

The Oral History of Kefalos: A Greek Heritage Organization of Norfolk, Virginia
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Abstract:

This study, drawing on oral history research, illustrates the journey of a particular Greek immigrant group and explains how Kefalos aided in their transition to America. In these interviews, participants have discussed the challenges of their arrival in the United States, the personal meaning of Kefalos membership, and their distinct national identity as Kefalonian-Greek Americans. Members of Kefalos are bound by collective memories that are created through the community's social activities and are sustained and transformed. Ultimately, these collective memories contribute to how individual members identify themselves within their society. Identifying the collective memory of an organization reveals the meaning behind the formation of the group and what holds it together and contributes to its success. Oral histories capture the importance of family and identity while also revealing the strength of memory that has contributed to the success of the organization. Without the transmission of memory across four generations, it is doubtful that the Kefalonian tradition would be as intact as it is today within Kefalos. Further, the juxtaposition of the interviews reveals a consensus among the members on the meaning of Kefalos to the Greek-American community and its primary role in uniting their community, preserving their distinct identity, and paving the way for future generations to embrace the Kefalonian culture without having direct first-hand knowledge of the island.

In an attempt to preserve their cherished island culture in the United States, twenty-five young Greek immigrants from the island of Kefalonia established Kefalos in 1973. Based in Norfolk, Virginia, Kefalos has succeeded in its mission for thirty-eight years, unifying Kefalonians across the Virginia tidewater region and promoting the education and cross-generational preservation of their distinct linguistic and cultural practices. Kefalos performs philanthropic work for both the surrounding Greek-American community and the island of Kefalonia, and ultimately nurtures a unique Kefalonian-American identity among its members.

This study, drawing on oral history research, illustrates the journey of a particular Greek immigrant group and explains how Kefalos aided in their transition to America. In these interviews, participants have discussed the challenges of their arrival in the United States (including discrimination and acculturation), the personal meaning of Kefalos membership, and their distinct national identity as Kefalonian-Greek Americans. Performing an interview-based study revitalizes immigrant stories and reveals the importance of individual voice and experience in a community history. Performing an oral study of a community provides a new dimension of local culture, one that gives hints of how memories of the past create meaning in the present.ⁱ Members of Kefalos are bound by collective memories that are created through the community's social activities and are sustained and transformed.ⁱⁱ Ultimately, these collective memories contribute to how individual members identify themselves within their society.ⁱⁱⁱ Identifying the collective memory of an organization reveals the meaning behind the formation of the group and what holds it together and contributes to its success.^{iv}

The oral method has a transformative effect on the history of the family. By utilizing oral history, the historian can uncover intimate details about the ordinary family—their contacts, neighbors, kin, and internal relationships; this is especially important in constructing a history of an immigrant group. The use of interviewing allows for the development of a much fuller history.^v More specifically, in immigrant history, this may include the intimate details of a migrant's childhood, their family's struggles, their personal reasons for choosing to immigrate, their first reactions to American culture, and their challenges with cultural adaptation—all components lost when using only census records and statistics.

In addition, this study constructs the history of Kefalos based on the collective narratives of interviews with members of the organization. It then analyzes the meaning of Kefalos to its members, with special emphasis placed on collective memory as a significant factor in constructing its meaning. Oral histories capture the importance of family and identity, while also revealing the strength of memory that has contributed to the success of the organization. Without the transmission of memory across four generations, it is doubtful that the Kefalonian tradition would be as intact as it is today within Kefalos. Further, the juxtaposition of the interviews reveals a consensus among the members on the meaning of Kefalos to the Greek-American community and its primary role in uniting their community, preserving their distinct identity, and paving the way for future generations to embrace the Kefalonian culture without having direct first-hand knowledge of the island.

Part I: History of Kefalos

The story of Kefalos is part of the larger history of Greek immigration to the United States and is therefore critical to understand the group's place within the historical spectrum. Greek immigration to the United States occurred in two major waves. The first wave arrived in the United States from the late 1890s to the mid 1920s. The second, or the "new wave,"

started in the mid-1950s and continued into the early 1990s.^{vi} First wave Greek immigration ended with the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924. The law restricted the immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans. By the mid 1960s, however, new U.S. legislative action initiated the second largest arrival of Greek immigrants to the United States.^{vii} The 1965 Immigration Act, which ended the national-quota system previously enforced in the Immigration Act of 1924, gave preference to individuals hoping to be reunited with their relatives already in America.^{viii}

In the early twentieth century, shortly after liberation from German and Italian occupation during WW II, civil war broke out in Greece. The origins of the conflict arose during WW II during German-Italian occupation.^{ix} With the Greek government in exile and unable to play a role in the situation at home, resistance groups used the opportunity to organize.^x The dominant group arising from this period was the leftist National Liberation Front (EAM), controlled by communists. By the spring of 1943, friction between the EAM and smaller resistance groups resulted in scattered conflicts all over Greece. A year later, the groups reached an agreement to form a national unity government that included six EAM representatives. In 1944, Greece was liberated from fascist occupation and the Greek government was restored.^{xi} However, the previous conflicts between resistance groups remained unresolved.

