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NARRATIONS/NARRATORS OF EUROPE

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Immigration and European Integration in Greece: Greek National Identity and the 'Other Within'

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Abstract
During the last two decades Greece has become a multicultural society due to the influx of immigrants mainly from the Balkans and East Europe. At the same time Greece became fully integrated to the European Community. Within this context the relation of Greek national identity to Europe and to the immigrant 'Other' becomes a topic of everyday conversations and a focal point of social scientific research. This study following a discourse analytic perspective (Edwards, 1997; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Potter and Wetherell, 1987) attempts to explore the way Greek people construct Greek national identity in relation to immigration and European integration within an interview context. It is argued that participants strategically managed stereotypes about immigrants in order to avoid accusations of prejudice, while stereotypes about the Europeans seemed to be informed by the ambivalent positioning of Greece between East and West (Bozatzis, 1998; Herzfeld, 1987).

Introduction

During the past 15-20 years Greek society has faced some fundamental changes. Greece, which was an immigrant sending country in the 1960s, started receiving large numbers of immigrants mainly from the former Soviet Republics and Albania. At the same time Greece has become fully integrated with the European Union (EU) and has adopted the euro currency. Discussions on the consequences that these changes brought to Greece occur very frequently in both the public arena and in private. These discussions are often inevitably linked in a very profound way to the changes that this new social context may signify for Greek national identity. This paper attempts to illustrate some of the ways in which Greek

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people talk about self and 'Other', either European or immigrant. It focuses on the stereotypes Greek people mobilize in talk and their rhetorical use, and it attempts to exemplify how these stereotypes may be informed by wider ideologies and the specific Greek cultural context.

The Context Dependency of Stereotypes in Social Psychology

It is generally acknowledged in contemporary social theory that ethnic and national identities, but also social identities in general, are not fixed and stable but constantly changing and fluid depending upon the wider social context. This is a pivotal assumption of one of the most prominent theories in Social Psychology, Self Categorisation Theory (SCT), which considers the context dependency of social identification to be a basic principle of social life. For the SCT the identification of a person with a specific social context depends directly to the categories that are available at any given moment. A certain category will be adopted to the extent that it 'fits' social reality. For the SCT 'fit' has two aspects: normative fit and comparative fit. Comparative fit is governed by the principle of meta- contrast. According to the meta-contrast principle, people will tend to adopt a specific category to the extent that there are more perceived differences between the categories than within the categories. Germans for example will tend to adopt their national category in a context where they perceive that they are more different to Greeks (or any other national category for that matter) than between themselves. In other words, people will identify with a specific category when the perceived inter- category differences are greater than the intra-category differences (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Turner *et al.*, 1994; Oakes *et al.*, 1994). Normative fit on the other hand refers to the background knowledge people have which should match the categories adopted. In other words, it is assumed that the content of the categories used should match our expectations and our knowledge of these categories (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Turner *et al.*, 1994; Oakes *et al.*, 1994). Nevertheless, while both aspects of fit are considered equally important 'in theory' for the identification with a certain category, the emphasis of empirical research is clearly on comparative fit (Reicher and Hopkins, 2001).

However, the content matching of the categories with our background knowledge for the SCT is not a passive procedure. The stereotypes for each category are not constructed to match exactly our social knowledge but also to match the specific social context with different groups and different social settings. Since categorisation is a dynamic procedure of differentiation from other groups, it follows that differentiating elements in each case will vary in order to match the social context. As a result the stereotypes used to describe 'self' and 'other' will differ according to the social groups which are present in the particular social situation (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Turner *et al.*, 1994; Oakes *et al.*, 1994). It has been found, for example, that during the First Gulf War when Americans were

compared to people from the USSR they were perceived as aggressive, but when Iraq was included in the same frame of reference they were considered as less aggressive (Haslam *et al.*, 1992; Haslam and Turner, 1992). In another piece of research the auto-stereotypes of the Scottish people differed significantly depending on whether the English or the Greeks comprised the frame of reference (Hopkins *et al.* 1997).

