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Επιβλέπουσα Καθηγήτρια: Σοφία Τριλίβα

"On a Waiting List for Life:
Young Unemployed Greek Graduates Constructing
Future Selves"

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Abstract

Greece's unemployment crisis has had a profound impact on young professionals across the country and has turned into a major personal, political, educational, and relational challenge for this so-called 'lost generation'. Joblessness among young people is at historic highs, forcing many of them to leave the country in search of jobs abroad, to seek 'subsidized employment' and accept underpaid or 'uninsured' work that often has little to do with their education and skills. More importantly, they are often forced to readjust expectations for their future. Seven graduates participated in a focus group, wrote, and shared letters from the future. Analysis of these data revealed a breach between a present self (we) featuring individualistic, competitive and self-enhancement values and denouncing such values and ways of being. This contrasted with future relational self (I) with hopes for marital and family equilibrium; a return to traditional values constituting a reflexive 'I'. There was very little focus on a 'we' narrative regarding jobs and collective futures, solidarity, or change. This lack of political voice and solidarity can easily lead to a passive acceptance, apathy, and waiting list positioning. Discussion focuses on what this positioning signifies for employability, collective/political, and mental health outcomes.

Introduction

 It has been eight years since Greece's official entry to 'The Crisis' and since then crisis discourses have proliferated every aspect of existence and the everyday lives of, perhaps, the vast majority of the people living in the country. Television channels broadcast updates on 'The Crisis' on a daily basis and the same holds for other media channels such as newspapers and radio programs. More importantly, people of *all ages* discuss the impact 'The Crisis' has had and continues to have on their lives and debate about its causes. Throughout the course of the sovereign debt crisis in Europe, Greece has been the epicenter of international media coverage. As Bickes, Otten and Weymann (2014) suggest, the public image of 'Greece as the culprit of the European Union', which is responsible for the tight financial climate all over the Eurozone and the depiction of the typical Greek as a 'slacker' and a 'shirker' has created a *'discourse of difference'* between the Greeks and the Germans. Diverse stereotypical discourses have proliferated in the media and as Tsekeris, Kaberis and Pinguli (2015a) argue "the Greek self" has suffered greatly and been rendered into crisis. Young people in Greece have been the subject of much of the media coverage and the focus of empirical research. They have been dubbed the "lost generation" (Kretsos, 2014) in that they had high expectations, high education and, paradoxically, no place in the current labor market. Financially and professionally, they rely heavily on their family's support (ages 18-30) and many live with their families into their late twenties, rarely have the opportunity to pursue their financial independence and receive no assistance from social welfare institutions (Kretsos, 2014. Tsekeris, Pinguli, & Georga, 2015b). In addition, just prior to the crises era young people have been connected to "cultures of rioting" (Andronikidou & Kovras, 2012). They have been dubbed "rebels with a cause" (Sotiris, 2010) and described as a generation that engages in "culturally legitimized pattern of youth rebellion" (Karamichas, 2009, p.292) and in uprisings that have been described as "the rebirth of urban social movements" (Petropoulou, 2010, p. 217).

    Since the advent of 'The Crisis" research and reports focusing on the age group between 20-24 years of age have documented soaring unemployment rates. Recent reports document unemployment of up to 65% percent for this age group (Matsaganis, 2015). Notwithstanding the high unemployment rates, Bell and Blanchflower (2015) note that Greece reports rising rates of *underemployment* as well; it is more probable that young people who are employed are working for short periods of time. Other research has aimed to describe how the socioeconomic situation has impacted young people's lives. For instance, Chalari (2015) in

her interviews with young people from Athens and Thessaloniki as well from islands and rural areas reports that they feel insecure, anxious and disappointed, especially about the prospect of unemployment. Research by Tsekeris, Pinguli, & Georga (2015a) is in line with these finding. Furthermore, in another research endeavor by the same team Tsekeris, Pinguli, & Georga (2015b) young people reported feeling disappointed "very often" or "all the time" regardless of having a full-time job and feel very *insecure* and in *precarious positioning* regarding their professional status. Moreover, young people seemed to feel personally responsible for the collapsing national economy, since more than half of the respondents believed that, "We are all responsible for the crisis." In a different vein, there has been negative media coverage on young people supposedly being "spoiled" and "lazy" regarding mobilizing to find work and create change (Mpitzileou, 2014). There are other groups of people in Greece who hold a similar reputation (Theodossopoulos, 2013). In this difficult, taxing and precarious situation young people in Greece face considerable challenges as they emerge into adulthood.

The 'pre-crisis era' statistics situated young people in more advantageous positions. Youth unemployment rates were at lower levels (Bakas & Papapetrou, 2012) and the panic that prevails amongst young people nowadays was not existent. Then again, some researchers remind us that Greece suffered in the unemployment rates *long before* 'The Crisis', especially when compared to the other Eurozone countries and that the situation today is not a product of the crisis *alone*. Specifically, Kraatz (2015) specifies a series of structural features have played a significant role in the employment difficulties young people have been facing before the emergence of the crisis and help to maintain the situation in the present, since no significant changes have occurred to alter them; incomplete transition from education to work, high rates of highly educated youth aged 25-29 leading to a vast group of over-qualified laborers, regional disparities, high rates of informal unemployment are a few of these features. Other researchers also stress that that since before the end of the 20th century, young people have faced serious trouble *in the transition* to the labor market after they had finished their studies (Dendrinos, 2014). In the first decade of the 21st century, both secondary and tertiary educated graduates faced similar troubles in finding a steady job and the unemployment rates did not differ significantly between the two groups (Livanos, 2010; Mitrakos, Tsakoglou, & Cholezas, 2010). In extent, Livanos and Pouliakas (2011) have equated university degrees to "Trojan Horses" that may jeopardize the employment futures of those who attain them.

The difficult transition from education into the labor market is partly based on the problematic relationship between the education system, job requirements or prerequisites and labor market legislation (Dendrinos, 2014; Kraatz, 2015). Specifically, Greece has had high rates of academically trained youth since the beginning of the previous decade and the 'over-education' or over-qualified issue was apparent prior to 'the Crisis'. Youth in Greece study in a plethora of diverse fields and many of them hold graduate degrees, while others study in specialized fields (e.g. studies in Education) in hope for recruitment in the public sector (Livanos, 2010). At the same time, however, the education system has prepared them poorly with respect to their vocational abilities (Dendrinos, 2014) making it difficult for them to have ready-to-use skills in the current labor market. In other words, a young person, even if he/she holds a doctoral degree, is still *inexperienced* in a labor market that has so limited options to offer to such highly educated candidates. This holds for those holding Master's and even Bachelor's degrees (Papakostantinou, 2013). This 'skills-mismatch' issue persists to this day (Kraatz, 2015).

