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A study of the influence of cultural backgrounds on Greek-American veterans seen at the Veterans Administration Mental Hygiene Unit, Lowell, Massachusetts

Wahlberg, Bertil Lennart

Boston University

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Boston University
A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS ON GREEK-AMERICAN VETERANS SEEN AT THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MENTAL HYGIENE UNIT, LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

A Thesis

Submitted by
Bertil Lennart Wahlberg
(A.B., Clark University, 1949)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Historical Background of Greece</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Geographical Factors</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Immigration to the United States</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.  Greeks in America</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Case Material</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Summary and Conclusions</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

Introduction

In working with people one cannot isolate them from their immediate environment and their social and biological heritage. People live, work and play within a social milieu which is largely dependent for its present functioning upon a background of institutions extending far into the past. Although they are probably not conscious of it, their everyday activities and thinking originated in the final analysis centuries ago. As children develop from birth, they are affected and influenced by their parents whose mode of life was in turn partly determined by their parents, ad infinitum. Partly determined is used because during the socialization process the child gradually breaks away from his family and experiences the thinking and ideas of other individuals whose ancestral heritage brings an entirely new set of values and ideals within his frame of reference. There is, therefore, constant interaction among the child, parents, and extra-familial people. However, despite these strong outside forces the child’s main source of socialization and culture pattern is his parents. We find, therefore, that the individual is the culmination of centuries of progression, retrogression, and interaction of institutions among many peoples of the world.

With this in mind the writer believes it is very important that those who attempt to aid people with their
problems should not only have a thorough knowledge of the dynamics of personality, but should also have more than a speaking acquaintance with the diverse cultural patterns. It is not sufficient to be trained only in personality dynamics because a behavior pattern which would be termed neurotic in this culture might be the accepted reality manner of reacting within the culture or social environment of a client. Therefore, we have to be extremely careful in evaluating a particular type of behavior so that we do not misconstrue that behavior for something it does not represent.

The main cultural components in this country are European, the Old Immigration from Western Europe and the New Immigration from the Mediterranean, Balkan, and Eastern European areas. Because the latter are the more recent immigrants and therefore present the greatest problem of aculteration in this country, it would seem that, as social workers, we should have a greater comprehension of the cultural forces within this group. Furthermore, a great many of our clients will come from this group, whether they are first, second, or third generation American. Although the first generation American has many problems of adjustment to the new country, he is better insulated against a culture conflict because of having lived within a particular Gestalt prior to immigration and upon entering this country he generally resides in a homogeneous district which maintains the in-group feeling of the "old country."
However, the second generation American is subject to
the rigors of a conflicting way of life. His parents so-
cialize him during the first few years according to the
standards of their land of ancestry, and later as the child
moves into society he is confronted with other standards
which generally are less harsh. This results in a conflict
as to which rules he should obey. Seeing other children
operating within one area, he desires their in-group feeling,
but concurrently he must adhere to his parents’ demands. We
are apt to see many problems developing as a consequence of
this conflict.

Purpose

In this study the writer will attempt to determine
whether Greek cultural forces impinge upon the patients of
Greek parentage to the degree that a conflict between Greek
and American standards arises which results in problems —
psychosomatic complaints, anxiety, tension, etc. — which the
patients are unable to comprehend or handle alone. There may
appear one general conflictive area which is manifested in
various ways, or there may be several different antagonistic
areas. This is not in terms of the patients’ presenting
problems at intake but in terms of those difficulties which
are reflected in the problems or complaints. The writer is
interested in discovering whether these patients, who except
for one are all second generation Greek-Americans, manifest
or present problems relating to culture conflict and if so,
what types of conflicts they are.

In order to facilitate an understanding of the Greek people, the various forces and circumstances which have made them what they are, and the events and reasons for their emigration, considerable material will be presented regarding the main Greek historical, geographical, economic, religious, and cultural events which have affected them. This will give an adequate frame of reference within which to place the patients for the purpose of the study. An analysis of the cases will follow to determine whether the patients present cultural material in the interviews which can be considered of a conflictive nature.

Data

Sixteen cases are being used in the study. Because the Mental Hygiene Unit in Lowell had been operating for only about fifteen months since September 12, 1949 at the time the study was started, there were only a total of three hundred cases. Consequently, it was felt necessary to include the total number of Greek-American patients who had come to the clinic, sixteen cases or about five per cent.

The sources of data for the case analyses will naturally come from the case records, and any further material will come from discussions with the individual staff members concerned with specific cases. The background material will be drawn from some of the available literature on Greek history, culture, emigration, religion, etc. Although there is
unlimited literature on that aspect of their life, there seems to be a lack of material relating to the adjustment of Greeks in America. There is some writing on the general aspects of culture and the problems of adjustment entertained by the first, second, and third generation European-Americans. Some general inferences can be drawn from such literature and wherever deemed applicable will be referred to but it must be remembered that they are general and not specific to Greek culture.

Limitations

Because the study is limited to only sixteen cases, or about five per cent of the total case load, the conclusiveness of the results is obviously minimized. However, it is hoped that certain trends or tendencies can be found which can be used for further study. In addition, the study is limited to a Veterans Administration Mental Hygiene Unit with no attempt at comparison with other agencies, with the city of Lowell as a whole, or with other areas of the country. Therefore, the writer is stressing the fact that the investigation applies to only the Veterans Administration Mental Hygiene Unit in Lowell, a New England mill town of about one hundred thousand population, and the surrounding area.

The study is also limited by the dearth of literature on Greek adjustment in America. There is much material covering the period from very early times to their immigration at the turn of the century. However, no material is available
regarding present-day activities of Greek-Americans. Reverend Theodore Theodorides of St. Constantine's Church in Cambridge indicated to the writer that such material can be found only in case records of social agencies, court records, etc.

Finally, the study will limit itself to presenting the background material and case analysis, and will not attempt to present methods of case work technique with this ethnic group.

The Mental Hygiene Unit

The need for Mental Hygiene Units became apparent during the war when large numbers of veterans were discharged from the service because of mental and nervous ailments. Experience in the armed forces during the war indicated that the majority of these cases could be treated effectively in clinics without hospitalization. For this reason, in accordance with V. A. Circular #26, later supplemented by V. A. Circular #169, Mental Hygiene Units were established in various regional offices where the Deputy Administrator determined that the clinic was necessary and could be properly staffed. These clinics were to be part of the medical service of the Regional Office, and were to have the same responsibility to the medical officer as other medical units. The purpose of the clinic was to treat psychiatric disabilities on an Out-patient basis. It was felt that the program of the clinic would serve to alleviate minor neuropsychiatric
illnesses, prevent the development of more serious illnesses, and consequently reduce the number of veterans requiring hospitalization.

