, non-GOA or part-GOA, intermarried, or any combination of the above and still be committed to activity in the GOC and to GOA culture. The reasons for their participation also varied from religious-based to ethnic-based to the combination of the two, which further accentuates the important connection between religion and ethnicity in these two churches and their vitality. For converts in particular, their draw toward the religious aspects of GOC life was not necessarily out of an interest in the religion but more out of an interest in acquiring an identity and acceptance in the church. Because religion is something that can be acquired and changed (in contrast to ethnic heritage), religion was used by interested participants as a vehicle for entry and active participation in the church. The participant experience of this connection, however, is contingent upon his/her view of the willingness and flexibility offered by the church to accommodate those who identify with and participate in either or all aspects of the church culture.

I have presented the current state of these two churches in the context of traditionally assimilative factors: the increasing likelihood of intermarriage and faded intergenerational transmission with greater distance from original ethnic ancestry. I found that, despite the

potential for such disruptions in ethnic/religious continuity, the flexibility afforded by the GOC allows participants of all kinds to continue to participate to various degrees. In particular, *because* of increased intermarriage, the converted spouses, now more powerful in large numbers, enforce such flexibility for all participants. While this flexibility is neither endorsed by all participants, particularly the older, more traditional participants, nor experienced benignly by all participants, it allows the GOC to continue to grow and influence future generations. Although this culture is continuously changing and reconstituting itself as its composition changes as does its outside environment, the GOC remains at this time a distinct culture tied to Greek and Orthodox practices.

Such culture change has most recently been shed in a positive light, rather than as an imposition of “American” culture on “ethnic” culture. Alba and Nee (2003:11) discuss that the term ‘assimilation’ can be used benevolently to describe changes in social boundaries along an ethnic/racial/religious spectrum. That is, although assimilation in the traditional sense inferred an ethnocentric and patronizing imposition of culture to minority groups of the time, they redefined the term to be applied to present-day assimilation. They describe this process as a “decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences....a distinction attenuates in salience, that the occurrences for which it is relevant diminish in number and contract to fewer and fewer domains of social life.” They add that, “[T]he mainstream is also changed in this process, likely becoming more inclusive.” Likewise, although I hesitate to apply the term ‘assimilation’ to the groups studied here, their membership in the GOC was not their only source of group membership, their suburban lifestyles brought them in touch many other groups of people, but their tie to the GOC remained intact (even though the GOC itself did not remain unaffected by the changes going on around it).

This trend addresses an increasingly blurry line between “insider” and “outsider.” For the participants of the GOC, their definitions of “outsiders” will likely continue to change as the composition of their “insiders” changes to correspond with marital trends, immigration trends and other social/economic/political phenomena occurring in their larger environment.

### **E. Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

One limitation of this research and a crucial piece of any future research on ethnic or ethnoreligious group participation is the comparison to similar populations who are not group participants. In studying the effects of ethnic neighborhoods on ethnic socialization overall, Alba et al. (1997:885) emphasize that, “It seems unlikely that a family, in isolation from co-ethnics, can manage the full socialization of its children into an ethnic culture and community. But a family embedded within an ethnic neighborhood presumably finds that ethnic surroundings complement the ethnic socialization that goes on within the home.” Likewise, an ethnic organization like the GOC may provide institutional support to GOAs who wish to maintain the culture, but in the absence of such an organization, how would GOA practice compare? Such a comparison is important to the search for reasons why people participate, for the reasons they may not participate further mark the boundaries of the group.

Additionally, a longitudinal study tracking changes in individual attitudes and behavior, along with changes in organizational composition and culture would shed light on membership and participation trends throughout the life cycle as well as alongside changes in the outside environment supporting the activity of the GOC.

Also, a comparison to another ethnoreligious group (Umaña-Taylor and Fine 2003) or in another geographic area of the U.S. would offer a substantial point of comparison and add to the

generalizability of findings such as those from this study. Surely, there are other groups whose activities and dynamics would serve as a useful source of comparison.

Perhaps such research paths will lead to the answer to a question I could not answer within the scope of this study: how much tradition and authenticity can survive in an environment of flexibility and change. While the GOC may continue to thrive as an exclusive entity, how many (or how few) of its components will truly remain exclusive or unique from the rest of American culture? Will the mere perception of exclusivity be enough to retain GOC participants who may otherwise become just like any other American? Such are the questions that have maintained interest in the field of race and ethnic relations. Ethnicity as a distinction was predicted to have died many decades ago, and though its state has changed dramatically over the years, its core, in whatever state, remains an intriguing and central piece of our social landscape.

