

# From Assimilation to Kalomoira: Satellite Television and its Place in New York City's Greek Community

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***Abstract:***

This paper examines the role that imported satellite television programming from Greece has played in the maintenance and rejuvenation of Greek cultural identity and language use within the Greek-American community of New York City—the largest and most significant in the United States. Four main concepts guide this paper, based on prior theoretical research established in the field of Diaspora studies: authenticity, assertive hybridity, cultural capital, and imagined communities. Satellite television broadcasts from Greece have targeted the audience of the Hellenic Diaspora as an extension of the homeland, and as a result, are viewed as more “authentic” than Diaspora-based broadcasts. Assertive hybridity is exemplified through satellite programming such as reality shows and the emergence of transnational pop stars such as Kalomoira, who was born and raised in New York but attained celebrity status in Greece as the result of her participation on the Greek reality show *Fame Story*. Finally, satellite television broadcasts from Greece have fostered the formation of a transnational imagined community, linked by the shared viewing of Greek satellite programming and the simultaneous consumption of Greek pop culture and acquisition of cultural capital. All of the above concepts are evident in the emergence of a Greek “café culture” and “sports culture”, mediated by satellite television and visible in the community’s public spaces. These findings contradict predictions often seen in the prior scholarship on the topic, which foresaw a quick erosion of Greek language use within the Greek-American community.

***Keywords:*** Assertive Hybridity; Cultural Capital; Diaspora; Ethnic Media; Greek; Greek-American; Imagined Community; Immigrant Media; Satellite Television; Transnational Media

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**Résumé:**

Cet article fait l'examen du rôle qu'a joué la programmation télévisuelle importée par satellite de la Grèce sur le maintien et le renouvellement de l'identité culturelle grecque et de la langue parmi la communauté gréco-américaine dans la ville de New York; la plus grande et importante aux États-Unis. Quatre concepts clés basés sur des recherches théoriques antérieures établies dans le domaine de l'étude des Diasporas guident cet article: l'authenticité, l'hybridité assertive, le capital culturel, et les communautés imaginées. Les télédiffusions satellites de la Grèce ont visé les spectateurs de la Diaspora hellénique en tant qu'extension de la patrie et, en résultat, sont perçues comme étant plus authentiques que les diffusions basées sur la Diaspora. L'hybridité assertive est authentifiée à travers la programmation satellite telle que les émissions de télé-réalité ainsi que l'émergence de vedettes populaires telle que Kalomoira, qui est née à New York, mais a atteint sa célébrité en Grèce par le biais de sa participation à une télé-réalité grecque *Fame story*. Finalement, les télédiffusions par satellites à partir de la Grèce ont favorisé la formation d'une communauté imaginaire transnationale qui est liée par l'écoute commune de la programmation grecque par satellite et la consommation simultanée de culture populaire grecque et l'acquisition de capitale culturelle. Tous les concepts présentés ci-haut se manifestent dans l'émergence d'une "culture café" et d'une "culture de sports" grecque qui est médiatisée par la télévision satellite et est visible dans la sphère publique de la communauté. Ces constatations sont contradictoires aux prédictions qui sont souvent vues dans les recherches antérieures sur ce sujet, qui prédisent l'érosion rapide de la langue grecque dans les communautés gréco-américaines.

**Mots-clés:** Hybridité Assertive; Capital Culturel; Diaspora; Média Ethnique; Grecque; Greco-Américain; Communauté Imaginaire; Média Immigrants; Télévision Satellite; Média Transnationales

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**Introduction**

Among diasporic communities in the United States, the Greek-American community is one of the most underrepresented in academic research and literature. Though there has been a recent increase in the Greek-American community's visibility through the surprising success of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *My Life in Ruins*, and the PBS documentary *The Greek Americans* (the success of which led PBS to launch its "Homelands" series of documentaries chronicling the history of several ethnic groups in the United States) (Anagnostou, 2003: 279; Hassapopoulou, 2007: 60-64, 70-71), that success has not led to an increased level of academic interest in the Greek-American community. This lack of scholarship has been noted by prominent Greek

Studies scholars such as Spyros D. Orfanos, who commented that "...references to the Greek immigrant experience in the United States are astonishingly few" (Orfanos, 2002: 15).

While Greek immigration to the United States never reached the levels of some other European ethnic groups, such as the Italians or the Irish, significant amounts of Greek migrants began to arrive in the United States beginning in the 1890s, continuing roughly until the end of the 1970s, when the last significant amounts of Greeks migrated to the United States. One of the noteworthy characteristics of the Greek-American communities which developed in the United States was the rapid development of a Greek-language press (Kopan, 1987: 161). Therefore, it is no surprise that much prior scholarship on the Greek-American diasporic media has focused on the role of the press within the community, chronicling its history and the important role it has played in helping maintain a sense of identity and the maintenance of the Greek language within the community. This line of scholarship, however, has overlooked the significance of other communication mediums within the Greek-American community. More specifically, the role of television within the community, and particularly satellite programming broadcast directly from Greece, has been largely ignored. Larger questions of the role of such contemporary media outlets in the formation and maintenance of new conceptualizations of Hellenic identity have also not been sufficiently examined.