In 1946 a Mental Hygiene Unit was established in Boston, Massachusetts, where many of the veterans now attending the clinic in Lowell first received treatment. Three years later on September 12, 1949, a Mental Hygiene Unit was opened in Lowell with a staff of one psychiatrist, two social workers, and one psychologist. Although three psychiatrists, three social workers, and one psychologist are authorized for the clinic, the original staff has been increased by only one psychiatrist. The clinic is under the direction of the chief psychiatrist, who is in turn responsible to the chief medical officer.

The general function of the clinic is for treatment only. Adjudication and general diagnostic examinations are served by other sections of the Veterans Administration. The sources of referral are as follows:

1. Other V. A. facilities and sections
2. Practicing physicians
3. Relatives and self-referral
4. Social agencies

The major source of referrals is the Medical Out-patient Department of the Veterans Administration. In order to be eligible for treatment there are certain legal and psychiatric requirements the patient has to meet. The legal requirements are that a veteran must have a service connected disability. Psychiatric requirements for admission are based on the
principle that certain groups of patients do not lend themselves to out-patient treatment, such as those so acutely psychotic that hospitalization is indicated.

The referred veteran is seen by a social worker for an intake interview to obtain a complete picture of him in the areas of his complaints, his family, social, employment and military history. Subsequent to this the veteran is interviewed by a psychiatrist for a psychiatric evaluation and assignment for social case work or psychotherapy. If the veteran is ineligible, the intake social worker has the responsibility of referring him to the appropriate social agency.
CHAPTER II

Historical Background of Greece

The Greek people were a composite of elements from Europe and Asia Minor and indigenous Mediterranean stock which had its seat in Crete. The contact with Egypt through long Mediterranean voyages gave them their early pattern of civilization. About 2000 B.C. they were brought under the control of a miniature Pharaoh, whose palace at Cnossus was the earliest center of political power in Greek lands. The Cretans extended their civilization into the Aegean area and parts of the Greek mainland but were overcome by invaders from the Balkan lands. The invaders introduced a language of an Indo-European type which formed the basis of the Hellenic tongue. However, Cretan sovereignty was ended by Achean attackers, who in turn were invaded by the Dorians. These attacks brought on a long period of confusion and marked the climax of the Viking Age of Greece.¹

As a result of the northern invasions, many migrated to the western fringe of Asia Minor where the climate closely resembled that of Greece. By the end of the second millennium B.C. it had become an integral part of the Greek world. By 1000 B.C. the invasions ceased and a new nation was forming out of the component elements of the Greek population.

¹ M. Cary and T. J. Haarhoff, Life and Thought in the Greek and Roman World (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1940) p. 15.
However, it was necessary to create a whole new civilization as the remnants of the old Minoan culture had been destroyed by successive invasions.

The earliest political units were groups of villages clustered around an unfailing water supply. These tribal states proved very inadequate as to defense and government; provision for settlement of individual disputes was little more than barbaric. The tribal states were succeeded by city states. During this period the Greek considered himself first a citizen of his own city and was disdainful of other towns. By 600 B. C. the Greeks recognized their common characteristics and adopted the name of Hellenes. However, inter-city disputes were frequent and were prolonged to such an extent as to become hereditary. The resulting strife was such a drain on their resources as to weaken their resistance to external forces. A period of successive wars followed, the first of these being the Persian Wars, which were important as they brought on the Golden Age of Greek culture. During this period Greek creativeness reached its highest development. The literature produced by Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, the philosophy of Seneca and Epictetus, the grandeur of the architecture all contributed to the great strides made in the arts and sciences.  

An interesting comment on the influence of the glorious past of the Greeks during the pinnacle of their achievement on the modern Greek people is provided by Fairchild:

After knowing the Greeks for some time one is strongly tempted to say that one of the greatest curses of the modern nation is its inheritance from a glorious past. The Greek realizes well how he suffers in comparison with his predecessors, but seems to feel that past greatness atones and compensates for present failures. 

... Every effort is made to establish the close connection between the modern and the ancient nation, and the assumption is that if this can be proved any present shortcomings are of slight moment.

Mr. Fairchild feels that it would be better if the modern Greek could free himself from all sense of a glorious ancestry and could bring himself to face the responsibility of the improvement of present conditions which exist among his people. 3

The Peloponnesian War which grew out of the rivalry between Athens and Sparta, the two leading cities of Greece, lasted from 431 to 404 B.C. and drew the greater part of Greece into its orbit. This was followed by the conquest of Greece by Alexander of Macedon, which ended Greek creativity in thought and action. His conquest had a further result which was of overwhelming importance to later Europe as well as to Greece herself: the spread of the Greek language over Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Northern Egypt as the result of the founding of Greek cities with Greek institutions.

3 Henry Pratt Fairchild, Greek Immigration to the United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911) pp. 34-35.
habits, and culture.

The Jews of Palestine, being surrounded by Greek speaking people, became partly Hellenized. The extent to which early Christianity was fused with Greek thought is indicated by A. W. Gomme:

Hence the books of the New Testament (and the last books of the old) were written in Greek; and when the Gospel was preached beyond Palestine, whether to Jews or to Gentiles, it must use the Greek tongue. When learned men began to expand its doctrines, they used the language of Greek philosophy; and a religion which was so entirely Hebrew in origin and which introduced ideas so novel to the classical world became half-Greek in thought. Because there was cultural unity, with no barrier of language or custom, and easy communications, the Apostles naturally went westward over Asia Minor to such old Greek cities as Ephesos, Thessalonike, Athens, and Corinth; because there was yet wider political unity, and no national boundaries, and Greek was still the native language of southern Italy and was understood in Rome, they went beyond the Adriatic into Western Europe. Christianity thus became in its early years a European religion; it also became a world religion, supra-national, with a universal appeal.4

With the death of King Alexander of Macedon, a new period of Greek history, usually known as the Hellenistic Age, began. Internal quarreling over succession to the throne led to the conquest of the Graeco-Macedonian league by Rome. The Romans capitulated to Greek culture largely because the culture had widely spread over half the Mediterranean area under Alexander's reign.5 However, the division between the Latin


5 Cary and Haarhoff, op. cit., pp. 44-45.
and Greek halves of the Empire became more sharply defined. Doctrinal quarrels between eastern and western Christians were prevalent. It was during this period that the Greek Orthodox Church came into being as a separate entity from the Roman Catholic religion. The Greek people recognized the Patriarch in Constantinople as the head of the Church. He, like the Pope, was catholic or oecumenical. 6

The Roman Empire lasted for several centuries without radical changes in its structure. It remained the home of civilization, although only in an uncreative manner, contributing little of its own, living on the past, yet preserving much of it for the future benefit of Europe.

