On Being Ethnic in the Twenty-First Century: A Generational Study of Greek Americans and Italian Americans

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Since the late nineteenth century, social scientists have been studying the cultural integration patterns of immigrants, especially within the United States. Through a rich body of theories and concepts, they have attempted to explain the paces of acculturation and the generational change of ethnic identities among American ethnic groups. Whereas a large body of work exists on first- and second-generation children of immigrants during the post–World War II period, studies on third and fourth generations are few. Furthermore, comparative studies concentrating on the similarities and differences among numerous ethnic groups are also limited. The current article, which is divided into three parts, focuses on the Greek and Italian Americans. It first examines historical patterns of immigration and integration among Greeks and Italians in America. It then briefly reviews previously done studies on each group. Finally, the article presents the results of two recently performed studies in the Greek and Italian communities of Chicago, focusing on the ethnic identities and views among second-, third-, and third-plus-generation participants (Balodimas-Bartolomei 2012, 2015). The subjective understandings the participants have of being Greek or Italian American are described, compared, and contrasted among the two groups.

More than one hundred years have passed since the onset of Greek and Italian immigration to the United States, with both groups having successfully assimilated into American society. Today's communities consist of members proudly claiming ancestry anywhere from second, third, fourth, and even fifth generations. Numerous past studies have reflected on the ethnic identity of earlier generations but little is known about later generations, including their perceptions about their identity, their degree of participation in ethnic organizations, and their maintenance of ancestral language, faith, traditions, and customs. The following comparative study provides us with the opportunity to better understand what it means to be a second-, third-, and third-plus-generation Greek American or Italian American in today's society.

The Present Study: Methodology

This study is based on the results of two separate inquiries performed in the Greek American and Italian American communities. Through the distribution

of a questionnaire designed specifically for each community, the aim of this research was to compare and contrast the views of second-, third-, and third-plus-generation Greek Americans and Italian Americans regarding ethnic identity. The study also attempted to discover characteristics that constitute being a Greek or Italian American today and to compare the similarities and differences from a generational perspective.

YEAR	TOTAL	GREEK GEN2	GREEK GEN3+	YEAR	TOTAL	ITALIAN GEN2	ITALIAN GEN3
2007	181	121	60	2009–2011	135	33	102

Table 1. Survey Population

In each study, the research participants were second-, third-, or third-plus-generation Greek and Italian Americans, mainly from Illinois. All were at least eighteen years old at the time of taking part in the study. The Greek study was first initiated in 2007. After some minor questionnaire changes, a more comprehensive study was conducted during 2008 and 2009 on 181 Greek Americans (121 of the second and 60 of the third/third-plus generation). The Italian study was conducted during 2009–2011 on 135 Italian Americans (33 second and 102 third/third-plus generation).

In order to have a more balanced study, the third- and third-plus-generation groups were categorized as a single group. The generations referred to in this study were categorized according to the U.S. Census report:

- Second generation (Gen2): Born in the United States and a citizen; having at least one foreign-born parent
- Third/Third-Plus generation (Gen3/Gen3+): Born in the United States; having both parents and grandparents born in the United States; a U.S. citizen by birth

The studies were created using a variety of sources to attract respondents. These included announcements in Greek and Italian American newspapers, university bulletins, churches, and ethnic clubs. Another valuable source was "word of mouth," as many respondents shared information about the study with friends, family, and colleagues. The questionnaires were self-administered and were available in both paper and electronic forms that were sent out as email attachments. Some ethnic clubs and online newspapers agreed to post the questionnaire on their websites. The Internet proved to be the most effective means for attracting survey participation, and it also generated a higher response rate, especially among the younger respondents.

The first page of each questionnaire contained a section describing the purpose of the study, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and contact infor-

mation. A permission form was also attached to each questionnaire. The survey design of the questionnaires used various types of data collection questions, including multiple choice; rating questions using either a three- or four-point Likert scale, and closed-ended questions (e.g., "yes" or "no" answers).

The survey questionnaire contained ninety questions within the following seven sections:

- Section 1: Socio-demographic characteristics
- Section 2: Ethnic community involvement
- Section 3: Viewpoints on ethnic identity and heritage
- Sections 4A and 4B: Heritage contact through travel/media
- Section 5: Religion, holidays, and marriage
- Section 6: Ethnic customs, traditions, cuisine, music, and dance
- Section 7: Ethnic heritage language and instruction

The completed questionnaires were given a subject number and then entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Science database for statistical analysis, which included frequency analysis, cross tabulations, and statistical significance.

The Populations

Nearly 2,500 years ago, Greek culture and language were exported to Italy when Sicily and much of Southern Italy were colonized by the Greeks. Known as Magna Graecia, the region became a center of Hellenism for hundreds of years. The Hellenistic elements were later adopted by the Romans, who, recognizing the richness of Hellenism, studied the Greek language and culture extensively. Hellenism continued to flourish in Southern Italy under the Byzantine Empire and was then transformed and rediscovered during the Italian Renaissance. In Greece, the influences of the Italians can still be found within its architecture, thanks to the skillful Romans (who adorned Athens and other cities with opulent temples, theaters, and statuary) and, years later, to the conquering Venetians, who added buildings, castles, and fortresses, predominantly on the Aegean islands and coasts as well as in mountain towns of the Peloponnese.

The impact that both groups have left on each other's soil and the cultural fusion between the two are reflected within much of their art, architecture, food, language, music, and even personalities. The Greeks' strong belief of being bonded to the Italians is reflected in their four-word Italian phrase "Una faccia, una razza"—"One face, one race." The aphorism that was often echoed by the mild-mannered Italian soldiers during the Axis occupation of Greece (Papavizas 2002, 41) made a comeback in 1991 in the Oscar-winning Italian film *Mediterraneo*, which depicts Italian soldiers stranded on the Greek island of Kastellorizo.

In addition to being historically and culturally bonded, Greeks and Italians have experienced similar patterns of immigration to the United States. Seeking better opportunities and escaping the economic and social strains in their motherlands, both groups participated in the mass southern European immigration waves of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the largest period of Greek immigration occurring between the years 1890 and 1924, when more than 400,000 immigrants entered the United States (Moskos and Moskos 2014, 13), and in much greater numbers between 1890 and 1921, when more than 4 million Italians, mostly from the Mezzogiorno, arrived (Alba 1985, 21; Cavaioli 2008, 214).

