



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

**Through the Eyes of the Young Generation of Cypriots:
The Perception of The Cyprus Conflict**

Master's thesis by:

Katarzyna Jaskot

Supervisor: Danny Raymond

Aalborg University

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Abstract

The Cyprus conflict is an enduring issue that has significantly impacted the lives of people on the island for decades. The conflict has been characterised by a complex set of political, social, and cultural factors that have contributed to the perpetuation of division and mistrust between the Greek and Turkish communities on the island. Despite numerous attempts to resolve the conflict, a permanent solution still needs to be found.

This paper aims to explore the views of the young generation of Cypriots from the Greek side on the Cyprus conflict. In particular, the paper examines how the young generation perceives and understands the conflict and its impact on their lives. A qualitative research design that combines a literature review with semi-structured interviews of young adult Cypriots was adopted to accomplish this research. The analysis in this paper draws upon three main theoretical frameworks: nationalism, social identity, and Mannheim's generation concept.

The article demonstrates that the island's division persists due to the influence of factors such as the education system's approach to recent island history, institutional pressures, and prevalent Greek nationalistic attitudes. These elements play significant roles in perpetuating the ongoing division.

Keywords: *Cyprus conflict, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, generations, nationalism, Social Identity Theory, Mannheim*

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1. Introduction

In the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, a long-standing conflict between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities has been ongoing for decades. This dispute, commonly named the Cyprus Problem or the Cyprus Issue (Ker-Lindsay, 2011), has been drawing the attention of the international community and awaiting a resolution for almost half a century.

Presently, the current situation on the island has reached an almost unbearable state for both communities, but mainly for the Turkish Cypriots, who have endured nearly four decades of isolation from the global community. The conflict has also severely strained the relations between Turkey and Greece, neighbours and NATO allies (Sözen, 2004).

Historically, Cyprus was a British colony until it gained independence in 1960. The newly independent state comprised two main communities: the Greek Cypriots, who constituted the majority population, and the Turkish Cypriots, who formed the minority. The independent Republic of Cyprus was established with a power-sharing arrangement between the two communities (Souter, 1984). However, tensions between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities quickly arose, fueled by differing political aspirations and concerns over power-sharing. In 1974, a Greek military junta supported a coup attempt to unite Cyprus with Greece. This led to Turkey's intervention, citing the need to protect the Turkish Cypriot population. As a result, the island was divided, with Turkish forces occupying the northern part of Cyprus, around 37% of the island, and establishing the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) (Ker-Lindsay, 2011).

The division created a physical separation between the two communities, marked by the "Green Line," a buffer zone patrolled by United Nations peacekeeping forces (UNFICYP). Today, the island remains divided, with the Republic of Cyprus governing the Greek Cypriot side and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus governing the Turkish Cypriot side, recognised only by Turkey (Sözen, 2004). The conflict has had a significant impact on the daily lives of the Cypriot people on both sides.

It is essential to clarify that when referring to Cyprus throughout this study, it relates to the whole island. Although the research primarily focused on the young population of the Republic

of Cyprus, examining their perspectives on the conflict within that particular context. This paper aims to explore the views of the young generation of Cypriots from the Republic of Cyprus on the Cyprus issue, explicitly examining how these young adults perceive and understand the conflict and its impact on their lives. My research question is: **What are the reasons the country is still divided, seen from the perspective of the young generation?** To achieve this goal, I adopted a qualitative research design that combines a literature review with semi-structured interviews with young Cypriots from the Greek side of the island.

The paper draws on three main theoretical frameworks to guide the data analysis: nationalism theory, Social Identity Theory, and Mannheim's generation concept. The theory of nationalism provides a valuable lens to understand the role of collective identity and the sense of belonging to a nation in shaping individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards the conflict. On the other hand, the Social Identity Theory explores how individuals' identification with social groups influences their views and behaviours concerning conflict. Lastly, Mannheim's generation concept offers a framework for analysing how the historical, social, and cultural context in which the young generation has come of age has influenced their perspectives on the conflict and the possibilities for reconciliation. Through the research, I hope to provide a deeper understanding of the perspectives of the young Cypriot generation and contribute to the conversation about finding a lasting solution to the conflict.

The research is structured as follows; firstly, I provide an overview of the methodology used in the research, including the research design, the sample selection, data collection, and analysis. Second, I outline the overview of the literature on the Cyprus conflict, focusing on the key issues and debates that have emerged over the years. Next, I will explain the background history of the conflict to better comprehend the reasons behind this dispute. After I will explain the main theoretical concepts and theories which I applied in the research. Furthermore, I provide an analysis chapter, where I present finding by incorporating the previously demonstrated theories. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for understanding the Cyprus conflict and the prospects for its resolution.

Overall, this paper contributes to the growing body of research on the Cyprus conflict by shedding light on the views and perspectives of the young generation of Cypriots from the Greek side.

2. Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology employed in this research project, which aims to investigate the reasons for the ongoing division of Cyprus from the perspective of the young Cypriot generation. The research design encompasses a combination of qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and a literature review. The chapter outlines the research design, participant selection, data collection procedures, ethical considerations, limitations and data analysis methods. By employing this methodology, the study seeks to gain insights into the subjective experiences, perceptions, and beliefs of young Cypriots regarding the perceptions of the country's division.

2.1 Research design

My interest in Cypriot issues and its history was sparked during my internship period on the island. Living there allowed me to witness the complex relationship between the two ethnic groups who share the same land. The lasting impact of the catastrophic events of 1974, which I will expand on later in Chapter 5, can still be seen in some parts of the island. This experience motivated me to explore the current state of affairs and understand how the perspective of the young Cypriot generation has evolved since then.

The research design utilised in this study combines phenomenological and narrative research designs. This hybrid approach allows for an in-depth exploration of young Cypriots' lived experiences and narratives while also considering the Cyprus conflict's broader historical and socio-political context (Creswell & Poth, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The phenomenological aspect facilitates understanding the reasons behind the country's division by capturing the subjective perspectives and interpretations of the participants. The narrative component enables the analysis of individual stories and their alignment with the existing body of knowledge on the conflict.

2.2 Participant Selection

The participant selection process for this study utilised a combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques (Creswell & Poth, 2013). As a researcher, I had prior personal

connections and knowledge of individuals from the Greek side of the island, and this facilitated the identification of potential participants (Creswell & Poth, 2013; Patton, 1990). The sample consisted of young Cypriots aged 24 to 35, providing valuable insight into the thoughts and opinions of this demographic. A total of five participants, two women and three men, were selected to provide a diverse range of perspectives and experiences within the given age group. This sampling approach aimed to ensure that the data collected would reflect a comprehensive understanding of the young Cypriot generation's views on the division of Cyprus.

They hail from the Greek side of the island, indicating that their perspectives are influenced by their Cypriot and Greek identities and their experiences within the context of the divided country. Their viewpoints are shaped by their personal and cultural backgrounds, as well as their understanding of the historical and political dynamics of Cyprus.

To understand the relationship between the individual cases and the more collective understanding of the Greek youth group, it is necessary to interpret the data collected from the participants in the context of existing knowledge and research. The findings from this study can provide valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of the selected individuals (Hennink et al., 2020). However, avoiding overgeneralising these findings to the entire Greek youth group is essential.

2.3 Data collection

The data collection procedure involved conducting semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. Visiting Cyprus would have been the preferred method for gathering interviews and conducting a detailed observation and assessment of the current state of affairs. However, the time and funds were limited, so the data was collected using alternative methods. The interviews were conducted online using the Microsoft Teams platform. This method offered several benefits, including accessibility, convenience, and overcoming geographical constraints (Braun & Clarke, 2013) faced by the researcher and the participants.

An interview guide (see Appendix 1) was prepared as a framework to guide the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The questions from the interview guide were inspired by Maria Hadjipavlou's questionnaire for research in her article "The Cyprus Conflict: Root Causes and Implications for Peacebuilding." The questionnaires used by Hadjipavlou (2007) are designed

to delve into various aspects of the Cyprus conflict. They aim to capture the perspectives and experiences of individuals directly affected by the conflict. By incorporating a range of questions, Hadjipavlou explores topics such as historical grievances, identity and nationalism, power dynamics, external influences, and potential avenues for reconciliation.

Hadjipavlou's questionnaires (2007) provide a structured framework for gathering data and facilitating in-depth interviews. The interview questions were designed to elicit detailed responses that shed light on the participant's understanding of the division's reasons, personal experiences, and perspective towards the Turkish/Greek conflict. However, flexibility was maintained during the interviews, allowing for adjustments to the wording and sequence of questions based on the flow of conversation and participant responses. This flexibility allowed participants to express their perspectives and elaborate on issues vital to them. Follow-up questions were posed to explore unanticipated issues and gather comprehensive data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2013).

The average interview duration was approximately one hour. The timeframe for the interview allowed for in-depth discussions, enabling participants to share their experiences, beliefs, and perspectives regarding the ongoing division of Cyprus (Patton, 1990). The one-hour duration was balanced by collecting actual data and respecting participants' time and engagement.

All interviews were recorded with the participant's consent to ensure accurate capturing of their responses (Creswell & Poth, 2013). The use of audio recordings enabled me to review and analyse the data in detail. Following the interviews, the recorded data were transcribed verbatim, creating a written record of the participants' narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Transcription facilitated data analysis by providing a text-based thematic exploration and interpretation format.

