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Articles

"I'm a Greek Kiwi": Constructing *Greekness* in Discourse

Jo Angouri

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Abstract

The article reports on the preliminary findings of a project on the constructions of Greekness in modern diasporas. The discussion draws on data from the self-identified Greek community of Wellington, New Zealand. Interview data, ethnographic diaries, and everyday real-life spoken interactions were collected. The analysis of the data shows that the interactants move away from a "teleology of return" (Clifford, 1997) and reconceptualise the host/minority dimension, highlighting the dynamics and complexities of Greek identity. Special attention is paid in the analysis to the role of institutions, particularly the Greek Orthodox community, in constructing a Greek identity in this context. The standpoint taken considers identity not to be a stable,

predefined entity but an ongoing dynamic process that is constantly negotiated and co-constructed between the interactants (De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006). Identity is not something interactants are or have but rather something they actively do in discourse. The article closes by arguing that diasporas are not static “definable” communities, but dynamic systems shaping and being shaped in the discourse of their self-affiliated members.

Keywords:

Greek diaspora | New Zealand | Greekness | homeland | identity

Notes

[1]The acronym will be used to refer to organized associations that self-identify and are registered as a GOC, also to distinguish from the colloquial/loose use of the term community.

[2]A discussion on this goes beyond the scope of this work, however, census data often are limited and other classifications are based on researchers' understandings of how community members should be “counted” (e.g., up to third generation, those who self-identify being of a certain origin, those who speak the language of the country of origin, and so on).

[3]All names are pseudonyms.

[4]Because of space limitations a more detailed discussion will be provided elsewhere.

[5]Translation mine.

[6]Specifically, Melbourne, one of the largest GOCs, plays a particularly important role as a “local Greek metropolis” for the NZ participants (and a destination of interdiasporic immigration). Although Melbourne is seen as attracting more support by the homeland, which causes a certain amount of resentment, it is also a place that is constructed as the “ideal home” because of the size of the Greek community and its characteristics (particularly that it is English speaking and presented as “better” connected with the homeland). According to my informants, a large number of the Greeks who moved to

NZ subsequently moved to Australia to join the large communities there. Even though a detailed discussion on this goes beyond the scope of this work, immigration of the Greek population to Australia follows the pattern of immigration of the NZ population (see, e.g., Hugo, 2001).

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