In discussing the Greek-American community and the Greek Diaspora, it is important to clarify exactly who is included within this categorization. For the purposes of this paper, the Greek-American community includes everyone of Greek descent, including immigrants who were born in Greece or Cyprus and who emigrated to the United States, as well as the descendants of these immigrants who were born in the United States and who, as has been highlighted in much of the prior research on the Greek-American community, have in many cases maintained at least some ties to their Greek heritage. That being said, what is so important about the Greek Diaspora and its media, however, that warrants further academic study? Several reasons can be identified. First, the Greek-American community, unlike many other European immigrant communities in the United States, has maintained a high degree of fluency in the native language, even after two or three generations. For many other European immigrant communities in the United States, it has been common for usage of the native language to cease after thirty or forty years (Kopan, 1987: 161). Additionally, it is important to avoid classifying Greek-American culture as a part of the hegemonic white American culture simply by virtue of the European origins of Greek-Americans. Anagnostou, referencing Lisa Lowe, has argued that "scholars who dismiss "white" ethnic narratives as politically reactionary and culturally irrelevant conveniently forget that "white" ethnicities, like any other racialized collectivity, are heterogeneous social formations" (Anagnostou, 2003: 282). Thus, the Greek-American community, with a culture and background that is different from other European ethnic groups, warrants further study.

Through this paper, my aim is to examine the role that satellite television has played in potentially helping members of the Greek community to maintain their usage of the Greek language and their identification with Greek culture. This is especially significant when considering predictions seen in much of the prior literature on the Greek-American community which foresaw a rapid decline in the usage of the Greek language within the community, including its media outlets, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to this, the role satellite television broadcasts from Greece have played in helping foster a new, transnational Greek identity and community that connects people in Greece with members of the Diaspora will be explored. Furthermore, this paper will examine the content of the satellite television broadcasts,

the manner in which these broadcasts have targeted the Greek-American audience, and why this content that is broadcast from Greece via satellite may be preferred by the Greek-American audience to media outlets based in the Greek-American community.

My research will focus on the Greek-American community of New York City, as it is the largest and most significant Greek-American community in the United States, and as it is home to a number of “homegrown” diasporic media outlets which offer a point of comparison to media outlets targeting the Diaspora which originate from Greece. Methodologically, this paper will employ a qualitative, multi-methodological approach based on the methods of naturalistic inquiry and textual analysis, with the text being analyzed being the satellite television broadcasts available from Greece. Additionally, field-dependent participant observation was employed to gather qualitative data by examining the use of satellite television in public spaces heavily frequented by members of the Greek-American community in New York City, such as Greek cafés. This paper will explore the content and nature of satellite television broadcasts targeting the Greek-American community based on a theoretical framework influenced by the fields of Diaspora studies and cultural studies, specifically based on four primary concepts: assertive hybridity, authenticity, cultural capital, and the formation of imagined communities. These four concepts were selected for their applicability and relevance to the topic being examined, as well as for their importance within the larger Diaspora studies and cultural studies theoretical frameworks. As this paper will illustrate, satellite television broadcasts from Greece have fostered the formation of “assertive hybridity”, which has been exemplified through programming such as reality shows broadcast on satellite television that have actively incorporated and involved members of the audience from the Diaspora. This is perhaps best exemplified through the emergence of transnational pop stars such as Kalomoira, who was born and raised in New York but who attained celebrity status in Greece as the result of her participation on the Greek reality show *Fame Story*, which was broadcast on satellite television and which actively targeted the audience of the Greek Diaspora. These satellite broadcasts can also be argued to provide an “authentic” slice of the daily life and modern popular culture—the “banal reality”—of Greece, through the broadcast of newscasts, sporting events, music videos, and other programming that is part of the daily life and culture of the homeland. Relating to this concept, satellite television broadcasts from Greece have helped cultivate the formation of a new, transnational “imagined community”, linked by the shared viewing of satellite television programming such as soap operas and live sports, and the simultaneous consumption of Greek popular culture. This is evident in the emergence of a Greek “café culture” and “sports culture” among Greek-Americans in New York City. These emergent cultures are visible in public spaces where members of the community, spanning several generations, gather and meet, and often share mediated, transnational experiences through the shared public consumption of live Greek sporting events, music videos and other pop culture elements that are imported from Greece via satellite. In such spaces, members of the Greek-American community can attain and exchange cultural capital, based on their knowledge of and familiarity with Greek popular culture symbols, which can be utilized and shared with other members of the community, as well as with family and friends back in Greece. In addition to the above, this paper will include a review of prior literature, which will highlight the many gaps that exist in the previous research on the Greek-American community, as well as the predictions that were made about the viability of the Greek language within the community and its media outlets. Finally, in the conclusion of this paper, the example of the Greek-American community and its relationship with the satellite television outlets of the homeland will be analyzed within a broader global framework, discussing the

lessons that can be learned by the Greek diasporic community's use of satellite television in an era of globalization.