The SCT stresses the importance of the social context in adopting certain categories and also in defining their content by emphasising the fact that stereotypes also vary according to context. However, it has to be taken under consideration that the SCT is a general theory about categorisation and not a specific theory of national identification. It attempts to uncover the universal principles that underpin social categorisation irrespective of the particular meaning that each type of categorisation may carry. Although of course the theory acknowledges the existence of different types of categories, these are treated as mutually interchangeable (Billig, 1995; Reicher and Hopkins, 2001). There is no attempt to examine the particular meanings that may be associated with each type of category and how these can possibly play a role in categorisation or in the utterance of stereotypes. This point is particularly important if we examine the case of national categorisation. When people adopt a national category they do not just estimate the similarities and differences between national categories but they also have to keep in mind what it means to adopt such a categorisation. As other theorists argued, the world of nations has to be imagined along with the rules that govern it (Anderson, 1991; Billig, 1995). When people categorise themselves at a national level the ideological framework of nation-states within which these categories operate and relate to each other also becomes relevant. Adopting a national category is fundamentally different form adopting a religious or professional one, and carries a different set of ideological assumptions. Often the issue of inclusion or exclusion of people in the specific category may leave people open to charges of racism and/or nationalism. In research conducted in the UK (Condor, 2000) participants were quite reluctant to adopt a national identification when talking about their country assuming that this identification could associate them with the imperialist past of the UK and therefore render them open to accusations of nationalism. It has also been found (Wetherell and Potter, 1993) that when people use negative stereotypes in talk about other minorities, disclaimers (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975), which are used in order to disavow prejudice, usually precede their expression. This also brings up another important point about stereotypes. According to some researchers, stereotypes are not mere representations of reality that aim to accentuate inter-group differences and intra-group similarities. Steve Reicher and Nick Hopkins (2001), for example, argued that national stereotypes are used in order to mobilise people to act towards certain political ends. Discourse analysts follow a similar argument (Potter and Litton, 1985; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), claiming that the importance of shared

social representations is on how people use them in talk in order to achieve certain rhetorical ends. For discourse analysts language is action oriented and stereotypes can be used in talk in order to persuade, mitigate etc. at a micro-social level but they can also be used in talk to perform macro-social functions such as to justify inter-group relations etc. In this context, we developed a discourse analysis in this paper to examine the use of the stereotypes Greek people mobilised about self and 'Other' ('Other' immigrant and 'Other' European) within an interview context about the changes that took place in Greece in the last 15-20 years. In the following section we will give a brief outline of the Greek socio-cultural context which informs the study.

Background to the Study: Immigration European Integration and Greek National Identity

In the last 15-20 years Greece was transformed from an immigrant sending country to an immigrant receiving country. In the decades of 1950 and 1960 the bad financial situation and socio-political turmoil in Greece combined with the need of the Western countries for manpower to work in industry led to a big wave of emigration to Western countries, mainly to the former Federal Republic of Germany and to a lesser extent to the USA and other European countries (Εμκε-Πουλοπούλου, 1986). The recession of the Western economies as well as the improvement of living conditions in Greece led to the gradual ending of emigration to the West and to the repatriation of a proportion of the emigrants. Moreover, the collapse of the communist regimes of the East European countries along with the political and economic havoc in Albania at the beginning of 1990 led to a large immigration flow from these countries to Greece.

A recent survey conducted in 2004 on the immigrant population estimates that there are 1.15 million immigrants living in Greece, which represents 10.3% of the Greek population (Ι.ΜΕ.ΠΟ., 2004). The vast majority (around 56%) of the immigrants are from Albania with the second biggest immigrant population being 'repatriates' from the former U.S.S.R. (around 350.000). The first waves of immigrants from Albania were given temporary permits to stay in Greece. Their numbers increased dramatically in the following years as more people from Albania entered Greece. The Greek State responded to this influx by not renewing their permits and not issuing new ones with the result of many staying in Greece as undocumented immigrants. If they were arrested they were deported back to Albania. By the August of 1995 it was estimated that the Greek police had carried out around 900.000 deportations (Καρύδης, 1996). Of course, according to the same estimates, most of these people returned to Greece through the mountainous paths of Epirus. On the other hand the vast majority of people from the former U.S.S.R. were considered to be Pontians, ancient Greek settlers along the Black Sea coast (Euxinos Pontos in Greece). They were received as repatriated Greeks

and political resolutions were taken which accorded them certain privileges in comparison to other immigrant populations (Kokkinos, 1991)[1]. Two different presidential decrees were signed in 1997 and 2001 in order to regularize all undocumented immigrants quite a long time after the initial reception of the immigrant populations.

The entrance of immigrants to Greece posed many challenges to commonly held assumptions about Greek national identity and most importantly about the homogeneity of the Greek population. This homogeneity was taken for granted in Greece and its roots lay mainly in the way Greek historiography (Λιάκος, 1994; Σκοπετέα, 1988; Στάθης, 1994; Τσουκαλάς, 1994; Βερέμης, 1983) had represented the Greek past. The main task of historians was to build an uninterrupted historical continuity of the Greek nation from antiquity to the present especially during the years following the war of independence in 1821. Several reasons made this task for Greek historiography imperative during the second half of the 19th century. The first reason was a book concerned with the origins of the Greeks written by Jakob Fallmerayer, an Austrian historian-anthropologist. In this book, Fallmerayer claimed that the newly formed Greek state at the time no relation to ancient Greece and that the settling and invasion of Slavs, Goths and Albanians led to destruction of the Greek race (Σκοπετέα, 1997). Another factor that played a role in the way Greek historiography represented the national past was the competing nationalisms of the Balkan countries that had irredentist aspirations in the same areas. This meant that in order to legitimize claims on the disputed territories, Greek historiography had to represent them as integral parts of Greek civilization and history (Βερέμης, 1983; Σκοπετέα, 1988; Λιάκος, 1994; Στάθης, 1994; Τσουκαλάς, 1994;). Finally, the influence that the philosophical movement of Romanticism had on Greek intellectuals was also quite important. According to this movement there is no history without nations and the national 'psyche', and its continuity can be identified in every phase of the national history (Τσουκαλάς, 1994).