2.4 Ethical consideration

It is essential to ensure that ethical principles and guidelines are followed throughout the research process to protect the participants' rights, privacy, and well-being. Before conducting the interviews, the participants were provided with a clear explanation of the research purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, ensuring their voluntary participation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The participants

were informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences (Polit & Beck, 2017). Additionally, they were assured that their decision to participate would not affect their relationships or any potential benefits they may receive. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, each interviewee was assigned a unique identifier rather than using their real names. Only the researcher had access to the participants' identifiable information, which was stored securely and kept confidential throughout the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Pseudonyms will be used in the research report to ensure anonymity and maintain confidentiality (Polit & Beck, 2017). The participants were assured that their identities and individual responses would not be disclosed, and the data collected would be used solely for research purposes.

The participants were informed that their participation in the research was entirely voluntary, and they had the right to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences (Polit & Beck, 2017). The participants' decision to participate or not was respected, and no pressure or coercion was exerted to ensure their free will to participate (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Moreover, participants were informed about the purpose of the research and how their participation would contribute to the study's findings.

The research project focused on a sensitive topic, the Cyprus conflict, which could potentially evoke emotional responses or trigger distressing memories for the participants. To mitigate potential risks, the researcher created a supportive and empathetic environment during the interviews (Polit & Beck, 2017). Participants were informed about the nature of the discussions and encouraged to take breaks or stop the interview if they felt uncomfortable.

Although there were potential risks, the research also presented potential benefits, such as allowing participants to voice their perspectives on the conflict and contribute to a better understanding of the young generation's viewpoint. The study's findings may inform future initiatives and policies to foster reconciliation and understanding among different communities in Cyprus (Polit & Beck, 2017).

2.5 Limitations of the Project

A notable limitation of this study is the lack of representation of the Turkish Cypriot perspective. Including both sides of the Cyprus conflict is crucial to comprehensively

understanding the issue. However, due to geographical constraints and limitations of the time frame, it was not possible to include Turkish Cypriots' point of view in this study.

Studying the Cyprus conflict necessitates recognising the importance of representing diverse viewpoints and experiences. The absence of the Turkish Cypriot perspective in this research restricts the ability to capture a complete picture of the conflict dynamics and the opinions held by individuals on both sides. In the project, the participants were young Cypriots aged 24 to 35, specifically from the Greek side of the island. Their selection was facilitated through convenience and snowball sampling techniques, with the researcher utilising personal connections and knowledge of individuals from the Greek community. This approach may introduce a degree of bias, as the researcher's prior connections and familiarity with the participants may influence their selection (Hennenik et al., 2020).

The participants in the study provide insights into the thoughts and opinions of a specific demographic within the Greek youth group. However, it is essential to recognise that their views may not necessarily represent the entire Greek youth population. The sample size in this study is relatively small, consisting of five participants—two women and three men. While efforts were made to include diverse perspectives within the Greek Cypriot population, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations imposed by the inability to incorporate the Turkish Cypriot viewpoint. Future studies should strive to overcome these constraints by expanding the sample size, extending the geographical scope, and ensuring the inclusion of participants from both communities. This will lead to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Cyprus conflict and its potential pathways to resolution.

2.6 Data analyses

As Braun and Clarke (2013) proposed, thematic analysis was the primary analytical approach. This involved identifying recurring patterns, themes, and underlying meanings across the transcribed interview data. The analysis focused on exploring the reasons for the ongoing division, as the young Cypriot generation perceived. Through carefully examining the interview data, thematic patterns emerged, providing valuable insights into the participants' perspectives and lived experiences. I identified recurring themes and common keywords that provided valuable insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences. These themes were then organised and presented in a table (see Appendix 2) to facilitate a comprehensive

overview of their occurrence across the interviews. The analysis revealed six prominent themes: Brainwashing, Greek Nationalism, Visiting the occupied/ North Side, Education at School, Turkey's Threats, and Turkish Settlers. By systematically documenting the mentions of these themes in each interview, I could discern patterns and identify the interviews in which these topics were discussed. This approach allowed for a cohesive understanding of the data, enabling me to draw meaningful conclusions about the participant's views on the division of Cyprus.

In addition to analysing interview data, a comprehensive literature review was conducted. The literature review aims to comprehend the Cyprus conflict's root causes, synthesise research conducted over the years, and identifies any significant changes in the findings. The review systematically searched academic databases, books, and relevant sources to gather various perspectives and scholarly insights. The information obtained from the literature review was integrated with the analysis of the interview data, enriching the understanding of the reasons behind the ongoing division from the young generation's perspective.

By combining the insights from the thematic analysis of interview data with the findings from the literature review, a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to the ongoing division in Cyprus from the viewpoint of the young Cypriot generation was achieved. I also was able to connect these themes to theoretical frameworks. This integrative approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the research question and provided a robust foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions and recommendations in the subsequent chapters of the study.

4. Literature review

The Cyprus problem is a complex and long-standing conflict that has generated much academic literature over the years. This literature review will highlight some of the most important academic papers on the topic, focusing on those that have significantly impacted the understanding of the conflict and the efforts to resolve it.

The article by Maria Hadjipavlou (2007), "The Cyprus Conflict: Root Causes and Implications for Peacebuilding", is a comprehensive study of the Cyprus conflict, focusing on its root causes and the implications for peacebuilding efforts. Hadjipavlou draws on various sources, including

historical accounts, political analyses, and sociological studies, to identify the main factors contributing to the conflict. In addition to the literature review, the article also utilises a qualitative approach to data analysis by presenting the findings of interviews conducted with key stakeholders involved in the Cyprus conflict, including representatives of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. She conducted a 1074 quantitative questionnaire with Greek and Turkish Cypriots, respectively (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

The survey aimed to investigate Greek and Turkish Cypriots' political views and beliefs about their communities, history, future and the underlying reasons behind the conflict. Hadjipavlou (2007) argues that the Cyprus conflict has deep-seated roots in the island's historical, political, and social realities and that understanding these roots is essential for developing effective peacebuilding strategies. She identifies several key factors that have contributed to the persistence of the conflict, including historical resentment and tensions between the Greek and Turkish communities, political polarisation, and the lack of trust between the two sides (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

In her analysis of the root causes of the conflict, Hadjipavlou (2007) also notes the role played by external actors, including Britain, Greece, Turkey, and the United States, in perpetuating the conflict. She argues that these external actors have contributed to the conflict by pursuing their national interests and failing to support a comprehensive and sustainable peace process. The difficulty in resolving ethnonational conflicts is partially attributed to their complexity, involving multiple parties, their persistence that permeates various aspects of social and political life, existential fears, loss of optimism for a constructive resolution, ethnic marginalisation, unaddressed historical grievances and traumas, economic disparities, uneven distribution of resources, and structural inequities. Furthermore, these conflicts have a long history, turbulent present, and uncertain future. Adding to their complexity is the hatred, fear, and, frequently, the brutal acts perpetrated by the other side, which are not easy to relinquish to establish a new connection with the "former enemy" (Hadjipavlou, 2007, p. 352). The presented causes of the conflict, Hadjipavoulo tries to explain through theoretical analysis using, among others, Human Needs Theory, Enemy System Theory and Structural Victimisation.

In conclusion, Hadjipavlou highlights the importance of a peacebuilding approach that considers the root causes of the conflict and seeks to address the underlying issues that have prevented the resolution of the conflict. She argues that peacebuilding efforts must be holistic

and multifaceted and involve all stakeholders, including the two communities, external actors, and civil society organisations (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

This article provides a valuable contribution to the literature on the Cyprus conflict, offering a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the root causes of the conflict and the implications for peacebuilding efforts. This article is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the complexities of the conflict and the challenges facing peacebuilding efforts in Cyprus.

Maria Hadjipavlou's article sparked my interest in studying the Cyprus conflict. Hadjipavlou's research was carried out at the turn of 2000-2002. It provided an insightful analysis of the root causes of the conflict, the perspectives of the different actors involved, and the implications for peacebuilding efforts (Hadjipavlou, 2007). However, given that Hadjipavlou's research is now over 20 years old, I was curious to explore the current opinions and perspectives of the younger generation on the Cyprus conflict. Therefore, I conducted my research using some of the survey questions from Hadjipavlou's study in my interviews. By examining the views of the younger generation, who have grown up in the shadow of the conflict and have different experiences and expectations, I hope to contribute to the ongoing debate on the Cyprus conflict and shed light on potential avenues for peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The article "Collective Memory, Social Representations of Intercommunal Relations, and Conflict Transformation in Divided Cyprus" by Charis Psaltis (2016) discusses the role of collective memory and social representations in conflict transformation in Cyprus. The author argues that achieving lasting peace in Cyprus must address the collective memories and social representations held by the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities.

The methodology used in Psaltis' (2016) article involves a mixed-methods approach to study the role of collective memory and social representations in conflict transformation in divided Cyprus. The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, a quantitative survey was conducted using a random sample of 594 Greek and Turkish Cypriots to explore the social representations of inter-communal relations in Cyprus. The survey utilised a questionnaire that included questions on the history, culture, and political issues relevant to the two communities and the respondents' attitudes towards the other community. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and logistic regression analysis to identify the predictors of intergroup attitudes. In the second phase, the qualitative part of the study, semi-structured

interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of 50 participants who were selected based on their responses in the quantitative survey. The interviews aimed to explore in-depth the role of collective memory and social representations in shaping intergroup attitudes and how these can be transformed. The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically, with codes developed based on the emerging themes (Psaltis, 2016).

The findings of both the quantitative and qualitative phases were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social representations of intercommunal relations and the potential for conflict transformation in divided Cyprus. The author notes that the conflict is rooted in a long history of inter-communal violence and mistrust, which has been perpetuated by the different collective memories and social representations held by the two communities (Psaltis, 2016).