## VII. APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### *Demographics*

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#### **GENDER**

In what town do you live?

In what town were you born and in what year were you born?

#### **Current Age**

Did you ever live anywhere else? Where, when, and why did you move here?

Ancestry of parents. Spouse too if applicable.

**Number of generations of family in U.S.** Spouse too if applicable.

What region (if any) from? Spouse too if applicable.

Number of years of education.

Profession.

Self-proclaimed social class. Parents' (if different).

Self-proclaimed ethnic/national identity.

### *Involvement in Institutions*

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**-How many in last 12 months? Which institutions involved in?** (Kinds: Religious, fraternal/philanthropic, commercial...) Church, festivals, AHEPA/Philoctochos, YAL, GOYA advising, Greek nights, dancing/singing/playing, media (TV, radio, CDs, newspapers, email subscriptions), Greek school, regional...

**-Amount of time devoted to institution/s?** (Hours and days per week/month within last 12 months)

-How many years have you been involved?

-Why did you join/start? Individual choice/obligation to your family/social/political environment?

-Why do you continue to be a part of institution? What do you think attracts you? Ethnic vs. religious.

-Have your reasons for participation changed throughout your lifetime?

-National/international politics affect ethnic identity, way you express it, or participation in institutions?

-Has participation in institutions strengthened identity with Greek-American community? Private vs. public

-Affect(ed) your choice of spouse/partner/significant other?

-How "active" are you compared to others?

-Are/were you a leader in institutions? Future?

-Which are other members of your family a part of?

-Do/would you encourage your children and others to become a part?



- What does membership in institution mean to you/what does it represent? What represents to others?
- Which is/are most important to you?
- Do you foresee yourself always being a part?
- Feel Greek only within the institution?
- Associate with others who are not a part of the Greek-American institutions? Compared with Greeks?
- What about the Greeks outside community? Are they different from you?
- How would you define “outsiders” and “insiders?” Institution, region, community, Greek-Americans?
- Consider the issue of “intermarriage.”
- Are your associations with “outsiders” any different from those with “insiders?”
- Ethnic connections: Language (where?), cuisine, holidays, life-cycle traditions, cultural artifacts, naming tradition, marriage, icons.**
- Involved in non-ethnic institutions?
- Balance contributions to communities associated with social class and with ethnicity? Torn? Priority?
- Any “Greek-American” commercial establishments that you know of or frequent in the area?**
- Anyone else in Canonsburg or Mt. Lebanon that might speak with me?
- Best way to contact you again should I need to for any reason?

## VIII. APPENDIX B: THE PARTICIPANTS

*Aspasia: a 25 year-old second-generation All Saints “active” female of multiple ancestry.* For Aspasia, the GOC is the only organized group she identifies with, it’s something she was brought up with and she remains connected to. Other affiliations have faded, through high school, her college sorority, work experiences, but her GOA circles have been consistent, lifelong, and a source of uniqueness for her.

*Terry: a 26 year-old second-generation Holy Cross “leader” male of full Greek ancestry.* Terry is very traditional, does not like change, knows what he wants and who he is. He knows very much about Greek politics, enjoys speaking Greek when out with his [mostly Greek] friends, listening to Greek CDs in his car, and Greek dancing. He is concerned about the non-Greek direction of the Church but acknowledges the value of the Greek welcoming culture (*see his comments in Chapters IV and V*).

*Dimitris and Kelly: 52 year-old married All Saints couple, one of whom is a second generation “leader” male of full Greek ancestry and the other is his non-GOA born “active” convert wife.* This couple is very involved, though in different types of activities. Dimitris is very knowledgeable about his Greek background, loves Greek music, and calls himself an “American-Greek” to accentuate Greek as the noun. Kelly is involved in the Philoptochos and volunteers her time to many of the other organizations as well. Because the GOC is important to both of them and because they understand both GOA-born and convert issues, they work together to revive, focus, and diversify the faces of the organizations they represent.