In addition, legislation in the labor market makes it difficult for an inexperienced young person to get a job because it is costly for an employer to hire an inexperienced worker due to taxation and insurance complexities and the high cost of hiring. For instance, it is difficult to make   person redundant if he/she turns out to be unsuitable for the job. As a result, employers prefer to switch positions between their stable employees instead of taking the risk of hiring a new person. These characteristics are those of a so-called 'rigid market' in which steady employees are benefited while new inexperienced employees disadvantaged (Dendrinos, 2014). Moreover, even if an employer needs a new employee he/she will certainly prefer an experienced person, since she or he has more chances of being the right person for the job.

The circumstances described above are not the only sources of discouragement for young people confronting the labor market. The basic salary has dropped close to 30% since the beginning of the crisis (Busch, Hermann, Hinrichs, & Schulten, 2013) and the social welfare institutions have proved to be insufficient in supporting unemployed youth. Indeed the Manpower Employment Organization (*OAEΔ*) has changed little since 2001 and therefore adjusted poorly to the crisis circumstances. As a result, it is unable to help young people both in seeking employment as well as in providing a credible unemployment insurance (Matsaganis, 2011).

In their attempts to reach psychosocial independence, young people do not receive much support from the state and as a result many of the tertiary graduates return to their home

towns immediately after their studies either because they prefer to wait for the 'right job' while living with their parents or their parents are unable to support their independent living. These and many other factors contribute to young people's loss of hope in gaining an independent existence or to 'have a life' as they often referred to it. As stated above, many of them live at their family's home until their late twenties and most of them don not have the required economic self-sufficiency to survive under crisis circumstances. In a recent study, however, employment was *not* correlated to one's independence, so there could be other reasons that contribute to why young people struggle to leave their parents' home (Tsekeris, Pinguli, & Georga 2015). According to Dendrinos (2014), these tight family ties may explain the poor treatment of unemployed youth by the social welfare institutions and also the dualistic labor market legislation we described above. It seems that an equilibrium between social welfare institutions, labor market legislation and close family ties is fixed in such a way that it makes it difficult for a young, inexperienced person to enter the market. This synchronization between high familial support and low institutional support existed long before the emergence of the crisis (Kretsos, 2014).

Certainly, for many young people these conditions are unacceptable and as a result they decide to leave the country in hope of better treatment by foreign labor markets or to continue their studies abroad. This 'Brain Drain' phenomenon is highly present in Greece today while the countries accepting this body of academically trained youth is gaining tertiary trained professionals without having had to cover the cost of their education (i.e. Brain Gain). Indeed, countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and other developed countries are implementing policies to motivate young scientists to pursue their future by migrating to them (Papakostantinou, 2013). Obviously, Greece is on the other side of the equation, unable to offer appropriate options and opportunities to the professionals trained in its tertiary education facilities. Nevertheless, not everyone has the opportunity, the financial capacity and the means to migrate to another country.

Many of the young and educated people are highly dissatisfied with the external pressures and stressors that they are burdened with and cannot understand why *they* have to settle for the mistakes of *others*. By 'others' they refer to bankers, politicians, and large international institutions, and even corrupt civil servants. In response they organized movements to express their discontent. The most widespread movement was *'Oi Aganaktismenoi'* (*'The Indignants'*). This was an occupy type of protest which started from Athens (but spread elsewhere as well) and consisted of people of all ages that were fed up with the constant policy changes imposed by the *'Troika'* (the International Monetary Foundation, the

European Commission and the European Central Bank). The 'Indignants' camped in *Plateia Syntagmatos* (Constitution Square) from May to the end of July 2011 and demanded a fair treatment since they - *the people* - had nothing to do with the monumental national debt which they were now obliged to pay through enormous social services cuts, tax increases and overall compromises in their quality of living (Theodossopoulos, 2013).

Street movements and riots are not the only way young people express their disagreement and opposition to the unjust treatment they are getting. Since the beginning of the crisis there has been a great increase in informal civil society organizations (CSOs), constituted from people of all ages. These organizations are in their core *solidarity institutions*, horizontally organized, free from the hurdles of bureaucracy and aim to direct action where need is presented (Simiti, 2015). In essence, many networks have been put in place as a response to the crises. These include food and shelter collectives, health and medication centers, exchange and distribution networks, even education centers (*'koinonika frontistiria'*) that aim to reach out to those in need through *bypassing* the formal social institutions that are unable to offer any help under the difficult conditions of the crisis (Simiti, 2015; Sotiropoumos & Bourikos, 2014; Rakopoulos, 2014a; Vaiou & Kalandides, 2014). These organizations are spread out throughout the country, vary in size and participation and as a result it is difficult to count their exact number.

On the other hand, it's been noted that in formal Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) participation has decreased and there have been reductions in funding from private institutions, the government and donors. Also, as Marilena Simiti (2015) reports many formal civil society organizations had to re-configure their field of action in order to match the current needs of a population ravaged by the economic crisis. It is this gap that the informal solidarity organizations had to address: formal NGOs and CSOs are slower in reacting to emergencies than informal organizations, also known as *'kinimata tis gitonias'* (*neighborhood movements*), and also some of the formal organizations maintain relations with the government and other political parties, a fact that many of the informal organizations do not approve of (Simiti, 2015; Vaiou & Kalandides, 2015).

Why, though, does participation in formal civil welfare organizations' actions continues to decrease while participation in informal actions and organizations 'from below' is on the increase? One good reason could be the different action strategies between the two. That is, strategies adopted by formal organizations focus in *giving help* rather than *partaking in change* (Simiti, 2015). In other words, informal movements organized by individuals focus on the development of a *collective identity* between the affected (Theodossopoulos, 2016;

Rakopoulos, 2014a; Vaiou & Kalandides, 2015). Participants might be severely affected or they could be coping better than others. In any event, everyone takes part so as to *receive* assistance or to *offer* help. One other reason could be that such organizing and praxis bypasses formal institutions such as mediators (distribution networks, welfare and social security etc.) in between the production and the consumption of agricultural products (i.e. anti-middleman associations). For example, many movements have been organized by farmers and other producers in order to distribute their products directly to the consumers (Rakopoulos, 2014a; 2014b). The political message behind actions like these is evident: these movements are not just an expression of indignation and frustration with the political status quo. People take a step further by applying solutions to their own troubles, trying to live up to the standards of an actual civil society (Simiti, 2015).

