

## **Ethnic Groups on the Move: Acculturation Dance Strategies of the Greek Gagauz**

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**Abstract:** The field of this research is the area of Thrace in Greece, in which people from various ethnic groups coexist for almost a century. Most of these ethnic groups moved to the area, after voluntary migrations in 1923. The newcomers were classified as "refugees" and were treated hostilely by the locals. One of these ethnic groups that was treated hostilely was the Gagauz, a Turkish-speaking ethnic group. The aim of this research is to study the acculturation strategies of the Gagauz in their attempt to be accepted in Greek society. This study attempts to investigate the way in which the Gagauz construct and reconstruct their ethnic identity through dance. Data was gathered through the ethnographic method as this is applied to the study of dance. The interpretation of the research data in order to approach the ethnic identity of the Gagauz was based on the theoretical perspective of cultural and social construction or constructivism. This theory, in order to highlight the ethnic identity of the Gagauz, is used under the analytical terms of "acculturation" according to the multicultural model proposed by Berry. From the analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic data, it was found that the construction of the ethnic identity of the Gagauz in Greece is a fluid process, in the reconstruction of which an important factor is the degree of its acculturation. The Gagauz, experiencing a social reality that seeks to have multiple identities at the same time, change the meanings of their actions always in relation to their social environment. Thus, on the one hand, they choose to have a Greek Thracian ethnic identity, on the other Gagauz ethnic identity, and on a third level they self-identify as Greek Gagauz. So, depending on their circumstances and feelings, they choose a different ethnic identity.

**Keywords:** Ethnography, dance, identity, acculturation, ethnic group.

Acculturation is a two-dimensional process of change (Berry, 1997), which occurs when groups come into constant primary contact and usually involves replacing the culture of the dominant group with the culture of the group that accepts domination. This theory was developed by Redfield and colleagues (Aguirre Beltran, 1957; Herskovits, 1938; Redfield et al., 1936) and refers to the tendency of certain populations to borrow" elements from each other. Conversely, according to Marden and Meyer (1968), acculturation is the process by which minorities are integrated into a dominant culture. However, although the original cultural patterns of the dominant group change, it often happens that it remains distinct (Kottak, 2007). The above fact is due to the

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adoption by the group that accepts domination of the acculturation strategy of integration or harmonization (Berry, 1997), which results from the coexistence of the cultural elements of the two different cultural groups (Giles, 2005; Rudmin, 2003), in other words from the intercultural mixing of the two cultures (Child, 1970; Lewin, 1948).

When we refer to acculturation, almost at the same time we are talking about a minority group or cultural group, in the sense of a group that has its own language, culture, and history and that simply seeks to maintain its particularities (Roukounas, 1995; Tananakis, 2007). These terms are often equated with the term "ethnic group", used by two disciplines, sociology, and social anthropology, which since the late 1960s have used the term extensively to refer to the social interaction between immigrants or refugee groups and their host countries. According to Smith (1987, 2000), ethnic groups are populations that have a common name, myths of origin, history, and cultural patterns, which are associated with a specific territorial area and a sense of solidarity (Smith, 1987) and which are recognized on the basis of one or more cultural differences, such as religion and language (Smith, 2000). However, the author considers them as creations of specific historical forces with the consequence that they do not remain constant but are exposed to historical change and decay (Smith, 2000).

However, anthropologist Franz Boas argued that all people are acculturated and not just the primitive and the minorities. According to Boas (1940), there are no people whose customs and traditions have been unaffected by foreign cultures, who have not borrowed arts and ideas, which were later developed in their own way. Thus, all people are acculturated, however, minority ethnic groups are under greater pressure to adopt the culture of the dominant group (DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990; Fox, 2010; Neto et al., 2005), especially when there is inequality in structures of social power. (Berns-McGown, 2007; Fox, 2010; Hoerder, 2002; Marsella & Ring, 2003). So, they adopt changes in their culture, which require changes in identity, values, attitudes, etc. (Bemak et al., 2003).