The result of the above mentioned factor was that Greek historiography undertook the task to construct a historical argument that would link the ancient Greek past to the newly formed Greek state. Within this new historical account the Greek civilization (and race) was presented not only as unchanged when conquered, but also as prevailing over the other cultures. For example, although the Romans conquered Greece they themselves were considered to have been culturally conquered by it. At the same time 'barbaric' races that settled in Greece such as Slavs, Goths and Albanians were assimilated by the 'superior' Greek civilization. Although this argument of the uninterrupted continuity of Greek civilization and history was formulated at the second half of the 19th century its basic axis has not been revised (Λιάκος, 1992) and still constitutes the backbone of the historical textbooks that form part of the curriculum in Greek schools

(Κωνσταντινίδου, 2000; Στάθης, 1994). As a result, the challenge that the presence of a large immigrant population in Greece posses to the assumption of the homogeneity of the Greek nation is of particular interest.

Nevertheless, the challenges posed to Greek national identity do not only stem from the immigrant populations, but also from supranational organizations and especially the EU of which Greece is a full member. Discussions about the effects of European integration on national identification are abundant not only in Greece but also in many European countries. Although Greek attitudes about Europe as represented in Gallup polls such as the Eurobarometer seem to be quite positive, a more thorough look reveals the complexity of the relationship between Greece and the West. Even from the early stages of the existence of the Greek State, the ambivalent positioning of Greece between East and West raised many heated discussions and led to the formulation of two opposing positions. The pro-Western one argues that the West provides a vital link to the Greek past, since Western thought is considered to be based on ancient Greek ideals and urges Greece to follow the advanced European nations. The pro-Eastern, neo-Orthodox intellectual tradition argues that the heritage of Byzantium links Greece to the ancient Hellenic past and that the West has alienated Greece from its Eastern cultural heritage and its Balkan neighbours. According to researchers, this juxtaposition still informs Greek society (Augustinos, 1977; Kitromilides, 1995; Varouxakis, 1995) and is evident both in cultural practices (Herzfeld, 1987) as well as the attitudes and opinions Greek people hold about the Western Europe. (Bozatzis, 1998).

Within this context it can be argued that both Europe and immigrants are 'significant Others' (Triandafyllidou, 1998) that inform the construction of Greek national identity. In the following section the methodology employed to elicit these constructions of Greek national identity is presented.

Method

Site of Research and Participants

The research took place in Thessaloniki the second biggest city in Greece , which is in the north of the country. Thessaloniki has attracted large numbers of immigrants mainly from the Balkans and Eastern Europe. It is estimated that in the Municipality of Thessaloniki the immigrants represent 7% of the overall population. The majority of the immigrants have settled in the Western parts of town, while fewer did so in Eastern Thessaloniki because property prizes are much higher there. As a result, there is more contact between the local population and immigrants in Western Thessaloniki in comparison to Eastern Thessaloniki. This, according to some socio-psychological theories, can have beneficiary consequences in reducing prejudice and negative stereotypes (Allport, 1954).

The participants were 38 people (20 female and 18 male) of Greek ethnic background and inhabitants of Thessaloniki (people of Greek ethnic background from the ex-Soviet Republics or Albania were excluded from the sample). Overall 36 interviews were conducted between 20/10/2005 and 23/3/2006 and on two occasions people were interviewed in pairs. Twenty participants were from Eastern Thessaloniki and 18 from the Western part of town. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 64 with the average age being 41 years and though the socio-economic background of the participants varied the majority were middle class.

Interview Procedure and Method of Analysis

Interviews were open-ended and semi-structured, and were presented as a discussion about the changes that had taken place in Greece over the last 15-20 years and their potential impact on local communities. When participants spontaneously referred to changes due to immigration they were then explicitly asked about this topic, their personal relations with immigrants, the possible similarities of the immigrants to 'Greek' people and the changes immigration brought to the country in general. They were also asked whether they have noticed any changes due to increased integration of Greece into the EU, whether they have travelled to other European countries, how they liked them and how they found the way of life there. Despite the assumptions of the 'contact hypothesis', which influenced our decision of sampling, no differences were identified between the accounts of the participants from Eastern and Western Thessaloniki in terms of the content of the stereotypes employed. The only difference concerned the fact that the issue of immigration came up spontaneously in the course of the interviews conducted with people in the Western part of the city, while most of the participants from East Thessaloniki, had to be explicitly questioned about immigration and its consequences. The interviews lasted from 10 to 60 minutes and on average about 32 minutes.

