

# The 'Crisis Generation': the effect of the Greek Crisis on Youth Identity Formation

## Abstract

This study aims in exploring the effect of the Greek Crisis on the ways young Greeks form their identities. The prolonged consequences of the Greek crisis (2008-today), have been undoubtedly experienced by all Greeks, although, younger adults (born between 1995-2000) constitute the first generation (Crisis Generation) to be raised during the Crisis and form their identity within this district social, political and economic reality. This study shall focus on the subjective experiences of 20 participants (18-23 years old), in an attempt to reveal their perceptions of how the crisis has contributed to their own identity formation. This study proposes that the Crisis Generation is characterised by a unique process of identity formation consisting of: a misleading passiveness, profound lack of apathy, misread and hopefully ephemeral sense of being trapped in a reality which they didn't form and explicit ability of planning a future identity away from the crisis through personal and social accounts of action.

Keywords: Crisis, Generation, Identity Formation, Youth, Reflexivity

## Introduction

Since 2008 the on-going Greek socioeconomic crisis<sup>1</sup> has changed massively the ways Greeks and particularly young people live their lives primarily through economic and political readjustments resulting in unprecedented unemployment rates for young people, a massive Greek 'brain drain' of young professionals and collective feelings of disappointment and pessimism. This prolonged social, political and economic crisis has consequently allowed the time and space for a unique generation to emerge, termed by this article as 'the first Crisis Generation'. This generation (born between 1995-2000) is the first to be raised during the crisis and the first to form its unique identity and fundamental perceptions on life during this challenging period of time. It therefore becomes pivotal to understand what is the effect of the Greek Crisis on youth identity formation as this is the first Generation to set the foundations of its identity formation through such unique social, economic and political reality.

Conceptualizing identity formation can be seen as the individual's attempt to define one's self through personal values as well as perceived social groupings and connections. In the Greek case elements of personal and social identity can be revealed through the ways young people think or consider themselves in relation to the crisis. But what remains under researched is the ways those

---

<sup>1</sup> For further discussion on Greek Crisis and Austerity see: X and X and S.

experiences effect younger people's identity formation. As Cote and Levine (2016) emphasised identity formation entails aspects of personal and social identity, which may reveal significant elements of the process of youth identity formation (in this case related to the Greek crisis). It is thus crucial to review how young people think subjectively of oneself and others in a reflexive way, within this specific socio-cultural context. This study will utilize two theoretical models (Cote and Levins', 2016 on identity formation and Archer's, 2012 on modes of reflexivity) in order to explore possible ways that young identity formation is effected by the Greek crisis, by focusing on how young people reflect upon it (personally and collectively) and perhaps most importantly, what they plan to do about it.

### Youth and the Crisis in Europe and Greece

Since 2010 certain European economies faced severe difficulties, which resulted in various forms of austerity measures. As Rudig and Karyotis (2014) explain, Spain, Portugal, Italy as well as Ireland and UK are few of them, although Greece followed the most intense draconian structural, political, economical and social adjustments since 2008. Young people in contemporary Europe are perceived as the first generation to do worse than their parents (Hamilton and Roberts, 2014). Young people are defined primarily by their quest to 'navigate transitions to adulthood' (p 1). However these transitions have altered enormously compared to previous generations, as young people need to adjust to a different form of reality. According to Antonucci et al (2015) there is a consensus in literature that in contrast to previous generations, young

people in contemporary Europe experience a fragmented, de-standardized and uncertain reality. This reality has been the result of increasing unemployment due to the economic recession. This results in lack of 'a universal path to a fixed end ... [and/or] normal maturity' (p 15). Furthermore, although the number of young people participating in higher education has increased (Brynnner, 2005), the transition from education to labour market has become more flexible, including long periods of unemployment; unstable career trajectories, increased stress, uncertainty and insecurity are some of the main experiences young people have to negotiate as they try to make their way through life (XXX). In a comparative study on Austerity and young people in Greece and UK, it was revealed that young people in both countries are primarily concerned about their professional prospects and raise of unemployment (XXX & XX).

The abovementioned observations can be further confirmed regarding youth in Greece (Kretsos, 2014, Papavasileiou and Lyons, 2015) during the times of prolonged Austerity<sup>2</sup>. Characteristically, Herzfeld (2011) and Knight (2012) explain that narratives of the Greek socioeconomic crisis relate to migration, xenophobia, famine, suicide and anger. Unfortunately in the Greek case, recession has affected particularly the lives of young people in even greater intensity (Kretsos, 2014). The main areas of young people's lives that have been altered massively, regard unprecedented youth unemployment rates

---

<sup>2</sup> As discussed elsewhere (XXX and XXX; XXXX) the main difference between Austerity and Crisis (on a social, political and economic level) concerns the intensity, duration, and extension of the measures that have to be implemented. Austerity is perceived as a gradual, transitional period including several difficulties, aiming in improvement, with a beginning and an end. However, Crisis is perceived as a violent, sudden, deep and extended period of prolonged suffering without any clear prospect of completion or calculation of consequences.

