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

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THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Athanasia Chalari[†]
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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the impact of the Greek Crisis on the ways young Greeks form their identities. The prolonged effects of the Greek crisis (2008-today), have been undoubtedly experienced by all Greeks (regardless of class, age, gender, location, occupation). However, older adolescents/younger adults (born between 1995 and 2000) constitute the first generation (termed Crisis Generation) to be raised during the Crisis and form their identity within this district social, political and economic reality. This study focuses on the subjective experiences of 20 participants born during this period, 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 social and political reality which was not formed by them and explicit ability of planning a future identity away from the crisis through personal and social accounts of action.

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1. Introduction

Since 2008 the ongoing Greek socio-economic crisis 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 in this article as 'the Crisis Generation'. This generation (born between 1995 and 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 the effect of the Greek Crisis is 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.

Conceptualising 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. So far, one way to understand the effect of the Greek crisis on peoples' lives was by considering the various ways through which Greeks (and specifically young people) may be effected by the crisis on a collective level (e.g. salary reductions, increased unemployment, immigration waves) as well as their own personal way of considering themselves as part of the crisis (e.g. being pessimistic, disappointed, concerned and anxious). However, what remains under-researched pertains to the ways these experiences affect young 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 the youth identity forms (in this case related to the Greek crisis). It is thus pivotal to review how young people think subjectively of oneself and others in a reflexive way, within this specific socio-cultural context. This study will utilise two theoretical models (Cote and Levins', 2016 on identity formation and Archer's, 2012 on modes of reflexivity) in order to explore possible ways through which young identity formation is affected 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.

2. Youth and the Crisis in Europe and Greece

Since 2010, certain European economies have 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, economic 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 the literature that in contrast to previous generations, young people in contemporary Europe experience a fragmented, de-standardised and uncertain reality. This reality has been the result of increasing unemployment due to the economic recession. This results in a 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 (Brynner, 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 (Chalari, 2014, 2015). In a comparative study on Austerity and young people in Greece and UK, it was revealed that young people in both countries are concerned about their professional prospects and raise of unemployment (Chalari and Sealey, 2017).

The abovementioned observations can be further confirmed regarding youth in Greece (Kretsos, 2014, Papavasileiou and Lyons, 2015) during the times of prolonged austerity. Most notably, Herzfeld (2011) and Knight (2012) explain how the 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 (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 the 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. As it has been argued (Chalari, 2015), compared to older generations, narratives of the younger generation in Greece reveal experiences of uncertainty, disappointment, pessimism, insecurity, fear, anger, negativism, pressure, anxiety and depression. Compared to two older generations (30-40 and 40-50), the ages 20-30 have been particularly affected by those experiences as they seem to be the most disappointed and discouraged due to the prospect of unemployment. Currently, according to Eurostat (2016) the Greek youth unemployment rate for the ages 15-29 is 38.3%, far worse that the European Union average being 14.3%. Indicatively, according to the Eurobarometer (2017), 98% of Greeks of all ages are pessimistic about the economic situation.

Such an on-going social, political and economic reality has consequently allowed the time and space for a unique generation to emerge, termed in this article as 'the Crisis Generation'. This generation 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. Young people in Greece, born between 1995 and 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 (Chalari, 2015) 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.

As already discussed, especially the youth in Greece have suffered significantly and the gradually increasing social constrains (primarily from employment opportunities, professional progression and prolonged parental dependency) have resulted in an extensive Greek youth 'brain drain' (Koniordos, 2017). The young people are particularly pessimistic, confused and uncertain about the future (Chalari, 2014, 2015). In this vein, Hughes (1971) has supported that significant historical, as well as social, economic and political, circumstances resulting e.g. in extensive unemployment or even in cases of war, are responsible for unforeseen personal problems related with how people live their lives. Prolonged experience of such circumstances, like in the Greek case, inevitably and collectively affects identity formation. Pinquart and Silbereisen (2004) explain that significant changes in society affect social institutions as well as psychological development especially when constrains on individuals are not stable.