Southern European immigration was temporarily limited for a few decades of the twentieth century by the discriminatory immigration laws of 1921 and 1924, the Great Depression, and World War II. As a result, only 21,000 Greeks arrived between 1925 and 1945 (Moskos and Moskos 2014, 13), many of whom were picture brides for single Greek men (Frangos 2005). Although there was a higher representation of Italian immigrants arriving during this era, the quota restrictions and world events greatly contributed to the drop in number of arrivals. Due to anti-Italian sentiments, this was a very difficult period for Italians in the United States. In contrast, it was a time of acceptance for the Greeks in the United States because of Greek resistance under Axis occupation.

After 1945, Greeks once again began arriving in large numbers, fleeing the aftereffects of World War II, the Greek Civil War, and the military junta of 1967–1974, commonly known as the Regime of the Colonels. The seven-year dictatorship limited the Greeks' rights by suspending elections and prohibiting strikes, protests, and even large gatherings, except for church functions. During this time, Italian immigration also increased. Post–World War II immigration constituted the second largest Greek and Italian waves, with 222,000 Greeks (1947–1979) and more than 400,000 Italians (1951–1971) taking part (Moskos and Moskos 2014, 13; Alba 1985, 21). The immigration flow continued until the 1980s, when it steadily decreased and remained low up until today.

Once arrived, the early immigrants began settling with their compatriots mainly within the larger cities across the country where they established ethnic neighborhoods and communities that became known as "Little Italy" or "Greek Town." There one could find ethnic grocery stores, bakeries, coffee houses, and even ethnic banks—all catering to those with limited English skills. Ethnic social clubs, cinemas, radio stations, and newspaper agencies were also found in these neighborhoods, often along with the national church that played a central role in maintaining identity. The ethnic communities gave the immigrants a sense of belonging and security together with an opportunity to

preserve language, religion, cultural heritage, and history—all components of their ethnicity that will be highlighted throughout this study.

From the early days of immigration, both groups arrived in the United States with strong religious bonds, especially to their village patron saints for whom many were often named. Back home, the immigrants were accustomed to frequently celebrating feast days through church worship and festivities. Like ancient processions, they would solemnly walk through the streets chanting hymns and carrying religious relics. Once settled in America, these groups established their own places of worship where they continued to carry on these practices and rituals.

The first Greek church in America was formed in 1864 by a small colony of merchants in New Orleans. Two churches boast of being the first permanent Greek Orthodox parishes founded in 1892: Holy Trinity of New York City and the Annunciation Church in Chicago (Moskos and Moskos 2014, 87; Nicozisin 2016). By 1916 there were more than 60 Greek Orthodox parishes across the country and by 1923 there were around 140 (Moskos and Moskos 2014, 87). In 1852, the first Italian parish in the United States, St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, was established in Philadelphia, followed by St. Anthony of Padua Church in New York City, founded in 1866 (Di Giacomo 2011, 11). The *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that, by 1910, Italians had founded 219 Italian Catholic churches and 41 parochial schools, served by 315 priests and 254 nuns (De Ville 1910, 205). By the end of World War 1, the number of churches was between five and six hundred—more than double the figures for 1910—many of which also had parochial schools (Mangione and Morreale 1992, 329).

Despite the growth of national parishes throughout the country, several issues polarized the Greek and Italian congregations. During World War I, the Greek churches were split along doctrinal lines, leading to "a civil war within the church" (Saloutos 1964, 281). Tensions soon grew among the parishes regarding church governance even though all were independently run and governed by the *koinotis* (lay community). Even after forming the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America in 1921 and having it recognized by the State of New York the following year, the church remained in a state of "disarray and demoralization" (Moskos and Moskos 2014, 90). For the remaining decade, disputes erupted over whether the Greek Orthodox Church of America should fall under the aegis of the Church of Greece or the Constantinople Patriarchate, with the latter eventually being granted ultimate power. The appointment of Archbishop Athenagoras as head of the archdiocese in America in 1930 proved to be of major significance in both the development of the church and the Greek American community. The Greek Orthodox Church now served not only as a place of worship but also as a social center for Greek Americans. The church community hall, which

usually included a school, became the center of life for the parishioners and a vehicle for the preservation and transmission of ethnic heritage, national values, and language.

Whereas Catholicism has played a big role in the lives of Italian Americans, the church and priests have not always been highly respected by the people. Traditionally Catholics are religious (Gambino 1974, 194); however the church's significance, both in Italy and in the United States, has varied throughout the eras depending on demographic, political, and socioeconomic circumstances (Brown 2000, 538). Demographically, Italian immigrants came from a homogenous country where religious pluralism was limited but regional variations of religious practices and beliefs were abundant. Many arrived from the south of Rome and from Sicily with a Catholicism that was a fusion of "lay-led communal rituals, annual feast day celebrations or town patron saint celebrations and a folk culture of anticlericalism" (Brown 2000, 538). This animus toward the clergy was brought on by political factors—mainly the papacy's opposition to Italian unification, which led the Nationalists to become church opponents and distrustful of higher authorities. In the United States many transient immigrants during the period of mass migration were men traveling around the country in search of work, and few could attend church. Those who did, however, were dismayed to discover that the American Catholic Church was dominated by an Irish hierarchy that disapproved of many of their religious traditions, "pagan" styles of worship, and common superstitions, such as the evil eye (*malocchio*), known as the *mati* by the Greeks (Andreozzi 2000, 437; Scarpaci and Mormino 2008, 16).

Not having a church of their own, Italian immigrants soon began collecting funds to build their own parishes while religious orders such as the Franciscan Fathers provided Italian-speaking priests. In 1893, the San Raffaele Society, also known as the Italian Immigration Society, was organized in New York City. Its main objective was to unite and serve the needs of Italian immigrants through the establishment of churches and parochial schools while also providing monetary aid to the needy (De Ville 1910, 205).

For decades, first-generation children of Italian and Greek descent learned ancestral languages exclusively in the family. In the case of many Southern Italians, first-generation children grew up speaking not Italian but regional and provincial dialects. In the early twentieth century, the order of St. Francis established Italian parochial schools to inculcate Catholicism and preserve *l'italianità*; however, the majority of the Italian immigrants supported secular education, as they had in Italy, and very few children studied in parochial schools or formally learned Italian (Rose 1922, 87). An eagerness to assimilate and become American, accelerated by U.S. intervention in World War II, contributed to the lack of Italian instruction in America. In the early 1960s,

the situation changed, as Italy rapidly recovered from the war and American tourists began visiting the country. A growing interest in *italianità* led to the development of language instruction.