Interviews were transcribed for content and most of the paralinguistic elements were omitted. In order to analyse the data, we decided to use discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1988 and 1993; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Edwards, 1997). Transcribed data was extensively read untill some basic categories were easily discernible. What followed was an attempt to examine the common themes or 'interpretative repertoires' which were used in each category. It is important to note here that our analysis focused on the identification of shared aspects of the respondents' accounts and there was no attempt to explore systematic differences between interviews in relation to the respondents' age, gender or other social characteristics. The representation of the immigrants as aggressive and/or involved in criminal acts and of the Europeans as organized were amongst the common themes identified. When the interpretative

repertoires used in each category were identified, the rhetorical context within which these were mobilized and what participants were trying to achieve with their use was scrutinized. The interview extracts included in the analysis section below have been translated from the Greek, and an effort was made for the translated text to resemble as much as possible the original data.

Analysis

The present analysis focuses on the stereotypes deployed when talking about immigrants in Greece and on the stereotypes used when talking about the 'other' Europeans, as well as on the auto-stereotypes used by participants when talking in relation to the above mentioned categories. In particular the focus is on the way in which the representation of 'immigrants' as 'aggressive' and/or 'involved in criminal acts' and the representation of Europeans as 'organised' are constituted and used within the participants discourse. Both representations have also been identified in other studies as part of the cultural imagery in Greece concerning the Otherness of immigrants (Figgou and Condor, 2006) and Europeans (Bozatzis, 1998)

Representing Immigrants' Aggressiveness and Criminality

Extract 1

> Antony: Hm...Erm, so...what has changed here in Polihni recently? Has anything changed....can you spot any changes? Say in the way of life....and even more general.... Say for example new inhabitants...
> Pavlos: If you talk about new inhabitants...eee...new inhabitants...I'm not racist
> Antony: Hmm
> Pavlos:...I'm not...but the new inhabitants are well known...the Russian-Pontians... immigrants...coming from...Georgia...and others...who... You will listen to people saying that criminality has increased...generally speaking...in my opinion...some of them spoil the reputation of Polihni.....of my own neighbourhood and I think one of the reasons why I want to move to the Eastern part of the city is because there are not so many immigrants there....The majority of them choose to settle here in the neighborhoods of West Thessaloniki....Polihni, Kordelio, Neapoli, Stavroupoli....
>
> (Male, unemployed, 24, Western Thessaloniki)

Extract 1 is from the opening part of an interview with a young man in West Thessaloniki. Answering the interviewer's question concerning changes in the neighbourhood (and changes in the inhabiting population, in particular) the man starts out with a phrase widely identified in studies of social exclusionary rhetoric disclaimer: 'I'm not racist but...' (Hewitt and Stokes, 1975). According to other commentators (Billig, 1988; Wetherell and Potter, 1992) speakers tend to use this

type of disclaimer before expressing unfavorable views towards an out-group, in an attempt to protect the 'self' from the stigma of prejudice. In this case the disclaimer precedes the construction of immigrants as responsible for the increase of criminality in the area and for spoiling the reputation of the particular neighborhood.

The disclaimer used in the first turn of the respondent's talk is not the only feature of this account which seems to function as an 'inoculation' (Edwards and Potter, 1992) of the participant's identity against the potential charge of racism. There are other features both in terms of content of talk as well as in terms of delivery which seem to have the same function. Firstly, one can point to the consequent pauses, hesitations which according to other authors are typical of talk about delicate issues (van Dijk, 1987; Riggins, 1997). Secondly, and most importantly for our current analysis, is the way in which the representation of the immigrants as responsible for the increase of criminality in the area is constructed by the respondent. More specifically, the representation of immigrants as criminal (as the cause of the increase of criminality in the particular area of Thessaloniki) is not constructed by the participant as a 'personal belief' (Devine, 1989). On the contrary, it is presented as a cultural stereotype that other people endorse (You will listen to people saying....). In fact the respondent presents his personal view in contrast to those of other people who tend to speak 'in general' and to apply the stereotype *to all of the immigrants.* According to Pavlos, it is only 'some of the refugees' who are involved in criminal acts and spoil the reputation of the neighbourhood. To put it in other words, according to Pavlos there is a kernel of truth in the stereotype (cf. Oakes and Reynolds, 1997), but it pertains only to some individuals and not to the general category of immigrants. By avoiding the generalization that his compatriots tend to formulate Pavlos claims his rationality and his unprejudiced attitude (cf. Billig, 1988).