(Kretsos, 2014) and massive youth immigration waves of qualified and over qualified young people (10% of the workforce) (Labrianidis/Λαμπριανίδης, 2011) estimated to be over 150.00 people (Koniordos, 2017). Papavasileiou and Lyons (2015) highlight the fact that an increasing number of Greek Millennials (aged 18-22) must now work while studying, having lost traditional parental support due to parents' reduced incomes or unemployment. According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (2017), the unemployment rates for the ages 15-24 reached 42.8% in July 2017. Currently, according to Eurostat (2016) the Greek youth unemployment rate for the ages between 15-29 is 38.3% (far worse than the European Union average being 14.3%). Indicatively, according to the Eurobarometre (2017) 98% of Greeks (of all ages) are pessimistic about the economic situation.

Young people in Greece, born between 1995-2000, reached adulthood during the Greek Crisis (2008-today); this 'Crisis Generation' could be primarily seen as the collection of people born in a given time period (Gilleard, 2004), or more specifically, as the group of individuals born within the same historical and socio-cultural context, who experience the same formative experiences and develop unifying commonalities as a result (Mahnheim, 1952; Pilcher, 1992). Common experience of unique historical context(s) associated to 'collective memories' (Schuman and Scott, 1989) is particularly relevant regarding the 'Crisis Generation'. Ryder (1965) explains that although people might experience the same historical events, they may respond to those events on the basis of their life-cycle stage at the time. Indeed, regarding the Greek Crisis, I have suggested elsewhere (XXX) that different generations in Greece have

experienced and responded differently to the same historical event of the Greek Economic Crisis. Still, (and as further explained) youth Greek generation remains homogeneous in relation to their perceptions of Crisis.

Manheim (1952) further maintains that generations radicalized by traumatic experiences can transform society by challenging customary thought and offering new political and cultural visions. It is thus understood that young generation in Greece has been trying to cope with a rather complex and painful reality through which the 'Crisis Generation' has been raised. Given that the process of identity is effected by the social political and economic environment and is formed during adolescence and early adulthood (Cote, 2000; Cote and Levine, 2002), the effects of the Greek Crisis are inevitably distinct on young people raised during this period. Corsaro (2011) maintains that identity formation is a process, which may last a lifetime but the first cornerstones are certainly formed in early steps in life. It therefore becomes pivotal to understand what is the effect of the Greek Crisis on youth identity formation as this is the first Generation to be raised during the Greek Crisis and set the foundations of its identity formation through such unique social, economic and political reality.

### Identity Formation

Before discussing the effects of the current Greek reality on youth identity we first need to understand what identity formation is. According to Cote and Levine (2016) self primarily forms during childhood and early adulthood whereas identity is formed in late adolescence and early adulthood. Identity

formation can be seen as the individual's attempt to define one's self through personal values as well as perceived social groupings (Osborne & Jones, 2011; Schachter & Rich, 2011). For Jenkins (2008:5) identity is 'the human capacity [...] to know who is who (and hence what is what). This involves knowledge of who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on'. There are primarily two ways that identity can be perceived: Social/Collective and Personal Identity.

'Social/Collective identity' is about "a connectivity born in history and carried forward through tradition" (Edwards, 2009:19); therefore, the historical conjuncture of the Greek Crisis forms the social environment of identity formation. Social identities tend to attach to groups (eg generations). For many sociologists peoples' personal characteristics derive from the socialization of each individual within specific groups to which they belong (including family, peers, school). Personality characteristics are influenced by the particular social context within which, each individual comes in contact with others (in this case Crisis remains the dominant social context). Therefore, individual identities will be both components and reflections of particular social (or cultural) identities. 'Personal identities' are both attached to individuals (their traits, personality characteristics) and are internalised by them (Owens, 2013). Personal identity is primarily perceived in this paper as the reflective process that is involved in "our abandoning the outward-looking point of view, and of our having become able to think of subjectivity as such, to think ourselves as thinkers" James (1890).

### Youth identity formation

The Greek young generation (Crisis Generation) has been raised during a prolonged social, political and economic Crisis, which has formed a social reality experienced during their childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. As these stages constitute the first milestones in life, identity formation for this cohort is inevitably unique. Youth, in terms of late adolescence and early adulthood, may seem the first terrain in which an individual is trying to understand and perhaps explain oneself. Usually this process is taking place through the understanding and possible explanation of others. More specifically, 'youth lifestyles' according to Miles (2000) involve certain forms and ways of interacting with and negotiating about their everyday lives. According to Mannheim (1952) and Pilcher (1994) generations defined through individuals born within the same historical and socio-cultural context (in this case Greeks being born between 1995-2000) experience the same formative experiences and develop unifying commonalities. Erikson (1950) perceived identity formation through the passage from childhood to adulthood and conceived identity as a process that is internal but also includes the relationships that individuals form with others during the life course. Erikson's studies focused on identity formation after World War II and he termed the results of such disastrous identity disruption as 'identity crisis'. Although the Greek crisis can not be perceived in similar terms as those of a War, it has certainly being acknowledged that the Greek Crisis has been proven to be disruptive for Greek people if not damaging (Koniordos 2017). Erikson's (1950) 'identity crisis'



further refers to a state in which youth have lost their previous sense of sameness and continuity and are looking for new, self-defined, ideals and ethic; as will be further discussed Greek youth experience analogous processes.

