

A Review of Literature on the Nature of the Greek Community in Melbourne, Australia

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History in Australia tells us that Greek migration to Australia dates to the late 19th century and early 20th, and by 1940 when the vast majority of migrants actually settled in what they refer to as their 'new home' their 'second homeland' (δεύτερη πατρίδα), searching for a new beginning in the 'lucky country' or 'the country of opportunity' as they viewed Australia. This process was made possible by the Assisted Passage Agreement signed by the Greek and Australian governments in 1952 that opened the way for the Greek people to come to Australia in large numbers and then for the City of Melbourne become home to the world's largest population of Greek people outside of Greece, a distinction it has maintained up to the present time. It was not smooth sailing however for these migrants – some challenges they faced were language, the loss of family and friends, and adjusting to a new way of life and culture – the Australian way. As a country Australia was and still is committed to providing culturally appropriate health care and services, and this principle is incorporated into the service contract of Medicare, the national healthcare system (Department of Human Services, 2012). Will start also with noting that there was no need for ethics for this type of anticipated data collection because everything that will be collected and the data that will go into the next paper will be in the public domain and is intended by its writers for general consumption as it will be in the online world. Data Collection is to be of online nature via <https://www.reddit.com> during a 6-month period August 2025 – January 2026 (posts made in the last 12 months).

Introduction

This paper presents a review of literature concerning the nature of the Greek community in Melbourne, Australia, with particular attention to issues of migration, cultural identity, wellbeing, and intergenerational experiences within the Greek diaspora. The quotations included throughout this paper are derived from previous qualitative studies conducted in Melbourne between 2011 and 2016 and are not drawn from the current data collection undertaken during 2025–2026. Their inclusion serves to strengthen the literature review by providing illustrative real-life examples and participant perspectives relevant to the themes discussed.

The first study, conducted in 2011, was a qualitative investigation titled *Cultural Understanding of Health and Adjustment to Cardiovascular Disease among the Greek Elderly*. The study involved 13 participants over the age of 60 who were recruited from the Fronditha Care activity group in Melbourne, Australia (see Table

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One for participant demographics). The research explored the health beliefs of elderly Greek Australians and examined how they understood health, illness, and cardiovascular disease within the context of their cultural values and attitudes toward wellbeing and medical care.

The second study commenced in 2012 as part of a PhD research project titled *Health Beliefs and Practices in Three Generations of Greek Australian Women in Melbourne*. This qualitative study examined the health beliefs and practices of women across three generations of Greek Australian families, including the immigrant generation, first generation, and second generation Australian-born participants. A total of 48 participants took part in the study (see Table Two for participant demographics). Participants discussed and interpreted experiences related to health, illness, and wellbeing through their own cultural and generational perspectives.

The third study, undertaken in 2016, investigated *Greek Dancing as an Aspect of Cultural Identity and Wellbeing*. This qualitative study involved 19 participants from the Manasis School of Greek Dance and Culture in Melbourne, Australia (see Table Three for participant demographics). The research explored the significance of Greek dancing as a means of cultural expression, identity maintenance, community connection, and wellbeing among members of the Greek diaspora living in Australia.

Table 1. *Participant Demographics from Study One: ‘Cultural Understanding of Health and Adjustment to Cardiovascular Disease among the Greek elderly’*

Age [at the time of interview]>60	Gender 5 (male) 8 (female)	Male (Participants 2,3,5,12,13)	Female (Participants 1,4, 6,7,8,9,10,11)
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Table 2. *Participant Demographics from Study Two: ‘Health Beliefs and Practices in Three Generations of Greek Australian Women in Melbourne’*

All female Participants	Immigrant generation	1 st generation	2 nd generation
Age [at the time of interview]	>58 - <78	>37-<50	>16 -<18
Years in Australia	>39 - <56	Australian born	Australian born

Table 3. *Participant Demographics from Study Three: ‘Greek dancing as an aspect of cultural identity and wellbeing’*

Age [at the time of interview] >18	Gender Male Participants 4 Female Participants 15	Country of Birth - Greece Participants 1,2,12,13,16	Country of Birth – Australia Participants 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,14,15,17,18,19
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Will start with some historical information as a background to the topic.

