

# Collective Memory, Social Representations of Intercommunal Relations, and Conflict Transformation in Divided Cyprus

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The paper discusses the main findings of a line of research that explored the social representations of the Cyprus issue and its history as well as intercommunal relations by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in the divided country of Cyprus. It focuses on the role of official historical narratives and their relation to social representations of intercommunal relations in Cyprus as manifested in oral history accounts of former inhabitants of mixed villages. Such inhabitants have living memories of intercommunal habitation before the war of 1974 and the geographical division of Cyprus by the Turkish army that year. These research findings are framed in the context of emerging interdisciplinary theoretical discussions between historians and social psychologists on the links between oral history accounts and collective memory in postconflict societies and their role in conflict transformation through intergroup contact and historical dialogue.

*Keywords:* social representations, collective remembering, Cyprus, oral history

Conflict and memory are inextricably intertwined. Conflict, either at the interpersonal or intergroup level, implies a clash of perspectives, ideas, and values, and its escalation often leads to physical or material damage. Such consequences are often traumatic and leave their scars; they can lead to wars, human losses, displacements, missing or larger scale ethnic cleansing, or genocide. Thus, it is expected in such emotionally loaded circumstances that the collective memory of the conflict itself will be divergent for the conflicting groups, victims, and victimizers in a way that it is likely to functionally regulate an antagonistic, zero-sum thinking between the parties (Bar-Tal, 2014; Paez & Liu, 2011). Collective memory of conflict shapes the perspectives of individuals and groups in a way that symbolic and realistic threats are exacerbated

(Stephan & Stephan, 1985), sustaining prejudice and distrust. This mutually reinforcing relationship between conflict and collective memory is one of the major components of intractable conflicts.

The collective and shared nature of societal beliefs about the conflict in conflicting societies suffering from intractable conflicts meant that some researchers (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2014) discussed collective memory as social representations (Moscovici, 1961/2008). However, as I argue in this paper, such analyses often fail to capture the internal dynamics of change of such collective memories or social representations as they give a homogeneous picture of representations within the conflicting societies sustaining a reified and essentialist notion of group or culture (Psaltis, 2012a, 2012b). This results in an inability to theorize continuity and change in postconflict societies as well as a weakness in understanding how individuals make sense of collective remembering or autobiographical memory that relates to the conflict (Wagoner, 2014).

## From Intractability to Conflict Transformation

The term *intractable* conflict is too static, conveying the meaning of difficult to disentangle; thus, it can become unproductive when thinking about conflict transformation. Change is often the result of conflict itself, especially if conflict takes the form of a sociocognitive conflict of perspectives and constructive dialogue (Psaltis & Zapiti, 2014) and not the destructive forms we are accustomed to in the case of civil or interstate wars and genocides. The similar term *protracted* (which suggests more openness to potential change) better captures “frozen” conflicts, characterized by the absence of formal conflict resolution and a history of failed attempts at resolving the problem. The recent talk of *conflict transformation* is perhaps the more dynamic term in the literature of international relations that indeed emphasizes the fact that conflict undergoes various changes in form and structure; conflict resolution and conflict transformation are not antithetical (Constantinou, 2015). Conflict transformation is often presented as a stepping stone to resolution, especially in the case of protracted

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conflicts (Galtung, 2000). Given that conflict transformation concerns an effort at transforming the systems, structures, and relationships that give rise to violence and injustice, it goes without saying that a better understanding and reflection on the role of collective memory and its function in conflict can enhance the ability of societies to engage in conflict transformation.

Below, I frame the paper as a continuation of an emerging dialogue between historians and social psychologists drawing on empirical and theoretical insights from contributions made in the field of oral history. I start with a short presentation of the Cyprus issue as a protracted conflict and the way collective memory is shaped in this context. Then, I move to some empirical findings from a large-scale representative survey from both communities exploring the relationship between adherence to the official narrative of each community and trust, prejudice, and various types of threats in a way that heterogeneity within each of the conflicting communities in Cyprus is brought to the surface. The role of intergroup contact (Allport, 1954) and microgenetic processes of change in social representations (Psaltis, 2015) is crucial in forming the various positions in the representational field, producing heterogeneity within each community. Finally, I present the results of a qualitative analysis of oral history accounts from inhabitants of formerly mixed villages and discuss the interlinkage among collective memory, positioning, oral histories, and conflict transformation.

