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Idyllic Times and Spaces?

Memories of Childhood Visits to the Parental Homeland by Second-Generation Greeks and Cypriots

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Abstract

This paper focuses on one aspect of a wider comparative study of second-generation Greek-Americans, Greek-Germans and British-born Greek Cypriots who have 'returned' to Greece and Cyprus. We analyse those parts of their life-narratives which refer to childhood visits to their ancestral homes in Greece and Cyprus. In nearly all cases these are memories of idyllic times and spaces – of beaches and the sea, of villages and the countryside, and of fine weather and happy times spent with extended families. The key trope running through these memories of childhood visits is : how children were allowed to 'roam free' until late at night, in contrast to the strict parenting and limited spatial and temporal freedom they experienced in the host country. However, different and sometimes less pleasant memories emerge when the visits took on a different character: for instance, when longer-term stays resulted from children being 'sent back' to be cared for by relatives, or when the children were older teenagers. In the second part of the paper, connections are made between these childhood times in the 'homeland' and subsequent decisions, later in life, to return to Greece or Cyprus for a longer-term settlement. In general the hypothesis that childhood visits were instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging in the homeland, preparing the way for the adult return, is only partially supported. Returns take place for a whole set of individualised reasons. Returnees find that their semi-permanent settlement in the homeland in early-mid adulthood poses a new set of challenges which contrast markedly with their childhood experiences and memories. Finally, reflecting on their relocation, second-generation returnees frequently remark on the loss of the 'authentic' nature of the homeland. They highlight the materialism of Greek and Cypriot society nowadays and the impact of recent mass immigration. However, they see the 'homeland' as a safer locale to raise their own children.

Introduction

Relatively little has been written about the transnational links of the second generation with their parents' country of origin, and even less on their specific experiences of childhood visits to the parental 'homeland'. This paper aims to explore these childhood transnational or 'counter-diasporic' visits, taking as its empirical frame a comparative study of three second-generation groups: Greek-Americans, Greek-Germans and British Greek Cypriots. Our research subjects are respectively US-born and German-born Greeks, and British-born Greek Cypriots, who are now living in the 'homeland', Greece or Cyprus, where most of them have moved as young adults. We explore those parts of their life-narratives where they reflect on their memories of childhood visits to their respective 'homelands' and say what role, if any, these visits had on their later-life decisions to relocate to Greece or Cyprus longer-term or for good.

The extensive literatures which now exist both on return migration and on

transnationalism are, for the most part, resolutely focused on the first generation. For return migration this might be semantically justified, for the second generation does not 'return' to a place it never came from (in terms of birth-place statistics). On the other hand, the connection to what is often regarded as the 'home country' may be very strong, so that the 'return' has ontological meaning even if it contravenes the logic of migration statistics.

For transnationalism the explanatory excuse might be that the migration is so recent that the second generation does not yet exist, or that migrants who have children have left them behind in the care of spouses or other family members, to be brought up in the home countries sustained by migrant remittances. Whilst these demographic arrangements of transnational migration are undoubtedly widespread, it is also evident from general knowledge of the post-war immigration histories of Western Europe, North America and Australia that migrations of family settlement have occurred on a large scale,

with substantial host-country-born second (and now third) generations. It is true that, especially in the United States and continental Europe (but not so much in the UK where the socio-demographic notion of the second generation is less recognised), these second-generationers being intensively studied, but this research focus is normatively guided by their progress along the path of integration or assimilation into the host society, especially in terms of their educational and labour-market profiles (see the review of this debate in King and Christou 2008:7-9). Their homeland links are, by and large, ignored.

This last statement is now beginning to be challenged. Levitt and Waters' (2002) edited book on the transnational lives of the second generation in the US was a major contribution here, with several chapters describing visits to various 'homelands' by older teenagers and young adults (but not by younger-age children). Other significant studies on second-generation transnationalism include Robert Smith's acclaimed ethnography of 'Mexican New York' (with fieldwork also in Mexican

resonance in studies of diaspora and of tourism directed to real or imagined diasporic homelands; in many countries with a history of emigration 'roots tourism' has become an important niche market within the tourism industry. For Basu (2004, 2005), who did fieldwork in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, 'roots return' is both actual physical mobility – a performative act expressed through visits to ancestral and heritage locations – and a more collective general project of (re)connection to the homeland. For Baldassar (2001) studying Italo-Australians visiting their ancestral villages in the mountains north of Venice, these long-distance returns have the character of a secular pilgrimage.