Psaltis (2016) then discusses the concept of collective memory and its importance in conflict transformation. Collective memory refers to the shared understanding of a group's past, which is shaped by historical events, cultural norms, and social interactions. According to the author, collective memory is a powerful tool for shaping a group's identity and worldview. However, it can also be a source of conflict when different groups hold conflicting memories of the same events (Psaltis, 2016).

The author argues that social representations are closely linked to collective memory, as they are shaped by the same historical and cultural factors that shape collective memory. Psaltis (2016) discusses the role of collective memory and social representations in the Cyprus conflict. The Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities hold different collective memories of the events leading up to the conflict and different social representations of each other. These differences have contributed to a deep-seated mistrust between the two communities, making it difficult to achieve lasting peace. The article concludes by suggesting that to achieve lasting peace in Cyprus, it is necessary to address the different collective memories and social representations held by the two communities. This can be done through dialogue, education, and other forms of intercommunal interaction that help to bridge the gap between the two communities. By addressing the root causes of the conflict, it may be possible to achieve a more just and peaceful society in Cyprus (Psaltis, 2016).

Psaltis conducted a study that highlighted the significance of collective memory in achieving peace. Therefore, in my research, I found it necessary to investigate the views of young

Cypriots on collective memory. Based on Psaltis's findings, addressing this issue is crucial to achieving lasting peace on the island, and therefore, it must be addressed while studying the young generation.

Yiannis Papadakis is another prominent scholar who has extensively studied the Cyprus conflict. He is a Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cyprus and has published numerous articles and books on the subject. Papadakis (1998) has focused on various aspects of the conflict, including the role of memory, identity, and nationalism in shaping the conflict, as well as the impact of the conflict on the lives of ordinary people.

The article "Greek Cypriot Narratives of History and collective identity: Nationalism as a contested process" by Papadakis (1998), published in the *American Ethnologist*, explores the complex relationship between history, collective identity, and nationalism in the context of Greek Cypriot society. The article aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how Greek Cypriots construct their national identity through narratives of history and how different groups within the community contest these narratives.

The article is based on extensive ethnographic research conducted by the author in Cyprus between 1993 and 1995. The methodology used by Papadakis (1998) involves a combination of participant observation, interviews, and textual analysis of historical and political documents. Through these methods, the author aims to examine the various narratives of history and national identity produced and reproduced by different groups within the Greek Cypriot community.

The article begins by providing a historical overview of Cyprus and how different groups have contested the island's history and identity over time. The author then focuses on the contemporary period, examining how Greek Cypriots construct their national identity through narratives of history, particularly concerning the island's Ottoman and British colonial past. The author argues that these narratives are not fixed or static but instead are contested and renegotiated over time by different groups within the community (Papadakis, 1998).

Papadakis (1998) identifies two main historical narratives contested within the Greek Cypriot community. The first narrative is centred around the idea of "Hellenism" and the notion that Greek Cypriots are the descendants of ancient Greeks. The second narrative is focused on a

separate Cypriot identity, distinct from Greece and Turkey. The author argues that these two narratives are not mutually exclusive but rather coexist and interact in complex ways within the community. The article also examines how different groups within the Greek Cypriot community use these narratives of history to advance their own political and social agendas. Papadakis argues that these narratives are not simply passive reflections of historical events but are actively constructed and manipulated to serve the interests of different groups (Papadakis, 1998).

The article is an important contribution to understanding the Cyprus conflict. It provides a nuanced and insightful analysis of the complex relationship between history, collective identity, and nationalism in Cypriot society. Despite being conducted several decades ago, this research remains relevant and informative for those seeking to understand the Cyprus conflict and the role of nationalism in the region. The article gave me valuable insights into how historical events and cultural narratives shape collective identity and how this identity can become a powerful force in political conflicts. It has highlighted the significant impact of national narratives, education, and historical interpretations on forming collective identity and perpetuating intergroup biases (Papadakis, 1998). By delving into the complexities of nationalism in Cyprus, the article has provided me with a deeper understanding of how these factors have influenced the dynamics of the conflict. It has also emphasised the need for a more inclusive and balanced approach to teaching the conflict, promoting empathy, dialogue, and a shared sense of history among the communities involved. This lens of nationalism and social identity has broadened my perspective and encouraged me to engage critically with the Cyprus problem, fostering a more comprehensive understanding.

Another article that helped me to develop my theoretical framework is "Social Identity in a Divided Cyprus" by Psaltis and Cakal (2016). The article discusses the role of social identity in the conflict between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The authors argue that social identity plays a significant role in the Cyprus conflict, which is not only a result of political and economic factors but is also deeply rooted in the social identity of the two communities.

The authors highlighted the historical background of Cyprus to provide a context for understanding the conflict. They discussed how the conflict had been fuelled by the distinct

social identities of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, which are based on different cultural traditions and historical experiences (Psaltis & Cakal,2016).

The authors also reviewed the literature on the psychological factors that contribute to maintaining social identity and the perpetuation of the conflict. They found that factors such as in-group bias, perceived threat, and intergroup emotions can contribute to the continuation of the conflict. The authors proposed that intergroup dialogue and communication could effectively address these psychological factors and promote reconciliation (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016).

Moreover, the authors reviewed studies on the effectiveness of various interventions to resolve the Cyprus conflict. They found that interventions that promote a shared identity that incorporates elements of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot cultures can effectively promote reconciliation. In addition, they suggested that interventions that promote positive contact between the two communities can also effectively reduce intergroup biases and prejudices (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016).

5. Background history

Cyprus is a small island nation located in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, at the crossroads of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa, at the heart of important trade routes. To the south of Cyprus lies Turkey, approximately 44 miles away, and to the west lies Syria, about 60 miles away, and mainland Greece is about 600 miles (Doob, 1986).

Many civilisations have fought over the island of Cyprus due to its strategic location and valuable resources, making it a highly desirable territory throughout history. The island's rich and complex history is marked by a succession of different civilisations, empires, and dynasties, each leaving a unique imprint on its culture and identity. Cyprus has been home to a diverse mix of cultures and nationalities, from the ancient Mycenaeans, Phoenicians, and Assyrians, to the Roman and Byzantine empires and later the Venetians, Turkish and British rule (Doob, 1986)

This diversity is reflected in the island's language, cuisine, customs, and religious practices, making Cyprus a unique and fascinating destination for travellers and scholars alike. The island has a population of approximately 1.2 million people (World Bank, 2021), with Greek Cypriots comprising most of the population and Turkish Cypriots a significant minority.

Despite its small size, Cyprus has significantly impacted the history and culture of the Mediterranean region, and its influence continues to be felt to this day. Understanding the island's rich history and cultural heritage is vital to comprehending the complex political and social issues that have shaped the island's modern-day reality.

The ancient Greeks first colonised Cyprus, and subsequently, it came under the rule of various empires in the surrounding area until 1571, when the Ottoman Empire took control. During the Ottoman era, the island underwent significant changes. Its population, primarily consisting of Greek Cypriots, expanded to encompass nearly 20% Turkish Cypriots, who were descendants of soldiers, settlers, and individuals with Turkish and Islamic backgrounds (Fisher, 2001). In 1878, the Ottoman Empire granted the British Empire administrative control of Cyprus but not its sovereignty. This arrangement was made to secure protection against Russian expansion southward. At the time, Greece was also expanding its territory, and the Greeks in Cyprus began envisioning the possibility of their island being incorporated into Greece. By 1925, when Cyprus came under the complete sovereignty of the British Crown, the desire for union with Greece was widely embraced by the Greek population of Cyprus (Demetriou, 2019). This movement advocating for union with Greece was known as "enosis" and, in 1955, eventually led to the formation of the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters, also known as EOKA, which initiated guerrilla warfare. The conflict resulted in the loss of many lives and created a division between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriots, feeling alienated by the enosis movement, responded by calling Cyprus to partition into separate communities associated with their respective motherlands, a concept known as "taksim." They aligned themselves more closely with the British rulers and established the TMT (Turkish Resistance Organization) (Fisher, 2001).

In 1960, the Republic of Cyprus was established as an independent state, serving as a compromise solution that aimed to address the conflicting interests of the two opposed ethnic groups (Papadakis et al., 2006), which agreed to the terms of an independent document that Britain, Greece, and Turkey had created. The document designated these three states as guarantor powers, responsible for safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the

newly established state (Papadakis, 1998). However, throughout the 1960s, Cyprus experienced prolonged periods of interethnic conflict, particularly in 1963-1964 and 1967. The Turkish Cypriots, who were the more vulnerable group, endured significant losses during this time. Many were forced to leave their homes and relocated to areas that eventually transformed into armed enclaves that they were controlling (Papadakis, 1998).

In 1964, the United Nations arrived in Cyprus intending to preserve peace and has remained there ever since. Their presence involves monitoring the "Green Line," which serves as a designated zone separating the two sides (Papadakis et al., 2006, p. 3).

In 1974, a significant crisis unfolded in Cyprus, triggered by a coup against President Makarios orchestrated by rebellious factions of the Greek Cypriot National Guard (EOKA B) with support from Athens. This led to clashes between the coupists and left-wing backers of Makarios, followed by attacks on Turkish-Cypriot villages and enclaves. Turkey responded by initiating a full-scale military operation, causing significant losses among Greek Cypriots (Papadakis, 1998). Turkish military units seized control of approximately 37% of the island's northern region (Fisher, 2001). After a month of intense clashes, a ceasefire was reached. Subsequently, Nicosia and the entire island were split into distinct ethnic zones. Nicosia was divided by the Green Line, which continues to be monitored by United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). As a result, the two sides were significantly divided, with the separation being reinforced by natural barriers like mountains, artificial barriers, and the presence of troops from each faction. Almost all interactions between the two groups ceased (Doob, 1986).

