REPRESENTATIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOSTALGIC MEMORIES: AN INTERGENERATIONAL COMPARATIVE STUDY INVOLVING NATIVE AND IMMIGRANT GREEKS

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Abstract: Nostalgia is defined as a reconstruction of important representational memories in the present. The present study aimed to investigate the process of objectification of nostalgic memories, and, also, the effects of gender, age/ generation, country of residence, and rate of occurrence of nostalgic memories. It draws on data from a sample of 226 female and male Greek natives and immigrants residing in Germany. The participants belonged to three different generations (young adults/children, adults/parents, elders/grandparents). They completed an open-ended questionnaire on nostalgic experiences, the associated reasons and elicited emotions. They also responded to the Southampton Nostalgia Scale measuring proneness to nostalgia. The results showed that nostalgic memories involved interactions with significant others, first-time experiences, places, periods of one's life, and important events that contributed to the person's identity formation (reasons). The elicited emotions were both positive and negative. Correspondence analysis showed that nostalgic memories were associated with participants' immigration status (native/ immigrant) and generation. Immigrants and elderly participants were more sensitive to the nostalgic process. The implications of the study are discussed in terms of social representations of nostalgic memories and their interaction with identity dimensions.

Key words: Generation effect, Immigration nostalgia, Social representations

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INTRODUCTION

Nostalgia has a dual status. On the one hand, it is a prevalent emotional state (Hepper, Ritchie, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2012), and, on the other, it is content of social memory (Madoglou, Gkinopoulos, Xanthopoulos, & Kalamaras, 2017). In the present study, nostalgia is conceptualized as a form of social thought, and one way to investigate it is through social representations (Moscovici, 1961/1976), social memory and identity theories (Laurens, 2002; Laurens, & Roussiau, 2002). Our claim is that the content of nostalgia concerns socio-representational memories re-constructed in the present and associated with the identity of social individuals.

Prior research showed that the generation in which participants belong to, influences the construction of representational autobiographical nostalgic memories. For example, older adults are more sensitive to the nostalgic process than younger ones are. The present study aimed to extend the previous findings and shed light upon the potential effect that immigration status (native/ immigrant) and generation have on nostalgia.

The conceptualization of nostalgia

The etymology of the ancient Greek word "nostalgia" derives from the combination of the word "nostos" and "algos". The specific state of nostalgia is best exemplified in the Homeric poem Odyssey. Odysseus, after years of wandering in places away from his homeland, was feeling a sharp feeling of pain (i.e., algos) and an intense desire to return (i.e., nostos) to his homeland, Ithaca. Nostalgia was what motivated Odysseus to stay alive and continue pursuing his return to Ithaca. The nature of the state of nostalgia has been researched in various scientific fields. Medical and biological interpretations gave way to philosophical, sociological, psychodynamic, psychological and socio-psychological approaches, that conceptualized the homecoming longing as an emotional longing for places and times, experiences and products of the past (see Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008; Sedikides, Wildschut, & Baden, 2004). Nostalgia is conceived of as a process that helps individuals borrow past events and moments in order to carve out a safe present and future (Pickering & Keightley, 2006).

Nostalgia affects mainly people's emotions and their need to preserve in their memory those facts of the past that help them achieve personal growth. Loveday (2014) suggested that nostalgic relations with the past can be based on real or imaginary situations experienced by the individual. These situations often refer to moments, pleasant or unpleasant, linked to family stories and vague beautified

memories, representing a period that the person wish they could return to. The exact content of such personal "myths" is not as important as its contribution to construct an esteem-enhancing social identity. This nostalgic re-evaluation of one's self serves to achieve a balance between the individual and the environment and increases the value of life experiences.

In the same line of thinking, Brown and Humphreys (2002) posit the importance of nostalgia in framing both one's individual and collective identity. In the case of individual identity, nostalgia offers the necessary material that distinguishes the individual from others. It provides distinctiveness and places the individual in a space and timeframe that creates security and a feeling of belonging, while it facilitates emotions such as pride to arise. In the case of collective identity, nostalgia calls for shared experiences, in a common internalized heritage, in common beliefs and values, in a collective feeling, which is particularly important in periods of change that generate anxiety. Brown and Humphreys (2002) also claim that nostalgia can in a way «refresh» individual narratives or stories and act as a prism through which people perceive and interpret present situations, reality or even threats. In this way, individual and group identities are shaped, via constructed personal narrations of situations that people feel nostalgic about. In other words, nostalgia plays an important role in shaping the dynamics of individual and group identities.

Nostalgia and emotions

Nostalgia is a process that is constantly present in the everyday life of individuals. It is frequently defined as a longing for the past associated with positive and beneficial or bittersweet emotions (Barrett et al., 2010; Hepper et al., 2012; Holak & Havlena, 1998; Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006). Research, nonetheless, has shown an association with negative emotions too (Sedikides et al., 2004). Furthermore, nostalgia is associated with the representation of the self as the protagonist as compared to significant others (family members, friends, companions), during significant life events (marriage, birth, vacations, holidays), with depictions of positive situations and places (lakes, sunsets). Nostalgia, basically, operates as an antidote to negative situations to support social relations and positive emotions (Sedikides et al., 2008; Wildschut et al., 2006). Through nostalgic narrations, significant others, as a social network, constitute a drastic source of attributing meaning to an individual's life (Hicks, Schlegel, & Kings, 2010; Lambert et al., 2010).