The Civil War ended in 1949 with the involvement of the Greek government's National Army. The government, still weak when the civil war broke out, was finally prepared to be involved in the conflict. Operation Torch was enacted in 1948 under General Alexander Papagos, and was the Greek government's final campaign to take down communist forces; the campaign was successful in suppressing communist forces and ended the war.^{xii}

The Greek Civil War drastically impacted the island of Kefalonia, and many first generation Kefalonian immigrants living in the United States today immigrated to flee the dangers of the Civil War. Kefalonian Panagiotis Kapos recalls the difficulties of living in war-torn Kefalonia:

The young people in the village and the rest of the country, we were suffering for bread, for clothes, for school.... I am now eighty-four years old, all these memories I hold in my brain are like fictional stories, but they are not fictional, they are facts. All of us, we will carry them throughout our lives.^{xiii}

In 1953, Kefalonia was once again devastated by natural disaster. The Great Ionian Earthquake of 1953 struck the southern Ionian Islands. Beginning in mid-August there were over 113 earthquakes recorded in the region between Kefalonia and Zakynthos.^{xiv} The most destructive 7.3 earthquake struck on August 12, 1953.^{xv} The earthquakes caused widespread damage in Kefalonia and led to the exodus of over half of the island's population. Kefalonian Konstantine Kapptos recalls that for Kefalonians, the 1924 Immigration Act was amended temporarily from 1953-1955 to give victims of the 1953 Great Earthquake priority.^{xvi} The Great Earthquake of 1953 virtually destroyed the island of Kefalonia and was a major contributing factor to Kefalonian immigration to the United States.

In the twentieth century, war, famine, and natural disaster forced large numbers of Greek immigrants to leave their homelands. When they arrived in the United States, many Greek immigrants gathered together in the safe havens of the Greek-American Church and immigrant neighborhoods.^{xvii} Within these Greek communities were subgroups of immigrants from the same village and parish.^{xviii} As a result, societies based on a common locality, or "topika somateia" in Greek, were formed to unite Greeks from a specific Greek region.^{xix} The

members of the “topika somateia” were devoted to helping each other, aiding those left behind, and collectively perpetuating the culture and kinship of their distinct locality.^{xx}

The Kefalonian community of Norfolk agrees that the first Kefalonian to live in the area was Nicholas Renesis of Keramies, Kefalonia. In 1905, at the age of twelve, Renesis immigrated to the United States. After returning to Kefalonia briefly to marry in 1921, he returned to Norfolk, Virginia and lived there with his family for the next eighty-one years. In the early twentieth century many Kefalonian immigrants were drawn to Norfolk, Virginia by the encouraging words of their compatriots already in the area, who described to their fellow migrants a place full of promising business opportunities because of its location near the Naval Base.^{xxi} The Kefalonian population in Norfolk continued to grow as Kefalonians in the locality began facilitating the immigration of their family members. Newcomers often worked in the businesses established by their relatives in Norfolk, including Kefalonian-run family restaurants, paint contracting businesses, or as bakers in the successful Mary Jane Bakery. The new migrants worked in the family business until they were able to speak English and go into business themselves.^{xxii}

The first Kefalonian society in the Norfolk originated in 1943. The group, named Saint Gerasimos after the island’s patron saint, functioned as a network, keeping together early immigrants from Kefalonia in the area. In 1945, Saint Gerasimos received its charter from the Pan-Messinian Federation of the United States and Canada, a group established to aid “topika somateia” or clubs representing the local regional homeland of Greeks in America and Canada.^{xxiii} As new immigrants, members’ financial status kept them from doing any extensive philanthropic work; however, the group would often raise money for the burial expenses of fellow countrymen and if they were able, loan money to new arrivals. Saint Gerasimos’ main function was to unify local Kefalonians and establish communication with their families still overseas. Members of the group would often wait at the port in Norfolk, where they would greet arriving immigrants or Merchant Marines from Kefalonia, bring them into their homes for a meal, and anxiously ask for news from the island. Otherwise, communication was limited and slow and Kefalonians living in the United States would often go years without hearing from their relatives on the island. By 1952 Saint Gerasimos membership reached its peak at sixty-eight members. The group was unable to maintain itself, and eventually disintegrated as families moved away, and members had less time to manage the group’s activity.