Manheim (1952) further maintains that generations radicalised by traumatic experiences can transform society by challenging customary thought and offering new political and cultural visions. It is thus understood that the 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, i.e. 'Crisis Generation'. Corsaro (2011) maintains that identity formation is a process, which may last a lifetime but the first cornerstones are certainly formed in early the life steps. It therefore becomes pivotal to understand what the effect of the Greek Crisis is 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.

2.1. 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), the self primarily forms during childhood and early adulthood whereas identity forms in late adolescence and early adulthood. Conceptualising identity formation can be seen as the

individual's attempt to define oneself through personal values as well as through perceived social interconnectedness (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 thing 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 (e.g. generations). For many sociologists, peoples' personal characteristics derive from the socialisation 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 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).

2.2. Youth identity formation

The Greek young generation (Crisis Generation) has been raised during the social, political and economic re-formation of Greece, while being in Crisis, and have experienced this new social reality during their childhood, adolescence and early adulthood. As these stages constitute the first milestones in life, identity formation for this cohort is inevitably unique. Generally, 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 Mahnheim (1952) and Pilcher (1994) generations defined through individuals born within the same historical and socio-cultural context (in this case, Greeks born between 1995 and 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 Two and he termed the results of such disastrous identity disruption as 'identity crisis'. Although the Greek crisis cannot 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 the Greek people, if not damaging (Koniordos 2017).

Cote and Levine (2016:115) suggest that identity stability in any culture is achieved through the interplay between the personal and the social. They support 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 (Chalari, 2014, 2015); 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 pivotal 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 revealing to explore how Greeks, and specifically young people, consider themselves in relation to the Greek Crisis and vice versa. This exploration could reveal personal as well as collective perceptions of the Crisis. 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 utilises 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. Specifically, it focuses on how young people reflect upon it personally and collectively and, perhaps most importantly, what they plan to do about it.

3. 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 of 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 2nd generation immigrants) (see table 1).

In order to secure diversity of location, interviews took place in five different locations (Athens=10 (capital), Thessaloniki 4 (2nd biggest city), Arta=2 (average mainland town), Syros=2 (island), Paramythia=2 (mainland village). These localities were chosen as being representative of different Greek sub-cultures according to the geographical proximity to the capital, the size and geographical / urban specifications (islands / mainland, urban centres / town / village).

The research questions addressed during interviews were informed by the research literature and were asked in an open-ended format (Light, Singer and Willett, 1990; Kvale, 1996). The participants were encouraged to tell their stories on how they experienced the crisis and each interview was later transcribed and translated into English. 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 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). The 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 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.

4. 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) Identifying the context of this study through common historical and socio-cultural experiences of the Greek Crisis, 2) revealing social identity formation through the common perception of belonging to the 'Crisis Generation' and the shared perception of 'passiveness'; 3) portraying personal identity formation through the prominent attitude of being trapped and confused on the one hand but not being apathetic on the other; 4) planning future youth identity away from the crisis.

4.1. Context: Common historical and socio-cultural experiences

All participants used common terms to describe the current situation in Greece as being very difficult and unpleasant; in complete accordance with research on Greek Crisis I have conducted in previous years (Chalari, 2014, 2015) especially young people remain disappointed, uncertain, worried, anxious and pessimistic. Additionally, the participants of this study were all concerned about their present and future, their family, unemployment and limited ability of spending. Indicatively Olympia (19, Athens), states: *"the situation is very difficult not only for me but for my family and for everyone. Unemployment is dreadful"* and Giorgos (19, Paramythia), explains: *"I have to think how or if I should spent my 15 euros (pocket money) every day"*. Similarly, Eleni (18, Syros) says, *"I am constantly concerned about things like if I can afford going out or not"*. In the same vein, Kostas (18, Thessaloniki) *adds "I am disappointed and sad because I see that the future is not mine! I am struggling to get by and I find it difficult asking for help as my family is struggling even more"*. The current experiences of the crisis are rather common between participants. These are repeated and shared experiences among all participants and perhaps most Greeks, regardless of age, might feel in similar ways.

4.2. 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 go about their everyday lives. Following Tajfel's (1981:255) approach on social identity which explains that social identity derives from the peoples' knowledge of their membership in a social group[s] (i.e. youth) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (being able to associate with the 'Crisis Generation' and its main characteristics), the emergence of the social identity of the 'Crisis Generation' seems inevitable.