Cote and Levine (2016:115) suggest that that a sense of stable 'ego-identity' protects people from social conflicts and tensions. In this vein they propose four ways that young adults can approach the task of identity formation: a) Resolvers (proactive approach) willing to think ahead in life, b) Guardians (active approaches), willing to commit to a course of action, c) Searchers (reactive approaches) apply exploration and experimentation and d) Drifters and Refusers (inactive approach) unwilling to think ahead, act or explore (2016:125). The Greek Crisis has caused significant structural as well as emotional changes and alterations in terms of ways of living (XXX); however, what remains under researched is the ways those experiences effect younger people's identity formation. As Cote and Levine (2016) emphasised identity formation entails aspects of personal and social identity, which may reveal significant elements of the process of youth identity formation (in this case related to the Greek crisis). It is thus revealing to review how young people think subjectively of oneself and others in a reflexive way, within this specific socio-cultural context.

In current sociological literature, the most concrete explanation of reflexivity is offered by Archer (2007:4); she defines reflexivity as "the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa". Reflexivity can be extended

to social groups, given that they can express a collective mode of reflexivity (Donatti, 2011). A key element of Archer's proposal is that even though reflexivity is perceived as an ability all individuals can potentially exercise, different people exercise it differently (Archer 2012). Therefore, in the context of Greek Crisis, it would be illuminating to explore how Greeks (and specifically young people) consider themselves in relation to the Greek Crisis and vice versa. Archer (2012:13) proposed four modes of reflexivity related to the relationship between inner considerations (termed internal conversation) and possible courses of action: a) Communicative Reflexives- Internal Conversations need to be confirmed and completed by others before they lead to action, b) Autonomous Reflexives-Internal Conversations are self-contained, leading directly to action, c) Meta-Reflexives - Internal Conversations critically evaluate previous inner dialogues and are critical about effective action in society, d) Fractured Reflexives - Internal Conversations cannot lead to purposeful courses of action, but intensify personal distress and disorientation resulting in expressive action. These modes are not static and could also be combined within the same person in different ways at different points in time.

This study will utilize two theoretical models (Cote and Levins' and Archer's) in order to explore possible ways that young identity formation is effected by the Greek crisis, by focusing on how young people reflect upon it (personally and collectively) and perhaps most importantly, what they plan to do about it.

## Methods

To explore Greek youth identity formation, 20 semi-structured, in-depth narrative interviews (Miller and Crabtree, 2004; Maxwell, 2013) took place in Greece during January and February 2017. These interviews aimed to inquire into how young participants lived their lives during the crisis, focus on the main concerns related to their lives in relation to the crisis, their past life while they were raised during the crisis and their critical views concerning their own possible contribution. Participants were selected to ensure diversity in terms of youth age (18-23, n=19.5), class (lower middle=8, middle=7 and upper middle=5) which was self-defined according to parents' status, gender (F=13, M=7), employment status (6 employed), educational status (University students=13, School students=5), plurality of residence (5 different locations) and even immigration status (four were 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants) (see table 1).

The research questions addressed during interviews<sup>3</sup> were informed by the research literature and were asked in an open-ended format (Light, Singer and Willett, 1990; Kvale, 1996). Each interview later transcribed and translated into English with participants encouraged to tell their stories on how they experienced the crisis. Themes emerged as part of participants' responses to the questions regarding their views on the way they lived their life in contemporary Greece. Participants were encouraged to express their personal

---

<sup>3</sup> The research questions derive from previous research on the subjective experiences of the Greek Crisis (XXX,XXX,XXX) aiming in capturing the ways participants perceive the Greek Crisis in ultimately personal terms.

concerns and evaluations associated with the transformation of Greek society by describing how their way of living had been affected and the ways they experienced everyday transformations (Roseneil and Budgeon, 2005:144). Thematic analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2003) consisted of repeated readings of the translated transcripts of the interviews, focusing on meaningful and relevant categories and themes associated with aspects and elements of identity formation processes. Contiguity-based relations between themes were identified revealing relations among parts of transcribed texts (Maxwell, 2013). The identification of these themes (formed after the completion of the initial transcript analysis) allowed the emergence of the actual connection between the core concepts of social identity, personal/reflexive identity and planning youth identity away from the crisis.

All participants were adults (over 18) and agreed to participate by signing a consent form stipulating confidentiality and anonymity. They were also informed that they were not obliged to participate in the research and that they could stop at any time, refuse to answer a question or ask for clarifications. The questions asked were identical for all respondents in terms of content and order; the questions did not raise any sensitive issues and therefore no ethical authorisation had to be considered. The sample was opportunistic as the recruitment strategy in Athens and Thessaloniki used 'snowballing' (Becker, 1963), with some of the participants introducing the researchers to others. 'Gatekeepers' (Henn and Foard, 2009) were used in Syros, Arta and Paramythia as a local 'mediator' was needed in order to secure trust between researcher and participants. The study focused on the exploration of

experiences associated with youth identity formation during the crisis and the purpose of the study was not to ensure a representative or random sample. It would therefore be more appropriate to refer to this study as an exploratory investigation (Hoaglin, Mosteller and Tukey, 1983) which reveals possible tendencies concerning the subjective experiences youth identity formation during the Greek crisis.

A larger number of participants would have been required in order to allow generalisations to be made about the wider population. Furthermore, the researchers were aware of the subjective evaluations and understandings involved in qualitative research and consequently a conscious attempt was made to offer a balanced interpretation of the participants' views and opinions.

### Analysis / Findings

Following the prominent characteristics of what constitutes a distinct youth generation along with the processes followed during identity formation, the analysis of the interviews, has primarily focused the following themes:

- 1) Revealing social identity formation through the common perception of belonging to the 'Crisis Generation' and the shared perception of 'passiveness';
- 2) portraying personal identity formation through the prominent attitude of being trapped and confused on the one hand but not being apathetic on the other;
- 3) planning future youth identity away from the crisis.