Following the deterioration of Saint Gerasimos in approximately the late 1950s and 1960s, Kefalonians in the Norfolk area would casually gather in each other’s homes almost every week. The evenings would begin with traditional meals and end with the singing of traditional island songs called Cantades.^{xxiv} The casual meetings facilitated the gathering of first and second generations of Kefalonians. Kefalonian Patsy Mousouris became interested in formally gathering Kefalonians in her area after growing up in the close-knit Kefalonian community. She was inspired by the casual gatherings every week and wanted to organize a group that would preserve the unique Kefalonian heritage and give back to the island of Kefalonia.^{xxv}

Mousouris immigrated to America from Kefalonia with her parents in 1948, when she was an infant.^{xxvi} She was raised in a traditionally Greek household and her family was active in the local Greek community and promoted the preservation of the Greek language, tradition, and faith. Attending church and learning to speak the Greek language was especially important and reflected the common belief in traditional Greek households. In 1972 twenty-four year old Mousouris began conceptualizing her idea for Kefalonian society in Norfolk’s Greek community.^{xxvii} For several months Mousouris consulted Kefalonians in the Norfolk area and investigated previous Kefalonian groups. Her study of Saint Gerasimos’

collapse led to an initial, important decision about the structure for the future group. Mousouris determined the new organization would have to be centered on youth membership in order to avoid the distractions that adults often faced from work and avoid any intergenerational conflict. She believed that starting the group in the younger generation would foster longevity. In her interview Mousouris recalls her earliest thoughts on starting Kefalos:

I just had the urge to bring the Kefalonians together, I just had to! I knew if I started this club with the grown ups, we would have problems. First of all our parents are older, they have their own ideas, they are not going to get along with the younger generation- there's egos involved. So I said we are going to keep the older people out, we are just going to have this young group started. In addition to being together, I wanted it to be more of a philanthropic organization where we would do good for Kefalonia; they have needs there. So we would raise money and send it over there and we would have our club known for doing good things there.^{xxviii}

Mousouris' idea for a youth-based heritage society attracted the interest of her Kefalonian peers. On December 3, 1972, Mousouris and twenty-five Kefalonian youth and a few adults between the ages of thirteen to thirty gathered for the first time in Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Norfolk to discuss the formation of the new group. They began by discussing bylaws, which determined that the Kefalos' president must always be born in Kefalonia, and that Kefalos would be a democratic and philanthropic organization. In order for the new organization to be officially recognized by the Greek-American community, they required a charter from another established Greek heritage organization. Mousouris wrote a letter to the president of Kefalos in New York, hoping that the established group would support them. The New York Kefalos chartered the new group in Norfolk on April 12, 1973. On May 27, 1973, the Norfolk Kefalos held their first official meeting.^{xxix} Almost two hundred individuals gathered for a traditional Kefalonian dinner where the youth unveiled the new organization to the Greek community. The parents in attendance were especially proud and contributed to the club's premiere that evening to show their support.^{xxx}

In the early to mid 1970s, Kefalos members organized several fundraisers including traditional Kefalonian dinners, dances, bake sales, and car washes that raised money to send to Kefalonia. The group would vote on the allotment of funds earned based on their communication with islanders and the degree to which money was needed. The first donation Kefalos made was a large framed icon of Saint Gerasimos that they gave to their host church to honor Kefalonia's patron saint. The group held their first and largest fundraising event for the island of Kefalonia in 1975. The donation of \$12,000 was contributed to the Kefalonian hospital; the money went towards the purchase of eye examination equipment. Funds were raised during the youth organization's first banquet and dance featuring live music from a popular Greek music group, Trio Bel Cante. The event, open to the entire community, hosted distinguished guests, including local politicians. The success of the function brought the new group a lot of attention from the surrounding Greek communities of Virginia and established Kefalos' name at a state level.^{xxxi}

In the late 1970s, Kefalos' framework changed. Initial members of the club found themselves preparing to leave for college, find jobs, and get married in other parts of the country, and it was at this time that the youth decided it was essential to incorporate the older generation into their club to keep from deteriorating like their ancestral organization did decades earlier. The unification with the older generation allowed for Kefalonians of all ages to work together to further establish the club in the Greek-American community in Norfolk.