Notwithstanding objections to the generalization of the stereotypical representation of the immigrants 'in theory', Pavlos announces his decision to leave the area and to move to the East part of the city. Hence, his decision is not directly related to the facticity of the stereotype of (all of) the immigrants' criminality but to the spoilt reputation of the area which is the result of the criminality of *some of* the immigrants.

The construction of the immigrants' criminality as a cultural representation that the speakers do not necessarily fully endorse was common in our interviews. However, there was another widely identified tendency: the tendency to treat the stereotype as an undisputable fact. Extract 2 is typical of this sort of account.

Extract 2

> Anthony: What differences and similarities are there with the local people here? I mean…
> Zoi: Eh… They have been nurtured in a different way, eh, besides they are interested in prospering at any cost, and they do not care even if, that is their goal they will not stick to anything. And as a team they are very close to each other. So…
> Anthony: They are closer to each other than…
> Zoi: Eh, yes. OK. That is because, you know what, I believe that the worse the living conditions you live in… you face let's say, OK and when you try to improve your place (in society) you can do anything.
> Anthony: Mm.
> Zoi: Surely there is a difference in relation to us in this aspect. We are in our land, we haven't left. They, maybe, the conditions forced them to become like that.
> Anthony: Mm. What they want, in other words, is to improve their place in society, right? They are interested in that and…
> Zoi: To improve their place. Generally, to assimilate to society.
>
> (Female, sociologist, 32, Eastern Thessaloniki)

In another part of her interview Zoi constructed the immigrants' criminality as a widely shared cultural representation of this particular group of people in Greece. In the exchange reported in extract 2, however, she comes to construct the stereotype of the immigrants 'who do not stick to anything in order to achieve their goals' as a fact, instead of a cultural representation. Facticity is provided to the respondent's talk by the use of formulations characterized by categorical modality (Fairclough, 2000) (*they are interested* in prospering at any cost…. *they do not care …. they will not stick to anything)* as well as by the use of extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) (*at any cost… to anything*).

The construction of the immigrants' tendency 'not to stick to anything, in order to achieve their goals' as an undisputed fact could of course be taken to reflect a general stance of antipathy on the part of the respondent and could potentially have 'negative identity effects' for Zoi. Hence, according to the premises of discursive psychology, it would necessitate an attempt to inoculate the self against the stigma of prejudice (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). In our view, such an attempt is apparent in the explanation of the immigrants' behavior provided by the speaker. In her attempt to explain the immigrants reactions, Zoi changes her footing and by adopting the second person singular she constructs a formulation which enlists the interviewer, (Condor, 1997) and represents her account as shared knowledge (Edwards, 1997) and universal truth (the worse the living conditions *you live in… you face* let's say, OK and *when you try* to improve your place (in society) *you can do anything*). According to Zoi's formulation, the tendency to react in the way the immigrants do is not characteristic of the particular category

of people. It is a universal trait of human nature under specific conditions. In this sense Zoi does not represent the immigrants' criminality (or rather their tendency not to stick at anything) as a stable, unchangeable, inherent feature of a particular category of people (cf. Figgou, 2002; Figgou and Condor, 2006). In fact she allows room to assume that as long as their conditions of living will change their behavior will also change. To improve their place and to change their behavior means according to Zoi's account to become exactly like us, 'to assimilate to the society'.

A similar account is provided by the speaker in the next extract who does not refer to the criminality of the adults, but to the aggressive behaviour of immigrant children in school.

Extract 3

> Anthony: How did the adults face this situation? We talked about the kids, the school, the kids' relationships...
> Evi: Yes. Eeh, in general these kids are also quite restless also because they have intense emotions, especially the emotion of survival because they want to hold onto something, sometimes they are very aggressive and this results in, hitting, slapping with the slightest provocation, let's say that will take place. Therefore, the parents react. They were not accustomed to something like that. They were accustomed to work out their disputes together and if there wasn't an agreement then to discuss things with the teacher, to find a solution, somehow. Eeh, in addition, in some old-time movies I had been watching, eh, where the kids took the law in their hands, let's say when playing they were the leaders that took care of everything and gave solutions. That is how these kids act and as a result their parents come and demand things.
> Anthony: Why do you think they act this way?
> Evi: (Pause). Eh, I told you before, when you are a foreigner, eh, when you have come from another place, eh, they do not know who you are, your past, there is mistrust. So, they have to defend themselves and sometimes they do make mistakes. I believe that this is the issue.
>
> (Female, primary school teacher, physical training, 44, Western Thessaloniki)