After many successive invasions the Turks finally gained possession of Greece in 1460. This conquest marked the beginning of three and one-half centuries of oppression more terrible than that of any preceding conquerors. However, there was little attempt made to subdue the language and religion of their subjects. The non-Turks were divided according to their religion into communities, the Greek Orthodox having the oecumenical Patriarch at Constantinople recognized as their head. As each religious head was given authority over all the members of his community in civil and religious matters, a tendency developed to identify religion with

national and language groups. Thus the old universal church became national not only in relation to the Turks, but to Roman christianity as well. 7

The devotion of the Greek people to their Church and their identification with it as a national institution persists even today, and is reflected in the aversion by the Greek community to marriage of its members outside the Greek Orthodox Church.

Although the Greeks sank to a pitiable position during the years of Turkish rule, their devotion to their Church and the fact that the system of local self-government had been allowed to exist helped in preserving their nationality.

It was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century, in 1821, that the spirit of independence led to outright revolt. The Turks tried to check the revolt by wholesale massacres and executions, but the Greeks were determined and in January 1822 the National Assembly adopted a provisional constitution and proclaimed Greece independent.

During the following century Greece was marked by internal strife, political despotism and Turkish oppression. However, with the combined aid of Russia, England, and France, Turkish tyranny was progressively reduced and finally removed in World War I. By a decisive popular vote Greece adopted the republican form of government in 1924. Recognition of

7 Ibid., pp. 3-8.
the new Republic was quickly extended by several great powers.

CHAPTER III

Geographical Factors

In order to understand more fully the Greek in the United States today it is necessary to establish a clear picture of life in Greece. This entails a study of the geography of the country as it greatly affects the type of occupation, trade routes, the development of industry and agriculture, and most significant for our study, migration. It is important to consider these factors as they affected Greek immigration to the United States around the turn of the century.

Greece proper was a very mountainous region isolated from the main body of the Balkan peninsula by a series of ridges. The coast line was extremely irregular and there were many excellent harbors. Greece was of necessity mainly an agricultural country. Mining and manufacturing have never flourished due to the lack of extensive mineral resources. The communication difficulties tended to limit the market, thus making industry unprofitable. The sheltered valleys and fertile uplands provided excellent agricultural lands and the vine, olive tree and wheat plant have always flourished, furnishing an easy subsistence for a not too dense population. Sheep and goats furnished milk, butter, and cheese as well as materials for clothing. It was not difficult to obtain the bare necessities of living. However, the Greeks were a

1 Fairchild, op. cit., pp. 6-8
prolific people and in the absence of industry there had not been sufficient improvement in the art of agriculture to provide for the natural increase of the population. Because of the mountainous topography of the country each small habitation district was closely confined within itself, making a gradual extension of territorial limits by individual migration impossible. As many of these districts bordered on the sea, a large part of the surplus population took to navigation and commercial pursuits. Many surplus inhabitants from the interior also became traders. For this reason the Greeks have always been a maritime people. The logical outgrowth of this seagoing life was that many established homes in sections of the Mediterranean lands and more distant parts of the world. The climate of the Mediterranean has done much to foster the development of the people into a maritime nation. Much sunshine, bright blue skies, the advantage of sailing around the sea without losing sight of land, and the consequent support for courage combined to make the Greeks bold sailors.

Thus its islands, coastal strips, mountain valleys, and wall-like mountains have played an important part in shaping the moral and intellectual features of the people. The same barriers which impeded commercial and industrial development

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also hindered common participation and interchange of social ideals. Consequently, small kin groups, each having an independent existence, came into being. This resulted in differences, jealousies, and misunderstandings, and although tribal wars are a thing of the past, the old factionalism remains a prominent feature in the Greek character. This idea is expressed by Fairchild as follows:

... today, as well as in ancient times, one of the most pronounced features of the Greek character is a factiousness, a sectionalism, a clannishness, an inability to take the point of view of one's neighbor, which has extended beyond the tribal limits to the domain of personal relations and individual character, making it very difficult for Greeks to unite in any common enterprise.  

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CHAPTER IV

Immigration to the United States

Before 1890 the number of immigrants was comparatively insignificant. These few were either orphans of the Greek War of Independence who were brought to the United States by individuals sorry for their plight, cotton merchants who lived on the Atlantic seaboard, seamen who left their ships on arrival in American ports, or students who attended universities. Only 1,887 Greeks emigrated to America before 1890 so that few of the distinct Greek characteristics remained and they became fundamentally American in ethnic type and culture.¹

After 1890 the "new immigration" took place, that is, the immigration of peoples of southern and eastern Europe, of which the Greeks were a conspicuous element. Due to the geographical features of Greece causing the separation of each habitation group, families were forced to be practically self-sufficient and internal trade was unprofitable. Although it was comparatively simple to gain a subsistence in Greece, it was difficult to lay up even a moderate amount of money. Their dissatisfaction with economic conditions was an important factor in causing migration. The first of the new immigrants from Greece were largely from the peasant class, mostly illiterate and poor, who having become dissatisfied

¹ Balk, op. cit., p. 25.
with economic conditions at home wished to try their luck in
the new world. Due to the labor conditions prevalent in the
United States at that time there was great need of the un-
skilled laboring classes to run the factories and their indus-
trial settlements. The new immigrants filled this need
and were able to make a successful living. Their success
casted many middle class Greeks to migrate also. However,
there was no place for a foreign educated class and the dif-
ficulties of learning a strange new language, obstacles of
differences in customs, laws, traditions, and education pre-
vented early assimilation and resulted in disillusionment for
many.

The greatest cause of emigration was the failure of the
currant crop in 1891. The damage to the French crop caused
by the appearance of phylloxera resulted in such devastation
as to destroy the wine making industry in that country.
Greece was quick to seize the opportunity to answer the de-
mand for currants. Olive orchards were cut down and vines
planted in their place. However, when in the latter part of
the nineteenth century France was successful in combating the
disease the resultant drop in the market for Greek currants
caused a serious depression. This provided the stimulus for
immediate migration.  

The Greek succeeds best either in countries where he

2 Fairchild, op. cit., pp. 74-76.
is superior in business capacity to the native inhabitants, or in a highly developed industrial country where he can work himself into some unoccupied commercial field. Turkey, Persia, and Egypt belong to the former class and in these countries there are prosperous Greek business men. America, on the other hand was a highly developed country with plenty of money, where people were ready to pay for satisfaction of their minor wants; thus it provided the conditions most suited to the Greek populace.³

A great incentive to emigrate to America was provided by letters written home from friends or relatives. It was usually the more successful who wrote home and described their achievements and opportunities in the United States. Many supported their claims by sending sums of money which appeared tremendous to their poverty-stricken friends at home. Others who were living under conditions not too favorable nevertheless wrote letters home saying how well off they were here to salve their pride. The exodus assumed proportions so great that quite often all the young men in an entire village left their homes to come to America. Many left in the hope of amassing wealth in the United States and returning home to a life of luxury and ease. On returning to their homeland some found American customs preferable to their

³ Ibid., p. 78.
own and came back to make permanent homes here. 4

In Greece every daughter must be married with a suitable dowry which it is the duty of her brothers to provide before they marry. If a man had several sisters it would be years before he could think of getting married himself. As the opportunities for earning enough money were often lacking, many men came to this country to work until they could return to Greece to see their sisters married. Frequently they would come back to the United States with brides of their own. 5

The desire to leave Greece and come to this country was so strong that any possibility of raising the money was seized upon. Inevitably exploitation was the result. Emigration agents toured the country telling the peasants of the glorious new land and stirring their imagination with tales of the wonders that could be theirs. Farms and homes were mortgaged at exorbitant rates of interest, so that at least one member of the family might emigrate to claim a share in the wealth to be obtained in the United States.