### Bridging Social Psychology and Oral History

The study of collective memory was one of the topics flagged as themes of common interest for social psychologists and historians (Wagoner, 2014). Oral history, as a branch of the discipline of history, stands in the privileged position to engage the debates on collective memory and conflict (Psaltis, Cabrera, et al., 2014) because of its position at the interface of the individual and society in the nexus of the past, present, and future. There is a lot to be gained from the interdisciplinary study of social, collective, or cultural memory on the one hand and oral history studies on the other because collective memory studies, up until recently, largely failed to engage directly with oral history. Hamilton and Shopes (2008) argued that this is due to different historiographical traditions.<sup>1</sup>

A social representations approach to oral history accounts can shed light on a specific problem that plagues the field of oral history. This is how an oral history account or testimony of autobiographical nature relates to collective memory (Psaltis, Beydola, Fillippou, & Vrachimis, 2014). This is because social representations theory has a unique way of resolving the tension between the individual and collective by avoiding both the traps of the reification of the notion of culture (Psaltis, 2012b) on the one side and methodological individualism of the individual-collective antinomy on the other.

For Serge Moscovici, a social representation is

a system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function: first to establish an order which will enable individuals to orient themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly, to enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects

of their world and their individual and group history (Moscovici, 1973, p. xii).

Social representations are organizing principles, acting as a social metasystem that organizes the thinking of the person similar to what Bartlett called “schemata.” Bartlett (1932) had a project to create a distinctively social and cultural approach to remembering and has been a great influence in the formation of Moscovici’s theory (Wagoner, 2014). Unfortunately, recent advances in the theory of oral history make no reference to either the work of Bartlett or Moscovici.

For the present analysis, the original analytical distinction made by Halbwachs (1950/1980) between historical memory and autobiographical memory is germane because the latter is premised on the lived experience of an individual (even if this is social in its nature) whereas the former refers to historical events, individuals, and places existing before the specific lifetime of an individual and is often supported institutionally by an educational system, memorials, and rituals of a group or nation-state because it is considered important for the national interest.

I argue that the productive tension between the two could be a theoretically interesting aspect of discussions about the collective memory of conflict. As underlined by Hamilton and Shopes (2008), the relationship between the individual who does the remembering and the memory of the group has never been successfully resolved. The effort to resolve this tension makes the social representations approach a very rich source for deepening the theory of oral history and for enriching the dialogue between the disciplines of history and social psychology that has recently been reinvigorated.

As clearly shown in the well-known work of the oral historian Passerini (1979), oral history accounts are not static recollections of the past but memories reworked in the context of the respondent’s own experience and politics. Thus, oral history narratives are dialogical, discursive, relational, and creative. This realization is reflected in the recent shift in oral history studies from the “fact-finding” to the analytical paradigm (Abrams, 2010) or, in other words, the move beyond “what” people remember or the content of the interviews to “why” they remember (i.e., the meaning of their recollections; Hamilton & Shopes, 2008).

A social representations framework can extend the questions to the present and future through a focus on transformation and stability. From a social representations perspective, it is not change per se that needs to be understood, but the relations between change and stability. In this way a better understanding of resistance to change and the transformation of conflict can be attained.

### Memory in Postconflict and Divided Cyprus

The case of Cyprus has been described as one of protracted conflict. Despite various attempts through bicomunal talks and various initiatives from the United Nations and international actors

<sup>1</sup> Oral history emerged as a widespread practice in relation to the democratization of history in the 1960s, fuelled by decolonization and the feminist and civil rights movements. In contrast, the “memory turn” in scholarship usually cites as its catalysts the Jewish holocaust memory industry and 20th-century wars often associated with “trauma.” In addition, memory scholarship has been largely concerned with memory that is sustained beyond the individual life span, most often in memorials, monuments, places, or rituals.

to facilitate negotiations, the Cyprus issue is still unresolved. What is the Cyprus issue as it will become clear in the following is contested itself within and between the two communities (i.e., Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) as well as Turkey and Greece, who have been involved in the problem from the beginning.