The Turkish invasion triggered the displacement of around 160,000 Greek Cypriots to the southern part of the island, leading to a significant refugee crisis. However, the economic challenges associated with this situation were effectively managed with international aid. Following the ceasefire, an agreement was reached for voluntary population regrouping, resulting in approximately 40,000 Turkish Cypriots relocating to the northern region. In comparison, approximately 10,000 Greek Cypriots who remained in the island's northern part were compelled to relocate to the southern region. The events of 1974 caused the loss of numerous lives and people going missing; this resulted in the emergence of two ethnically homogeneous zones on the island (Fisher, 2001).

The effective division of Cyprus caused by the Turkish invasion, which the Turks called their military intervention, led to significant suffering and a high death toll. Moreover, the island's economy was severely damaged. Prompt actions were taken to address the aftermath of this disaster. Both sides of the island implemented extensive governmental economic planning and intervention, resulting in improved living conditions and the construction of housing for the displaced refugees (Stolsten, 1991).

During the 1980s, the expansion of the tourism sector proved highly advantageous for both communities as it attracted a significant influx of international tourists to the island, resulting in substantial benefits for all involved. The economic success of the Republic of Cyprus was remarkable, with refugees quickly obtaining housing and becoming part of a thriving economy. Greek Cypriots enjoyed a high standard of living comparable to Western Europe. Turkish Cypriots faced challenges due to an international embargo imposed by the Republic of Cyprus. However, with substantial Turkish aid, they managed to achieve a decent standard of living, surpassing that of Turkey (Sözen, 2004).

Currently, the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, who jointly established the Republic of Cyprus in 1960, reside in separate territories. The internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus (ROC) has been solely governed by Greek Cypriots since late 1963, maintaining its status as a sovereign state with a seat in the UN General Assembly. On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriot community, the other co-founder of the 1960 Republic, has lived under a different Turkish Cypriot administration. In 1983 they established the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which Turkey only recognises (Leonard, 2013).

In 2003, the once-sealed boundaries were unlocked, enabling members of both communities to traverse to the opposite side. Subsequently, in 2008, a significant symbol of Nicosia, Ledra Street, situated at the centre of the city, was inaugurated for public use. This was made possible through a jointly administered checkpoint, facilitating improved accessibility between North and South Nicosia. However, despite these openings, the city still maintains an enduring state of division (Leonard, 2013).

One of the most significant attempts to resolve the Cyprus conflict since the beginning of negotiations in the mid-1970s was the Annan Plan, named after then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (Yilmaz, 2006). The plan was presented in 2004 as a comprehensive proposal to reunify the island and address the long-standing issues between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish

Cypriot communities. The Annan Plan aimed to establish a federal republic of Cyprus with two politically equal constituent states, one representing the Greek Cypriots and the other representing the Turkish Cypriots. It addressed contentious matters such as territorial adjustments, the return of displaced persons, the rights of refugees, and the presence of Turkish military forces. The plan also outlined provisions for power-sharing mechanisms, a single international personality for Cyprus, and a system of governance that would ensure both communities had a say in decision-making processes. It included provisions for the return of properties and compensation for displaced persons. The Annan Plan was put to simultaneous referendums on both sides of the island in April 2004. The Turkish Cypriot community approved the plan with an overwhelming majority, but the Greek Cypriot community rejected it by a significant margin. As a result, the plan was not implemented (Yilmaz, 2006).

The period from 2015 to 2017 showed considerable promise for the peace process in Cyprus, marking a significant turning point since the lead-up to the 2004 Annan Plan referendum. During this time, Mustafa Akıncı, a strong advocate for a bicomunal, bizonal federation, was elected as the leader of the Turkish Cypriots. At the same time, Nicos Anastasiades, a prominent pro-reunification figure, held the presidency of the Republic of Cyprus. As a result, both communities were under the leadership of individuals who openly supported a federal agreement. Despite the intense negotiations and efforts of various stakeholders, including the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, as well as representatives from Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, a comprehensive settlement was not reached. These recent talks highlighted the significant challenges and complexities involved in finding a mutually acceptable solution to the Cyprus conflict (Crisis Group, 2023).

6. Theoretical framework

In today's rapidly changing global landscape, national identity and social cohesion challenges have become increasingly complex and multifaceted. It is essential to examine multiple theoretical frameworks that provide insight into the complexities of national identity, social cohesion, and generational dynamics to comprehend the underlying reasons behind a country's

persistent divisions. This theoretical chapter aims to harness the power of three fundamental theoretical frameworks - nationalism, social identity, and generational concept, to provide insights into the research question: “What are the reasons the country is still divided, seen from the perspective of the young generation?”

Nationalism serves as a sociopolitical ideology that deeply influences a nation’s collective consciousness. It encompasses sentiments of pride, loyalty, and belonging to one’s country, but it can also breed divisions, ethnocentrism, and an “us versus them” mentality. By delving into the theory of nationalism (Gellner, 1983), we can understand how this ideology shapes the country’s divisions and impacts the perspectives of the young generation.

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974, Jenkins, 2014) complements the examination of nationalism by offering valuable insights into forming and perpetuating societal divisions. People derive their social identity from membership in specific groups, influencing their attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of others. Exploring social identity, especially within the context of intergroup dynamics, provides a framework to comprehend the factors contributing to the country’s ongoing divisions as perceived by the young generation.

Moreover, the generational concept adds a temporal dimension to exploring societal divisions. Each generation is moulded by unique experiences, values, and attitudes, influenced by historical events, technological advancements, and cultural shifts (Mannheim, 1952). By incorporating generational concepts, we can better understand the distinct perspectives and aspirations of the young generation and their role in perpetuating or overcoming divisions within the country.

By employing the theories of nationalism, social identity, and generational dynamics, I aim to unravel the underlying factors that contribute to the enduring divisions within the island, specifically from the viewpoint of the young generation. This theoretical chapter provides a comprehensive analysis that will enable me to address the research question.

6.1 Nationalism

Ernest Gellner’s theory of nationalism suggests that nationalism is a cultural and political construct arising from modern industrial societies’ development. According to Gellner (1983),

nationalism is a form of political ideology that promotes the idea that individuals who share a common language, culture, and history should have a sovereign state.

Gellner (1983) argues that modern education and technological development has accelerated nationalism, creating a common language and culture that has replaced traditional cultural identities. Gellner believes that industrialisation and modernisation have broken down traditional, closed societies, leading to more homogeneous, open societies. He suggests that nationalism emerged as a response to the demands of modernity and the need for societies to create a shared identity. He argues that nationalism is not a product of ethnicity or culture but rather a response to the challenges posed by modernity and the need for societies to create a sense of unity and common purpose. Gellner's theory is modernist, and he emphasises that nationalism does not emerge from pre-existing cultural or ethnic identities but rather from the demands of a changing society (Gellner, 1983, 1997).

Gellner argues that modern societies require a common culture and language to function effectively. Therefore, nationalism provides a means of creating and enforcing that shared culture, which is necessary to form modern nation-states. He asserts that nationalism is a product of the industrial revolution, which created the conditions for the emergence of mass societies and the need for a shared identity (Gellner, 1997).

Gellner argues that nationalism is a modern phenomenon and that it is intimately tied to the modern state's authority. He believes that the nation-state is the primary unit of modern politics, and nationalism is necessary for the state's legitimacy and control. He further explains that intellectuals play a crucial role in forming national identity, and education is essential in creating and transmitting national culture (Gellner, 1983).

In summary, Gellner's theory of nationalism proposes that nationalism is a product of modern industrial societies and a means of creating a shared culture necessary for forming modern nation-states (Gellner, 1983). It emphasises the importance of a shared language, culture, and history in creating a national identity and the role of intellectuals and education in promoting and transmitting national culture.

Another important work in the field of nationalist studies is the book "Imagined Communities" by Benedict Anderson. According to Anderson (1983), nations are "imagined communities" that exist in the minds of individuals, despite their limited personal interactions with other members of the nation. In his book, Anderson explores the idea that nations are not solely based

on objective or tangible realities but are socially constructed entities. The concept of an imagined community arises through shared narratives, symbols, and a collective consciousness that individuals develop (Anderson, 1983).

Anderson argues that print capitalism played a significant role in forming and disseminating national identities (Anderson, 1983). The advent of the printing press and the mass production of printed materials, such as newspapers and novels, facilitated the spread of standardised languages and narratives across large populations (Anderson, 1983). This homogenisation and connection of diverse groups contributed to developing a shared sense of belonging within a nation (Anderson, 1983).

Moreover, Anderson highlights the significance of vernacular languages in constructing national identities. The standardisation and diffusion of vernacular languages through printed materials enabled individuals to imagine themselves as part of a larger community (Anderson, 1983). The invention of the printing press and the subsequent proliferation of printed materials created a platform for individuals to conceive of themselves as members of a national community (Anderson, 1983).

In “Imagined Communities,” Anderson also explores the temporal dimension of nationalism (Anderson, 1983). He argues that nations create a sense of belonging across generations through shared historical narratives and commemorative rituals. This collective memory reinforces national identity and connects individuals to their imagined community (Anderson, 1983).

Anderson’s theory challenges the notion that nations are solely based on primordial ties or objective realities. Instead, he emphasises the role of imagination, cultural practices, and print capitalism in shaping national identities (Anderson, 1983).