This paper, then, is about childhood, memory, multiple notions of home, and eventual relocation to the parental homeland. All are potentially interconnected, but none is a straightforward or simple notion. With childhood, the boundary is blurred, and in the narratives we hear different interpretations of homeland visits as the child matures into adolescence and adulthood. Memories are inevitably reconstructed post hoc. If articulating memories is an act of representation (and of performance in the interview setting), then we must ask what is its relationship to 'fact' and whether memories are 'real' and 'authoritative' reconstructions of self, home and history (Agnew 2005:7). Yet, is this the right question to ask? Memories are more than mere repositories of fact; they are an act of remembering that can create new meanings and new understandings, both of the past and of the present (Giles

older than about 50, regular childhood returns would have been unlikely. Mike (57, GC) remarked that, when he was a child in London, family holidays were to Brighton and Hastings, not to Cyprus. Return visits from Germany, on the other hand, were usually overland, by car – which brought its own challenges. The following quote is a nice evocation of the performativity of the annual trip down to Greece, and also of the materiality of the visit as well – the ‘exchange’ of high-quality German-manufactured consumer goods with the ‘Greek stuff’, products of the soil:

Every summer vacation, six to eight weeks, by car. Actually, it's a traditional Greek-German vacation, by car, so you can carry all the things you want to carry. This is the nightmare of everybody, three days in a car, with all that stuff... I remember, like, in the beginning [laughs], it was like vacuum cleaners and televisions... there was a time in Greece thinking that everything that has a German brand name is better ... So you were carrying all that stuff back and you were putting all the Greek stuff in the car and bringing it back to Germany. It's like litres of olive oil, of wine and cheese and God knows what, that you cannot put on a plane... (Rebecca, 41, GG).

Childhood memories of visits were almost always very positive, especially for the pre-teen years. There was the obvious feeling of being on holiday (but on a rather different type of holiday than children of non-migrant background), with frequent references to sun, sea, beaches, idyllic villages, nature and the countryside, and a warm welcome from family members. However, one word stood out as completely predominant in the narratives of all these summer holiday visits – . Children saw themselves as being allowed much more freedom to run about without being watched, to stay out late, and to do things that they would not have been allowed to do in their ‘host’ countries. This was especially noticeable in the Greek-Cypriot

narratives, suggesting that the contrast between the ‘safeness’ of Cyprus and the ‘mean streets’ of London (or other big cities – interviewees also came from Birmingham, Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow, Nottingham and Coventry) was sharper than between Greece on the one hand and Germany and the US on the other. The contrast between freedom in Cyprus (and Greece) and restrictions in the host country was most striking for the female interviewees, reflecting once again the powerful gender dynamic of Greek and Cypriot family life. Interviewees also observed that, during these holiday times, their parents were more relaxed and behaved differently towards them, the children, than when they were at ‘home’ in Britain, the US or Germany.

This, then, is the general picture, a remarkably consistent one, which we now disaggregate and nuance via sets of quotes. First, a few remarks about the nature of the return visit – essentially a holiday, but not one that other children at school shared:

I only came for holidays then, I was nothing but a tourist. Greece was my homeland but I was just a visitor and a visitor hasn't got a clue about everyday life (Gregory, 40, GG).

This was a holiday... you're not at home, but... You know it wasn't a holiday like I was staying in a hotel, and it a holiday 'cause we had our own place over here, we had an apartment which my parents bought in 1980 when I was born. And I had my grandparents, so I would stay with them, I would stay with my aunty... it was different, but it wasn't like [the kind of] holiday like my friends would talk about when they went to a hotel or a cruise, and they did this and that... it wasn't like that (Theodora, 28, GC).