Others took advantage of offers made by factory owners or other business men who went to Greece in search of cheap labor. The promise of work in the United States and free passage were too tempting to refuse, and many first came here in this way. As the United States immigration laws denied

4 Balk, op. cit., p. 36.
admission to any aliens who had been induced to migrate to this country by offers or promises of employment, the prospective workers were carefully coached on how questions should be answered, and were warned not to mention any promise of work. A stock answer to immigration authorities was, "I shall take the first honest job that is offered to me." These workers were usually underpaid, but so great was their fear of the authorities that they seldom complained. Few realized the true situation as the meager amounts earned seemed large in comparison to wages in Greece. It was a common practice for a Greek who had been in America long enough to start a small business of his own to return to his fatherland for a few months visit, and then go back to America, taking with him a group of half a dozen or more of his friends and neighbors. It was quite impossible for a stranger to find out by what inducements or promises he had persuaded them to accompany him. 6

The "new immigration" resulted in the presence of 8,075 Greeks in the United States in 1900. The years 1900 to 1910 marked a period of large industrial expansion in the United States and the number of Greeks in this country rose to 101,264. 7

6 Ibid., pp. 89-90.
7 Balk, op. cit., p. 27.
CHAPTER V

Greeks in America

On his arrival in this country the Greek immigrant was chiefly employed as an unskilled laborer in the New England textile industries, a fisherman on the East or West Coast, a miner in Pennsylvania or Utah, a farmhand on the fruit farms in California, or a laborer on railroads throughout the country. He had no difficulty in finding a place in any occupation requiring labor without much skill. However, the Greeks prefer to be independent and save their earnings toward this end. As soon as a laborer accumulated a little money he bought a fruit or flower tray and peddled his wares on the street. By hard work, long hours, and self-deprivation he was able to accumulate a little more money which he invested in a fruit or flower stand. Eventually his earnings were sufficient to establish a small business. He often did this in conjunction with one or two other Greeks, who would rent a store together in which they combined confectionery goods, a flower shop, and shoe shining and repairing all in one store. The Greeks are peculiarly successful in working with food and many became engaged in operating restaurants, wholesale grocery establishments, and markets or confectionery stores.

1 Balk, op. cit., pp. 42-43.
It was natural for the Greeks to enter into businesses in which their compatriots had been successful. Rarely did they choose a completely different field. Many came to the United States at the request of a friend or brother who had an established business which needed more help.

Many young boys were brought here from Greece to work in the shoe shine parlors. Their wages were meager, and they often worked twelve or fourteen hours a day. The long hours prevented them from taking advantage of the schools which were set up to teach immigrants to speak English and acquaint them with American customs. Lack of contact with the outside world kept them in ignorance, thus enabling the bosses to continue this exploitation until a few boys earned enough to go into business for themselves. Then replacements were brought over and the business continued. As already mentioned, fear of being reported to the authorities as violators of the immigration law was enough to keep the boys in line if they disclosed their squalid living conditions, low pay, and other abuses. This habit of exploiting each other was one of the greatest complaints against the Greeks in this country. Once a Greek had mastered American ways it was not unlikely that he would put his knowledge to use in making money at the expense of his less experienced countrymen.  

Many Greeks became disillusioned following their arrival

Having received a letter from some compatriot in this country, they were filled with expectation of what the new land had to offer. "He who was our poor neighbor has now become rich and a great and honored man; let us go too."³ Instead they found hard, inevitable toil, the like of which they never dreamed of at home. In Greece they never consulted a clock as to what time to get out of bed; they did not work in bad weather, but only when they pleased; no factory whistle commanded obedience and there was no boss who closely supervised their work. Upon their arrival in America they were forced to live in wretched tenements in order to pay debts and to support their families at home. The danger, disease, and exploitation by unscrupulous countrymen and Americans - all these were unforeseen when they left Greece to come to the land of promise - America. Once here shame and lack of money prevented them from returning and they buckled down to hard work. No doubt their ambition in the face of great obstacles accounts in a large part for the success of so many Greeks.

Because it was not a question of one individual fighting alone for success, but of a great number of Greek people finding themselves in similar circumstances, it was inevitable that they would band together. This was necessary for mutual support and communication, and to keep alive the patriotism,  

³ Thomas Burgess, Greeks in America, p. 19.
religion, and the customs of the fatherland. By 1891 Greeks were gathered in some of the large cities in colonies numbering a few hundred. When Prince George of Greece passed through the United States he stopped in New York and received a few of the leading Greeks of that city in his hotel. He left with them the idea of organizing a Greek Society. The five hundred or so Greeks in New York established a society called "The Hellenic Brotherhood of Athena" which wrote to Greece requesting a priest. A similar organization was formed in Chicago. Thus began the Orthodox Greek communities. By 1913 there were sixteen churches erected by various Greek communities. One of these, the Church of The Holy Trinity, was established in the Orthodox Greek community of Lowell, Massachusetts.

The Church was and is still the most important institution in any Greek community. Another strong influence fostering group cohesiveness was the newspaper. The first, the Atlantis, was started in 1894. The newspapers have contributed a great deal toward the enlightenment and development of Greeks in America. However, they have also done much to animate the factionalism which remains a prominent part of the Greek character.

An important consideration in the lives of the early Greek immigrants was the fact that few of them brought their

4 Ibid., pp. 53-55.
families here. Financial reasons made this impossible. Thus crowds of men herded together without the influence of family life were subjected to temptation. The freedom of American girls and women which was in sharp contrast to life in Greece where no decent girl would be out unescorted after dark both shocked and allured them. They found American moral standards perplexing: the laxness in divorce laws, the "looseness" among "leaders of society," and the daily scandal-mongering of newspapers. Later unmarried girls started coming to America with their brothers and parents. As there are few mixed marriages among the Greeks, the difficulty in adjusting to American customs and mores in this respect was alleviated considerably as more women arrived from Greece.