In her first turn in the exchange reported in extract 3, Evi constructs the aggressiveness of the immigrant children who 'tend to be involved in hitting with the slightest provocation' as the result of intense emotions and, in particular, of the emotion of survival. The link between aggression and the motive of survival allows for associations with biologistic explanations of intergroup behaviour (cf. Tajfel, 1981; Billig, 1985). However, after being invited by the interviewer to offer an explanation, the speaker provides an account which emphasizes the significance of social conditions in provoking aggressive behaviour. Immigrant children become aggressive because 'they are foreigners' and as foreigners they have to face our mistrust. It is worth pointing to the assumptions put forward in the above

exchange: to be an immigrant in Greece means to be a 'foreigner'; it means to have a past unknown to others and to inevitably cause mistrust. Such a representation has important implications on the way in which the agency of the Greeks and (by implication of the immigrants) is constructed. All of the reactions of Greek people (the reactions of parents in school, the general mistrust towards the immigrants) are attributed to their ignorance, to their lack of knowledge concerning the immigrants' past and current conditions. By such formulation the speaker implicitly distances herself from her ignorant compatriots, but at the same time she represents their reactions as understandable (if not legitimate).

Finally, the difference in the way in which Greeks and the immigrants are accustomed to solve disputes and manage their disagreements does not remain unqualified. The speaker draws a parallel between the immigrants and the heroes of old movies in terms of their tendency to take the law in their own hands. By this comparison the immigrants' way of solving disputes is constructed as backward and it is implicitly contrasted to the Greeks' civilized and progressive tendency to discuss their disagreements.

Up to this point we considered accounts in which a representation of the immigrants in Greece as aggressive and/or involved in criminal acts is constructed by the respondents. We argued that in all of the cases considered here (as well as in most of the interviews conducted for the purposes of the present study) the participants employment of the particular representation was accompanied by an attempt to avoid the stigma of racism either by constructing the image of the criminal immigrant as a cultural stereotype that they themselves do not fully endorse, or by constructing aggressiveness and criminality as a universal characteristic of humans under certain conditions.

By constructing the immigrants' criminality and aggressiveness as generated by certain social conditions the participants allowed room for potential change. According to the account of the speaker quoted in extract 2, their behavior will change as a result of them achieving their goal which is to become exactly like the Greeks and to 'assimilate to society'. According to the account quoted in extract 3, change and assimilation to Greek society are also treated as equivalent to progress. The immigrants' tendency to take the law in their hands is a backward behavior which resembles the actions of old movie heroes, while discussion over disagreements characterizes our current progressive way of life and mentality.

Representing European Organization and Greek Disorganization

As we mentioned above one of the common-place features of our participants' accounts pertains to the representation of Europeans as organised or rather as more organised in comparison to Greeks. The extracts of talk included in this

section are typical of our corpus of data in terms of the way in which Europeans are represented.

Extract 4

> Anthony: What similarities and differences do you see between us and the other Europeans?
> Peter: What differences? (laughter) ... Differences, OK I can tell you, about the Swedish for example, about the Germans we have stuff to talk about... They are more responsible... We are a bit more... irresponsible... How shall I put this? Not, irresponsible this is a bad word... Disorganized we are... Yeah, we are more laid back. They are a bit more formal, more organized... We have a bit more... outgoing nature how shall I put this... these people are a bit ... are a bit like clockworks... it is a matter of mentality of the people. It is also because of the weather. I mean a Portuguese is different from a Swede and an Englishman... a...
> Anthony: In other words you believe that weather conditions do play a...
> Peter: Eh, they do play a role... well if you see cloudy weather... you will become cloudy (laughter) you will not be a person with an outgoing nature and the like.
>
> (Male, student, 21, Western Thessaloniki).

Before proceeding to consider the way in which the participant quoted in extract 4 constructs a representation of 'Europeans' and 'Greeks' it is necessary to pay some attention to the way in which the category 'European' itself is constituted in his talk. It is particularly remarkable that the category European introduced by the interviewer's question is interpreted and consequently represented by the interviewee as equivalent to the category of 'Northern Europeans'. This particular formulation is quite typical of our corpus of data where Germans, English and to a lesser extent Swedish people, -all of the categories employed by the respondent in extract 4 – are treated as the 'prototypical Europeans'. The latter are in many cases differentiated not only from the Greeks but also from other Mediterranean peoples (as for example the Portuguese in extract 4).