*Steve: a 29 year-old second generation Holy Cross “leader” male of full Greek ancestry.*

Steve and his home in Pittsburgh are reminiscent of true Greek culture. His home carries all the unique foods native to Greece, and this American-born and -raised participant refers to Greece as “back home” and calls himself Greek, not Greek-American. He visits Greece almost every summer, and has even chosen his profession to be a professional Greek musician. He claims that his participation in activities is never due to obligation or even effort, it’s the result of true love for everything Greek.

*Gina: a 52 year-old second generation Holy Cross “active” female of full Greek ancestry.* Gina travels across the city of Pittsburgh, past a much closer GOC, to participate in Holy Cross activities because she prefers the Holy Cross priest and developed relationships there when she lived closer some time ago. She says that she participates out of a true connection to the Church, that it’s not just a pastime for her and that it’s definitely not convenient for her to travel up to an hour to do so.

*Helen: a 26 year-old third generation Holy Cross “active” female of full Greek ancestry.* Helen is very active in GOC activities, mostly for social reasons. She acknowledges that part of her participation has to do with her parents “making her want” to participate in such activities, what I would call voluntary obligation. Helen travels all over the U.S. to be a participant in many types of GOC activities.

*Appolonia: a 25 year-old third generation All Saints “active” female of multiple ancestry.* Appolonia, is more distant generationally and of multiple ancestry. She is more of a religious participant and more detached from Greek aspects of participation.

*John: a 39 year-old second generation All Saints “leader” male of full Greek ancestry.* John’s focus is more on the religious activities of the church rather than the ethnic. He regrets

that GOA-born participants may take their position for granted; he says they lose touch with the religion that binds them and focus more on enjoying the social tie they share. Whereas converts, he argues, embrace the total benefit of Greek Orthodoxy.

*Matthew: a 35 year-old non-GOA born Holy Cross “leader” male.* Matthew appreciates that the GOC activities do not cater only to the GOA-born, and like John, he appreciates a separation of spiritual from social.

*Vangi: a 50 year-old third generation All Saints “leader” female of full Greek ancestry.* Vangi married a non-GOA born man, and, together, they also appreciate the Orthodox more than Greek activities of the GOC. In fact, after having moved to a community where there is no GOC, they decided to move back to Canonsburg solely for their kids’ exposure to the religion that they find so important.

*Mary: a 27 year-old second generation All Saints “leader” female of full Greek ancestry.* Mary is extremely active in all aspects of the church and she foresees herself becoming even more active in future years. She travels the world to be part of church-sponsored missionary trips and transnational GOC networks and contributes much of her extracurricular time for these activities.

*Koula: a 55 year-old second generation All Saints “passive” female of full Greek ancestry.* The Church is very important to Koula, but almost exclusively on Sundays only. Though attending Sunday church services comprises most of Koula’s GOC activities, she, like Gina, travels past her local GOC to attend at All Saints. So even just her once a week activity requires great effort.

*Jimmy: a 27 year-old second generation All Saints “passive” male of full Greek ancestry (and son to Koula).* Jimmy identifies equally with both aspects of his Greek and American

identity and appreciates the full scope of his heritage. Though he doesn't find much time now to participate in GOC activities, he has an immense fondness and nostalgia for his upbringing in the GOA community. He sees this community as his extended family, he enjoys seeing fellow community members when he can and sees them as a constant in his life.

*Beba and Bud: a 65+ year-old married couple, one of whom is a second generation Holy Cross "active" female of full Greek ancestry and the other a non-GOA born Holy Cross "active" male.* Beba and Bud, though "active" participants, are on the periphery of their GOC community. Their time is mostly spent volunteering to help out with the execution of certain activities, but they are typically not integral to the planning process. Of their age group, they were the only study participants who never had children. Bud never converted to Orthodoxy and feels that it is harder to become an accepted member of the GOC as a man (*see Chapter V for Bud's comments*). Together, all of these issues may have contributed to their periphery status in the GOC organizations in which they participate.

*Sofia: a 68 year-old second generation Holy Cross "active" female of full Greek ancestry.* Sofia participates in many types of activities, but at this stage in her life it is the spiritual connection she feels with the Church, its activities, and its participants that fulfills her most. She considers her community her family, especially since she has no other family in the area and since she says her fellow participants were the ones who comforted her most when her husband passed away.