The field of this research is the area of Thrace in the prefecture of Evros in Greece, in which people from various ethnic groups coexist for almost a century, such as natives, refugees from Bulgarian Thrace and Turkish Thrace, Cappadocians, Pontians, Sarakatsani, as well as Turkish-born Muslims, Pomaks and Gypsies (Filippidou, 2011, 2018). Most of these ethnic groups moved to the area, after voluntary migrations, after the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The newcomers were classified as "refugees", but apart from the stigmatized identity and the various and negative or derogatory adjectives that given to them, were considered as co-religious and Greeks. However, despite the sense of common identity based on religion, there was discrimination among the inhabitants of the region, because they came from areas that now belong to neighboring countries, but also because of their different dialects and cultural practices. One of these populations that were treated negatively was the Gagauz (Filippidou, 2011).

The Gagauz consist of a Turkish-speaking ethnic group and are located mainly in southern Moldova, where they also have an independent state, the Gagauzia, but also in Romania, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. A large part of the Gagauz lives in Greece with the majority of them being located in Thrace, in the area of northern Evros, and especially in communities in the area of Trigono, Didymoteicho, and mainly in Orestiada (Filippidou, 2011). The Gagauz, after moving to the area of Orestiada, were treated hostilely by the Greek speakers of the area, due to their foreign language. This fact resulted in their rapid acculturation. However, today, after their social rise, which was achieved, after the abandonment of their language, they try to demonstrate to "others" the uniqueness of their identity, in a contra-acculturative attempt (Filippidou, 2011, 2022).

This fact is achieved through the revival of various aspects of their culture, where dance plays a major role in their effort (Filippidou, 2011, 2022). Therefore, nowadays in Greece, the Gagauz, present their Gagauz songs and dances on stage. So, nowadays, their dance presents the particularity that it has two different dance repertoires, one Greekphone, and one Turk-phone, which are performed in different places. More specifically, the first repertoire is performed in their private space, while the second repertoire is performed in public space, where other ethnic groups are also present. The aim of this research is to study the acculturation strategies of the Gagauz in their attempt to be accepted in Greek society. In particular, this study attempts to investigate the way in which the Gagauz, as subjects of social action, construct and reconstruct their ethnic identity through dance.

### **Acculturation Theory**

There are two proposed theoretical models for acculturation, those that consider acculturation as a one-dimensional process and those that consider it a two-dimensional process. In the first category is included the assimilation model and in the second category, the multicultural model is included.

As far as the assimilation model is concerned, the changes in cultural orientation are one-way and concern the unilateral adoption of cultural elements of the dominant ethnic group and the simultaneous weakening of the cultural elements by the group that accepts domination. The assimilative model, therefore, implies that there is a numerically, and institutionally and culturally dominant culture, within which the various subcultures move. These subcultures, in the long run, will either be absorbed by the dominant culture or will be marginalized (Pavlopoulos & Bezevegkis, 2008).

In contrast to this one-dimensional perspective, some researchers have defined acculturation as a process in which both hereditary and acquired identities are free to vary independently (Berry, 1980; Celano & Tyler, 1990; LaFramboise, et al., 1993; Laroche, et al., 1996; Sayegh & Lasry, 1993; Zak, 1973), that is as a two-dimensional process. In this category belong the multicultural models, which recognize the possibility of coexistence of two independent dimensions, that is, the preservation of existing cultural elements and the adoption of new cultural elements (Mpezevegkis et al., 2010).

One of the most well-known and widely used multicultural models is that of John Berry (1992, 1997), which takes the view that the result of intercultural contact between groups is not an unavoidable, prescribed process. According to him, acculturation is a two-dimensional process, which takes place during the contact of two or more different cultures and which refers to the changes that result from this contact (Berry, 2006). Berry, therefore, recognizes the possibility of coexistence of two independent dimensions: (a) maintaining contact with members of the in-group, that is, maintaining existing cultural elements; and (b) the desire to have relationships with members of the out-group, that is, the adoption of new cultural elements.

According to Berry, the combination of the above two dimensions results in four forms of acculturation, and four different intercultural strategies used by different groups. These strategies reflect attitudes and behaviors (Berry, 1980, 1992, 2003, 2006). These strategies are: (a) marginalization, which consists of the loss of ethnic identity without, however, replacing that loss by joining the dominant group; (b) separation, which refers to alienation from the dominant group and the preservation of ethnic identity; (c) assimilation, which refers to the limited interest in preserving existing cultural elements, increased interaction with the dominant group and ultimately

assimilation by it, and (d) integration, which results from the coexistence of the cultural elements of two different groups (Giles, 2005; Rudmin, 2003) .

