Generational Differences and Cultural Change

By

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this thesis, that the original work is my own except as specified in acknowledgements or in footnotes, and that neither the thesis nor that original work contained therein has been submitted to this or any other institution for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

Young people are arguably facing complex life situations in their transition into adulthood and navigating their life trajectories in a highly individualised way. For youth in post-compulsory education, their training years have been extended, their years of dependency have increased and they have greater individual choice compared to previous youth generations. This study develops an understanding of the process of individualisation applied to youth in late modernity and explores it in relation to the neo-liberal climate. It compares the life situation of this youth generation with youth in the early 1960s, brought up with more predefined traditional conditions, cemented in traditional social structures. The processes that led to generational changes in the experiences of youth in the last forty-five years are examined, linked to structural transformations that influence subjective experiences. Specifically, the shifts of the conditions of youth in post-compulsory education are studied in relations to socio-economic, technological and cultural changes.

This study discusses the Western Anglo-American model of changes in youth's life experiences and examines how it (mis)fits in a more conservative Catholic Mediterranean setting. The research investigates conditions in Malta, an ex-colonial small island Mediterranean state, whose peculiarities include its delayed economic development compared to the Western setting. The core of the research comprises of primary data collection using in-depth, ethnographical interviews, with two generations of youth in different socio-historical context; those who experienced their youth in the early 1960s' and youth in the late 2000s.

This study concludes that the concept of individualisation does indeed illuminate the experiences of youth in late modernity especially when compared to the experiences of youth forty-five years ago. However the concept of individualisation is applied in a glocalised manner in line with the peculiarities of Malta that has lagged behind mainstream developments in Western Europe and still retained traditional features. Building on the individualisation concept, I use an empirically grounded concept of

'compromised choices' to describe the increase in the bargaining of choice happening at different fronts in the life experiences of youth, especially in the life biography of women, choices in education and the job market and choices in consumption.

KEY WORDS

Youth, Individualisation thesis, Generational Differences, Neo-Liberalism, Cultural Changes, Malta, Glocalisation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

In Memory of my mother Maria Dolores Visanich (1948-2011)

"The unexpected disadvantage of modern life is victory over our own fates"

- Michael Cunningham, *Home At The End of the World*

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1.1   Shifts in the Life Situation of Youth

It is a popular belief that commonalities in youth in late modernity are more than ever cutting through global, cultural and socio-economic boundaries when compared to previous youth generations. They are more formally educated and technologically proficient than any generation preceding them. They are also more logged on and linked up through the cyber world. It bears much truth that there is a common pattern of change in the life situation of Western youth since the post Second World War - from a traditional structured transition into adulthood embedded in a conservative communal society to more individualised trajectories constrained by new demands from the educational system and the job market. Many of these changing patterns are in part the result of changes in wider economic processes; from a form of organised capitalism to neo-liberal capitalism. This study uses the work of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008[2002]) on the increase of choice in personal biography and apply the concept of individualisation to outline the typical transformations in the life situation and biographical patterns of youth. Individuals are often regarded to be more than ever at the centre of their own lives and reflexively constructing their social biographies while constantly adapting to the conditions of the labour market, the educational system and socio-economic conditions.

Nevertheless there is clear disparity as to how far the degree of the individualisation process has advanced in different locations. The contribution of this study to the sociological field of cultural studies lies in the fact that it tests out how typical (or atypical) the individualisation mode of Western youth life experiences is in Malta; a more conservative and peripheral Southern European location. Despite the fact that various scholars referred to the changes in the life situation of youth in the West in recent history (Beck, 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Bynner and Roberts, 1991, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kamenetz, 2007,

Quart, 2003, Sennett, 1998), studies on how peculiar European locations adapt to such changes remain absent. Hence, by making sense of the trajectories of two particular and distinct generations of youth, this study aims at examining the extent of change in the life situation of youth in Malta, in relation to the way they adopt and adapt tendencies of Western individualised youth. This study traces the changing tendencies in a number of areas of young people's social life – family life, gender, education, job market, consumer culture and technology.

A consistent dimension in this study is the fact that youth's life situation is seen as both a product of structural influences as well as the result of subjectivity, choice and agency. In effect, emphasis is made on a holistic understanding of youth by linking culture and social action with wider social structures and material conditions of existence. My interest in this area has directed me into questioning the following:

- In what ways is the Western individualised youth lifestyle adapted in a 'glocal' manner in the chosen location?
- What features in youth's life situation remained constant and what were the changing variables for two generations of youth experiencing their young adulthood forty-five years apart?
- To what extent did the sequences of events and the way youth exercise personal choice and control change since the 1960s?

This study compares the life situation of young adults experiencing their youth in late 2000s with those who experienced their youth during the first half of the 1960s, who are now retired. Both chosen groups studied were privileged enough to have had post-compulsory education. It is too naïve to regard a whole decade as a homogenous historical moment due to the dramatic economic and social changes taking place in such period. For instance, in Britain, the 1960s was a period of drastic changes. While the first half of the 1960s was renowned as a 'golden age' (Hobsbawn, 1996) the later years of this decade showed signs of regression that coincided with the rise of neo-liberalism (Harvey, 2005). The dramatic changes of this decade

are thoroughly examined in the first part of the study with the intention to present a contextual framework of the typical Western socio-economic and material conditions in the 1960s. However, attention is put on those young adults who were in their early twenties by 1965 and had acquired post-compulsory education. This generation, more or less born around 1945, are often referred to as the 'baby boom' generation and they are now in their 'third age' (Laslett, 1991). In Western Europe, this youth group were the first fully-fledged 'teenagers' during a time of economic stability that provided them with the expansion and extension of education as well as the provision of full employment.

The life situation of these young people is compared with those born roughly forty-five years later, around 1989 and who were fully trained within the neo-liberal mentality in Western Europe. They experienced a climate of economic insecurity and taken for granted individualised lifestyles (Beck, 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Bynner and Roberts, 1991, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kamenetz, 2007, Quart, 2003, Sennett, 1998). This chosen youth group was in post-compulsory education by the end of the first decade of the new millennium. Moreover, this generation were facing a globally more mobile, flexible and deregulated work environment; a far cry scenario from the opportunity of a 'job for life' for young adults in the early 1960s. Both periods with their different cultural, economic and material conditions proved to be fertile grounds to study the dramatic changes in the life situation of youth in just less than fifty years. Various studies on the Western youth have been written on the two periods separately which made it convenient in analysing their applicability to the chosen location.

Aside from drawing from Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2008[2002]) study on individualisation to explain the shifts in the biographical patterns of individuals, this study also draws from Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) structural works on habitus and trajectory as tools for empirically understanding how a person's dispositions is embedded in his/her social milieu. In effect, this research is grounded in the idea that the actions of youth needs to be studied interrelated to their social and historical context; cultural

particularities, wider social structures and socio-economic manoeuvres. Nevertheless, in line with Archer (2003), this study avoids the generic defect of conflation and allows for causal autonomy between agency and structure. Archer (2003) does not treat structure and agency as if they were in opposition to each other, but instead she acknowledged their difference and their relative autonomy.

Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus is not regarded as something static but as constantly changing in relation to its interaction with social structure. In his own words, Bourdieu stated that

> One of the fundamental effects of the orchestration of habitus is the production of a commonsense world endowed with the *objectivity* secured by consensus on the meaning of practices and the world, in other words that each of them receives from the expression, individual and collective (in festivals, for example), improvised or programmed (commonplaces, sayings), of similar or identical experiences. The homogeneity of habitus is what–within the limits of the group of agents possessing the schemes (of production and interpretation) implied in their production–causes practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted (Bourdieu,1977:80).

However, instead of seeing these structures as only class-based, this study emphasises the importance of the 'structure of feeling' produced by a generation (Williams, 1965[1961], 1977). This study is specifically relevant because it focuses on the common perceptions and values shared by a particular generation. It presents an understanding of any social formation through examining social practices and taken for granted behaviour and beliefs. Williams (1961) explained the concept of 'structure of feeling' in *The Long Revolution* by saying that

> It is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organisation. And it is in this respect that the arts of a period, taking these to include characteristics approaches and tones in argument, are of major importance. For here, if anywhere, this characteristic is likely to be expressed; often not consciously, but by the fact that here in the only examples we have of recorded communication that outlives its bearers, the actual living sense, the deep community that makes the communication possible, is naturally drawn upon (Williams, 1961:64-65).

In a later work in *Marxism and Literature*, Williams (1977) maintained that one should understand culture in terms of past and future aspirations as well as the present lived experiences of a generation. In line with this, the understanding of a generation in this study was framed by economic, historical, social and cultural processes experienced by a generation that had significant impact on their lived experiences. This study can therefore be regarded as inter-disciplinary.

Youth action is understood as being both the product of dispositions as well as reflexive decisions. Despite the significant difference in the approaches of both the concept of habitus and studies on human agency, Elder-Vass (2007) emphasised that the two can be reconciled into a single theory. In particular, he maintained that the work of Bourdieu (1990) on the social conditioning that determines behaviour as well as Archer's (2000, 2003) emphasis on reflexive choices can be reconciled with some modification. Human action is basically the outcome of continuous interaction between dispositions and reflexivity, therefore, in line with Elder-Vass's (2007) argument, this study emphasises the importance of a structure-agency relation when making sense of the changes in the life situation of youth.

1.2   Outline of Study

This study is divided into three main parts which can be referred to as, the typical Western mode, the research context and methodology, and the fieldwork analysis. The first part of the study evaluates the contributions of other sociological studies about youth cultures and identifies trends in these works. It interrogates in detail the common Western experiences of the shifts in youth's life trajectories, focusing especially on the Anglo-American context as an exemplary case. Notwithstanding their own distinctive characteristics, British and American youth experiences have similar socio-economic trajectories with other countries in the West. The use of terms like Anglo-American is, of course, a simplification of a number of complex processes and is intended to deliver an example of the West. Thus, it is not the scope

of this research to assume an all-encompassing explanation for Western countries or to defend an ethnocentric view of the West.

The first part of the study is subdivided into three main themes; the shifts in youth's life course transitions, changes in the school to work transition and consumer capitalism and its ability to reshape the everyday life of youth. Each theme is presented in a separate chapter. Such examination is required prior to exploring the degree to which this mode of behaviour of Western youth is embedded in a more Catholic conservative Southern European location.

The first theme is examined by looking at how life course transition into adulthood has dramatically changed in less than fifty years. This chapter traces the restructuring of these transitions to adulthood and its interaction with historical events; from the community-oriented transition to a more individualised life-course. Life-course transitions are based on a series of social events that are not necessarily dependent on chronological age. On a macro level, established life course research investigated the relationship between life stages with wider social standardisation patterns (Heinz, 1991, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kohli, 1996). Youth's transition into adulthood is shaped not only by structural socio-economic and cultural forces that differ across countries, but also by the role of personal agency.

Over the past half a century, there has been a decline in the traditional social markers that signified the transition into adulthood. Various sociological studies refer to this change, from standardised life course transitions into adulthood in the aftermath of the Second World War (Hobsbawn, 1996) to the more uncertain individual identity with new forms of structures of dependency (Bauman, 2000, Beck, 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Giddens, 1991). Nevertheless, this chapter does not assume that young people had no real options of how to construct their own lives in the 1960s or that youth in late modernity are not constrained in any way. On contrary, changes in the structures of dependency are examined.

In effect, this chapter refers to the fact that the concept of individualisation does not assume that individuals are free from any structural constraints. This argument is partially explained when examining the increased dependence of Western youth on their parents because they cannot afford an independent living. This is elaborated further in later chapters in relation to its application in the research location.

Subsequently, the third chapter builds on this increased dependency by examining changes in the institutionalised move to adulthood by referring to the shifts in the school to work transition. It explores shifts in the educational system and the job market. This chapter examines the Western schemes that are assumed to have promoted a more meritocratic education in the 1960s. The younger generation entering the workforce benefited also directly from full employment that was safeguarded by Keynesian interventionist economics. In recent years, the lengthening years in education coupled with the increased demand for short-term contract jobs led to a more fragmented life course transitions (Lasch, 1991, Sennett, 1998, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Ehrenreich, 2002, Kamenetz, 2007).

This is followed by a chapter that traces the popular consumption development, from the making of the 'teenager' in the 1960s to the contemporary forms of consumer seduction. It analyses sociological studies on the cultural meanings of consumption and the market's pervasive effect on youth. This chapter refers to studies that argue that despite the increase in inequalities in the West, the younger generation are more than ever being seduced by corporations to have an affluent lifestyle. This is being done irrespective of the fact that young people today are facing a harsh reality of rising costs, higher education and housing as well as undermined employment rights and pensions; mainly due to the advances of global neo-liberalism.

1.2.1 The Common Western Youth Experience

The three main themes in the first part of this study are framed and conditioned by the common Western European processes of cultural, historical and socio-economic changes. Despite the fact that these changes were not linear in all European countries and different policy adjustments were applied across Western European nations, various sociological studies outline the prevalent common historical and cultural legacies of countries in the West (Hobsbawn, 1996). By 1960, in most of Western Europe, countries like West Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain experienced a significant growth in the level of per capita income (DeLong, 1997).

The development of organised capitalism in the post Second World War brought notable features of this transformation including state intervention and an increase in the social wage that guaranteed full-time stable employment especially for youth. Such measures also brought institutional stability, mostly reflected in the advantageous life chances experienced by youth at a time when welfare was considered a fundamental feature of Western statehood. The expansion and extension of education, the availability of full employment and the concept of the 'teenager' were key features in the social and cultural life of youth in the 1960s.

Even though young people were experiencing some anxieties related to political uncertainties such as the fear of nuclear war as explained by Zweig (1963), young people at that time where mainly experiencing a secure economic situation during this so-called 'golden age' (Hobsbawn, 1996). Despite the relevance of Zweig's (1963) study, this study is more focused on the economic situation that provided the extension and expansion of the educational system and the increased opportunities for employment.

It is often argued that such institutional stability has been reversed with the crisis of organised capitalism that coincided with the OPEC oil price hike of 1973; a predicament that fuelled a right turn to a neo-liberal economy (Harvey, 2005). Economic growth driven by 'embedded liberalism' became

exhausted and 'no longer working' (Harvey, 2005:12). The intensification of neo-liberalism has produced a situation where young people are facing a reality of increased unemployment and fixed-term contract jobs (Sennett, 1998). Theoretically, neo-liberalism is a reaction to the macro-economic theories of Keynes as its agenda is based on a priority given to inflation control before unemployment measures and minimising state intervention in the market (Yergin and Stanislaw, 1998). It became a conventional wisdom that personal loans are part of youth's baggage in their transition into adulthood and they are justified if invested in education because this increases their marketability in a climate of unemployment (Kamenetz, 2007).