As the Church and family life were established in the Greek community, so followed the development of Greek schools. In Greece there are no Sunday schools as the Bible, Catechism, and Prayers are taught as a basic part of the curriculum throughout the entire school life. Naturally families felt that the curriculum in American schools was lacking as it failed to provide such education. The earliest schools were established in the Greek communities in Boston, Lowell, Lynn, and Chicago. The schools are not parochial in the sense in which the term is applied to Roman Catholic schools, as the priest of the community has no direct relation to the school. However, in Greece the teaching of prayers, the forms of worship, and the life of Christ and other Bible stories are
the function of the school and are required by law.

Because of the influence of the Greek schools and churches the group cohesiveness has been preserved through the years. The early immigrants instilled the idea into their children that they were primarily Greeks and, although loyal to the United States, they still take great pride in their language and heritage.

An excellent understanding of a Greek community in any city is furnished by W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole in their book *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups*. The study covers the customs and mores of various ethnic groups in a typical American city and provides a clear picture of life in a Greek community.

The Greek family is strictly patriarchal although this pattern is radically altered the day the husband takes his place in the industrial economy of an American city. The family ceases to be a self-sufficient, cooperative, producing unit and the highly complex division of labor of American economy reflects itself in the sharp division of labor between husband and wife. The husband alone has become the "bread-winner" and the wife becomes even more subordinate to him in her role as "homemaker." This situation is accentuated by the fact that the wife has few social relations beyond her home except for a few persons of her own ethnic background who may be her neighbors. Her husband soon picks up the American language in his economic relations, thus facilitating his
movement in society.

Greek women are expected to confine their interests to their home and children. As the husband is at work during the day and spends many evenings at the coffee shops, the responsibility of supervising the children which formerly was the husband's now falls to the wife. He in no way abandons any of his authority over the children, but delegates it to the wife as his agent when he is occupied elsewhere.

The following statement of a first generation Greek husband typifies the desire to keep the women identified exclusively with the home:

In this country one trouble is that they give the women too much power. They have organizations, they vote and run things, and run for governor just like the men do. . . . The Greek women here don't vote. Just the men vote. I know the American women do but the Greek don't. They stay at home. 5

In analyzing the governing body of the Orthodox Greek Community, it must be remembered that it is almost impossible to separate the organization of the overall community from that of the Church. The Greek Church is directed by a committee elected democratically by the male adults of the community who are also church members. The committee acts as board of directors of the church for the community. This is legally recognized by American society as a corporation with a constitution on file at the State House. The committee is

elected annually and consists of ten members. Four are officers who are responsible to the community and the other six comprise two administrative sub-committees in charge of the routine and minor details of the church and school. However, on all matters of importance the entire committee must make the decision. The affairs which they direct include management of the church funds, maintenance of the church building, hiring and paying the priest and the Greek school teacher, and arranging church and school picnics.

Occupation and class strata seem to have little effect on the selection of the members. They must be heads of families, however, as the family is the unit of the community. Committee membership is generally drawn from those who have not to any great degree entered into external relations in the system of the city. Complete identification with the Greek community appears to be a factor influencing individual success. Therefore, newcomers attempt to identify themselves with the local Greek community.

Although the Greek Church represents a strong force in social control, the priest himself is chosen by the community and his length of service is determined by them. When a community wants a priest they organize a church and write to the bishop in New York. If the priest who is sent is not acceptable a meeting is called and three-quarters of the members present are sufficient to reject him. They notify the bishop who sends them another priest and investigates the conditions.
The actual head of the Greek Church in America is in Constantinople, but the bishop in New York administers all of North and South America. He acts as agent between the Mother Church in Constantinople and the local priest in matters of ritual and dogma. Otherwise he has only slight authority. The Orthodox Church is in no way hierarchic as the bishops are set over priests in liturgical and disciplinary matters but not in an autocratic sense.

Having discussed the institutional forms of Greeks in America, we are now in a position to concentrate on the Greek population of a specific area. Other habits peculiar to the Greeks will be brought up in the following paragraphs on Lowell, Massachusetts.

The first Greek immigrants to Lowell came in 1891. At that time almost all Greeks in the country were peddlers working toward the goal of eventually establishing small businesses.

It was the period of financial panic in 1892 when Greeks first became employed in the mills to any great extent. Lowell was at that time and still is primarily a mill town, specializing in the textile industry. Two or three peddlers who could not maintain their small businesses were given an opportunity to work in the mills. They wrote their friends, who immigrated and became engaged in similar work. The Greeks were favored by the overseers over the other national groups because they proved themselves the steadier workers. From
that time on they had little difficulty in finding employment in the textile mills. Because they were given preference over other workers, they were forced to settle in groups in one section of the city as a means of protection against workers of other nationalities who resented their success in the mills. The greatest concentration was on Market Street and still centers in this section.

The living conditions were extremely poor and unsanitary, the Greeks and Syrians having the poorest housing conditions of any nationality in Lowell.

Often they are crowded in close and narrow quarters, with three or more in a room, little or no ventilation, rooms often without windows, no facilities for bathing, no opportunity for drying clothes except in the crowded kitchen, and with extremely bad toilet accommodations. 6

The conditions are even more severe when compared to the lives of people in Greece. They were brought up in the pure air of Greece, working either as farmers or shepherds and living in houses where there was always plenty of fresh air. In Lowell they worked fifty-six hours a week in cotton mills breathing cotton dust every day. Their condition is further described by Kenngott as follows:

At the close of the day's work they go to the poorly ventilated coffee houses and remain there smoking, spitting on the floor, playing cards and inhaling the germs of various diseases, about three hours every evening. After that they go to their poor apology of a home and sleep with one or two others.

in a single bed, frequently with two beds in one room. In these bed-chambers the air becomes very polluted, as the windows are very rarely open during the night. In place of the light wines of Greece, they turned to drinking the intoxicating liquors of our country. All these things tend to bring upon them tuberculosis in various forms.  

Nevertheless in 1912 there were eight thousand Greeks living in the city of Lowell, the second highest in proportion of the non-English speaking people in the city. At that time the Greek colony in Lowell was considered the most exclusive and distinctly Greek settlement of any size in the United States.

Thus we get a fair idea of the population of first generation Greeks in the early part of the century. Unfortunately, no similar statistics could be obtained on the number of Greeks in Lowell at the present time. The 1940 census report gave only the number of foreign born Greeks which was 1,649. The Greek voting population is around twenty-seven hundred.

A great source of pride to the Greek population of Lowell is their Orthodox Church. This was built in the early twentieth century at a cost of about seventy-six thousand dollars. The church is built in a modified Byzantine style of fine

7 Ibid., p. 94.
8 Ibid., p. 28.
9 United States Department of Commerce, Sixteenth Census, 1940.
10 Lowell, Massachusetts, City Hall Records.
cream-colored brick, having two small gilded domes in front and one large one over the center. The interior follows the orthodox style and is beautifully appointed. The patterning of the church after those in Greece further illustrates the desire of the Greek people to maintain their essential national characteristics and reproduce with the utmost fidelity the conditions in their native land.