Where, exactly, did the childhood visits take place? Reading the full set of narratives reveals quite a complex geography and variation of types of place. The parents of Theodora, above, had bought a flat in Limassol (Cyprus's largest seaside town)

and so holidays were divided between the coast and staying with relatives inland. Both in Cyprus and Greece, most emigrants leaving in the 1950s and 1960s came from villages and small towns, as both countries had mainly rural, agricultural economies at that time. Other emigrants came from coastal areas and the Greek islands. Hence the holiday returns could be to any of these kinds of location. But that is not the full story because, whilst emigration was taking place, other family members (especially the brothers and sisters of the emigrants) were migrating internally, to Athens, Thessaloniki or Nicosia. So these places might also feature on the return visit itineraries, except that in the summer peak these cities empty out as people go back to their villages or decamp to the coast. Either way, beaches and the seaside, and villages and the countryside, are the two most frequently referred to – inevitably in idyllic terms.

round to their houses... it was more like every Sunday we used to visit an aunty, I really socialised more with my cousins than I did with my friends, and if I had a friend from school they'd have to be approved by my parents... my mother'd have to meet the parents... she was just so worried... I had a really good friend at primary school and she was Italian and my mum got on with her, 'cause we're quite similar... And she'd always say to me, you know, 'not that I don't trust you, it's just that I don't trust everybody else'... I was driven to school to my embarrassment up to the age of 15 [laughs out loud], in a battered Mazda, oh it was really embarrassing... whereas my brother could go on his own... And I, er, was encouraged to do chores around the house, whereas my brother didn't have to do it 'cause he's a boy and I'm a girl, and I'm supposed to know how to do it, 'cause I'm gonna be a housewife, and all that kind of rubbish... and that's it... oh yeah, the school slumber parties, so I wasn't allowed to do that, 'cause I wasn't allowed to stay at somebody else's house overnight, my mum didn't trust so much, like an English family or whatever...

[...]

And the funny thing was that when I was on holiday here in '95, you know 15, mid-teens or whatever, the first time I went out was actually in Cyprus... My cousins here – this is when I found out 'wow, we really are so different' – so we were like 'yeah, we're going go out', and for some reason, as strict as my mum was in England, she would let me do whatever I wanted in Cyprus, it was so bizarre... And, you know, , like the doors wouldn't be locked, whereas in England we would always lock the doors twice. Everything was so open in Cyprus... In England if I wanted to go down to the shop I wasn't allowed, but here I could just roam around and do whatever I wanted... so I kinda enjoyed the freedom of the holidays. And my

cousin was going to take me out, and my mum was like 'alright as long as your cousin looks after you'; even though she was three months younger than me [laughs] she was looking after me, 'cause I was from England and I didn't know my way around [laughs]. And that was the first time I went clubbing, it was in the tourist district [of Limassol], it was really funny, I just wore something normal, you know, not super-trendy, just something to go out in, and my cousins were with their mini-skirts and they had a full face of make-up on, they had their highlights, and I was like [mimics shocked expression] and I felt like a baby actually, I really felt like a child, even though I was 15...

Among many significant interpretive remarks that could be drawn out of this long interview extract, we highlight the

to take the piss out of my Greek [laughs]... They see us as villagers 'cause we went, or people left after the war or whatever, and they kept their traditions as tightly as possible... and most of them were village traditions, because they were brought over from the village, whereas they [the Cypriots in Cyprus] had become Europeans, they'd become modern, and progressed, and they see us as being backwards a bit, which I actually find hilarious, 'cause it's the other way round. The thing is that actually we are more open-minded, more worldly, than they are. But the other thing I was seeing when I was age 15... was the materialism over here, which again was, you know, 'cause my parents were brought up in the village and... my mum used to buy me clothes from Marks and Spencer's that I hated, but I was thankful that I had clothes to wear [laughs]... whilst here, they wanted designer brands ... You know, I'm 28 now and I've moved over here and have a career [she works in property development], and I know people my age that are still getting money from their parents... So these are like major, major differences that I see.

Once again, there are many interesting issues raised here, which we will come back to later in the paper. For now, let us hear two more 'narratives of freedom'. Although the most striking accounts were related by female interviewees like Theodora, note that, to some extent, the same contrastive experiences applied to young males (the second of the two quotes below).