The status quo on the island today is that of division, from a U.N.-patrolled buffer zone, of the divided country. The north (37% of the island) is occupied by 30,000–40,000 Turkish military troops who invaded Cyprus in 1974 after a short-lived coup engineered by the junta in Greece that aimed at union (*enosis*) of Cyprus with Greece. The Turkish Cypriot leadership and Turkey in 1983 declared an independent state that is recognized until today only by Turkey and condemned by the international community and U.N. resolutions. The rest of Cyprus is controlled by the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus and governed by Greek Cypriots. The whole of Cyprus joined the European Union (EU) in 2004, but the *acquis communautaire* is suspended in the north pending a solution of the Cyprus problem. Negotiations are currently underway between negotiators and the two leaders of the two communities to reach a comprehensive settlement on the basis of a bizonal, bicomunal federation after a failed attempt in 2004. The dossiers under discussion concern (a) Governance and Power Sharing, (b) Property, (c) Territory, (d) Economic Affairs, (e) EU Affairs, and (f) Security and Guarantees.

### Divided Collective Memory in Cyprus

In Cyprus, where two communities with distinct linguistic and religious backgrounds have been geographically divided across ethnic lines for almost half a century, different social representations have evolved in each community, especially regarding the Cyprus problem and its history. Such narratives are politically manipulated by various political elites and the state administration for the corresponding “national collective struggles” in each community. The systematic use of rituals, national symbols (see Psaltis et al., 2014a), memorials, commemorations, national struggle museums, and politically driven manipulation of the media and the educational system all contributed to the creation of different social representations of the past. The teaching of history in public schools reflected a specific official master narrative in both communities (Erhürman, 2014; Makriyianni, 2006; Makriyianni, Psaltis, & Latif, 2011; Papadakis, 2008; Psaltis, 2012a) that largely contributes, as shown in the following, to prejudice and distrust toward members of the other community when uncritically internalized by the individual.

According to Papadakis (2008), the central nationalistic historical narrative in the Greek Cypriot (henceforth GC) textbooks is one that begins with the arrival of Greeks (14th century BC) in Cyprus, which leads to its Hellenization in which the moral center is Greeks (of Cyprus) and the major enemy is Turks. The plot concerns a struggle for survival by Cypriot Hellenism against foreign conquerors and the tragic end is the “Barbaric Turkish Invasion” and occupation of 37% of Cyprus.

The corresponding Turkish Cypriot (henceforth TC) narrative is<sup>2</sup> one that begins with the arrival of Turks in Cyprus (in 1571 AD) in which the moral self is Turks (of Cyprus) and the major enemy is Rums (GCs). The plot concerns a struggle for survival by the Turks of Cyprus against GC domination. The war of 1974

marks a happy ending with the “Happy peace operation” by Turkey in Cyprus, which saved TCs from a pending union of Cyprus with Greece.

Such official narratives clearly promote a particular form of collective remembering of victimization by others. As later shown, adherence to the official narratives is not only predictive of threats (of realistic and symbolic form) but through these threats prejudice is increased and further distrust is created between the two communities in Cyprus, which is eventually reflected in a reduced wish to coexist with the other community in the future. Although the ontogenesis of these narratives is beyond the scope of this paper (but see Psaltis, 2015), it is worth noting that a feeling of past victimization is formed early on. For example, GC elementary school students aged 9–10 years were asked to write a short “History” of their homeland (see Makriyianni, 2006, p. 240). One child wrote the following:

My homeland is Cyprus. Cyprus is 8000 years old. Its capital is Nicosia. The mother homeland is Greece and we are Greek-Cypriots. In 1974 there was an invasion by the Turks and we were conquered. Some people are now refugees and they long for their villages (girl, 4th grader).

A shorter narrative written by a boy with no reference to Greece reads like this:

My homeland is Cyprus. Various people came and conquered us. The last enemies were the Turks. They made war against us and took half of Cyprus (boy, 4th grader).

The presence or absence of references to Greece is not accidental and it relates to an emerging ideological differentiation within the GC community. The moral center in this age group varies between the national identification as a Cypriot, GC, and Greek, with most children in this age group going for an identification as “Cypriot” and “Greek Cypriot” (see Psaltis, 2015). Such a variety of positions gradually attains symbolic value by regulating relations between the two communities in Cyprus and indeed shows that there are varying positions in the representational field of the Cyprus problem.

### Beyond the Reification of Culture and the Community

Social representations theory avoids the pitfall of the reification of the notion of culture or community (Psaltis, 2012b). In fact, the social representations framework stands in a privileged position to bring to the surface ideological contestation and positions of resistance to the official narratives that directly relate to variations of national identification and intergroup contact between the members of the two communities.