**Figure 1**

*Berry's Two-Dimensional Model of Acculturation*

**Cultural Adaptation (relationship sought among groups)**

		<b>Cultural Adaptation (relationship sought among groups)</b>	
		<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Maintenance of heritage culture</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Separation</b>	<b>Integration</b>
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Marginalization</b>	<b>Assimilation</b>

*Note.* Adapted from Kiylioglu and Wimmer (2015, p. 4)

More specifically, marginalization is characterized by feelings of isolation and loss of identity. The groups in this case lose their cultural and psychological contact, both with their own group and with the wider community (Filippidou, 2022; Papastylianou-Akalestou, 1992). This model, when imposed by the wider community, is tantamount to genocide or otherwise cultural genocide. When this attitude occurs consistently in a subgroup, it constitutes the classic case of marginalization (Stonequist, 1935). When there are no positive relations with the wider society and this attitude is accompanied by an obsession with preserving the ethnic identity and tradition, then the resulting formula is that of separation (Papastylianou-Akalestou, 1992).

Assimilation refers to the minimization of differences between the two groups to the point where the dominant group is not at all distinguished from the group that accepts domination. This means embracing the most important aspects of the culture of the dominant group, such as language, religion, values, etc. (Filippidou, 2022; 1979). At the group level, assimilation is attributed to the phrase "melting pot" or "cultural additivity", where groups with different cultural characteristics tend to merge in order to create a new society (Kolb, 2009; Papastylianou-Akalestou, 1992; Vuong, 2018).

Finally, with integration or harmonization, the group becomes an integral part of society, while various ethnic groups while maintaining their ethnic identity collaborate in a wider social system (Berry, 1985; Bochner, 1985; David et al., 2009). Thus, according to Papastylianou-Akalestou (1992), integration "is the most rational form of acculturation, because the synthesis of the elements of the cultural tradition of the individual/group with that of the dominant social group, pushes the individual to social- psychological balance" (p. 62).

From the above, therefore, the importance of Berry's model emerges, which removes the absolute positions that want acculturation as a one-dimensional process, which includes either the marginalization of the dominant ethnic group or the assimilation of its culture by that of the dominant. Berry's model recognizes the possibility of the coexistence of two independent dimensions, namely, maintaining contact with members of the inner group and the desire to gain relationships with members of the outer group, from the combination of which emerge four acculturation strategies. Therefore, Berry's model considers that the result of intercultural contact between groups is not an unavoidable, prescribed process, but can be the subject of selection and management. This is the significance of this model, which allows for multiculturalism by affirming that different cultures can coexist in one society.

## **Methodology**

Data was gathered through the ethnographic method (Gefou-Madianou, 1999) as this is applied to the study of dance (Buckland, 1999; Dimopoulos, 2017; Filippidou, 2018; Giurchescu & Torp, 1991; Koutsouba, 1997; Sklar, 1991). Ethnography (from the words nation and write) is the systematic study of people and cultures. Cultural phenomena are investigated through ethnography, in which the researcher observes society as an object of study. Ethnography is the medium for written cultural observation of a group, which is why this method was chosen in this paper (Geertz, 2003). The data collection is based on primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources refer to data gathered through in situ research that was carried out in the region of Thrace and, particularly, in the community of Inoi of Evros prefecture from December 2007 up to July 2018. Primary sources refer to the data coming from in-situ research, through interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) (open-type questions for semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews), and the participant observation combined with simultaneous audio and video recording of the inhabitants of the community. In addition, oral history was used as a method, through which everyday memory is projected as a quest of social history (Thomson, 2002). The overall course of field research was performed by the dual experience of the local culture with reference both to the habitants of this particular community (carriers of the local culture), as well as to the researchers (Erikson, 1967).

Secondary sources refer to the review and use of the existing literature and were based on the principles of archival ethnography (Gefou-Madianou, 1999; Stocking, 1992) and historical research (Adshead & Layson 1983). For presentation and data analysis Geert's model of "thick description" (2003) was adopted, as in ethnographic method the analysis and interpretation of the data is done simultaneously.