Um, it was weird because I was allowed so much more freedom here, I mean, I was kept on such a tight rein [in South Wales], I remember being 14 and coming out here... and I was allowed to go to night clubs, you know, and go out with my cousins in Paphos... go to bars, go to have ice-cream outside, you know, in a restaurant at 12 o'clock at night and have a pizza, you know, after the disco, and stuff like that, it was very odd. My parents were around in

Paphos having a night out and they'd let us wander around and go off and walk on the promenade and get ogled by all the boys and... I suppose it was just safer for them, and they had more time, I don't know, perhaps they were just more relaxed, being out here, you know, and they trusted people that were around, the people who I was with... it was so much easier and I don't know, they were just, they had a better handle on being parents here than they did in the UK, it was quite weird (Maya, 42, GC).

Oh yeah, I remember coming over, my first holiday I remember, I was six, I remember the beach of course. Cyprus was very different back then. I remember the beach, I remember staying in the village, we had a house in the village, I remember staying in the flat here in Limassol... I remember my cousins, playing with my cousins. I remember the food of course... Cyprus was brilliant because you got to play without any restrictions... you don't have to be home by a certain time, my parents felt safe leaving me out with my cousins, they'd never have to ask where we were. I remember I learnt to ride a bicycle in Cyprus and as soon as I learnt I was out everywhere, whereas in England I wouldn't have dreamt of getting a bicycle. I remember I wasn't allowed to play anywhere apart from our garden in England, whereas in Cyprus as long as there's someone that they knew with me I could be anywhere... I felt a lot freer as a child in Cyprus (Harris, 29, GC).

For some, however, during the later teenage years, views of Cyprus were more mixed. Particularly in the villages and away from the towns and beach life, Cyprus seemed a duller place with not much to do. In other cases, interviewees realised that the trips were a chance for family members to introduce them to a potential marriage

Yeah, we came here every year for about five-six weeks and we loved it, I mean up until I was about 13 or 14 I loved it, we'd count the days with my sister to come over, because we were freer here... we used to go to my mum's village in the mountains and we'd just run around all day with other kids... But when we started getting teenager-ish and we wanted to go out, they were a bit stricter; that's when I started to hate it... I didn't want to come here any more (Anti, 38, GC).

The first time I came I was six, in 1965, and then I came again in 1972... and '74... and I didn't come back for eight years after that, in '82, yeah... I didn't want to come here when I was older ... because there was pressure from my father's family, that they were gonna marry me off here, and I just did not want that (Tania, 48, GC).

For Greece the picture is somewhat different. On the one hand there seems to be more continuity of pleasant feelings through the various phases of childhood; and on the other hand we find more young people, particularly in their college and university years, visiting Greece independently from the US, so the encounter with the homeland may be less family-oriented. But, for both Greece and Cyprus, it is difficult to generalise about these 'older child' visits because of the diversity of views and experiences. Three contrasting Greek-American voices:

We got here as fast as we could and my dad would get us out in the countryside... we spent most of the time just visiting family and you know having huge feasts... like these long visits to people and their friends... the relatives... you know often boring visits where we had to wait and wait until they finished talking and stuff and really dull (Dora, 34 GA)

... and when we were here... we were always around our Greek cousins and I have Greek-German cousins and they would always come down from Germany and we would always spend

time together and ... because we didn't share another language, we would have to speak Greek together so my Greek was emphasised more and I think I really had a great time. I never had a bad experience coming here on vacation. Whether it was with my parents or by myself because I think that when I was around 18 or 19 years-old I started travelling to Greece by myself and every year or so I would come here with friends and we would travel to the Greek islands and we always had a great time... (Loukia, 34, GA).

And because my mom has so many sisters we met every summer and spent our time between [names a series of places where various sisters lived]. We spent a lot of time near Plagiari [close to Thessaloniki] because it was closer to the beach and there was more room to stay. So there I have [names her aunt, her cousins and their children], it's just one big happy family. Easter-time we'd skewer lambs in the yard, summertime we'd have lunch all together after the beach, oh, it was just great, wonderful. In Athens I have [names another aunt and cousins] ... and I'd spend half my time there... we went to the beach... and every evening we'd go out, you know, when we were younger just for a coffee, juice or a walk, and then as we got older in high school for a beer or clubbing, this and that. Agrinio, I stopped going to Agrinio [her mother's rural village] in high school because it was boring. Can I talk about my memories [of Agrinio]? (Magda, 36, GA).