Background

Greek migration to Australia dates back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with larger waves of migration occurring following World War II and the Greek Civil War. By the mid-twentieth century, many Greek migrants had settled permanently in Australia, often referring to it as their “second homeland” (δεύτερη πατρίδα). For many, Australia represented a place of opportunity, stability, and the possibility of a better future for themselves and their families.

A significant increase in Greek migration occurred following the Assisted Passage Agreement signed between the Greek and Australian governments in 1952, which enabled large numbers of Greek migrants to settle in Australia. As a result, Melbourne became home to one of the largest Greek populations outside Greece, a distinction it continues to maintain today.

Despite the opportunities available in Australia, the migration experience was often challenging. Many migrants experienced language barriers, separation from family and friends, social isolation, and difficulties adjusting to a new cultural and social environment. Adapting to Australian society required considerable psychological, social, and cultural adjustment.

Australia has long promoted multiculturalism and the provision of culturally appropriate healthcare and social services. This commitment is reflected within the Australian healthcare system, including Medicare, which recognises the importance of culturally responsive service provision for diverse migrant communities (Department of Human Services, 2012).

Methodology, Data Collection and Early Findings

It is important to note that formal ethics approval was not required for this stage of the study because all data collected were publicly available online and intended by users for public consumption. The study utilised publicly accessible discussions posted on Reddit, an online social media platform, and no private or restricted-access material was included. Furthermore, no direct interaction with participants occurred, and no additional personal data beyond what was publicly available online was collected or analysed.

Data collection was conducted online via Reddit over a six-month period between August 2025 and January 2026. The study focused on posts published within the previous 12 months, with data collected twice monthly throughout the research period.

Preliminary findings from the first three months of data collection (August 2025 – October 2025) indicated that social media platforms such as Reddit function as important spaces for discussions relating to diasporic identity and migration experiences. Common topics included Greek migration, life in diaspora, religion, food, sport, cultural identity, and community belonging. In addition, many users sought practical advice regarding issues such as Greek citizenship by descent, migration between Australia and Greece, and processes associated with obtaining Greek citizenship.

A Review of Literature¹

While the Greek community has largely integrated into Australian society, Greek migrants and their Australian-born descendants have maintained a strong cultural identity characterised by enduring connections to their ancestral homeland, the Greek language, and the Greek Orthodox faith (Tamis, 2005). Religion and spirituality, in particular, have functioned as important sources of emotional support, identity continuity, and resilience for both first-generation migrants and subsequent generations of Greek Australians (Avgoulas & Fanany, 2015; 2024).

Many Greek migrants who arrived in Australia during the post-war migration period had firsthand experiences of war, occupation, and political instability. Greece experienced occupation by German and Italian forces during World War II, followed by the Greek Civil War, both of which contributed significantly to social disruption and economic hardship. For many migrants, migration to Australia was initially perceived as temporary, with the intention of eventually returning to Greece after achieving financial stability and establishing a better future for their families (Price, 2000). However, for the majority, permanent return migration did not occur, and Australia gradually became home.

This experience often produced complex and sometimes conflicting emotions among members of the migrant generation. Many participants expressed nostalgia and sadness associated with their inability to return permanently to Greece, while simultaneously acknowledging the opportunities and stability they experienced in Australia. Some participants reflected positively on their migration experience, describing Australia as a country that provided security, opportunity, and improved living conditions. Others compared their circumstances favourably to those of relatives who remained in Greece, particularly during periods of economic instability.

For both the migrant generation and their descendants, Australia became a “second homeland” (δεύτερη πατρίδα), and many individuals gradually became acculturated into the English-speaking Australian context. Most migrants arrived with limited financial resources, minimal formal education, and predominantly rural backgrounds. Despite these challenges, they brought with them strong cultural traditions, values, beliefs, and social practices that they sought to preserve and transmit to future generations as essential aspects of their “Greekness” (Tamis, 2005).