For Greek Americans the situation was very different. From the early days of immigration, Greek language instruction was highly valued and accessible. Along with the Greek Orthodox faith, the Greek language formed a fundamental component of modern Greek nationalism (Moskos and Moskos 2014, 76). The earliest recorded Greek school was established in the home of Ioannis Giannopoulos in 1776 in St. Augustine, Florida, where the first colonists from Greece landed (Panagopoulos 1978). In 1922, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of New York began organizing "Greek schools" that consisted of full-time day parochial schools and/or after-school programs either on church premises or at neighborhood schools. These schools offered a wide variety of activities, including modern Greek language instruction, lessons in Greek history and culture, Greek dancing, as well as elements of the Greek Orthodox religion. Several schools also began offering evening Greek classes for adult non-Greek spouses or Greek Americans who did not attend Greek school as children.

Lay people from both of these ethnic groups formed organizations and societies, including the Order Sons of Italy, the National Italian American Foundation, and the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), all of which still exist today. By the early twentieth century, there were hundreds of Italian societies and organizations that supported their populations financially and socially while helping to protect them from intolerance and discrimination (Andreozzi 2000, 437; Gambino 1974, 102). The AHEPA was specifically founded in response to the Ku Klux Klan's anti-Greek sentiments. Many immigrants from both groups valued *campanilismo*—loyalty and attachment to one's birthplace or village—and so they frequently sent money back to assist the needs of their families, churches, and towns. Today, numerous Greek and Italian organizations continue to promote their respective cultures and heritages, including by means of funding university scholarships.

The increase of immigration into the United States led to a rise of studies on ethnic groups, especially in the later part of the twentieth century. The Civil Rights Movement and the emergence of a more secure and assertive third generation—a second native-born generation (Alba 1985, 7)—brought about a change in the way ethnicity was regarded. Additionally, the arrival of postwar, first-generation Greek and Italian immigrants provided the opportunity for comparative studies among second- or third-generation descendants of earlier immigrants. With this renewal of interest in ethnic Americans, several Greek and Italian scholars began researching the processes of assimilation within their very own communities to determine the effects that acculturation was having on the maintenance of religion, ancestral language, culture, traditions,

and ethnic identity in general. Within the Italian community in particular, researchers were interested in determining the correlation of social class and cultural assimilation among Italian Americans (Crispino 1980; Gambino 1974; Gans 1982; Lopreato 1970; Marger 2014).

A variety of sociological theories and concepts evolved that attempted to explain the processes of acculturation and assimilation among American ethnic groups. The first was the classic linear assimilation model, also known as the "melting pot" theory, which suggested that within three or four generations the descendants of immigrants abandoned their immigrant past and fully assimilated into American society. Many studies supported this theory by demonstrating that the first generation strongly identified with its ethnic identity while being only slightly acculturated and integrated into society. The second generation showed a decrease in ethnicity but was much more acculturated and integrated into society, while the third generation was completely integrated. The third generation, these studies posited, exemplified a new form of identity or "ethnogenesis" (Alba 1995: Alba and Nee 2003; Constantinou and Harvey 1985; Crispino 1980; Krase 2003; Lopreato, 1970; Scourby 1980; Vlachos, 1968).

Later theorists dismissed the assimilation claim, insisting that there is no fixed timetable for completing generational assimilation and that such a process is not a direct convergence but rather bumpy, as described by Gans (1992, 44). The newer theories also supported the assertion that assimilation may be blocked, incomplete, or segmented due to various factors leading to stagnant or downward mobility. Portes and Zhou (1993) formulated the three-part segmented assimilation model consisting of three possible outcomes for the second generation: (1) full assimilation with human capital advantages that are limited for most members; (2) blocked assimilation due to conditions of poverty, discrimination, and racialization; and (3) selective retention of ethnicity in which one preserves the ethnic community's culture and values. Many Italian studies supported this model by demonstrating that as group members moved from the working class into middle-class occupations and left their ethnic neighborhoods, they became indistinguishable from other middle-class Americans (Marger 2014, 305).

In 1952, Marc Hansen asserted that the third generation was showing a renewed interest in ethnic identity when he postulated what he called "the principle of third-generation interest": "What the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember" (Bukowczyk 1996, 205). He reasoned that the third-generation turn toward ethnicity occurred because this group felt more secure than its predecessors. Several Greek and American studies reinforced this hypothesis. In his book *From Immigrant to Ethnics: The Italian Americans*, Nelli (1983) claimed that third-generation Italians were returning to their roots

and proudly affirming their identity. Among the Greek studies, Vlachos (1968) and Constantinou and Harvey (1985) demonstrated that the third generation tried to find elements of self-identification and social location within the ethnic setting. Scourby (1980) also found that third-generation Greeks identified with broader aspects of ethnocultural values than did the first- and second-generation groups.

In addition to investigating the stages of assimilation, several twentieth-century theorists began examining expressions of ethnic identity among the descendants of immigrants, especially the third generation. However, as many have claimed, determining ethnic identity is not an easy task mainly because there is no generally agreed-upon definition of the concept, thus resulting in a variety of terms based on underlying theories (Trimble and Dickson 2004, 417). Typically, ethnic identity is an affiliative construct in which an individual is viewed by him- or herself and others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group that shares fundamental values. The group is often typified by certain identifiers, characteristics, or markers that include but are not limited to language, religion, food, holidays, clothing, artifacts, and ethnic organizations—many of which will be discussed further in this article. To some extent, these symbolic features can also have a modest influence on the individual's behavior (Kivisto and Nefzger 1993, 417).

Symbolic features can, however, be misleading when trying to determine the extent of one's ethnic identity. In 1979, Gans opposed Hansen's claim of ethnic revival by postulating that the third-generation ethnics were not returning to ethnic cultures or organizations but simply resorting to symbolic features or "tokens or ethnicity." He claimed that they were detached from ethnoreligious culture and not strongly committed to their ethnicity. Since the "ethnic" culture did not penetrate their daily lifestyles, any expression of ethnicity was only considered to be a "symbolic identity." Whereas Crispino's findings on the Bridgeport Italian Americans aimed at validating Hansen's assertion of ethnic revival among the third generation, several other scholars continue to dispute his theory. Boscia-Mulè (1999) found Gans's "leisure-time ethnicity" hypothesis problematic. Her study on third-generation Italian Americans demonstrated that although her respondents had a limited understanding of their culture, they displayed a strong sense of their ethnic identity, which was logically sustained through a network of primary and family ties. Their ethnicity did not appear to be symbolic, individualistic, acontextual, or leisure time, as Gans suggested, but rather a "diverse" style of Italianness.