4.2.2. The 'Crisis Generation'

As the Greek crisis is profoundly prolonged (since 2008), this generation has been literally raised during the crisis. So, the participants of this study were aged between 8 and 15 years old when the crisis started. This particular characteristic constitutes a fundamental difference between this generation and any other generation, as this age group was the first to be raised during the crisis. 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",* says 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 cannot really realise how much we have been affected by the crisis as we were raised during the crisis"* (Kate, 19, Athens) and Stavroula (18, Athens) further confirms that *"I can't say that I have experienced any big change in my life as I was raised during the crisis".* 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 hurt"* and Tassos (20, Thessaloniki) adds that *"at least I am not the different one as all my friends are struggling like me because of the crisis. At least I make some money as waiter"***.** 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.

4.2.3. 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). The participants demonstrate a rather explicit tendency towards 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"*, says 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 are perceived as parts of selves formed during and through structured role relations, in this case with reference to youth. Social identities carry expectations related to present and future interactions associated to other individuals. The participants reveal unmet expectations by other young people by stating that they are passive. In fact, several participants, displayed awareness about themselves as being young, in relation to this passive category: *"We have not resisted as much as we should have resisted"*, says Eleni (18, Syros)**,** while Katia (23, Athens) explains*, "we do not react we just tolerate what is going on at home, in a relationship, at work"*. 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.

In fact, Cote (2000) explains that in late modernity youth has learned to live in a world of uncertainty and risk (Beck, 1999, Giddens, 2000). For example, George (18, Paramythia) explains*: "right now the situation is very difficult. High unemployment, low economic development, no cash flow and we have no idea what else might happen tomorrow".* And, Cote (2000) further explains that such uncertainty is related with an increased part of population having to go through life in a state of passive confusion about themselves, their goals and their values. Characteristically, Niki (20, Arta) states*: 'Younger people give up more easily today',* and Rafaela (18, Arta) confirms**:** *"I wish we could find a way to escape this endless misery, this dead-end".* Additionally, participants express collectively feelings of uncertainty and disappointment. For example, Katia (23, Athens) states*: "today exploitation in the workplace is extremely common especially for young people",* and Christiana (18, Athens) adds*: "financially things are very difficult. I can't go out as often, my family can't even pay the rent in time and this cause tension and disappointment".* In this context, Cote's (2000) suggestions become even more relevant as he explains that more people have passed

through their adolescence and into their adulthood without actively engaging themselves in their own identity development (p.152). The participants straggle in their everyday lives as they seem confused by the social reality as well as concerned, disappointed and discouraged to develop an active identity. Therefore, they acknowledge that they remain passive.

4.3. 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 worlds, 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. Most participants have been able to become self-aware and self-critical by evaluating positively or negatively, their own position and stance 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

4.3.1. 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 in one way or another said 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 that *"I am far too young, I have not done anything wrong"*, (Giorgos 18, Paramythia) or *that "I can't even vote yet so how could I contribute? I am definitely not!"* (Eleni, 18, Syros)**.**

Some participants also make comparisons with the previous generations: *"No I don't think so because I am very young. Perhaps the older members of my family have contributed especially the generation of our grandparents"* (Anna, 18, Syros). Tasos (20, Thessaloniki) 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. It is thus understood that in terms of personal identity, participants consider themselves (as youth) being the sufferers of this crisis who need to find a way to cope with the crisis.

4.3.2. 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 though 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 stated: *"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 said: *"There is not much I can do. How can I change the economic situation of this country?".* As discussed, most participants characterised 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 and I know I am not trying"* (Rania, 18, Paramythia). Dimitra (23, Athens) became even more precise as she explained that *"I don't show that I do not like or want this situation and therefore it seems that I agree or that I approve of what is happening. But I don't! So nobody knows that I want this situation to change"*. This fragment reveals a critical account not only about the person concerned, but also about the potential result of the stance of this person to others.