The early years of settlement in Australia were often characterised by social, linguistic, and emotional challenges. However, traditional cultural values, family structures, and religious faith functioned as important sources of resilience and psychological support during this period of adjustment. Compared with some other migrant communities in multicultural Australia, the Greek community has demonstrated a particularly strong attachment to homeland, culture, and collective identity, which has contributed to a strong sense of belonging and continuity within diaspora (Kaloudis, 2006).

¹As noted previously and further highlighted by this footnote, this paper is a review of literature of the topic quotes that have been included in this paper are from previous research from 2011-2016 and not from this current study as this data was collected in 2025 and 2026. The reason for its inclusion was to highlight further the literature review of this paper with real life examples and via the use of relevant quotes.

Culture plays a significant role in shaping how individuals and communities understand health, illness, wellbeing, and social experience. The experiences of migrant communities and the relationship between cultural identity and wellbeing have been widely discussed within migration and cultural psychology literature (Lopez-Class et al., 2011; Unger & Schwartz, 2012). Migration is often a life-changing experience not only for migrants themselves but also for future generations. The process of migration and acculturation may contribute to stress, anxiety, and psychological vulnerability, particularly during periods of social adjustment and cultural transition (Pumariega et al., 2005). At the same time, the experience of migration varies significantly across individuals depending on social, cultural, historical, and personal factors. Previous research has also demonstrated important relationships between migration, acculturation, and health outcomes among migrant populations (Miranda et al., 2011; Organista et al., 2003; Salant & Lauderdale, 2003).

Some of the data discussed in this review relates specifically to the health and wellbeing of older Greek Australian women living in Melbourne. These findings derive from several in-depth qualitative studies conducted within the Greek Australian community between 2011 and 2016. Ethical approval was obtained where required, and all identifying information was removed to protect participant confidentiality. Fictional names were also used throughout the research process.

The studies aimed to document and better understand the experiences of migration, settlement, acculturation, and ageing among members of the original migrant generation who had lived in Australia for several decades. An autoethnographic and narrative approach was adopted to allow participants to describe their experiences and perceptions in their own words, either in Greek or English. To further explore intergenerational acculturation and identity, interviews were also conducted with children and grandchildren of the migrant generation. In total, 16 family groups participated in the study, comprising 48 participants across three generations.

The findings discussed below primarily reflect the perspectives of the immigrant generation. Interviews explored participants' experiences of migration, identity, health, family life, religion, and cultural continuity. The resulting narratives were analysed using ethnographic and narrative approaches. As the first author is a member of the Greek Australian community, the research was conducted from both insider and outsider perspectives, facilitating culturally informed engagement with participants and allowing interviews to be conducted in Greek where necessary.

The discussion is organised into four thematic areas: Health and Wellbeing in Greece before Migration; Greece after Migration; Health and Wellbeing in Greece Compared to Australia; and Recreating Greekness in Australia. Participant quotations are included to provide insight into lived experiences and personal interpretations of migration, identity, and wellbeing.

Despite residing in Australia for many years, many participants remained more comfortable communicating in Greek than in English. This reflects a broader pattern observed within the Greek Australian migrant generation, which largely maintained a Greek-speaking identity (Tamis, 2005). In contrast, the first and second Australian-born generations are primarily native speakers of English, and there is evidence suggesting a gradual decline in Greek language proficiency among younger generations.

Language plays an important role in identity formation, acculturation, and cultural continuity (Feuerverger, 1989; Fishman, 1977; Giles & Johnson, 1981; Li, 1995). Beyond communication, language functions as an expression of ethnicity, belonging, and cultural identity. For migrant populations, language proficiency may also influence wellbeing and access to healthcare, particularly when communication barriers affect the ability to seek support and engage effectively with health services (Unger & Schwartz, 2012).