Therefore, a germane question here is “which is the community?” or “who is included in the community and who is not?”. The ethical horizon of inclusion and exclusion of a community can be

<sup>2</sup> In 2004, the new history books for the history of Cyprus, written by the new elected leadership of Mehmet Ali Talat, offered an alternative narrative that challenged the separatist and nationalistic narrative that was in place up to that point (see Papadakis, 2008, for an analysis of these short-lived books). However, in 2010 with the election of a new nationalist administration, these textbooks were replaced by new ones that reverted to the old nationalist narrative described in the text above (see Makriyianni, Psaltis, & Latif, 2011, for more on this).

a contested issue itself (see Gillespie, Howarth, & Cornish, 2012). Positions within each community relate to varying meanings of the Cyprus problem in the past; paint the quality of relating with the other in varying emotions and feelings of threat, trust, or distrust in the present; and finally anticipate possible futures or solutions to the Cyprus problem (see Psaltis, 2012b).

Thus, it is expected that the autobiographical memory of a specific person and their remembering of life events relating to the official narratives will be taking a stance explicitly or implicitly in relation to the official master narrative. This is a result of the fact that master narratives have aspirations of becoming hegemonic social representations colonizing the meaning of autobiographical memory. Still, counterhegemonic or alternative narratives or representations could be seen as resistance to the domination of the official historical narrative, and autobiographical memory could also be a manifestation of such a counterhegemonic narrative. Master narratives can actually be discussed as forming part of the figurative nucleus of social representations of the past and as organizing principles of the quality of intergroup relations and contact between TCs and GCs (see Psaltis, 2012a). Alternative representations can be seen by the psychological subject as held by the other community or a different ideological position within the community and as such could be seen as part of the peripheral elements of a social representation. To the extent that the subject is familiar with these narratives but does not adhere to them, they could even be seen as stabilizing the core of the master narrative by functioning as “straw men” (Gillespie, 2008, 2015; Psaltis, 2012b) of a complex representation held by others. However, it is also possible for such peripheral elements to penetrate to the core, which signals a real change in the representation because master narratives become reflected upon and criticized whereas elements of the alternative representation are taken on board and recognized. As shown in the following, intergroup contact is crucial in this conflict transformative moment. Both the recollection of past intergroup contact between the two communities and present day contact with members of the other community are also expected to be regulated by these organizing principles, acting as normative regulators that control, verify, and direct cognitive operations in the past-present-future transition. Such heterogeneity of identity positions were identified in a large-scale questionnaire survey with a representative sample from both communities in Cyprus (Psaltis, 2012a).

### Identity Positions in the Representational Field of the Cyprus Issue

As part of a research project exploring intergroup dynamics in Cyprus and representations of the past, we had the chance to explore the representations of the Cyprus issue in adults aged 18 years and older in relation to the role of intergroup contact between GCs and TCs and various variables that tap the quality of intercommunal relations in Cyprus. This was a large-scale questionnaire survey with a representative sample from both communities ( $N = 800$  GCs and  $N = 853$  TCs) done in 2006, and it was made possible by the partial lifting of travel restrictions across the U.N. buffer zone on April 23, 2003. The questionnaire particularly explored the amount and the quality of contact between members of the two communities, national identification, trust, forgiveness, threats (realistic, symbolic, distinctiveness threat), intergroup anx-

ity, perspective taking, intergroup salience, and attitudes toward the other community (see Psaltis, 2012a for details).

Attitude toward “motherlands” (Turkey and Greece) and wish for the use of their symbols (flag, national anthem) by the corresponding community was labeled as *Helleno/Turco centrism*. On the contrary, *Cypriocentrism* (Peristianis, 1995) was operationalized as the wish for use of Cypriot national symbols and civic identity and feelings of detachment from motherlands. Furthermore, there were questions that explored the representations of the history of the Cyprus problem and in particular interpretation of the events of intercommunal strife in 1963–1964, the nature of the Cyprus problem and its causes and views concerning organizations such as the GC EOKA (“National Organization of Cypriot Fighters”) and the TC TMT (“Turkish Resistance Organization”) that fought for *enosis* (union with Greece) and *taksim* (partition), respectively. Finally, the questionnaire included questions that tried to tap the level of acceptance of various possible solutions to the Cyprus issue (Federation, Unitary State of Consociationalism as in 1960, Retaining the Status Quo, Two-States Solution).