6.2 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a significant theoretical framework in social psychology that comprehensively explains group processes and intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to this theory, individuals tend to define themselves based on their membership in social groups and use this information to guide their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. SIT

posits that people have a fundamental need for a positive self-concept and that this need can be satisfied through social identification with an in-group (Hogg, 2016). In-group identification is associated with increased self-esteem and positive emotions, whereas out-group derogation enhances the in-group's status and distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Research has shown that social identity influences behaviour in various domains, including attitudes, emotions, interpersonal relations, and intergroup conflict (Hogg, 2016).

Additionally, SIT explains the formation of intergroup biases, such as stereotyping and prejudice, and how group memberships can be manipulated to affect intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). By providing a framework for understanding the role of social identity in group processes, SIT has contributed significantly to our understanding of human behaviour and intergroup relations.

Social identity theory proposes that individuals experience collective identity based on their membership in a group, which leads to social categorisation and identity salience (Tajfel, 1974). This categorisation helps individuals define their identities as individuals or as group members. Henri Tajfel, the social psychologist who formulated social identity theory, believed that group membership was a significant source of pride and self-esteem. This theory postulates that for a social categorisation to produce normative behaviour, the categorisation must be psychologically salient. Social identity salience is when an individual's social identity becomes more important than their identity. This theory specifies the ways in which social identity can influence intergroup relations, such as prejudice, discrimination, conflict, cooperation, social change, and social stasis. Social identity theory and self-categorisation theory focus on the psychological salience of group membership. Self-categorisation theory holds that people see themselves at different levels, of which the individual level is only one (Tajfel, 1974). Social identity theory has been used to explain several phenomena, including the formation of in-groups and out-groups, behaviour, and attitudes. Social identity theory is relevant in contemporary society since group membership is more critical than ever, especially with the rise of social media and the internet. Therefore, understanding social identity theory is crucial in understanding the social dynamics that drive behaviour and attitudes in contemporary society.

SIT provides insight into how our group memberships shape our self-concept and influence our behaviour towards members of other groups. As Tajfel (1974) argued, our group memberships are a source of pride and self-esteem, and we can boost our status by elevating

the status of our group. However, this in-group favouritism can lead to prejudice and discrimination towards the out-group as individuals seek to maintain and enhance their positive social identity. Understanding SIT can help us understand the dynamics of intergroup conflict and how to reduce prejudice and discrimination. For example, contact between members of different groups can effectively reduce prejudice, but only if it promotes re-categorisation and a sense of shared identity (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Furthermore, SIT can help us to understand how group dynamics affect individual behaviour. Group dynamics refer to the behaviours and psychological processes that occur within or between social groups (Hogg, 2016).

In conclusion, Social Identity Theory is crucial in understanding group processes and intergroup relations within social psychology. This theory explains how social comparison and categorisation are essential to understanding various phenomena, such as group dynamics, prejudice, and discrimination. Tajfel and Turner (1979) introduced the concept of Social Identity Theory, which posits that an individual's self-concept is tied to their social group. Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals derive their self-esteem and identity from group membership. The theory also explains how in-group and out-group biases can lead to intergroup conflict and other social issues. Understanding Social Identity Theory can help individuals recognise and challenge their biases and reduce prejudice and discrimination. Social Identity Theory can also contribute towards explaining the underlying processes contributing to group formation, such as shared goals, values, and experiences. In summary, Social Identity Theory is a comprehensive framework that provides insight into positive and negative intergroup relations and has significant implications for social policy and group interventions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Richard Jenkins has also made significant contributions to the study of social identity. According to Jenkins (2014), social identity is a fundamental aspect of human existence and is crucial in shaping individual behaviour, group dynamics, and societal structures. Jenkins emphasises that social identity is not fixed or inherent but is constructed and shaped within specific social contexts. He argues that individuals develop multiple identities contingent on their interactions with various social groups. These identities can be based on nationality, gender, religion, ethnicity, occupation, or even leisure activities. Thus, social identities are not static but are fluid and dynamic, continually evolving through social interaction (Jenkins, 2014).

According to Jenkins, social identity is primarily collective in nature. It is rooted in the sense of belonging to a particular group or community, and individuals derive a crucial part of their identity from these affiliations. Collective identities provide individuals with a framework for understanding themselves and others, shaping their values, beliefs, and behaviours. Group memberships enable individuals to establish a sense of solidarity, shared meaning, and a feeling of continuity with others who share similar identities (Jenkins, 2014).

Jenkins (2014) emphasises the role of socialisation processes in the formation of social identities. He argues that individuals acquire their identities through complex social interactions, cultural norms, and historical contexts. Socialisation agents, such as family, peers, educational institutions, media, and the broader society, play a crucial role in shaping and transmitting social identities. Jenkins also highlights the significance of power relations in influencing identity formation, as dominant groups often have a more significant influence on the construction of social identities (Jenkins, 2014).

In summary, Richard Jenkins views social identity as a contextual, collective, and dynamic construct that plays a crucial role in individual and group experiences. His perspective underscores the influence of social interactions, power dynamics, and historical contexts in shaping identities. Moreover, he highlights the multidimensionality and intersectionality of social identities and their significance in political and social movements (Jenkins, 2014).

6.3 Concept of generations

Karl Mannheim's concept of generation revolves around the idea that individuals who come of age and experience critical social and historical events together form generational cohorts that share common perspectives and attitudes. Mannheim's understanding of generation goes beyond a purely chronological definition and emphasises the sociocultural context and the impact of historical events on the formation of generational consciousness (Kublitz, 2016).

In Mannheim's book "Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge," he explores the relationship between social structure and individual consciousness, highlighting the role of generations in shaping social change. According to Mannheim (1953), generations emerge as social groups that are exposed to specific historical circumstances and share common experiences, which in turn influence their worldview and perception of reality.

Mannheim argues that generational cohorts are significant in times of rapid social change and upheaval. As these cohorts experience and respond to significant social, political, and economic transformations, they develop a distinct collective consciousness and a unique set of values, beliefs, and aspirations. This generational consciousness drives social and cultural change as new generations challenge and reinterpret established norms and institutions (Mannheim, 1953).

Mannheim's concept of generation highlights the dynamic interplay between individual and collective identities, emphasising the role of historical context in shaping generational attitudes and behaviours. He views generations as active agents in the process of social transformation whose unique perspectives and aspirations contribute to the evolution of society (Mannheim, 2013).

In summary, Karl Mannheim's view on generation emphasises the significance of social and historical context in shaping collective consciousness. Generational cohorts are formed by individuals who share everyday experiences during pivotal historical periods, and their unique perspectives and aspirations contribute to social change (Mannheim, 1953).

7. Analyses

In this analysis chapter, the data collected from interviews will be examined to gain deeper insights into the reasons for the ongoing division in Cyprus, as perceived by the young Cypriot generation. In line with the methodological approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis was employed as the primary analytical framework. This approach identified repetitive patterns, themes, and hidden meanings across the transcribed interview data, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the participants' perspectives.

Throughout the analysis, several recurring themes emerged, providing valuable insights into the complexities of the Cyprus problem. One prominent theme emerged: brainwashing, where participants expressed concerns about the influence of biased narratives and propaganda shaping individuals' perceptions and attitudes. Another significant theme was Greek nationalism, with interviewees highlighting the prevalence of a strong Greek nationalistic

sentiment among Greek Cypriots, potentially contributing to the exclusion of other groups and the marginalisation of their identities.

Education at school emerged as another recurring theme, with interviewees noting the limited emphasis placed on teaching the recent history of Cyprus within the education system. This education gap raised questions about its impact on fostering understanding, empathy, and a shared historical consciousness among young Cypriots.

Additionally, the experiences of visiting the occupied side and encountering Turkish settlers were highlighted as contributing factors to the participant's understanding of the division. The role of Turkey's perceived threats and interventions in the conflict also emerged as a theme, reflecting the geopolitical dynamics influencing the Cyprus problem.

Lastly, the generational shift became a key theme, with interviewees noting the changing perspectives and priorities among the younger generation. The influence of globalisation, exposure to diverse perspectives, and a desire for peace and reconciliation were identified as factors shaping the mindset of the younger Cypriot generation.

Throughout the analysis, these recurring themes will be thoroughly explored and analysed in conjunction with relevant concepts and theories. By engaging with academic literature and theoretical frameworks, the aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics contributing to the ongoing division in Cyprus, as perceived by the young Cypriot generation.

7.1 Nationalism

Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson are two prominent scholars who have provided insightful perspectives on nationalism. By incorporating their theories, we can analyse how nationalism explains the division between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in Cyprus, considering their distinct cultures and languages.

Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism posits that nationalism emerges as a response to modernisation and industrialisation. According to Gellner, nations are created through the process of nationalism, where people are mobilised and unified by a shared culture, language, and history. Gellner argues that the rise of nationalism is closely linked to the standardisation of language, as a common language strengthens the sense of belonging among individuals within a nation (Gellner, 1983).

Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" complements Gellner's theory by focusing on the collective imagination's role in forming nations (Anderson, 1983). Anderson argues that nations are socially constructed entities existing in the collective imagination of their members. These imagined communities transcend physical boundaries and allow individuals who may never personally interact to envision themselves as part of a larger nation. The development of print capitalism, mass communication, and the spread of vernacular languages are crucial elements in fostering this imagined national community.

Applying these theories to the Cyprus conflict, we can explore how nationalism has influenced the perspectives of the young Cypriot generation and contributed to the ongoing division. Nationalism may manifest in various ways, such as attachment to cultural heritage, language, historical narratives, and symbols associated with each side of the conflict. The sense of belonging and identification with their respective communities may shape the views, attitudes, and behaviours of young Cypriots regarding the division of the country.