## 1. Social Identity Formation

According to Owens (2013), social identity derives from the group, statuses and categories to which individuals are socially recognised as belonging and ageing is indeed a profound categorisation. But Youth is not only about ageing; youth is used in relevant literature to refer to the sharing of common experiences between groups of 'young' people (Briggs and Turner, 2012; Bynner, 2005) and Miles (2000) adds the concept of 'youth lifestyles' which suggests a diversity of experience especially regarding the ways young people interact with and negotiate about their everyday lives. This paper is particularly focused on the ways that young people's identity formation has been effected by the Greek crisis and in this respect it will be revealed that young people actually do share distinct social realities which determine the way they negotiate about their everyday lives.

### 1.1. The 'Crisis Generation'

As the Greek crisis is profoundly prolonged (since 2008), this generation has been literally raised during the crisis as the participants of this study were aged between 8-15 years old when the crisis started. This particular characteristic constitutes a fundamental difference between this generation and any other generation. For Erikson (1946), identity relates to the awareness of self-sameness and continuity not only on an individual level but also in the level of the immediate community. In the following quotes participants demonstrate

awareness of this kind of sameness. **“Younger people have been raised during the crisis so for us the crisis is our life. This is our reality we can hardly remember how things were before the crisis”** (Anna, 19, Syros). As discussed social identity derives from the group, statuses and categories to which individuals are socially recognised as belonging (Owens, 2013). In this case social identity is primarily perceived through the parameter of crisis. So it can be proposed that inevitably social identity formation of this generation entails the shared experience of belonging to the ‘Crisis Generation’: **“my generation can not really realize how much we have been affected by the crisis as we were raised during the crisis”** (Kate, 19, Athens). One way that has been used to define different generations relates to groups of individuals born within the same historical and socio-cultural context, who experience the same formative experiences and develop unifying commonalities as a result (Mahnheim, 1952; Pilcher, 1994). In this respect Manos (22, Thessaloniki) maintains that **“the young generation is the outcome of the crisis, we are all heart”** and Tasos (20, Thessaloniki) adds that **“at least I am not the different one as all my friends are struggling like me because of the crisis”**. It is thus appropriate to argue that this particular cohort represented, through these participants, constitutes the emerging Greek ‘Crisis Generation’ as there seems to be a shared realisation of belonging to this category.

## 1.2. Passive Youth

Social identity also relates to the ways ‘others’ perceive a specific group (public awareness of youth) and how this group perceive itself (self/youth-awareness)

(Jenkins, 2008). Participants demonstrate a rather explicit tendency of considering themselves on a social/collective level (the young generation) in relation to the crisis. Several participants displayed precise awareness of collective/social identity (or 'public' self-consciousness according to Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss, 1975) regarding young generation by described young people as being passive and non-reactive. **"Young people primarily don't care about what is going on and they remain passive. They prefer to compromise"** (Thanos, 20 Athens). Similarly, Christina, (18, Athens) believes that **"Young people prefer to compromise rather than do something, they get angry and disappointed and even aggressive with what is going on but they do not react"** (Christina, 18, Athens). Stryker (1968, 1987) proposed that social identities carry expectations related to present and future interactions associated to other individuals; participants reveal disappointed expectations by other young people by stating that they are passive. In fact several participants, displayed awareness about themselves as being youth, in relation to this passive category: **"We have not resisted as much as we should have resisted"** (Eleni, 18, Syros) or as Katia explains, **"we do not react we just tolerate what is going on at home, in a relationship, at work"** (Katia, 23, Athens). Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (1999) explain that identity development concerns the individual's awareness and identification with certain cultural values, behaviours, beliefs, (in this case collective lack of reaction). Such awareness provides a theoretical structure for understanding individuals' interpretations of their own social identity (in this context associated with youth and crisis). Therefore such awareness clearly contributes an aspect of social identity formation related to passiveness.



## 2. Personal Identity Formation

The second aspect of identity is related to personal identity, which is primarily perceived as peoples' ability to think about their own selves and become the observers and thinkers of their own lives (Owens, 2013). Or in other words peoples' ability to become reflexive. As discussed, participants were able to display awareness of their social identity (being youth) but at the same time they were able to engage reflexively with their own personal evaluations of themselves (as youth) in relation to the crisis. Reflexivity (Archer, 2007, 2012) enables people to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and *vice versa*. All participants have been able to reflect upon their stance toward the crisis on two levels: a) become reflexive towards young generation and b) become reflexive towards themselves

### 2.1. Reflexive Towards Young Generation

According to Stryker (1968, 1987) personal identities carry expectations related to present and future interaction associated to other individuals and certain roles performed by group members. Thus personal identity is also related with the ways individuals reflect upon the social groups they associate with (in this case younger generation). One of the questions in the interview related to the contribution of each participant to this crisis. Unsurprisingly, most participants explicitly stated that **“my generation has not contributed. But we have to pay the price”** (Kostas, 18. Thessaloniki). Most would also add that: **“I did not**

**have the chance to contribute I am very young**” (Spyros, 18, Athens) or like Giorgos (18, Paramythia) who states that **“I am far too young, I have not done anything wrong”** and Eleni, (18, Syros) who explains that: **“I can’t even vote yet so how could I contribute?”**. Some participants make comparisons with the previous generations: **“Perhaps the older members of my family have contributed especially the generation of our grandparents”** (Anna, 18, Syros) and Tasos (20, Thessaloniki) who agrees that **“the previous generations borrowed money to live a better life and now we have to pay back the money. How does this make me responsible?”** Thus certain participants have even named that the older generations are the ones to blame for the current situation in Greece. But what becomes evident at this point is that participants feel rather ‘trapped’ as they seem to believe that they have inherited a society, economy and political reality in prolonged crisis and they are asked to find a way to live with it although (in contradiction to older generations) they did not contribute in shaping this reality.