The benefits of nostalgia are well documented in the literature. Nostalgia works as a means to deal with unpleasant events and emotions such as loneliness, fear, threatening situations of social life, while at the same time it helps in the enhancement

of self-esteem and in the development of a positive self-image (Sedikides et al., 2004). Nostalgia instills inspiration and optimism, orientates and determines future actions, has a motivating power (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2016), and bolsters communication with others (Batcho, 2007). Zhou, Sedikides, Wildschut, and Gao (2008) showed the connection between negative emotional states and feeling of loneliness with the invigorating functioning of nostalgia. Loneliness decreases perceived social support and increases nostalgia, which in turn, reinforces social bonds amongst individuals. Nostalgia has also been found to help people attain a more meaningful life, a psychological well-being and equanimity, and protect from existential threat (Routledge, Arndt, Wildschut, Sedikides, & Hart, 2011; Routledge, Arndt, Sedikides, & Wildschut, 2008). In addition, it reduces attachment insecurity, grows trust in others, elevates the importance of relationship goals, fortifies collective identity, and buffers death anxiety (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). Nostalgia serves an existential function protecting mental, psychological and social health while at the same time increasing self-continuity (Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, & Arndt, 2015) by fostering social connectedness (Sedikides et al., 2016). The effect of nostalgia on self-continuity is mediated by social connectedness, that is, feelings of belongingness and acceptance by one's social group (Abakoumkin, Hepper, Wildschut, & Sedikides, 2019).

The relationship between nostalgia and immigration

One archetypical feature of nostalgia, as exemplified in Odysseus, is being away from homeland. This would suggest that feelings of belongingness and acceptance may differ among individuals depending on whether one lives in one's own country or in some other. Nostalgia has been associated to four different populations living away from home: immigrants or refugees, students living abroad or in another city, soldiers, and sailors (Cox, 1988; Jackson, 1986). In these populations, the relationship to one's representational memories changes because of objective social status changes (Breakwell, 2015). Research has shown a certain difficulty of such populations to adjust to the new environmental and social conditions as well as a desire to recall the past in order to minimize present negative emotions, pain, stress, and depression (Miyazawa, 2012; Volkan, 1999). Nostalgia by an immigrant gives them hope while at the same time benefiting their mental health and overall future perspective. The fluidity of identity in a new environment triggers within the individual mechanisms for retrieving positive emotions as well as reshaping identity and social cohesion. Immigrants express through nostalgia the deep emotional desire to return home. Immigrants may also selectively activate memories of their homeland, project them in the future and relate them to personal or romantic moments highlighting moments

of the past that contain close relationships with families and friends (Boym, 2001). However, in a productive form nostalgia can act as "an interpretive stance in which a person is aware of the element of discordance in her life" (Ritivoi, 2002, p. 165), enabling immigrants to adjust themselves to new environments. Past studies on immigration have not used nostalgia as a conceptual tool to understand immigrants' experiences in a host country (Miyazawa, 2012). The present study will contribute in this direction by exploring the content of Greek immigrants' nostalgic memories in Germany. Results will indicate the way in which immigrants represent nostalgia and restore their past based on their memories of homeland.

The relationship of nostalgia with gender and generation

Early research on gender effects on the content or frequency of nostalgic recollections has revealed interesting individual differences. The initial studies on nostalgia were dominated by the view that men feel more nostalgic than women, since they are traveling more, and their lives are constantly changing, resulting in triggering nostalgia as a coping mechanism to secure their identity (Davis, 1979). Other studies suggested that women are more prone to nostalgia than men (Holbrook, 1993), while Batcho (1995, 2007), Sherman and Newman (1978), and Wildschut et al. (2006) showed no gender differences. On the other hand, Baker and Kennedy (1994), and Havlena and Holak (1991) showed that men and women feel nostalgic about different things, and each gender conceives nostalgia differently.

Independently from gender, an important variable in the selection of past experiences one is nostalgic about is the generation one belongs to (Conway, 1997; Mannheim, 1928/1990; Μαντόγλου, 2010; Olick, 1999; Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997; Schuman & Scott, 1989). The special interests, needs and motives are differentiated depending on one's generation. The common socio-historical and cultural space, shared experiences and educational system, institutionalized or informal culture have an impact on the socially constructed content of autobiographical memories. In addition, the memories of the past are reconstructed in the present and some of them are displaced, according to a new perception of life conditions and the current identity needs (Stoyanova, Giannouli, & Gergov, 2017). As for generation groups, according to the theory of socio-emotional selectivity (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999), older people tend to conceive the remaining part of their lives as limited and for this reason their interests and goals shift from the future towards the past. They feel nostalgic about the beautiful moments that have passed and in this way their life acquires meaning. This, up to a certain extent, justifies the inclination of the elderly to think about the good old times or their belief that things used to be better in the past (Holbrook, 1993;