Considering the (comparatively constructed) representations of Greeks and Europeans in Peter's account, the first thing to note is their progressive modification in the course of the exchange. The respondent starts out his answer with a comparison between the 'responsible' Europeans and the 'irresponsible' Greeks but he proceeds to reflect upon his choice ('how shall I put this') and he turns to correct himself by substituting the terms 'disorganized' and 'laid back' for the term 'irresponsible'. The modification of his construction of the Greeks has inevitable consequences to the comparative construction of the Europeans who turn to be represented as 'formal' and 'organized' instead of 'responsible'. This modified description, however, is also followed by hesitations and pauses and the speaker turns to construct a new opposition between the outgoing nature of the

Greeks and the 'a bit like clockwork' Europeans. Hence, while in the opening part of Peter's account a rather 'positive' attribute of the Europeans is opposed to a fairly 'negative' attribute of the Greeks through the respondent's successive revisions we end up having a rather reverse picture.

Peter's account is to an extent characterized by the same discursive features (pauses, hesitations, self-corrections) identified in the stretch of talk quoted in extract 1. Interestingly, while in extract 1 we associated these features with the attempt of the participant to mitigate a rather negative construction of the 'Other' (of the immigrants) (Riggins, 1997), in this case they seem to reflect an attempt to avoid constructing a negative picture of the Self, a negative picture of the ingroup.

Of course, one could also identify a number of features of the respondent's talk (both in terms of content and in terms of the delivery) that could be taken to mitigate the consequences of the ascription of negative attributes to the Europeans. Firstly, it is the use of the word 'a bit' ('they are a bit like clockworks'). Secondly, it is the formulation of an explanation of the alleged differences between Europeans and Greeks. Both the Europeans' tendency to be 'a bit like clockworks' as well as the Greeks' 'outgoing nature' are attributed to a certain kind of mentality and to the weather conditions. In this sense the Europeans can not be held responsible for their 'clockwork alike' behavior or for their 'cloudy' instead of outgoing nature. As Peter puts it, 'if you see cloudy weather... you will become cloudy'.

Nevertheless, the explanation of the Europeans' tendency to be 'cloudy and clockwork alike' through recourse to the weather conditions have another important implication, closely related to the attribution of agency, we already considered. The weather conditions are fairly unalterable, and as result the traits, mentality and behaviour which are associated to these conditions are also hard to change. A similar account is provided by the speaker in the next extract.

Extract 5

> Antony: Hmm. Since you have traveled a lot and you have met...I assume...colleagues from abroad...What differences can you spot between the Greeks and the rest of the European people...say in the work ethics....or...
> Michalis: We are more laid back. Of course in terms of science we are fairly behind
> Antony: Hm
> Michalis: Also in terms of organization. Whether we talk about the Italians or... Of course in comparison with the South part of Italy we are more organized...
> Antony: Hm

> Michalis: They have a better social security system... everything is in order. They are more secure...and they have a better quality of life....We always have to worry about something.....Of course we are a recently established state. Because Greece is a ...I wouldn't say two hundred years old...I would say fifty years old state. Because we became a state after the civil war.....and we have this sort of Mediterranean mentality and the temperament...The Greek has a different behavior ....
> Antony: How would you describe this behavior? Which are its main features?
> Michalis: Of the Mediterranean mentality? We are more cheerful, happy....due to the weather conditions...due to the temperature. The Greeks reflect upon life. They will go out... they will have their ouzo... They will enjoy themselves...although they may have less...they have less but they also live better...and if they put some effort... an order in the work place... they will move ahead.
>
> (Male, doctor, 54, Eastern Thessaloniki)

There are apparent similarities between the account considered in extract 4 and the one reported in extract 5. Michalis, in common with Peter, counterposes a representation of the Europeans as having order, organization and security in their lives with a representation of Greeks as more laid back, cheerful and being able to enjoy life (cf. Bozatzis, 1998). Also in agreement with the account of Peter, Michalis tends to treat the category European as equivalent to the category of the 'Northern European'. Of course, he differentiates the South from the North part of Italy and he also counterposes the European organization and order to the Mediterranean temperament. He does not use these distinctions and exceptions, however, in order to problematise the superordinary category 'the Europeans' (as introduced by the interviewee) or in order to problematise the ascription of general characteristics to it (It is *the Europeans* who are different from the Mediterranean).

Despite its similarities with the stretch of talk reported in extract 4, the account of Michalis seems prima facie to be much more 'symmetrical' (Fairclough, 1992). If the Greeks 'enjoy themselves', the Europeans enjoy 'a better quality of life'. If Greeks 'reflect upon life while they are drinking their ouzo' and they manage 'to live better with less', Europeans have an organised social security system and they do not have 'to worry always about something'. However, symmetry vanishes when the participant proceeds to explain the alleged differences between the two categories. The temperament of Greeks -and by implication the mentality of Europeans- is attributed to the Weather conditions. The alleged deficiencies of Greeks, however, in terms of organisation and social security are also related to specific socio-political conditions and more specifically to the fact that Greece constitutes a recently established state. Hence, the temperament and mentality of the Europeans -which is depicted rather unflatteringly- is constructed as something

unchangeable. The alleged deficiencies of Greeks however are depicted as potentially changeable, when the Greek State reaches its majority.