In 1992, developmental psychologist Jean Phinney designed the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure—an instrument that assesses and measures ethnic identity and affiliation with one's group via a questionnaire. The survey is considered to be the most widely used in ethnic identity studies given that it is

based on common elements of ethnic identity across groups. It contains four major components that are used to measure ethnic identity:

- Ethnic awareness—understanding of one's own and other groups.
- Ethnic self-identification—label used for one's own group.
- Ethnic attitudes—feelings about own and other groups.
- Ethnic behaviors—behavior patterns specific to an ethnic group.

Several studies, including some using Greek and Italian groups, have employed similar metrics to measure the participants' views on various shared characteristics, such as language and religion—two very significant features of Greek and Italian identities. Due to the generational weakening and loss of both, these two characteristics in particular have been the focus of many studies, including the present one.

As early as 1922, Philip Marshman Rose questioned the future of Italians and the American Catholic Church. He felt confident that in the Americanization process immigrants' children would eventually be drawn to Americanized churches (Rose 1922, 139). Shortly thereafter, American Catholic priest and sociologist Andrew Greeley published a study indicating that even with the existence of Catholic churches, Italian-speaking priests, and parochial schools, Italian Americans were "the least pious of all Catholic groups" (Gambino 1974, 211). Later research proved Rose was correct—over time, second-generation Italian Americans began shedding the external religious and superstitious village forms of their parents (Alba 1985, 91) as they relocated in the suburbs and became fully involved in the general secularization of Catholicism (Russo 1969; Varacelli 1986). Even though the 1960s marked a new era for Italian American national parishes, with an increase in attendance at Mass, fundraising feast-day events, and other ethnically religious activities (Brown 2000, 541–542), Monti (1994) explains that toward the end of the twentieth century church attendance among Italian Americans was nominal.

Mark Gray of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate has stated that Catholic affiliation among Italian American adults fell from 89 percent in 1972 to 56 percent in 2010 (Gray 2011). Gray reasons that since retention rates remained high, it appeared not to be an issue of children being raised in the church and then leaving but rather of children either being raised in another faith or with no faith at all.

Whereas many Greek American studies from the last century revealed participants' positive attitudes toward the church and evidence that ethnicity was not as important as their orthodox faith, studies continue to show generational religious attenuation (Demos 1989; Kourvetaris 1997; Scourby 1967). On the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese website, Peter Kehayes states that "60% of Greek Orthodox families of the last generation and 90% of Americans with

Greek roots are no longer in communion with the Church." Such findings demonstrate that "Greek Orthodoxy has been decimated by attrition and faces a grave survival and identity crisis" (Kehayes 2015).

Many scholars have argued that language is the most significant factor that distinguishes an ethnic group from other groups. In 1966, renowned linguist Joshua Fishman summarized the stages of heritage language shift in his three-generation linguistic assimilation model. He demonstrated that by the third generation the heritage language disappears (Fishman 1966). Fearing such a loss, several prominent Greek Americans have been voicing their concerns about this matter; as early as 1989, Archbishop Iakovos, who served as primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America for thirty-seven years, warned that Greek Americans were cutting themselves "off from their historic past by not drilling their children in the fundamentals of Greek" ("Orthodox Prelate Concerned Over Use of English" 1989).

Dartmouth language professor John Rassias and the members of the Archbishop's Commission on Greek language and Hellenic Culture questioned whether Greek heritage can be maintained if its language is lost (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America 1999). Poet and historian Dan Georgakas (2004–2005, 8) wrote, "One may present theoretical and historical arguments about whether the Greek language is essential for maintaining Greek cultural identity, but in the United States, the demise of an ethnic language always signals the demise of ethnic identity." He too questioned how Greek identity can be maintained in America with only some 200,000 Americans identifying themselves as fourth-generation Greeks, with "out-marriage" at 80 percent, and with new immigration down to between 1,000 and 2,000 annually—all phenomena indicating that Greek America is following the assimilation pattern of other European immigrant groups (1). In addition to demonstrating language attenuation, twentieth-century studies indicated that as the language weakened so did Greek identity (Constantakos 1982; Demos 1989).

Although the numbers have drastically dropped within the past few decades, 29 parochial day schools and 340 Greek afternoon schools are currently functioning throughout the country and serving approximately 30,000 students (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America 2015). However, as Polyvia Parara pointed out at a recent conference, Greek studies programs are lacking on the university levels, as only 2 percent of all colleges and U.S. universities offer courses in modern Greek (quoted in American Hellenic Institute Foundation 2014).

Regarding language loss among the Italian Americans, Anthony Tamburri (2010) states that although "a plethora of children and grandchildren of Italian immigrants no longer speak [Italian] . . . if they wish not to learn the Italian language, this . . . we should also accept." Tamburri reasons that "one need not necessarily be fluent in a language associated with an ethnic identity if

s/he has decided to dedicate a good deal of time and effort to the promotion and promulgation of the culture of that ethnicity." Today, Italian is the fourth-most-studied language in the world (Italian Tribune 2014) and the fifth in American high schools (Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin 2009, 3). Many Italian communities, organizations, and public and private schools also provide Italian instruction for children and adults. Furthermore, a large number of universities offer Italianized programs with over 25,000 American students annually pursuing Italian language, culture, or art studies in both Italy and America (Terzi di Sant'Agata 2013, 5). One-third (33 percent) of all Italian-speaking adults in the United States originate from non-Italian backgrounds, not sharing Italian ancestry (Milione and Gambino 2009, 18).

In addition to the weakening of language and religion, there is concern over the ethnogenesis or changing ethnic identity among later generations. The situation seems dire particularly within the Greek community in the United States, with members persistently lamenting over the decrease in church membership, Greek school enrollments, organizational involvement, and declining Greek language familiarity and identity. The growing rate of inter-marriage among Greek Americans, now between 75 and 85 percent (Kehayes 2015), is often considered the reason for fading Hellenic identity and the decimated state of orthodoxy.

Within the Italian community, there seems to be more acceptance and optimism than fear over new versions of *italianità*. While acknowledging that today's 12 million Italian Americans are indeed different from the 4 million immigrants who arrived between 1880 and 1920, Monti (1994) does not believe that Italian American ethnicity is in decline or decimated by detrition as do many in the Greek community. On the contrary, he feels that simply declaring that one is an Italian American on one or another side of the family is an important means of organizing a personal identity—something that appears to be occurring more and more today. And yet Fred Gardaphé (2012) has written that in the span of less than three generations Italian Americans have assimilated so quickly into the American society that they have become strangers to others and themselves.