Moreover, the first decade of the new millennium was a period particularly notable for the intensification of globalisation, as a form of capitalist reorganisation, not just in the economic sphere but in the everyday life of individuals. The process of globalisation greatly influences the way people communicate, work and process knowledge (Lieber and Weisberg, 2002, Schirato and Webb, 2003). Especially for the younger generation, which are more technologically proficient, the process of globalisation is often considered as bringing about dramatic changes in their everyday life. Nevertheless, globalisation is not necessarily a homogenisation force. On contrary, this study puts attention on the concept of 'glocalisation'.

1.2.2 The Research Location - 'Neo-Traditional' Setting

The second part of this study examines to what extent the common Western European experience transferable to Malta, as the case study, using the glocalisation thesis to understand the reciprocal relationship between the global and the local. This part also includes the design of the fieldwork.

Despite the fact that the processes of youth generational changes in this study focuses on just one Mediterranean island state, this study has wider comparative applicability. Many of the peculiarities found in Malta are also prevalent in other parts of Europe, where the same conditions of

accommodating the 'modern' with the 'traditional' are also experienced (Mitchell, 2002). This study draws on from Jon Mitchell's (2002) anthropological study in Malta. Mitchell defined 'modernity' and 'traditional' as the following;

> On the one hand, 'tradition' was associated with Catholic morality, a way of – particularly family- life based on it....On the other hand, it was associated, particularly by younger Maltese, with a 'backward' and increasingly anachronistic orientation to the world, that bore the hallmarks of Church hegemony. Similarly, 'modernity' encompassed an inherent ambivalence. On the one hand, it was associated with education, material wealth and progress, but on the other hand with material excess and the erosion of 'traditional' morality (Mitchell, 2002:16).

Anthony Abela (1991), a Maltese sociologist, also attempted to locate Maltese society on the European typical mode of development and concluded that Malta was 'neo-traditional'; traditional because it still largely embraces a Catholic morality, but 'neo' due to its incorporation of a modernist orientation to the economy and to rationality. Furthermore, such characteristics, typical of Mediterranean locations, had a considerable impact on the development of the individualisation process. The second part of this study deals with analysing how economic and cultural changes in the research location took place at a slower pace compared to the Anglo-American development process.

1.2.3   The Fieldwork

It is worth noting that this study is intended to champion the idea of a holistic understanding of two similiar youth cultures experiencing their youth at different historical moments. Instead of dealing with culture as a deterministic system, I was more interested in people's interpretation of their culture. Moreover this study builds on the fact that 'methods should not be separated from theory…methods can be adopted and adapted to realise methodological aims' (McGuigan, 1997:2).

Hence, having my main interest in the meanings people give to their behaviour and actions, there was little scope in using quantitative research methods which although reliable for certain purposes, do not provide in-depth knowledge on the experiences of youth. Therefore this study was

based on ethnographic interviews as the main research method. Ethnography is based on acquiring human contact and interaction with participants. In this study attention was put on making sense of what the world is like for young adults living in different cultural, economic and material conditions and who were trained to interpret their youth differently. In effect, I had various conversations with the social groups I was studying and followed them around their various activities as well as spent time with them at their own domestic space.

The way young people think about and plan their futures is not the same for youth with different resources and opportunities (Brannen and Nilsen, 2002). Definitely, the discourse of choice may in reality be relevant only to the privileged few who have the necessary social and material capital that allows them certain life chances (ibid.). While my ethnographic method is applicable to any social group, this study focuses on two particular social groups of youth in post-compulsory education, experiencing their youth forty-five years apart. Very much inspired by Willis's (1977) study *Learning to Labour* on the lads and the way working-class boys get working-class jobs, my objective was to obtain knowledge on how middle class youth worked hard to obtain middle class white-collar jobs. I was mainly interested in studying the changing tendencies and expectations of this group of youth over a period of time. One of the reasons for choosing one social group of youth is because it allows for an examination of people with similiar class of origin and support structures.

My main focus during the fieldwork was to try to record data that although obvious to the respondents, is less obvious to a different social group, coming from different habitus, age and location. A great deal of attention is lavished on presenting the participants' life story and their meaning of everyday experiences as youth. The social types of participants were used illustratively to give an idea of the typical kind of person studied. The chapters analysing the fieldwork include many excerpts of these conversations as recorded with only minor editing to make the translation

meaningful. All names of participants in this study have been changed to preserve anonymity.

The construction of memory was one important factor that I was aware of when making sense of the interpretation of youth in the 1960s, now retired. Their knowledge, refracted by memory, was evaluated in relation to their present situation that mirrored their recollections of the past. For instance, participants often referred to their life situation as young adults having in mind their children's experiences as youth today. Various history scholars were consulted on this matter to make sense of the recollections of participants.

Furthermore, awareness of such conceptual problems was needed in treating the two broad periods. Primarily, the perceptions of the life experiences of youth in the 1950s and 1960s are often mediated by a strong nostalgic view of the past, making this period seen as uncritical and unproblematic. Such approach may underestimate the level of individual complexity in past life experiences of youth and ignores the continuities and similarities in the experiences of youth, regardless of their temporal location (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005). Attention is also put on conceptualising the present day. Drawing from Anthony Giddens (1991) and Ulrich Beck (1992 [1986]), the terms 'late' modernity and 'second' modernity are used in this study as shorthand to describe the conditions of Western society in the first decade of the new millennium. Both scholars have argued that the process of modernity has not come to an end. Instead, they proposed a continuation of the modernisation process since the 1960s. Beck's concept of 'second modernity' characterised by greater reflexivity on the part of individuals, referred to

> The newly formed social relationships and social networks now have to be individually chosen; social ties, too, are becoming reflexive, so that they have to be established , maintained, and constantly renewed by individuals (Beck 1992[1986]: 97).

1.2.4   Outcome of the Study

This study provides empirical evidence which enables one to develop an understanding of the processes that led to youth generational change. The third part of this study is made up of three chapters focusing on the analysis of the ensuing data. Various conclusions were drawn on youth generational differences. Primarily there was strong evidence of the shifts in the preconditions of youth. In line with the concept of individualisation, it was evident that there was a change in the structural conditions in the life situation of youth; from the more preordained conditions defined by the family and religion to new demands imposed on individuals through the educational system, the job market and the consumer culture. Participants speaking about their youth in the early 1960s pointed out that they were all geared towards achieving common goals – employment, marriage, and family formation. They had a degree of certainty in their transition to adulthood. However, young participants experiencing their youth in the last decade of the 2000s were aware of these goals but they were in no hurry to reach them. Just like Bauman's (1996) 'tourist', they desired doing things that they had never done before. For most young people interviewed, gaining new experiences was an uppermost priority. There was a constant seduction amongst young people to experience the world outside their everyday routine.

The model of individualisation by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002[2008]) is used to evaluate the structural transformations in the life situation and biographical patterns of youth; from a traditional setting, constrained by institutions like the family and religion to a more individualised, 'do-it-yourself' trajectory. However, this study did not assume that in a traditional social setting individuals were suffocated by guidelines or that they were fully controlled without any individual autonomy.

My study provided evidence to the fact that although traditional preconditions did shape the life situation of the older fieldwork participants, however they also had options in designing their own life. For instance, some participants postponed marriage to dedicate more time to study and work. Moreover, Ann

maintained that irrespective of the traditional restrictions that discouraged married women to be part of the workforce, she decided to remain economically active after getting married and having children. Charles also felt that he had the autonomy to decide to emigrate and design his own life abroad. These choices however need to be addressed in line with the fact that these individuals were not representative of all youth in the 1960s. They were the privileged few who have had the opportunity for post-compulsory education and thus had more bargaining power when designing their own life.

It was equally important in this study not to assume that there are no restrictions in late modernity and that individuals are leading a life based on their own free-will. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002[2008]) pointed out that

> the life of one's own is not a life peculiar to oneself. In fact the opposite is true; a standardised life is produced that combines both achievement and justice and in which the interest of the individual and rationalised society are merged (2002[2008]:23)

The concept of individualisation focuses on the increased emphasis on individuality and self-reliance (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002[2008]). However, while the concept of individualisation may be perceived as producing a sense of subjective individuality, it must not be confused with 'individualism [or] individuation – a term used by depth psychologists to describe the process of becoming an autonomous individual' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002[2008]:202). In effect, individuals in late modernity do not objectively have more individual freedom. They may not necessarily have more independence compared to previous generations because they have new demands. Moreover, they are not designing their life on their own free-will without any social constraints. On the contrary, the individualisation process brought with it new forms of regulations such as the increasing demands of the educational system, the welfare state and the labour market that are significantly influencing the biographical patterns of youth.

> Individualisation is a social condition...a compulsion, albeit a paradoxical one, to create, to stage manage, not only one's own biography but the bonds and networks surrounding it and to do this amid changing preferences and at successive stages of life, while constantly adapting to

the conditions of the labour market, the educational system, the welfare state and so on (2002[2008]:4).

Individuals in late modernity are still bounded by guidelines and regulations but the major difference from traditional societies is that individuals are compelled to devise their own lives with thorough planning and rationalisation, yet at the same time shouldering the consequences of their decisions. Young people are being confronted with new guidelines laid down by the educational system and the labour market to design their own lives and they are made responsible for events like unemployment.

Young participants in the study maintained that although at times they felt they were freer to design their lives compared to their parent generation, they also admitted that they felt more anxious and pressured by the educational system to obtain qualifications and increased their marketability. The increased importance of qualifications, especially a university degree, had become a universal goal for the majority of middle class youth like the fieldwork participants. Furthermore the lengthening years in education and unemployment are contributing to the increase dependence on parent(s) in the research location. All participants were still living with their parents when they were interviewed. However, this needs to be addressed in line with local peculiarities, such as the tendency to remain living at home until marriage. Therefore, it was not simply the individual's free-will to stay living at home but there are also cultural factors that are taken into consideration in this study.

This study provides evidence that proves the argument of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002[2008]) that individuals are not completely autonomous in their decisions. I use an empirically grounded concept of 'compromised choices' to describe the bargaining of choice happening at different fronts in the life experiences of youth living in more conservative Southern European locations, especially in the life biography of women, the choices in education and the job market and the choices in consumption.

Their 'compromised choices' are socially situated and influenced by 'glocal' tendencies - the synergy between Western individualised influences and the cultural norms of their location at a particular time. The tendency for 'compromised choices' is evident in the way young people are attempting to strike a balance between their willingness to gratify cultural norms as well as their desires of designing their own life plan. Results in this study also point out that individualisation should be treated in a glocal manner. Compared to other Western locations, the process of individualisation coupled with economic developments and the intensification of neo-liberalism has been 'delayed' in Southern conservative locations like Malta. Empirical evidence in this study showed how the individualisation process is adapted to a lesser extent compared to the Anglo-American context, mainly due to local peculiarities and structural factors that are still very influential in the biographical patterns of individuals.

In effect, three main structural factors in Malta have limited the applicability of the process of individualisation. These include Catholicism that generates consent over the masses, the strong family network and Malta's post-colonial status. It is undoubtedly the case, especially for those experiencing their youth in the early 1960s, that their life situation did not fit in completely with mainstream Western trends mainly because the socio-economic and cultural conditions were not consistent with those of the West. Similiar to other countries in the South, religion in Malta occupies a centre stage position in society. Moreover, there is a strong relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Maltese family. Whilst recognising that the Maltese family has changed in form and function, yet it still gives priority to strong kinship ties, the institutionalisation of marriage and it remains very much nuclear oriented. The dissimilarity in the application of the process of individualisation is also in part the result of the 'delay' in economic development in colonial countries like Malta when compared to countries like Britain.

1.3 Influential Theories

In formulating my analysis on youth generational differences, I drew upon a number of inspirational theoretical sources. Primarily, it is worth noting my interest in life histories of people coming from different social worlds. I am very much curious to know how they reflect on their lives and to understand their own actions and everyday experiences. Undoubtedly, it made sense to draw from theories on cultural studies.

> One of the distinguishing features of cultural studies is its focus on the subjective dimension of social relations, on how particular social arrangements and configurations are lived and made sense of, so highlighting the complex inter-sections between public culture and private subjectivity and the transformative potentials that may arise there (Pickering, 2008:18)

This clearly highlights my objective in this study. Theories in cultural studies have guided me in making sense of lived experiences and their interpretation of what makes one's own perception, feeling and actions meaningful. Overall, I was influenced by critical theories on the changes in the global individualised society and the influence of neo-liberal capitalism (Beck, 1992 [1986], Giddens, 1991, McGuigan, 2005, 2009, Rifkin, 2000, Sklair, 2002). Whilst most of these works are in the Anglo-American tradition, it is the aim of this work to evaluate their applicability to the research location.

The study by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002[2008]) on the process of individualisation has stimulated my thinking on how individuals are more expected to devise their own lives with thorough planning and rationalisation, while shouldering at the same time the consequences of their decisions. Another highly influential study was Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) analysis on habitus. Bourdieu's work on dispositions and expectations of individuals is particularly influential because I focused on one social group in post-compulsory education who posses greater resources than other groups.

Furthermore, Williams's (1965[1961], 1977) work was equally relevant in this study because it refers to the way each generation produces its own 'structure of feeling' which exercises power over behaviour and belief and influencing the 'affective elements of consciousness and relationships' (1977:132).

Specifically I was also interested in studies on the contemporary form of social control in society. Zygmunt Bauman (2000), a stern critic of the status quo, is without a doubt at the forefront of such studies. He presented an intellectual challenge to the contemporary 'liquid modernity' – a fluid reality that generates anxiety and insecurity. Bauman's harsh judgement of liberal capitalism was instrumental in my own analysis on the structural historical period young people are living through. I was particularly interested in empirically testing Bauman's ideas of how young people are the seduced subjects even though they consider themselves to have choice within the consumer market.

Equally inspiring was the work of Alissa Quart (2003) *Branded, The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* on commodity fetishism today. Another particular work that made a significant impact on my views and the way I see my world (and my wardrobe) was the work of the American journalist Naomi Klein (2005[2002]) *No Logo*. This work about the semiotics of the marketplace and the 'ad' culture is particularly significant when making sense on the life situation of youth in late modernity. Specifically this work examines how marketing machines target the youth segment to produce brands rather than products. Whilst production is transferred through a web of contractors in developing countries, resources are invested on the design and marketing of goods. Driven by the deregulated global economy these corporations have given rise to sweatshop labour and further exploitation of Third World countries.

I also found inspirational the historical and analytical work of Eric Hobsbawn (1996) on the accumulated advantages of youth in the aftermath of the Second World War. He focused on this era as the 'golden age' due to the way people's life chances improved substantially with the expansion of education and the minimisation of poverty. Furthermore, the changing social and cultural significance of information and communication technologies in the last fifty years have undoubtedly a considerable role in reshaping the life situation of youth. Various sociological studies (Castells, 1996, Rifkin, 2000)

were consulted and analysed thoroughly in an attempt to make sense of the so-called digital divide between both generations of youth.