An analysis of this set of data from a social representations perspective (see Psaltis, 2012a) made clear that different representations of the Cyprus issue have indeed evolved between the two communities as they have been geographically divided across ethnic lines for almost half a century. However, it is important to note that this research identified three different identity positions within each community: the proreconciliation, the communitarian, and the ethnonationalist position. From the results, it appeared that in both communities, people in the proreconciliation clusters are people who show a very positive orientation toward members of the other community on a series of variables (trust, contact, forgiveness) and who also score lower on perceived threats and intergroup anxiety. In fact, the proreconciliation clusters in the two communities are almost identical in the profile of their views expressing peace activists and bicomunal nongovernmental organizations that advance a social representations project (see Bauer & Gaskell, 2008) of joint collective action for reunification of Cyprus. These individuals covered the political spectrum from proreconciliation left to liberal cosmopolitan right, although the majority came from leftist parties. The stronger Cypriocentric views of this position suggested that the aim was to form a superordinate community of Cypriots that includes GCs and TCs, a solidarity formed on either a basis of cultural similarity between the two communities or a civic form of constitutional patriotism.

The communitarian position in each community was described by increased attachment to the ethnonational symbols (flag, national anthem of motherlands) and was related to high levels of perceived realistic and distinctiveness threats as well as lower levels of trust and contact with the other community. In the two communities, these positions share structural similarities because they represent a form of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995), in which the ethical horizon of the concern of participants is constrained to the limits of their own community fed by the mundane reality of everyday living in two geographically separated communities for decades. This position is politically related to parties of the center—traditionally hardline on the Cyprus issue and a patriotic left in the GC community.

Lastly, the ethnonationalism position was expressed in the two communities with ideas of Greek and Turkish ethnonationalism, respectively, forming a mirror image of each other in which the

ethical horizon is a larger ethnic community that includes the mainland nationals but excludes the other community in Cyprus, as suggested by the low levels of intercommunal contact, trust, and forgiveness and high levels of prejudice and threats of this position. This position is politically related to the conservative right wing and extreme right wing parties.

Importantly for the present discussion, very clear links emerged between these three positions and the representations of history. The participants were asked to answer three questions relating to the history of the Cyprus issue. All three questions gave three options to the participants: the one that aligned with the official narrative of their group (option a in Table 1), one that resisted the official version (usually aligned with left political orientation, option b in Table 1), and one that represented a synthesis or partial acceptance of the two positions (option c in Table 1). These options were the result of focus group discussions around these issues and interviews with historians.

The beliefs representing the official master narrative found support from all three positions and they were indeed the dominant position in both communities, but they drew their strength from the ethnonationalist position in the TC community and the ethnonationalist and communitarian position in the GC community (see Table 2). On the contrary, the critical view apportioning blame to extremists from both communities was supported mostly by the proreconciliation position in both communities.

On the question regarding their view of the paramilitary organizations, there were even greater differences among the three positions. On the whole, the vast majority of the ethnonationalist position agreed to a view of the organization of their own community as a legitimate resistance organization against the domination of the GCs in the case of TCs and against the domination of the British in the case of GCs.

Finally, regarding the question on the attribution of blame for the creation of the Cyprus issue, most GCs attributed blame to Turkish expansionism. However, differentiation was again clear among the three positions. Whereas in the proreconciliation position the sample was evenly distributed among all three possible answers, in the communitarian and even more in the ethnonationalist position the adherence to the official stance was overwhelming. In the TC community, the sample was generally divided among the three answers, which showed less attribution of blame to Greece for the problem compared with the corresponding attribution of blame to Turkey by GCs, and there was not significant differentiation among the three positions within the community on

this question concerning Greece. This is probably due to the admittedly lower involvement today of Greece in the Cyprus issue and their usual position that Greece “supports whatever the GCs decide” in their efforts to solve the Cyprus issue.

### Mixed Villages in Cyprus and Oral History Accounts: Past, Present, and Future

The findings reported earlier concerned a representative sample from both communities. As a result, it included older individuals with memories of living with the other community and younger ones who mostly formed their representations of the other community through processes of transgenerational transmission of collective trauma.

In search for individuals who actually had living memories of the war in 1974, intercommunal strife in 1963–1964, and relationships with members from the other community, we turned our attention to interviewing inhabitants of formerly mixed villages in Cyprus and collecting oral history accounts of their past life in the village (Lytra & Psaltis, 2011). From this research, it became clear that any attempt to remember aspects of common life in the mixed villages is done through the lens of the present, constrained by the master narratives.