However, despite all the effort put into the organization of informal institutions 'by the people, for the people', solidarity has become a catchword in Greece. As Rakopoulos (2014b) puts it, everyone from politicians known for their corruptive dealings (e.g. Tsochatzopoulos) to anti-fascist movements, rallies, riots and, in fact, everyone else use the term "as a shared consensus between people and communities". Moreover, not everyone is in agreement with actions carried forward in the name of solidarity. As Theodosopoulos (2013) showed, many stood contrary to *'The Indignants'* movement for a plenty of reasons ranging from disrespect to the public space they occupied to certain opinions for the 'actual cause' of the movement. This and many other examples generate divergence between people often equally affected by the crisis and create rivalries, possibly undermining the efforts put forth.

Indeed, there has been some skepticism regarding the effectiveness of the actions by informal civil society organizations. Specifically, it has been suggested that their solidarity initiatives may be ineffective for two reasons. Firstly, in addressing the issues generated by the crisis due to their inability to deal with the sheer volume (Simiti, 2015). Secondly, it is possible that these actions act as a *supportive mechanism* to the status quo (instead of critical) since they fill the gap created by the inability of the formal institutions (Theodossopoulos, 2016). Namely, they take on obligations the state should be minding or dealing with. Of course, counterarguments are based on the fact that these critiques underestimate the damage done by the political measures opposed during the 'crisis era', on the one hand, and their effectiveness in exerting political influence on the other (Vaiou & Kalandides, 2015). Nonetheless, both sides opt for the change of the status quo and the conciliation between them could offer alternative routes towards the most efficient and effective ways of having a significant political impact.

Differences and disagreements between people dissatisfied with the circumstances and compromises they are obliged to endure do not end here. Theodosopoulos (2013) emphasizes that, in Greece, *'blaming the other'* acts as a "discursive weapon" that provides some kind of understanding and control over the incomprehensible and complex situations of the crisis. Greeks themselves, for example, maintain the typical image of the 'Greek as a slacker' through these kinds of mechanisms. For instance, Theodossopoulos (2013) interviewed migrants from Panama who viewed the youth leading the *'Indignants'* movement as a community of self-interested protesters, living off their parents money that are protesting because they are spoiled and don't want to work.

These are the conditions the young people have to navigate--incomprehensible circumstances, where fear and insecurity prevail at every step, and where contradiction to the status quo is often looked down upon even by people who maintain a critical stance. In this research endeavor, we explored young unemployed university graduates' outlook on their own futures. More specifically, the aim of the study was to delineate how they view *themselves* in the future. A great deal of academic research focusing on youth unemployment applies quantitative methodologies that are useful in forging political and intervention agendas. On the contrary, we wanted to explore how young contemporaries of the so-called 'lost generation' talk about their everyday lives, 'The Crisis' circumstances and how they depict their futures.

Theoretically and epistemologically we take a narrative standpoint regarding our view on the self: narration is a fluid, everyday phenomenon that has a significant effect on the self and, consequently, on the understanding of external situations that this self can acquire through specific *narrative choices*. According to Alasutari (1997) individuals tend to have a fixed view of themselves that must be in accordance with their past experiences, leading gradually, justifiably and 'truthfully' to their present self-view. Still, this self-view can and does change by re-examining past events and re-configuring them in order to interpret the present. In other words, narrative construction of the self is linguistically and hermeneutically significant for a person's self- representation and interpretation of his/her own life. However, this process is unavoidably limited by language itself. Reexamination of past events and their interpretation through a 'new lens' serves so as to give the sense of a continuous; gradually developing and ever-changing yet stable and consistent self. Through narrative, people understand, comprehend, and make sense of the present, while attempting to *predict the future* as well (Carr, 2001; Kerby, 2001; Novitz, 2001). How do the young unemployed college graduates imagine their futures having been students, university

graduates, workers and now unemployed in Greece? Is there any space for optimism, dreams and hopes in the futures they narrate?

Method

Participants

Seven young unemployed professionals were recruited with the help of local stakeholders in European funded programs for the unemployed. All of the participants were unemployed at the time of the research and had obtained tertiary education Bachelor's degrees.   They were 24 – 28 years of age and had some work experience, mostly part-time or seasonal employment. Some of the participants knew each other from the subsidized work (Voucher) programs and as a result the communication between them was effortless, smooth and straightforward (see Appendix 1 for a detailed table of the participants).

Focus Group Procedure

The Focus Group was carried out on July 10th 2015, just five days after the referendum vote which took place in Greece rather unexpectedly. The weeks preceding and succeeding the vote were very tense, as a result of the capital control measures that were implemented. The participants and their families were affected by these newly imposed measures and new financial insecurities and Grexit dilemmas were at a pick at that time. The participants provided written informed consent. The research protocol was approved by the Review Board of the Department of Psychology at the University of Crete.

Letters from the Future

The focus group procedure consisted of three parts. In the first part the participants were informed about the steps to be followed and were given instructions. They agreed to write a "letter from the future" following the method that was developed by Anneke Sools and her colleagues (Sools, Mooren, & Tromp, 2013; Sools & Mooren, 2012). More specifically, the participants were asked to write the letter as if they had traveled into a specific time in the

future and were sending the letter to *themselves*. They were to describe the time and place they chose to 'travel' in any way they thought was significant. They were specifically asked to write *optimistic* letters. Moreover, they were encouraged to reflect on the issues and troubles they might be facing in the present or may encounter during the pursuit of their *ideal future*. They were asked to describe how they managed to overcome any troubles they confronted, and to give useful tips and advice to their 'past selves'. Overall, the methodology that was elaborated was more *directive* than *open*, when compared to the rationale adopted in the original research design (for more details see Sools & Mooren, 2012).

Focus Group Discussion

The second part of the focus group was a half hour interval that was given to the participants in order to write the letters. In the third part, the participants read their letters aloud and were asked to point out and comment on the similarities and differences between them. For the most part, the participants themselves guided the discussion. Notwithstanding, the two researchers (T.F and S.T) encouraged them to link their letters to the current socio-economic situation in Greece, to reflect on the dreams and ideas they expressed in their letters and their connections of the current historical moment, economic and social situation in Greece. They were also prompted by queries to talk about their past working experience, their lives as undergraduate students, and as students in high school when they made decisions about their futures. The circular questioning procedures applied were based on Karl Tomm's reflexive and collaborative approaches format to posing questions (Tomm, 1988; Strong, Sutherland, Couture, Godard & Hope, 2008). It is important to note that the writing of the letters preceded the focus group discussion, and hence, there was no interchange and interference or intrusion from the group dialogue in the writing process. In the final 10 minutes of the focus group a reflective discussion on writing letters from the future took place. The focus group dialogue was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

Analysis

Analysis focused on the transcribed focus group protocol and the seven "letters from the future". The two data sources were analyzed using different methods. Firstly, thematic analysis procedures were used on the focus group transcripts, which served to outline the core themes discussed. Narrative analysis was used to analyze the letters using procedures

developed by Anneke Sools and Michael Murray (Murray & Sools, 2015). This analysis entailed breaking down each letter into six elements: agency, actions, scene, purpose of the letter, means to fulfilling the agents' purpose and breach.