### **Review of Prior Research**

Prior scholarship which has examined Greek diasporic media and its role within Greek diasporic communities can be classified into one or more of the following categories: a focus on the role and history of the print media through a historical-descriptive analysis, an emphasis on Greek diasporic communities on a national level (e.g. looking at Greek migrant communities in the United States or Australia as a whole), a focus on the role of Greek diasporic media outlets in maintaining the Greek language, and more recently, ethnographic research which has attempted to take a closer look at the Greek diasporic media. It should be noted that much of this scholarship is not very recent, dating back to the 1990s or earlier, and a significant portion of it does not come from specific studies which focused on Greek diasporic media, but rather from sections located within broader studies examining Greek Diaspora communities more generally.

Two comprehensive articles which focused on the Greek press in the United States are *The Greek Press* by Andrew T. Kopan (1987), and *The Greek Press in America* by S. Victor Papacosma (1979). Both of these articles, aside from not being very recent, have an exclusive focus on the history newspapers and their role within the Greek-American community and highlighted the evolution of the Greek-American press from one which was predominantly published in the Greek language, to one which is largely bilingual (Ibid: 59; Kopan, 1987: 172-173). Both articles expressed concern that, as mass immigration to the United States from Greece has ceased and that Greek-born immigrants are being replaced with the American-born second- and third-generation that is more comfortable interacting in English than in Greek, the Greek-American press finds itself in an uncertain position and will have to transition to a largely English-based format to survive (Kopan, 1987: 174; Papacosma, 1979: 61). Neither article, however, focused on the role of television, radio or other mediums in the Greek-American community.

A more comprehensive—and recent—examination of the Greek diasporic press was prepared by four professors (Vasilis Karapostolis, Nikos Demertzis, Despoina Papadimitriou, and Antonis Armenakis) from the University of Athens. The first portion of their research consisted of a structural study and inventory of Greek diasporic media all across the globe, consisting of a pilot study and subsequent questionnaire which was sent out to every Greek diasporic media outlet which could be identified by the researchers. The second portion of their study was comprised of a content analysis of three daily newspapers of the Greek Diaspora (two from the United States and one from Australia) (Karapostolis, Demertzis, Papadimitriou & Armenakis, 2001: 14-15). The researchers hypothesized that there would be differences in the ethnic self-identification of Greek Diaspora communities over time, reflecting its gradual assimilation into the society of their respective host countries (Ibid: 39), findings which were confirmed by the results of the content analysis. In essence, the study echoes the findings of much of the prior scholarship in this area: that the Greeks of the Diaspora would gradually assimilate, leading to a reduction in the use of both Greek diasporic media and the Greek language within the community. This study again largely focused on newspapers, while a detailed analysis of Greek diasporic radio and television programming was not provided. Finally, by looking at Greek diasporic media largely at the macro level, the study did not examine media at their point of reception: the audiences of the Greek Diaspora.

Recent scholarship has also seen the completion of several ethnographic studies on Greek diasporic media consumption. Myria Georgiou, in a study entitled *Crossing the Boundaries of the Ethnic Home: Media Consumption and Ethnic Identity Construction in the Public Space: The Case of the Cypriot Community Centre in North London*, studied the use of Greek-language diasporic media outlets, primarily satellite television, among the Greek Cypriot community of North London, using a Cypriot community center as the focus of the study. This study identified the important role the community center held for the construction of their ethnic identity, and the major role the ethnic media played in the confirmation of their ethnic identity and renewal of images of the homeland (Georgiou, 2001: 326). A connection was drawn between the ethnic media and public spaces such as the community center, while a significant finding was that the members of the community center largely preferred the Greek Cypriot satellite channel to the satellite station originating from Greece and to their own local diasporic media outlets, while consuming this content with a critical and nostalgic eye (Ibid: 324-326). These findings were mirrored in a second ethnographic study conducted by Georgiou in London and Astoria, New York, published in *Diaspora, Identity and the Media: Diasporic Transnationalism and Mediated Spatialities*. In this study, the role of Greek diasporic media, including satellite television and community-based outlets, in reinforcing Greek self-identification was reiterated. Specifically, Georgiou found a high level of diasporic media consumption among young second- and third-generation Greeks in the Diaspora, who used the media as a “cultural identifier” and means to keep up with the latest trends in Greek pop culture (Georgiou, 2006: 74, 78, 141).

