Beyond the 'Stop Gap': Young (adult) women's experiences of living with parents in the aftermath of the Greek austerity crisis

Julia Kazana-McCarthy

Abstract

In the context of greater strains imposed by the post-2008 global financial crisis, it has become more commonplace for young people to live with their parents for extended periods. Beyond a domination of Anglophone research, far less is known about whether these experiences of living with parents vary in countries with different economic and cultural contexts. This article focuses on young women in contemporary Greece – a society undergoing radical social restructuring in the wake of the post-2008 economic crisis. Drawing on qualitative interviews with young university-educated women in urban Greece (n=36), the article argues that the current fiscal crisis alongside long-standing patriarchal norms place a significant burden on the lives of these young women. It concludes that evaluation of the impact of financial crisis on the living arrangements of young people should carefully assess the interaction of the gender and cultural aspects of family lives.

Key words: living arrangements, young women, family, crisis, gender expectations.

Introduction

Over the last decade, leaving the family home has become complex and delayed for a significant proportion of young people growing up in industrialised nations (Arnett, 2004; Hank, 2007), and even more marked in Southern Europe (Lennartz et al, 2015; Eurostat, 2016). Key reasons for this include difficulties paying rent as well as a shortage of affordable housing, meaning that young people often fall back on living with parents, and/or financial assistance to afford housing of their own (Fuligni and Pedersen, 2002; Lahelma and Gordon, 2008; Furstenberg, 2010). These circumstances which young people face have occurred in conjunction with a broader array of factors concerning youth-adulthood development, including delayed entrance into the labour market, longer periods of time spent in formal education, and marriage or long-term partnerships occurring at a later age compared with previous generations (Lee, 2001; Arnett, 2004; Bynner, 2005).

Studies have suggested that the formation of a new household is one of the most important aspects of independence and successful transition to adulthood (Cordon, 1997; Arnett, 2004). More recent economic austerity policies occurring through Europe and other parts of the world have, however, made these pathways towards adulthood, and independence more

broadly, even more challenging (for example, Heath and Calvert, 2013; Cairns et al, 2014). Notwithstanding some variations in the magnitude of austerity within and between nations, factors such as higher unemployment risks for young people, higher cost of living and reductions in state support for youth have been identified as common trends impacting on youth-adulthood pathways (see Antonucci et al, 2014). Taking cue from authors such as Berrington et al (2017) in their efforts to define cross cultural differences in intergenerational cohabitation practices among youth in Europe, this article focuses on a nation whose austerity policies have been among the sharpest in Europe – Greece.

Since the 2008 financial crisis erupted, Greece has experienced some of the most intensive austerity measures seen in the Western world, with major impacts on its youth. Vast cuts to jobs with 60% of youth unemployed, reduction of the basic salary to 400 euros per month for young people (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2012), as well as higher costs of living and housing insecurities have occurred (Alamanou et al, 2011). Greece provides us with an important case study with which to understand how the financial crisis has affected its youth, and in particular capacities to leave the parental home. Although studies have indicated that strong family bonds may offer a safety net for young people (Flaquer, 2000; Scabini et al, 2006), this article argues that since the crisis these traditions in Greece have been compromised by economic strains.

In what follows, this article focuses on a group infrequently addressed when examining economic hardships and austerity: young educated women. Because of major cuts to medium- to high-skilled labour in Greece, young people educated to degree-level and beyond have experienced higher unemployment risks than lower-skilled youth (Drakaki et al, 2014; Labrianidis, 2014). For young women, economic strains also converge with a more complex series of patriarchal and familial norms, with parental expectations about leaving the family home differing in response to young men and women (for example, Reher, 1998; Athanasiades et al, 2018). To date, transitions to adulthood research has been slow to address how prolonged cohabitation with parents interferes with attaining 'adult' status within conditions of economic austerity (Iacovou, 2002; Hochstenbach and Boterman, 2015). This is particularly important given the assumption that middle-class families may offer an important safety net for young women in Greece (Lekakis and Kousis, 2013; Pentaraki, 2013). It will be argued that austerity places considerable pressures on these relationships within families, as well as restricting the future living options for these young women.

This article will investigate how the economic crisis affects experiences of cohabitation with parents, and consists of the following sub-questions. First, how do young Greek women living with parents reconcile their adult status? Second, in what ways do these young women manage and negotiate their relationships with their parents (mothers especially)? Third, how do gender expectations manifest in attitudes towards and experiences of cohabitation with parents?