The coffee houses are also a carry-over of conditions in Greece and serve as a meeting place for relaxation and some business discussions. Burgess describes them as follows:

Imagine a room, sometimes shabby, sometimes neat, filled with little tables, about which are seated moustached Greeks talking, joking, playing cards, sometimes singing, poring over newspapers, and smoking cigarettes and drinking their thick, sweet Turkish coffee, served in tiny cups, or perhaps Moxie or some other soft drink. Here are discussed with relish and vivacity and factional intelligence the politics of the community, Greece, the United States. Here is the typical Greek spirit of comradeship and argument. 11

The adult men, both first and second generation Greek-Americans, spend much of their leisure time in the coffee houses. They are recognized as community centers and notices of elections, church functions and coming events are posted there. The coffee houses serve to a great degree to tie the ethnic community to the homeland. They represent to the Greek an aspect of his ancestral society which is less changed from the original than any structure in the community with the exception of the Greek Orthodox Church.

11 Burgess, op. cit., p. 151.
CHAPTER VI
Case Material

In this study there are sixteen cases to be considered, this figure being the total number of Greek-American patients seen at the clinic from September 12, 1949 to the time the study was begun, a period of about fifteen months. A total of three hundred patients were seen at the clinic during the same period. Therefore, the cases under study came to a fraction over five per cent.

Only one patient is a first generation American, the remainder all being second generation. They range in age from twenty-five to sixty-two. Eleven are between twenty-five and twenty-nine, three in their thirties, thirty-four, thirty-five, and thirty-eight, one forty, and one sixty-two; the latter is first generation.

Of the sixteen cases thirteen presented psychosomatic symptoms at intake, such complaints as headache, constipation, vomiting, diarrhea, tenseness, irritability, fatigue, insomnia, and combinations of them. In contrast to this only three patients presented more socially oriented problems: fear of hurting people resulting in rigid control of himself, inability to hold employment and become settled, and fear of being a homo-sexual. The latter three patients are aged twenty-nine, twenty-seven, and thirty-four respectively. Five patients did not continue coming to the clinic following the intake interview, four because they refused the help
offered by the clinic, and one because he had no service connected disability. All of the above five presented psychosomatic complaints and all except the non-service connected veteran were unwilling to accept a psychogenic base for their symptoms. Eleven patients, therefore, continued in treatment over an extended period of time.

Ten of the patients are married, five are single, and there is no reference to marital status in one case. According to the records two of the married patients live with their wives' parents. There is no record of the living arrangements among the remaining eight married patients. Of the five single patients four stated they live with various members of their families, parents and/or siblings. Although there is no record of the fifth patient's domicile, it is presumed that he lives with his parents as he is a student in Lowell. Three patients married Irish Roman Catholic girls, resulting in open opposition from their parents. In contrast, another patient indicated marriage to a non-Greek girl but with no conflict with his parents. There is no record of the religion and national origin of the other six patients' wives.

It is rather hard to determine from the records whether any of the patients had any awareness of a culture conflict except in a few specific cases. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, three veterans received much parental opposition to marrying a non-Greek girl. This was understood by the patients as a cultural opposition to out-group marriage.
Although there seems to be no further indication of an awareness of culture conflict among other patients, it is possible that there are more with cultural insight who do not make it evident in the interview.

One area of information deficiency in the records is the educational and religious training of the patients. Answers relating to what type - Greek or American - length, whether parentally enforced or voluntarily accepted, how strong an influence in drawing the patient to the Greek or American culture, etc. are not in the records. Although speculation is not in order with respect to such data, the writer would like to suggest that many of these patients do attend a Greek church, even if only occasionally, because their parents, who are first generation Greek-Americans and adhere strongly to the formal Greek way of life, influence their children strictly regarding religion. ¹

Except for five definite cases, there is no record pertaining to the extent of education. These five patients indicated at various times during the interview their educational achievements. One is attending a commercial art school, another is a graduate of a New England law school, a third is obtaining business school training, a fourth attended an accountants school for thirty-six months, and the fifth is a dental technician with his own laboratory.

¹ Reverend Theodore Theodorides of St. Constantine's Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
In checking the employment history of these patients, it is interesting to note that only one of the sixteen works in a textile mill, the major industry in Lowell. Although his employment is in the mill, it is further interesting to note that he has raised himself to the position of inspector. Four indicate they are unemployed, and one states that he has only part-time employment, working in a package store because of inability to locate an accountant's position following thirty-six months in accountants school. One is employed by a leather factory, this being somewhat divorced from the main mill industry. One is an auto mechanic and has his own garage. One is a proof-reader. Two are salesmen in department stores. As mentioned in the previous paragraph one is a dental technician. The law school graduate is a partner in a small laundry. One still attends commercial art school under Public Law 346. Another student is attempting to secure a business school education. There is no indication of the employment status of one Greek-American patient.

The cases under study may be sub-divided into groups on the basis of certain trends which the analysis revealed. With only sixteen cases these trends are obviously not conclusive, but they can serve as guides for future work with Greek-American patients. In many of the cases there seem to be considerable feelings of inadequacy, sometimes verbalized, but more often inferred by the interviewer, whereby the patients feel they are not fulfilling completely their
obligations. Another factor which many of the patients exhibited is the apparent necessary feeling of having to maintain control over their verbalizations. This results in resistance to the interviewer. The patient seeks to protect himself from revealing his inner feelings by attempting to confine his verbalizing to completely factual information, thus avoiding emotional factors. This was a recurring difficulty which is important to our study as it may have some basis in the cultural background of the Greeks. This will be discussed later in the chapter. Marriage outside the Orthodox Greek unit was a problem in some of the cases as the parents strongly objected to non-Greek girls.

The above factors will form the basis for subdividing the Greek cases. As some of the veterans have several of the difficulties mentioned, strict classification is impossible. However, the cases will be studied in detail and an attempt made to analyze the factors and their relevance to the study of Greek characteristics.

In nine or 56.25 per cent of the cases studied there is evidence of the patients striving for independence and success, but being constantly frustrated in attainment. We know that the Greek culture places a high premium on independence. This often results in jealousy of other individuals and a constant struggle to outdo one another. Although the Western culture places a high priority on individual success and personal adequacy, it seems prevalent to a much greater degree
among the Greek people.