Stoyanova et al., 2017). Davis (1979) suggested that the older an individual gets, the more nostalgic they become. On the other hand, Batcho (1995) demonstrated that younger people show higher levels of nostalgia, caused by multiple changes in their lives, concluding that gender and generational effects depend on the object of nostalgia. Nostalgic objects that were dominant during childhood gradually fade away and they are being replaced by new ones, more compatible with growing age. Older people have different loved objects reminding them of their past based on their gender. In general, older people are more sentimental and nostalgic than young people, but within the elderly population, elderly women have been found to be more sentimental and nostalgic towards their past compared to elderly men (Stoyanova et al., 2017). Women are more sentimental and vulnerable towards certain objects, like photographs, while men are more materialistic and prefer objects such as cars (Sherman & Newman, 1978). Madoglou et al. (2017) showed that elderly women were more prone to nostalgia as well as sensitive to absence and death of family members (parents, grandparents, spouses) than young women. In addition, they found that older people were more prone to nostalgia than younger ones, communicated their nostalgic experiences and referred to significant "others" who have passed away, while younger people concentrated onto important personal life periods and leisure activities.

Socio-representational nostalgic memories and identity

The present study conceptualized nostalgia as the outcome of a socio-representational dynamic. Nostalgic content refers to emotional memories of the past constructed in the present through a socio-representational process, influenced by the identity of social individuals. This section defines concepts such as social representations, social memory, identity, and describes their interrelations.

Social representations

Social representations are modes of thought formed through social interactions. Their function is to help individuals navigate and excel in both the material and social world in which they live and in which they interact between them (Jodelet, 1984; Moscovici, 1961/1976). Social representations constantly transform and construct social reality, while continuously being re-interpreted, re-thought, re-presented (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Wagner & Hayes, 2005).

Two processes relevant to social representations and nostalgia are anchoring and objectification, two major social psychological processes that characterize the construction of social representations (Moscovici, 1961/1976). Social individuals

objectify the representational object and transform it into concrete images and a familiar representation via selections, simplifications, and deformations, based on the value system shared by group members as well as their beliefs, ideas, perceptions, practices, institutions, etc. Through the anchoring process, the representational object changes, as it gets integrated with the individual's preexisting worldviews, in an "already known" (i.e., meaning, prior experience, norms, interests, attitudes, cognitive style, etc.). The representational object, according to Doise (1990, 1992), is further shaped through its affiliations to social dynamics (groups, structures, social classes, etc.). The relation between objectification and anchoring is bidirectional (Moscovici, 1961/1976, 1984) and could be conceived of as the two sides of the same coin (Markov, 2000).

We propose that through the objectification process individuals construct the content of nostalgic memories (e.g., products, events, places, meaningful social relationships, childhood, specific moments, significant others) and attribute significance to the present. At the same time, nostalgic memories are anchored to the general conventions and beliefs of group members (e.g., immigration status, gender, generation) and their present needs. The anchoring process to the objectified content of nostalgic memories is assumed to depend on the affiliation group of the social individuals.

Social memory

Social memory, in both its explicit and implicit form, concerns social representations of the past (Haas & Jodelet, 1999; Viaud, 2003). As Wagoner (2015) pointed out, "*Social representations are carriers of collective memory; through them, past experience shapes the present. Thus, social representations ensure for social groups a degree of continuity through time*" (p. 143). Socio-representational memories are constructed through the processes of objectification and anchoring, and their contents are characterized or determined by the everyday interaction (Halbwachs, 1925/1994; Olick, 1999) that individuals maintain with the members of different social groups. Those groups, according to Halbwachs (1950/1968), include individuals' family and relatives, school or working environment, and peer groups providing an existential reference and contributing to shaping personal and social identity.

It is to be noted, however, that social memory is selective. The process of recollection is a transformation of the past. When everyday life events are recollected their content changes, their representation is modified, and they can even be forgotten (Misztal, 2003). This occurs because memories change in the course of time, as individual identities are perpetually re-constructed. There is no need for the representational memory content to be accurate as long as it is worthy, that is, actively contributing to

the construction of a positive personal and social identity as well as positive self-regard and regard by others (Abric 1994a; Candau, 1998; Haas & Jodelet, 1999; Legg, 2004). This entails that nostalgic social memories, as recollections of the past, are selective, deliberately (or not) restructured, and possibly re-interpreted, neglected, forgotten or removed if they do not conform to the individual's current identity.

Social identity

Social memory (including nostalgic memories) is closely associated with, and anchored in, one's social category memberships and the processes of communication that take place in them. Thus, the content of memory cannot be perceived separately from identity. As Breakwell (2015) notes, *"(…) identity is a dynamic product of the interaction of the capacities for memory, consciousness and organized construal that characterize the human biological organism, with the physical and societal structures and influence processes (including social representations) which constitute the social context. Identity is considered to be constantly in development since new experiences continually provoke change. Identity is argued to reside in psychological processes but is manifested through thought, action and affect in the social context. (…) identity is seen as a co-production between the individual and the social context"* (p. 251). Social memories participate in the formation of an individual's identity (Olick & Robbins, 1998) since the individual's identity determines one's memories (Candau, 1996).

Depending on the social objects, the socio-historical and cultural context, some attributes of identity outweigh others. Moreover, if we consider that the notion of identity is not unidimensional and that individuals adhere simultaneously to different cultural and social values groups (nations, country of origin, gender, generation, socioeconomic status, political ideology, educational level, cultural background, etc.), the influence of identity characteristics on the representational construction of the past becomes even more salient. Wagoner (2015) proposed that "*The conflict of memories between different social groups reminds us that there is no neutral way of representing the past; remembering is always done from a social position and with cultural tools, such as language, images, and narrative*" (p. 161).