Making sense of youth cohabitation with parents: patterns and practices

The vast array of structural changes across the globe has impacted on a host of social institutions and practices. Significant cuts to the welfare state system have led families to interdependent and mutual caring relationships (see Fuligni and Pedersen, 2002; Shoeni and Ross, 2005). A crucial manifestation of these challenging times has been the impact on parents, and families more generally, to support their children aged in their twenties and thirties. The Anglophone literature has presented the prolonged period of cohabitation between young people and their parents as one symptom of declining welfare systems in conjunction with other structural risks (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Receiving financial help from parents now ranks as one essential mode of material support for young people as they attempt to leave the family home (Heath and Cleaver, 2003; Furstenberg, 2010), which can also continue even when young people physically move away from parents (Lahelma and Gordon, 2008).

   The prolonged period of cohabitation between young people and parents is more exacerbated in Southern countries comparative to other parts of Europe (Lennartz et al, 2015). That young people in Northern Europe tend to leave their parents' home significantly earlier than youth from the South (Fuligni et al, 2002) has been attributed in part to more secure labour market conditions (Newman and Aptekar, 2007), and comparatively better wages between these different parts of Europe. The economic crisis, however, is not the only feature responsible for the reasons why Mediterranean young people live with parents for longer. More specifically, living arrangements can be influenced by the degree to which welfare regimes are either *familistic* or *individualistic* (Schwanitz and Mulder, 2015). In countries with *familistic* values (with Greece being one of them) young women are more likely to take on care roles to support elderly or sick parents (Gal, 2010; Papataxiarchis, 2012). These practices therefore have potential bearing on young women's options for leaving the parental home.

   In Greece, cohabitation patterns have changed during the same period as the post- 2008 financial crisis. Eurostat data (2019) indicates that intergenerational cohabitation for young women in Greece has increased at a higher rate than for young men. In 2008, at the start of the financial crisis, 49.3% women aged between 18 and 34 resided with their parents, which increased to 61.2% in 2017. Contrastingly, for young men, in 2008 67.1% lived with parents, which increased to 73.2% in 2017. Compared with men, young women, by and large, tend to make transitions to leaving the parental home earlier than men (Billari and Liefbroer, 2007). Yet the higher rate of increase in young women living with parents could be attributed to factors such as higher levels of unemployment (Chalari, 2012; Papadakis et al, 2015), especially given that young women are more likely to be educated at degree-level and above, and thus at greater risk of unemployment due to medium- to high-skilled labour shortages (Livanos, 2010). This suggests that there is a plausible connection between economic conditions determined by the state and choices regarding living arrangements (Iacovou, 2002).

The Greek family has been traditionally understood as a 'social shock absorber' (Moreno and Mari-Klose, 2013) and the primary provider of welfare support in the context of marked declines in state support (Bermeo, 2000). Evandrou et al (2018) argue that both young men and women who receive support with housing are more likely to provide care to their parents compared with those ones who have not received any support. Yet, conditions within families can be severely affected by economic strain (Updegraff et al, 2012; Shenaar-Golan and Walter, 2015). Gudmunson et al (2007), for example, describe how economic adversities are associated with a wide range of negative psychological symptoms. These include depressed mood, anxiety, low self-esteem, guilt and even physical illness, which in turn affect their family and intimate relations (Drydakis, 2015). Unemployment, economic hardships and lack of physical space in households can affect families' wellbeing by increasing feelings of depression, as well as marital unhappiness and conflicts on how material resources should be allocated within the household (Gudmunson et al, 2007). The latter can be a major source of adversity for parents, whose stress can lead to hostile parenting resulting from family and economic strain (Conger et al, 1994).

For young women, particular types of conflict are evident when assessing intergenerational cohabitation practices. Scaramella and Conger (2004), for example, argue that conflicts between mothers and daughters are more frequent and intense than those with fathers. Such conflicts are usually money related, as well as concerning arguments about the amount of time spent outdoors or clothing tastes (Conger and Conger, 2002). The overprotectiveness perceived by young women from their mothers also has implications for their sense of autonomy. As Berrington et al (2017) explained, in the majority of EU countries, extended cohabitation with parents suggests many consequences for parent-child relationships; for example, parents can believe that they are entitled to exhibit greater control over their children. There remain strong cultural expectations in Greece regarding leaving home only when married (Reher, 1998; Woestman, 2010; Petrogiannis, 2011). In their research on young adults in Greece, Athanasiades et al (2018) found that young women feel more restricted by their parents' patriarchal values regarding gender roles, compared with their male participants. Subsequently, there is good reason to believe that women's experience of cohabitation will be determined by the fusion of austerity alongside existing patriarchal values.