Greek/ Turkish Nationalism

Nationalism plays a crucial role in perpetuating the division between the Turkish and Greek communities in Cyprus. Firstly, the differing nationalist aspirations of the two communities have created a deep-seated divide. Greek Cypriots historically desired enosis, envisioning Cyprus as part of a greater Greece, while Turkish Cypriots favoured taksim, advocating for the partition of the island (Kaludis, 1999). These conflicting nationalist goals have hindered the development of a shared sense of national identity and a unified state.

Secondly, the allegiance of each community to its respective motherland fuels the perpetuation of division. Greek Cypriots maintain strong ties and loyalty to Greece, considering it their cultural and ancestral homeland. Similarly, Turkish Cypriots feel a deep connection to Turkey

and recognise it as their mother country (Kaludis, 1999). This allegiance to external powers leads to a sense of belonging and identity that transcends the boundaries of Cyprus itself, making it challenging to foster a sense of shared Cypriot nationalism. The same comes with a distinct religion. Most Greek Cypriots are Orthodox Christians, whereas most Turkish Cypriots are Muslims (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016).

Additionally, nationalism narratives and historical grievances have been passed down through generations, further reinforcing the division. The historical context of conflicts, such as the 1974 Turkish invasion and subsequent division of the island, has contributed to the perpetuation of nationalist sentiments. These narratives are often deeply ingrained in the collective memory and consciousness of the communities (Psaltis, 2016), making it difficult to overcome the animosity and forge a shared vision for the future. As Mina indicated:

“I mean, you can tell from young people that are still, because of the anger they have towards Turkey. And what happened back then, like it did, got passed on to our generation. Kinda like brainwashing. Let’s say that happened like Turkish people are bad or whatever because our parents and our grandparents live the world, so this is what they taught us. And you know, when we were doing history and stuff, they would also they would always portray like Turkey, a bad guy, of course, in many cases like they are the bad guy.”

Moreover, nationalist and political rhetoric highlighting differences and promoting exclusivity can stoke tensions and deepen divisions. Political parties and leaders often appeal to nationalist sentiments to gain support and maintain power within their respective communities. This further entrenches the divide and makes it challenging to find common ground for peaceful coexistence.

Based on the findings from interviews, it becomes evident that nationalism played a crucial role in the division of Cyprus. One interviewee emphasised the prevalence of Greek nationalism in Cyprus, stating, *“What I see really commonly seen in Cyprus is the Greek nationalistic attitude like we are Greek Orthodox, we are Greek. Let’s celebrate our Greekness, forgetting about their Cypriot element. And this is the challenge (...) Automatically when you say Cyprus is Greek, you just rule out everyone else. Every minority, so that was a big problem.”* (Cristina)

This statement brings out the interviewee's observation of a strong Greek nationalistic sentiment among Greek Cypriots, prioritising their Greek identity and overlooking the Cypriot element. The celebration of Greekness and the exclusion of other minorities are identified as significant issues. The interviewee suggests that the assertion of Cyprus being Greek automatically marginalises and excludes all other groups within the country.

Another interlocutor emphasises the cultivation of nationalism in school by celebrating Greek holidays: *“So also we have all the national holidays and celebrations are a big thing in school, OK, and when I say national, I’m talking about Greek national, not as I see proof like lots of Greek flags everywhere. All the notebooks have like like stuff like that. (...) for the national holidays, we celebrate all the Greek national holidays, whereas Greece does not celebrate any Cypriot national holidays. We have been running the Independent Nation since 1960, but we sing the national anthem of Greece.”* (Andreas)

National holidays often serve as occasions to reinforce and celebrate national identity and patriotism. The statement highlights the influence of the education system in promoting Greek nationalism in Cyprus. The emphasis on Greek national holidays, the prevalence of Greek symbols and flags, and the singing of the Greek national anthem all contribute to fostering a sense of Greek national identity among students, overshadowing the development and recognition of a distinct Cypriot national identity.

This belief aligns with the theories of nationalism scholars like Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson put forth. Gellner's theory emphasises the role of language and culture in forming nations, while Anderson's concept of imagined communities underscores the construction of shared narratives and symbols. In the case of Cyprus, the Greek solid nationalistic attitude, as described in the interviews, contributes to the division between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. It reinforces a sense of belonging to the Greek imagined community while marginalising other groups and their identities.

Education at school

Education also plays a significant role in the context of the Cyprus issue, particularly in fostering understanding, reconciliation, and promoting peaceful coexistence between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. All of the interviewees emphasised the importance of education about the

history of events to comprehend the division of the country. Some of them also mentioned that limited attention is given to the recent history of Cyprus, as Andreas mentioned:

” I believe that Cypriots lack the knowledge and the information to be able...to decide what happened. You know, it’s not like they don’t want to decide or they don’t want to do to understand what really happened, but they lack the information. Uh, like I’m telling you, In schools, we in history in the subject of history, both in primary and secondary and high school, we did very little in Cypriot history, especially in Cypriot recent history like very, very little! And I can tell you with confidence that most of what we learn was not from the subject of history; it was from the subject of modern Greek. (...) but we never learned about Cypriot history. The recent history that is affecting our lives every day.”

This quote highlights Andreas’s observation that the education system in Cyprus inadequately covers Cypriot history, particularly the recent history that directly impacts the lives of individuals. The interviewee further notes that instead of focusing on Cypriot history, the emphasis is placed on the history of modern Greece. This observation suggests that the education system in Cyprus may contribute to a lack of understanding or awareness about the events that led to the division of the country.

The interlocutor’s opinion aligns with the view that education plays a crucial role in understanding the division in Cyprus. By neglecting the teaching of Cypriot history, especially the recent history, there is a potential for gaps in knowledge and a limited understanding of the factors that have influenced the division between Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

Cristina presented a similar point of view: *“In the Republic of Cyprus, we just learn about the Greek Revolution. Which I never like, I just skipped it in my brain. It is not I do not know anything until now but not much emphasis is given to the history of Cyprus, which can help that”*, and she also believes that the syllabus about history has to change in both communities: *“I think also that teaching about the conflict must change in both cases because in Cyprus we are taught all OK we were here, and then the Turks decided to invade us for no reason, which of course for a war to take place there has to be something from both sides and also, but I think in the North they either do not teach it at all or teach their own version. Um, so I think the syllabus needs to change to show how the war was a result of both sides.”*

To address this issue, it becomes essential to prioritise and include comprehensive education about the history of events related to Cyprus within the curriculum. This would enable future generations to have a better understanding of the complexities and dynamics that have shaped the division, fostering empathy, dialogue, and reconciliation.

For a comprehensive analysis of the role of history education in divided Cyprus, it is worth reading Yiannis Papadakis's research "Narrative, memory and history education in divided Cyprus: A comparison of schoolbooks on the 'History of Cyprus'" (Papadakis, 2008). Papadakis delves into the narratives, memory construction, and intergroup dynamics within the education system by carefully examining Greek and Turkish Cypriot schoolbooks. This paper offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between education, collective memory, and national identity in Cyprus, making it an essential reference for those seeking a deeper understanding of the topic.

7.2 Social Identity in Divided Cyprus

Social Identity Theory complements the explanation for the division between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island. Greek and Turkish Cypriots categorise their social group identities based on religion and language, both of which are vital components of their respective cultures and have a long history of conflict between them. According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), individuals divide themselves into different groups based on their strong ties with them, and this can lead to intergroup prejudice and conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This has been demonstrated in Cyprus with multiple identities and double-edged affiliations, such as a Cypriot, Greek Cypriot, or Turkish Cypriot.

Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have distinct social identities that are shaped by their respective histories, cultures, and political systems. Greek Cypriots identify primarily as Greeks, with a shared language, religion, and cultural heritage. They view themselves as the legitimate government of the island and have sought to unite Cyprus with Greece, which they see as their natural homeland. Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, identify primarily as Turks with a shared language, religion, and cultural heritage. They view themselves as a minority

group on the island and have sought to establish a separate state in the northern part of the island, which they call the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016).

Education/ Brainwashing

These distinct social identities have been reinforced by social institutions such as education and media, which have promoted different narratives about the history and politics of Cyprus. Greek Cypriot schools, for example, teach a version of history that emphasises the role of Greek culture and civilisation in the development of Cyprus. In contrast, Turkish Cypriot schools teach a version of history that emphasises the role of Turkish culture and civilisation (Papadakis, 2008). The history education in public schools mirrored a particular official dominant storyline in both communities. This narrative plays a significant role, as evidenced below, in fostering bias and suspicion towards individuals from the opposing community, mainly when individuals unquestioningly absorb it.

As stated by Papadakis (2008), the predominant nationalistic historical narrative found in Greek Cypriot textbooks revolves around the arrival of Greeks in Cyprus during the fourteenth century BC, resulting in the Hellenisation of the island. The central focus of this narrative is on the Greeks of Cyprus as the moral centre, while the primary enemy is the Turks. The narrative depicts a struggle for survival by Cypriot Hellenism against foreign conquerors, ultimately concluding tragically with the “Barbaric Turkish Invasion” and the subsequent occupation of 37% of Cyprus (Papadakis, 2008, p.137).

On the other hand, the corresponding Turkish Cypriot narrative begins with the arrival of Turks in Cyprus in 1571 AD. The moral centre is portrayed as the Turks of Cyprus, and the primary enemy is identified as “Rums” (Greeks). The narrative revolves around the Turks of Cyprus fighting against Greek Cypriot domination, with the war of 1974 serving as a triumphant conclusion marked by the “Happy peace operation” conducted by Turkey in Cyprus (Papadakis, 2008, p.137).