Nostalgia is the product of social memory (Laurens, 2002), joining together the past with the present through a selective process. The past is selected, reinterpreted or reconstructed in the present, lessening the importance of the significant conflicts in an individual's life, adapted to an idealized form so that it can be of use. For example, people consider that the world was much better in the past (Batcho, 1998; Holbrook, 1993). That is, nostalgic memories do not necessarily represent "reality", since a selective reconstruction of the past in the present is ceaselessly taking place.

This selective nostalgic content enables individuals to adjust their recollections of negative or traumatic events to a context of reference, values, beliefs, and meanings of the groups they belong to. At the same time, the content of nostalgic memories ensures the present identity needs and interests of individuals.

The present study: Aims and hypotheses

Nostalgia is an attachment to the past, a preference towards specific experiences of the past. The aim of the present research was to show how the socio-representational nostalgic memories are materialized (objectification) and how different groups express themselves through these nostalgic memories (anchoring). Specifically, this study explored the objectified content of nostalgic memories, the reasons that lead individuals to nostalgic recollection and which elicit emotions, as well as the anchoring process, according to one's residence country (native Greeks and immigrant Greeks in Germany), generation (young adults, adults, and elderly), nostalgia proneness (more prone and less prone) and gender. Our study aimed to test the following hypotheses.

1. Nostalgic memories are expected to refer to significant "others", to periods in one's life, to places, and unique events –mainly pleasant ones. (Hypothesis 1)
2. The reasons for autobiographical nostalgic memories will be associated to identity reassurance against existential threats. (Hypothesis 2)
3. Nostalgic emotions will be mainly positive, albeit with a bittersweet tone. (Hypothesis 3)
4. The nostalgic process will be associated to aspects of identity related to one's generation and immigration status, but not gender. Specifically, older generations will be more prone to nostalgia than younger generations (Hypothesis 4a); moreover, nostalgic experiences, reasons, and emotions will be representative of the interests and concerns of each different generation (Hypothesis 4b); immigrant status will have an impact on the content of nostalgic memories (Hypothesis 4c); there will be no gender differentiation in nostalgic experiences (Hypothesis 4d).

METHOD

Participants

A random sampling design was used. Participants were 133 native Greeks (64 males, 69 females), living in the city of Athens, and 93 Greek immigrants living in Germany (47 males, 46 females), located in the city of Munich (see Table 1). Participants

belonged to three different generations: 75 young adults whose age ranged from 18-25 years (M = 22.09, SD = 2.42), who represented the generation of "children"; 78 adults, with their age ranging from 41-60 years (M = 50.71, SD = 4.54), who represented the generation of "parents"; and 73 older adults whose age ranged from 61-87 years (M = 73.51, SD = 8.46), who represented the generation of "grandparents" (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participants' residence country, gender, and generation

		Generation			Total
		Young generation: 18-25 years old	Adult generation: 41-60 years old	Older generation: 61-87 years old	
Greece	Men	26	18	20	64
	Women	23	26	20	69
Total		**49**	**44**	**40**	**133**
Germany	Men	12	20	15	47
	Women	14	14	18	46
Total		**26**	**34**	**33**	**93**

Materials

Content of, reasons for, and emotions related to nostalgic states

Participants read a brief definition of nostalgia, according to which "*nostalgia involves a strong emotional desire for moments and events of the past*" and responded to three open-ended questions. In the first question, they were asked to report an experience (event, person, place, object...) from their past that makes them feel nostalgic; in the second question, they were asked to mention the reason relevant to this nostalgic experience, while in the third question they were asked to record the elicited emotion from this nostalgic experience.

The Southampton Nostalgia Scale

To classify the participants in those more nostalgic and less nostalgic, we asked them to complete the Southampton Nostalgia Scale (Routledge et al., 2008), consisting of five items (α = .872): "How often do you experience nostalgia?" (1 = Very rarely to 7 = Very frequently); "How prone are you to feel nostalgic?" (1 = Not at all to 7 = Very much); "Generally speaking, how often do you bring to mind nostalgic experiences?" (1 = Very rarely to 7 = Very frequently); "Specifically, how often do

you bring to mind nostalgic experiences?" (1 = Once or twice a year to 7 = At least once a day); "How important is it for you to bring to mind nostalgic experiences?" (1 = Not at all to 7 = Very much). The Southampton Nostalgia Scale, based on median score, classifies participants into more prone (Me > 5) and less prone (Me ≤ 5) to nostalgia.

Procedure

Participants took part in the study voluntarily. The procedure for data collection for native participants was the following: Young adults ("children"/ university students) were asked to fill in the questionnaire and to distribute it to adults ("parents") and older adults ("grandparents"). As for immigrant participants, the data collection used snowball sampling addressing the Greek community in Munich.