The interpretation of the research data in order to approach the ethnic identity of the Gagauz, will be based on the theoretical perspective of cultural and social construction or constructivism (Anderson, 1991; Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983). This theory, in order to highlight the ethnic identity of the Gagauz, will be used under the analytical terms of "acculturation". More specifically, the term "acculturation" will be used according to the multicultural model proposed by Berry (1992, 1997). This model used by him to investigate the psychological adjustment of immigrants who move to live in another country. However, in this paper the Berry's model will be used to study the attitudes that apply the ethnic group of the Gagauz through the dance during its contact with the Greek speakers of the area, to construct their ethnic identity.

From the above, it can be seen that in order to increase the reliability and validity of the present research, multiple triangulation (Redfern & Norman, 1994) was applied. Multiple triangulation refers to a combination of more than one type of triangulation in the same research

design. As follows, in this particular case a combination of triangulation of data collection, theories and methods was used, in order to increase the validity of the research on the one hand and to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon on the other hand (Redfern & Norman, 1994).

## Findings

### The Ethnographic Context

The Gagauz living in Greece come from the coasts of Northern Bulgaria and the regions of Eastern Thrace (today Turkish Thrace). After the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which was based on the Ottoman "millet sistemi" (Matalas, 2002), that is on the basis of religion, they relocated to the region of Thrace mainly, with the majority of them living today in the northern part of Evros (Figure 2). The Treaty of Lausanne stipulated that the Gagauz be included in the exchanged populations, because on the one hand, they were non-religious of the Turks, and on the other hand, the Turkish government considered them to be of Greek conscience.

#### Figure 2

*The Region of Evros in Greece*



*Note.* Adapted from *Evros (regional unit)*, by Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evros\\_\(regional\\_unit\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evros_(regional_unit)). In the public domain.

One of the communities in which the Gagauz settled in northern Evros was Inoi. The Gagauz of Inoi are refugees from the community of Serbettar, which is located 12 km east of the river Evros, on the borders of the neighboring state of Turkey, and which was formerly called Saraplar, who in Greeks it is called Krasochori meaning wine village. The inhabitants of Krasochori, after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, were forced to move further south and settle in the current area of the prefecture of Evros. They first went to the village of Simenli, today's Fylakio, and then around 1924 they moved to the Jenioglu place where they built their new community.

In the first half of the 20th century and following the model of the nation-states, the newly formed Greek state tried to create a Greek national identity, for all the inhabitants within its borders, with basic structural elements, language, and religion. Any exclusions from these structural elements of "Greekness" were considered problematic and ethno-cultural differences were considered divisive elements (Margari, 2004; Papakostas, 2007). Consequently, those who did not possess these cultural characteristics imposed as necessary by the national ideology were rejected as "others" and excluded from their participation in the nation (Filippidou, 2011, 2018, 2022).

On the basis of the above reasoning and in combination with the heterophony of the Gagauz, the conditions were created for the "other" populations of the Evros region to address the Gagauz, adding the descriptions as "Turks", considering them second-class citizens and treating them with contempt. The inhabitants of Evros, relying on the peculiarity of the Gagauz language, gave them a stigmatized identity, as they treated the settlements inhabited by the Gagauz, as "sub-spaces", which were culturally backward, feeling themselves as culturally superior, because of their Greek-speaking language and the majority of them in the area (Filippidou, 2011).

This treatment of the Gagauz over time began to decline and nowadays is not so obvious. The old class stratification has now been overthrown and the population of the wider area of Evros presents homogeneity in terms of economic and social characteristics, regardless of the ethnic origin of the inhabitants. Besides, the Gagauz are not, with the exception of their language, a clearly distinct cultural group, different from the other Greek ones, especially in matters of religion and popular worship.

### **The Gagauz and Their Dancing Repertoire**

As mentioned in the the introduction, today the dance of the Greek Gagauz includes two different dance repertoires, which are performed on different dance occasions, and which often coexist. Characteristics are the words of the Greeks Gagauz: "when we are invited to dance, we dance our own dances, otherwise, we dance the dances that everyone dances."