Major and significant differences were revealed in the manner in which GCs and TCs remember life in mixed villages. Whereas most GCs remembered life with TCs as more positive, cooperative, and pleasant, TCs were more ambivalent and most remembered life as more negative and less pleasant; TCs also remembered significantly fewer contacts and close relationships between the two communities compared with GCs. An exception to this tendency of GCs to overemphasize contact with TCs was the contact involving economic exchanges such as visiting shops and coffee shops, where they agreed with most TCs that there was not much of that kind of contact happening in the villages (see Table 3).

These results suggest the great extent to which remembering the quality of relationships and intergroup contacts in the village largely aligns with GC and TC official narratives, respectively.

In particular, TC nationalism claimed total autonomy, ethnoreligious homogeneity, and geographical separation (see Canefe, 2002) from GCs. Therefore, the traditional national master narratives in the TC side allow no room for the idea of GCs and TCs living together again in mixed areas. On the contrary, on the GC side the official narrative has actively promoted the idealization of

Table 1  
*Questions Relating to Representations of the History of the Cyprus Issue*

Do you believe that the events that took place in the period 1963–1964 were:	(a) Aggression of GCs against TCs ( <i>for TCs</i> )	(b) A conflict between extremists from both communities ( <i>for TCs</i> )	(c) Both
	(a) A rebellion of TCs against the Republic of Cyprus ( <i>for GCs</i> )	(b) A conflict between extremists from both communities ( <i>for GCs</i> )	
Do you believe that TMT ( <i>for TCs</i> )/EOKA ( <i>for GCs</i> ) was:	(a) A resistance organization that fought against EOKA ( <i>for TCs</i> )	(b) A nationalist organization that fought against TCs who were against <i>taksim</i> ( <i>for TCs</i> )	(c) Both
	(a) A liberation-anticolonization organization ( <i>for GCs</i> )	(b) A nationalist organization that fought the British, TCs and GC leftists ( <i>for GCs</i> )	
Do you believe that Cyprus problem resulted from:	(a) Greek expansionism- <i>megali idea</i> ( <i>for TCs</i> )	(b) The conflict of Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus ( <i>for TCs</i> ).	(c) Both
	(a) Turkish expansionism ( <i>for GCs</i> )	(b) The conflict of Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus ( <i>for GCs</i> )	

Table 2

*Distribution (%) of the Interpretations of the Events of 1963–1964 Within and Across Communities*

Interpretation of event	TCs			GCs		
	Proreconciliation	Communitarianism	Ethnonationalism	Proreconciliation	Communitarianism	Ethnonationalism
A conflict between extremists from both communities (answered by both GCs and TCs) [critical position for both GCs and TCs]		<u>11.8</u>			<u>24.0</u>	
Aggression of GCs against TCs (answered by TCs) [official position of TCs]	17.9	<u>12.9</u>	7.3	35.1	<u>20.2</u>	16.2
A rebellion of TCs against the Republic of Cyprus (answered by GCs) [official position of GCs]						
Both (answered by both GCs and TCs)	41.1	<u>53.0</u>	56.5	36.9	<u>38.8</u>	57.4
No response—do not know	35.7	<u>27.2</u>	34.5	18.1	<u>22.3</u>	17.6
Total %	5.3	<u>4.7</u>	1.7	9.9	<u>12.9</u>	8.8
		6.9			18.7	
		100			100	

*Note.* Underlined percentages refer to the percentage of participants that selected the specific interpretation of the historical event not broken down in relation to their ideological position.

the past and of past life in the villages before dislocation and have encouraged the adherence to a conviction of return to what once was. This idealization of the past encompasses to a certain degree the idealization of life together with TCs because the declared aim of the GC side after 1974 is reunification of Cyprus and withdrawal of Turkish troops from the island. The dominant GC narrative in this context is expressed with arguments such as the following: “We have lived peacefully with TCs in the past and we can do it again; the problem is not TCs but Turks and their occupation.”

The rationale that made possible the positioning of remembered intercommunal relations in the broader official narratives of their

communities became clearer when we had the chance to collect oral history accounts of their former life in mixed villages and their attributions for the disruption of such relationships.