Although participants generally preferred speaking Greek, many demonstrated frequent code-switching between Greek and English, often incorporating English loan words into everyday conversation. These included terms associated with Australian social life, healthcare, technology, and contemporary culture. Some participants expressed surprise and disappointment when made aware of the extent to which English words had become embedded in their speech, occasionally noting that they had forgotten corresponding Greek terms. This reflects both the significance of language maintenance within the migrant generation and the ongoing influence of the English-speaking Australian environment.

Overall, many older participants reported limited English proficiency and relied heavily on children and grandchildren when communicating within the broader Australian context, particularly in healthcare settings. Limited formal education and language barriers often contributed to reliance on traditional knowledge systems and family support in matters relating to health and wellbeing.

Health and Wellbeing in Greece before Migration

Participants in previous studies frequently perceived Greece prior to migration as a healthier and more fulfilling environment than Australia, with homeland itself often viewed as an important component of emotional wellbeing and identity. Similar perceptions were also evident among younger generations who had never lived in Greece but had developed idealised understandings of their ancestral homeland through stories and experiences shared by parents and grandparents. Greece was often imagined as a place characterised by simplicity, strong social relationships, healthier lifestyles, and greater overall wellbeing.

Interestingly, these positive perceptions of Greece coexisted alongside recognition that many members of the migrant generation had left Greece due to economic hardship, social instability, and limited opportunities. For many participants, migration represented both loss and opportunity. It is also important to acknowledge that many migrants left Greece at a relatively young age, and their recollections of homeland were often shaped by childhood memories rather than adult experiences associated with work, family responsibilities, or financial pressures. One participant reflected on this by stating, “We were strong kids then; the lifestyle was different then.”

Medicine and healthcare have a long history within Greek society dating back to Hippocrates, and the medical profession has traditionally been highly respected. However, participants frequently described healthcare in rural Greece during their youth as limited and inaccessible. Some participants recalled that medical knowledge and resources were restricted, particularly in isolated villages. One participant explained, “There were doctors, but they did not know the medication.”

Others recalled only seeking medical assistance in cases of serious illness, while some reported rarely or never visiting a doctor during childhood. One participant described the challenges associated with accessing healthcare in rural Greece:

“In Greece in those years, there was only one doctor for many villages and someone had to go personally to call the doctor, as there were no phones. The doctor would come on a donkey; it was very difficult.”

Participants also described significant differences between traditional approaches to illness management in Greece and the more formalised healthcare system they later encountered in Australia. During their childhood in Greece, home remedies, herbal treatments, and traditional healing practices were commonly used, particularly in rural communities where access to medical services was limited. Several participants recalled specific practices associated with illness management. One participant stated, “My mother would rub me with petrol and give me warm drinks.” Another recalled being taken to the seaside during an episode of whooping cough after a doctor recommended “fresh air.” A participant who experienced tonsillitis described how heated compresses made from hay-like materials were applied to reduce infection because medical care was difficult to access. Others recalled practices such as bed rest, rubbing therapies, and cupping being commonly used within the household context.

Overall, participants frequently associated Greece with healthier living conditions and attributed this perception to lifestyle, diet, and environmental factors. Many believed that food in Greece during their childhood was fresher, less processed, and consumed in moderation. One participant explained:

“When I was a child in Greece, we ate meat only once a week, and it was fresh. We didn’t have refrigerators. That’s why there weren’t so many illnesses.”

Others associated health with the natural environment and lower levels of pollution and industrialisation. One participant commented, “We were lucky that there were no infections then as the atmosphere was clean.”

The contrast participants drew between Greece and Australia in relation to health and wellbeing may also reflect broader psychological and generational factors. As older adults, participants possessed greater awareness of illness, ageing, and chronic disease than they had during childhood in Greece. Since many significant health experiences occurred after settlement in Australia, participants may have associated Australia more strongly with illness simply because it was the setting in which ageing and health decline occurred. In addition, participants were influenced by contemporary public discussions surrounding health, stress, pollution, and lifestyle factors within Australia, including information circulated through both mainstream and Greek-language media. These perceptions were further shaped by the views and experiences of younger generations living within the broader Australian social context.