This Study's Findings

Section 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

In both the study dealing with Greek Americans and that dealing with Italian Americans, the number of women respondents was greater than that of men. The age spread varied slightly between the two studies. Around half of the Greek participants were between thirty-nine and fifty-eight years old, whereas

nearly half of the Italian participants ranged between twenty and thirty-eight years old. Both studies demonstrated a generational increase in numbers of mixed marriages; however more Italian Americans had a non-Italian parent when compared to Greek Americans, who listed Greek heritage on both sides. Italians were fairly evenly distributed between single and married, whereas more Greeks were married. The largest category of education achievement for the Greeks was BA/BS and high school for the Italians. Only one-fifth of both groups completed advanced graduate studies. Very few gen2 and hardly any gen3+ respondents had dual citizenship. The top three occupations of participants in both communities were teacher, student, and attorney followed by professor, consultant, office manager, dentist, real estate, sales, and secretary.
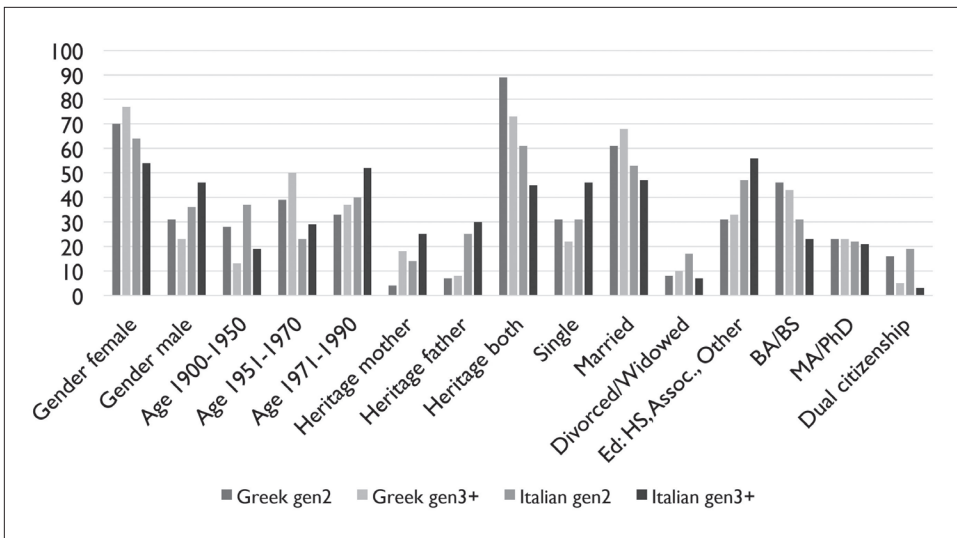
Chart 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Section 2: Ethnic Community Involvement

An overwhelming number of Greek gen2 and several from gen3+ consider themselves a part of the Greek community, although the percentage significantly drops among gen2. Slightly more than half of the Italian participants consider themselves a part of the Italian community. While the total of Greek percentages is much higher than the Italian percentages, there is a generational decline among both groups, especially among Greek Americans. Participants who indicated that they considered themselves part of their ethnic community proceeded to answer additional questions concerning ethnic community involvement. Thus the following results in Section 2 reflect only those participants.

Even though there is a considerable generational decrease among Greek gen3+, Greek Americans appear to be more active in ethnic organizations than

the Italian Americans represented in this study. All the respondents appear to be satisfied with their levels of involvement except for the Italian gen3+, who would like to be more involved. Greek gen2 and Italian gen3+ also seem to be more satisfied when involved, especially when compared to Greek gen3+. The majority of Greek Americans believe that ethnic Americans should fully participate in their ethnic community. In some questions, Italians appear to decrease their ethnic involvement from gen2 to gen 3+ more sharply than Greeks do. However, in some cases, Italian ethnic involvement increases from gen2 to gen3+, whereas this is never the case for Greeks. Overall the percentages demonstrate that Greek and Italian gen3+ in this study still support and value their ethnic organizations. Half of Greek gen2 claimed that the majority of their friends are Greek; however, the percentages demonstrate that ethnic friendships are not as common for the others.
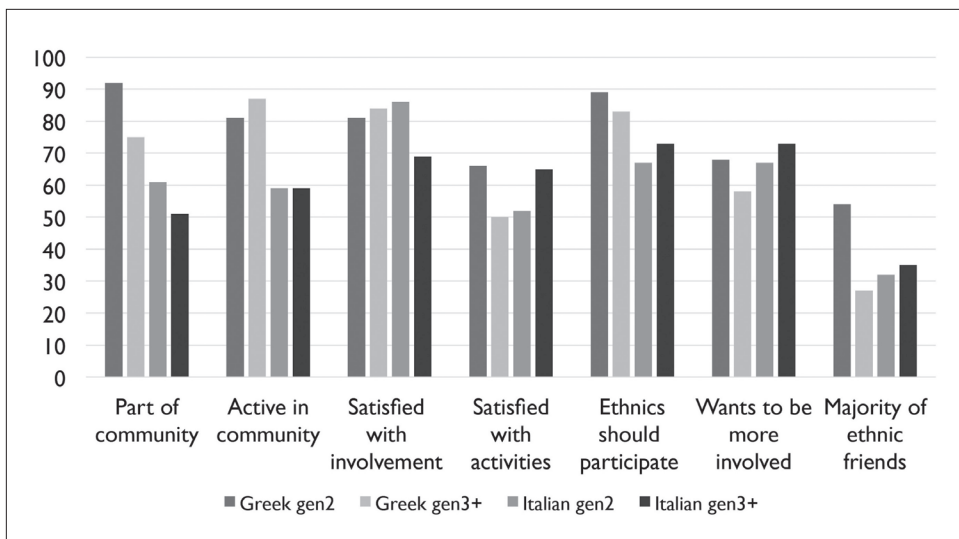