Method

Participant characteristics

Thirty-six young women between the ages of 20 and 37 took part in open-ended qualitative interviews. Debate exists about the ages which adequately constitute 'youth', with this study adopting a relatively long time-frame in order to assess potential differences between ages,

as well as the possibilities that constraints to 'adulthood transitions' occur at an older age compared with other (mostly Anglophone) contexts. The majority of participants were well educated, as demonstrated through the majority of the sample, either studying, or having studied at Greek and/or European universities at undergraduate or postgraduate level. In Greece university-educated young adults have faced particular difficulties finding work which accords with their qualification levels (Labrianidis, 2014; Papadakis et al, 2015). As Labrianidis (2014) argues, one symptom of the Greek crisis has been a curtailment in knowledge-based jobs for well-qualified young people. This contributed to the restricted employment options faced by my sample of highly educated young women. At the time of interview, most of these women were involved in short-term, poorly paid temporary work, disconnected to their areas of study.

Snowballing techniques have been used where my initial participants were asked to nominate, through their social networks, other participants who meet the eligibility criteria and could contribute to my study (see Morgan, 2008). Given the fact that most of my participants were recruited via my initial connections – those that were all university-educated – it was perhaps unsurprising that further participants also shared similar demographic profiles. It is therefore likely that this contributed to the similarity in types of experiences shared. At the initial stages of participant recruitment, I also advertised my research to prospective participants by posting recruitment announcements in unemployment services and local coffee shops. The women who responded to these adverts (n=7) were mostly university-educated women, but not known to me unlike the recruitment strategy described above. This sample group's experiences did not vary from the snowball sample network.

Following distribution of study details to prospective participants, interviews were conducted in neutral venues (usually cafes, work offices or community centres). To ensure that my participants would not be identified, I replaced their real names with pseudonyms usually chosen by my participants themselves. An open-ended style of interviewing was adopted, which sought to limit the amount of researcher influence on the themes and direction of questioning (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Consequentially, most interviews lasted over 90 minutes, and sometimes up to three hours. Half the interviews were carried out in the centre of Athens, as the crisis is more apparent and experienced in a sharper way in the capital (see Dalakoglou, 2012), and half in Thessaloniki, the second biggest city of Greece. The situation in Thessaloniki is in many respects similar to Athens. Well-established businesses have closed, resulting in a major problem of unemployment. The reason for choosing these two cities instead of a rural area, is mainly because I intended to focus on university-educated women who tend to live in bigger urban areas (Arcury and Christianson, 2010). All interviews were conducted in Greek and translated and transcribed into English for coding and analysis. To assure accuracy of translations, a selection of interview transcripts was cross-checked by another researcher.

The analysis of data took place with adherence to the principles of thematic analysis. Following Miles et al (1994), I started by transcribing and analysing data after each interview,

rather than to wait until the completion of the research before undertaking such tasks. This approach was a valuable one in terms of being close to the data, refining themes and lines of questioning in the interviews, as well as allowing me to 'test' and validate emerging themes established during this provisional strand of analysis (Prus, 1997). Grouping general themes in the data provided broad topics and patterns, which were followed by gradual refining and specific analysis of data, as well as the nuances and contestations in each of the themes (DeVault, 1999). I regarded this multi-stage approach to data analysis to be important as a means of cross-validating points, as well as checking whether earlier established themes were in fact still relevant.

Findings

Living conditions in the context of the financial crisis

Financial strain and long-term unemployment were common conditions among the young women interviewed. The effects of unemployment/underemployment had placed significant strains on familial relations, especially between young women and parents. The crisis operated in a direct and indirect way in defining the intergenerational cohabitation experiences of the participants. In direct form, insecure labour and low wages were observed, meaning that living with parents was an economic necessity. Indirectly, cohabitation brought with it stresses and strains induced by living situations, namely restrictions to lifestyle and behaviour.