A third ethnographic study, conducted by Anastasia Panagakos and presented in *Downloading New Identities: Ethnicity, Technology, and Media in the Global Greek Village*, similarly focused on the use of new media technologies such as satellite television and the Internet. Focusing on the Greek community of Calgary, Canada, the article examined how new media technologies rejuvenated the Greek diasporic community under study, by allowing members of the community to express and cultivate their ethnicity. These new forms of media allowed the members of the Greek community to acquire cultural capital amongst their peers, through the viewing of Greek soap operas (primarily for the older generation) and the downloading of Greek pop music (primarily by the second- and third-generation) (Panagakos, 2003: 210-211, 215). These new media outlets allowed members of the community to build stronger relationships and fostered new feelings of ethnic identification (Ibid: 202, 216).

Significant results regarding media use in Greek Diaspora communities can also be garnered from the results of the *Global Survey on Hellenism*, conducted by the Greek polling firm Kapa Research and the Harvard University Center for Hellenic Studies. A random sample of 15,640 members of the Greek Diaspora from all across the world were surveyed, and results of this study are significant, particularly in examining the contemporary use of media by the Greek Diaspora and in potentially refuting old assumptions about the future of Greek language use in the Diaspora. One intriguing aspect of the findings came from the ethnic self-identification of the respondents. 45.4% of respondents considered themselves “Greek”, and another 32.9% as Greek first, followed by their host country. Additionally, 81.5% of respondents considered “speaking Greek” as the most significant factor in maintaining their cultural identity, 63.4% of respondents said their children spoke at least some Greek, 87.4% were most comfortable speaking in Greek or were equally comfortable in both Greek and the language of their host country, 77.3% considered Greece their homeland, while 90% answered that they put at least some effort into maintaining their Greek identity and 89.6% felt that it is at least somewhat

important for their children to maintain their Greek identity (Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007: 8-11, 17-18, 51-53, 55, 57).

Of even greater interest, however, are the results from the questions asked about mass media use. When asked from which medium they primarily received news from Greece, 47.1% of respondents reported television, while 35.4% reported the Internet and 7.2% reported newspapers and periodicals. Furthermore, 51.4% of respondents from the United States and Canada reported watching Greek satellite television daily, while 49.6% of respondents were dissatisfied or only slightly satisfied with the quality of the Greek diasporic media outlets they had access to. Finally, 65.8% of respondents felt that media from Greece played a significant role in strengthening Hellenism in their host countries (Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007: 89-92, 98, 100-101).

These results are significant because they seemingly contradict some of the more pessimistic “doom-and-gloom” scenarios regarding the death of the Greek language among Greek diasporic communities which were prevalent in much of the prior literature. It is evident that among a significant portion of the Greek Diaspora there is still a high level of maintenance of the Greek language and a high degree of consumption of Greek media, including satellite television from Greece. Two particularly notable findings were the low level of reported readership of Greek newspapers, and the relatively high level of dissatisfaction members of the Greek Diaspora had with diasporic media outlets, which would be expected to be more responsive to the needs of their specific communities. These findings contradict previous, dire scenarios predicting the quick demise of Greek self-identification and language use among the Greek-American community, while demonstrating a preference among members of the community for “authentic” media outlets that are broadcast directly from the homeland.

### **Cultural Capital, Imagined Communities and the Development of Greek-American Café and Sports Cultures**

The Fourth of July is one of the major patriotic holidays of the United States. However, on the afternoon of July 4, 2004, the streets of Astoria, New York were decidedly blue and white—the colors of the Greek flag—rather than red, white and blue. The reason for this was Greece’s shocking and unexpected victory in the championship game of the Euro 2004 soccer tournament. For this occasion, thousands of Greek-Americans gathered in the Greek cafés throughout Astoria to watch the game, which was broadcast live on satellite television. Greece’s eventual victory turned the streets of Astoria into a sea of blue and white, as thousands of Greek-Americans emerged from the cafes wearing Greek soccer jerseys and waving Greek flags.

This event is significant for two reasons. First, it is indicative of the strong relationship which many members of the Greek-American community maintain with their Greek roots and with modern Greek culture, in this case manifested through their enthusiastic show of support for the Greek national soccer team. Furthermore, Greek cafés played a significant role as a public space in which members of the Greek-American community gathered to watch this soccer match. Indeed, as cited by Georgiou in her ethnographic research of the Greek communities of London and New York, public spaces in heavily Greek neighbourhoods such as Astoria are often sites of exposure to Greek satellite television and Greek pop culture. One of the defining features of these cafés is the availability of televisions which are tuned to satellite television broadcasts from Greece—particularly music videos and sporting events. Furthermore, these cafés are, in terms of their ambiance and atmosphere, very similar to the youth-oriented cafés back in Greece. In an

ethnographic study of Greek businesses in Astoria from 1991 to 1998, Maria Vouyouka-Sereti described Astoria's Greek cafés which evolved in the 1990s as “a direct imitation of the Greek original”, which themselves began to appear throughout Greece during the 1980s, and as “a part of the everyday life of the Greek residents...” of the Diaspora (Vouyouka-Sereti, 2002: 244, 254-255). Indeed, it is probably not a coincidence that these cafés, and in turn, a Greek “café culture” began to emerge in Astoria in the early to mid-1990s, soon after the first satellite broadcasts from Greece reached North America.