Treatment of the data

The written material produced by the participants through the open-ended questions regarding the experiences, the reasons and the emotions of nostalgia, was subject to content analysis. Each category formed was based on answer frequency and thematic coherence. Answers with high frequency were preserved as autonomous categories (Abric, 1994b; Vergès, 1994), and answers with low frequency were either classified in related autonomous categories or in new ones with common content. All categories were checked by three independent reviewers, who were asked to read carefully the label of each category and decide whether the excerpts of participants' answers matched the category labels. Finalization of the categories and the classification of the participants' answers to the various categories was determined by consensus or by agreement of two of the three reviewers. Furthermore, Krippendorff's alpha (Kalpha) was calculated using Hayes and Krippendorff's (2007) SPSS macro as a coefficient for examining inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability for experiences was Kalpha = .851, for reasons, Kalpha = .754, and for emotions of nostalgia, Kalpha = .803.

Testing of the objectification process hypothesis in the construction of the content of experiences, reasons and emotions of nostalgia was based on descriptive statistical methods on data content. To test the anchoring process hypothesis regarding the effect of identity on nostalgia, all available variables were subjected to Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Cluster Analysis models.

RESULTS

Objectification of nostalgic experiences, reasons, and emotions

Nostalgic experiences

The frequencies of the thematic categories formed, based on participants' answers to nostalgic experiences questions, are shown in Table 2. The content of the nostalgic memories reported was objectified to: *specific periods of life* (e.g., childhood, school years, university years); *interactions with significant others* such as family members and, more specifically, with parents, children, grandchildren, grandparents; *leisure activities* (e.g., fishing); *holidays* (e.g., in a specific location); *places* (e.g., home, homeland), and *professional issues* (e.g., a change in work position). Nostalgic memories were also objectified to *some distinctive moments* (e.g., waiting of the bride), to *sports events* (e.g., a polo game), to *trips* (e.g., a trip to China, a trip to Thailand), and to *university admission* as well.

Table 2. Frequency of nostalgic experiences categories

Categories of nostalgic experiences	Frequency	Percent (%)
N-CHILDHOOD YEARS	28	12.4
N-CHILDBIRTH	27	11.9
N-UNIVERSITY ADMISSION	15	6.6
N-HOLIDAYS	14	6.2
N-FAMILY	14	6.2
N-STUDENT YEARS	14	6.2
N-FIRST LOVE	13	5.8
N-SCHOOL YEARS	13	5.8
N-DISTINCTIVE MOMENTS	12	5.3
N-PROFESSION	11	4.9
N-UNPLEASANT SITUATIONS	10	4.4
N-PARENTS	9	4.0
N-GRANDCHILDREN	8	3.5
N-SPORTS	8	3.5
N-FIRST TIME	8	3.5
N-LEISURE ACTIVITIES	6	2.7
N-HOME	6	2.7
N-TRIPS	5	2.2
N-GRANDPARENTS	4	1.8
N-NO ANSWER	1	0.4
TOTAL	226	100.0

Note: N = nostalgia

Moreover, *unpleasant situations* related to sickness, death of a beloved person, the first difficult years in Germany, and disappointments were also reported. Finally, it appeared that *first time* events (e.g., the first salary, the first day at school) and the *first love* held an important place in the nostalgic memories of the participants.

Reasons

Table 3 presents the frequencies of the thematic categories regarding reasons for nostalgic experiences. The most common reasons participants stated why they were nostalgic about their past were objectified to special moments/events that *have given meaning to their lives*, *have positively influenced their future*, *have led to self-improvement*, *have presented* a *moral reward*, *have met their cooperation and communication needs* and, finally, *have been involved in the shaping of their identity* (e.g., discover things about themselves, independence, autonomy, self-esteem).

Moreover, participants' nostalgia was also associated to reasons such as *family warmth*, *carefreeness*, as well as *unconcern* (e.g., year, time, age, environment), *distinctive moments*, *beautiful memories* (e.g., sweet memory, life experience, an important pleasant event) and *pleasant emotions* (e.g., feeling calm, enthusiasm, admiration, satisfaction). Finally, *hard times* (e.g., an unfulfilled desire, the moment

Table 3. Frequency of categories of reasons of nostalgic experiences

Categories of reasons of nostalgic experiences	Frequency	Percent (%)
R-UNIQUE EXPERIENCE	27	11.9
R-UNCONCERN	26	11.5
R-MEANING OF LIFE	22	9.7
R-IDENTITY	21	9.3
R-FAMILY WARMTH	20	8.8
R-IMPORTANCE FOR THE FUTURE	17	7.5
R-MORAL REWARD	16	7.1
R-PLEASANT EMOTIONS	13	5.8
R-CARELESSNESS	11	4.9
R-DISTINCTIVE MOMENTS	9	4
R-SELF-IMPROVEMENT	8	3.5
R-REVIVAL DESIRE	8	3.5
R-NO ANSWER	8	3.5
R-BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES	7	3.1
R-HARD TIMES	6	2.7
R-COOPERATION	4	1.8
R-NEED OF COMMUNICATION	3	1.3
TOTAL	226	

Note: R = Reasons

between life and death), *revival desire,* and *unique experiences* (e.g., first grandchild, first love) have also been recorded as nostalgic reasons.