Chart 2. Ethnic Involvement

Section 3: Viewpoints on Ethnic Identity and Heritage

Greek and especially Italian gen2 are quite more conscious or preoccupied with their ethnic identity than gen3+. An overwhelming majority (98 percent) of all Italian participants are very proud of their ethnic identity as are most Greeks. Greek Americans tend to use their ethnicity as a marker more so than Italian Americans. The majority of Greek gen2 (81 percent) believe that they need to stick together in order to keep the culture alive, as do Italian gen3+ (67 percent). Nearly all participants believe that the family is very important in keeping heritage alive.
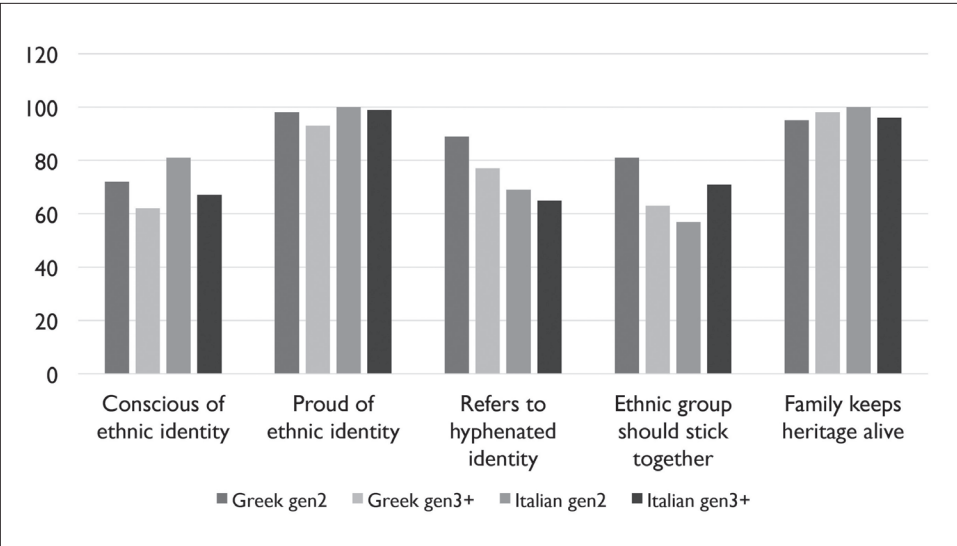
Chart 3. Viewpoints on Ethnicity and Heritage

Section 4A: Heritage Contact through Travel

All the Greek and nearly all the Italian gen2 participants still have relatives in the ancestral country; however, gen3+ participants, especially the Italian Americans, have somewhat fewer. Nearly all Greek and Italian gen2 and two-thirds of Greek gen3+ have visited Greece, whereas nearly half of the Italian gen3+ have never gone to Italy.
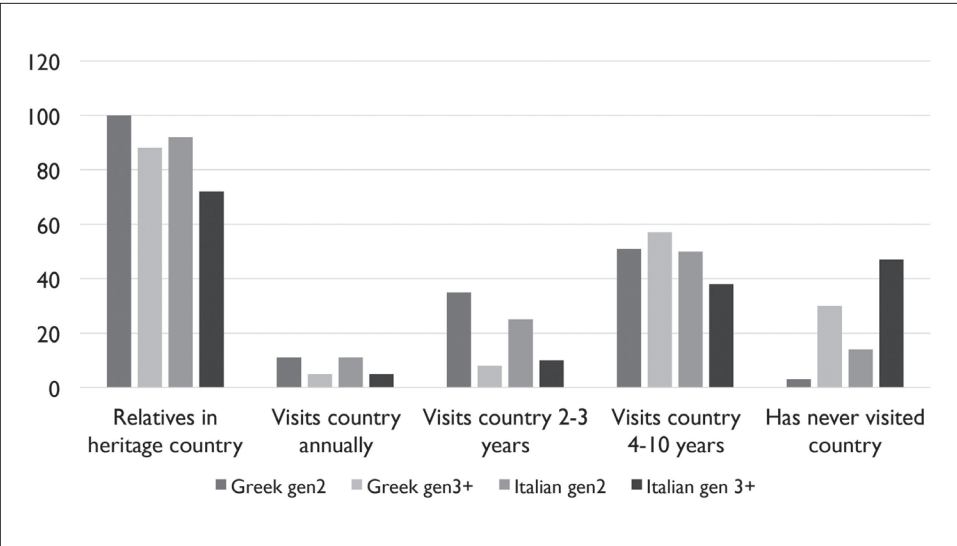

Chart 4A. Heritage Contact through Travel

Section 4B: Heritage Contact through Media

Most Greek and Italian gen2 respondents telephone or correspond either frequently or occasionally with someone in the ancestral country, in contrast to three-quarters of gen3+, who are not in touch with anyone there. Several Greek and over half of Italian gen2 correspond by email or mail with people in Greece and Italy, whereas not many of the gen3+ correspond by these means. Only about half of Greek gen2 listen to ethnic radio as opposed to the Italians, who do so in greater numbers. Half or a bit less of the gen2 watch ethnic TV programs whereas not many gen3+ do. Not many participants subscribe to ethnic satellite stations. About half of gen2 read ethnic newspapers and magazines. A great majority of Greek and Italian gen2 stay informed about their ancestral country through the Internet, in contrast to only about half of gen3+.
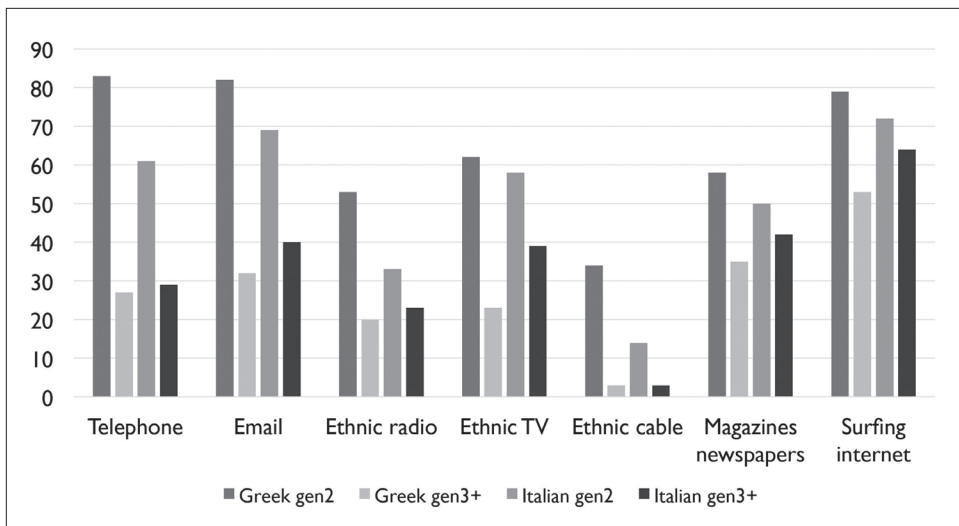