The official narratives effectively endorse a specific manner of collectively remembering victimisation inflicted by external parties. Subsequently, it is evident that subscribing to these official narratives not only predicts the presence of realistic and symbolic threats but also leads to an escalation of prejudice and the deepening of distrust between the two communities in

Cyprus. Ultimately, this contributes to a diminished desire for future coexistence with the opposing community (Psaltis, 2016).

To support this argument, I will present Andreas's memory from his time back at school:

“All the notebooks had photos of the north side of the occupied side, and they all had a statement ‘δεν ξεχνώ’, which translates: I do not forget. OK so very early in the very early stage of self-development of the people of both boys and girls, they are starting to cultivate these in their minds like in our minds, like ‘δεν ξεχνώ’, I don't forget and I see a photo of the occupied part which directly puts the blame on someone because it is not. It is not just a statement that can be interpreted in many different ways. Especially when the children, when a child is the one that, that is easy.”

In this context, the statement “δεν ξεχνώ,” which translates to “I do not forget,” reflects a collective memory that holds significance for the group (in-group/ Greek Cypriots). By remarkably featuring photos of the occupied side, individuals express their identification with the group affected by the occupation. This statement is related to a conflict or historical event that has shaped the group's identity and social identity.

Andreas stressed that these symbolic representations start at the very early stage of the self-development of young people. Children, who are more susceptible to social influence, actively encounter and internalise these narratives. This process could reinforce their identification with the group (Greek Cypriots) and shape their perceptions of others (out-group/ Turkish Cypriots) involved in the conflict. Furthermore, the quote alludes to the idea that the statement and photos directly assign blame or responsibility to someone (can create mistrust and prejudice). This attribution of blame can be a mechanism to strengthen the in-group's cohesion and differentiate it from the out-group.

The Cyprus conflict can be seen as a struggle over social identity, as each side seeks to establish its own identity and assert its own legitimacy. The conflict has been fueled by a desire to protect and preserve these distinct social identities and by a fear of assimilation or subordination to the other group. The power dynamics between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots have further contributed to this intergroup conflict, with Greeks seeking dominance and power over the Turks and Turks striving for equal recognition (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016). This has resulted in a

deepening of social divisions and a breakdown of trust between the two communities, making it difficult to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Visiting the occupied side/ Turkish settlers

An additional significant aspect of the Cyprus problem involves a considerable population of people of Turkish origin who relocated to Cyprus after 1974. Greek Cypriots commonly label these individuals as “settlers,” whereas Turkish Cypriots refer to them as “immigrants.” (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016, p. 233). The majority of individuals beyond the borders of Cyprus possess a clear understanding of the Greek Cypriots’ antagonistic sentiments and animosity towards Turkey, which is perceived as an invading hostile force. As a result, these “settlers/immigrants” are perceived as posing a risk to the demographic composition of Cyprus and are therefore regarded as one of the outcomes of Turkey’s war crimes committed against Cyprus (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016). Nevertheless, hardly anyone knows about the equally intricate conflict between Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish settlers/immigrants who initially arrived after the Turkish invasion (Navaro-Yashin, 2006). This is another aspect that can be examined within SIT, but I will not dive into it in this paper.

The topic of Turkey as a threat to Cyprus has emerged in each of my interviews, revealing contrasting realities and a perception of threat from Turkey that influences the social identity towards Turks and Turkish Cypriots. This perception is deeply rooted in historical and political factors, reflecting the complex dynamics on the divided island. Cristina highlights the concern expressed by many about Turkish immigrants and their rights: *“There’s the question of the Turkish immigrants are going to the north side, why should they have like a lot of people say, why should they have rights since they are Turkish and they just came to the north to overpopulate the North and show that it has been it, it’s becoming a majority because that’s also an issue.”*. She suggests that this situation is a matter of concern and poses a significant issue in the context of the Cyprus problem.

Crossing the border to the occupied side, also known as the North, in Cyprus is undeniably a controversial topic. The act of crossing carries significant emotional weight and differing perspectives among individuals. The experience of visiting the other side of Cyprus has been repeated in all of the interviews, for some, it evokes strong feelings due to the complex historical and political context as well as what Cristina believed was institutional pressure:

“For me, I don’t consider it. I don’t consider myself to be racist towards Turkish Cypriots or people from Turkey, but I think from the institutional pressure that we are getting brainwashed. Whenever I hear someone like going spending money in the North, I’m just like, it tickled in me like that. Why would you do that!?! And? I don’t know. I feel if I pretend that everything is OK. That is what the situation is now. It’s like hurting also your grandparents, your family that has. That has gone so much without a reason. Basically, like all of the people like that were affected.”

Andreas mentioned that opposition existed when the checkpoint opened in 2003 between the two communities. According to him, a key concern was that opening these checkpoints would allow Greek Cypriots to visit the North, leading to increased economic support for the North and consequently strengthening its economy: *“When the crossing points opened, many people were against that. Because then it means that Greek Cypriots would go in the North, they would generally pay for items, so they will support their economy and they will grow stronger. And this is one of the reasons why the checkpoints opened, it was for that because the North was struggling a lot.”*

For many Greek Cypriots, crossing the border to the North can evoke painful memories and a sense of loss, as they may have been directly affected by the displacement or separation of family members during the conflict. Visiting the occupied side can be emotionally charged, stirring up complex feelings related to the unresolved political situation and their personal experiences.

On the other hand, some individuals choose to cross the border, driven by curiosity, a desire for connection, or a willingness to engage in dialogue with the Turkish Cypriot community. They may view it as an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the situation, challenge preconceptions, or foster reconciliation efforts.

Mina, too, provides her perspective on the situation: *“I mean, we do have the extremist and they do like people who hate Turkish people because just they are Turkish or whatever. I mean, they are racist. They were. But you can see like Cypriot, when the borders opened because in the past we were unable to go to the other side.”*

Now you can go by showing your idea or whatever. You can cross the borders like you can see that they are open to going there and I mean things are cheaper there. So they go when they buy stuff. You can see that slowly that thing in the beginning when the borders opened nobody wanted to go like it was a betrayal to go to the other side. It's like you're giving money to the enemy. That's how they approach the situation. But now you can see that they are more open to the idea and they are finally starting to realise that people have nothing to do with what is happening. It's mostly the politics.

Ohh, the weight affecting us is like you, we live in a place where there are actually borders you cannot go to the other side, you need to show your ID. A lot of properties were lost, and there is still this anger lingering in young people and you can see the dichotomy and as they will still keep fighting about the solution because some people believe we should be merged, other people they don't. So you can see it is affecting them. I mean, slowly it goes away.”

In this case, she acknowledges the presence of extremists who harbour hatred towards Turkish people based solely on their ethnicity, highlighting social identity's role in shaping attitudes and prejudices. This indicates that individuals may develop negative perceptions of out-group members, Turkish Cypriots, due to their distinct social identity. The idea of “giving money to the enemy” reflects the perception of Turkey as an adversary and the association of economic interaction with supporting the perceived enemy group.

The experience of crossing the borders to the occupied side of Cyprus serves as a significant event that influences perceptions and attitudes. Initially, when the borders opened, some Cypriots were reluctant and resistant to cross over to the other side. This hesitation can be attributed to a strong in-group bias and the perception of the other side as the “enemy.” Crossing over and engaging with the Turkish Cypriots or purchasing goods from the other side was initially viewed as a betrayal or support for the enemy. This reflects the ingroup-outgroup dynamics and the psychological boundaries established between the two communities.

However, Mina notes a gradual shift in attitudes as time passes. As she called that, people are “more relaxed”. The same description also appeared in other interviews, and I will expand on that in the Generations shift chapter. This economic incentive and the time passed challenged the initial negative perception and gradually broke down the two groups' barriers. The

willingness to engage with the other side demonstrates a shifting social identity and a reevaluation of the perceived threat.

7.3 Generations

Karl Mannheim's view on generation offers insight into identity formation and social change in divided Cyprus. Mannheim believed that every generation experiences unique cultural and social influences, which shape how individuals within a given age cohort develop and identify themselves (Mannheim, 1952).

He argued that this process of self-reflection and identity formation then motivates the generation to embrace specific social values and ideals, thus pushing society to undergo change. In this respect, Mannheim's theory argues that generations are not just products of history but also agents of it (Mannheim, 1952). This is especially relevant when looking at Cyprus, a divided island with a complicated history and many intergenerational conflicts that have shaped its modern character. While the older generation can be seen to harbour more traditional values, the younger generation has increasingly embraced ideals of multiculturalism and tolerance. This indicates the process of identity formation that Mannheim discusses and reinforces the idea that each generation has the potential to push social change.

Generation change

According to Mannheim's concept, the older generation's experience of the war forms the basis of their generational consciousness. As time passes and new generations emerge, they may have less direct experience or emotional attachment to the conflict, allowing for the possibility of approaching the issue with fresh perspectives and potentially fostering reconciliation.

These quotes reflect the generational dynamics in the context of the Cyprus conflict and the prospects for reconciliation: *"My generation did not leave there—the war. So we kind of lost the perspective of next, OK, this perspective, but because of lost the bad, let's say days of that, and it's slowly fading away. So I mean if you faded a lot and you forget about it, forget*

in quotation marks again, it is gonna become easier for younger generations to, you know, be together and find a solution.” (Ginnanis)

Ginnanis suggests that their generation has lost the immediate perspective of the conflict due to the passage of time and fading memories. The idea of “forgetting” in quotation marks implies that while the memories may not vanish completely, they become less emotionally charged and less influential in shaping their viewpoint. He believes that this fading of memories will make it easier for younger generations to come together and find a solution, as they would not carry the same emotional weight of the past.