The results of the thematic analysis and narrative analysis were triangulated and analyzed by all three researchers; having in mind that each data set was supplementary to the other and also distinct. Specifically, the topics *narrated* in the letters and those *discussed* in the focus group were very similar, but developed very differently. This led to a distinct corpus of conclusions that each of these procedures separately could not reach.

Results

> **"*Shared distress, half distress*"**
>
> **- Local proverb**

According to the participants narrations in their letters from the future and the focus group discussion, the 'crisis' circumstances that have taken hold in Greece have had an impact on how young unemployed people, trying to make the transition from tertiary education to the job world, view and talk about their lives and prospects for the future. Participants described in detail how their dreams and hopes were inextricably intertwined with the diminishing socioeconomic conditions and opportunities and protracted marginality. They described how having found themselves in such precarious and fear provoking positioning, *adaptation* and *coping* entailed focusing on one's personal chances and resources. This narrative of personal adaptation was craftily disguised behind a *critical* narrative, which is concomitantly *dismissive* of the status quo. This conclusion is based on the interweaving of three core themes in the participants' narratives: elusive expectations, personalized distress, and personal adaptation to injustice. Notwithstanding, alternative routes of thought were mentioned. These differed and challenged the individualistic and self-absorbed ways in which the participants' futures were narrated and which could lead, according to a few participants, to solidarity in overcoming the obstacles and/or in transforming the entire generation's prospects.

Elusive Expectations

The participants described how their livelihoods are pursued on economic ground that shifts rapidly underfoot, in the case of Greece's social situation, almost like quicksand. In this landscape many of the old assumptions about how people can make a living and plan out their futures are outdated pieties. No one, not even those in the traditionally coveted public sector work or professional jobs, can expect a fixed pattern of employment in the course of their lifetime. Young unemployed college graduates are, once again, placed under tremendous pressure to prepare for a future in which they will be able to compete and outdo their peers. This constitutes a *breach* in the cultural narrative that they bought into and was installed by past generations.

Researcher: So, you don't know what you want [professionally]?

Zacharias: I think that the labor market is too fluctuating. Nobody can or even could know […]

Penelope: And even when we know what we want, we can't pursue it […]

Timothy: No child as s/he grows older, and especially before s/he reaches adulthood, is educated on how to discover his/her own abilities so s/he can follow the right professional path in which these abilities will be utilized and so s/he can be happy in life. Instead, each young person chooses a profession statically based on the circumstances [economic, political etc.] of each phase this country is going through […]

Researcher: Choosing [a career path] at eighteen seems a bit premature to you?

Loxandra: *You haven't seen things*; you are not prepared.

Democritus: Either way it's not healthy to decide early in […]

Researcher: Let me ask you something. Did your parents have the same job throughout their lives? […] What does this mean to you?

Loxandra: I would have been sick of it [*jokingly*]

Zacharias: It was a different time back then. I think the market was more…how should I put this?

Democritus: Small.

Zacharias: I mean that […] society's requirements have been standardized […] it [society] doesn't give everyone the opportunity to take full advantage   of his/her talent, his/her full potential. It provides very specific paths and we

are being asked to follow them. Take the vast public sector as an example; the predetermined professions that are not more than fifty if we were to count them; these professions that everyone is waiting to be absorbed in. We all have capabilities that exceed these fifty specific professions and remain stagnant, undeveloped and many times are sacrificed at this altar; at that we have to follow a predetermined path; something standardized and we do not evolve; we don't utilize our full potential.

Participants in our study felt they were not prepared to make important decisions given the current fluid social circumstances. The education system limited their choices to a few career paths and required from them "to develop specific abilities." They grew up following their parents and the educations system's rationale of choosing a profession at eighteen and following a steady professional path and leading a more or less predictable life course and future. However, even after receiving their diplomas, they still have no orientation in life. They feel that their potential and capabilities are being overlooked and sacrificed in an altar of predetermined pathways. Having adhered to the predetermined   pathways, they are now excluded from the privileges they were promised. This breach in their life course signifies a major setback a rupture that usurps their faith in 'the system' and that has diminished if not nullified their rights and freedom to make choices for themselves.

"Standard employment" which for the Greek work force meant public service full-time for a lifetime employment and long-term tenure with one employer is no longer easily obtained and in these crises times are no longer an option. This *lost utopia* when it comes to work has been forged into the *imaginaries* of young people in Greece and it was a promise of their families and culture. The current situation in Greece has reshaped the geography of livelihoods for almost all of their generation and the protective forces of family and social insurance when it comes to getting work have crumbled fast. The radical uncertainty regarding one's and the country's future that has ensued has left young people bereft, waiting, aghast, and with the foreseen futures that cannot materialize. A described state of decrepit suspended animation as the numbers on the waiting list for jobs have been ticking upward. This is a breach in what had been *forecasted*, somehow promised, *predetermined* or *expected*. Their hopes dashed they feel embittered.

Researcher: [In the participants' letters] not everyone aimed for a Master's degree.

Loxandra: *Do what* with a MSc in crisis times?

Democritus: That's correct […]

Researcher: Although most of you referred to the contemporary [crisis] obstacles. We can't disregard these obstacles right?

Loxandra: You can't ignore them. I have already started gathering arms! [*jokingly*]

[Later in the focus group discussion]

Democritus: You can switch *all the time*; decisions, plans, professions…

Loxandra: Democritus has been living in his own bubble.

Cyril: Democritus, a child forms his/her character up to a certain point and afterwards shows his/her tendencies.

Democritus: I don't like static people.

Loxandra: We are not static people! We serve tables, we work in accounting, and we are not static! But you don't like what you do; say, you want to serve tables for pocket money?

The confusion percolating within the psyches of young college graduates can be easily traced in the above excerpt from the focus group. In the first section we can identify two opposing and colliding narratives in Loxandra's statements. She strictly acknowledges that it is impossible to capitalize upon a Master's degree in the current labor market but later on admits jokingly "she has started gathering arms". In reality she did enroll in an MSc course; she is *preparing herself* to better her chances of getting a job by specializing in her field of studies. Thus, unpredictable labor conditions coupled with the unexpected life course the participants are leading render them unable to choose, make up their minds, let alone invest in a certain profession. They are profoundly confused when it comes to making plans for their futures. At the same time, they still live up to and pursue their pre-graduation and pre-crisis expectations of a more balanced life and still, through painstakingly considering choices, try to attain a sense of equilibrium. However, the much-desired balance and conveniences that were promised are not visible or have vanished as have their 'futures'.