Specifically, the first dance repertoire includes the dances "that everyone dances". This phrase refers to the dances that are danced today by all ethnic groups in the region of Thrace in Greece. This dance repertoire emerged after the imposition of the Oligarchy of Colonels in 1967, which constructed a dance repertoire to enhance the image of Greek Christian culture and which was to be followed by all ethnic groups in the region (Filippidou, 2018). This first dance repertoire of the Greek Gagauz includes Greek-language songs and is performed on social-dance occasions, such as weddings, engagements, dance parties, and festivals. The second dance repertoire includes dances accompanied by Turkish songs and which are danced in dance performances on stage, such as dance festivals, cultural events, as well as television shows.

According to the above, the fact is established that in the first case there is talk of survival tradition, while in the second case of revival (Filippidou et al., 2008). The survival and revival of dances is closely linked to their "first" and "second existence" (Hoerburger, 1965, 1968). Thus, in the first case the dances of the Gagauz focus on the inhabitants-dancers themselves and are danced in each other's dance circumstances, while in the second case the dances are usually presented in formal stages, by only a few dancers, who are members of dance clubs.

Using the terminology of Nahachewsky (1995) the dance events of the community and the dances that accompany them can be categorized into two main categories: a) *participatory dance events*, in which the whole community participates, and b) in the *presentational dance events*, in which only certain dancers participate, who are also members of dance clubs (Charitonidis, 2018; Filippidou, 2011). An important factor in this separation is the participation of the public. In other

words, the passive participation of the audience in the dance events defines the presentational dance events, while active participation defines the participatory ones.

On this basis it could be said that participatory dance events include community participatory dances, while presentational dance events include presentational dances. In particular, the first category includes the dances Syrtos, Syrtos-sygekathistos, Zonaradikos, Hasapia, Gikna, Baidouska, Karsilamas, Koutsos and Sygekathistos. These dances are danced in cultural and social events of the community, such as the public dance (panigyri), dance parties, as well as in various celebrations, such as weddings and engagements. The second category includes the dances of Havas Kousiaklamas, Havas Omouslamas, Dusleme, Doinler, Kasapia, Fido, Menexe, Uciurt Giorgi, K'na Gecesi, Axiamda iplik Isler, Marie Kero, Paitouska, Bounartzia, Testemel, Karsilamas and Topal avasou, as well as the Deve dance, which presented in dance performances inside and outside the community, such as dance festivals and cultural events (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Dance Repertoire Based on Theoretical Categories*

	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Dances</b>
<b>Survival dance repertoire</b>	Participatory dances	1) Syrtos
		2) Syrtos sygekathistos
		3) Zonaradikos
		4) Hasapia
		5) Gikna
		6) Baidouska
		7) Karsilamas
		8) Koutsos
		9) Sygekathistos
<b>Revival dance repertoire</b>	Presentational dances	1) Havas koysiklamas
		2) Havas omouslamas
		3) Dusleme
		4) Doinler
		5) Kasapia
		6) Finto
		7) Menexe
		8) Uciurt Giorgi
		9) K'na gecesi
		10) Axiamda iplik Isler
		11) Mari Kero
		12) Paitouska
		13) Bounartzia
		14) Testemel
		15) Topal avasou
		16) Kars'lama (Serseli)
		17) Deve



This distinction of dances into presentational and participatory aims to highlight the two different dance repertoires used by the Gagauz, who while in each other socio-dance gatherings continue to dance the dances of the pan Thracian repertoire which accompany Greek songs, in stage events they revive dances that they had abandoned in the name of the social rise and which are accompanied by Turkish songs (which had been abandoned as "guilty" of ethnic differentiation). Based on what has been said, the dance repertoire of the Greek Gagauz, can be divided into two categories: a) *the survival dance repertoire*, which is the homogenized Thracian repertoire (Filippidou, 2011, 2018, 2021; Filippidou & Koutsouba, 2020a, 2020b; Filippidou et al., 2019), that is what all Greek Thracians generally dance in their various events and in b) *the revival dance repertoire*, which is the local idiom, that is what dances the Gagauz present as "theirs" to "others."