Magdalini, a young school teacher from Athens, was forced to move back to live with her parents after losing her job. The unemployment in tandem with the living arrangements had a profound impact on Magdalini's mental health and wellbeing. Magdalini expressed regular hostilities with her parents, partly as a result of her perceptions that her parents were constraining her lifestyle and leisure choices:

> 'Sometimes I feel like I want to kill them! I mean, especially since I've come back from Ioannina [city], things like "Where are you going?", "What are you up to?", "What time are you coming back?" sound to me like … They seem really odd to me! Like Chinese! I mean, it makes sense when you live in the same house with them. I am not working at the moment, which means that I spend lots of time with them and this brings tensions and arguments.' (Magdalini, age 25, Athens)

Being forced to spend longer periods of time at home due to having no work resulted in increased conflict with her parents. Having little personal space, such as with which to spend time with her boyfriend, further frustrated Magdalini who saw few hopes for leaving the home in the foreseeable future. Similarly, Nafsika had spent a year as a student in Thessaloniki, after which her mother decided to move there and reunite the family. Living at

home had opened up tensions with Nafsika and her mother with regard to Nafsika's leisure activities.

> 'When I go back home, we sometimes argue really seriously and we say things that we don't mean. And this makes our cohabitation nasty and uncomfortable. I tried to find a job and a new place to move in on my own, but the truth is that I'm not able to afford a flat's expenses. The main reason I usually argue with my mum is that she likes controlling or restricting me, as if I was still a child. She thinks that I am too young for certain things and that I am not able to take care of myself. And she doesn't like me spending many hours outdoors.' (Nafsika, age 22, Thessaloniki)

Nafsika blamed the crisis for having taken "her independence away". She recalled a past period when she could enjoy her privacy, which in turn had helped her to improve her relations with her mother. Since moving back home, the tensions and disagreements between Nafsika and her mother had grown. Nafsika, as the oldest of the children in her family, perceived her mother's lack of trust in her as 'infantilising'. Being tired and sometimes intimidated by the tensions at home, Nafsika chose to compromise and behave in ways that would not upset her mother and put her family relations at peril.

Magdalini and Nafsika were among the few participants who had returned home following periods living as students away. While few differences were identified in their experiences compared with those who lived with parent/s throughout, what was significant was the sense of hopelessness and frustration regarding the possibility of finding decent employment which would offer them the potential to consider leaving and having their own property. This readjustment to cohabitation beyond a temporary 'stop gap' was thus emotionally difficult, taking time to come to terms with.

Economic strains played a major role in restricting options for leaving the home. Zoe, a student from Thessaloniki, spoke about her experience of pursuing a job as a means to cover basic needs, as her parents could no longer support her financially. At the time of interview, Zoe's mother, who had been working in a private school for the last 20 years, had just lost her job, while her father's salary had been cut by 50% due to the crisis. Zoe had been applying for various forms of part-time employment, with no success. As Zoe explained, cohabitation with her parents involved a form of "mini control", which meant that her parents would restrict her sense of freedom and autonomy.

> 'Of course, living with your parents does not offer you the same degree of freedom. I mean there is a mini control over my life. But not too bad … My biggest complaint has always been the fact that I can never invite people around at unsocial times. I would love to be a bit more independent, stand on my own feet.' (Zoe, age 23, Thessaloniki)

Affecting personal freedom and their capacities to 'grow up', such as forming and maintaining intimate partnerships or friendships, the crisis had played a major role in shaping the lives of the young women. For example, Sasa, a lawyer who inherited her father's legal practice,

experienced a challenging cohabitation with her parents who placed considerable restrictions on her whereabouts and personal freedom and leisure. With work conditions difficult, Sasa traded off her independence and decided to move back to her parents' house. Soon later though, she convinced her parents to help her financially move to her own apartment.