Despite efforts to be as objective as possible, I cannot ignore the fact that this study is in part autobiographical. I am myself a young adult. My actual life situation and my future aspirations were part of the initial drive to study the situation of youth today and the harsh realities we are facing. Born in 1982 and having my coming of age by the 1990s, I gradually grew more conscious of my life situation and often questioned what I wanted to get out of life. It was during my college years that I felt at the crossroad to choose a path that would presumably lead me to a stable job, with sufficient earnings to maintain a socially accepted standard of living. I was brought up and trained in a rather conservative location in Western Europe where the collective sentiments and moral constraints are still very strong along with the importance given to kinship ties.

Apart from these peculiarities embedded in my persona from cradle onwards, I still aspired to push these boundaries and dreamt of having an independent living; to be able to afford to travel, live alone and delay the age of marriage; as a formal transition into adulthood (and parenthood). I always questioned the consequences of leaving my parents' cocoon before actually marrying, which is far from the norm in such a conservative climate. Such consequences included buying my own place; an added burden to my post-graduate study loans. Financial problems were one of the major difficulties of pursuing my dream. It felt natural to consider taking a bank loan to make ends meet. According to my bank statements, I will completely repay the loan I took to buy my own place, after paying three times its original value in bank interests, by the time I reach my 65th birthday.

To add more to this equation of debts, I am aware that I sowed inside of me the seeds of desire for branded commodities. I am conscious of status signs affiliated with brands and often feel anxious to be part of the more 'affluent' crowd by consuming expensive branded gear. My generation are growing up in a world where Nike is not just a pair of shoes and iPod is not just a music

device. It bears much truth that brands designate our social identities. They say much more than their function; they define our place and status. Such environment creates anxiety and ambiguity which is seen to be released only by satisfying these false needs.

I should also say something about how I was motivated to compare my generation with the youth generation of the 1960s. Even though I am far too young to remember the 'swinging sixties', I can say with poise that I was brought up in the shadows of this era. Up to this day, the spirit of The Beatles and The Rolling Stones are kept alive by the rather hegemonic radio fixtures that tend to romanticise this era as the milestone for the birth of style, music and fashion. It almost feels like I'm studying my temporal childhood; a feeling that was mainly fostered by my father, a passionate enthusiast of this era. Ever since I can remember, the sixties music at home was played and we religiously gathered to watch the BBC's 1960s *Top Of The Pops* accompanied by my father's own nostalgic memories of his days in London as a young adult and having his own beat group. It is no surprise that my imagination of this period is rather romanticised; thinking of it as an era of colours and freedom; An era which was indeed 'golden' for my father and other starry-eyed enthusiasts interviewed in this study. My mother and her artistic flair as a seamstress was also an instrumental figure in the construction of my imagination. For her, fashion today was simply pastiche; a parody of the 'real' fashion in the 1960s.

My hopes when working on this study are to increase the understanding of the real life situation of youth today. I believe that aside from the advantageous position of being young today such as being more formally educated and more globally connected, we live in a world driven by the neo-liberal agenda which seeps into our everyday life and gains the consent of the masses. Especially when it comes to the field of consumerism, young people are not conscious of the heavy marketing advertising which presents a picture that 'normality' can only be attained by consumption of products, especially branded ones. I hope that with this study I will be able to stimulate the critical abilities of those who are experiencing youth and its

consequences at the present historical moment; those who like me have future aspirations to get the best out of life.

My own biographical experiences were outlined in order to demonstrate how my own social standing and subjectivities played a crucial role especially in choosing this field for research. In line with Max Weber's (1949[1904]) study on objectivity, a value-neutral study cannot be completely obtained. However, irrespective of my own lived experiences and personal biases that cannot be completely ignored, I was very much focused on presenting the subjectivities of participants rather than mine. My own reflexivity and sociological imagination has presented me with an opportunity to be a stranger within my own territory; within my own generation.

1.4   Defining a Generation

Primarily, one needs to question what constitutes a generation, both historically and culturally. There is no clear-cut definition of what definitive factors characterise youth and the transition into adulthood due to the increase in the length in formal education and the tendency towards a later departure from the parental home. At its basic definition, youth refers to those people falling within the United Nations' age bracket for youth; that is between 15 to 24 years of age. This includes two stages in youth; the stage of late adolescence roughly ending around the age of 18 and the stage of young adulthood. It is a time during which the individual has left the dependency of childhood and early adolescence (age 10 to 14), and yet has not fully acquired the responsibilities of adulthood. Young people in this age group tend to be partially autonomous from their parent's generation. However the majority would still be living with their parents and with no family responsibilities of their own. Also, the age of 18 marks a transitional age, almost a political rite of passage when acquiring the right to vote and the legal and state consideration of adulthood. In addition the age of 16 marks the school-leaving age and gives the option for young people to become financially independent. Such specificities of self-determination yet with no adult responsibilities are important factors in the creation of the youth

market segment for the promotion of seductive commodities within the consumerist Western society.

Despite the fact that youth as a definitive autonomous stage of life gained its prominence in the mid-twentieth century particularly with the emergence of the social category 'teenager', the attribution of adolescence predates the Second World War (Savage, 2008). In order to describe the intermediate transitory phase between childhood and adulthood, Stanley Hall (1904), a psychologist, coined the term 'adolescence'. In his two-volume work, Hall presented a detailed account of this stage of life clearly defined by age, extending over the period of fourteen to twenty-four years. During this life course of 'storm and stress', individuals experience biological development during puberty as well as socially constructed developments that typify this stage. In addition, Hall (1904) considered adolescents as being particularly influenced by their peers and the print media. To some degree, the risk behaviour is associated with identity exploration and the desire for new intense experiences in sensation seeking.

Youth is also a stage prevalent of depressed moods rooted in friendships and intimate relationships. Hall (1904) explained the transitory phase of adolescence as causing 'suspicion of being disliked by friends, of having faults of person or character that cannot be overcome, the fancy of … hopeless love' (1904:78). He argued that this life stage needs to be lengthened and marked by specific rites of passage in order to provide young people with a refuge within the industrial society.

For the purpose of this study, the term 'young adult' is used to refer to individuals who are in their transition from dependent youth to independent adulthood. This term refers to the stage of uncertainty in relation to the fundamental changes in the structure and agency of transitions. Their ambivalent position between youth and adulthood, explained in detail in the first two chapters, is mainly marked by various characteristics; they finish a course and decide to enter another on, they enter into relationships yet do not settle down, they revise their occupational aspirations, partly through the

labour market forces. Youth are not just studied as a cohort group but most importantly as a generation. In this stance, Mannheim's (1952) distinction of a generation from an age cohort is employed.

For Mannheim, a generation is not simply viewed in relation to an age cohort but as people who lived through the same historical period and experiences that influenced their attitudes and behaviour. In a similar yet more recent sociological definition, McCrindle and Wolfinger (2010) regarded a generation as 'a group of people born in the same era, shaped by the same times and influenced by the same social markers – in other words, a cohort united by age and life stage, conditions and technology, events and experiences' (2010:19). In effect, McCrindle and Wolfinger (2010) treated the age at which one is exposed to political shifts and technological change, as a significant factor because it determines the extent to which such events and crisis are embedded in one's psyche and worldviews. People develop a form of collective identity separating them from preceding generations. Nevertheless, it is too naïve to simply ascribe universal attributes to a generation and assume that a youth generation living during the same time had the same characteristics irrespective of the cultural particularities of its location.

Chapter 2: Conceptualising Youth and the Shifts in Life - Course Transition into Adulthood

> It is as if people nowadays embarked on their life journeys without reliable maps, all in their private motor cars rather than the trains and buses on which entire classes once travelled together (Roberts, 1996:231).

2.1   Introduction

The transitional experience of youth in late modernity into adulthood is markedly different to those of youth in the 1960s. It underwent dramatic changes in the sequencing of key events that signify adulthood. Privileged middle class young adults are extending their years in post-compulsory education and entering the workforce at a later age. As a consequence, they are staying longer at their parental homes and delaying family formation. These prolonged tendencies towards a shift in the transitions to adulthood were heavily influenced by changes in the economic and cultural conditions.

This chapter explores the extended phase of youth as a central dimension in the shifts in the life situation of young adults; from a predictable process mediated by family background, class and gender, to a more complex, fragmented and individualised course. As the first chapter in this study, the aim here is primarily to refer to the ambivalent and problematic category of 'youth'. Subsequently, using the Anglo-American context as an exemplary case of the Western mode, this chapter examines the transformations shifts in youths' transitions. Such shifts are examined embedded in two broad economic changes; the post-war organised capitalism, followed by the global neo-liberal capitalism. In this chapter, substantial weight is put on these socio-economic shifts with the intention of providing a structural economic framework within which the whole study is embedded.

2.2   A Liminal Life Stage? The Conceptualisation of Youth

The epitomising signs of maturity into adulthood are often measured by the completion of a series of linked events rather than based on age-graded statuses. These include leaving the parental home, finishing school, becoming financially independent, getting married and having the first child. Nevertheless, the stage between childhood and adulthood is not so straightforward to define and it is generally considered as an arbitrary transitional period. The typical sequences of events between adolescence and adulthood are often referred to by using various metaphors. Evans and Furlong (1997), for instance, maintained that in the 1960s, youth transitions into adulthood were categorised as niches, in the 1970s as pathways and later, in the 1980s, as trajectories. New metaphors in the 1990s referred to the more reflexive and individualised transitions.

Irrespective of their historical and cultural context, youth experience a number of similar traits. Puberty marks the start of the consciousness of sex and its expression; the beginning of intimate relationships and the training phase preparing for adulthood. The anthropologist Van Gennep (1960) identified the ritual ceremonies manifesting life-course transitions in his account on the rites of passage. Van Gennep explored the age-related social transitions of individuals, celebrated by ritual practices that promote stability in society.

> The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another.. For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another (Van Gennep, 1960:2-3).

Especially in 'primitive'[1] societies, rites of passage display how the individual becomes detached from the previous stage and passes through an intermediary state until incorporating the new set of rules, roles and obligations of the successive social position. Van Gennep (1960) explained how a person moves from one life stage to another in three phases which are, the rituals that mark the separation from one life stage to another, the

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[1] Referring to tribal society with basic levels of technological and social organisational complexity and early stage of settlement usually associated with hunting and gathering systems. Such term is used without derogatory connotations when compared to modern societies.

liminality of being moved to another stage and finally the incorporation into the new life stage.

The 'father' of youth life course transition research Stanley Hall (1904) was the first to use the term 'adolescence' to refer to the psychological process that coincides with the biological milestone of puberty. He referred to this stage marked by the consciousness of sex and its expression, the initiation of intimate relationships and a time for high sensational seeking. It is during this stage that young people experience strong emotional and behavioural upheaval before entering adulthood. Young people, irrespective of the time and space context, experience an urge to become autonomous and independent. This quest for self-determination and autonomy from the parent generation became particularly more pronounced with the social category 'teenager'.

Jon Savage (2008) in his work *Teenage*, explored this stage as a time of 'living in the now, pleasure seeking, product-hungry, embodying the new global society where social inclusion was to be granted through purchasing power...The future would be teenage' (Savage, 2008:465). Associated with mass market, the teenage years are buttressed by the purchasing of mass produced products used as symbols of social inclusion. In the comparatively affluent post-war years, the teenage years between the ages of thirteen to nineteen, became a distinct social and economical life stage expressed through the consumption of products such as magazines and clothes. The making of teenage is explained thoroughly in chapter three in relation to consumerism.

Various scholars have referred to the changing conceptualisation of youth due to the delays in the life course transition into adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2006, Chisholm, 1995, Clark, 2007). Chisholm (1995) empirically proved from his numerous studies carried out in Western and Southern Europe that the contemporary youth phase has extended further compared to the past;

> The social boundaries between life course phases are more fluid than they used to be. Quite simply, the trends summarised by the terms extensions, destandardisation, fragmentation and individualisation of the life course are not

in dispute, although their intensity varies between societies and social groups (Chrisholm, 1995: 127).

More recently, speaking about delaying transitions, Clark (2007) maintained that the timing of transitions has been delayed since the 1970s. He pinpointed five main factors that are delaying youth's transition into adulthood. These are, leaving school, leaving the parental home, having a full-year full-time work, entering conjugal relationships and having children. When comparing data from the census, he found that typical twenty-five year olds in 2001 have made the same number of transitions as twenty-two year olds in 1971.

Observations on such delays have led Arnett (2000, 2006) to come up with a new separate phase of 'emerging adulthood'. Arnett (2006) disputed the conceptualisation of youth as the intermediate phase between childhood and adulthood by stating that,

> Youth is too vague and elastic a term to be useful in describing the new and unprecedented period that now lies after adolescence but before full adulthood... Any word that is intended to be applied to people in the entire age range from 10 to 12 until at least 25 cannot possibly work, because the typical 10 or 12 or 15 or 17 year-old is simply too different from the typical 25 year old (Arnett, 2006:119).

Arnett (2006) maintained that the term 'young adulthood' is no longer suitable to describe youth who are in their twenties. Instead the term 'emerging adulthood' should be used to refer to these individuals. Many people in their twenties do not subjectively define themselves as adults and therefore for Arnett, the term 'young adulthood' is misleading as it implies that youth define themselves as such. Due to the extension between the stages of youth and adulthood, individuals are extending the time of enjoying not having full adult responsibility yet at the same time being semi-autonomous.

Arnett's (2006) proposal of this new concept of youth is characterised by identity exploration, trying out possibilities in love and work, instability, self-focus and the feeling in between adolescence and adulthood. For Arnett (2006) in this liminal stage of 'emerging adulthood', young people free

themselves from the normative expectations of childhood dependency and move into exploring the variety of possible life directions. In their early twenties, young people tend to be more committed to move out of the family home, establish stable relationships and choose their adult identity. However, typically young people do not regard themselves as adults but more as individuals making long-term commitments and decisions (Arnett, 2006). Due to the postponement of full independence, adulthood is reached around the age of thirty.

However, Arnett's (2000, 2006) new conceptualisation is viewed with scepticism by Bynner and Côté (2008). They found little reason to view 'emerging adulthood' as a new developmental period. Instead they argued that support of this new concept comes from those who simply want a useful metaphor to make sense of changes in the transitions of youth to adulthood. They stated that they were not convinced that

> the developmental necessities for the transition to adulthood have changed fundamentally and thus that a new developmental phase of the life-course has been established that potentially applied to all young people (Bynner and Côté, 2008:252).