The question at the very end of the last extract leads into the next key theme from the childhood narratives, reconstructing what was seen as a traditional and now disappeared (or fast disappearing) way of life. So Magda's retrospective continues:

My favourite memories of Agrinio are, I guess, it's culture shock, coming from San Francisco in America to a house that had no inner plumbing, and today I have an extremely irrational fear of bugs and I swear to God it's from that house. There was a hole in the ground... with spiders and cockroaches, ants, big ants, I've never seen ants so big, moths at night, mosquitoes, all kinds of creepy crawly things, and you had to squat there. It was awful... every time I went in there, there was the stench and the bugs. That was a bad experience but looking back I think it did me good. I don't know how, but I like it that I have the memory of that... The good memories I have from that house is playing in the yard with the chickens, yeah because the back of the house was a hencoop and I didn't mind waiting for the water to heat up on the wood-burning stove and to pour it into the tin buckets to take to the bath in the hencoop [laughing]. We took a bath with the chickens! [...] I remember my grandmother, old lady just in black with long braids, and I was always kind of afraid of her. She looked scary to me; missing teeth. I have images of her chasing a chicken round the yard and finally grabbing it, cutting its head off and that thing running around headless until it dropped. I had been

donkeys and... it's not like that anymore... When you come to Greece [nowadays] you've still got beautiful places, but in the 70s, for instance there was almost no trash back then, people didn't use packaging, like they would re-use it, like the cans that they put flowers in... it was a different context to the States where we had grown up [where] there were all these consumer things and the packaging and trash (Dora, 34, GA).

Others were particularly struck by the sensual experiences of these childhood and earlier-life visits – the colours of the landscape, the smells, heat etc:

...and those years later when I was in Germany, there was one thing that still

good destination for a holiday, I mean although you've got the pick of the world I always wanted to come to Cyprus, 'cause I liked – I'm talking about the 60s and 70s when Cyprus had villages, you know – I just loved that way of life. It's gone now, which is sad... to find it now you have to go up into the mountains... I knew one day I would come to live in Cyprus, it's something that's always been inside, I don't know how or when but I knew... I knew I would eventually settle here... (Mike, 57, GC).

Mike's essentialised view of himself as incontrovertibly Cypriot, and of Cyprus as his natural home, was echoed in other narratives – each, however, reflecting different circumstances, as one would expect, and each reflecting, again in different ways, the link between childhood upbringing (including homeland visits) and subsequent 'return'. Thomas had been pressurised by his parents to continue with the Greek High School in Germany rather than attending the German one any longer. This preserved his 'Greekness' (above all his competency in the language), and combined with regular summer visits, shaped his later decision to move to Greece to attend university and develop a career:

...I had just finished the third year in High School and I had to choose whether or not to continue with the Greek High School on a regular basis without attending the German one any longer. I had just had a very nice summer in Greece. My mother would tell me constantly to continue with the Greek school, for us to return to Greece, you know the usual things we are told... And she got her way, she managed to convince me [...] I simply wanted to return to my homeland. Every summer we would go to Greece and during the summer Greece is always very beautiful with a lot of sun and sea; we were nostalgic for this when in Germany. I can say that this was the basic reason (Thomas, 29, GG).

What we see here is a kind of 'family narrative of return' – led in Thomas's case by his mother – which, together with the idyllic summer visits and the warm climate, nurtured the desire of Thomas to 'return' to Greece, which he does at the age of 19, independently from his parents. Another example, this time from Cyprus:

My father would bring us over, he has eight brothers and sisters, my mum has six, and most of them were living over here. So he would take us around the whole of the island, you know, meeting them, making sure we knew our roots, and knew our family, knew who we were, you know. And that was what did it [made my mind up about moving to Cyprus]. I never wanted to go back home [from these visits], never; whenever we were leaving I'd be, like, 'oh I'm so sad, I don't want to go, let's stay here' ... So I always wanted to [move to Cyprus] one day, yeah, yeah, I did. My mum and dad, you know, I think every Cypriot family over there [in England] always says, you know, 'once we get ourselves [this or that], once we get enough [money], once we're old... we'll go back'; it's always like that, I think it's inside them somewhere... they always want to go home (Alexandra, 37, GC).