Greece after Migration

When reflecting on contemporary Greece, many participants expressed the view that both the country and its people had changed significantly since the time they migrated. Most participants had returned to Greece on several occasions and

were therefore able to compare their memories of homeland with present-day realities. For many, these visits evoked mixed emotions characterised by nostalgia, sadness, cultural disconnection, and a sense of loss.

One participant described her experience by stating:

Greece has changed. When I was there, I would close my eyes and remember the past, the Greece I remembered. Everything has changed, and this saddens me. The people who live there are now different; I did not find my friends, everything has changed.

Others expressed concern regarding changes in social values and lifestyle practices in Greece. One participant commented, “Greece has changed, the way of life is very different, young people have no respect.” Another contrasted life in Greece with Australia, explaining:

Here we work, and I have taught my children this as well. There, the young people just want to have a good time. Here we have a better life.

Participants frequently noted differences between Greek and Australian social values, particularly in relation to work ethic, family life, religion, and everyday routines. At the same time, many became increasingly aware that they themselves had also changed through decades of residence in Australia. Having migrated at a relatively young age, many participants had not personally experienced the major political, economic, and cultural transformations that occurred in Greece and Europe during the latter half of the twentieth century, including changes associated with European Union membership and globalisation.

Although participants often perceived themselves as culturally unchanged, their narratives suggested that prolonged residence in Australia had significantly influenced their attitudes, behaviours, and identities. Many described experiences of being perceived as “Australian” by individuals in Greece, which contributed to feelings of displacement and not fully belonging in either country. Some participants reported experiencing suspicion or resentment from people in Greece upon returning. One participant recalled:

[It was] terrible, my own father and brother did not speak to me. The people there changed. They would say, ‘The Australians have come to take our farmland.’

Another participant reflected more broadly on this cultural divide, stating, “They disliked us and we them.” Others expressed concerns associated with economic migration and employment, noting that increasing migration from Greece to Australia might affect opportunities for younger Australian-born generations.

Participants also discussed broader social and cultural changes they observed in Greece. These included perceived changes in family life, religious participation, food practices, and language use. Several participants commented that people in Greece no longer maintained the same traditional practices they remembered from childhood. One participant remarked, “They don’t cook, they go out,” while another observed, “They don’t even go to church. The grandmothers don’t even go. I go to church every Sunday.”

Changes in language use were also frequently discussed. Participants expressed surprise at the increasing incorporation of English words and expressions into contemporary Greek language use in Greece. One participant noted:

I hear on television shows from Greece that some Greek words are used wrong,

adding that the English word “okay” was now commonly used in everyday conversation.

Despite recognising these social and cultural changes, participants continued to express strong emotional attachment to Greece and the villages or regions in which they were born. Feelings of nostalgia and longing for homeland remained prominent throughout their narratives. One participant explained:

I do feel a pull to go back. I was born there, my village, but when I went everything was different, nothing was the same as the way I left it.

Another participant described wanting to bring soil from Greece back to Australia during one of her return visits but ultimately deciding against it because she believed the soil belonged to Greece itself.

The emotional complexity associated with maintaining connections to both Greece and Australia was often described in terms of living between “two homelands.” One participant explained that when visiting Greece she missed her family in Australia, yet once she returned to Australia she missed Greece. She reflected:

That’s what it’s like to have two homelands.

Another participant described this emotional tension by stating:

It’s our πατρίδα (‘patrida’ homeland), my family is there. Here I feel and have always felt like someone who is free but a prisoner.

These narratives highlight an important psychological dimension of migration and diaspora: the difficulty of reconciling memories of homeland with the realities of long-term settlement in another country. Participants frequently experienced tension between the idealised Greece preserved in memory and the contemporary Greece they encountered during return visits. At the same time, many were unaware of the extent to which their own identities, values, and worldviews had shifted through the process of acculturation within Australian society.