Arguably 'emerging adulthood exists only in cultures that allow young people a prolonged period of independent role exploration during the late teens and twenties' (Arnett, 2000:469). But Arnett did not explain what causes the variations of those who experience such developmental stage and those who do not (Bynner and Côté, 2008). Based on their observations, Bynner and Côté (2008) concluded that the conceptualisation of the life stage described as 'emerging adulthood' fails to recognise the population heterogeneity including the marginalised youth as well as the structural components that influences one's life course transition.

In effect, the study on youth cannot be divorced from one's social positioning. Norbert Elias (2000[1939]) emphasised the importance of one's habitus as a constituent part of what makes the individual's life chances and dispositions. For Elias, childhood is the main 'transmission belt' for the development of the habitus.

> … It is the web of social relations in which individuals live during their most impressionable phase, that is childhood and youth, which imprints itself upon their unfolding personality in the form of the relationship between their controlling agencies, super-ego and ego and their libidinal impulses. The resulting balance …determines how an individual person steers him or herself in his or her social relations with others … However, there is no end to the intertwining … (Elias, 2000[1939]:377).

Similarly, Cohen (1997) in his work *Rethinking the Youth Question*, recognised this need by stressing that youth's biography is embedded in its context.

> The relative autonomy of the youth question is founded on a structural principle - the relative autonomy of the political, economic and ideological structures of capitalist society. It is the discontinuity between these structures which poses the youth question as a specific instance of their articulations; this takes the paradoxical form of creating the conditions of an imaginary unity out of the real divisions which distribute young people to different social locations (Cohen, 1997:224).

Therefore, youth's identity and life chances are all the product of 'the particular family living in a house situated in a certain area' (Pollock, 2002:69). Pollock (2002) emphasised the importance of taking into consideration these structures and experiences when examining how youth's identity is formed and reformed. Such analysis is specifically stressed in this study due to the fact that the focus is on one social group of youth; those born in a family that is culturally and economically supportive of post-compulsory education.

Hall (1992) referred to three shifts in identity formation. In the first phase, the traditional stage, identity was assumed to be part of a larger community. Following this, in the second stage, Hall (1992) recognised that individual identity became a distinctive identity. Individuals became increasingly more rational, working out things on the basis of logic instead of being limited by their position in society or by traditional beliefs. Identities were tied up to specific occupational groups and bureaucratic organisations. In the third phase, or what he called 'the postmodern subject stage', Hall (1992) maintained that individuals no longer have a single identity but a number of identities according to their different social roles in society. Moreover, the ease and frequency with which people are moving around in different places

around the world also have a significant impact on the construction of one's identity. In addition, structural social changes have a direct impact on the shifts in identity, especially with the reduction of certainties.

More recently, Manuel Castells (1997) categorised three types of identity formation. Primarily, he mentioned the 'legitimising' identity by which he referred to the way identity is formed by the family background. Cultural characteristics of one's location play a central role in the formation of this identity. The 'project' identity is another kind of identity formation that is associated with some sort of enterprise like a football team or a religious group that becomes important to the individual. Herein, the global culture becomes a key factor in the influence in identity formation. Castells (1997) also spoke about what he called 'resistance' identity. By this he referred to something that disrupts the legitimising identity, such as adopting new global tendencies that disrupt or even replace traditional community characteristics.

However, instead of referring to the process of globalisation as a homogenous and monolithic process that eradicates local culture, the concept of 'glocalisation' in identity formation seems more appropriate (Robertson, 1995). The glocalisation thesis, explained thoroughly when making sense of the research location in chapter four, posits a form of combination of the global and the local. Global tendencies adjust to local conditions in a form of culture that recognises the mishmash of universalising and particularising trends (Robertson, 1995). Hence, it can be argued that the interaction between one's background and location are imperative characteristics for understanding the shifts in life-course transitions of youth. This synergy in the identity formation of youth is mediated through the socio-economic conditions of the location.

Evans with Heinz (1994), in the book *Becoming Adults in England and Germany*, addressed the significance of cultural norms that influence the decisions of youth. They focused on the patterns of activity that young people from different backgrounds adopt in an attempt to realise their personal interests and occupational goals within structural determinants.

They referred to four broad trajectories: the academic route leading towards higher education, training and education leading to skilled employment, other forms of education and training associated with semi-skilled employment, early labour market experience for unskilled jobs and unemployment and remedial training schemes. Evans and Heinz (1994) addressed the fact that the extent to which youth have succeeded in developing long-term occupational goals is dependent not only on family background but also on their experiences of challenges and rewards in their identity formation as well as the availability of jobs in a particular location.

2.3 Predictable Transitions into Adulthood Embedded in Organised Capitalism

It has been argued that in the post Second World War, life-course transitions followed a predictable pattern (Ashton and Field, 1976, Coles, 1995, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kohli, 1996, Mills and Blossfeld, 2001). The educational institution, the family, the labour market and the welfare state are regarded as connecting in a linear manner different courses in the individual's life stages (Kohli, 1996). The period of education is related to youth, that of work with active adulthood and the period of withdrawal from the job market corresponds with old age. The tripartite social model proposed by Kohli (1996) distinguished a welfare generation in relation to its contributions to the system of social security; from its participation and involvement in education, work and retirement. This kind of setting provided youth with predictable transitions predefined by the family, social class and gender roles. Ascribed status determined one's fixed identity for life; often interpreted as reflecting God's will.

Berger and Kellner's (1974) explored the characteristics of a stable communal setting in which

> Marriage and the family used to be firmly embedded in a matrix of wider community relationships. There were few separating barriers between the world of the individual family and the wider community.. The same social life pulsated through the house, the street and the community (Berger and Kellner, 1974:160).

In this cultural climate, the community environment was held together by a homogenous lifestyle of shared values and beliefs, anchored in religion. Societal expectations such as the age of marriage and the bearing of the first child were for the majority of youth unquestionable factors in one's life-plan. However, irrespective of the fact that thought and conduct were constrained by external communal factors, young people in the 1960s had a sense of stability in their life-plan. In Britain, for instance, economic measures of state intervention guaranteed such stability and social protection from cradle to grave. The increasing security in society stimulated a high degree of social cohesion and a strong sense of collective sentiment (Ormerod, 1994). Up until the 1970s, social life was more or less characterised by

> a high degree of shared social values, of what may be termed social cohesion, a characteristic of almost all societies in which unemployment has remained low for long periods of time (Ormerod, 1994:203).

Moreover, the development of the welfare state undertook collective responsibility for the well-being of each citizen. The state worked as a mechanism for the provision of security for every citizen and income support to individuals on the verge of poverty.

2.4   Socio-Economic Shifts: From Organised to Neo-liberal Capitalism

> After World War II in Western Europe the "mixed economy".....worked amazingly, remarkably, unbelievably well. It delivered economic growth at a pace that the world had never before seen. It produced an after-tax and -transfer distribution of income that was remarkably egalitarian (DeLong, 1997).

Security in society during this period was supported by what the economists Mitchell and Muysken (2008) identified as the three main pillars of economic and social settlement. In their work *Full Employment Abandoned*, Mitchell and Muysken (2008) maintained that the first 'economic pillar' was based on the commitment to full employment which was achieved by the Keynesian fiscal and monetary demand management. This involved providing employment in the public sector and having the government mediating class struggle. Secondly, the 'redistributive pillar' was designed to improve market

outcomes through state intervention that reduces the levels of unemployment. Underpinning the two pillars was the 'collective pillar' which provided various citizenship rights. The public sector offered standardised services such as comprehensive public health and educational systems to all citizens.

According to conventional wisdom in the first half of the 1960s, in Western countries like Britain, young people were living in times of prosperity. The British Conservative politician Harold Macmillan won the general election in 1959 on the slogan that the post-war population 'never had it so good' (Black and Pemberton, 2004:2). This statement echoed the booming socio-economic situation during post-war years. Indeed, the socio-economic developments taking place during this time till the early 1970s resulted in affluent life chances especially for youth. Their life experiences were shaped by the time of relative prosperity, full employment, rising income, and increase in spending power coupled by the increase in consumption and material wealth. Post-war British Labour and Conservative governments, influenced by Keynesian economists, were committed to state intervention to maintain social cohesion. As Harvey (2005) stated, this economic system worked to ensure 'domestic peace and tranquillity, some sort of class compromise between capital and labour' (2005:10).

Zweig (1961) in his book *The Worker in an Affluent Society* referred to the impact of the transformations taking place in the privatised lifestyles of individuals. He referred to the way workers were adjusting to a climate of increased economic security as well as the rising of material expectations. The higher standards of domestic comfort were enhanced with consumer durables and better well-furnished homes. Nevertheless, irrespective of this affluence, in a later study Zweig (1963) saw this period as having its own distinctive anxieties especially for young people. In his book *The Student in the Age of Anxiety*, Zweig (1963) highlighted some of the constraints experienced by university students at that time. He referred to the stress of university life as well as the anxiety of youth in relations to work prospects and personal relations. Moreover, he argued that women thought of

themselves as submissive to men. In particular, Zweig (1963) discussed the political atmosphere during this time, having Russia as a rapidly developing country and threatening American society with a nuclear attack. It is important to remark that during the 1960s the situation of the cold war worsened and the possibility of a nuclear war became more real. In 1961, the American President J.F. Kennedy announced the fear of a soviet nuclear attack and stated that families who would not be directly hit by the blast would only survive in bomb shelters (Craats, 2002). Such fears of what was going to happen had created a significant amount of anxiety in the West.

Yet, irrespective of the significance of this political situation in the life situation of youth, this study is more focused on the expansion and extension of the educational system as well as the increased opportunities in the job market for young people. A vivid examination of the cultural and economic post-war settlement in the 1950s and 1960s was presented by the historian Eric Hobsbawn (1996) in the book *The Age of Extremes*. Hobsbawn explored how the socio-economic, political and cultural changes between 1950s till the early 1970s made this period 'golden' because of the 'affluence' manifested in better standards of living. Equipped with historical analysis, Hobsbawn (1996) explained the accumulated advantages of youth during these years. People's life chances are said to have improved substantially with the expansion of education and the minimisation of poverty. In assessing the 'goldenness' of this period, Hobsbawn gave credit to the

> Keynesian combination of economic growth in a capitalist economy based on the mass consumption of a fully employed and increasingly well-paid and well-protected labour force (1996:281-2).

Accordingly, Hobsbawn (1996) emphasised the benefits of this economic system for youth and the working-population by arguing that,

> An economy of mass consumption came into existence on the basis of full employment and regularly rising real incomes, buttressed by social security, which in time was paid for by rising public revenues. Indeed, in the euphoric 1960s some incautious governments went so far as to guarantee the unemployed – who were then few – 80 per cent of their former wage (1996:282).

Nevertheless, the term 'affluence' needs to be used with great caution because it does not always denote positive connotations of an improved society. The post-war economist J.K Galbraith (1958) in his study *The Affluent Society* saw this 'affluence' in America as being governed by false needs contrived by advertising, in which people never had so many goods rather than never had it so good. Galbraith (1958) disagreed that the increase of material production was a sign of a healthy American society. For Galbraith, private affluence came at the expense of public squalor. This work sought to outline the lack of social and physical infrastructure within the public sector being overshadowed by 'artificial affluence' through the production of commercial goods. Sklair (2002:62) also stressed the intensification of 'artificially created desires' as having their roots during the 1960s in the 'golden age of capitalism' (ibid.). Moreover, Hoggart (1958) in *The Uses of Literacy* gave an explanation of the negative side-effects of 'affluence' in Britain by arguing that it brought about cultural impoverishment and the loss of working-class values.

However, the 'affluence' of the post-war period is often pronounced in the social and economic measures with the intention to provide better standards of living for individuals, especially for the young. Similiar to other Western European countries, Britain's social legislation in the immediate post-war years was focused on combating the 'Five Giants'- want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness (Jones, 2005[2000]). The 'Social Insurance and Allied Services' report by the economist William Beveridge was the blueprint for the state to take responsibility for the well-being of its citizens (Yergin and Stanislaw, 1998).

> The Plan for Social Security is designed to secure, by a comprehensive scheme of social insurance, that every individual, on conditions of working while he can and contributing from his earnings, shall have an income sufficient for the healthy subsistence of himself and his family (Beveridge, 1944:17).

In addition, the two British White Papers in 1944 on social insurance were a step forward to target 'want'. The 'Family Allowance Act' and the 'National Insurance Act' in the mid-1940s were designed to provide benefits to combat poverty. An allowance for every child coupled with benefits for those

unemployed, sick or widowed safeguarded citizens from the risk of poverty (Jones, 2005[2000]). At the same time, a commitment to offer comprehensive health services was protected via a National Health Service Act. Services free of charge were intended to overcome 'disease' in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness.

By the 1950s, the revisionist versions of social democracy, based on Keynesian interventionism, the mixed economy and state welfare outlined the fact that capitalism was clearly capable of delivering economic growth and employment and it would be inappropriate to dismantle it. Accordingly, Sennett (1998) maintained that there was a transformation in post-war capitalism from its previous nature of unrestrained operations to a more organised form. It was a popular belief that the government intervened in capitalism to redistribute resources amongst people. In view of this, Crosland (1956) maintained that there was no need to nationalise the private sector if appropriate interventions are implemented along the Keynesian practice. In effect, he regarded nationalisation as one possible 'means' to an 'end' for improving society (Crosland, 1956). In his influential book *The Future of Socialism*, Crosland asserted that equality of opportunity needed to be balanced by increasing social welfare and equality in the distribution of rewards and privileges in an attempt to diminish class distinctions. A central argument in his book is his ideas on the continuation of improvement of the welfare services and his hope for egalitarian reforms to the education system and the distribution of property.

Britain was not an exceptional case for such prosperous years. Similar actions in the USA were implemented to overcome the symptoms of the 'Great Depression' originated around 1929. Economic growth and advancement in technology were also taking place in the USA and Western European countries throughout the late 1950s and up to the late 1960s (Hobsbawn, 1996).

Nonetheless, such 'golden age' did not survive beyond the 1960s. The crisis in capitalism and the OPEC hike in oil prices in 1973 and again in 1979

coincided with the crisis of the Keynesian economy and its replacement with neo-liberalism (Harvey, 2005). The 1970s were defined by crisis in capital accumulation, surging unemployment, inflation and 'stagflation'[2]. Economic growth driven by 'embedded liberalism' became exhausted and 'no longer working' (Harvey, 2005:12). In such a dull economic climate, a group of economists, inspired by Hayek and Friedman, took advantage in implementing their economic plan for the liberation of corporate business power and the re-establishment of market freedom.

Having Chile as a 'pilot study' following General Pinochet's coup, neo-liberalism has ever since become the main proponent of a global economic system through hegemonic means (Harvey, 2005). Harvey (2005) discussed the massive shift of wealth through dismantling state interventions such as public services and the breaking of unions. Such a political situation stands in direct opposition to the prosperous atmosphere of the social democratic style of governance exactly fifty years before. Central to its ideology is the belief that the free market is an essential prerequisite for a free society; with particular emphasis on individual freedom as opposed to Keynes' state interventionist theories (ibid.)