Events became larger, drawing Kefalonians from all over the East Coast; they started classes to teach youth and adults the traditional dances of Kefalonia, hosted monthly Kefalonian dinners, and offered several scholarships for college-bound Kefalonian descendants. Unlike Saint Gerasimos, the youth saw adults as a form of stability; Mousouris described the merger by saying,

We had the older generation come into the club and working now with teenagers, working together. The older group that is now retired has the time to contribute to making plans, and the ones that have families come in too, and you have a different club now than what it was when it originated. It's no longer to get together to help someone learn English or help them with a loan, it offers a chance for us to see each other and do good. And a chance that if we bring our children with us, they will learn some of the customs of Kefalonia.^{xxxii}

With the generational merger, individuals with varying knowledge of Kefalonian tradition were able to come together; regardless of age, they were united by their common pride and love for Kefalonia. Member of the older generation Panagiotis Kapos described the merger of generations and the importance of the perspective of older members to the group:

The society (Kefalos) is the one that gets us together and gives us something from the old country to remember; our jokes, our adventures. And we share these stories all the time; we tell them to our kids so that they can remember these things when they think about Kefalonia. The society that our kids established needed our help so that it could last, they were growing older and got married, others went to college.^{xxxiii}

Konstantine Kappatos, one of the original twenty-five members, provides a valuable perspective on how Kefalos helped him. His account demonstrates the transformation of Kefalos from its origin in the 1970's to the present-day. When Konstantine arrived in Norfolk, Virginia in 1969, members of the Greek Church community in the area welcomed him with open arms. He says, "It didn't take long, I went to the church and met the priest. The next day I was supposed to meet him for lunch and there were almost fifty other people there. I instantly knew almost fifty Greeks and many of them were Kefalonians."^{xxxiv} He describes the merger of generations in the club saying, "When the older people joined we not only had their financial help, but we had a better connection to the island. Since then, I believe it has been stronger, because everyone can be involved and everyone can give their perspective."^{xxxv} The effects of the merger on the group's dynamic were especially evident in Kefalos leadership.

Kabitsis was born in Keramies, Kefalonia in 1917. He immigrated to the United States in 1953 in search of economic opportunity. One of the top mechanics for the Greek Navy, Kabitsis had been to the port in Norfolk several times before settling in the United States. Although he had no relatives in the area, he heard from other Kefalonians that Norfolk was an opportune place to live. Kabitsis arrived in Norfolk right after the disintegration of Saint Gerasimos and was closely affiliated with some of its prominent members.^{xxxvi} During his three-year presidency, Kabitsis directed the club's focus on cultural preservation and his leadership of the organization incorporated a lot of traditional ideals. In 1985 Kabitsis started a campaign to save a traditional shrine in the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church.^{xxxvii} The Church, which was undergoing some renovations, was planning to remove a hand-made shrine built by the Greek immigrants who established the cathedral decades earlier. With the support of Kefalos, Kabitsis gathered hundreds of signatures in a petition to keep the one of a

kind shrine and was ultimately successful in his efforts. Kabitsis was also involved in correspondence with the island of Kefalonia. He met with the governor of the island several times to discuss the club's efforts in the United States and more specifically he started a campaign to preserve the Greek language in Greek-American churches. The presence of the older generation in Kefalos emphasized the importance of the Greek faith, language, and culture. When describing a Kefalos project to renovate a Kefalonian church, Kabitsis expressed old generation ideals, "One of the projects we worked on was the building of a church in Kefalonia in one of the small villages. The church is of the greatest importance to us as Greeks. The faith is something that must always be remembered, it is what makes us whole."^{xxxviii}

The ninth president of Kefalos was Panagiotis Kapos. Born in 1926 in Kefalonia, Kapos experienced the hardships of war-torn Kefalonia and the effects of the struggling economy. In 1955, at the age of thirty-two, he left the island with his wife and infant son to immigrate to the United States. While his wife and son stayed with relatives in Norfolk, Virginia, Kapos spent several years in Memphis, Tennessee where he and his brother (who had immigrated years earlier,) worked on establishing a small paint contracting company.^{xxxix} Once business was stable, Kapos returned to Virginia to open his own branch of the company and settle down with his family. He became involved with Kefalos in the late 1970s when the youth-run group merged membership with the older generations.^{xl} His efforts as president were not only to encourage pride for Kefalonia, but also for Greece and America:

The organization is built on the love of our countries. Without love for them, we can not be successful. When I came here, I was welcomed by Americans, by Greeks, and by Kefalonians. In my years as president I hoped to show each generation the importance of embracing this national pride.^{xli}

During Kapos' presidency, Kefalonians continued to work together with the remaining youth to further establish the club in the Greek American community. Previous president Dennis Kabitsis describes Panagiotis Kapos, "He who worked the hardest for Kefalos was Panagiotis Kapos. I told Panagiotis, stay as long as you can. He and his entire family kept Kefalos motivated and involved."^{xlii} Under Kapos, Kefalos events became larger, drawing Kefalonians from all over the East Coast. The group expanded its efforts and started classes to teach youth and adults the traditional dances of Kefalonia, hosted Kefalonian dinners in the Church's banquet hall, and developed several scholarships for college-bound Kefalonian descendants.

The creation of scholarships was responsible for a major change in club membership rules. While Kefalos membership was always lenient, Kapos created an official open door policy for any Greeks in the community interested in participating. More specifically, he invited immigrants and descendants from Kefalonia's neighboring island of Ithaca to join together with the club. Enthused Ithacans united with the Kefalonians in 1985 giving the organization a new name, Kefalos: The Kefalonian and Ithakecian Society.^{xliii}

While the needs of the island of Kefalonia still remained the prominent focus, Kefalos members wanted to extend their attention to helping their local community. The open door policy for membership caused key transitions to occur within the organization. Firstly, the allocation of the group's funds was augmented. While the island of Kefalonia remained the foremost receiver of charity funds, the spectrum for fundraising broadened. Outside members created a new avenue for the appropriation of funds. The joined efforts made it possible to distribute funds towards more of the Norfolk Greek community's interests. One of these interests was the provision of scholarships to local Greek youth. The first scholarship

was entitled the Kefalos scholarship and offered five hundred dollars to a Kefalonian or Ithakacian youth. The Dimitris Hionis, Kosmetatos, and Saint Gerasimos, Mousouris Memorial, and Touzos Memorial Scholarships were established to commemorate past members and were awarded to the Greek student with the highest marks.^{xliv}

In 1995, Kefalos president Panagiotis Kapos and his brother Dennis began speaking with other Kefalonian societies in the United States about the establishment of a national Kefalonian and Ithakacian organization. In the spring of 1995, five Kefalos members including Kapos, his wife Helen, Dennis and Anthoula Kapos, and Marnia Potamianos attended the “First Convention of Kefalonian and Ithakacian Societies Abroad” in Montreal, Canada. The first convention unified Kefalonian societies from all over the world, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Two years later, in May of 1997, a second convention was held in New York City to solidify the ideas discussed at the 1995 convention. Five members from Norfolk attended the second convention, Kapos, Helen Kapos, Dennis and Anthoula Kapos, and Dennis Potamianos. The national organization was given a name, “Odysseus” after the mythological Ithakecian figure from Homer’s *Odyssey*. The second meeting deliberated prospects for a youth-exchange program to Kefalonia, the idea to publish a Kefalonian cookbook, and an ambition to compile a directory of Kefalonians from all over the world that would act as a reference for trade and business between Kefalonians. Dennis Kapos recalled the event,

Panagiotis and I had been talking to the other Kefalos groups in the north for sometime about the idea of a national group. We were one of the first seven Kefalonian societies in the country to support this idea. When we got to the convention it was so amazing, Kefalonians from all over the world, even Australia. We knew that good things would come from this.^{xlv}

The new and old Greek American immigrant generations identify their ethnicity differently. While newer generations relate to more mainstream characteristics of Greek culture like food, music and dance, older generations value nationality and religion as the foundations of their ethnic identities. However, in Kefalos, the merger of the younger and older generations has embraced all perspectives. As a result, Kefalos instills ancestral values while embracing and incorporating mainstream Greek American culture. Kefalos activities that range from car wash fundraisers to traditional Kefalonian dance classes illustrate the combination of modern and traditional ideologies that have led to the group’s ultimate success.

Part II: Making Meaning of Kefalos

Historian John Bodnar states that “shared history through memory as a monolithic entity build[s] patriotism and [serves as] a kind of “civic glue” that would help all members feel as if they were part of a common undertaking.”^{xlvi} By understanding the history of one’s ancestors through collective memory, individuals are more able to identify themselves within a society and maintain allegiance in a particular cultural or heritage group. According to Bodnar, collective memory also has the power to “take on the form of an ideological system, with special language, beliefs, symbols and stories that construct a bond between members.”^{xlvii} This binding power is strongly evident in the relationship between Kefalos members of each generation, especially among newer generations of Kefalonians born in the United States that fuse the essence of the cultural tradition with their American tradition, despite not being born in Kefalonia.