These changes were evident not only in visible aspects of culture, such as language use and social practices, but also in attitudes toward work, religion, family life, and everyday behaviour. Over time, Greek culture within Australia developed along a distinct trajectory shaped by migration, memory, and adaptation to the Australian context.

As a result, Greek identity within the Australian diaspora came to reflect the values, memories, and cultural understandings of the migrant generation rather than contemporary Greek society itself. In contrast, Greece continued to evolve socially,

politically, and culturally within the broader European context. Consequently, Greek Australians often maintained a comparatively stable or nostalgic understanding of Greek identity while simultaneously becoming increasingly integrated into the English-speaking Australian mainstream.

This process reflects the complex and often unconscious nature of acculturation within migrant communities, whereby cultural continuity and adaptation occur simultaneously across generations.

Health and Wellbeing in Greece compared to Australia

Participants generally perceived healthcare services in Australia as superior to those available in Greece during their youth, particularly in relation to access to medical treatment, healthcare infrastructure, and financial security associated with illness. However, despite recognising the advantages of the Australian healthcare system, many participants believed that emotional wellbeing and quality of life were better in Greece.

One participant reflected on the contrast between the two countries by stating:

The comfort is that, as difficult as things may be, you can overcome them financially here [in Australia]. When my children were ill, I would take them to the doctor and buy the medication. There [in Greece], no. Our parents found it very difficult. My siblings were ill there, and they died. Why did they die? There was no medication, the doctors were not careful. Those years were difficult.

Another participant commented simply, “It’s better here, the healthcare,” while another observed, “Here people mainly go to doctors,” highlighting the greater reliance on formal medical care within the Australian context.

At the same time, several participants believed that although healthcare systems and medical knowledge were more advanced in Australia, people in Greece were healthier overall. This perception was closely associated with participants’ views of lifestyle, diet, social relationships, and stress. Many participants described life in Greece as slower, simpler, and emotionally more fulfilling than life in Australia.

One participant explained:

The way of life is very different in Australia compared to Greece. It’s beautiful in Greece. You feel wonderful in Greece. Our life changed in Australia. You go to work, you come home, and then you go to work again.

Another participant expressed similar sentiments regarding stress and work pressures:

Here we work very hard. I don’t understand how over there they don’t have the anxiety we do. Things are harder now because they don’t have work, but you go there and the shops and cafés are full.

Participants frequently associated Greece with lower levels of stress and stronger enjoyment of daily life despite economic hardship. One participant reflected:

They don't have money, but they have a good time.

She then recalled childhood memories of life in Greece:

I remember, as a child, I would go to the garden. I would take an onion with some bread and eat. But I would not stress. I would go to the fields for work and come home singing in the evening.

Others acknowledged that contemporary Greece had changed significantly, particularly following economic difficulties and financial crisis. One participant noted, "Things were better before the crisis. The way of life was better."

Despite their positive perceptions of lifestyle in Greece, participants also expressed favourable views regarding life in Australia and recognised the ways in which they had adapted to Australian society. Several participants acknowledged adopting healthier routines, dietary habits, and lifestyle practices associated with life in Australia. One participant stated:

I try to keep my rules. I have breakfast, a sandwich for lunch or tuna with salad. We have learnt a different way here.

Others reflected positively on family relationships and social support within the Australian context. One participant commented:

They live better in Greece, but the families are not close. We are more connected to our families here.

Another participant recognised the benefits of adaptation and acculturation, explaining:

We have adopted an Australian lifestyle that I think works well.

These narratives illustrate the complex and often contradictory ways in which migrants evaluate health, wellbeing, and quality of life across cultural contexts. Participants consistently contrasted Greece and Australia in terms of healthcare systems, emotional wellbeing, stress, family relationships, and lifestyle. At the same time, their reflections demonstrate the extent to which they had become integrated into Australian society, often without fully recognising these changes themselves.