According to Filippidou (2011), these two dance repertoires are identical not only in terms of dance movement itself but also in other parameters of the dance, such as the models of the dance form, the position and gender of the dancers, the rhythmic shape and the rhythmic organization, the use of space, as well as the way of interpretation. The only parameter that differentiates the two dance repertoires of the community and is found in each dance is the musical accompaniment. Specifically, in the survival dance repertoire, the dances are accompanied by a Greek song, while in the revival one is by a Turkish song. Therefore, the presentational dances are similar to the participatory in movement and music and differ only in speech (Greek or Turkish lyrics).

### **Acculturation dance strategies of the Gagauz in Greece**

The Gagauz are a Turkic-speaking ethnic group of Orthodox faith, to which, the inhabitants of the region of Evros Thrace in Greece, where they live, attributed to them a stigmatized identity, which was the result of its Turkic-speaking language, which they associated with the national adversary (the Turk) (Filippidou, 2011). In other words, they were not socially accepted and were excluded from upward mobility. These were the reasons why the Greek Gagauz were rapidly acculturated, and at first, it seemed that they were fully assimilated by the Greek speakers of the area. Thus, after a period of stigmatization and marginalization, due to the fact that they spoke Turkish, they chose to eliminate their Turkish language in order to resemble the Greek speakers in the area, to rise socially, and to stop being considered "suspects" of differentiation.

This effort on the part of the Gagauz is also reflected in their music-dance tradition, where Turkish-speaking songs were limited, and Greek-speaking ones prevailed. As a result of this marginalization and subsequent replacement, there was a gradual abandonment of some Gagauz dances that did not resemble the local dances and, therefore, there were no songs to accompany them. In other words, the Gagauz socially integrated and adopted many elements of the music-dance tradition of the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the area, adopting, like many other ethnic groups, the homogenized pan-Thracian music-dance repertoire (Filippidou, 2011, 2018, 2021; Filippidou & Koutsouba, 2020a, 2020b; Filippidou, et al., 2019).

Subsequently, the abandonment of the Gagauz language and the learning of the Greek language gradually contributed to their integration with the "other" inhabitants of the area, as a result of which they were recognized as "theirs". Besides, the Gagauz do not have obvious distinct cultural characteristics from the other inhabitants of Evros, with the exception of only their language. However, their stigmatization as "Turks" (because of their Turkish language), which continues to this day to be attributed to them in parts, but also in general their contrast with the surrounding social space, which was the fruit of their Turkophone, resulted in the discovery of the Gagauz identity. Further, this fact resulted in the gathering of the members of this group, which spoke to the "others" in Greek, while the "themselves" spoke in Turkish.

In other words, the Gagauz to the "others" tried to show that they had fully assimilated, in order to acquire upward mobility, while in their gatherings the Gagauz identity dominated (Filippidou, 2011). Thus, they retained some elements of their culture, as well as their Turkish-speaking language as a group, thus demonstrating that they chose to harmonize with the dominant group, but not to fully resemble it. In other words, the gradual cultural assimilation of the Gagauz did not automatically lead to the disappearance of their particular collective identity, which to a large extent continued to exist only in their between relations.

However, today, in the age of globalization, people feel the need, more than ever, to claim the right to dispute and at the same time manifest a strong tendency to preserve or even promote their uniqueness. Today, more and more often, ethnic groups claim their identities, whose members perceive and experience in a special way the processes through which identity and otherness are created and experienced. As for the Greek Gagauz, after a long period of acculturation, today they try to promote to the "others" the Turkish songs, their dances, and their culture in general, both reviving dancing rituals that have ceased to take place and presenting on stage their traditional dances accompanied by a Turkish song. Thus, they use dance in order to redefine and project their ethnic identity or, in other words, to retribalize (Cohen, 1969). Their pursuit is realized through the effort of the local cultural club to present the small local differences of the Gagauz culture in order to emphasize the uniqueness and importance of their culture.

However, the action of individuals of this ethnic group during various dance events, calls into question the idea of distinct groups. This is because, on the one hand, they choose their retribalization in an attempt to declare and promote their Gagauz identity; on the other hand, they remain in their acculturation. This is evident from the fact that in their "own" socio-dance gatherings the identity of the "others" prevails, since in each other social events, such as weddings, engagements and festivals, their dance repertoire appears homogenized (pan Thracian dance repertoire) and includes Greek songs.