In the above excerpt, being versatile and flexible professionally or as an employee and life's pathways is criticized and unwanted. Loxandra, for instance, dislikes working in sectors outside her specializations for "pocket money." At the same time, however, participants fend off a steady and unchanging career and believe that steady professional

placement is a leftover from the past, a 'traditional' way of making choices and navigating one's work life that perhaps leads to boredom (see previous excerpt). This discontinuity and change in the life trajectories of a large sector of the participants' generation has left them waiting. Finding a way to re-conceptualize their lives in a context of constant change is not easy. Namely, confusion and disorientation is firmly entrenched in the participants' psychosocial existence and is the outcome of a breach in their elusive expectations and false promises, which lead to a fundamental reexamination of their own significance inside a large, unstable and exploitative matrix.

Personalized Distress

During the focus group discussion the participants described how they have been making decisions about 'their future' since they were teenagers. Specifically, all of our participants took the entrance examinations for tertiary education (*Panelladikes Exetaseis*) since this life route has been traditionally linked (by their parents, educators, and the wider social milieu) to better chances of finding a job and in this way 'gaining a future.' However, the elders' positive projections of the younger generation's prospects for a 'better life' were proven wrong. Nevertheless, they need to move on from these perplexing present circumstances while minimizing the possibility of other 'miscalculations' in the future and, also, minding the misleading advice of the neoliberal regimes focused on improving one's resume by taking part in voucher programs. The college graduates in our study appeared confined to what they needed to do and how to best comply with the demands of short-term voucher employment options.

They narrated how the complexity and intensity of the situations they have to face force them to mind '*their future*' and compel them to make decisions that refer to their *personal well-being*. In this sense, distress and insecurity as an outcome of the socioeconomic regulations is focused and restrains and restrictions on one's individual perception and impact on his/her own life. This fact showed up in the letters as a sense of *individual balance*. Specifically, the futures that the participants described were more balanced in a sense of *personal achievement*. In other words, the participants had achieved *their own dreams and goals*; they had a steady job, some of them had started a family, while others travelled around the world. However, most of them did not mention any *specific changes* in the politico-economic factors that suppress them in the present; they did not mention *if* and *how* the economic pressures that torment them now will come to a stop. When they did refer

to the crisis factors, the main outcome of the improved economic environment was that *they* and *their* social circle could now pursue their personal dreams. In other words, it seems that the main effect of the crisis' conditions is being perceived as an *individual sense of imbalance* that obstructs them from pursuing *their goals*; thus, in most letters there was no sense of the Greek populace or people living in the country or even their age cohorts' well-being. Penelope (25, Historian) states in her letter:

"Today I read an article, like the one we had participated once together [the future and past self] on how young people see their future. You had a great difficulty picturing yourself in the future. Now that I think of these things I feel like laughing. Penelope, matters are simple; just relax. Life here is much better. Things will get better and if you just relax you'll figure out what is that you want to do [professionally]. I am not going to tell you what it is - it's a surprise. You have an awesome husband and a gorgeous son. So don't worry. Square one was when, while you were still working at the drug store, you buckled down and finished the seminar on learning disabilities. Everything else came to be, with some effort on your part but the essential part was that you did not let the obstacles of that [crisis] era stop you."

Penelope's (25, Historian) inability to comprehend and withstand the unjust situations she has to face is expressed through a disoriented self. Specifically, she chooses to act *despite* the crisis' difficulties. In the optimistic future she depicts how she has accomplished *her own* goals and dreams; she got married, found a job she loves and is in peace with herself. There is no reference on the circumstances that suppress her in the present; she does not mention how *others* cope with the same struggles she has to go through; neither does she mention *if* the strict socioeconomic situations changed nor *how* things "changed for the better". Instead she mentions that *her life* in the future "is much better." Therefore, one could argue that her sense of a balanced life is predominantly centered on *her own* and *her family's well-being*.

This individualistic sense of balance is existential in nature. From the participants' perspective, the crisis situation represents a 'war' that seems tremendously personal; from their point of view it feels like the State is up against each and every one of them *individually*. In this sense, they are shocked, panic-stricken and in an effort to '*save themselves*' they are in survival mode. The extenuating circumstances that they are facing *require* from them that they *think as individuals* trying to make up a living and 'mind their own business'. As Zacharias (25, Political Scientist) put it in the Focus Group: "this is no

time for individual pioneering initiatives […] we are waiting for the storm to subside and afterwards we'll see where each of us will end up." In this sense, our participants' imaginaries are replete with individual-based thinking. This may be the case because from their adolescent years they learned to strive to secure "a better future" for *themselves* through their academic achievement and specialization. "The Crisis' pressures have amplified this, in that they ruminate and worry about their lives and their "compromised and threatened" futures. In this fashion, their praxis, vocational specialization and self-adaptation seem like *the one and only reaction to the injustice*s they are enduring.

Individual Adaptation to Injustice

The austerity policies and the pressures of 'the crisis' of public finances appear to be conceived and construed on a *personal level* Thus, reaction to these circumstances is limited to individual action. In the futures described by the participants mostly *individual initiatives* were described. Specifically, the participants were striving to survive under difficult economic situations; they were working for many hours a week, were underpaid and felt underprivileged. At the same time, though, they maintained their sense of dignity and rightness, since the injustice they were suffering was apparent, therefore vindicating and justifying their personal struggle. Moreover, many participants felt that they were at an existential junction between fear and courage. If they gave in to fear, they were at risk of being trapped in an everlasting mental state of self-doubt and diffidence. On the other hand, if they were to show courage and dare to act *despite* the difficulties and obstacles put up by the crisis pressures they would at least have the heart to fight for their right to live a 'dignified living' (*αξιοπρεπής διαβίωση*). However, this sense of courage consisted of taking a chance in independency by pursuing additional specialization in professions that were required by the labor market. Let's take a closer look at an excerpt Dorothy's (27, Industrial Designer) letter:

> "Three years ago I was in a stagnant state […] conditions in the country were tough, especially for us [young people], and were making me nervous […] I decided to sign up for a place in a faculty for Tourism, since Crete and Greece in general is swamped by tourists […] During my internship I was working in a hotel wherein they kept me as a permanent employee […] I am glad I did not get scared and I dared. Now I am just

fine, I make it on my own, I travel just like I always wanted and I am happy and fulfilled."