Chart 4B. Heritage Contact through Media

Section 5: Religion, Holidays, and Marriage

Religious holidays are very or somewhat significant in the lives of most of the participants. Greek gen2 attend church more frequently than gen3+; however, Italian gen3+ attend more frequently than Italian gen2. Very few participants claimed they never attend services. Greek traditions and customs are intertwined in the celebration of American holidays for most respondents. The majority of Greek gen2 believe that it is important to marry a Greek American, but not as many Greek gen3+ share this view. Only one-third of all Italian participants believe that it is important to marry an Italian American. Close to one-fourth of the participants feel that intermarriage has influenced their practice of orthodoxy or Catholicism.
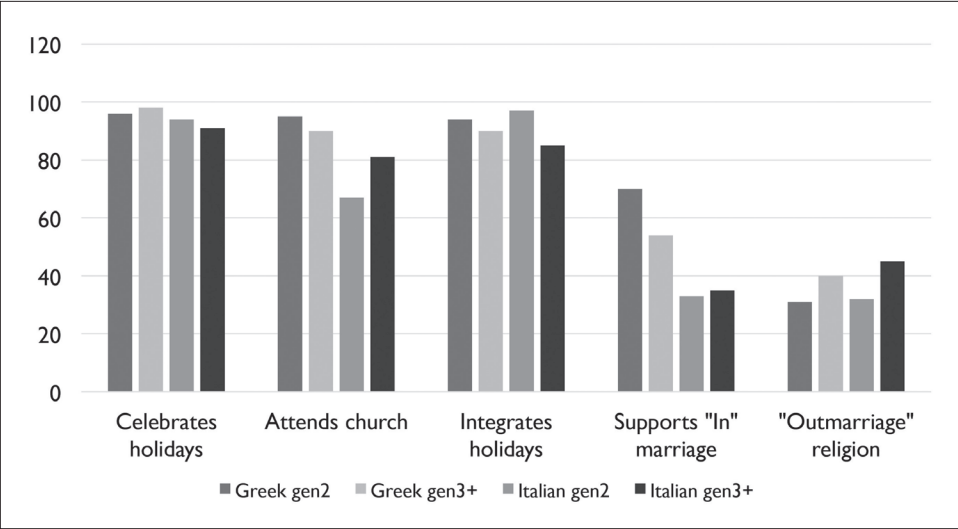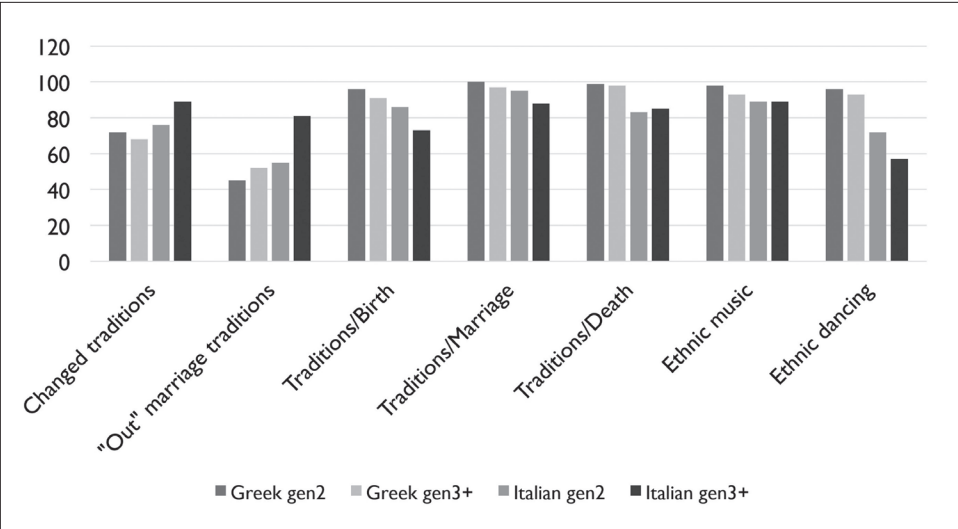
Chart 5. Religion, Holidays, Marriage

Chart 6. Ethnic Customs, Traditions, Cuisine, Music, and Dance

Section 6: Ethnic Customs, Traditions, Cuisine, Music, and Dance

Although customs and traditions have played an important role in the participants' lives, nearly three-quarters feel that they have somewhat changed over the years. More Italians than Greeks believe that intermarriage has influenced this traditional decline. While traditions still appear to influence the way the majority celebrate a birth, marriage, or death of a loved one, there is a generational decrease among all of the participants when doing so except in the observance of death for Italians of gen3+. While not indicated in the chart, an

overwhelming majority of Greek and Italian Americans anecdotally stated that their cuisine is highly influenced by their ethnicity. Most participants enjoy listening to their ethnic music; Greeks also expressed enjoyment of ethnic dancing, in contrast to Italians, who did not.

Section 7: Ethnic Heritage Language and Instruction

This section provided evidence for a pattern of a significant drop in language maintenance in gen3. Especially significant responses include the vast majority of Greek gen2 but not many gen3+ reported growing up speaking Greek at home. There was also a significant generational drop among Greek participants who attended Greek school corresponding to a decreased belief that children should attend Greek schools and the desire to raise children in a Greek environment. The percentages are much lower in the Italian community, with only half of the gen2 growing up to speak Italian and very few having attended Italian heritage language school. Approximately half of the Italian participants have the desire to raise their children in an Italian environment.[1]