In Lowell the first generation Greek-Americans were severely exploited by those of the native population who had influence and control. Because the Greeks were a new immigrant group who knew nothing of the American way of life and had no financial security, this exploitation was easily accomplished. Furthermore, because many of these early Greek people had been brought to this country by American businessmen as cheap labor, which was illegal under the immigration laws, the exploitation with respect to wages, housing, etc. was further facilitated. The immigrant would never dare to complain because he would undoubtedly be deported. 2

There is no record to indicate the occupations of the parents of the patients studied with the exception of one whose father is a mill worker. However, George F. Kenngott states:

Most of the emigrants from Greece to Lowell are unskilled laborers and farmers; about ten percent are skilled. . . . There are more Greeks at work in the factories of Lowell than in any other city in the country. They are mainly employed in unskilled labor, as in picker and carding rooms, and in performing certain labor which is usually reserved for women, such as tending ring-spinning frames. 3

The writer believes that it is fair to speculate that in terms of the above quotation many of the parents were

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2 Fairchild, op. cit., p. 25.
3 Kenngott, op. cit., p. 32.
employed by the textile mills.

In analyzing the cases it was noted that only one patient is a mill worker, and he is an inspector. The remainder have entered fields of employment other than mill work. This is made even more interesting when the type of employment of the second generation Greek-Americans is compared with that of the first generation. Whereas so many of the immigrants worked in the mills, these second generation patients appear to be seeking a way out of such employment. Despite this rejection of mill work and seeking something better, their goal of success and independence is frustrated. They have feelings of inadequacy which are either verbalized or interpreted as such by the therapist. Although a feeling of inadequacy is not a purely Greek cultural phenomenon, the Greek culture does place a high premium on independence and strength to overcome problems. Under Greek standards a man is expected to be the true Spartan type: a masculine figure who is able to live up to the traditions and national heritage of Greece. He must be strong and capable in handling difficult problems by himself. Individualism in overcoming opposition and hardship is admired.  

Mr. R., a thirty-eight year old veteran, presents a rather typical picture of the patients who exhibit this deviation from the true Spartan figure.

4 Fairchild, op. cit., pp. 34-35.
The patient is the third oldest of eleven children. He dislikes his older brothers who never helped their mother with work which Mr. R. often did. In fact, he boot-blacked and sold papers at an early age to contribute financial support. Although the father was a mill worker, he was a poor provider, doing considerable drinking. Mr. R.'s mother was a hard worker, having been a farm girl in Acadia, near Athens, from where she emigrated to relatives in Lawrence. In 1939 the patient married and in 1944 he entered the service. Although he was unable to afford children initially, he finds that now he is "unable to have any" even though he desires them. Furthermore, he is incapable of intercourse more than once a month because of fatigue. Some time ago his wife forced him to buy a house which was beyond his means, indicating that she would leave him otherwise. He now has heavy obligations which have been aggravated by a recent pension cut. At present he is a salesman in a furniture store. He presents a burly, moderately obese appearance. Mr. R. stressed the fact that he was independent, seeming to indicate that he now is not. In a further connection with this, Mr. R. strongly stated that Greeks are too jealous and will not stand together; they will not let one Greek rise above another.

It would be rather difficult to explain this case strictly in terms of Greek culture because similar problems are found in other cultures. However, when the subtle shades of meaning regarding status, role, etc. among different cultures are known, the personality dynamics of an individual may change their focus entirely. The husband's status in the Greek family is that of absolute ruler with complete authority, while the wife is subordinate to him in the role of homemaker. The family is considered the primary unit of the

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6 See p. 29.
Greek community, and failure to provide adequate support and adjust to other aspects of family life are not in accordance with the standards set up by the Greek society.

Mr. R. has failed in the role of a Greek husband. He is incapable of frequent sexual relations with his wife and financial obligations are a burden to him because of his wife's insistence in owning a house. He feels he is falling short of his proper duties and suffers a great sense of inferiority to other men whose employment and sexual adjustments are far superior to his own. Although the preceding has been written in terms of one patient, the cultural dynamics can be applied in a general way to other patients who exhibit similar problems.

On page fourteen it is noted that there is tremendous feeling against exogamy. The reasons for this development have been given in Chapter II but briefly stated here it came about through the increasing nationalistic feeling and importance of the Church from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries under the Turkish oppression. In addition to the literature references, Rev. Theodore Theodorides of St. Constantine's Church in Cambridge, stated to the writer that even at the present time the first generation Greek-Americans express much opposition to a son marrying out of the group. They constantly interfere with the young people's affairs so that almost inevitably a marital problem erupts. He further indicated that following a nuptial he now speaks to the
parents in an attempt to reduce their interference. However, he did add that many of the young people are too hasty in deciding on exogamy which transcends a tradition of many centuries. It is very difficult for the parents, who maintain the old customs, habits, and traditions, to acquiesce to "modern" ideas.

As has been indicated previously three patients married Irish Roman Catholic girls which initially was not accepted by their parents. One indicated having married a non-Greek girl but apparently with no parental opposition.

Mr. G. was seen at the Boston Mental Hygiene Unit over a period of two years and subsequently at the Lowell Mental Hygiene Unit since its inception in September 1949. In that period he discussed at length the conflict with his parents over his choice of a future wife, an Irish Roman Catholic girl. At first his parents strongly opposed the marriage. The patient was ordered by his father to leave the house, in accordance with the Greek custom when a son marries out of the group. This was the first time the patient had disobeyed his parents, but it marked the beginning of his breaking away from strict adherence to Greek traditions. He refused to have the engagement announced or to have a "fancy wedding," both of which are important aspects of the Greek courtship. Later, as a result of the girl learning a few Greek phrases, which pleased his parents and resulted in a better acquaintance, both the mother and father gradually came to accept her. It is rather interesting to note that the patient's symptoms increased about the time he first disobeyed his parents, and he also had a headache and stomach ache on his wedding day. There is a possibility that the conflict with parental attitudes and feelings was a serious difficulty to him and he was unable to reconcile his breaking away from Greek tradition with his early upbringing which had stressed adherence to national customs. However, his symptoms have gradually subsided and now at the Lowell clinic he no longer mentions them.
Here is an example of active parental opposition to exogamy which typifies a few such cases seen at the clinic. In addition, the girl is Roman Catholic, a group from which the Greek Orthodox Church broke because of much adverse feeling. It is interesting to note that the parents subsequently came to accept each of the girls, according to each patient. However, in view of the known strong feeling against exogamy, there is some question regarding how complete is this acceptance.

The previous chapter in which the Greek Orthodox Church was discussed revealed the important place of the Church in the lives of Greek-Americans. As all the patients who married non-Greek girls were second generation Americans, it would seem probable that they were brought up in strict adherence to the tenets of the Greek Orthodox Church. Thus, not only was parental disapproval a factor, but also defiance of the traditions of their culture. Although they proceeded with their marriage plans, the early training was so deep rooted as to make successful adjustment difficult.