Dorothy briefly describes a stagnant, waiting list, past, filled with situations and circumstances unfavorable for young people. However, after acknowledging these stressful conditions, she implicitly attributes the liability of this static, lacking in opportunities past to *herself* by recognizing that her first degree in Industrial Design has no prospects in the market. After attributing to *her choices* the reason for her unemployment, she decides to get another degree in tourism; a significantly larger sector in the Greek market, which provides her with better chances of getting a job. Therefore, one could argue that although she perceives injustice as a *constant* State determined fact, her choices aim for a more *individually advantageous* future. What matters for her, is how *she adjusts* and *secures her own future* around taken-for-granted injustice. Her life choices can either comply with the orders of an unjust labor market, giving her better chances of adapting into the market or not comply to these orders, which means risking her chances of maintaining the cultural capital, security, financial capacity and even sense of self she is accustomed to. Dorothy does not heed attention in her letter to the fact that work in tourism is seasonal and precarious. Not adapting to the crisis' demands could lead to unfamiliar and highly stressful social circumstances. In the same vein, Loxandra states in her letter:

> "Fifteen years passed since the third Memorandum and Greece came quite close to destruction but I hope that things are starting to get better now. A day's labor was difficult for all of us. We worked many different and difficult jobs just to survive but came out of it [the crisis era] *better and stronger*. Now I work in the field I always wanted and, although pressing, work is relatively good […] I am not saying we have a surplus of money to waste but we live a life with dignity. We both work [her husband and herself] but fortunately grandmas and grandpas help us out. I wish someday things will be 'GOOD' and not just 'better' because we must not wreck other generations. Mine was already wasted."

Loxandra *hopes* that circumstances will 'balance out' so she can be entitled to a 'dignified living'. However, she doesn't resign in apathy and in defiance. Instead, she chooses to *bear the struggles* of the economic crisis along with her peers. The fact that they recognize the injustice they are forced to suffer, gives them a sense of 'fighting for the right cause', since

they are victims of ruthless exploitation. Despite their unjust treatment, her generation pulled through 'better and stronger'. At the same time, however, in these difficult conditions her generation also seems *helpless* and *scattered*. Their common struggles connect them and there is a collective notion of justified efforts to adapt. The selves they outline, however, are entirely preoccupied with *personalized struggles* and *individual efforts* in making a living. Loxandra just like the other contemporaries of her generation, tread down their own *individual paths* through their everyday efforts to make ends meet. Thus, there seems to be no space for actions of *solidarity* and a *collective (re)action* to the common injustice every one of them is experiencing. Their sense of solidarity and support was restrained largely to their own selves, extending towards their family and acquaintances. Beyond the circle of acquaintances, though, strangers were related to one's self *only through their common suffering*.

Indeed, most of the participants in their letters, did not partake in changing neither the regime nor the status quo. They endured hardships patiently hoping economic conditions would stabilize. Clearly, their opinions about political lack of reliability explain, to a degree, their absence from political engagement. But deeper than their criticism of the political stage and their need for distancing themselves from it and the dishonesty it entails, lies their notion that social, economic and political conditions extend beyond their *individual reach*. More specifically, the participants not only wanted to live a life outside of political engagement, most did not *trust that it can be changed.* An excerpt from a discussion between Democritus (28, Philologist) and Zacharias (25, Political Scientist) may clarify our point:

Democritus: It takes one to change and others will follow along [he gives an example].

Zacharias: I disagree, in part […] I believe that since a person is part of a society, it is very difficult, not rare, but with difficulty can someone differentiate him or herself while being a *part* of a society. I think that we all receive stimuli and that we all develop a conscience, according to directional lines of that society. That is, we all reach a point at which we conform ourselves to some degree […] you can't say 'I am part of the society but I function autonomously and independently and have my own way of life'. It's not possible. You can't take the law into your hands nor function completely autonomously. I believe that you are a part of society and you are defined to some extent by society.

This excerpt was extracted from a point in the focus group during which the participants were debating on the possibility of creating *social change* by promoting *personal change*. Democritus (28, Philologist) stated that it is essential that any tendency towards social transformation should originate primarily in *every individual*. This capacity to bring about change should be put into practice in everyday life according to Democritus provoking change in others as well. However, Zacharias (25, Political Scientist) was significantly doubtful that change and differentiation from certain societal presets is even possible.

All in all, most participants in our study not only do not trust the political regime but also *do not trust it can be changed*. In this unjust and unfair environment with a well-rooted patronage system they oppose the formal procedures of political engagement and want to grow independent of them. The schism between their individual actions that promote individual achievement and personal well-being through adapting to the order of the status quo and their critique of it, reaches a new understanding when seen from this perspective. Since they consider that their own actions are insignificant to society's change overall, they choose to act individually because that way they experience immediate results with regard to their *personal well-being* (e.g. they get a job through specializing in a certain field); fear and esoteric unrest are alleviated through feelings of *personal security* and *professional reassurance* and a sense of *personal equilibrium* is established. This line of action, however, reinforces *individual action* since people's interests lie in the establishment of a personal equilibrium and serve to promote the (re)establishment and verification of the status quo, while at the same time, complicate initiatives towards genuine solidarity. In this fashion, young people can be opposed to the status quo and abide by its provisions at the same time.

Can Waiting Lists be absolved?

The themes discussed above were the participants' overriding narrations in both the "letters from the future" and in the focus group. There were, however, some occasions that counter-narrative propositions and ideas were developed in the participant's narrations. This occurred in the focus group where the unemployed young people came into dialogue with their cohorts. The counter-narratives steered discussions and debates to an impasse, were often criticized and even rejected by other participants. The significance of these ideas is to be found in that they challenge the consistency of the mainstream route of (re)action to the crisis. It is not necessary that these ideas are applicable, practical, probable, effective or even desirable; their value lies within the *turbulence* they provoke to the rationalized, consistent

and ineffective patterns of reactionary action towards the common injustice the young people face today.

The core element of these ideas focuses on the amount of fear and panic that is *instilled* within each person in a situation that seems personal, as stated above. Specifically, Democritus (28, Philologist) states "people do not set up their own communities in order to create their own stimuli[1]. They are passive to stimuli from above [meaning the State and the Media]; they don't make their own stimuli. We face issues with creativity, solidarity and role models". According to other participants it is of great importance to *share* fear. It is not sufficient to share fear as a common experience; actual sharing *divides* fear into portions between people and as a result helps them transcend above it and act collectively. Sharing leads to breaking the sense of individuality that confines a "person to his or her own self" (Democritus, 28, Philologist); change has to begin from everyday life; connecting people through sharing leads to *breaking the sense of individuality* and, thus, the *personalized sense of fear*. Democritus writes in his letter:

"After the deletion of a significant proportion of the debt and the country's exit from the Memorandums, change for the best was a given. The Mediterranean people united, demanding the 'right on wellbeing' […] for five years we struggled but pulled through altogether. Fear and anxiety do not exist in our lives because we stood up for each other. When we realized the potential of our homeland, is when real change took place. Nowadays, I can see only smiles on the street while any misery that's left does not affect me because I strengthened my defenses. Free education, health and the right to work; what else can somebody want to be happy? Oh yes! Love and fantasy as well, the two ever-invincible forces of the human mind."