Emotions

Table 4 shows the frequencies of emotions related to the recollection of the nostalgic experience. Findings indicate that nostalgic memories encompassed mainly positive emotions dominated by a sweet melancholy, which we coded as "*bittersweet*". This emotion was presented with the highest frequency ($f = 63$). The feeling of joy involved a mild dissatisfaction or sadness due to the fact that pleasant nostalgic memory cannot be revived in the present, as shown in the participants' argumentation (e.g., love but also a large emptiness, joy but also sorrow for departing, sweet sorrow for something lost and would like to be here, joy and bitterness for the years that have passed, sweet melancholy, sorrow for not having them but pleasure and joy for the memories).

Regarding positive emotions, these related to *joy*, *peace*, *happiness*, *vindication*, *enthusiasm*, *satisfaction*, *pride*, *love*, *tenderness*, *affection*, *accomplishment*, and feelings of *freedom*, *warmth*, and *nostalgia*, infused with terms like courage, calmness,

Table 4. Frequency of categories of emotions associated with nostalgic experiences

Reasons of nostalgic experiences	Frequency	Percent (%)
E-BITTERSWEET	63	27.9
E-PRIDE	25	11.1
E-NOSTALGIA	17	7.5
E-PEACE	13	5.8
E-SATISFACTION	13	5.8
E-AFFECTION	13	5.8
E-HAPPINESS	11	4.9
E-ACCOMPLISHMENT	10	4.4
E-ANGUISH	8	3.5
E-JOY	8	3.5
E-WARMTH	7	3.1
E-DISCOMFORT	7	3.1
E-SORROW	6	2.7
E-TENDERNESS	5	2.2
E-VINDICATION	5	2.2
E-FREEDOM	4	1.8
E-LOVE	4	1.8
E-ENTHUSIASM	4	1.8
E-NO ANSWER	3	1.3
TOTAL	226	100.0

Note: E = Emotions

carefreeness, completion, self-esteem, positivity, pleasure, security, trust, certainty, confidence, kindness, understanding, compassion, etc.

Finally, feelings of sorrow (e.g., distress, insecurity, feeling empty, sadness, melancholy, bitterness) also accompanied nostalgic memories, while feelings of discomfort (e.g., anxiety, frustration, fear) or anguish (e.g., responsibility, agitation, anticipation) were also reported.

Anchoring of socio-representational nostalgic memories

Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) was used to classify nostalgic experiences, reasons, and emotions as a function of gender, age/ generation, levels of proneness to nostalgia and immigration status. From the MCA results, two factorial axes were abstracted interpreting 59.82% of the total variance (see Figure 1). The first factorial axis, that explained 35.98% of the total variance, contrasted two groups of respondents: *native young people with low proneness to nostalgia* and *immigrant elderly people with high proneness to nostalgia*. The first group reported special moments related to *sports activities*, *school years student years,* and *holidays* as autobiographical nostalgic memories. Regarding the reasons, the first group invoked *the cooperation* and *identity*-shaping process, while they felt *joy* and *satisfaction*. The second group referred to a nostalgic past that was mostly related to *grandchildren*, *first love*, *home/ homeland*, and some *unpleased situations*. The reasons for nostalgic experiences were the *distinctive moments* and *hard times*, while their feelings revolved around *happiness*, *nostalgia,* and *discomfort,* respectively.
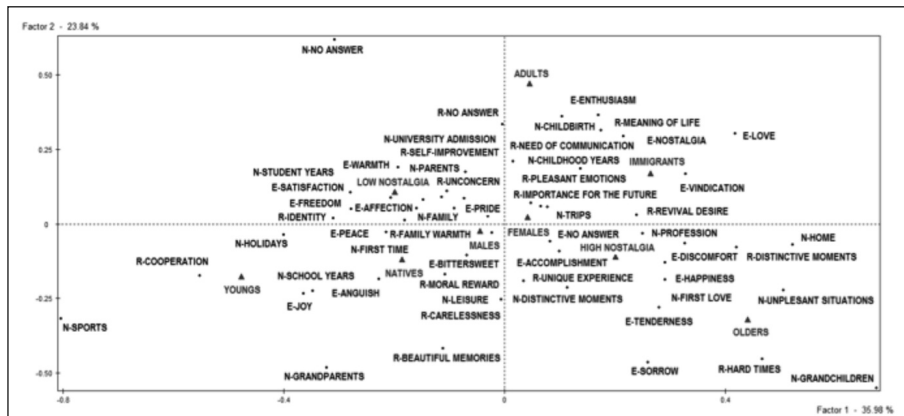

Figure 1. Multiple Correspondence Analysis dimensions: Contents of autobiographical nostalgic memories, their reasons, and their emotions as associated to gender, generation, immigration status and levels of proneness to nostalgia.

The second factorial axis explained 23.84% of the total variance, distinguishing two groups of respondents: *immigrant adults with low proneness to nostalgia* and *native young* and *older people with high nostalgia proneness.* Concerning the first group of participants, in their nostalgic experiences they mentioned their *childhood years* and *the birth of their children* mainly for *attributing meaning to their lives* that makes them feel *enthusiasm* and *nostalgia.* On the other hand, *native young and older generation with high nostalgia proneness* mentioned their *school years*, some *distinctive moments*, their *grandparents*, some *important sports events,* and *grandchildren.* The main reasons for remarking this nostalgic content were *hard times, beautiful memories, carefreeness* and a *unique experience*, while the emerging emotion was *sorrow.*

The Hierarchical Cluster Analysis that was applied on the data identified four distinct clusters with their corresponding nostalgic experiences, reasons, and emotions (see Table 5).