Conclusions

In this paper we considered interview accounts given by Greek people concerned with the changes that have taken place in their Country as a result of firstly, recent immigration and secondly increased European integration. Our focus was on the way in which both the Europeans and the immigrants were represented in the participants' discourse.

We maintained that in our respondents' accounts the immigrants have been constructed as aggressive and/or involved in illegal acts and as prone to take the law in their hands. This behaviour was not attributed to idiosyncratic characteristics or to inherent stable traits of the category under consideration but they were explained through recourse to their difficult conditions of living in Greece. According to the assumptions put forward by the participants, all humans under the same conditions would have reacted in the same way in which the immigrants do. By representing criminality and aggressiveness as generated by specific conditions of living, the respondents allowed room for change. They assumed that immigrants will eventually change as a consequence of their conditions of living being changed. Moreover they maintained that the improvement of the immigrants' social status will inevitably lead to their assimilation into Greek society. Change and assimilation to Greek society were treated as equivalent to progress, as a process in the course of which the immigrants will leave behind their backward way of doing things and will adopt the Greek way of life.

As far as the Europeans are concerned, their organisation and advance in particular sectors such as the system of social security and science was emphasised. Although organisation was presented under a favourable light it was also related to certain deficiencies in the European peoples' social life. According to the accounts provided by our respondents, the 'clock-work like' mentality and the 'cloudy temperament' which characterise the Europeans does not allow them room to enjoy life. Greeks in comparison to the Europeans were depicted as having an outgoing nature and a Mediterranean temperament, which on the one hand is responsible for their disorganisation but on the other hand enables them to 'live better with less'. While the features attributed to Europeans were related to certain unalterable weather conditions, those attributed to Greeks were related (apart form the weather) to particular socio-political conditions. Hence, while Greeks were represented as having the potential to reach Europe in certain sectors, the European deficiencies were depicted as fairly unalterable.

In the analysis section when discussing the explanation of the immigrants' criminality as generated by specific social conditions we argued that such formulation is to an extent related to the participants' attempt to avoid ascribing unalterable and simultaneously unfavourable characteristic to a particular group of people, something that could be taken to reflect a racist attitude (Figgou and Condor, 2006). What begs the question is why in the case of the accounts referring to the Europeans the ascription of unalterable traits does not seem to be treated by the respondents as equally accountable.

The above finding may to an extent be related to the status attributed to the two groups (immigrants and Europeans in comparison to Greeks) and to the way in which prejudice is generally understood in relation to status differences. In a study concerned with the social representation of prejudice within the context of contemporary Greece (Figgou, 2002), for example, the respondents (also lay people living in Northern Greece) tended to represent 'prejudice' as feelings of antipathy towards members of low status groups on the part of the high status group. In our participants' accounts the Europeans are in no way represented as a low status group in comparison to the Greeks. Despite the unfavourable traits ascribed to them, they are constructed as being ahead in various sectors. So the possibility of presenting a racist identity when spotting some of the deficiencies of Europeans (high status group) seems not be equal to the possibility of appearing racist when talking about the 'low status' and 'backward' immigrants.

Another important factor, which potentially influences the way in which participants constructed their accounts in relation to the Europeans, is the ambivalent positioning of Greece between East and West. According to other commentators (Bozatzis, 1998; Herzfeld, 1987) this ambivalence has a profound impact on the way Greek people construct their relations to the other Europeans. For Nikos Bozatzis (1998), this ambivalence has led to the creation of the moral charge of xenomania in the Greek context, which refers to the consumption of Western material or cultural products and way of life. As a result, Greek social actors face a rhetorical dilemma when they talk about Greece and the West. On the one hand, they have to demonstrate their rationality and disavow any excessive national sentiment and allegiances that could associate them with nationalism. On the other hand, they have to disavow any excessively favourable disposition toward the Western 'Other' that would seem to discredit their own national category, as well as making them pray to accusations of xenomania and mimicry. Therefore in the extracts presented above the organisation of the Western European countries was not seen only as an advantage but it was also played down by accounts that emphasised the negative consequences that this organisation had for the Western Europeans' social lives.

To sum up within the Greek context, immigrants and Europeans can be considered as 'significant Others' (Triandafyllidou, 1998) in relation to how the Greek national identity is often constructed. The articulation of stereotypes related to the above mentioned categories was mediated by the specific cultural and political context in Greece, but also by wider ideological assumptions concerning intergroup relation and especially prejudice.

Notes

[1] Some of the measures included the establishment of an organization that would supervise and facilitate their resettlement, low rate loans to buy property and special permits to stay in Greece.

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