Since the 1970s, neo-liberalism has been influencing particularly Western governmental policies. Harvey (2005), a leading exponent in the history of neo-liberalism, explained clearly the penetration of liberalisation trends not only in the West, but also in China and India. Global neo-liberalism is defined as 'the revival of free-market economic policy and its rapid diffusion around the world with enormous social-structural and cultural consequences' (McGuigan, 2005:1). Its influence is witnessed by growing deregulation and privatisation. Ultimately neo-liberalism led to 'the globalisation of the economy and the divorce between the interests of capital and those of the national-state. The political space and the economic space could no longer coincide' (Gorz, 1999:13).

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[2] The term stagflation refers to a situation with persistent high inflation combined with high unemployment and stagnant economic growth in a country's economy. The term was coined by British politician Iain Mcleod in a speech to Parliament in 1965 (McKinnon, 2011)

Andre Gorz (1989), adopting a Marxist logic in *Critique of Economic Reason*, criticised the conventional conceptualisation of the neo-liberal discourse based on its effectiveness and efficiency. For him, such discourse on the acceptance of the economic rationale of calculability as part of the natural order of things is simply a reflection of its hegemonic stamp (Gorz, 1989). With his utopic idealism to liberate people from the chains of paid labour, Gorz (1989) stressed that the proponents of neo-liberal hegemony present it as an inevitable part of everyday life rather than as a matter of political choice.

Similarly, Bourdieu (1998) deliberated on the notion of hegemony by viewing neo-liberalism as presenting itself as the 'scientific description of reality' (1998:94). It is seen as a 'doxa', an objective truth across the social space (Bourdieu, 1998). The current hegemony of neo-liberal thinking is made to present a legitimate scientific vision of the social world; a truth about things as they are. Bourdieu addressed this 'inevitability' of neo-liberalism that became a central part of the culture of the economy as being

> taken for granted that maximum growth, and therefore productivity and competitiveness, are the ultimate and sole goal of human action; or that economic forces cannot be resisted. Or again – a presupposition which is the basis of all the presuppositions of economic – a radical separation is made between the economic and the social, which is left to one side, abandoned to sociologists, as a kind of reject (Bourdieu, 1998:31).

According to Bourdieu (1998), neo-liberalism is wisely crafted as it positioned itself into ideological primacy because its self-definition is perceived by the majority as the inevitable truth for the social world. Neo-liberalism was accomplished through democratic means by constructing political consent across the population resulting in Thatcher and Reagan winning their respective elections. The grounds for the consent is what Gramsci (1971) called 'common sense' which is made up of a process of cultural socialisation and making political issues part of cultural ones. Using the media efficiently and seeking the approval of intellectuals, neo-liberal thinkers propagated the myth that it was seeping into common knowledge that 'there is no alternative' to neo-liberalism. For Bourdieu, the consent for the neo-liberalist agenda became the 'inevitability' (1998:30); shaping the

habitus and producing new social structures. This is 'what gives the dominant discourse its strength' (Bourdieu, 1998: 30). As the neo-liberal economic and political programme gathered momentum, social protection was set on the road of deterioration resulting in policies of 'destatisation and debureacratisation of social protection' (Gorz, 1994:4).

These economic realities have made youth's transition to financial independence more difficult. Due to the changes in the educational system and the job market, discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter, youth is being extended. Furthermore, the life situation of youth is often assumed to have become individualised (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]). Despite that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008[2002]) argued that the concept of individualisation 'has nothing to do with the market egoism of Thatcherism' (2008[2002]:202), it is understandable why some regard this notion as consistent with neo-liberal capitalism;

> Individualisation looks very much like the kind of subjectivity and approved way of carrying on called into being by neoliberal globalisation, constructing a type of individual attuned to living in such a harshly modern civilisation... The popular appeal of neoliberalism.. is similarly [to individualisation] experienced as liberating, albeit that this is somewhat illusory; for everyone, freedom of choice and opportunity to make it on your own (McGuigan, 2010:110-1).

2.5   Individualised Youth Transitions

The promotion of individual initiative through a *laissez-faire* economy runs parallel to the increased importance in the individualised culture that fosters a belief in self-reliance. At a time when 'time-honoured norms are fading and losing their power to determine behaviour' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, (2008[2002]:7), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008[2002]) claimed that individuals have more choice to live a 'life of one's own'. Various sociologists have argued that individuals are now exercising more their own agency in ways that have both benefits as well as risks (Archer, 2000, 2003, Beck, 1986, Bauman, 1996, Beck, 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Giddens, 1991).

The shift from state responsibility onto the individual has created a situation where individuals are responsible for their own actions. Moreover, the prominence of self-interest in the neo-liberal discourse continues to put weight on individuals rather than groups in a collective manner. Bourdieu (1998) elaborated on this aspect and stated that neo-liberalism 'embark on a programme of methodical destruction of collectives' (1998:95-6). Thus the self is interpreted as an individualised 'reflexive biography' instead of a socially produced entity. The concept of individualisation is defined as

> a structural, sociological transformation of social institutions and the relationship of the individual and society.....it has undermined traditional securities such as religious faith, and simultaneously it has created new forms of social commitments [The concept of individualisation is used to] explore not just how people deal with these transformations in terms of their identity and consciousness, but also how their life situations and biographical patterns are changed (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]:202).

The individualisation thesis refers to the dialectical process of disintegration and reinvention. People have become compelled to decide, plan and negotiate their own life course transitions instead of following a traditional chronological order. The sequence of life passages are selected and organised by the individuals themselves. Individuals find their own solutions for the disruptions in society rather than relying on collective support systems and traditional structures. Individuals navigate their passage by developing a sense of self, rooted in a form of adult role that they decide to adopt (Côté, 2010). Young people are more than ever associating adulthood with psychological factors like accepting responsibility for their actions and making their own decisions (Arnett, 2004).

In line with this, Zygmunt Bauman (1996) in 'From Pilgrim to Tourist' maintained that identity is not only becoming fragmented but it has ceased to have any stable foundation whatsoever. Just like the journey of a pilgrim, the formation of identity in the past had an ultimate plan to reach the goal. Bauman (1996) maintained that in postmodernity, the individual's route is more similiar to that of a tourist; having awareness of the goal, but the individual may simply decide to go places for new experiences before

reaching such goal. This shift crystallises the changes in youth's biographical patterns.

With 'precarious freedoms', young people are responsible for planning their life on their own. It can therefore be argued that the process of individualisation is paradoxical (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]). Despite the fact that it provided more choice for individuals experiencing their youth in late modernity, it has also produced anxiety and uncertainty about the future. In effect, one of the most significant consequences of the changing patterns in youth's biography is the increase of risk taking (Beck, 1992). Youth's choices could result in either opportunities for success or the risks of failure. It is only youth who are privileged enough to have family financial support that can rectify mistakes and have opportunities for second chances (Evans and Heinz, 1994). Moreover, young people are shouldering more anxiety and instability compared to their predecessors. Shifts in family life are an exemplary case that crystallises these increased individualised practices.

The meaning of the family as well as patterns of family formation varies with time and space, thus making it difficult to find a universally agreed definition of the family. Legal alternative to marriage, such as un/registered partnership have become more widespread and young people can now choose the type of partnership that fits them best. Changes in family structures and community networks are key elements to explore when making sense of the shifts in life course transitions. The changes in the sense of community and the family network are well explained in Berger and Kellner's (1974) argument;

> In our contemporary society..each family constitutes its own segregated sub-world. ..This fact requires a much greater effort on the part of the marriage parties. Unlike in earlier situations in which the establishment of the new marriage simply added to the differentiation and complexity of an already existing social world, the marriage partners now are embarked on the often difficult task of constructing for themselves the little world in which they live (Berger and Kellner, 1974:160).

Marital relations are also said to have acquired a new meaning in the individualised society. The reorganisation of work is fostering the need for a sense of belonging of individuals; a need that was previously provided by the family. In her study, Hochschild (1997) referred to a new model of family and work life that is making individuals feel 'at home' when they are at work whereas making them estranged to their family life. She addressed this predominant 'reversal' pattern that is shaping the way individuals look at work and family life. Family life is becoming less satisfying to individuals and rather than seen in terms of obligation it is seen as an option that they can break free from at work. Such transformations in family life need to be studied in line with the shifts in the female life biography. Without a doubt, one of the most obvious shifts in the life-course transitions of females with post-compulsory education is the way that paid employment is no longer regarded as an intermediate phase until marriage. Legislation in the 20th century had limited women's paid employment through the 'marriage bar', which led to the widespread practice of denying jobs to married women.

2.6   The Individualised Female Life Biography

In less than fifty years, fundamental changes in women's lives have occurred in terms of gender relations, education, work, legislation, and public life. With the shift from 'ascribed' to 'achieved' roles, it is argued that the female biography underwent an individualisation boost. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995[1990]), in their book *Normal Chaos of Love*, stated that

> Individualisation means that men and women are released from the gender roles prescribed by industrial society for life in the nuclear family. At the same time, and this aggravates the situation, they find themselves forced, under pain of material disadvantage, to build up a life of their own by way of the labour market, training and mobility, and if need be to pursue this life at the cost of their commitment to family, friends and relatives (1995[1990]:6).

Individualised young women have more choice to decide how to devise their own life projects and work out their ideas about the future. The process of individualisation in the female life biography is clearly manifested when examining how the roles of young women are not solely defined in terms of the traditional nurturing role of homemaker and mother. Young women are more than ever displaying expectations that extend beyond the family.

Nevertheless, the situation of the individualised woman is paradoxical. Although females have more choice, they are also experiencing more uncertainty and anxiety (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]).

Greater educational opportunity for girls is not only visible at the cognitive level but also in many aspects of their everyday life. For instance, the average educational level of young women today is higher than that of their parents, especially of their mothers (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]). In education, young females are increasingly faced with the same demands and opportunities as males. Arguably, females with post-compulsory education no longer simply gear their choices to the needs of a future family (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]).

However, despite tendencies towards equalisation between the sexes in education and employment, gender inequalities still prevail in most European countries. EU studies such as the document 'Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015' (European Commission, 2011), highlights the situation of inequality between women and men and proposes ways how to increase equality. This study shows that while the employment rate of women is increasing, it remains lower than that of men even though women represent a majority of students and university graduates. Furthermore, on average women earn 17.8% less than men for every hour worked. Gender inequality is also manifested in the way women are still very much under-represented in economic and political decision-making positions (European Commission, 2011).

Young women tend to opt for training that strikes a balance between their desires for a career and their 'obligations' for partnership and parenthood. They are more likely to be constrained by working hours and career conditions which do not respect a mother's life situations (Blossfeld, 1995). Whereas the modernisation of female biographies coupled with the increasing levels of qualifications of young women led to a new kind of self-confidence, there is still growing insecurity about the ambivalent image of the 'real woman' (EGRIS, 2001). In a European environment where the male

breadwinner is still the norm, women are still taking a disproportionate share of domestic and child-care responsibilities (ibid.). Especially in more conservative Southern European locations, traditional stereotypical gender roles are still very much pronounced. In such conditions, the 'glass-ceiling' limits women's employment opportunities.

2.7   Conclusion

Numerous sociological studies on the Western youth experiences referred to the shifts in youth's transition into adulthood; from a more predefined traditional transition (Kohli, 1996) to a less predictable 'patchwork biography' (Beck, 1986, Bauman, 1996, Beck, 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Giddens, 1991). As the first chapter in this study, the aim was to present an overarching model of the socio-economic and cultural changes in order to make sense of generational differences in the life-course transitions of youth.

This chapter put attention on the different socio-economic conditions that heavily influenced the life situation of youth in their transition into adulthood. Whilst the economic booming of post-war years constituted a more predictable life course into adulthood, youth in the end of the first decade of the new millennium experienced a different transition.   The concept of individualisation has been used to explain the shifts in youth's life-course transition into adulthood. The progressively fragmented and risk-oriented period from the 1970s onwards is believed to have resulted in a growing role of individual agency in shaping the life-course transition and increasing the risk factor (Beck, 1992). However, aside from the emphasis on individual agency, structural constraints like the changing socio-economic situation are given equal importance. Shifts in the economic and cultural climate influenced dramatically the stages of life course transitions. The normative pattern of the life course was transformed and the transition from one stage to the other is now less defined. Changes in the transition to adulthood are often assumed to have resulted in the loss of predictability, the increased risks and the emergences of more biographical options.

Furthermore, institutional factors such as the extension and expansion of the educational system are also key factors influencing the shifts in youth's transitions. Various scholars refer to the changes in the educational system and the job market as the main factors contributing to why young people are postponing events that conventionally were associated with their entry into adulthood (Bynner and Roberts, 1991, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kamenetz, 2007, Sennett, 1998). Such factors are explained in detail in the next chapter.

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Chapter 3: Changes in Biographical Patterns in the Transition from Dependency to Independency

3.1   Introduction

Young people are arguably facing more 'complex' transitions into adulthood. This chapter builds on the previous chapter by examining the changes in the school to work transition; from the assumed linear process mediated by family background, class and gender, to a more fragmented and individualised process. It explores the institutionalisation of the transition to adulthood through the educational setting and the labour market, all intersecting in the production of individual trajectories. There is an obvious dissimilarity in the life experiences of youth since the 1960s, as they move from post-compulsory education to work. It is the scope of this chapter to explore the key characteristics contributing to these generational differences.

The economic stability in the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s in countries like Britain have arguably enabled youth to have a straightforward transition from school to work (Ashton and Field, 1976, Coles, 1995, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kohli, 1996, Mills and Blossfeld, 2001). Furthermore, it was a popular belief that this transition in the 1960s was more or less a homogenised process for all those who shared a similiar habitus (Roberts, 1995).

Such transition encouraged other sequences of events; what Coles (1995) referred to as the three interrelated transitions; from school to work, from family of origin to family of destination and from childhood home to independent living. However, youth transition into adulthood is considered to have become more extended with increasing complexities (Beck, 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Bynner and Roberts, 1991, Evans and Furlong, 1997, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kamenetz, 2007). It is also maintained that young people are more than ever lengthening their dependency on their family of origin and they are more subject to

unemployment and short-term contract jobs (Ehrenreich, 2002, Heery and Salmon, 2000, Sennett, 2006). Furthermore, youth are expected to navigate their own life trajectories in highly individualised ways (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]).

The school-work transition is examined within the framework of Western socio-economic changes especially featured in the Anglo-American context; from the so-called 'affluent' post-war 'golden age' (Hobsbawn, 1996) characterised by the use of Keynesian Interventionism economy to the contemporary global neo-liberal situation. The concept of individualisation, as a subjective mode of neo-liberal capitalism, is used to make sense of the way youth have more choice in their school-work transition, yet they are also shouldering more responsibility.