Members of Cluster 1 were mostly *immigrant adults* whose nostalgic memories were characterized by *childhood years* and *childbirth* with the main reason being the *meaning in life*, while the associated emotions were *vindication, love, nostalgia, and enthusiasm.*

Cluster 2 included mostly *native Greeks* who associated their nostalgic experiences to *trips, family*, and events that had taken place for the *first time* in their lives. Members of this cluster referred to *unique experience*, *carefreeness*, *family warmth*, *the importance for the future, revival desire* and *moral reward* as reasons for nostalgia, while the dominant feeling was mainly *bittersweet.*

Cluster 3 comprised the *young generation* whose nostalgic experiences revolved around *school years, university admission, student years, leisure activities* and *holidays*, with main reasons being *unconcern* and *identity* construction, accompanied by feelings of *anguish, pride,* and *peace.*

Finally, Cluster 4 included members of the *older generation* with *high nostalgia proneness* as nostalgic situations encompassed *first love, home, grandchildren,* and some *unpleasant situations.* Concerning the reasons, members of this cluster referred both to the *distinctive moments* and to the *hard times*, while the corresponding emotions were *happiness, tenderness, discomfort,* and *sorrow.*

DISCUSSION

Nostalgia can be conceived of as the result of a socio-representational dynamic. The present research investigated the representational mapping of nostalgic memories via objectification and anchoring processes.

**Table 5. Hierarchical cluster analysis: Contents of autobiographical nostalgic memories,
their reasons, and their emotions as a function of gender, generation, residence country
and levels of proneness to nostalgia**

Clusters	Members of each cluster	Nostalgic content - Reason - Emotions associated to each cluster
Cluster 1 (17.11%)	Adult generation/ Immigrant Greeks	N-Childhood years N-Childbirth N-No answer R-Meaning of life R-No answer E-Vindication E-Love E-Nostalgia E-Enthusiasm
Cluster 2 (42.92%)	Native Greeks	N-First time N-Trips N-Family R-Unique experience R-Carelessness R-Family warmth R-Importance for the future R-Revival desire R-Moral reward E-Bittersweet
Cluster 3 (27.88%)	Young adult generation	N-School years N-Student years N-University admission N-Leisure activities N-Holidays R-Unconcern R-Identity E-Anguish E-Pride E-Peace
Cluster 4 (12.09%)	Older generation, High nostalgia	N-First love N-Home N-Grandchildren N-Unpleasant situations R-Distinctive moments R-Hard times E-Happiness E-Tenderness E-Discomfort E-Sorrow

Objectification of nostalgia

The analysis of the *objectification* of nostalgia (nostalgic experiences, reasons, and emotions) confirmed our research hypotheses.

As regards Hypothesis 1, the content of nostalgic memories was characterized by a systematic selectivity in whatever positive feature the past had to offer after having dispensed dreary, monotonous, outdated and incompatible elements. Nostalgia concerned sweet memories mixed with a longing for interpersonal relations with close ones, important life events and special and notable moments, leisure activities, life periods, professional matters, places, and unique and extraordinary experiences. Furthermore, the content of nostalgic experiences was objectified to representational memories involving individuals. The self was the protagonist, surrounded by, or in interaction with, close others. Our findings supported those of prior research (Hicks et al., 2010; Lambert et al., 2010; Sedikides et al., 2008; Wildschut et al., 2006). Sedikides et al. (2016) suggested that "nostalgia functions to fortify the self-system and confer well-being benefits" (p. 533). The content of nostalgic memories also involved events of negative "discontinuity" (Davis, 1979) such as illnesses, disappointments, difficult and stressful situations that had been overcome.

In relation to Hypothesis 2, our findings supported the conjecture by Sedikides et al. (2016) that "nostalgia serves a homeostatic function (e.g., to counteract loneliness or existential anxiety)" (p. 534). This is evident in the objectification of the reasons for which the specific experiences became nostalgic. The reasons advocated referred to the reassurance of identity against existential threats, to self-improvement, while ensuring a communicative, moral and emotional balance and well-being. These findings confirmed that nostalgia serves an existential function, giving a sense of meaning to life (Routledge et al., 2011), increases self-continuity and confers eudaemonic well-being by fostering social connectedness (Abakoumkin et al., 2019; Sedikides et al., 2016).

In the case of Hypothesis 3, that regarded the objectification of emotions, our findings were in line with other research (Batcho, 1998; Davis, 1979; Holak & Havlena, 1998; Sedikides et al., 2004; Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006; Wildschut et al., 2006), showing that nostalgia is mainly related to positive emotions, while a bittersweet feeling is prevalent, noting a sweet emotion that conceals melancholy for the lost object. It may also indicate joy for the mnemonic "revival" of a previous experience in the present and at the same time sorrow about its absence. Positive emotions of nostalgia can be attributed to the selective nature of nostalgic memories and their reconstruction over time. However, negative nostalgic emotions (e.g., sorrow, discomfort, anguish) are associated with events of "discontinuity" (Davis, 1979).