> 'In the meantime, I had formed my own romantic relationship and they were restricting my outings with my partner; I couldn't dare to ask them to go out, especially in the weekdays. Thus, I decided to live on my own, as my parents were suppressing me and I couldn't feel free. By living alone, I feel like I won my dignity back, as they can't control my private life any longer.' (Sasa, age 30, Thessaloniki)

Similarly, Dina, a 35-year-old woman from Athens, shared her challenging experience of cohabitating with her parents. After having several arguments with her mother who wanted her to find a partner and get married, Dina decided to leave her parents' home and live with her best friend in an apartment five blocks away – a decision viewed by her parents as one of 'abandonment' towards them. Dina explained that her financial difficulties was not the only factor placing barriers to her independence from family; she admitted that her parents would never forgive her behaviour, unless she got married – living with friends as an exit route from the family home was not deemed justifiable as a legitimate mode of living and 'independence'. Despite the arguments, Dina managed to convince her parents to support her financially and pay her rent.

> 'At the end of every day I feel a sense of relaxation, and although it's been a while since I've left my parents' home, I still say "Thank God, I've got my little sweet home." You know, it feels like the place which calms me down. It's my shelter. Otherwise, I would have freaked out.' (Dina, age 35, Athens)

Although rare in the sample, Dina's example indicates that the link between leaving home and being independent is not a clear-cut or direct one. Leaving the parental home does not necessarily entail independence, because for most of my participants the main source of financial as well as emotional support is their parents. Young women in Greece still must negotiate deeply engrained gender norms which place a strong hold on their social mobility. And although it is gradually changing, there remains a social taboo in Greece regarding single women leaving home (Woestman, 2010; Petrogiannis, 2011). These patriarchal attitudes combine even further with expectations that women should supply care work in cases of parental ageing or ill health (Maume, 2006; Karanika and Hogg, 2016). Here it can be argued that the effects of the crisis are not solely responsible for the pressures placed on young women's lives, but rather intersect and mesh closely with long-standing patriarchal attitudes.

Gender and role expectations

In this section, I will attempt to shed light on the gendered impact of the crisis on cultural expectations in Greek society. One key component of familial expectations on young women in Greece is to care for parents and elderly relatives. Unlike other parts of Europe, expectations on caring for parents still come from female children and other close family, rather than the State in Greece (Papataxiarchis, 2012). Care work was found to have a personal cost on autonomy and privacy for young women. An example comes from Smaragda, a 24-year-old postgraduate student from Thessaloniki. Smaragda's parents had decided to take her sick grandmother to live with them.

> *I live with my parents, my brother, and my grandmother; we brought my grandma at home since we've lost my grandfather. She's got a few mental issues – bipolar disorder and depression. Therefore, she's all the time on pills and her behaviour is a bit weird. I mean, when I want to study and need some peace at home, my grandma wants me to check on the roof because she might think that somebody is walking on it! I've offered my room to her and I've been sleeping in the sofa for about two years. It's been difficult with my exams. And my brother doesn't want me there either. So, I have no private space to read, talk on the phone, and relax. Of course, I wouldn't even consider renting my own place!* [Smaragda 24, Thessaloniki]

Smaragda's description of her new life conditions was articulated in an optimistic mood, despite clear personal difficulties presented in her account. She explained that she did not mind living with one more person at home, and especially her grandmother who was 'funny' and made her laugh. Yet, she resented the lack of privacy that she had been experiencing over the last two years, despite efforts to see the positives in her living status. This reference to the lack of privacy in Smaragda's quote should be contextualized in the crisis – the increased financial strain on families impinges on physical space in the home brought about by caring duties. Smaragda did not question her family's decision to take her out of her own bedroom for her grandmother's welfare, even remarking that her brother maintained his bedroom as normal, as "he was a man and needed his own space".

  Like Smaragda, a similar reflection on making positive sacrifices for family members was evident in Elli's account. As Elli described, aside from the very fact that she "would not be getting paid by her employers for much longer", she expressed her gratification for her mother's financial and emotional support growing up, conceiving of this decision to return home as a form of duty to support her.

> 'I don't want to leave my mum alone in the future. Although at the moment we live far from each other, I don't worry too much because I know that she is healthy and she's doing well. Yet in the future I wouldn't opt for a job outside of Crete, because I want to look after her. I will never abandon her, because she's been supporting me by all means throughout my whole life.' (Elli, age 25, Athens)

Elli had left Crete to work for one year as a full-time teacher in Athens. The school she was working for had delayed paying her wages by four months, leaving her struggling financially

during this time. The day we had arranged our interview, Elli was very excited because she had been paid. Her parents' material support was vital during these times without finances.