Thus, today in the Gagauz who lives in Thrace in Greece there are two different dance repertoires which are observed in different dance occasions which are often intertwined. The first is the survival dance repertoire, which includes dances of the homogenized pan Thracian repertoire, is accompanied by Greek songs and is danced by all the Gagauz in their various dance events. The second is the revival dance repertoire, which includes Gagauz dances, accompanied by Turkish songs and performed by members of the local cultural club on stage (Filippidou, 2011).

However, many times, even after the promotion of the Gagauz dances and songs, that is, the presentational dances, by the local cultural club, it is observed that Gagauz who do not belong to the cultural club also participate in them. Today, the presentational dances have slowly started to be rewarded in the consciousness of the Gagauz. So, it is often observed Gagauz timidly 'enter' the dance and sing the Turkish songs softly, wanting to show their Gagauz identity. But automatically, the choice of Gagauz identity includes the people who bring it to the "opposite bank", separating them ethnically, but on the other hand, also distinguishes them nationally. So many times, and usually after some reactions, either by "themselves" or by "others" for their choice, they are limited to the position of the spectator. This was also observed in the cultural club, which after reactions for the promotion of Gagauz dances and Turkish songs chose in some stage dance events to dance the Gagauz dances, but with Greek songs.

As a result, Gagauz cultural club merged the two repertoires, creating a new "dance formation", which included Gagauz dances with Greek songs and which was accepted by "themselves" and by "others". By changing the speech, that is the Turkish song and creating a new "dance formation", the Gagauz try to show that their only difference from the "other" groups who lives in the area is the existence of speech. In other words, with this dance practice, the Greek

Gagauz, project their similarities and put aside their differences. Characteristic are the words of a Greek Gagauz, the Nikolaidis Angelos (2010) said:

*To us Gagauz the preservation of our tradition has another meaning, more important [...] than that of others who belong to other 'races'. We realize that by maintaining our tradition we keep in touch not with the past of romanticism and reminiscence, but with that of history and our own course within it. We learn what we are and we feel proud that today this foreign element we had in our lives, that is the foreign language, did not send us to the other side (in the Turkey), but kept us here (in Greece), projecting first our similarities and then the differences, so that everyone who does not know us can learn us....*

## Conclusions

The aim of this research was to study the acculturation strategies of the Gagauz who lives in Greece in their attempt to be accepted in Greek society. In particular, this study attempts to investigate the way in which the Gagauz, as subjects of social action, construct and reconstruct their ethnic identity through dance. In order to achieve this aim and in order to interpret the research data, it was used multicultural model of acculturation proposed by Berry (1997), which recognizing the possibility of coexistence of two independent dimensions, namely, maintaining contact with members of the inner group and the desire to gain relationships with members of the outer group, from the combination of which emerge four acculturation strategies.

From the analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic data it was found that of Berry's four acculturation strategies, Gagauz use the three. More specifically, the Gagauz use the strategies of assimilation, separation, and integration. In more detail, the Gagauz, on the one hand, they choose the acculturation strategy of assimilation, as they dance the dances of the homogenized pan-Thracian repertoire (Filippidou, 2022). This strategy integrates them with the Greek speakers of the region, a fact that offers them social recognition and rise. Thus, they self-identify and hetero-identify as Greeks Thracians, a definition that connects the people who carry it with Greekness. However, the Gagauz identity, in this case, is losing out.

This is the reason why the Gagauz attempt to retribalize (Cohen, 1969), projecting their Gagauz identity. This is achieved by presenting their Gagauz dances and Turkish songs. So, they choose the acculturation strategy of separation, which separates them from the Greek speakers Thracians of the area (Filippidou, 2022). Thus, they self-identify and hetero-identify as Turkish-speaking Gagauz. However, the insistence to maintain their Gagauz identity had the result of the "others" separating them nationally and not only ethnically, bringing them to the "opposite bank" and hetero-identifying them as 'Turks'.