What is also interesting about the way the parental narrative of return is passed on to the second generation is that it often results in the second generation inheriting this desire and turning it into reality, whereas the parents themselves do not return, at least not when their children do. This perspective is developed more explicitly in research carried out by Tracey Reynolds (2008) in the Caribbean. According to Reynolds, the family narrative developed around the 'myth of return' is integral to the British-based second generation's return orientation; these narratives 'act as important social resources in sustaining the second generation's emotional attachment to the family homeland and in influencing the decision to return' – alongside, of course,

other practical considerations (Reynolds 2008:2).

Our final example of the 'coming home' narrative connected to an essentialised 'I am Greek' identity formation comes from Stamatis. Given his age (63 when interviewed) and his parents' modest background as economic migrants in the US, Stamatis did not 'reconnect' with Greece until his first visit in 1966, aged 21. The visit was prompted by his father inheriting some land which needed a family visit to sort out. Stamatis went off backpacking, meeting up with relatives and getting acquainted with the country and its politics. In this fairly long extract, he takes us through the events leading up to this first visit, its significance to him and his subsequent expressions of identity; he also reveals an unusual awareness of the 'layers of reflection' inherent in memory reconstruction and interpretation. Perhaps this is not so surprising as he subsequently pursued a peripatetic career as an academic, writer and political activist, moving back and forth between North America and Greece, finally settling in the latter in his 50s.

No, we didn't really have the means [for me to visit Greece as a child]. My family was fairly modest in income. The reason we ended up reconnecting with Greece is that my dad – we lived in California at that point – my dad was notified by the Greek consulate in San Francisco that he had inherited some property... and he had to go there to settle up the legal situation... So my parents planned a vacation, a trip to Greece... and I decided to go that summer ... an event that was deeply emotional... two and a half months in Greece, and that was my reintroduction to Greece, the summer of 1966. [...] Lots of memories... for me it was like, um... I guess it turned out to be a life-changing experience, although I didn't think of it that way at the time, but it was. I ... you know, this goes back through layers of reflection where you kind of change what the original experience was about so it was hard to

get back what it really meant to you the, um... But I immediately felt at home in Greece... Thinking back on it, it has to do with my mum, for whom the feeling of (homeland) was very important, and I mean from that first trip my parents would go every summer to Greece. Well they did get somewhere in advancing the property situation, but it remains unresolved as of today and I the, ue, u02-7.3(xpe)-1ce,549h layers o...1eliad property... and he had takes US, Stamatis did not s

months before, the house next door got broken into, a burglary, and we were in the house at the time, and we didn't notice that the whole house was gone, they managed to take everything out, right under our eyes, so that unnerved them a bit. And the final straw as that plant pot – yeah – whoever stole that plant pot was the reason [laughs]... because after that they just decided to sell up, pack it in, and go back to Cyprus.

[...]

When we moved here in '89... for me it was easy because I went from an industrialised, bleak, depressed, high crime city to, er, a very bright, open, free – there was very little crime here –

[...]

This is home for me now, even though, when I go to Liverpool, the accent warms me, because I love Liverpool people, you know, and I feel a lot of memories there when I go back but... erm, this is home for me now... this is my port [smiles] yeah, yeah, I'll end up here...

Whilst each of these three cases – Lydia, Petros and Nicholas – is obviously unique in their individualised version of a mobile, transnationalised childhood, there are some remarkable common threads. All of them had parents who came from humble backgrounds and were economic migrants, either factory workers in Germany or 'fish-and-chippers' in England, and all of them were able to override the challenges of language and school moves to access university education, and from that a much higher socio-occupational class than their parents. Yet, again in all cases, this combined social and spatial mobility has estranged them to some extent from the cultural and class anchoring of the three reference groups of which they are themselves part – the host society (Germany, England), the homeland society (Greece, Cyprus), and the migrant society (Greek-Germans, British-Cypriots). They end up in hard-to-classify identity back in their 'homeland' country.