Sociologist Anna de Finna says that in ethnic communities, “Identity can be given off, conveyed, enacted, performed, and discussed.”^{xlvi} The Kefalonian identity is constructed through various means of cultural preservation. Dances and dinners allow for members to reenact traditions. The idea is to get older generations to teach younger generations and so forth and the replication of traditional practices is incredibly effective.^{xlix} Kefalos has provided a vessel for older and younger generations to create a distinctive identity that can facilitate both of their beliefs. More recent generations tend to identify ethnically with popular characteristics of culture such as food, music and dance; while older generations who immigrated to the United States view nationality and religion as the foundations of their identities. Kefalos has maintained a remarkable degree of communal and family cohesion, while also accommodating themselves to the achievements and standards of a larger society.¹ They have done so by promoting the beliefs of each generation, and this is evident in their history. The transitions between older and younger leaders for instance has allowed for the addressing of multiple perspectives. Dennis Kabitsis, the first member of the older generation to serve as president of Kefalos, focused on the preservation of the Greek language among Kefalonian youth and communicated often with the island of Kefalonia.

The addition of older members into the society also allowed for first-hand interaction with the knowledge of the traditions the youth hoped to preserve. Older members not only educated younger members by teaching them the songs, recipes, and dances of Kefalonia, but also passed down stories about their experiences living on the island and immigrating to the United States. In an analysis of collective memory entitled, *Finding Meaning in Memory*, historian Wulf Kansteriner says, “Environments of memory sustain traditions and rituals...as old traditions and affiliations lost their meaning, the relation between people and their past was reconstructed through first-order simulations of natural memory.”^{li} Clearly, understanding the immigrant experience of the members’ ancestors is important in embracing the Kefalonian identity. By encapsulating important personal experiences into iconic stories, the older generation reconstructs bits of information into a general scheme so that when their experience is passed down, newer generations can relate and find meaning.

Interviews with older Kefalos members are filled with recollections of totemic events that are communicated with ample emotional force. Memory was an important element for analysis in interviews with Panagiotis, Dennis Kapos, and Dennis Kabitsis, who ranged in age from eighty-four to ninety-three.. Often times, elderly individuals chose to remember memories that are important to them: they repeat them over the years as they seek to reinforce meaning in their lives.^{lii} The role of these stories is incredibly important to the development of the collective memory shared among Kefalos members. It is evident in the accounts of the younger narrators, the effect these stories had and how they play a role in how they identify themselves.^{liii} For instance, younger narrators’ emphasized that their experiences immigrating to (or living in) America were much easier than those of their relatives who arrived in the first wave. Konstantine Kappatos and Patsy Mousouris in particular articulated this consistently throughout their interview. Mousouris describes her generation as follows,

When we came along in the sixties and the seventies, our parents had reached the middle class. We had a lot of advantages. We had a home, we had a car. I never missed anything. But then, don’t forget, these parents that we grew up with, and a lot of these old timers, when they left 12 and 17, they never finished elementary school. So you had parents that didn’t have an education. But they encouraged in their

children to have a better education. So they would tell us constantly, get an education, and go to college.^{liv}

Kappatos articulates similar message in regards to his experience in American society, “For me it was not extremely bad, and I had family here. And things were getting better in America, as far as discriminating against foreigners; it was not as bad as when my uncle was here.”^{lv} Kappatos and Mousouris’ focus on the appreciation of their opportunities as immigrants while remembering the struggles of their predecessors display a collective value shared among their generation. These shared values contribute further to the understanding of the deeply situated and subjective nature of oral history interviews performed within a group.^{lvi} While maintaining a Kefalonian identity is clearly important to the members, maintaining an American identity is also a priority. First and second generation Kefalonians were taught to love the United States for how good it was to their relatives. Kefalonian immigrant Panagiotis Kapos only shares positive memories of his life in America: “We found good people in America, and all of them showed us love, black and white.”^{lvii} Ultimately, Kefalos members want to act as representatives of their ancestors and try to create a link between their relatives’ arduous past to their own future. In addition, Kefalos reflects a microcosm of Greek American culture and sets its members apart from the larger Greek community. Member Mark Mousouris states,

In the community, with so many people coming from so many different parts of Greece, sometimes they forget that you are from a specific place, and Kefalos can give us the identity. Like any organization, it does give a person some roots, some basis for being Kefalonian; I think that’s what the club does, it gives us an identity. And I think it helps for people to know that you are a group, that you have an identity.^{lviii}

While members identify with their larger Greek community, Kefalos provides an environment where individuals can focus on their distinctive practices. The island of Kefalonia itself, isolated from mainland Greece, experienced a unique history that contributed to the birth of an exclusive sub-Greek culture. Due to its strategic location near mainland Greece, Kefalonia consistently endured foreign occupation. Various occupations played drastic roles in morphing Kefalonian culture, and this is even evident today, especially linguistically. Italian, German, and British occupation led to the formation of words distinctive to only Kefalonia.