Nevertheless, this contradicted the identity standard (Burke, 1997) of the Gagauz, who do not consider themselves Turks, but as Turkish-speaking Greek Gagauz (Filippidou, 2018). In order to reconcile their two conflicting collective identities, (Turkish-speaking Gagauz, Greek Thracians) the Gagauz create a new "dance formation", which includes the Gagauz dances with Greek-speaking names, accompanied by Greek-speaking songs (Filippidou, 2022). In this way they choose the acculturation strategy of integration.

In this way the Gagauz combined their Gagauz identity with their social rise, projecting their similarities with the Greek speakers of the area. With the new "dance formation" the Gagauz tried to demonstrate their Greekness and their Gagauz origin. The choice of the Gagauz's acculturation

strategy of integration forced the Greek-speaking groups, which maintain the dominance in the area, to accept the Gagauz dance repertoire. This happened because now with the change of the song, from Turkish to Greek, all the ethnic groups are given the opportunity to coexist in the dance, singing the Greek songs together. With the strategy of integration, their ethnic group becomes an integral part of society, while allowing them to collaborate in a wider social system while maintaining their ethnic identity. So, now, they self-identify and hetero-identify as Greek Gagauz.

From the above it is concluding that the Gagauz, experiencing a social reality that seeks to have multiple identities at the same time, change the meanings of their actions always in relation to their social environment. Thus, on the one hand they choose to have a Greek Thracian ethnic identity, on the other Gagauz ethnic identity and on a third level they self-identify as Greek Gagauz. So, depending on their circumstances and feelings, they choose a different ethnic identity. This confirms the view that identity does not have a permanent character but is more of a "construction", which depends on the conditions and the context in which it takes place and appears as an object of choice and management by the members of each group.

Finally, the ethnic identity of the Gagauz in Greece consists of two distinct circles, which refer to the two distinct music-dance repertoires, which the Gagauz either combine and unite, or distinguish them. In conclusion, the dance in the ethnic group of Gagauz in Greece, as a cultural element that is constantly evolving, was found that shape and reshape their ethnic identity, always according to the needs and their perceptions, depending on the possibilities provided to them by their environment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

It is commonly accepted that every scientific approach makes it necessary to limit the scope of research and the delimitation of the goals sought, as well as the limitation of the theoretical and methodological tools chosen by researchers. Approaching the ethnic identity of the Gagauz from the point of view of the dance practice of the inhabitants of the Oinoi community constitutes a limitation in itself since the identity of the Gagauz contains elements, which can be interpreted in a variety of ways. In addition, the study of ethnic identity based on the theory of social and cultural construction of identity, seen under the terms of "acculturation", delimits both the scope of the research and its content as well as the framework of its theoretical support.

The aim of the research constitutes an additional limitation since it is limited to the geographical area of the Prefecture of Evros in Greece and refers to the ethnic group of the Gagauz who live in its northern part. In particular, it refers to the Gagauz who live in a settlement of the city of Nea Orestiada, Inoi, while it does not represent all the Gagauz who settled in the area of northern Evros or in other regions of Greece, such as in Komotini, Serres, Drama, Thessaloniki.

### **Further Research**

From the data collection, issues emerged that could not be studied further in the context of this particular study and that would be interesting to investigate. The first question concerns the role of the Cultural Association of the Inoi community in the construction of the ethnic identity of the Gagauz since it is a space that in recent years represents their ethnic identity. However, the community's Cultural Association is a women's association. As a follow-up, another issue that can be the subject of study is the highlighting of the role of women in the construction of the ethnic identity of the Gagauz of Inoi.

A third question refers to the study of the dance forms of the dance repertoire of the Inoi community as such, in order to find out what the dance itself has to tell us about the way it is transferred from the community to the dance associations halls and by extension to the dance stage, that is, from his "first" to his "second existence" (Charitonidis, 2018). Nevertheless, in this research paper, the acculturation strategies used by the Gagauz of Inoi through dance were investigated, in order to construct and reconstruct their ethnic identity. Henceforth, it would be interesting to find out if this model of acculturation is also applicable in other cases of ethnic groups active in Greece and if these groups use the same parameters in the construction of ethnic identity, i.e. if the same acculturation strategies are followed or if, as the case may be, there are differences in its application.

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### Notes on Contributors

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