Anchoring of nostalgia

Nostalgia is prevalent in everyday life. It is present across cultures, nations, socio-economic status groups, race, age groups, and gender. It is a universal and pancultural phenomenon (Hepper et al., 2014; Routledge et al., 2011; Sedikides et al., 2004; Zhou et al., 2008). This does not mean, however, that everyone experiences nostalgia in the same way, nor that nostalgia is equally beneficial to all, because its objectified content (experiences, reasons, and emotions) is *anchored* on the person's identity. Our findings confirmed Hypothesis 4a, namely, that nostalgia characterizes mainly elders, both immigrants and natives. Older generations showed high level of proneness to nostalgia, as previous findings have shown (Madoglou et al., 2017; Stoyanova et al., 2017).

Hypothesis 4b was also confirmed because both immigrants and native young people felt nostalgic about transitional life periods, associated with life changes such as school and student years, as well as unique experiences that shaped their identity. Specifically, for young Greek students, admission to the university has high social value and is a major personal goal in Greece (Madoglou, 2010). Studying in the university is often accompanied by relocation away from the student's family home, and this signifies the beginning of "student life" (Batcho, 1995). Students feel nostalgic about an unprecedented environment with new activities, leisure, and vacations, with main reasons being that of unconcern and identity shaping. Emotions of anguish, experienced in their school years, were neutralized by emotions of pride and internal peace, experienced in their student years.

Both immigrants and native older generations cited unpleasant situations and negative "discontinuity" experiences (e.g., death of a loved one, health problems, and difficult interpersonal relationships). They also reported hard times as a reason for nostalgia creating emotions of discomfort and sorrow. Older people, according to Divard and Robert-Demontrond (1997) find refuge in the past, because their future seems limited and nostalgia serves as an antidote to loneliness. As Halbwachs (1925/1994) pointed out, older people, liberated from daily activities or pressures such as job, family and other social engagements, shift their attention to memories of the past. Nostalgia is a by-product of discontinuity events (Sedikides, Wildshut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006), which are treated as a form of threat evoking even more nostalgia (Routledge et al., 2011). Nostalgia then becomes a source of resilience helping people to cope with situations that cause discomfort and pain. Disappointments and losses are embellished, attenuated and rationalized to confront existential challenges of the present and the anxiety of the future. One's first love and grandchildren ("continuity" events) were also reported as objects of nostalgia, with distinctive moments, as reasons, and happiness and tenderness as the emotional content of nostalgia.

Hypothesis 4c regarded the effect of the country of residence. Our findings confirmed that country of residence influenced the participants' answers. For older immigrants, unpleasant situations regarded the first difficult years in Germany (i.e., a stressful life change) along with the desire to return home the traditional definition of nostalgia due to hardships that involved discomfort. On the other hand, immigrant adults, with low level of nostalgia, felt nostalgic about childhood years and childbirths for life-meaning reasons, accompanied by emotions of vindication, love, and enthusiasm.

Native participants of all generations felt nostalgic about their family, trips and first-time experiences, due to family warmth, the importance they held for the future, moral reward, unique experiences, carefreeness, and revival desire, followed by bittersweet emotions. These results strengthen the findings of previous research (Sedikides et al., 2008; Wildschut et al., 2006), although generation and immigration variables were not included.

Finally, Hypothesis 4d that regarded the effect of gender was also confirmed as it did not affect responses, as already found in previous research (Batcho, 1995, 2007; Sherman & Newman, 1978; Wildschut et al., 2006).

To sum up, nostalgic memories are defined through space and time constraints, connecting people with their past and their interpersonal relationships. Individuals continue to remain in "mnemonic contact" with their significant others and places in the present. Nostalgia seems to be objectified in an idealized gaze back into the past, which is not related to "objective" reality, but is selected and reconstructed by the individual's current perception of reality. It follows a narrative that, if necessary, is composed of reinterpretations, gaps, distortions, absence, censorship, silence, or "forgetting". At the same time, it is subjected to internal (internalized heritage of social norms) and external (values, beliefs, rules, institutions) influences.

Social representations of nostalgic memories are related to identity that changes over lifetime. As an individual gets older, their membership groups proliferate and some of them lose their past meaning. For example, an older individual who was young once, feels more nostalgic towards their grandchildren or spouses than towards their childhood or student years, because their needs in the present have changed. A first-generation immigrant (older generation) feels more nostalgic concerning their homeland as an object of nostalgia than a second-generation immigrant (adult generation). It has also been observed that the complete integration of immigrants occurs in the third generation when the experiences and narratives have been lost (Μαντόγλου, 2010). Deschamps, Paèz, and Pennebaker (2002) suggested that the depth of collective memory in Western societies goes back three generations.

Implications of the study, limitations and future directions

This research contributes to the study of the processes of nostalgia under the spectrum of a social representations approach. It conceptualizes nostalgia as a representational construction that responds to the current identity needs of individuals. More research is needed in order to understand the process of nostalgia, given its complicated nature and the limited research that examined it in this perspective. Intergenerational and immigration factors, as well as their interaction, are particularly important in the process of nostalgia and require further investigation. The limited number of participants per generation, as well as the origins of immigrants, do not allow us to generalize the results. Moreover, qualitative research of speech analysis could provide a more complex argument about nostalgic content, the reasons that push people to recall nostalgic objects, as well as to the emotions involved in this process. Finally, the objectification and especially the anchoring process can both be tested through different immigrant status.

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