Concurrently, my participants were also feeling that their endeavours for independence had an 'expiry date'; this was not just caused by the lack of any certainty their temporary jobs could offer them, but also by the level of responsibility they would regard themselves as having towards their parents (mothers especially), as the only daughters in the family. Elderly/sick parents are an important factor that lead young women to return to the town/city they originally came from (see Labrianidis, 2014). In the majority of cases, the support comes from daughters in the wake of emotional care following the death of their father. Young women in Greece are seen as delivering crucial modes of care to their parents in old age (Cylwik, 2002; Karanika and Hogg, 2016), which brings with it a set of cultural expectations and moral duties to conform to. And although an important source of care for mothers, who continued to rely heavily on their daughters' assistance, there was also a more sceptical side to this provision of care according to some of the young women. Maria, for example, who resided in Athens with her mother and sister, explained her decision to remain close to her family.

> *I've lost my dad when I was 19, and that has been a big loss. Hence, I've got such strong ties with my mum. But deep inside me I know that I should not stay in Athens in the fear that I'll miss my mum or that she will need my help. I'll end up with seven cats otherwise!* [Maria 30, Athens]

Maria described her potential decision to leave Athens as another loss that she did not want to experience. Her future was concerning her, as she was in a relationship with a young man from Thessaloniki and she was torn between two cities and two choices: either in Thessaloniki with the man she loved or in Athens with her mother and sister. The choice of leaving her mother presented as a difficult decision. Maria appreciated the support from her immediate family; however, her choice was also informed by guilt in leaving her mother in the wake of her father's death. Worried about her mother's wellbeing after her husband's loss, Maria chose to stay with her and look after her. In effect, Maria did not have an alternative. Her job as a high school teacher in a private school in Athens was under threat, with her employers struggling to pay her on a monthly basis.

In a similar vein, Nikoleta explained how insecure she would feel leaving her family's home, given that her temporary job did not allow her to live independently, as well as feeling guilty as a consequence of the 'psychological war' she was experiencing by her mother, which made her feel trapped and unable to leave the house.

> 'She [Mother] is very manipulative and she blackmails us with heart issues (relating to her illness). She wants us to leave her place as little brides. I've seen many cases so far with young people who cannot live on their own, because their parents think that they will abandon them. But I would feel very guilty if I left her.' (Nikoleta, age 29, Athens)

Such guilt is often turned into an obligation and moral duty that daughters should care for their mothers, which put strain and pressure on them, and in so doing, limits opportunities for leaving the home legitimately. Although such alleged acts of manipulation employed by mothers towards their daughters can exist, they may do so for reasons such as mothers feeling lonely and fearing losing contact with their daughters as they age. Furthermore, for young women, options for leaving the home are not straightforward, even without care obligations. Adhering to culturally prescribed expectations about a legitimate time point to leave the family home (for example, 'leave her place as little brides' – Nikoleta), remains a key reason for staying put. Yet, as argued, the crisis also plays an additional role in constraining opportunities to leave under traditional marriage-based exit pathways, and financial uncertainties playing a key role in limiting options for independence.

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Discussion

This article has sought to understand how the current economic crisis affects young Greek women's experiences of cohabitation with parents, marking one of the first to address such issues. While a considerable number of commentaries exist on the Greek crisis (Fouskas, 2012; Lekakis and Kousis, 2013; Pentaraki, 2013), few of these have sought to unpack the ways that the crisis has impacted on the lives of young women, not least their everyday living conditions. This gendered impact of the crisis is of considerable importance to assessments of the ways that family lives have been reshaped because of the economic crisis in Greece and beyond, especially for young women – a group whose employment options have been severely curtailed (European Commission, 2010; Drydakis, 2015; Papadakis et al, 2015).

Following the focus on the ways young women conceive of their adult status, I have shown that the link between leaving home and becoming independent is neither clear-cut nor direct. Living arrangements and privacy do not necessarily connote independence and a straightforward attainment of adult status (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005). Although leaving the parental home might sound like *the* key element for the achievement of independence, autonomy and adult status, findings have shown that these processes are much more complex and negotiated than they seem. Therefore, even for those participants who had managed to move to their own home, they did so while relying heavily on parents' material support. In their research on intergenerational support for young adults in the UK, Heath and Calvert (2013) explain that this support comes usually at a price, as young adults' dependence on parents undermines their sense of independence and autonomy in other areas of their lives.