## 2.2. Reflexive Youth (towards oneself)

As discussed, personal identity is primarily perceived as the individual’s ability to consider her/himself in relation to the social context s/he finds her/himself in any given time. Smith explains that self-identity has to do with guiding what one does and appraising what one has done at least partly through reflection on one’s performance; feeling responsible, at least sometimes, for one’s actions and holding others responsible for theirs (Smith, 1991). Thus personal identity could be formed through the ways people reflect upon themselves and their

actions in a critical and even evaluative manner. Although participants felt that they did not contribute to the causal factors of the crisis they were able to consider reflexively about their actions towards the crisis, i.e. what they have done about the crisis. Most of them produced self-critical evaluations like Spyros who explained: **“I have not done anything at all for this situation to change. I remain passive and neutral”** (Spyros, 18, Athens) and Giorgos (18, Paramythia) who states that: **“There is not much I can do. How can I change the economic situation of this country?”**. As discussed most participants characterized the young generation as passive and some of them were even able to identify with this characterization like Rania: **“It is not up to me. No matter what I do it won’t be enough”** (Rania, 18, Paramythia). Stavroula becomes analytical when she describes her concerns: **“I find it difficult to comprehend what has gone wrong or how it can be fixed and even more importantly how could I help for this to happen”** (Stavroula, 18, Athens). Participants seem confused about the course of action that they could follow and they display their difficulty to comprehend social reality. Thus, following the above mentioned characteristic of this generation being ‘trapped’ to a social reality that they did not have the chance to form, it seems difficult for them to comprehend this reality and consequently, they seem unable to find the appropriate way to react. Such realisation further confirms Cote’s (2000) suggestion that an increasing number of people have to go through life in a state of passive confusion about themselves, their goals and their values. At the same time though, participants also express their aversion to the way social reality has been formed. Lazarus (1999) explains that individuals evaluate events as harmful, threatening or challenging but they are also able to consider

ways of coping with the situation. Perhaps the complexity and rather repressive effect of the current social reality, does not allow the formation of a specific course of action by youth.

Notably none of the participants reported that they do not care or that they do not want to do something. They all expressed a collective sense of being trapped in a confusing reality or even helpless rather than unconcerned and indifferent. Conclusively participants are displaying awareness of their passiveness in a critical manner. On the one hand, they perceive themselves (as a generation) passive but on the other, they are not apathetic about this realisation.

### 3. Planning Youth Identity Away from the Crisis

So far this paper discussed elements of social and personal identity formation as revealed and discussed by the participants themselves. Greek youth identity has been portrayed as a trapped generation formed during the crisis, which is not unconcerned about its inactiveness but feels unable to react (especially collectively). The question that is now raised: what is this generation going to do about it?

As it became evident, the effect of the Greek crisis on Greek youth relates to the emergence of a perceived passive generation, which is currently unable to react due to a repressive social and political reality, which is certainly not prioritising the needs of this generation. However, at the same time, this

generation is profoundly alerted and concerned about the restricted social reality they found themselves in and they have displayed explicit critical aversion about the passive stance of their generation. Such reflexive processes are certainly related with possible future action, as relevant literature has revealed that, prior to action, relevant consideration/reflexivity upon the action (termed internal conversation) is involved (XXXX ), Archer (2007, 2012). Indeed, as the next section reveals, perhaps this is the most important component of what the participants of this study had to contribute: the ways participants plan a youth (Crisis Generation) identity away from the Crisis.

Cote and Levine (2016) proposed four distinct ways that young people can approach identity formation related to willingness or unwillingness to consider and/or produce some course of action. Furthermore, Archer (2012) identifies four modes of reflexivity, which relate to personal considerations (termed internal conversations) that may or may not lead to a course of action. As youth identity formation (and quite clearly in the case of Greek Crisis) is indeed related to the ability of people to produce reflexive accounts (about themselves and/or society) as well as planning or even producing possible courses of action related to these accounts, we shall now turn to the responses of the participants related to their engagement (or not) with considering and planning (or even executing) specific course(s) of action related to the Greek crisis.

### 3.1. Greek Crisis Identity Formation (through Action)

Quite interestingly and regardless of their realisation of belonging to a rather 'passive generation', their difficulty to comprehend social reality and their current incapability to react upon it, all participants were willing to consider and propose ways of overcoming the Greek crisis (directly or indirectly) on a personal and/or on a collective level. All participants were pessimistic about the immediate future of Greece (it was even commonly noted that things will not improve the next 10 years) but at the same time were all hopeful that eventually the situation will improve.