*Stefos and Margaret: a 65+ year-old married couple, one of whom is a second generation All Saints "active" male and the other a first generation All Saints "active" female.* Stefos and Margaret were each most active at different times in their lives. Stefos was most active later in life, when he was retired and had more time to devote to non-work activities.

Margaret, a lifelong stay-at-home mom, was most active when her children were involved in the GOC activities, when she was in the middle-aged bracket. Both, for different reasons, relied on this GOC community to transition them into American life, either because Stefos' parents could not do this alone or because Margaret's immigration into this community straight from Greece required it. To them "Greek-American" is not just a hyphenation or joining of two labels, rather it carries a unique sense of connection fostered by a connection to two cultures.

*Chryssoula: a 32 year-old second generation Holy Cross "passive" female of full Greek ancestry.* Chryssoula, though a sparse participant, is somewhat anti-GOC culture due to some of her past experiences in the GOC. She enjoys Greece and Greek culture very much, but Greek America has offered her little more than bad experiences via some of the participants. She feels a loss of anonymity within the confines of a small GOA community. Perhaps somewhat due to these experiences, she chose to marry a non-GOA born man who later converted to Greek Orthodoxy.

*Vanna: a 79 year-old non-GOA born Holy Cross "leader."* Vanna has a very strong tie to her adopted religion and has led many of the GOC organizations in her lifetime through this day. She describes the Church as her family when she moved to Pittsburgh and as family still today. She estimates that two-thirds of all her friends are GOAs.

*Jerry: a 59 year-old third generation Holy Cross "leader" of full Greek ancestry.* Jerry feels strongly that the GOC needs to maintain a Greek/Orthodox balance. He feels that sometimes the Greek activities supersede the Orthodox activities but emphasizes that the Orthodox connection is what draws all parishioners together.

*Jody: a 59 year-old non-GOA born All Saints "passive."* Jody, being a convert into this community, sees non-GOA born participants as more focused, organized, and democratic than

the GOA-born participants who have been immersed in the GOC for their whole lives. Though she is currently “passive,” she would have been considered a “leader” for much of her adult life in the Church. She credits learning the Greek language as key to her entry and acceptance into the Church community. She has also adopted Greek traditions that she has passed on to her children.

*Daniel: a 29 year-old third generation All Saints “passive” of mixed Greek ancestry [and son to Jody].* Daniel, like Chryssoula, has become disenchanted with the GOC culture due to some of his past experiences. He never developed a close connection to anyone in the GOC because he says there was no one in his age group he could identify with. He also has a strained relationship with his father, and he blames the Greek culture for his father’s parenting style. Daniel does participate, though infrequently, more out of a sense of obligation on the holidays or other high events. Although he has visited Greece a few times, he feels he does not have adequate knowledge of the Greek language to fit in Greek surroundings and has few other connections to Greek culture in general.

*Anna and Tony: a twenty-something newlywed Holy Cross couple, one of whom is a second generation “passive” female of full Greek ancestry [and who actually spent most of her years living in Greece] and the other is a third generation “active” male of full Greek ancestry.* Tony, having grown up in this community, has long-lasting friendships in the community that have outlived any other kinds of friendships he has forged. Anna, having lived most of her life in Greece, participates as a tie to Greece itself not necessarily to any participants within the Church.

*Perry: a 68 year-old second generation All Saints “leader” male of full Greek ancestry.* Perry continues to be very active in the GOC as well as in many civic affairs locally. He is very proud of his heritage and his history as a participant and leader of this community. Further, he

believes his representation as a GOA on activities outside of the community presents a unique perspective to non-GOA goings-on.

*Lakis: a 51 year-old second generation All Saints “leader” male of full Greek ancestry.*

Lakis participates out of great pride and affection for his predecessors, mostly for his parents. He feels that by participating he is “carrying the torch” of his parents, and he feels closer to them (now deceased) as a result. Lakis is extremely active in the GOC as well as in national GOA organizations, and he hopes to become even more active in retirement.

*Stelios and Pari: a Holy Cross married couple in their late 40s, one of whom is a second generation “leader” male and the other is a third generation “active” female.* Stelios and Pari, though they live in Canonsburg, have switched their church membership to Holy Cross. They prefer what they see as Holy Cross’s greater diversity in participants, language, and thought. Their love and pride for Greek Orthodoxy and culture have effectively been passed on to their daughter whose friends “wish they were Greek Orthodox.”



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