However, these ideas seemed 'far-fetched' to most participants. They embraced them but were unsure about their effectiveness and mainly accepted them as theoretical suggestions, which seemed impossible to put into practice. Moreover, they acknowledged that certain lines of action they choose to follow are reestablishing an unjust status quo but cannot see an alternative route of action. In other words, there seemed to be a mutual suspicion between

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[1] The word stimulus in Greek translates roughly to *erethisma*. Although, erethisma also stands for incentive, motive, and when used as a verb means to arouse, to provoke. Therefore, Democritus in this specific sentence refers to a creative force originating from the connection between people consisting a community.

young people on how dedicated one can be to the collective. Ultimately, however, these suspicions lead to questioning *one's* self-dedication and honesty to a collective identity and therefore to an uninhibited and obvious display of genuine care and solidarity. All in all, young people seem to be tangled in a web of unwillingness; criticizing individuality and approving of collectivity but acting individually and being hesitant towards collective action at the same time.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to gain an understanding as to how young unemployed people with tertiary education degrees in Greece imagine their futures. The narrative approach applied in analyzing the participants' letters from the future was supported by the trustworthiness of the analyses of all three authors and triangulated by analysis from a focus group discussion. In this fashion, the complexity of the participants' narrations regarding their outlook into the future was expressed and the credibility of the findings enhanced. Findings indicated that young unemployed university graduates have had to change what was a preordained narrative of a "fortuitous future" with one of a difficult to fathom future that is compromised and at best has some element or fragment of "dignity." Confronting this breach in a culturally installed narrative regarding their everyday lives and futures has left them waiting feeling rudderless and at a loss. Moreover, despite criticizing, being at variance with the stressful circumstances, and acutely cognizant of the unjust treatment they are facing, they choose an individualistic route in narrating their current lives describing how they have passively adapted to the precarious labor practices imposed by the austerity regimes. Such practices include short (4 to 6 months) subsidized voucher programs followed by more unemployment and short periods of uninsured under-employment (Petmesidou & Polyzoidis, 2015). Such work engagement along with long stints of unemployment was part of the experience of all of the participants and what they described as being a waiting list status. Even though the participants described their generation as being in peril, the future selves they described in their letters focused on individual goals and were oriented towards personal and familial equilibrium and adaptation. Hence, economic, political and social uncertainty notwithstanding, genuine collectivity and solidarity were not a priority and were mentioned almost exclusively in the focus group, perhaps because they are unformed ideals

where collective selves and concerted cooperative action are not feasible or probable at this juncture.

People's persistence on individual achievement can be traced back to the post-junta period (*Metapolitefsi*). During that period middle class contemporaries were dramatically increased in number and gained significant cultural and political power. By adopting an individualistic, profit-oriented action, often coupled with client-oriented relations with powerful political parties, many Greeks gained an elusive sense of *individual immunity* against widespread economic hardship. Tsekeris, Kaberis and Pinguli (2015a) describe these so-called "middle class imaginaries" that gradually led to the development of an *egoistic individualism* among Greeks, which in turn degraded the sense of collectivity and genuine solidarity. Therefore, in the current economic crisis state of affairs the young unemployed precariat feel vulnerable, alone and experience a wide range of psychological impacts (Tsekeris, Kaberis & Pinguli, 2015b).

In their letters from the future participants, despite pointing out the necessity for collective resistance and opposition against the injustices they have been and will be enduring did not imagine substantial change in their lives nor in their social world.   In the focus group discussion participants were preoccupied with an individual effort to secure a more stable future for themselves and, in some cases, for their family. Interactions and exchanges in the discussion did touch upon political and wider social developments, yet such talk was scant in that the participants concentrated on matters security and predictability linked to obtaining a steady job. Finding a path to steady employment status turned out to be of primary significance for the participants. After securing a steady job and a "dignified salary", the unemployed university graduates pointed out that they could proceed with starting a family or traveling. In other words, participating in commonly acceptable collective actions to change the socioeconomic and political ills did not turn up in the depictions of the participants' futures. This generates concerns about young peoples' abilities to cultivate and promote alternative social imaginaries and newly propagated ideals. A recent study by Chalari (2014) supports the outcomes of our research, in that young people are very anxious, distressed and unsure about their future. Specifically, she investigated 32 people's experiences of the consequences of the crisis, in three generations. In her research, participants of all age groups had a great difficulty in making plans for the future and their struggles confined their actions to the individual level of *coping* with the situation rather than engaging in collectively oriented actions. Furthermore, despite their critical understanding of

the crisis, it was unclear to them as to how significant acts of opposition could be put into praxis.

Furthermore, the unemployed young people in our research grew up in the post-junta profit-oriented times, where individualistic actions paid off (Tsekeris, Kaberis, & Pinguli, 2015a). They developed a conscience through the Greek Education System, which presses students on "securing one's own future" by obtaining a university diploma (Livanos, 2010). Holding their diplomas in these crisis times they find themselves at the center of a highly unstable, intimidating and abusive labor market in which their university titles and perhaps professional specializations are not so important and do not offer them the prospects they were promised when they launched what they were promised would be career trajectories upon successfully completing their education (Dendrinos, 2014).

Today, their desires for balance are centered on their own selves and depend on their capacity to find a steady job, and ultimately oblige them to live up to the same-old notion they espoused when they were younger; *securing one's own future*. This *ideal* guides them on an individualistic route of action of constantly adapting to the ever-changing professional requirements of the labor market through life-long learning, vocational training programs, further academic qualifications and a general personal effort to secure a safer and more predictable *individual*, *familial* and *employment* future; a future that has nowadays crumbled under the austerity regimes. According to Kesisoglou, Figgou and Dikaiou (2016) young people view working under precarious conditions as "the only alternative" to unemployment; in their research, precariousness was rendered an *inherent* characteristic of the Greek labor market, while other participants viewed precarious work as a necessary step towards a more stable job placement. In other words, working under precarious conditions was necessary and inescapable. Precariousness was acknowledged widely as a banal and permanent characteristic that could however provide young people with *hope of a better future*, through the construction of a good and competitive resume. The 'better future' for our participants was one with just some essence or iota of dignity, having a job and with the help of family making ends meet.