Additionally, the seafaring nature of the islanders and their constant traveling, especially for trade, contributed to the integration of outside cultures. Thus, while Kefalonians identify as Greek, their individual culture and language allows them to more intimately identify with one another. Mark Mousouris goes further to say that “the important thing is that the identity part of it is very important to the individual, you want to know your roots, you want to know where your parents come from, you want to know the history...you want to know sometimes some of the words that are used in Kefalonia, that are not necessarily used by other Greeks.”

Finally, Kefalos strengthens familial ties. Members are not only drawn together by their common culture, but also by the desire to strengthen relationships with relatives. Kefalos links families in the Kefalonian community, contributing an added sense of pride for their shared cultural origins. Dennis Kapos says, “The group started with my children, my nieces, and my nephews.”^{lix} Mark Mousouris credits Kefalos for nurturing bonds between

his aunts and uncles with his children who may have otherwise remained isolated from developing a strong bond because of their generational gap. He says,

If it wasn't for our involvement in Kefalos...I don't think they (my children) would of gotten that enthusiastic about where their parents, where their grandparents, especially on my side come from. From their grandmother they were able to learn a lot of the history of the island...and the relationship with my uncles and their family as well helped them understand what it's [being Kefalonia] all about.^{lx}

Others use Kefalos as a way to reinforce individual memories of their family members, Patsy Mousouris says, "When I do something for Kefalos, I think about my parents, I do it for Mom and Dad."^{lxi} While the impact is specific to the individual, the strengthening of the connection between family members is another important aspect to understanding the meaning of Kefalos to its members.

In Kefalos, Kefalonian members of the Greek community can participate in an environment where their culture can be exclusively practiced. While the wider Greek community provides a place for them to practice common traditions, such as religion and language, Kefalos creates a new atmosphere for individuals to understand their specific roots; where they can learn the stories of their ancestors, practice their traditions, appreciate their larger societies, strengthens familial ties, and ultimately establishes a Kefalonian identity within them.

All in all, Kefalos has evolved into a model organization for other immigrant communities—including the wider Greek-American community—who wish to preserve their heritage while still being able to assimilate into broader American society. Kefalos has enabled Kefalonian immigrants to harmonize their cultural identity with an American identity, and will undoubtedly leave a legacy of education, opportunity, and an appreciation for the struggles of early Greek immigrants for future generations to come. The organization's success is evident in its growth in membership; today, it consists of 150 Kefalonian members and their families. Founder Patsy Mousouris said, "In 1972, none of us could foresee that our small organization would grow and last thirty years. I wish Kefalos continued success and growth."^{lxii}

ⁱ Linda Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (September 2002): 594, accessed October 2010, <http://www.jstor.org>.

ⁱⁱ David Middleton and Derek Edwards, *Collective Remembering* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 25.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 36

^{iv} Michael Frisch, "Oral History and Hard Times: A Review Essay," in *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990), 7, accessed September 2010, <http://jmrdocuments.umwblogs.org/files/2010/08/Frisch-Oral-History-and-Hard-Times.pdf>.

^v Akemi Kikumura, "Family Life Histories: A Collaborative Venture," *Oral History Review*, no. 14 (1986): 4, accessed September 2010, <http://jmrdocuments.umwblogs.org/files/2010/08/Akemi-KikumuraFamily-Life-Histories-A-Collaborative-Venture.pdf>.

^{vi} "Greek-American Oral Histories: Timeline," Center for History and New Media, accessed October 2010, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/greekam/timeline.html>.

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} Spiro Katsaras, "Greek Immigration to America," interview by Michael Passas, World Cat, section goes here, accessed November 13, 1988, <http://newfirstsearch.oclc.org.ezproxy.umw.edu>

^{ix} Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *Modern Greece a Short History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 193.

^x Spiro Katsaras, "Greek Immigration to America," interview by Michael Passas, World Cat, section goes here, accessed November 13, 1988, <http://newfirstsearch.oclc.org.ezproxy.umw.edu>

^{xi} Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *Modern Greece a Short History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 196.