3.2 The Common Western European Experience: The 'Golden Age' of 'Post-War Consensus'

The post Second World War period roughly up to the beginning of the 1970s is often characterised as a 'golden age' of economic growth, rise in the standard of living and working conditions as well as advancement in technology (Hobsbawn, 1996). Such circumstances have arguably paved the way for smooth and linear transitions from school to work (Ashton and Field, 1976). In their work *Youth Workers: The Transition From School to Work*, Ashton and Field (1976) addressed the predictable and uncomplicated nature of youth transitions during this time. They identified different youth groups, each attaching different meaning to work and experience. For instance, the group they called 'the extended careers' associated with more middle class youth who focused on long-term rewards through academic paths. Their long period in training guaranteed them high and secure incomes. This guarantee was made possible according to Ashton and Field (1976) because of the social, political and economical changes that occurred during the thriving second half of the twentieth century in the West. The biographical trajectories of youth in the 1960s were socially designed by the growth of the welfare state and economic stability (Hobsbawn, 1996).

3.3   Reforms in the Educational System

The expansion and extension of the educational system as well as the provision of full employment were distinguishable factors for the creation of a straightforward transition for youth into adulthood. When looking at the changes in the British education system for instance, it is undoubtedly clear that youth benefited directly from measures aimed at combating 'ignorance' and inducing mass participation in higher education (Heath, 2003). Education as a fundamental human right, recognised as one of the pillars of the economic system was attributed meticulous attention during the second half of the twentieth century.

The real concern of the 1944 'Education Act' in Britain was the promotion of educational opportunity for all pupils under a unified system of free compulsory schooling between the ages of 5 to 15 (ibid.). The eleven-plus exam was introduced in this Education Act with the main intention to channel pupils into state secondary schools, geared to their abilities. However, when Anthony Crosland became Secretary of State for Education between 1964 and 1970, he worked for the abolition of this exam in an attempt to facilitate greater equality of opportunity and promote social mobility (Fenwick, 1976); 'education, not nationalisation, was to be the main engine in the creation of a more just society' (Crosland, 1982:69).

The commitment to free education aimed at maximising the number of students attaining higher education. For instance, in 1956, the Anderson Committee offered student support grants to reach those with financial difficulties, based on the principle of equality of opportunity. Moreover, the Robbins Report enhanced the educational opportunities for many young people in 1963, which committed the government to increase students in higher education by 50 per cent in four years and by 250% in 1980 (Dunford and Sharp, 1990).These actions led to a large expansion in the number of university students as well as university institutions.

Actions were also carried out with the intention to develop an all inclusive educational system. The increase in polytechnics ensured that those

students who did not qualify for universities had the opportunity to follow courses up to a degree level (Lawton, 2004). The White paper in Britain 'A Plan for Polytechnics and other Colleges' published by Crosland in 1966 was designed to create or upgrade a number of LEA (Local Education Authority) Colleges to higher education standards.

Despite the fact that meritocratic principles were promoted to encourage higher education, this is in no way suggesting that gender, class and ethnic inequalities were abolished (Bourdieu 1973, Bowles and Gintis, 1976, Willis, 1977). It was also the case that a number of students decided not to undergo any kind of training and joined the workforce at school-leaving age. However, there was a social welfare cushion that protected these young people and guaranteed them secure economic conditions by the state (Hobsbawn, 1996).

Those young people who entered the labour market at school-leaving age had much better benefits and opportunities than previous generations; they surely had 'far more independent spending power than their predecessors' (Hobsbawn, 1996:327). Hence, the provision of full employment itself, as well as wage increases and benefits, provided a fertile ground for a smooth school to work transition in the late 1950s and 1960s (Ormerod, 1994, Hobsbawn, 1996).

3.4   Reforms in the Labour Market

The younger generation entering the workforce in the early 1960s benefited directly from full employment that was safeguarded and enshrined in the 1945 Charter of the Universal Human Rights of United Nations. In the report 'Full Employment in a Free Society', the British economist Beveridge (1944) presented measures to maintain employment in a healthy society. He stressed that,

> full productive employment in a free society is possible...it is a goal that can be reached only by conscious continuous organisation of all our productive resources under democratic control (Beveridge, 1944:16).

Beveridge's (1944) report included possibilities and methods for achieving full employment by the state in which individuals would have freedom to choose their occupation and manage their personal income (Beveridge, 1944). Aside from having unemployment reduced to short intervals, Beveridge also asserted that jobs should offer fair wages. The Keynesian notion of full employment provided grounds 'where there are at least as many job openings as there are persons seeking employment' (Vickery, 1993:4). Arguably, the Keynesian economics aimed at the well-being of all classes by providing a welfare system for the inclusion of everyone and full employment, was a way forward out of the severe downturn in economic activity during the interwar period (Hobsbawn, 1996).

The low level of unemployment and high average weekly earnings provided a smooth move for youth into financial autonomy. In line with this, Pollack (1997) maintained that 'leaving school at the earliest opportunity and going straight into full-time work has the obvious advantage that a young person can become quickly financially independent' (Pollock, 1997:625). In effect, the transition from school to work followed a straightforward pathway. Furlong and Cartmel (2007[1997]) elaborated on the gender-segregated transition in which young males were making 'mass transitions from the classroom to the factories and building sites, while young women followed pathways leading straight from school to shops, offices and factories' (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997]:12). The pillars of the prosperous economic environment and the power of trade unions therefore strengthened and secured youth as an intermediary life course. As a consequence, young people were offered protection through institutionalised means whilst securing the assumed homogenising pathway leading to adulthood (Pollock, 1997).

 Despite the validity of these works, other scholars stress on the need to re-examine the individual transitional experience and question the extent to which youth transitions in the 'golden age' were as straightforward and smooth as the popular belief (Goodwin and O'Connor, 2005, Vickerstaff, 2003).

Vickerstaff (2001) doubted the post-war smooth transition for those youth following apprenticeship. Rather than being a single straightforward step transition, she explained that their experiences were much more fragmented than assumed to be. Whereas she admitted that the choices available led to 'greater homogenisation of possible pathways and individuals may have had less expectations of being able to design their own trail' (2001:3), however, she maintained that it was far from a straightforward transition. They still 'had to negotiate and manage their own trajectory, whether it was of their own choosing or not' (ibid.). More recently, Goodwin and O'Connor (2005), focusing on Leicester as their case study, also questioned the linearity of such transition and maintained that this conventional wisdom underestimated the level of complexity that characterised youth's transition in the 1960s and 1970s.

It bears much truth that young people lived through a period in which the state was responsible for the provision of employment for all. The rise of neo-liberal market-driven conditions has encouraged a kind of governance that transfers the responsibility of personal well-being from the state onto the individual. The crisis of the welfare state and the growing insecurity and risk amongst young people are considered as some of the factors leading to fragmented life course transitions (Lasch, 1991, Sennett, 1998, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Ehrenreich 2002, Kamenetz, 2007).

3.5   'Fragmented' Youth Transitions

A thorough explanation of the fragmentation of life-course transitions requires addressing the concept of individualisation. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008[2002) elaborated on the fragmented identity of the individual into separated functional spheres, which is further affirmed by nation-state institutions. In effect, individualistic tendencies hand in hand with the neo-liberal market ideology emphasise Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's criterion of 'your own life – your own failure' (2008[2002]:24). Biographies are no longer safeguarded by a system of values which places the collective on the forefront before the self. Life course transitions become less rigid and

more fragmented. The market forces that abolished the normality of a 'job for life' were in part responsible for the increase disruption of the school to work transitions.

Such processes related to the labour market economy are said to have brought about the blurring and even disintegration of life course divisions (Bauman, 1995, Jones, 2005[2002]). Various scholars maintained that young people are considered to have 'patchwork careers' characterised by part-time and casual jobs interspersed with periods of unemployment (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]). Risk also became predominant, especially when the individual is blamed for personal failure like unemployment (Beck, 1992). Sennett (1998) stressed this when he said that 'apprehension is created in a climate emphasising constant risk, and apprehension increases when past experience seems no guide to the present' (1998:97).

Furlong et al. (2002) referred to the 'normalisation' of unemployment in contemporary society and short periods of unemployment which became part of youth's biographical patterns. They regarded more complex transitions as those that 'involve breaks, changes of direction and unusual sequences of events' (Furlong et al., 2002:8). In an earlier work with Evans, Furlong maintained that

> Analysis of the contemporary situation of young adults highlights an increasing fragmentation of opportunities and experience; the processes of youth are highly differentiated, reflecting and constructing social divisions in society in complex ways… As possible pathways out of school have diversified, young people have to find their own ways forward and their own values in education, consumption, politics, work and family life. (Evans and Furlong, 1997: 33)

3.6 Transformations at Work: The Increase of Short-Term Contract Jobs and Unemployment

Pierre Bourdieu (1998) stressed that precariousness is a new mode of domination in contemporary capitalism. Building on this, Doogan (2009), speaking on the 'New' Capitalism, suggested that the contemporary

transformation of work has given rise to new employment relations, mainly characterised by a sense of precariousness and instability;

> the decline of traditional industries which offered stable and secure jobs and their replacement in a new contingent economy that offers temporary, part-time and casual work, much of which is based on flexible contracts (Doogan: 2009:3).

In the last decade, there was an increase in involuntarily fixed-term jobs in most European countries (European Commission, 2008). The number of European workers employed in fixed-term contracts increased from 6.5% to 7.5% for women and from 5.5 to 6.5% for men. Young people less than 30 years of age are more likely to have fixed-term employment contracts with almost a third of employments (ibid.).

Furthermore, when looking at European statistics for instance, the rate of unemployment amongst young adults have increased dramatically, currently reaching over 20% in countries of the European Union (Eurostat, 2011). As a consequence, young people are extending their years in training to increase their marketability. Various societal, technological and economic transformations are the driving forces for the transformation of work, considered here in terms of changes in employment patterns, shifts in job stability and increase in precarious employment.

Also, the changes in the demographic ratios in the West as a result of increasing life-span and lower birth rates, is contributing to a financial burden on society. The shrinkage in well-paying jobs is resulting in greater competition for youth with older workers for jobs that pay a living wage. Older people are extending their working years and thus the replenishment of the workforce by the younger generation has stalled (Bynner and Côté, 2008). Bynner and Côté (2008) quoted UK statistics in their study on how during the past decade they observed a relative stagnation in youth's earnings. Individuals experiencing their youth at such economic and social situations are prolonging their dependence on their guardians, partly because of the increasing difficulty in finding a secure job.

It is not just the availability of work that changed but also the working experience underwent dramatic shifts. Sennett (1998) in his account on *The Corrosion of Character–The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, examined the changes in the life experiences of youth's job experiences living twenty-five years apart. This work is particularly notable for explaining the changing world of work since 'social capitalism' to the present stage of the 'new capitalism' by referring to the lived experiences of a father and a son. Sennett's study is embedded in the wider socio-economic change from 'organised' to neo-liberal capitalism.

More recently, Sennett (2006) addressed the impact of the economic transition to global capitalism in *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. He stressed the dismantling of the Weberian so-called 'iron cage' structure, made up of fixed corporate organisation of bureaucracy. This key transformation resulted in the ever-changing working conditions within the 'new economy', giving way to what Sennett (2006) referred to as the new form of 'flexible capitalism'. One definite aspect of this new system is the lack of long-term stability and benefits for the workers who have to face continuous uncertainties and risk without established guidelines. Sennett explained this by saying that

> today the phrase flexible capitalism describes a system which is more than a permutation on an old theme. The emphasis is on flexibility rigid forms of bureaucracy are under attack, as are the evils of blind routine. Workers are asked to behave nimbly, to be open to change on short notice, to take risks continually, to become even less dependent on regulations and formal procedures (Sennett, 2006: 9).

In a similiar manner, Louis Uchitelle (2006), writing about *The Disposable American*, stressed that until the 1970s, the majority of employees in America held long-term jobs. Since then, downsizing in companies resulted in a large number of individuals becoming unemployed. Whereas, voluntary or involuntary job changing was associated with improvement in wages in the 1960s, today job changes are said to result in poorer working conditions and wages (Uchitelle, 2006).

In the same vein of thought, Lash and Urry (1994) argued that the post-industrial society is disorganised because nothing is 'fixed, given and certain, while everything rests upon much greater knowledge and information' (Lash and Urry, 1994:10-11). Moreover, the workforce is much more 'flexible' than ever before. The decline in career-long employment is replaced with contingent contracts and mobile workforce. In their 'insecurity thesis,' Heery and Salmon (2000) examined how the changes in the external labour market and national systems of employment regulation resulted in greater insecure employments in recent years. This phenomenon has become even more prominent with the advent of corporate globalisation. Employees are increasingly regarding themselves as insecure partially because of the exposure of domestic markets to intense global competition. In addition, the cost reduction policies within national economies through short-term management of company assets are primarily safeguarding the financial interests of 'shareholder value'. In the globalised climate, countries are competing for the provision of good conditions to attract transnational companies (Bourdieu, 1998). Since the 1970s, the intensification of neo-liberal policies pushed forward the opening of markets for deregulation and free-trade.

Milton Friedman's ideas, as part of the Chicago School, supported *laissez-faire* economics and the diminished authority of the state in economic affairs. Free markets, free trade and the minimal role of the government, protecting only the civil freedom of individual are key factors of the neo-liberal ideology. For Friedman (1962), the days of government intervention in private affairs would disappear. Countries like the United Kingdom and France adopted these free-market policies creating a new environment by shifting public policy to strategise along free market principles. Companies have the potential to move their registered offices to more advantageous locations around the world. The advantageous locations are those that offer the lowest rates of taxation, a cheap workforce and the least regulated employment laws (Gorz, 1999).

Although short-term contracts may seem that they are promoting opportunistic bargaining for employees, workers tend to suffer both from economic and psychological effects (Heery and Salmon, 2000). Some have argued that the replacement of stable jobs with 'flexible labour' mainly in the form of fixed contracts is the result of neo-liberal consumer choice (Bauman, 1998). In the name of individual 'sovereignty', neo-liberal mechanisms built an arena where individuals compete with one another in the fight for economic security. This Darwinian conflict is being fuelled by threats of restructuring and the fear of job loss. In effect, the increase in involuntary job contracts in countries such as Britain and the USA brought about an increased risk of unemployment and reduced earnings. It also downplayed on employees rights such as sick leave and occupational pensions (Heery and Salmon, 2000).