But how did these women negotiate their relationships with parents? Corresponding with other studies (Conger and Conger, 2002; Scaramella and Conger, 2004), conflicts between young women and mothers were identified. These tended to involve instances where mothers would seek to curtail the leisure pursuits of young women, including dress codes and demands on evening arrival times following socialisation with friends. Following Evandrou et al (2018), it is likely that living with parents contributes to young women's sense of obligation to support, despite a long-standing history of gendered division of care responsibilities in Greece and elsewhere (Reher, 1998). Intergenerational solidarity is commonplace, in terms of the expectations on care and support offered by daughters to their parents (mothers particularly). The latter echoes what both Rastogi (2002) and Douglass (2005) express regarding the reciprocities and mutual solidarity in mother-daughter relationships. However, these care obligations have implications for reproducing gender inequalities and as argued, place an expiry date on independence especially among young women relatively early in their transitions to adulthood.

And it is those attributes of Greek society with strong family bonds which continue to have a major role in the control of young women's lives, in conjunction with the consequences of the crisis. The crisis not only increases financial adversities, but is compounded by gender

expectations and caring roles conducted within the family home across Southern Mediterranean societies, and especially involving women as core caregivers (see Reher, 1998). Despite some positive social changes to gender autonomy, Greece remains a society which is still principally patriarchal (Karakatsanis, 2001; Woestman, 2010). Subsequently, for these young women, traditional pathways of exiting the family home to form a new 'independent' life are far from straightforward. Even for those young women looking to marry and start a family of their own, financial uncertainties, and the moral obligation to supply care to parents can interfere with these prospects (Gal, 2010; Papataxiarchis, 2012; Labrianidis, 2014).

In nations such as the UK and US, several authors have argued that significant cuts to the welfare state, together with more insecure employment for young people, have resulted in greater reliance on parents for support (Fuligni and Pedersen, 2002; Lahelma and Gordon, 2008; Furstenberg, 2010). This article accords with these arguments, but goes further to suggest that living with parents as a temporary 'stop gap', as in the Anglophone context, is an unlikely prospect for many young Greek women (and men) (see Tsekeris et al, 2017). My participants' experiences of financial hardships can be considered distinct from poverty and/or underdevelopment – as social actors in a regime of financial crisis, they have lived through successive governments and were usually acutely aware of the difference in the quality of their lives. Consequentially for these young women, finding new opportunities for exiting the parental home becomes an enduring challenge, compounded by the crisis, but also by gender norms in Greece which place a double burden on these young women.

This article calls on scholars to place greater attention to the gendered consequences of the fiscal crisis, seen not only in Greece but a multitude of other nations besides. The experiences of young women who struggle to operate in often hostile employment conditions, with bleak options for financial mobility, should not however be defined purely by these economic contexts, but also by the patriarchal norms operating within these specific nations and sub-communities within. Despite the majority of the sample being comprised of educated young women, few saw any legitimate options for exiting the family home even when aged into their thirties. While this study is based on the accounts of young women, most of whom were well-educated and with generally good family support, extending analysis to other groups, especially young women from working-class backgrounds, is important (see Silva, 2013; Athanasiades et al, 2018). Further assessment of young men's experiences of the crisis, and of their intergenerational cohabitation experiences, would also profit from future research. Likely differences in men's experiences include their inability to accomplish their conceived 'duties' as financial providers, which in turn lead to low self-esteem and an effect on their sense of masculinity and self (see Jenkins et al, 2002).

Conclusion

This article has argued that the impact of the crisis, fused with long-standing patriarchal norms in Greece, places a significant burden on the lives of the young women interviewed. Not only does the structural context of Greece impose considerable financial strains on family lives more generally, but also induces considerable barriers on these women to be able to achieve any hope of financial independence. Yet, the effects of the crisis are not the only source of the challenges these women have to navigate as they grow older – tensions and arguments associated with restricted space and freedom, a commitment to care work in cases of elderly/sick parents, as well as judgements about *ideal* gender norms from parents continue to govern the lives of young women. This article concludes that assessment of the ways that the economic crisis occurring since 2008 should both be attentive to gender differences, but also to the fusion of cultural and patriarchal norms within specific nation states. The outcome of this fusion of structural and cultural conditions provides one important way of explaining the life outcomes of these young women as they look to the future and any possibilities of leaving the family home.

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