Manos Spyridakis (2013) referred to this professional precariousness, which resembles a borderline state between employment and unemployment, as *liminality*. In his research, workers in Greece felt like they were on a thin line between *stability and instability*, which forced them to 'stay on their toes' and in constant alertness. This state signified a differentiated sense of identity, which was more disciplined, docile and much more easily

manageable and exploitable by large organizations and businesses. Permanently moving back and forth between stability and instability were implicated in the participants' high levels of anxiety and distress and made the workers, which Spyridakis (2013) refers to, more willing to adapt to certain circumstances, comply with unjust company policies etc. For the participants of the present study it seems to have rendered a whole generation of university graduates on a waiting list positioning with regard to career decisions, paths to employment, and to taking on the challenges of creating change for themselves, their cohorts, their communities and the country.

Furthermore, Tsekeris, Kaberis and Pinguli (2015a) investigated the relationship between self-suffering, the dismantling of the social, and the establishment of civic mindedness, between Middle class contemporaries. Specifically, the experience of *living at risk*, feelings of *precariousness* and *insecurity*, caused by the incapacity of formal institutions to support those affected by the crisis, rendered the participants more *vulnerable* and more *easily exploitable*. Similarly, young people in our research become more willing to adapt to newly imposed austerity measures when reacting individually to the personalized distress they are feeling; they accept low paying and/or temporary, dead-end jobs, strive endlessly to refurbish their vocational skills and enrich their resumes, and do everything in their 'power' to chase after a dream of individual stability and security. Nevertheless, their precarious positioning is not altered and as a group they encounter one another from one voucher program to another, transitioning from one temporary job post to the next, feeling like they are trapped in a never-ending cycle between precarious work and unemployment. This echoes Spyridakis' (2013) analysis workers in the shipbuilding industry, who work under extremely stressful and precarious conditions. They are often forced to survive long periods of unemployment which are replete with a constant search for work. Once a job opportunity is identified, no matter how unjust and exploitative it is, they make every effort to get hired.

This *individual reaction* against the injustice, which is painstaking adaptation, seems to be effective from a personal point of view since it yields immediate results for the individual, which alleviate personal anxieties and distress (e.g. professional reassurance, feelings of a justified struggle). Nonetheless, it prevents young people from acting collectively against the *structural causes* of the injustice they are facing. According to Spyridakis (2013) temporary posts and flexible vocational capacities signify the role contemporary workers must play out in the contemporary Greek labor market; this *flexicurity* demands that workers constantly adapt to new circumstances so that it becomes more probable that employers will hire them. However according to this view, young people should feel fully responsible for their

unemployment, since it is caused by their inability to adapt to the new circumstances. Indeed, adaptation to new measures is a coping mechanism for many Greeks in times of crisis (Tsekeris, Kaberis, & Pinguli, 2015a: Kesisoglou, Figgou, & Dikaiou, 2016).

Jakonen, Peltokoski and Toivanen (2012) argue that precarious work is an outcome of the shift from industrial production to the expanding of the information sector, signifying the emergence of a new class of laborers; *the precariat* is consisted of well-educated, culturally and socially capable workers who adopt a lifelong learning notion to employment and generally define a very *flexible* and *adaptable* workforce. However, the posts taken over by the precariat are temporary, while the laborers themselves are expendable and easily replaceable. The laborers' life becomes highly unstable and insecure while work is extremely precarious and temporal in its nature. Thus, a decrease in the quality of life is inevitable. However, young people in our research, at the very least, opted for the reproduction of their social and class status though their academic studies. They were hoping that their success in obtaining academic diplomas could provide them with a quality of living similar to the one their parents provided for them; they were not destined to live the unpredictable and unstable life of a laborer.

As a result, many of them feel like they are on a long waiting list for a much-desired stable and predictable future. In their individual efforts to adapt they fall victims of unjust structural regulations, therefore reestablishing the status quo by vindicating its existence, which in turn expands the effects of structures that regenerate injustice (Tsekeris, Kaberis, & Pinguli, 2015a; Spyridakis, 2013). At the same time, however, the possibility of a collective effort towards change is decreased. In other words, there is no space for truthful solidarity and genuine collectivity in a society where the social is *supposed* to serve the economy (Spyridakis, 2013). However, Chalari (2012) in her research of how Greeks conceptualize the notion of resistance, states that resistance is not merely defined by the external actions of agents. Resistance is essentially a *personal* and *subjective* matter that for most individuals is located in their personal lives or even in their own self (i.e. thoughts, internal conversations). These "unrecognizable acts of opposition" should not be disregarded as insignificant; they produce different outcomes for each individual and could eventually lead to acts of collective opposition. In this light, it is essential to emphasize the importance of alternative modes of thinking that emerged in the present research; *individual adjusting* and *adapting* only serves as a means to regenerate and expand the structural causes of both unemployment and injustice. Therefore, it is important to establish *change as a part in the daily life* of individuals by strengthening *social bonds* and adopting a *community oriented behavior*.

Collective identity, genuine, solidarity and collaborative action towards a common cause of resistance are essential prerequisites for effectively opposing to injustice as well as for establishing a *community based society*, free from the hurdles of individualism and egoism.

The main drawback of the present research is the difficulty of generalizing. Specifically, the participants came from the same area of residence. Moreover, most participants knew one another through their participation in the subsidized work programs. Due to this fact, communication was honest and effortless on the one hand, but signified the participants' common background on the other. The results provided in the present research originate from a very specific part of society. As a result, generalizing from the narratives that emerged to others groups of unemployed people is difficult.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the narrative analysis that was elaborated shows great promise for researching young peoples' view on their future, and constitutes a very effective way of sketching their view of the present and their place in it as well. In Greece, research of 'The Crisis' is almost exclusively limited on quantitative methods and a significant amount of the research has not tapped into young unemployed peoples' outlook on the future. Qualitative research in general and narrative analysis could *oxygenate* the research already being conducted. Moreover, it is essential for *understanding people* more immediately; comprehending and relying on their perspectives of the situations they are living. This way, change is grounded in people themselves and research becomes a mediator, assisting people on pursuing their aspirations for better future collective and personal futures.

Appendix 1

Name	Age	Gender	Residence	Unemployed for	Undergraduate studies	Past working experience
Cyril	24	Male	Rethymno, on his own	4 years	Political Science	Seasonal worker, Canned tomato factory
Dorothy	27	Female	Rethymno, on her own	Working once a week	Industrial Design	Waitress, Office job
Timothy	26	Male	Rethymno, with parents	6 months	Degree in the Humanities, Linguistics	Reception, Marketing, Assistant and employee in newspaper agency
Penelope	25	Female	Rethymno, with parents	1 year	History and Archaeology	Hotel employee, Waitress
Democritus	28	Male	Rethymno, with parents	2 years	Classical Philology	Secretary
Zacharias	25	Male	Rethymno, on his own	10 months	Political Science, Masters in Political Analysis and European studies	Newspaper agency, Foreign language Centre, Centre for job training and placement
Loxandra	26	Female	Rethymno, with roommate	7 months	Economics	Accounting Agency, Waitress

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