Very few Greek gen2 and none of gen3 are currently studying Greek at an institution of higher learning probably because the majority of Greek gen2 in this survey already speak Greek and also because there are few higher learning
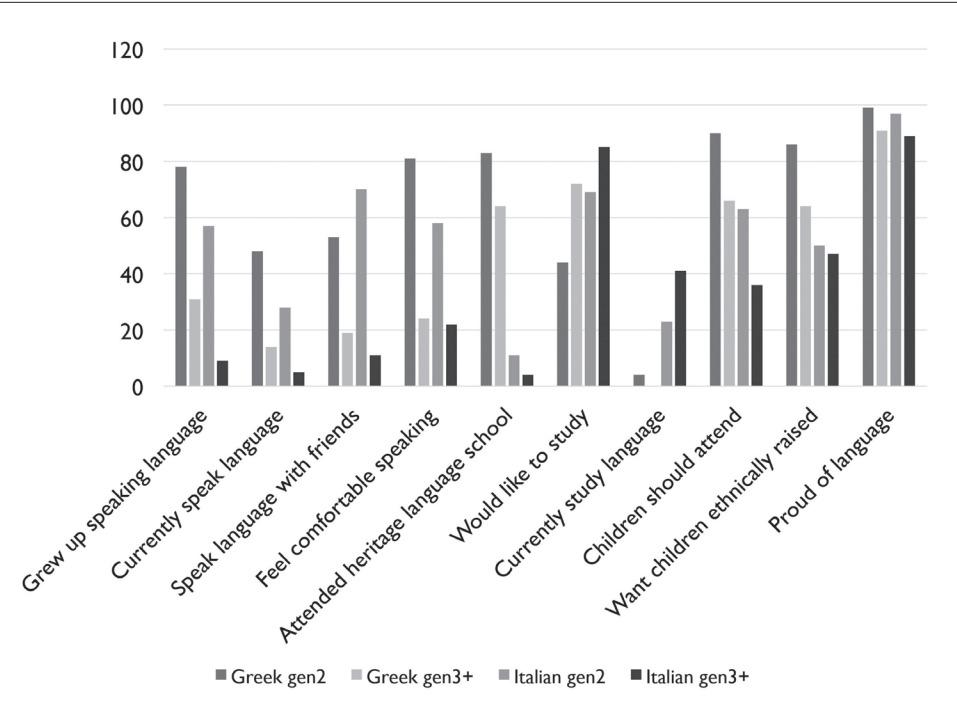

Chart 7. Ethnic Heritage Language and Instruction

institutions that offer Greek language instruction. Nearly three-fourths of Greek gen3+ and Italian gen2 and even more Italian gen3+ express a desire to study their heritage language. Italian Americans, especially gen3+, are more involved in heritage language instruction. This can also be attributed to over half of Italian gen2 in this survey already speaking Italian and to the fact that very many higher learning institutions offer Italian language instruction. Even though the majority of participants do not speak Greek or Italian, they all admit to being proud of their heritage languages.

Conclusion

The current article has examined the results of two separate studies conducted on gen2, gen3, and gen3+ Greek and Italian Americans, mainly from towns in the state of Illinois. Its aim was to look at their views regarding ethnicity from a generational perspective. As with most studies, methodological limitations existed, for example, the sample was not randomly selected, causing the probability of bias, since the selection of the participants was made from areas that already presuppose ethnic community involvement (and therefore ethnic identity). It must also be noted that the sample was small and represented participants from only one area of the county, and therefore a decisive statement cannot be made for the entire population, nor can one be made on ethnicity and ethnic identity since both are socially constructed products. Furthermore, the wording of some of the survey questions was by its very nature subjective. Despite these unavoidable weaknesses and limitations, studies such as this can help us identify various trends and patterns.

As with previously performed studies on gen 2 and gen3 ethnic Americans during the past century, this study also points to a significant generational decrease of ethnic identity among Greek and Italian gen3/gen3+ participants: Fewer gen3+ have friends from their ethnic community or believe that it is important to marry someone of the same ethnicity, for example. And while being very proud of their ethnicity, many no longer refer to themselves as hyphenated Americans. With fewer relatives in Greece or Italy, the majority have less contact with the ancestral homeland. Visits are minimal; nearly half of the Italian gen3+ who responded have never visited Italy. The majority of the participants in this survey no longer reads ethnic newspapers and magazines, listens to ethnic radio stations, or watches ethnic television programs. And while a good majority still maintains ethnic traditions and customs, these too have changed over the years. Although faith remains a high priority, church attendance has dropped over generations, especially among Greek gen3+.

In addition to several generational differences, the study showed clear dissimilarities among Greek and Italian Americans. Greek Americans enjoy

Greek music and dance much more than the Italian Americans enjoy their own. Intermarriage appeared to be higher among both categories of Italian Americans, with more of these participants having a non-Italian parent when compared to Greek Americans who claim Greek heritage on both sides of their parents. In terms of education, the majority of Greek Americans achieved a higher level, earning bachelor or postgraduate degrees, while nearly one-half of the Italian participants had finished their education after high school or graduating from a two-year college.

Clearly, the greatest generational decline of ethnicity was reflected in heritage language maintenance. Whereas the majority of Greek gen2 and a good number of Italian gen2 grew up speaking the heritage language, most of gen3+ have never been exposed to it. Fewer participants feel that it is important for children to attend ethnic language schools or to be raised in a bilingual/ bicultural language environment.

Although the study reveals generational culture deterioration within the Greek and Italian American communities, the data also disclosed a certain increase of ethnic consciousness, especially among Italian gen3+, who claimed interest in ethnic organizations, language study, religion, and family. Many of them expressed a desire to become more involved in their community. They also appear to attend church more frequently than the Italian gen2. Having a strong desire to speak the heritage language, several of these people are currently studying Italian at an institution of higher learning. Together with participants from the other groups who do not speak the heritage language, they feel very ethnically oriented and proud of their language. Nearly all of the participants express a strong love of their ethnic cuisine. Lastly, the majority regards the family as the continuing unit of communal solidarity.

The mixed data results appear to support a few different theories on ethnicity. The generational decline of ethnicity supports the assimilation theory that concludes that by the third generation grandchildren of immigrants have completely assimilated into the larger American society and have become less ethnic. However, along with this apparent trend, evidence exists demonstrating the increase of support for ethnic organizations, church attendance, and Italian language learning among the gen3/gen3+ Italian Americans. The generational increase of this study disputes Gans's symbolic identity theory and inclines rather toward the third-generation theory, which maintains that the participants have not left behind all traces of ethnicity.

While the majority of gen3/gen3+ Greek and Italian Americans do not speak their ethnic language and are not as involved in their ethnic community, they are very proud of their heritage, ethnicity, and language. Considering that the majority of Greek and Italian gen3+ expressed a strong interest in studying the heritage language, the results from this study can serve as a tool for the

advancement of modern Greek and Italian studies programs. Additional scholarships are needed for such language programs, as well as for organized study trips to the ancestral homelands. Such programs are vital to keeping students connected to the contemporary Hellenic and Italian cultures.

Notes

1. The survey question stated: "I would want my children to be raised in an ethnic environment (i.e., attend heritage language school, speak the heritage language in the home, socialize with others from my ethnic group, participate in ethnic clubs and organizations, visit the heritage land)."

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