One characteristic which seems to pervade the majority of the cases is the apparent resistance, manifested by a dichotomy between the patients' emotions and their problems. Only the factual circumstances of problems and the patients' symptoms are discussed. Many Greek-American patients are either vague or provide little information in the interviews. In addition, some tend to intellectualize, thus divorcing
their emotions from the central core of the problem. Although this phenomenon is found among patients with other national origins, seeming to negate the cultural emphasis, again we must understand the subtle meaning which this characteristic carries. The inability or unwillingness to discuss personal problems is in the Greek culture termed philotimo, which constitutes the concept of personal integrity, respect for oneself and respect from others for the fulfillment of his role. He attempts to present a surface of self-sufficiency to the outsider. Only within the inner circle, within the family and those whom the family has accepted into the circle can the Greek express his doubts, his failures, his needs, and his dependence.  

Fourteen Greek veterans manifest this resistance characteristic. Four patients were seen only on intake and rejected the possibility of their symptoms being psychogenic. They either implied the symptoms were organic or expressed an unemployment problem which they felt could not be aided by psychotherapy or social case work. Consequently, they refused help and did not return. One attended the clinic for three or four interviews and failed to continue as a patient, expressing the feeling that he "could not see what help talking does." Another veteran was treated by one of the psychiatrists for a considerable length of time and although he

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brought out much material he stressed the physical aspects. He considered the mental or emotional factors alien to the problem. Although he wanted his symptoms cured, he did not wish to participate in the treatment. Later he was transferred to another psychiatrist, was seen once and failed to keep further appointments.

The remaining eight veterans have been in treatment for a long period and although they bring out much material, some of which seems to have an emotional content, the therapists indicate no insight has developed. One patient, Mr. G., who was seen at the Boston Mental Hygiene Unit, seemed to improve but denied any benefit from the treatment; however, he wished to continue when the Lowell clinic opened. In contrast to the somewhat emotional nature of his interviews in Boston where he discussed his parents' opposition to his marriage with a non-Greek girl, his attitude at the Lowell clinic is "flip and humorous." He maintains the relationship on a jocular and social level, frequently attempting to draw the therapist into discussing himself. He is unable to discuss things of a personal or emotional nature involving himself. Despite the fact that two of the other seven veterans had psychotic break-downs in the service and are under-productive and show little spontaneity in the interview, they now manifest good contact and can be included in this discussion. All seven are essentially similar in this resistance. One discusses his symptoms primarily; another finds himself unable to "let go
and talk with anyone," feeling that he is wasting time because he is not telling the entire story. Although the others relate well and talk freely, they tend to intellectualize and give the impression that it is difficult to discuss their emotions.

The above illustrations manifest no purely cultural trait per se as resistance to express emotional content is found among patients of other national origins at the clinic. On the other hand, when this characteristic is considered in terms of philotimo, a new emphasis appears. The writer believes that to a certain extent that concept applies because these patients have been subject to parental influence for several years. This will naturally affect their behavior patterns to some degree.
CHAPTER VII

Summary and Conclusions

It is a well known observation that whereas the first generation European-American is reasonably insulated against a culture conflict because of having known only one set of standards for many years and later living with his own cultural and national group in this country, the second generation individual comes into contact with two sets of values, his parents' which reflect a particular European culture and the community standards which reflect the American culture. It is reasonable to assume that in many cases different types of problems can become manifest, especially if the parents maintain strong attachment to the particular European value systems under which they were socialized. This study then was undertaken to determine whether Greek cultural forces impinge upon the Greek-American patients at the Lowell Veterans Administration Mental Hygiene Unit to the degree that conflicts between Greek and American standards arise. If such conflicts do appear, in what areas and to what degree are they manifest?

In order to have a frame of reference within which to place the sixteen cases for purposes of study and comparison, considerable material was presented regarding the main Greek historical, geographical, economic, religious and cultural events which have affected the Greek nation.

One handicap discovered during the course of the study
was the dearth of material relating to second generation Greek adjustment in America. As was pointed out on page six, this material can be obtained only from social agency and court records. Even though the above factors limit the study relating to their adjustments and any ensuing problems, so as to invalidate generalizations, it would seem that there is value in it as a foundation for future work in this field.

Three major problem areas were found to exist among the sixteen Greek-American patients studied. These were presented as trends because the limited number in the group minimized the conclusiveness of the findings. However, within the group a sufficient number of patients were contained in each of the three areas to warrant conclusiveness within the study.

Nine patients manifested, either through verbalizations or through interpretation by the therapist, a striving for independence and self-sufficiency which was not being attained. This led to feelings of inadequacy.

The first generation Greek-Americans were exploited and lived under terrible conditions in Lowell. The patients in this study, the progeny of the exploited first generation group, exhibit an attempt to extricate themselves from these conditions, evidenced by only one working in a textile mill, the major industry in Lowell which employed first generation Greeks. Despite this attempt, many of them failed to accomplish their goal. They fell into financial debt, they were unable to accomplish what is expected of them as husbands and...
men. Although this identical pattern of behavior is found among other cultural groups, it must be thought of in terms of Greek standards. The Greek family is patriarchal with the man maintaining absolute responsibility. When he fails in this capacity, he is not living up to the true Spartan figure which is expected.

A second area which was extremely prominent resulted in resistance to the therapist. Fourteen patients displayed opposition to any discussion of the emotional aspects of their problems. They either discussed only their symptoms, or related factual information with no emotional content, or kept the interviews on a jocular level. Some stated that they saw no value in "talking." This behavior pattern is also displayed by individuals of other national origins. However, the Greek people have a concept known as philotimo which prevents them from expressing their doubts, failures, dependences, etc. outside of the inner circle of the family and those who are accepted within it. When thought of in those terms, this resistance can be understood as a cultural phenomenon.

The third problem encountered among these patients was that of exogamy. This was the sole difficulty verbalized by the patients as having cultural significance. Through the centuries a strong feeling of nationalism and close attachment to the Church has developed among the Greeks. Therefore, endogamy has been thought of as mandatory. Three patients
married Irish Roman Catholic girls, but during the initial stages of the courtship tremendous opposition to the marriage was expressed by the patients' parents. Subsequently, the girls were accepted as family members. By what means this acceptance was accomplished is not indicated in the records except that in one case the girl learned Greek phrases which pleased her future in-laws.

Thus, we see that many of the problems exhibited by these Greek-American patients are shared by other national or ethnic groups. This would appear to negate a cultural emphasis. However, when value systems of a culture are known, the subtle shades of meaning of particular behavior patterns and standards take on a different context from one culture to the next. In working with such people, therefore, it would seem important to be aware of these various value systems.

As has been mentioned before in specific instances, there is a lack of information in the records regarding length and type of education, strength of religious affiliations, employment status of parents, and religious and national origins of the patients' wives, and many other factors. For social workers this type of information would seem to carry considerable importance. Furthermore, when there is a possibility of a conflict between value systems, such as would occur among second generation European-Americans, the importance and value of material relating to cultural standards would seem to be magnified and should be obtained whenever possible.
Without this information the exact degree to which the different cultural factors affect the adjustment of Greek-American individuals cannot be ascertained.

Approved:

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Dean
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