In such public spaces, members of the Greek-American community can not only congregate with their peers, but through their exposure to Greek popular culture such as Greek pop music and live Greek sporting events that are broadcast on satellite television, they can also attain and exchange cultural capital with other members of the community. Panagakos, citing Pierre Bourdieu, describes cultural capital as “an assortment of social forces, such as family background, class, and education, that lead[s] to certain advantages both social and economic” (Panagakos, 2003: 213). Panagakos further notes that cultural capital, while often passed down within families, can also be acquired through immersion with a particular topic, and for younger people in particular, is attained through keeping up with the latest trends in Greek pop culture (Ibid: 210). Cultural capital thus acts as a form of knowledge which can then be shared with other members of the community. In turn, this attainment and exchange of cultural capital can play a significant role in helping members of the Greek-American community to maintain their Greek cultural identity and their use of the Greek language. According to Georgiou, such public spaces play a significant role in the formation of Greek identities for young Greek-Americans: “Cafés, bars and music clubs often turn out to be more significant in identity construction than formal community institutions” (Georgiou, 2006: 106). This reflects Panagakos' observation that second- and third-generation Greeks in the Diaspora use Greek pop music as a type of “cultural capital” among their peers (Panagakos, 2003: 210). The ability to develop and share familiarity with Greek pop stars and musicians, football teams and athletes and other symbols of modern Greek popular culture all figure prominently in the attainment of cultural capital, and in the maintenance and strengthening of ties to the culture of the homeland and to the Greek language. Indeed, satellite television from Greece has been a visible part of Greek cafés and other public spaces frequented by members of the Greek-American community since the first satellite broadcasts from Greece began in the 1990s. It is notable that among the very first subscribers to Greek satellite television outlets in the Greek-American community were social clubs, community centers and cafés, which saw broadcasts of Greek sporting events as an opportunity to attract a loyal clientele. As Georgiou has pointed out, “Football and sports programs are among the most viewed broadcasts on Diaspora television” (Georgiou, 2006: 143), and even as penetration of satellite television into Greek-American households has increased, the viewing of sporting events in public, communal spaces has remained popular, as evidenced by the large turnout and massive celebrations in Astoria following Greece's Euro 2004 triumph. This Greek-American “sports culture” has developed in parallel with the Greek-American “café culture”, and is largely indistinguishable from a similar setting at a café or public space in Greece where the same sporting event is viewed.

In addition to benefitting from the attainment and exchange of cultural capital, members of the Greek-American community, through their viewing of satellite television broadcasts from Greece, become part of a larger “imagined community” of Greeks all across the world—in Greece, in Cyprus and in the Diaspora—who are sharing in the collective experience of viewing the same programming and consuming the same cultural products simultaneously. Benedict



Anderson defined “imagined communities” as communities in which “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion” (cited in De Santis, 2003: 72). This conception was furthered by Heather De Santis, who describes television as “a unique medium that serves to create and reinforce cultural communities . . . [as] individuals watch simultaneous broadcasts along with other households”. In looking at the example of the Greek-American community, one can see a parallel though the act of watching Greek satellite television—and the same programs Greeks are watching in Greece; an observation shared by Georgiou in her ethnographic research of the Greek diasporic communities of London and New York City:

When Greek pop music hits are consumed in Athens, Nicosia, London, New York and Melbourne, the content is the same; their communal, simultaneous, mass, transnational consumption is enabled by communication technologies, especially satellite and the Internet.

(Georgiou, 2006: 153)

As Georgiou points out, not only does satellite television technology link disparate Greek communities throughout the world, it links these communities through the broadcast of the same content, which can be followed simultaneously by viewers across several continents. This shared viewing can be seen as helping foster a sense of “we-ness”, or a sense a community, as described by Askoy & Robins, amongst the viewers in the Greek-American community (Askoy & Robins, 2003: 100-101). Viewers watching a soccer match, keeping up with the latest trends in Greek pop music and pop culture, or following Greek soap operas on a daily basis build a sense of “we-ness” with their counterparts back in Greece, who are watching the same programming at (or nearly at) the same time. Additionally, participating in a shared viewing experience in public spaces such as Greek cafés, social clubs, restaurants and community centers likely further bolsters this sense of “we-ness”, as these public spaces take on the additional role of serving as a meeting point for members of the community, where such programming can not only be viewed, but also discussed and shared with others of a similar background and set of interests, thus facilitating the aforementioned exchange and attainment of cultural capital.