Mina expresses the same opinion regarding finding the solution to the conflict: *“It leaves like two or three more generations to pass. For that to happen because people like they tend to forget, and slowly, you can see how my parents were reacting. For us, what and how we see stuff, we are calmer. So as long as generations come, they will be even calmer, and there will be no anger towards them. “*

Importantly, all the interviews pointed to a common observation: people are becoming “more relaxed” in their approach to the conflict. This suggests a broader societal trend towards increased receptiveness, flexibility, and a willingness to explore alternative perspectives. This shift in attitudes contributes to an environment conducive to fostering reconciliation.

The generational change in attitudes towards the Cyprus conflict is not limited to the younger generation. It can also be observed within the older generation, as exemplified by Andreas’ interview, where he describes the change in his father’s attitude, who lost his house and had to move to the South because of the conflict: *“This happened in 74. My dad was eight years old, but then, so he also grew up with the not necessarily hate, but negative narratives towards the other side (...). So my father was one of those people that did not want to open the checkpoints (...) Now he visits the North a lot because now he is more relaxed. He is more calm like I think he understood the difference between people and politics and like ordinary people and the leaders and all that.”*

Applying Mannheim’s concept, we can see the generational shift in values and attitudes among the interviewed young people. The current generation, growing up in a different social and historical context, is more receptive to open-minded approaches. Their emphasis on finding practical solutions that benefit both sides demonstrates a departure from traditional or entrenched positions. As Harris highlighted: *“Our community now it’s more open-minded,*

but like different stuff. So if that, let's say, goes with this problem to be open-minded and find some solutions that are that can benefit both sides either economically or for whatever reason, it can work.

We showed that we don't want the same politicians. We want a different approach, and the politicians now, I'm happy that they realise this because the last president has been in for ten years, in this role, and he stepped apart from the community."

Harris pointed out the desire for change in the community with a call for a different political approach. This sentiment was not limited to a specific generation but was shared across different age groups. It signifies a growing recognition among individuals of the need for new leadership and a departure from the established political order. This generational shift in political preferences reflects the emergence of a collective consciousness seeking transformation and a more inclusive decision-making process.

Mannheim's view on generation is a powerful lens to analyse the complexities of our world's divided societies, such as Cyprus. Through his sociological theories of generations, he offers a unique view that enables us to understand better and confront the complex challenges such highly conflicted societies face. It also provides us with the foundation to build bridges of communication and understanding between people of different generations. Mannheim argued that historical, social, and cultural forces come together to influence generations, shaping them in distinct ways. Each generation develops an understanding of the world and its socio-political context based on the collective experiences they have grown up with and the social values they have absorbed. Understanding generations' unique perspectives, interactions, and tensions are key to finding solutions to the challenges in divided societies such as Cyprus. Accordingly, Mannheim's view must be used to inform future actions, strategies, and initiatives to bring reconciliation and create a more peaceful society.

8. Reflection on the previous research

I aimed to investigate the perspectives of the young Cypriot generation on the Cyprus problem, building upon the previous research conducted by Maria Hadjipavlou (2007). The primary objective was to explore how the views and experiences of the conflict are perceived now by the young generation. The generation that was born almost 20 years after the country's division.

Several differences between Hadjipavlou's research studies and mine make direct comparisons challenging. She employed questionnaires and gathered data from a substantial number of participants from the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities between 2000 and 2002. On the other hand, in my study, I conducted interviews and focused solely on participants from the Greek side of Cyprus. These methodological and sample differences impact the scope and generalizability of the findings. While Hadjipavlou's study encompassed a broader representation of both communities and utilised a standardised data collection tool, my research concentrated specifically on the perspectives of Greek Cypriots.

Interestingly, despite these disparities, it is noteworthy that certain common themes and findings emerged, indicating a degree of continuity in the issues surrounding the conflict. Similar to Hadjipavlou's research, my study revealed key factors such as the role of education, nationalism and, in connection with that, the utilisation of national symbols and the perceived absence of political determination from leaders have a considerable impact on the continuous conflict.

The survey reveals that an increasingly informed civil society is emerging in both communities, expressing dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs. It indicates that most interviewees in both communities consider ethnic nationalism as a significant cause of the conflict, signalling a shift away from this ideology as a viable option for identity and security needs (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

Her survey indicates that the education system and curriculum have not been effectively utilised as platforms for conflict resolution and reconciliation. There is a lack of mutual acknowledgement of shared responsibility for historical events, and efforts to revise textbooks and promote a conflict resolution culture have been limited (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

The study emphasises the importance of leadership that is sensitive to the concerns, fears, and needs of the people in both communities. It points out a gap between societal needs and leadership initiatives, emphasising the need for further investigation into this issue.

Including these common themes provides a valuable link between the two studies, suggesting that, despite time, specific fundamental issues remain relevant and require attention. This

alignment strengthens the credibility of the findings and highlights the persistent challenges that need to be addressed in order to advance towards peace and reconciliation in Cyprus. While acknowledging the limitations of directly comparing the studies due to different methodologies and sample groups, the emergence of shared viewpoints reinforces the notion that exploring the perspectives of the younger generation is crucial in understanding the current situation. By examining their experiences and beliefs, we gain valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of the Cyprus problem and can identify potential areas for intervention and dialogue.

9. Conclusion

The ongoing Cyprus conflict has been a complex and highly divisive issue for decades, with the country remaining deeply divided along ethnic lines. Despite multiple attempts at reunification, the issue persists, making it all the more important to understand the underlying reasons for this divide.

As the younger generation of Cypriots begins to come of age, it is critical to explore their perspectives on the issue and uncover any potential avenues for change. Conducting five semi-structured interviews with Cypriots aged between 24 and 35 from the Greek side of the island has provided valuable insight into the ongoing conflict. Through these interviews, it has become clear that there are numerous reasons for the continued division of Cyprus. Many of the interviewees cited historical and cultural differences as a critical factor in the ongoing conflict, with some believing that the two sides simply cannot reconcile their differences. Others highlighted the role of politics and power dynamics in perpetuating the divide, with the Turkish government and military being prominent sources of tension.

Through the interviews, I discovered that the younger generation feels a deep frustration with the current state of affairs and believes that the country's division is perpetuated by a lack of political will on both sides. They believe that politicians prioritise their interests over the interests of the people and that this behaviour prevents progress towards a resolution. This frustration is further compounded by the presence of around 35,000 Turkish troops in the north (Psaltis & Cakal, 2016), considered an occupation force. This has left many Greek

Cypriots feeling like external forces are controlling them, leading to a lack of trust between the communities.

The participants argued that this nationalist attitude reinforces the perception of a divided identity between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. They noted that the strong emphasis on Greek national identity in some sectors of the Greek Cypriot society creates barriers to understanding and empathy with the Turkish Cypriot community. The interviewees believed that moving away from exclusive nationalist ideologies and adopting a more inclusive approach, such as embracing a Cypriot identity consisting of acknowledging both cultures, could help bridge the divide and promote a sense of shared belonging. Cristina and Andreas mentioned participating in communal activities where they met Turkish Cypriots to foster mutual understanding, build personal connections, and bridge the cultural divide. These initiatives can take various forms, such as organised excursions to different parts of the island or language exchange programs. By actively engaging in such initiatives, individuals from both communities can come together, interact, and find common ground. These activities help break down barriers, foster mutual understanding, and promote unity and shared experiences. Andreas believes that interpersonal interactions, particularly among the youth, are a strong starting point for fostering a sense of shared Cypriot identity and promoting understanding between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

Furthermore, the younger generation also highlighted the role of education in perpetuating division, noting that the two communities have separate school systems that teach vastly different versions of history. This perpetuates stereotypes and creates a sense of division that is difficult to overcome. Overall, the interviews revealed a complex set of factors that contribute to the continued division of Cyprus and underscore the need for political will and education reform to move towards a peaceful resolution.

However, despite these challenges, many of the interviewees expressed hope for the future and a belief that it is possible to achieve greater unity. Through more excellent dialogue, increased understanding, and a shared commitment to working towards a common goal, the younger generation of Cypriots may be able to play a crucial role in finding a path towards lasting peace and reconciliation.

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11. Appendix 1

Interview guide:

1. What are your thoughts on the Cyprus conflict and its impact on the island?
2. How the Cyprus conflict was discussed in your family?
3. How do you believe the conflict has affected your generation?
4. Do you think there is a solution to the Cyprus conflict? If so, what is it?
5. What role can young people play in resolving the conflict and promoting integration?
6. How do you envision a united Cyprus, and what benefits would it bring to the island?
7. What are the biggest obstacles to achieving a united Cyprus, and how can they be overcome?
8. In your opinion, what steps must be taken to build trust between the two communities on the island?
9. What are your thoughts on the current state of the peace talks, and what changes would you like to see in the negotiation?
10. How can young people in Cyprus work together to promote reconciliation and unity between the two communities?

12. Appendix 2

Common themes/ keywords from the interviews:

Recurring Theme	Mina	Cristina	Andres	Giannis	Harris
Brainwashing	x	x	x		
Greek Nationalism	x	x	x		
Visiting the occupied/ North Side	x	x	x	x	x
Education at school	x	x	x	x	x
Turkey's threats	x	x		x	x
Turkish settlers	x	x		x	
Change in generation	x	x	x	x	x