### 3.1.1 Personal Accounts on Action

Some participants explained what they are already doing: “ **I am trying to improve in any way that I can, I do not give up**” (Yiannis, 18, Thess/ki) or what they think might be relevant “**I can only try to understand why the situation is as it is and perhaps understand what caused the crisis. So hopefully when the time comes for me to get a job I will be able to do things differently**” (Kate, 19, Athens). According to Cote and Levine’s model (2016) these participants could be characterised ‘Guardians’ as they share an active approach and are willing to commit to a course of action. According to Archer’s (2013) modes of reflexivity, they would be characterised as ‘Autonomous Reflexives’ as their considerations lead directly to action. However, some participants prefer to confirm their concerns with others before lead to action: “**I can contribute for things to change if I join forces with everyone else. Nobody can do much on his own. We need to support each other**” (Katia, 23, Athens). Similarly Tasos (20 Thessaloniki) adds that “**if I can**

**plan a way out with my mates, share it with everyone and agree on this plan, I know we can make it happen”**. Possibly, Archer (2012) would characterise these participants as ‘Communicative Reflexives’ (however there is not an equivalent category in Cote and Levine’s model).

According to Cote and Levine (2106) ‘Resolvers’ are the ones who produce proactive approaches and are willing to think ahead in life in a planning and purposive manner like Giorgos who states that **“I will leave abroad and have a better life. There is nothing I can do here now. I have to go”** (Giorgos, 19, Paramythia). Anna is following the same kind of identity formation although her plan is the exact opposite: **“I will remain in Greece and try to discuss with others, especially the older generation, about how things can improve and change. We need to try change our mentality and I want to help for that to happen by positively influencing others and make them think ”** (Anna, 19, Syros). Archer’s (2012) mode of reflexivity in this case would be called ‘Meta-Reflexives’ as the considerations (internal conversations) are self-contained, leading directly to action. Even Dimitra’s accounts would fall under these categories although she is not referring to immediate future: **“I can go as far as advising my children (if and when I have children)”**(Dimitra, 23, Athens).

In the same vein, Cote and Levine describe as ‘Searchers’ the ones who produce reactive approaches and can explore and experiment without necessarily thinking ahead in life: **“I refuse to follow the system, I refuse doing something I don’t like, in the hope that I will get it my way”** (Katia,

23, Athens). Similarly, Kate states that **“I will join a demonstration to protest about what is happening but I haven’t figured out how I could do something more powerful and what exactly I need to do** (Kate, 19, Athens). Notably, Rudig and Karyotis (2014) explained that 29% of the Greek people interviewed in Greece for the purposes of their study, stated that they had engaged in a protest against austerity measures. Such evidence indicates the relevantly limited collective reaction (particularly deriving from younger people) towards austerity in Greece.

According to both above-mentioned models, the participants of this study were identified in one of the categories proposed by the relevant literature but participants were also able to explain their plans about collective courses of action.

### 3.1.2. Collective Accounts on Action

Following the same categories of youth identity formation and modes of reflexivity, collective accounts can also be categorised in similar terms: Guardians/Autonomous Reflexives: the main characteristic being self-contained considerations and willingness in committing to a course of action, like Dimitra’s statement: **“We need to change the way we vote, to stop trusting people who can’t be trusted any more. Mainly politicians”** (Dimitra, 23, Athens) or Olympia’s (19, Athens) views: **“Stop voting according to who is going to make us a favour”**. Resolvers/Meta-Reflexives: thinking ahead in life, able to plan and being critical about effective action in society.



Characteristic fragments would be those of Sofia's **"Our parents' generation was particularly consumerists. They were spending without thinking. They couldn't see the future; they had loans that they still cannot pay back. We should not repeat the same mistakes"** (Sofia, 19, Athens) and Thanos': **"We need to be better informed, be willing to hear what others say and actually to try to improve as humans. This is how we will change the mentality of older generations"** (Thanos, 20, Athens). Communicative Reflexives: consideration should be conformed by others before producing action as clearly indicate in Kate's account **"we all need to agree in making small changes in our every day lives so that we can improve the way we live** (Kate, 19, Athens) and Yiannis (18, Thessaloniki) **"we should follow a gifted leader who listens to what we all have to say"**. Searchers: exploration/experimentation without necessary thinking ahead in life: **"We should keep our heads up. We should trust each other, remain informed and become better people"** (Niki, 20, Arta) and Kostas (18. Thess/ki) **"we just need to be independent, strong and confident. Get our hope back"**

On a collective level, participants were willing to discuss their plans about the future by indicating ways of moving away from the Greek crisis primarily by changing habitual actions (eg change ways of: voting, consuming, being informed becoming optimistic again and stop repeating older generations' mistakes).

Notably, none of the participants could fall under the last category of youth identity formation and the last mode of reflexivity; none of the participants could be identified as 'Drifters/Refusers' (those who follow inactive approaches and

are not thinking ahead in life) or as 'Fractured Reflectives' (produce considerations/internal conversations unable to lead to purposeful course of action). This finding confirms the social and personal identity characteristics previously discussed as participants perceived themselves as passive (unable to currently react) but not apathetic (indifferent, uninterested). The participants of this study who form the Crisis Generation were perfectly able to critically consider and discuss about possible course of action, on a personal and collective level. All participants were identified through Cote and Levin's youth identity formation categories and model and Archer's modes of reflexivity leading to action.

Consequently this study proposes that the Crisis Generation represents a unique generation of Greek youth characterised by: a misleading passiveness, profound lack of apathy, misread and hopefully ephemeral sense of being trapped in a social and political reality which was not formed by them and explicit ability of planning a future away from the crisis through personal and social accounts of action.