### **Satellite Television as a Facilitator of Assertive Hybridity**

The acquisition of cultural capital is hardly limited to exchanges between one’s peers within the community. As illustrated with the Greek pop stardom of Kalomoira, a Greek-American teenager from Long Island, New York, satellite television broadcasts have taken the accrual of cultural capital to the next level, through the cultivation of a new form of assertive hybridity. As defined by Cunningham and Nguyen, assertive hybridity refers to the appropriation of some foreign cultural product and “authenticating” it as something native by reproducing it with native performers and in the native tongue (Cunningham & Nguyen, 2001: 103). This conception can be extended to the fairy-tale like success of Kalomoira Sarantis, or “Kalomoira”, a Greek-American teenager from Long Island, New York. In 2003, Kalomoira participated in auditions for the *Fame Story* reality show which were held in New York City. *Fame Story*, which is similar in format to *American Idol*, was broadcast in Greece as well as via satellite television on *Antenna Satellite*, and tryouts were held in locations around the world that are home to large Greek communities, including New York City. Based on her performance at the auditions,

Kalomoira was selected to be a participant on *Fame Story* in Greece. Despite initially lacking fluency in the Greek language, Kalomoira attained instant popularity with viewers in Greece, and eventually emerged as the winner of *Fame Story*, leading to a lucrative recording contract in Greece, instant celebrity status, and a successful career as a pop star and television hostess in Greece which has continued to this day (Anagnostou, 2006; *Biography for Kalomoira Sarantis*, 2009; Niarchos, 2004). This remarkable achievement bears a striking resemblance to the emergence of Selena, who achieved international stardom as the “Queen of Tejano” despite being born in the United States and despite her initial lack of fluency in the Spanish language (“Selena Biography”). Unlike Selena, however, Kalomoira attained stardom in her parents’ homeland instead of the United States, where she was born.

As a Greek-American teenager who was able to utilize satellite television and tryouts held in the United States to eventually become a superstar in Greece, Kalomoira serves as an example not just of the ability of satellite television to bridge the homeland and the Diaspora, but also as someone who was able to use both her Greek and American roots to attain success. In this sense, Kalomoira’s success as a pop star in Greece that was originally “discovered” in the United States is an illustration of assertive hybridity—as is the fact that she achieved her success through her renditions of songs sung in both Greek and English, which she performed on *Fame Story*. Indeed, *Fame Story* itself is an example of hybridity: a Greek permutation of a reality show format which has attained great popularity throughout much of North America, Europe and beyond.

The success of Kalomoira illustrates the power of satellite television broadcasts in not only fostering cultural capital among its viewers, through the active consumption of Greek pop cultural productions such as *Fame Story*, but also through the possibility of actively engaging those viewers, as evidenced by the tryouts held for *Fame Story* in New York City and other cities with large Greek communities around the world. Kalomoira, despite initially lacking fluency in the Greek language, had access to Greek satellite television in her family’s household, and presumably had at least some familiarity with Greek pop culture and with programming such as *Fame Story*. Without access to satellite television programming from Greece, Kalomoira would have been far less likely to learn about the tryouts being held in New York City, and certainly would have been much less likely to achieve the fame and success that she ultimately enjoyed. Further examples of second- and third-generation youth of the Greek Diaspora achieving fame in Greece using contemporary Greek media as a conduit are referenced by Anagnostou, including Helena Paparizou, a Swedish-born Greek who represented Greece in the Eurovision song contest in 2005 and emerged as the victor. Anagnostou highlights this success as an example of an emergent transnational Greek identity (Anagnostou, 2006), while Georgiou has emphasized the key role satellite technologies have played in enabling this emergent transnational phenomenon (Georgiou, 2006: 141).

The example of Kalomoira shows how a communications medium such as satellite television can bring members of the Diaspora closer to the home country in ways that would have been more difficult to achieve otherwise. By combining Greek and American elements in her music and by embarking on a path to stardom that began in the United States and which concluded in Greece, Kalomoira serves as a particularly appropriate example of how satellite television broadcasts targeting a diasporic audience can foster assertive hybridity. And, looking at the Greek-American community specifically, Kalomoira’s success is perhaps the most visible example of how satellite television broadcasts from Greece have played a role in the

maintenance—and perhaps even rejuvenation—of the community's Greek identity and usage of the Greek language, as well as its association with Greece and Greek culture.