^{xii} *Ibid.*, 223.

^{xiii} Interview with Pangiotis Kapos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 23, 2010.

^{xiv} Basil C. Papazachos, "Large Seismic Faults in the Hellenic Arc," *Annali Di Geofisica* XXXIX, no. 5 (October 1996): 6.

^{xv} *Ibid.*

^{xvi} Interview with Konstantine Kappatos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 13, 2010

^{xvii} Sam J. Tsemberis, *Greek American Families: Traditions and Transformations*, vol. 8, Modern Greek Research (Pella Pub, 1999), 10.

^{xviii} Lazar Odzak, *Dimitrios Is Now Jimmy: Greek Immigrants in the Southern United States 1895-1965* (2006), 80.

^{xix} *Ibid.*, 83.

^{xx} *Ibid.*, 86.

^{xxi} Patsy Mousouris, "Kefalos 25th Anniversary Newsletter," 14.

^{xxii} *Ibid.*, 14.

^{xxiii} Alexander Plagiannakos, "About the Pan-Messinian Federation of USA and Canada," Pan Messinian Federation of USA and Canada, 2008, accessed 2011, <http://www.pan-messinian.com/>.

^{xxiv} Interview with Konstantine Kappatos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 13, 2010.

^{xxv} Interview with Patsy Mousouris, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, October 17, 2010.

^{xxvi} *Ibid.*

^{xxvii} *Ibid.*

^{xxviii} Interview with Patsy Mousouris, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, October 17, 2010.

^{xxix} Kefalos Norfolk Chapter, "30th Anniversary of Kefalos 1972-2002," October 2002, 32.

^{xxx} Interview with Patsy Mousouris, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, October 17, 2010.

^{xxxi} Kefalos Twenty Fifth Anniversary Newsletter (Norfolk, Virginia), "Letter from the President," 1997.

^{xxxii} Interview with Patsy Mousouris, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, October 17, 2010.

^{xxxiii} Interview with Pangiotis Kapos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 23, 2010.

^{xxxiv} Interview with Konstantine Kappatos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 13, 2010.

^{xxxv} Interview with Konstantine Kappatos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 13, 2010.

^{xxxvi} Kefalos Twenty Fifth Anniversary Newsletter (Norfolk, Virginia), "Letter from the President," 1997.

^{xxxvii} Interview with Dennis Kabitsis, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, March 5, 2011.

^{xxxviii} *Ibid.*

^{xxxix} *Ibid.*

^{xl} Interview with Pangiotis Kapos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 23, 2010.

^{xli} *Ibid.*

^{xlii} Interview with Pangiotis Kapos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 23, 2010.

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- ^{xliii} Interview with Dennis Kabitsis, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, March 5, 2011.
- ^{xliv} Interview with Pangiotis Kapos, interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 23, 2010.
- ^{xlv} Kefalos Norfolk Chapter, "30th Anniversary of Kefalos 1972-2002," October 2002, 25.
- ^{xlvi} John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton University Press, 1993), xi.
- ^{xlvii} *Ibid.*, 19.
- ^{xlviii} Fina Anna. De, *Identity in Narrative a Study of Immigrant Discourse* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2003), 16.
- ^{xlix} *Ibid.*, 19.
- ¹ Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory, 2002, *History and Theory*," Wiley Online Library, 183, April 12, 2011, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/0018-2656.00198/abstract>.
- ^{lii} Valerie Raleigh. Yow, *Recording Oral History: a Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), 38.
- ^{liii} David Middleton and Derek Edwards, *Collective Remembering* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 60.
- ^{liv} "Interview with Patsy Mousouris," interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia October 17, 2010.
- ^{lv} "Interview with Konstantine Kappatos," interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, September 13, 2010.
- ^{lvi} Linda Shopes, "What Is Oral History?," George Mason University; Making Sense of Oral History, 5, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/oral.pdf>.
- ^{lvii} "Interview with Pangiotis Kapos," interview by author, Norfolk Virginia, September 23, 2010.
- ^{lviii} "Interview with Mark Mousouris," interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, February 26, 2011.
- ^{lix} "Interview with Denis Kapos," interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, February 26, 2011.
- ^{lx} "Interview with Mark Mousouris," interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, February 26, 2011.
- ^{lxi} Interview with Patsy Mousouris," interview by author, Norfolk, Virginia, October 17, 2010.
- ^{lxii} *Ibid.*