Overall, participants acknowledged that migration to Australia provided significant opportunities, improved healthcare access, economic stability, and better futures for their children and grandchildren. Nevertheless, feelings of loss, nostalgia, and emotional attachment to Greece remained central aspects of their experiences. These findings reflect a broader dilemma commonly associated with migration experiences: although migration may lead to social and economic advancement, these gains are often accompanied by emotional, cultural, and psychological losses that may never be fully reconciled.

Recreating Greekness in Australia

Several important factors shape the experiences of Greek Australians, particularly religion, family, language, and community belonging. Religion, especially the Greek Orthodox faith, functions not only as a spiritual framework but also as an important cultural and social institution through which individuals interpret life experiences and maintain continuity with their cultural heritage. Family likewise occupies a central role within Greek culture, influencing identity formation, intergenerational relationships, and social support structures.

The similarities in values and beliefs between the migrant generation and their children and grandchildren demonstrate the strong commitment of older Greek Australians to preserving and transmitting cultural traditions to younger generations. This commitment has contributed to the continued support of Greek language schools, cultural organisations, churches, and community activities that reinforce Greek identity among younger Australian-born generations (Avgoulas & Fanany, 2013; Tamis, 2005). As a result, many second- and third-generation Greek Australians continue to identify strongly with their Greek cultural heritage despite being fully integrated into Australian society.

Among older members of the community, devotion to the traditions and rituals of the Greek Orthodox Church remains particularly strong. Religious rituals associated with birth, marriage, illness, and death continue to shape individual and collective experiences and provide emotional comfort and meaning during times of uncertainty and hardship. One participant reflected on the role of religion during illness by stating:

Religious rituals are good, especially during illness, as they help us emotionally. They do not take away illness, but they give us courage and strength.

Interestingly, religious belief and practice also remain significant among many younger Greek Australians despite broader secularisation trends within Australian society (Avgoulas & Fanany, 2015). For younger generations, religion often functions not only as a spiritual system but also as an important connection to family history, cultural identity, and shared community experience.

One younger participant whose grandmother had taken part in the study described an intense personal experience that she interpreted through a religious and spiritual framework. The participant described episodes of fear, paralysis, and distress occurring during the night, which she associated with spiritual forces and interpreted within the context of religious belief. Rather than seeking psychological or medical explanations, she and her family turned to the church and sought guidance from a priest. Following prayer and religious intervention, the participant reported that the experiences ceased.

While this experience may be interpreted differently within psychological, spiritual, or cultural frameworks, it is significant in demonstrating the extent to which religious belief systems continue to shape meaning-making processes within the Greek Australian community. Both the participant and her family understood the experience through a culturally and religiously informed lens and responded

accordingly by seeking support from the church rather than from formal mental health services.

This example also illustrates the persistence of cultural beliefs, traditions, and interpretive frameworks transmitted across generations within migrant communities. It suggests that religion and spirituality continue to function as important mechanisms of coping, resilience, and identity formation among Greek Australians.

Participants in the study described a wide range of emotions associated with migration and settlement in Australia, including sadness, fear, loneliness, anxiety, and homesickness. Difficulties associated with language barriers, cultural adjustment, separation from family, and adapting to unfamiliar social environments were frequently recalled.

One participant reflected emotionally on leaving Greece:

They took me to Athens, Piraeus, and when the time came to leave... Oh God, if I knew how to swim and I was not afraid of death, I would have jumped. That's how much leaving impacted me.

Another participant described the challenges associated with migration and language barriers:

We came here without knowing the language, without knowing anyone. It was challenging for us. The first years there was a lot of sadness. We were afraid, and we would hide.

At the same time, many participants also reflected positively on the resilience and adaptability developed through migration experiences. One participant concluded, "Australia made us people," reflecting the belief that migration and settlement fostered independence, resilience, and personal growth.