#### 4. Discussion

This study revealed Greek youth identity formation processes on multiple levels. First, youth identity formation was analysed on a social level: participants (aged 18-23) were all raised and reached early adulthood during the crisis and consequently this study proposed the term 'Crisis Generation' to describe the first generation to be raised during the crisis. Furthermore, participants were

self-identified as belonging to a passive (albeit non-apathetic) generation. On a personal identity level, participants displayed a shared perception of being 'trapped' in a social reality they did not form but at the same time they explicitly revealed a critical and non-apathetic stance towards this realisation. This profound lack of submissive attitude led this research to the perspicuous categorisation of all participants' responses into: a) Cote and Levin's youth identity formation model and b) Archer's modes of reflexivity leading to potential courses of action. Although the current social and political reality in Greece discourages Greek youth to produce immediate forms of reaction, all participants contributed positively and critically towards planning a youth away from the crisis by discussing potential courses of action on a personal and social level.

Admittedly these considerations (reflexive accounts) about potential courses of action, constitute plans about the future, and it is not possible to know whether they will be materialised or not and even if they will, if these course of action will be recognised by others. But as all participants displayed profound awareness and aversion of the current crisis, were able to consider themselves in relation to the crisis on a personal and collective level, then it can be supported, that these young people are currently producing inner considerations, or 'internal conversations' (XXXX, Archer, 2007) by producing reflexive considerations about their present and future place in the Greek crisis. And as revealed through relevant literature (XXX and Archer, 2007, 20012) such consideration enable related actions to follow. According to Edmunds and Turner (2005) generations alter from being passive into becoming politically

active and self-conscious, when they are able to exploit recourses (political/educational/economic), to innovate in cultural, intellectual or political spheres.

It is thus suggested, that as the exploratory sample of this study indicates, young people (or the 'Crisis Generation') are perfectly able to become active in a purposeful and meaningful manner on a personal and/or social/collective level after following fruitful reflexive considerations regarding possible courses of action. The reason why these actions are not expressed or perhaps recognised yet, clearly relates to current social, political and economic restrictions and limitations, which do not allow young people particularly to express themselves in effective personal or collective ways. This generation is forming a distinct identity, which is inevitably restrained by the limitations of the Greek crisis (economical, political and social) but at the same time, this generation is perfectly capable of considering in a critical and reflexive manner themselves in relation to the crisis. It is beyond anyone's gift to foresee if, how and when courses of collective or personal action will follow such fruitful considerations, or if such courses of action will be recognised by others, but what can be revealed and emphasised, is that the 'stereotypical' perception of Greek youth as being 'passive' constitutes a misleading understatement. To the contrary, Greek youth identity formation certainly entails vibrant reflexive processes, which are partly expressed and can be fully voiced and hopefully heard when the socio-political and economic Greek reality would allow such opportunity to emerge.

## Bibliography

- Antonucci, L., Hamilton, M. and Roberts, S. (2015) "Constructing a Theory of Youth Social Policy", in L. Antonucci, M. Hamilton and S. Roberts (eds.), *Young People and Social Policy in Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Archer, M.S. (2007) *Making Our Way Through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, M., S. (2012) *The Reflexive Imperative in Late Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Becker, H., S. (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press
- Briggs, D., and Turner, T. (2012) 'Understanding British youth behaviour on holiday in Ibiza' *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 6(1): 81-90
- Bynner, J. (2005) 'Rethinking the Youth Phase of the Life-Course: The case of Emerging Adulthood?' *Journal of Youth Studies* 8(4): 367-384
- Chávez, A. F. and Guido-DiBrito, F. (1999), 'Racial and Ethnic Identity and Development'. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 84: 39–47.
- Corsaro, E., A. (2011) *The Sociology of Childhood*. USA: Pine Forge Press
- Cote, J. (2000) *Arrested Adulthood: the Changing Nature of Maturity and Identity*. New York: New York Identity Press.
- Cote, J. and Levine, C., G. (2002) *Identity Formation, Agency and Culture: a social psychological synthesis*. USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. Publishers
- Cote, J., E. and Levine, C., G. (2016) *Identity Formation, Youth and Development*. New York: Psychology Press
- Donati, P. (2011) 'Modernization and relational reflexivity'. *International Review of Sociology*, 21(1): 21–39.
- Edmunds, J. and Turner, B. S. (2005) 'Global Generations: Social Change in the Twentieth Century' *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 56, No. 4: 559-78
- Edwards, J. (2009) *Language and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Erikson, E. (1946) 'Ego Development and Historical Change'. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 2:359-396

Erikson, E. H. (1950) *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton

Eurobarometre (2017) [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm) (visited 20/10/2017)

Eurostat (2016) <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/youth/data/database> (visited 20/10/2017)

Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M. F., and Buss, D. M. (1975) 'Public and private self-consciousness: assessment and theory' *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. 36: 1241-1250

Gilleard, C. (2004) 'Cohorts and Generations in the Study of Social Change'. *Social Theory and Health* 2: 106-119

Hamilton, M. and Roberts, S. (Eds)(2014) *Young People and Social Policy in Europe: Dealing with Risk, Inequality and Precarity in Times of Crisis*. London: Routledge

Hellenic Statistical Authority (2017). <http://www.statistics.gr/> (visited 20/10/2017)

Henn, M. and Foard, N. (2009) *A Critical Introduction to Social Research*. London: Sage