### The Oral History Project on Representations of Past-Present and Future

As part of the same mixed villages project, oral history accounts of former inhabitants from both communities from a few mixed villages were selected as case studies (for details for the procedure and detailed discussion, see Psaltis, Beydola, et al., 2014).

Table 3

*Percentages of GC and TC Participants' Responses to Items Regarding the Frequency of Their Socializing With Members of the Outgroup in Their Villages*

Question	GC or TC	Never (%)	Rarely (%)	Occasionally (%)	Often (%)	Very often (%)	Mean (range 1–5)
In your village, how often did you greet people who were outgroup members (e.g., when you saw them in the street)?	GC	3.2	4.2	4.8	18.8	68.9	4.46
	TC	31.3	23.7	19.7	16.1	8.6	2.47
How often did you chat to people who were outgroup members in your village?	GC	4.6	4.2	5.1	19.5	66.1	4.39
	TC	32.5	25.1	21.2	13.8	6.7	2.37
How often did you do something social together with your outgroup member covillagers (e.g., weddings, parties, going out, name days, funerals)?	GC	12.9	10.5	22.0	22.5	30.8	3.48
	TC	52.0	20.7	14.9	8.0	4.0	1.91
How often did you visit outgroup members' shops in the village?	GC	52.6	9.4	10.4	12.4	10.6	2.15
	TC	38.7	27.7	19.4	9.2	4.8	2.13
How often did you visit outgroup members' coffee shops in the village?	GC	54.3	8.8	9.7	10.3	13.6	2.17
	TC	61.7	16.0	11.5	6.6	3.5	1.73

*Note.* The original questionnaire items presented to GC participants made reference to “Turkish Cypriots” whereas the questionnaire items presented to TC participants made reference to “Greek Cypriots” wherever “outgroup members” are mentioned in this table. GC = Greek Cypriots; TC = Turkish Cypriots.

The analysis of the oral history accounts given by the participants revealed that most of the GCs would blame the British and the Turks along with TMT (often all seen as part of a bigger North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] plot) for the division of Cyprus. They would also stress the consequences of the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkey, often with intense emotions. For most GCs the Cyprus issue began in 1974 with the Turkish invasion and they would have ready various examples of good intercommunal relations in the village before 1974. On the contrary, most TCs view EOKA and the 1955–1959 struggle for *enosis* (union with Greece) as the root of the problem and as a turning point in breaking up good intercommunal relations. They also usually blame GCs for discriminating against them, in the period from 1960–1974, through governmental policies trying to overpower them and financial embargoes and trade (e.g., trying to buy their properties and small enterprises) with the help of the church, and they even accuse some GC paramilitary groups of plotting ethnic cleansing. Most TCs consider that they were saved by Turkey in 1974. Such narratives are largely aligned with the official narratives of their respective communities.

However, at the same time there is also a critical discourse in both communities traditionally affiliated with the left that exhibits resistance to the official narratives of their communities and often uses arguments of the official discourse of the other community to describe the roots of the problem and thus challenge their own official discourse.

For example, a 63-year-old GC man typical of a proreconciliation position said that his family was the first communist family in the village. He had TC friends in the past, and after the opening of the checkpoints he often visits his old friends and now has also made new ones; he even made friends with a person who came from Turkey. He feels great attachment to his occupied village; it is for him “the capital of the world.” Remembering the past, he notes that TCs held lower paid jobs than GCs and he criticized the then government of the Republic of Cyprus for discriminating against TCs. He said “I remember that in 1966–67, the roads were not paved; in our village at some point they paved all the roads except for the Turkish neighborhood.” Still, he was also critical of the way that civilian GCs during 1974 were captured and executed by the Turkish army and TCs and the desecration of Christian churches and cemeteries in the occupied north. He remembers much intergroup contact in the village and makes specific reference of visits to shops and coffee shops of the other community by members of both communities. He also discussed in detail specific events of intercommunal strife in the village, and he sees the start of the EOKA struggle as a turning point in the disruption of good intercommunal relationships. Once a solution is found, he would like to return and live back in his village. He also mentioned at some point that he had close relatives from his wife’s side killed in 1974. The critical discourse here is challenging the hegemonic GC view of the “TC rebellion of 1963,” blaming EOKA and TMT as nationalist organizations who disrupted the “very good” relationships in the village. Intercommunal strife is not hidden or repressed in the narrative in this account because it is seen as something that we need to know about to avoid making the same mistakes again.