Reflecting on relocation

In the final section of the paper we examine the themes which are revealed by the participants when they talk about their recent lives in Greece and Cyprus. As this is a broad agenda, parts of which we have already discussed elsewhere (Christou and King 2006; King and Christou 2009), we focus here more specifically on the contrasts that participants draw when they compare their experiences of resettlement with their earlier childhood visits. Some clues have already been given on how these comparisons play out: for instance the ways in which Greece and Cyprus have changed over the intervening period – no longer a place of rural simplicity. And Petros hinted that his early childhood

playmate cousins had grown up and moved on; he questioned whether they loved him any more and lamented that they were no longer interested in what he had to say.

This change in the 'atmosphere' amongst family and friends – not as present and welcoming as remembered from childhood visits – is the first theme we explore. This quote, from Cyprus, represents a typical reaction:

Everyone [in the family] seems very busy and I found out very quickly that it's one thing when you're here on holiday and everyone makes time for you, and that it's a different thing when you actually move over here, 'cause everyone just kinda disappears. I didn't get that help, or I didn't feel that hospitality that I got when I was here on holiday, I just felt very, very much alone. And I had no friends, 'cause when I was here [on holiday] I was here with my family, and 'cause I wasn't studying here [i.e. at school or university] I didn't make any friends either. So I was just really really alone (Theodora, 28, GC).

Angelo experienced a similar 'shock' when he returned to Cyprus, but he shows a greater awareness of the reasons for the difference ('I came as an adult, not as a child') and even suggests that the lack of a warm family welcome was a good thing as it acted as a reality check:

The most exciting thing for me was to see all my family. But none of them showed any interest, and... that ... was a really big shock; to me it was so different from my experiences as a child, which I think I was clinging to, as a means of making my stay here a rationalised thing, the decision to move to Cyprus. So that was what changed: I came as an adult, not as a child, which

Over in Greece, Rebecca, who had relocated from Germany, experienced a different reaction because she had gone back to her father's village, where she was made to feel she had to 'behave' in a different way – as her father's daughter, and speaking Greek.

Because I came out of Germany where I lived a normal teenager life, in a normal environment as far as I was concerned, into a little village where rules and regulations... you know, you're on a show when you walk through the village, and all that stuff... For me it was like 'what do they want from my life?' And the other thing I remember, you might call it cultural, was this idea that as soon as I was here, as soon as I moved here ... all of a sudden there was this expectation: 'Now you have to speak and understand Greek', because you have to show off as the daughter of a Greek man that you can be Greek too... I've felt this pressure all the time (Rebecca, 41, GG).

The final extract that we include in this subsection widens the discussion from relatives and friends to a general comparison between 'life on holiday' and the everyday reality of living in urban Greece. It brings out the contrast between holiday visits to the beaches and islands, and the frustrations and annoyances of living in Athens.

I never had a bad experience being here [on holiday]. So I wasn't afraid when Spiro [her husband] said, let's get up and move. I said: 'OK, how bad can it possibly be?' [laughs] It was harder big c.529 it poliday]. So I wasn't afraid

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the other hand many of them also related how they were raised within a tight Greek or Greek Cypriot community with little interaction with other ethnic or migrant groups, or even with the host society outside of school. Coming from countries with a long-standing immigration history and a (sort of) multicultural social model (except in Germany where Greek migrants were seen as guestworkers or low-class restaurateurs), their memories of an 'authentic' Greece or Cyprus were often challenged by a reality of large-scale recent immigration – Greece primarily from Albania; in Cyprus from a diverse mix of East European (Russia, Ukraine, Poland) and Asian countries (Sri Lanka, the Philippines). Here are some reactions from our participants:

We too developed xenophobia, we Greeks changed too, we have become more suspicious... It is simply that Greece was not prepared economically and socially to put up with this [immigration]... The Germans were ready when they took this step to bring in foreigners. Greece was not ready and consequently people have changed... a sort of sordidness has been brought forth (Martha, 30, GG).

In Cyprus it has changed quite a lot from a country of out-migration, like our parents who moved to England; now it has lots of new immigrants... I like it, I like it. Um, who am I to say for people not to come into the country – I'm for everyone to live where they want, and I think multicultural places make it very, erm... if it weren't for the crime... 'cause Cypriot people aren't criminals... on the whole there's no crime in Cyprus, and it's now where all the different cultures are coming in, it's becoming more and more... it's gonna spoil it a little bit here (Angela, 41, GC).