Ehrenreich (2002) attacked the assumption that work is the route out of financial burden and that poverty awaits only those who are too lazy to work. In her work *Nickel and Dimed - on (Not) Getting by in America*, she conducted covert participant observation at various manual jobs. She treated her working experiences in a scientific manner to test whether blue-collar work helps to 'make ends meet' and live above the poverty line. The assumption that low-wage jobs require an unskilled workforce was rightfully undermined in her account. During her job experiences as a waitress, nursing assistant, maid and as a Wal-Mart employee, she observed that all these blue collar occupations require quick thinking, fast learning, focus and memory. Whilst harping on the lack of employment benefits in relation to health and safety, Ehrenreich (2002) demonstrated successfully that one low-wage job was insufficient to finance the minimum requirements of a person. The inflated housing prices makes it hard for these low-earners to balance income against expenses, shaping a reality of striving hard with two and even three jobs for survival. Due to these dire conditions presented to unskilled young people, Bynner and Côté (2008) stressed that 'youth have had little choice but to seek post-secondary educational credentials in the hope of gaining an advantage in access to better-paying jobs' (2008:260).

3.7 Extending the Years in Training for the Privileged Youth

Roberts's (1995) asserted that 'the scarcer young people's employment opportunities have become the more attention has been paid to their preparation and eventual entry into the labour market' (1995: 23). Up until the 1980s, having no academic qualifications did not hinder finding work in Britain. The labour market practically absorbed virtually all youth and opportunities for the unqualified and unskilled were easily available (Bynner, 2001). A distinctive marker between the two generations of youth understudy is the increase in the importance of qualifications. The achievement of qualifications, especially a university degree, had become a universal goal for the majority of middle class youth.

Some studies focus on how young people in late modernity are burdened by the responsibility to finance their own education with the consequence of entering into significant debts before joining the workforce (Kamenetz, 2007). The financial burden of this youth generation is best articulated in the work of the American journalist Anya Kamenetz (2007). Although focusing specifically within the American social reality, this work can be seen as having wider applicability especially in countries like Britain with continuous rising in tuition fees. Kamenetz exhausted her book *Generation Debt* with everyday accounts of young people to illustrate the crisis they are living through as a consequence of the current political climate. Primarily Kamenetz highlighted the unequal distribution of economical resources in which older people are 'taking far more than their fair share' (2007:xiii).

Neo-liberal policies that dismantled the welfare state in areas such as education, health care, and social services, were part of an economical move to cut state obligations and place the burden on personal responsibilities. Reform of the welfare state included policies for 'replacing social welfare systems by private insurance schemes and private pension funds (Gorz, 1999:20). The tug of war for the allocation of resources is continuously building up tension amongst the working population and the 'first wave' of baby boomers as they enter retirement and become part of the

welfare dependent population. The inequalities in wealth distribution are fertile grounds for tension between the generations.

Kamenetz (2007) maintained that this generational conflict is because the 'young' elderly or what she called the 'greediest generation' are having their pensions being paid by younger people who cannot themselves secure a career let alone invest in their pensions. Whilst presented with the 'American dream' of a middle class existence and surrounded by the inescapable tentacles of aggressive marketing in the consumer world, young people are facing a harsh reality of maxed out credit cards and student loans.

In the chapter 'College on Credit' Kamenetz (2007) described the severe situation of credit card debt among students to make ends meet. The increase in tuition fees contrast sharply with the post World War years characterised by an increase in grants and the expansion of public higher education. Notwithstanding that 'financial aid' is provided to American students, the offered grants are a far cry from the remaining balance that needs to be settled by the student. As in the narrative account of one student, 'Fred', Kamenetz wanted to stress the frustrating situation of students who anxiously sought for higher education yet they lacked financial backing. 'I registered for classes, showed up, and I wouldn't be on the roll. They drop you from classes if the cheque doesn't come. So I would crash classes to try to get in' (2007:28). Indeed, such desperate situations, which are the result of minimum state intervention, compel young people to give up higher education and hope to find full-time employment.

Kamenetz (2007) addressed the way that hedonistic consumerism coupled with student loans to finance higher education, credit card debt and high cost of housing is resulting in a gloomy life situation for young people, not just in America but worldwide. It comes to no surprise the trend for young people to leave their parental home at a later age or even to return back living with their parents after college because of financial difficulty; some even called this a 'boomerang' generation for its trends to keep going back to their parental home (Newman, 1999).

3.8   Prolonging Parental Dependence

Increased job competition has contributed to increasingly prolonged and precarious transitions to financial independence (Bynner and Côté, 2008). Traditional life-course transitions to adulthood have become broken down into interconnected events, in no specific chronological order. The event of household formation, for example, has become separate from family formation. Thus leaving parental home became in itself an important rite of passage. This does not always denote the transition to adulthood, in particular when young people still depend on parental financial support (Jones, 1997). Furthermore, the predominance of the lack of normative organisational stages in human lives is mostly evident with the de-institutionalisation of marriage in the twentieth first century. Joint households are no longer only tied by marital relationships (Bumpass and Lu, 2000). This is notable in the increased rate of cohabitation and reconstituted arrangements. Also, the increased rates of divorce is also bringing about destabilised life courses because in some cases divorcees are returning to their parental home and becoming once again financial dependent on their parents.

Alongside these complex transitions into adulthood, one cannot ignore the extension of the period of economic dependence of youth on parents. The longevity in educational and training because of higher unemployment, the changes in welfare structures and the increase in short-term contract jobs have had considerable impact on the transition of young people into independent living. Karen Evans (2002), referring to her contribution in the study 'The Youth, Citizenship and Social Change Research Programme', maintained that more than 60% of their sample of 18-25 year old individuals felt that they were partially dependent on parents in all respects except financially.

Prolonging of partial dependence of youth is also the consequence of the increase in house prices over recent decades. The ability to have an independent lifestyle at young age in a separate dwelling became harder to access in the twentieth-first century. A total of 44% of young Europeans

stated that they cannot afford to leave parental homes, whereas 28% agreed that not enough affordable housing is available (Eurostat, 2009b).

Compared to the era of the 'golden age of marriage' in the 1950s and 1960s, marriage and living arrangements underwent dramatic change. The delaying in marriage and family formation partially due to changes in educational patterns is indicative of the reshaping of life courses (Irwin, 2006). This is evident when looking at European statistics having the average marriage age of men in countries of the European Union at 29.8, whereas for women it is 27.4 years. Furthermore, the age at which women give birth to their first child increased; now reaching an average of 28 years of age (European Commission, 2008a).

3.9   Conclusion

This chapter explored the shifts in youth's school to work transition. It examined the institutional changes in the education system and work, shifts in job opportunities and patterns of unemployment; all affecting the life situation of youth in their transition to adulthood (Evans and Furlong, 1997, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Heinz, 1991). The labour market was often seen as largely being responsible for the increasing shifts in the school to work transition (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997]). The socio-economic changes that took place during the post-war years had a significant impact on the life course normative expectations and experiences of young people. For youth in the 1960s, especially those growing up in the Anglo-American context, they experienced an increase in the standards of living through the expansion of the welfare state, education and the availability of employment coupled with frequent wage rises were amongst the beneficial factors of the 'golden age' (Hobsbawn, 1996).

This chapter also examined how neo-liberal conditions that encouraged self-reliance, coupled with the transformation of work has contributed to a more than ever fragmented school to work transition (Mills and Blossfeld, 2001). Indeed the life course transition for youth in late modernity is undoubtedly significantly at odds with the social reality of younger people during the so-

called 'golden age' of the 1960s. Moreover, these shifts are also fuelled by the increase emphasis on affluent consumerism that significantly shapes youth's identity.

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Chapter 4:   Consumerism and Popular Culture

4.1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to make sense of the way young people are seduced through consumption. This chapter digs deeper into the roots of cultural meanings of consumption and the market's pervasive effects on youth. It traces the growth of the youth consumer culture since the post Second World War up to the late 2000s. Therefore, rather than addressing generational differences, this chapter focuses more on examining the way popular consumption developed since the making of 'teenager'. Despite the increase in inequalities in the West, the youth generation are more than ever being seduced by corporations to have an affluent lifestyle irrespective of the fact that they are facing a harsh reality of rising costs, higher education and housing as well as undermined employment rights and pensions. The neo-liberal hegemonic stamp is being imprinted in the everyday life experiences of youth; experience becomes a commodity, time becomes a commodity and even social interactions today are becoming commodified.

This chapter outlines how the neo-liberal ideology is not simply present in consumer-based capitalism and marketing tactics to sell, but has become obscured and have infiltrated the hearts and minds of people whilst making itself seen as a typical part of the everyday life. Furthermore, it is the main concern in this chapter to critically question classical subcultural studies and their notion of youth resistance to the capitalist system. This chapter refers to studies that regard youth resistance as simply a product of marketing machines and corporations, aimed at creating a diversification in the market. This conception is arguably the strongest when looking at the contemporary popularisation of youth (sub) cultures by marketing industries to promote a more hip, non-conformist style in fashion.

4.2 Conspicuous Consumption and Seduction of the Youth Generation

It is a matter of fact nowadays that youth consumer practices are a crucial support of contemporary capitalism. Theories inspired by Marxism tend to see consumption as a tool for the ideology sustained by the capitalists and used to reinforce mechanisms of social control. Needless to say, the strong marketing machines within the culture industry are mostly targeted at the younger generation. It seems that market segments are simply tailored to capture everyone within the web of consumption; an ideology which mirrors the ideas of Adorno and Horkheimer (1997) on the controlling forces of the culture industry. The element of diversity in consumer goods is seen as simply an illusion serving the function for the provision of all 'so none may escape' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997:123). Their study has been written with conviction that the role of the media is to send uniform messages to the masses that work to retain the class gap through the encouragement of a false sense of hope for the working class. They stated that:

> The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises… The promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reaches that the diner must be satisfies with the menu (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997:139).

More recently, this argument on social control has been questioned by Bauman (1991) when he spoke about the role of consumer seduction with the intention to keep people captivated by the capitalist way of life. Individuals are lured and seduced by commodities that promise individual freedom, away from one's oppression. However, Bauman (1991) maintained that seduction is a complex mechanism for market-dependency, used so that more consumers will depend on the market and thus generate the capitalist system. On a similar note, Leslie Sklair (2002) referred to 'the culture-ideology of consumerism' in economic globalisation; an ideology which stresses the benefits of consumerism and

> persuade people to consume not simply to satisfy their biological and other modest needs but in response to artificially created desires in order to perpetuate the accumulation of capital for private profit, in other words, to ensure that the capitalist global system goes on forever (Sklair, 2002:62).

Youth in the late modernity are amongst the fiercest segment of the population to be seduced by commodity fetishism. The material conditions

during one's formative years have great impact on the life situation and future expectations of individuals. McCrindle and Wolfinger (2010) went as far as to suggest that we are witnessing, for the first time, a 'global generation'; 'a generation accessing the same websites, watching the same movies, downloading the same songs and being influenced by the same brands' (2010:2). Despite the distinctive characteristics of any given location and its own particularities, it bears much truth that technologies are more than ever shaping the life situation of youth in a glocal manner.

The basic rule for marketing according to Alissa Quart (2003) in her research *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* is to 'get 'em while they're young' (2003:9). She maintained that youth are the worse hit victims of conspicuous consumption, mainly because they were immersed into embracing the logic of consumerism from an early age with branded toys. Quart (2003) referred to the trend of viral marketing, or peer-to-peer marketing, adopted to spread the seductive lure of brands and infiltrate the minds and hearts of the young. Young girls are recruited to attend brand focus groups to offer their 'consultation' to marketers on what is hip. These girls admitted that consulting was a way of defending oneself from bullying at school and ensuring a place amongst the so-called 'cool' gang. Quart (2003) explored the semiotics attached with brands in her conversation with girls who wear designer label clothes, often associated with women twice their age. These girls, parading in shopping malls, driven by deep desires for beauty, have a fixation on purchasing clothes and perfumes. Shopping malls create an ambiguous and anxious environment of needing, which is only released by buying. The intensification of youth consumerism is creating an obsession especially in young girls.

Regardless of the fact that Quart focused on a young age segment in early adolescence, this study is very much relevant when making sense of the training in seduction that young people have had. In one of the conversations Quart (2003) had with the girls and their mothers, it is clear how these girls want to look like affluent adults, wearing the same brands like their parents and having a strong desire to transform their child-like body

into a sexy one. They are portrayed by Quart (2003) as passively accepting conspicuous consumption from a very young age and brought up in a society which values appearance above all else. Quart's observation of the consumerist-oriented Jewish American Bar Mitzvah religious ceremony as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, dovetails very well with the more Western European Christian ceremony of the First Holy Communion. Just like for the Bar Mitzvah, the First Holy Communion signals a very important religious ceremony in one's life. Nevertheless, such religious event has become wrapped with consumerist trends and became more like an event that showcases the great (pre) 'tween' marketing machine. Mothers are made to compete in an arena of communal narcissism for the best simulacrum wedding package; dress, hair, party and its synthetic 'excitement' for the big day. The event itself becomes commodified; the children are parading on the church aisles showcasing their premature consumerist selves. These children are already imprinted with the idea of 'uniqueness' and dressed to attain the spectacular star image; an idea which goes well with the celebrity culture now targeting even children. Conspicuous consumption in such occasions tends to go far beyond the actual religious event. It sends the message to these children that spending and obtaining is more important that the actual coming of age of this occasion.

More recently the situation of contemporary youth has been called into question by Anya Kamenetz (2007) in her reflective account on her generation, that she aptly called 'generation debt'. She argued that 'we twenty-somethings have grown up marinated in the most aggressive advertising and marketing environment ever known' (2007). Moreover, this youth generation is driven by the semiotics attached to social class and to a 'cool' identity made available through consumption (McGuigan, 2009). Herein, consumption is not simply an essential feature of human existence that fulfils basic needs like nourishment, shelter and clothing, but it has a deeper cultural meaning. Conspicuous consumption in late modernity is used for self-definition. Consumption especially of branded products is made to designate social positions. Unlike Thorstein Veblen's (1999 [1899])

analysis of the 'nouveau riche' in the United States and their efforts to exclude others who did not belong to their leisure class, the 'democratisation' of conspicuous consumption focuses on inclusion (McGuigan, 2009).

The market is no longer driven by mass production but by market segmentation, targeting and creating the needs and desires of different target groups. Especially but not exclusively for the younger generation, market researchers break down the market both vertically by class and status and horizontally by group identities, age (whether teenagers or young adults), gender and region or ethnicity in an attempt to seduce consumers with products designed for their 'needs'.

Some 'cool' products are marketed as offering individuality through their distinctive characteristics and functions. Take for instance Nike shoes, marketed not just as a pair of running shoes but also as an identity symbol; whether it is the 'artistic' by the Nike's artist athlete collection or the more rebellious by the 'caution' collection. Yet due to the fact that more individuals are seduced into buying the same products that offer individuality, more standardisation is being created.