Herzfeld, M (2011) 'Crisis Attack: Impromptu ethnography in the Greek maelstrom' *Anthropology Today* 27: 22-26

Hoaglin, D.; Mosteller, F. and Tukey, J., W. (1983) *Understanding Robust and Exploratory Data Analysis*. New York: Wiley

Hughes, E. (1971). *The sociological eye: selected paper on work, self and the study of society* (Vol 1). Chicago: Aldine

James, W. (1890) *The Principles of Psychology. Vol 1*. London: McMillan

Jenkins, R. (2008) *Social Identity* (3<sup>rd</sup> end.) London: Routledge

Knight, D. (2012) 'Turn of the screw: narratives of history and economy in the Greek Crisis' *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 21(1): 53-76,

Koniordos, S. (2017) An Overview of Greece's 'Brain Drain' Crisis: Morphology and Beyond. In Giousmpasoglou, C., Paliktoglou, V. and Marinakou, E. (Eds) *Brain Drain in Higher Education: the case of Southern European Countries and Ireland*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.

Kretsos, L. (2014) 'Young People at Work in Greece before and after the Crisis' in Hamilton, M. and Roberts, S. (Eds)(2014) *Young People and Social Policy in Europe: Dealing with Risk, Inequality and Precarity in Times of Crisis*. London: Routledge

Kvale, S. (1996). *Inter Views: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Λαμπριανίδης, Λ (2011) *Επενδύοντας στη φυγή: Η διαρροή επιστημόνων από την Ελλάδα την εποχή της Παγκοσμιοποίησης*. Αθήνα: Κριτική

Lazarus, R. S. (1999). *Stress and emotion: A new synthesis*. New York: Springer.

Light, R., J.; Singer, J. and Willet, J. (1990) *By Design: Conducting Research on Higher Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Manheim, K. (1952) *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Maxwell, J., A. (2013) *Qualitative Research Design: an Interactive Approach*. London: Sage

Miles, S. (2000) *Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Miller, W., I. and Crabtree, B. (2004) 'Depth Interviewing' In Hesse-Biber, S., N. and Leavy P. (Eds) *Approaches to Qualitative Research: a Reader Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Osborne, J. W., & Jones, B. D. (2011). Identification with academics and motivation to achieve in school: How the structure of the self influences academic outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review*, 23, 131–158

Owens, T., J. (2013) 'Self and Identity'. In John Delamater (Ed.) *Handbook of Social Psychology*. New York: Plenum Publishers

Papavasiliou, E. and Lyons, S. (2015) 'A Comparative Analysis of the work Values of Greece's 'Millennial' Generation' *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 26(17):2166-2186.

Pilcher, J. (1994) 'Manheim's Sociology of Generations: An undervalued legacy'. *British Journal of Sociology* 481-495

Roseneil, S., & Budgeon, S. (2004). Cultures of Intimacy and Care beyond 'the

Family': Personal life and social change in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Current Sociology*, 52, 135-159.

Rudig, W. and Karyotis, G. (2014) 'Who Protests in Greece: Mass Opposition to Austerity, *British Journal of Political Science*, 44(3): 487-513

Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to Identify Themes. *Field Methods*, 15, 85-109.

Ryder, N., B. (1965) 'The cohort as a concept in the study of social change' *American Sociological Review*, 30:843-861.

Schachter, E. P., & Rich, Y. (2011). Identity education: A conceptual framework for educational researchers and practitioners. *Educational Psychologist*, 46, 222

Schuman, H., and Scott, J. (1989) Generations and Collective Memories *American Sociological Review* 54: 359-381

Smith, M., B. (1991) *Values, Self and Society: Toward a Humanist Social Psychology*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers

Stryker, S. (1968) 'Identity Theory and Role Performance' *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 30: 558-564

Stryker, S. (1987) 'The Vitalisation of Symbolic Interactionism'. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 50: 83-94



Table 1

	Age	Class	Employed	University Student	School Student	2nd generation Immigrant	Residence	Gender	
Dimitra	23	LM	Y	Y			Athens	F	
Sofia	19	UM	N	Y			Athens	F	
Olympia	19	M	N	Y			Athens	F	
Niki	20	LM	N	Y			Arta	F	
Kate	19	M	N	Y			Athens	F	
Stavroula	18	M	N	Y			Athens	F	
Rafaela	18	M	N	Y			Arta	F	
Katia	23	LM	Y	Y		Y	Athens	F	
Christina	18	LM	N		Y		Athens	F	
Giorgos	19	M	N	Y			Paramythia Thesprotias	M	
Rania	18	LM	N	N	Y	Y	Pramythia Thesprotias	F	
Despina	23	UM	Y	N			Athens	F	
Anna	19	UM	N	Y			Syros	F	
Eleni	18	UM	N	Y			Syros	F	
Yiannis	18	M	N		Y		Thessaloniki	M	
Tasos	20	LM	Y	Y		Y	Thessaloniki	M	
Kostas	18	UM	N	N	Y		Thessaloniki	M	
Thanos	20	M	Y	Y			Athens	M	
Manos	22	LM	Y	N		Y	Thessaloniki	M	
Spyros	18	LM	N		Y		Athens	M	
	n=19,5	UM=5 M=7 LM=8	Y=6	Y=13	Y=5	Y=4	Athens=10 Thess/ki=4 Arta=2 Syros=2 Paramythia=2	M=7 F=13	

UM: Upper Middle, M: Middle and LM: Lower Middle