The second quote above perfectly illustrates an ambiguity which runs through many of the interviewees' reactions to immigration: they understood its inevitability as part of globalisation and development, they were able to make historical connections of sorts to earlier

phases of migration to Germany, the UK or North America, they generally welcomed the advent of a multicultural society, but they had reservations – about the scale of recent immigration, about the country's unpreparedness for it, about high rates of 'illegality', about cultural difference, and about possible links to crime. Note how Angela's account elides from multiculturalism to crime. At the same time, some participants were very critical of Greeks' and Cypriots' racist attitudes towards immigrants from poor countries. Given that two of the authors have already discussed some of these issues with reference to earlier work on second-generation Greek-Americans (Christou and King 2006), we present here some more of the Cypriot material.

Nicholas was particularly enthused by the 'new multiculturalism' of Nicosia:

Nicosia for me is like, the only place [in Cyprus] where you can go and feel multicultural, especially on Sunday, you know, you can walk by and see Bangladeshis playing cricket in the park – or they could be Sri Lankans, I don't know... You see they have picnics, festivals and concerts. Like last Sunday I went to the Nepalese New Year celebrations, that was great, I didn't realise there were so many Nepalese in Nicosia... I mean, for me that was fantastic... A lot of Chinese, we never had so many Chinese, they're not so much... er... they're kind of, not as, er, they don't interact with society in the same way as the other cultures do. Now we get a lot of Russians... especially down in Limassol ... you get a lot more English in Paphos [...] But for me, I like the idea of it being multicultural, I do (Nicholas, 31, GC).

Marc on the other hand denied Cyprus was truly multicultural and focused more on trying to 'explain' Cypriots' racism towards foreigners as unintentional and based on ignorance rather than malice:

... and from a country that's been ethnically cleansed 35 years ago [referring to the Turkish partition of the

big factor... it does not make economic sense to live here any more... [Nowadays] Greece is very, very expensive – more expensive than the States and more expensive than most European countries... So getting back to when I lived here in the 70s, you can't imagine how cheap it was. We used to pay the maid \$5 a day for an entire day, so you could live really well. I mean, going out to eat was an everyday occurrence because it was so cheap... and the cost of living was just so low... It's totally changed now. It's totally the reverse...

From a different age-group, Theodora and Nicholas articulated a similar critique of the materialism and rising cost of living in Cyprus in recent years, again making the historical comparison with the years of their childhood visits.

It's all about how you look over here, it's so ... materialistic, and I don't know how they can do it, because it's so fuckin' expensive as well, because coming here on holiday I thought Cyprus was so much cheaper, but

to the beach, they have the mountains,
they can be safe, you know, as long as
you mix them with the right people.
And you do socialise more here,
although the sun can make you feel a
bit lazy, whereas in London... I was too

Conclusion

Taking Greece and (Greek) Cyprus as homeland countries, this paper has examined the discourses and memories of childhood visits paid to these homelands by second-generation Greeks growing up in Germany and the United States and Greek-Cypriots born and raised in Britain. This topic has been rarely explored in the literatures on the second generation, return migration, and transnationalism. Hence, very few comparative studies are available.

Return trips with parents are generally remembered in glowing terms, for reasons of climate, time spent by the sea, the warmth of family and especially cousins, and above all . Children were allowed to do things, go places, and stay up late, to a far greater extent than their parents would have permitted in the respective immigration countries. This can be explained by the generally 'safe' environment in Greece and Cyprus, and the surrounding safety-net of cousins and relatives who can be 'trusted' to look after the holidaying children, as well as the

London, Liverpool, Stuttgart or the Greek districts of New York. Levitt (2009) refers to this holding on to old values from the homeland by migrants abroad as the 'ossification effect', seeing it as a spatio-temporal disjuncture between emigrants' and non-migrants' actual and metaphorical journeys. This effect points up the contradictions and in-between positionalities of second-generationers both when they visit and when they relocate long-term; the positionalities and relationships can fundamentally change between these two types of return encounter. As Carling (2008) emphasises, relationships with non-migrants, both those who are positioned within transnational social fields, and those who are not, are all part of the 'human dynamics of migrant transnationalism', within which the second generation, and their visits home, are an under-researched component.

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