Participants were also highly aware of the relationship between migration and health, including both physical and psychological wellbeing. Several participants associated migration experiences with stress-related illness, anxiety, and emotional strain. One participant stated:

Migration impacted my health. I had a nervous breakdown.

Others connected their health difficulties more broadly to the emotional and psychological burdens associated with migration and settlement. Religious faith frequently emerged as an important coping mechanism during these periods of hardship. One participant explained:

Everything was very difficult. I was alone. I didn't know anyone, and I would pray and ask for the Virgin Mary's help.

For many participants, migration to Australia was initially viewed as temporary. Most migrants arrived with the intention of eventually returning to Greece after establishing financial stability. This expectation strongly influenced their commitment

to preserving Greek language, traditions, religion, and cultural identity within the Australian context. One participant explained:

We all had the dream of staying in Australia for a few years only and returning to Greece.

However, permanent return migration rarely occurred. Participants recognised that, over time, they had adapted to Australian society in ways that complicated the possibility of fully reintegrating into life in Greece. One participant reflected:

Everything changed from the minute we got here. Life changed. We did what the Australians do. We kept the Greek language, but our manners changed.

The difficulties associated with return migration and cultural readjustment have been well documented within migration literature (Christou, 2001; Christou, 2006; King & Christou, 2015). These experiences demonstrate the long-term psychological and emotional effects of acculturation and identity transformation within migrant populations.

Despite the many challenges associated with migration and settlement, the Greek Australian community has demonstrated considerable resilience and social integration across generations. Migration significantly shaped participants' understandings of health, wellbeing, identity, and belonging. While participants frequently acknowledged the social and economic opportunities available in Australia, many continued to experience emotional attachment to Greece and nostalgia for the homeland they remembered from childhood.

Participants often contrasted the emotional and psychological dimensions of wellbeing in Greece with the pressures and demands associated with Australian life. This distinction highlights the importance of considering both physical and psychological dimensions of health within migration experiences, particularly among ageing migrant populations.

Communication and language barriers also emerged as important aspects of migrant wellbeing and social adaptation. One participant recalled an experience from the 1950s when she attempted to purchase eggs from a store despite not speaking English. Unable to communicate verbally, she imitated the sound of a chicken and used hand gestures to indicate eggs. This example illustrates the challenges faced by early migrants as well as their resilience and adaptability in navigating unfamiliar environments.

Over time, Greek migrants established strong and interconnected communities throughout Melbourne. Greek cafés (καφενείο), milk bars, churches, and local businesses became important gathering places that fostered social connection and cultural continuity (Alexakis & Janiszewski, 2016). Today, suburbs such as Oakleigh continue to function as important centres of Greek cultural life and are frequently referred to as "Little Athens" due to their concentration of Greek businesses, restaurants, cafés, and community organisations (Avgoulas & Fanany, 2020).

The development of the Greek Australian community was strongly influenced by post-war migration policies and the gradual establishment of stable social and cultural institutions. By the mid-1970s, newly arrived migrants were often able to

settle within already established Greek communities that provided social support, employment opportunities, religious institutions, and opportunities for cultural maintenance (Clyne, 2011; Tamis, 2005).

These community structures have played an important role in supporting wellbeing, identity maintenance, and resilience among Greek Australians. Religion, in particular, has continued to function as a source of emotional support, meaning-making, and social cohesion across generations. Beliefs relating to fate, God's will, and religious responsibility frequently shaped attitudes toward health, illness, and everyday life (Avgoulas & Fanany, 2012; 2013; 2015; 2017).

The strong emphasis on social relationships and community belonging within the Greek Australian diaspora reflects broader discussions within social network theory and migration research regarding the importance of collective identity and social support in shaping behaviour, wellbeing, and adaptation (Jackson, 2011). Similarly, contemporary forms of communication and online social networks increasingly provide additional spaces for cultural maintenance, identity negotiation, and community connection within diasporic populations (D'Andrea et al., 2010).

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