### **Authenticity and the Diaspora as an Extension of the Homeland**

Kalomoira's path to success and superstardom in Greece began with her participation in tryouts for the reality show *Fame Story* which were held in New York City. The fact that tryouts for this Greek reality show were held overseas is indicative of the importance that broadcasters in Greece have attached to the audience of the Greek Diaspora, including the Greek-American audience. This can be seen by the plethora of satellite outlets broadcasting from Greece which are available to the Greek-American audience, including *Antenna Satellite*, *Antenna 20 Years Channel*, *ERT World*, *Mega Cosmos*, *Alpha Sat*, *Alter Globe*, *Blue*, *GMTV* and *Star International* satellite (Nevradakis, 2010). Even though much of the programming shown on these stations is the same as the programming broadcast domestically in Greece, networks such as *Antenna Satellite* and *Mega Cosmos* are diasporic versions of their domestic counterparts, with a programming schedule that is arranged to best serve the needs of the North American audience. Scholars such as Jigna Desai and Inderpal Grewal, who have specifically looked at the Indian and South Asian Diasporas, have identified the tendency for domestic television broadcasters and filmmakers to develop relationships with the Diaspora and to view it as a potentially lucrative extension of the homeland (Desai, 2004: 40-41).

The existence of so many satellite television broadcasters from Greece targeting the Greek-American community can also be said to be indicative of a yearning that the members of the community have for programming and a slice of present-day culture from the homeland. This could be described as a yearning for “authenticity”—programming and entertainment that is imported directly from Greece and that is being simultaneously viewed by audiences in Greece. What is noteworthy about this seemingly strong preference for authenticity, however, is that it did not begin with the advent of satellite broadcasts from Greece to the United States. This tendency can be identified at least as far back as 1979, when the results of a survey of editors of Greek-American newspapers and periodicals indicated a general sentiment that the future of the Greek-American press was threatened by the availability of newspapers which were flown in directly from Greece to large Greek communities in North America on a daily basis (Papacosma, 1979: 60). A preference for the newspapers that were imported from Greece among members of the community was identified, casting doubt on the future viability of a homegrown diasporic press. Similarly, the tendency of many Greek-American families to travel back to Greece has been shown to result in “a surge in Greek identification” (Moskos, 1989: 96). In other words, visits back to the “authentic” environment of the homeland reinforced Greek self-identification, which was carried back to the United States at the end of the visit. In this respect, it is hardly a stretch to discuss a similar effect originating from the viewing of “authentic” Greek satellite television from the homeland. Part of the authenticity of the satellite broadcasts can thus be attributed to the slice of daily life—or “banal reality” of Greece which is transmitted through the satellite broadcasts. Exposure to this banal reality, as described by Askoy and Robins, helps diasporic audiences shatter the nostalgic images of the homeland present in their imaginations. These images are then replaced by depictions of the modern-day realities of their homeland and a daily familiarity with what is happening there (Askoy & Robins, 2003: 95-96, 100-101).

In the case of the Greek-American community and the satellite television stations broadcast from Greece, this exposure to the daily reality of Greece is complemented by the fact

that the broadcasters themselves have reached out to members of the community and involved them in much of the programming that is then aired on satellite and back home. One such example are the tryouts and auditions held in the Greek-American community for reality television programs broadcast back in Greece and on satellite. As exemplified by the example of Kalomoira, these tryouts have afforded the opportunity to Greeks of the Diaspora to become active members of the audience, and to compete for a chance of fame and success in Greece, as well as to become active contributors towards the pop culture of Greece. A second example is seen by the recent development of television programs which have aired in Greece and via satellite but which have been filmed in large Greek communities overseas, including the Greek-American community of Astoria. One such example is *Stous 31 Dromous (On 31<sup>st</sup> Street)*, a recent television series produced by Greece's *Mega Channel*, which was filmed in Astoria, and which takes its name from one of the neighbourhood's major thoroughfares, 31<sup>st</sup> Street, which is home to a number of Greek establishments and businesses (Stous 31 Dromous, 2007). A similar example is a situational comedy titled *Eise to Teri Mou*, which began airing on *Mega Channel* in 2001, and which was partially shot in Melbourne, Australia, another city with a very large Greek community. Like *Stous 31 Dromous*, this comedy also incorporated diasporic themes into its storyline (Panagakos, 2003: 212). Such programming is likely to be seen by Greek-Americans as possessing authenticity, as their lives and communities are represented through these televised depictions. In addition to the aforementioned factors, the satellite networks themselves have also, through the broadcast of pop culture programming targeted exclusively towards the Diaspora (as in the example of satellite music video stations such as *Blue*, which are not available in Greece) and through the broadcast of live sporting events which are tremendously popular with members of the diasporic community. And when considering that such programming is often available in public spaces such as Greek cafés within the Greek-American community, it can further be argued that exposure to the modern Greek way of life through satellite television, likely contributed to the establishment of youthful cafés which mimicked the "authentic" youthful cafes of Greece.