Again, there were TC oral history accounts that resisted the official TC narrative by avoiding the homogenization of the GC community and suggesting the existence of good or even exceptionally good and trustful social relationships with GCs. For ex-

ample, a TC female, aged 61 years, asked whether there were any incidents of intercommunal tensions in the village stated that

there were some small things happening. Like crossing through our land and damaging the crops, but I think this was not because of one being Greek or Turk but it was down to the person doing this being a bad person.

She also recounted an incident in 1974 in which a GC saved several TCs from being executed by GC extremists. She also mentioned that the GC-run government in 1968 reconstructed TC houses that were destroyed during the strife in 1963–1964 and invited the TCs to return to their properties. Finally, she also stated that her father had many GC friends and recounts a meeting with GC covillagers after the opening of checkpoints in 2003:

apparently I looked like my dad. They recognized me immediately. They said to me “what nice people were your mother and father, they did this to help us, they did that to help us, etc. . . .” Even one Rum said that he managed to build and finish his house because of my dad.

She also recounted a story in which GCs kept a safe entrusted to them by her father when he left the village in 1974 for 30 years unopened waiting for him to return and reclaim it. What was interesting in this specific individual is that when it came to taking up a position on a future solution of the Cyprus issue, she said that she would like a solution but one that the two communities could be separate. Such kind of disjunction or rupture between the relevance of past relationships and the political form of a future solution is probably a specific characteristic of TC inhabitants of formerly mixed villages. For many TCs, former inhabitants of mixed villages, good intercommunal relationships in the past would not often be seen as consequential for supporting a solution that entails population mixing, which makes sense considering the fact that the solution currently discussed on the negotiating table is one of a bicomunal federation with bizonality.

### Discussion: On the Interplay of Collective Memory and Oral History Testimonies in Postconflict Societies and Their Transformation

Most oral history accounts or testimonies will somehow be regulated by schemata or templates embedded in the master narratives (Wertsch, 1997) either because they tend to conform more or less strategically and consciously to such a structure or because they actively resist it in a representational project, in our case, of building a superordinate identity and future federal polity that entails power sharing by GCs and TCs. The ideas or “facts” occupying a central organizing role in the official historical narratives are particularly prone to contested interpretations within and across the conflicting sides; thus, they are more vulnerable to distortion in oral historical accounts.

Moscovici’s (1998) argument that it is possible to identify social representations based on belief and social representations based on knowledge is germane here as well as Piaget (1932) theorizing of relations of constraint and relations of cooperation (Psaltis, Duveen, & Peret-Clermont, 2009). The representations of the past that closely follow the official narrative manifested in oral history accounts are not only the result of conflict but also further support the conflict ethos in protracted conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2014). As we see from the case of Cyprus, they do not necessarily take the

content of victimization by the other community. For GCs, victimization comes from Turkey and not TCs because of the traumatic experience of 1974. Given the official policy of reunification of Cyprus and the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Cyprus, intercommunal relations in the past are idealized. Given that there is ample evidence that individuals who adhere to the official GC narrative today show increased levels of prejudice and distrust not only toward Turks but also toward TCs (Lytra & Psaltis, 2011; Psaltis, 2012a; Psaltis, Lytras, & Costache, 2011), the findings suggest an important pattern of cognitive polyphasia in many GCs. Most of the individuals of communitarian and ethnonationalist positions that state that they “do not have a problem with TCs” are the same individuals who avoid and stigmatize contact with TCs. This can also be seen as dissociation between past, present, and future and a performative contradiction among words, deeds, and feelings, which is very characteristic of a heteronomous morality in Piagetian terms, in which verbalism contradicts action. It is also a fine example of what Moscovici (1998) called social representations, for which the “kernel consists of beliefs which are generally more homogenous, affective, impermeable to experience or contradiction, and leave little scope for individual variations” (p. 226).

Thus, a major question that arises from a conflict transformation perspective concerns how such representations can be transformed into social representations, which Moscovici (1998) calls as founded on knowledge “which are more fluid, pragmatic, amenable to the proof of success or failure, and leave a certain latitude to language, experience, and even to the critical faculties of individuals” (p. 226). Research evidence from this same research projects suggests that a major route toward such a transformation is the promotion of good quality intergroup contact between the conflicting groups and historical dialogue (Psaltis, Gillespie, & Perret-Clermont, 2015).

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