In the same vein, 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) and Manos (22, Thes/ki) echoes this: *"We live surreal lives and I have no idea how this can change"*. Participants generally seem confused about the course of action that they could follow and they display their difficulty to comprehend social reality. Thus, following the abovementioned characteristic of this generation as 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 a 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 were 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 were not apathetic about this realisation. Owens (2013), emphasises that through reflexivity people are able to

view themselves from an external point of view, just as other people might view them. And, this is a very important component of self-identity formation as it displays awareness of how people can be perceived by others (passive young generation) and how the people concerned may reflect about it (become critical or not).

4.4. 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. The prominent social identity characteristic revealed by participants has to do with the formation of a 'crisis generation', which is perceived in terms of passiveness. The prominent personal identity characteristic disclosed by the participants related with reflexivity and the participants' critical/non-apathetic stance towards the acknowledgement that their generation is perceived as passive and their sense of being trapped in a confusing social reality they did not form and consequently being unable to change. Thus far, the Greek youth identity is 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 the Greek youth relates to the emergence of a rather passive generation, which is currently unable to react due to a repressive social and political reality which is certainty 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 (Chalari, 2009, 2012, 2017) Archer (2007, 2012, Donati, 2011). 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 district 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.

4.4.1. Greek Crisis Identity Formation (through Action)

Quite interestingly, all participants were willing to consider the question 'how can you contribute' regarding the improvement of the Greek social reality. 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.

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, Thessaloniki) 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 (2016), these participants would be characterised as '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 especially the young people"* (Katia, 23, Athens). Similarly, Tassos (20 Thes/ki) 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".* Archer (2012), would characterise these participants as 'Communicative Reflexives', although 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. Dimitra's accounts would also 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). I will try to raise my children in a way to realise the results of their actions and choices" (*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"* says Katia (23, Athens). Similarly, Kate (19, Athens) states: *"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". 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. Each one of these categories relate planning (reflexive considerations) with action. Thus, all participants were actually identified as belonging to an identity formation and reflexive mode category which can enable them to produce a course of (re)action related to Greek crisis. These planned actions were specific for some (leave the country or remain, influence older generation, raise children differently, join demonstrations) but not as specific for others (make plans with others, refuse following the system). Notably, the courses of action discussed are focused on a personal level, meaning that participants discussed what they can do (or already doing) on their own. Such subjective accounts of action can be fully understood and experienced only by the individual concerned (Chalari, 2012). However, participants were also able to explain their plans about collective courses of action.

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. This is reflected in Dimitra's (23, Athens) statement, *"We need to change the way we vote, to stop trusting people who can't be trusted any more. Mainly politicians"* or Olympia's (19, Athens) views: *"Stop voting according to who is going to make us a favour. Today this should not be repeated we need to vote for capable politicians willing and able to change Greece".* 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 and many people end up in jail because of that or they lost their homes. 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 confirmed by others before producing action, as clearly indicate in Kate's account *"we all need to agree in making small changes in our everyday lives so that we can improve the way we live"* (Kate, 19, Athens) and Yiannis's (18, Thessaloniki) quote: *"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"* says Niki (20, Arta) and Kostas (18, Thessaloniki) *"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.

5. Conclusion

This study revealed Greek youth identity formation processes on multiple levels. First, the context of the crisis was discussed, as all participants have been affected by the crisis in similar ways, they have been sharing common experiences and shared common perceptions of the current social reality. Youth identity formation was then analysed first, 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 leaded 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 the personal and the collective levels, then it can be supported, that these young people are currently producing inner considerations, or 'internal conversations' (Chalari, 2009, Archer, 2007) by producing reflexive considerations about their present and future place in the Greek crisis. This means that they are currently planning /considering / evaluating / imagining / preparing / exploring /reviewing possible ways of moving on after the crisis. And, as revealed through relevant literature (Chalari, 2009, 2012, 2017 and Archer, 2007, 2012), such consideration enable related actions to follow. According to Vignoles at al (2011) people have a number of means at their disposal to reconcile apparent inconsistencies in their sense of identity and to preserve a sense of self-continuity. Notably, Edmunds and Turner (2005) explain that 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 these actions are not expressed or perhaps recognised yet, clearly relates to current social, political and economic restrictions and limitations which does 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 the Greek youth as being 'passive' constitutes a misleading understatement. To the contrary, the 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.

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Appendix

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 Thessaloniki=4 Arta=2 Syros=2 Paramythia=2	M=7 F=13

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

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