Based on the above, it is perhaps no surprise that the results of the *Global Survey on Hellenism* found a preference amongst members of the global Greek Diaspora for the satellite television stations broadcast from Greece, as compared to community-based television broadcasters originating from within the Greek Diaspora. A general preference for the "authenticity" of the imported media certainly is one way in which this result can be accounted for, but there are several other factors which should be considered as well. One such factor is the relative lack of resources which diasporic television producers have access to, in comparison to large and well-funded networks from Greece. As a result, the quantity and quality of programming, to varying extents, both suffer. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise to note that many diasporic television outlets, such as *NGTV* in New York, fill a large part of their broadcasts with taped programming from Greece. Satellite television outlets also have the further advantage of economies of scale, through the technical advantage of satellite broadcasts in a large signal footprint. However, would those additional factors be enough if the programming of the satellite networks was not compelling to the Greek-American audience—especially when considering that these stations are only available on a subscription basis? A reasonable assumption can be made that members of the Greek-American community will go through the trouble and expense of subscribing to satellite television stations from Greece because they believe that the programming, in some way, "speaks to them". Perhaps they merely just find the programming on the satellite stations entertaining or of a higher quality than the Greek programming produced in

the Diaspora, but the experience of watching programming which is “authentic” in the sense that it reflects programming that is also shown in Greece, events such as sporting matches that are also being followed in Greece. Furthermore, by actively involving the Diaspora in some of the programming, the satellite stations add an additional layer of authenticity to their broadcasts. This authenticity, and the other compelling reasons that may exist for following the satellite broadcasts, can be viewed as factors which together can help members of the community maintain their ties to Greece, to the Greek language and to the Greek culture.

## **Conclusion**

In examining much of the prior scholarship that focused on the role of the Greek press in the Greek-American communities, one of the most evident and recurrent themes was a fear that the Greek language, along with Greek self-identification among members of the community, was doomed to extinction. A trend towards the conversion of Greek-language publications to bilingual or English-language periodicals was identified, and most scholars, even while acknowledging the strong ties which most members of the Greek-American community retained with the homeland and with their language, culture, and religion, predicted that this close connection would begin to vanish, as the immigrant generation would age and the second- and third-generation youth would assimilate more fully into American society. Notably, even scholarship which was published after the launch of satellite broadcasts from Greece targeting North America in the early 1990s did not, with the exception of the ethnographic studies by Georgiou and Panagakos, account for this new technology, or the role it could play within the community. It is noteworthy that these broadcasts have not just successfully targeted members of the immigrant generation, who were born and raised in Greece and for whom Greek is often the dominant language, but American-born members of the second- and third-generation as well. Georgiou, in her ethnographic work on the Greek communities of London and Astoria, shared this observation, pointing out that many second- and third-generation Greeks of the Diaspora have turned back to diasporic media outlets as they have grown older, settled down and started a family. Furthermore, the appeal of some of the programming broadcast via satellite from Greece among young people can be seen through such examples as that of Kalomoira, and her rise to Greek pop stardom which began with tryouts for a Greek reality show, *Fame Story*, which were held in New York City. These examples illustrate the significant role which satellite television broadcasts have had on the Greek Diaspora, and highlight the emergence of “assertive hybridity”, which Kalomoira exemplifies.

In many ways, satellite television has become the primary source of news and entertainment for Greeks of the Diaspora, who seek out the “authentic” content that is beamed directly from the homeland, and which may be more popular than home-grown, community-based diasporic television productions due to this apparent “authenticity”. Access to such authentic programming, whether it is music videos, soap operas, newscasts or live sporting events, has fostered a sense of “we-ness” among viewers, and transfers viewers to the mundane, “banal” reality of everyday life in Greece. In this sense, the viewers of the Diaspora become part of the “extended homeland”, while the satellite networks themselves target diasporic communities as another part of the homeland that is also a potentially lucrative market as well. Communal viewing of satellite television programming, such as sporting events or music videos, contributes to the sense of “we-ness”, as well as the formation of cultural capital, through the shared knowledge of Greek pop culture, soap opera plotlines or sports news with one’s peers

within the community. Finally, the shared experience of watching televised programming from Greece has led to the formation of a new, transnational imagined community of viewers, all of whom follow the same programming simultaneously (or almost simultaneously) with viewers back in Greece.

Indeed, the Greek-American experience with satellite television could serve as an example for other Diasporas across the world, particularly in an era of globalization. In particular, the ways in which the satellite broadcasters have engaged the Greek-American community show that even a global medium such as satellite television can become highly localized—and thus highly relevant—to diasporic audiences. Together, the above factors have combined to play a significant role in the rejuvenation of the Greek language and Greek self-identification among the Greek-American community of New York City.

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