Despite the fact that young people in late modernity are much more brand conscious compared to their older counterparts, one cannot ignore generational change when it comes to taste. This premise bears comparison with Pierre Bourdieu's (1984 [1979]) study on taste in relation to social class. Bourdieu's (1984 [1979]) theories have been influential to the sociology of consumption. In line with his notion of habitus, individuals are often not aware of their taken for granted displays of their tastes as consumers when it comes to, for instance, food, bodily expressions and dress. Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) argued that the processes by which individuals distinguish themselves from others is not wholly determined by conditions of capitalist economics but also by the educational system that teaches cultural codes. Such cultural distinctions manifested in consumer tastes enable groups to include and exclude individuals. Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) also maintained that taste-makers are significant cultural intermediaries who mediate new trends.

This class of taste-makers has expanded and are more concerned with the arts and culture. Nevertheless, taste is not only class-based, it is also generational distinguished. Youth tends to disdain older people's sense of taste and adopt more hip trends, often inspired by the fashion, style and decor of celebrities. With the advent of *Cool Capitalism*, McGuigan (2009) referred to the role of celebrity or pseudo-aristocracy culture pioneered by the Hollywood star system. The kind of 'celebrity democracy' hand in hand with the pervasive consumer ideology manifests itself clearly in the assumption that anyone can achieve stardom with their own efforts. Richard Dyer (1977) examined the dynamics of celebrity in his book *Stars*, in which he referred to how 'Stars… are the direct or indirect reflection of the needs, drives and dreams of American society' (Dyer, 1977:6). Related to stardom is the false created desire of fame and fortune.

The popular belief of a more gullible consumer younger generation who are in need of supervision and control, adds a critical dimension to youth today. Angela McRobbie (1994) maintained that youth's expressive consumption has created the discourse of moral panic in the media and public spaces. Youth are often represented in a romanticised manner as a problematic group especially in subcultural studies of the 1970s.

4.3   The Initiation of the Youth Market and Youth Subcultures in the 1960s

Youth culture in the 1960s cannot be seen separate from its historical and economic dimension as well as their material conditions. The 1960s' booming economy within the typical Western mode has fuelled a more reachable middle class (Hobsbawn, 1996). Aside from the increase in one's income and welfare benefits, the material conditions of the baby boomers increased significantly compared to their predecessors (ibid.).

The youth niche market in the late 1950s was initiated because for the first time young people had more cash in hand. This is evident in record selling in which 75-80 per cent of rock music was sold to customers between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five (Hobsbawn, 1996). The prosperous post Second

World War years hand in hand with the intensification of the consumer market were key figures in the making of 'teenager' as a specific market cohort. Various scholars referred to the homogenous youth culture during the Post Second World War years because of the ever-more uniform cultural processes as a result of the spread of mass consumption (Clarke et al., 1976). While it may be too generic to assume a uniform youth culture and ignore the different lifestyles and modes of expression, it is justifiable to argue that technological advancements of the press, radio and television, set in motion the arrival of 'imitation' and 'manipulation' by corporations (ibid.).

A number of studies by cultural scholars in the 1970s and 1980s followed the popular belief that young people were resisting the mainstream capitalist dominant hegemonic culture by their non-conformist attributes. There is an undoubted interest in subcultural studies and its consequent moral panic not only in the late 1960s and 1970s but also up to the present day. British scholars of the 1970s investigated youth subcultures of the teds, mods, rockers, and skinheads in relation to the assumed potential resistance manifested in their hedonistic lifestyles. These scholars, associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, claimed that post-war British youth subcultural groups were showing resistance to capitalism and the dominant hegemonic forms of culture. Under the influences of British Marxist critics, subcultural scholars published works which include Paul Willis's (1978) *Profane Culture*, Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson's (2004 [1976]) edited publication, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain, Working-Class Youth Culture* and Dick Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.

Such studies on youth subcultures cannot be seen divorced from the socio-economic changes in the Post-Second World War Western society. This was aptly examined by Phil Cohen (1972) in his interpretation of working class subcultures and its relation to the 1960s' class transitions. This study deserves its merits especially for the way Cohen (1972) placed the situation of a social class formation within a historical framework and saw it interrelated to economic and cultural changes. Cohen gave a detailed

portrait of the traditional working class family in Britain and explained how changes in post-war years undermined it. Transitions in the working class included the depopulation of working class areas, the breaking-up of traditional extended family, and social mobility alongside the drastic changes in the economy. He expanded on the effects on working class family and the neighbourhood as a result of redevelopment;

> The first effect of the high-density, high rise schemes was to destroy the function of the street, the local pub, the cornershop, as articulations of communal space. Instead there was only the privatised space of the family unit, stacked one on top of each other, in total isolation, juxtaposed with the totally public space which surrounded it, and which lacked any of the informal social controls generated by the neighbourhood (Cohen, 1972:16).

Cohen's (1972) research based in London's East End in the early 1970s, addressed the initiation of subculture as a consequence of the fragmentation and disruption of the working class family and economy. He defined subculture as a

> compromise solution between two contradictory needs: the need to create and express autonomy and difference from parents, and by extension, their culture; and the need to maintain the security of existing ego defences, and the parental identifications which support them (Cohen, 1972:26).

He maintained that the skinheads were resisting and resenting the changes in the working class and the false air of hopes provided by the social workers. They simply wanted a return to their working class traditions. Cohen concluded that generational conflict was leading to the creation of subcultures. These young people wanted to rebuild the tradition of their parent working class culture, in its collective solidarity, its conception of masculinity and its orientation towards the 'outsiders'. Cohen (1972) maintained that although subcultures tried to separate themselves from their parent culture, their culture still echoed their family class background.

> The latent function of subculture is this - to express and resolve, albeit 'magically', the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture. The succession of subcultures which this parent culture generated can thus all be considered as so many variations on a central theme – the contradiction at an ideological level, between traditional working class Puritanism, and the new ideology of consumption; at an economic level between a part of the socially mobile elite, or a part of the new lumpen. Mods, parkers, skinheads, crombies, all represent in this different ways, an attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements (Cohen, 1972:23).

Dick Hebdige (1979) in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, assumed, in a rather romanticised manner, that non-conformist fashion such as punk was a sign of resistance against consumer capitalism. Hebdige decoded signs adopted by subcultures that 'give itself to be read' (1979:101) as rebellious forms. Subcultural members use the process of bricolage in the transformation of the use of semiotics. Signs such as punks' reused ordinary objects of safety pins and chains, are made to form new meaning; seen by Hebdige (1979) as a semiotic resistance to the dominant order. Style for him is a tool for creating rebellious behaviour in the 'semiotic guerrilla warfare' invested with the 'power to disfigure'. He explained this in relation to the punk style as a very conscious choice of dissension opposing society's norms and values.

A thorough understanding of such genre is by referring to the British scene in the 1970s with punk bands like The Sex Pistols, The Clash and The Unwanted. For Hebdige (1979), the anger and anxiety translated from their music are signs of 'voluntary assumption of outcast status' (1979: 110). Such behaviour doesn't make sense unless it is seen against the political and economical backdrop of the 1970s. Hebdige himself referred to this period as a 'gloomy apocalyptic ambience of the late 1970s' (1979:122-3) mainly characterised by unemployment and instability as a consequence of crisis of organised capitalism and the right political turn to the neo-liberal ideology. The deregulation of the market within the global economy result in the expanding number of employment contracts being temporary or part-time as well as the disappearance of having the commitment of jobs for life.

Moreover for Hebdige, the 'mods' were also a response to the crisis of the working-class. They affiliated themselves with styles associated with higher classes thus manifesting upward mobility. In Hebdige's (1976) account, the 'mods' were renowned for their use of Italianate style whilst using scooters as an identity symbol. Energy and hedonistic lifestyles was enhanced by the use of the drug 'Speed' that made up their excessive stamina. They lived in a utopian vision of the world of gangsterism and luxurious clubs whereas in

reality their illusion was not quite fulfilled because of their average weekly wage.

In addition, Willis (1978) also addressed class relations and the existence of a hostile relationship between working class youth and the dominant class. In his work *Profane Culture*, Willis (1978) interpreted the actions of motorbike subcultural boys as resisting the dominant culture because they were deprived from material conditions. Their position as a subordinate class stirred frustration and they resolved it by creating their own identity, not as a form of creative expression, but as 'the only route for radical cultural change' (Willis, 1978:1). However, Willis (1990) also referred to the vigorous creative element of young people in his later work on youth culture as a manifestation of 'a profane explosion of everyday symbolic life and activity' (1990:27).

Subcultural studies often presented an over deterministic approach of youth's social action, what Kellner calls the 'fetishism of resistance' (1994:37). For Redhead (1990), scholars 'positioned conceptually youth culture and youth subculture in a relation of resistance, to, or, rebellion towards a dominant culture' (1990:41). Similarly, McGuigan (1992) stated that the 'working class subcultures of 'resistance'- teds, mods, rockers, skins, punks and so on – were read politically as symbolic challenges to the dominant culture' (1992:89-90).

It is also worth noting that the concept of resistance was mainly studied in the context of male subcultures to an extent that 'the very term subculture has acquired such strong masculine overtones' (McRobbie and Garber, 1976:211). Nonetheless, Angela McRobbie (1990) argued that girls also develop their own cultural resistance. She maintained that young woman develop forms of cultural resistance not only to the capitalist modes but also to the patriarchal society. McRobbie (1990) addressed the way girls produce their own distinctive subculture within the school. The 'culture of femininity', that girls were socialised into, is manifested in fashion and in the way girls utilise magazines. The girls in McRobbie's account are similar to Willis's (1977) 'lads' in rejecting the school's agenda and replacing it with their own

forms of resistance. These girls placed significant value on the role of the wife and mother marking their future roles. This aspiration was satisfied through reading magazines, which depicted the ideology of romance.

The argument of youth resistance to consumerism has been called into question recently in the *Conquest of Cool* by Thomas Frank (1997). He stressed that capitalism is dynamic in its nature rather than static; evident in the dramatic changes in the way corporations were organised during the last fifty years. Frank (1997) maintained that the understanding of youth subcultures in the 1960s went beyond examining only their culture. There is a need to dig deeper into the matter and make sense of the corporate ideology and business practices hand in hand with the changing middle class mores at that time. Frank (1997) examined the roots of counterculture by analysing 'the forces and logic that made rebel youth cultures so attractive to corporate decision-makers' (1997:7). By tracing the roots of bohemian cultural style, he argued that counterculture rather than being the product of youth's dissatisfaction with capitalism is more the brainchild of lascivious business. In effect, he preferred to use the term 'fake' counter culture in his 'co-optation' theory.

> Faith in the revolutionary potential of 'authentic' counterculture combines with the notion that business mimics and mass-produces fake counterculture in order to cash in on a particular demographic and to subvert the great threat that "real" counterculture represents. [In a nutshell] if you can't beat 'em, absorb 'em (1997:7).

By referring to catalogue ads and commercials, Frank (1997) demonstrated the normality of this imagery of 'fake' counterculture in the 1960s. He maintained that it is very hard to distinguish between 'authentic' counterculture and a fake one. He went on to argue that even the authenticity of counterculture divorced from capitalism is somewhat difficult to find because most 'authentic' countercultures have their grassroots in mass culture. Its major protagonists are usually rock stars or millionaire performers and employees of the culture industry and thus there is close affiliation with the capitalist consumer world. In spite of the claims made by subcultural scholars on youth's resistance of the dominant culture, teenage

subcultures in post-war years are appropriately seen by Frank (1997) as the product of market capitalism. In line with this, hippies are regarded by Warren Hinkle (1967) as an integral part of the consumer culture.

> In the commercial sense, the hippies have not only accepted assimilation..., they have swallowed it whole. The hippie culture is in many ways a prototype of the most ephemeral aspect of the larger American society; if the people looking in front the subsurbs want change, clothes, fun and some lightheadedness form the new gypsies, the hippies are delivering – and some of them are becoming rich hippies because of it (Hinkle,1967:226).

Moreover, adverts in the 1960s gave the impression that the consumer culture was a fraud while portraying consumers as individuals, standing out of a crowd rather than fitting in. Such argument is similar to that of Judith Williamson (1978) in *Decoding Advertisements* who maintained that advertisements are made to incorporate critique as a marketing strategy; 'ads which can incorporate criticisms of themselves have a much higher credibility than those which don't' (Williamson,1978:174). Whereas American capitalism in the late 1950s dealt more with conformity and 'keeping up with the Joneses', the 1960s based their marketing strategies 'on the doctrine of liberation and continual transgression that is still familiar today' (Frank, 1997:20).

The introduction of 'market segmentation' in the 1960s and the discovery of demographics replaced the manufacturing of one uniform product for everyone. Hence, the old Taylorist theory headed toward theoretical extinction. Instead of the physical characteristics of the product, market segmentation and consumer identity became prominent in modern theories of marketing (Frank, 1997). By the 1960s, idealised vision of American life captured in advertising seemed unbelievable and the 'creative revolution' with its carnivalesque characteristics and its embracing to the critique of mass society quickly replaced the ads of the 1950s (ibid.). Robin Murray (1988), when speaking about the Post-Fordist age, maintained that 'innovation has become a leading edge of the new competition..designers produce the innovation...they shape lifestyles..they are the engineers of designer capitalism' (Murray, 1988:166).

The welcoming of youth-led revolution and the meaning of hip, as a set of liberating practices at odds with the dominant impulses of post-war American society, were perceived by the American marketers as something that revitalises the youth market rather than an act to bring down capitalism. Anchored within a specific social and economic context, the concepts of conformity and collectivism in contrast to individualist ethic are the by-products of shifts in the economy coupled by state manoeuvres and private corporations. They are the protagonists that swerve mass society into different so-called 'characterological' type in relation to the transformations in the economy, whether in times of economic stability or crisis (Frank, 1997). Of course, this sociological reasoning makes more sense when examining the dispositions of different youth generations existing at different historical moments and living through different socio-economic and cultural climates.

4.4   Contemporary Youth Culture under the Conditions of Global Capitalism

In his later work, Hebdige (1988) addressed the way the media and commercial marketing mechanisms are absorbing the former rebellious youth subcultural styles, giving them a populist 'cool' edge and selling them as commodities. Agencies of signification such as television are incorporating such styles into the mainstream.

One of the main distinctions amongst young people relates to the possession of what Thornton (1996) called 'subcultural capital'. Derived from Bourdieu's cultural capital, it denotes control over those who do not possess it. Subcultural capital is the 'marker of hipness and being in the know' (1996:10), and it is only a transitional and temporary phase. It is the stage when the subcultural characterisation is limited only to the minority. This stage is preceded by the internalisation of these characteristics in popular culture.   New counter cultural trends and stylistic appearance, initially adopted by the minority cultural group are becoming popularised for their distinctiveness as part of the marketing strategy. The media play a determinant role in the creation and destruction of subcultures.   Thornton stated that:

Subcultural capital therefore became a temporary phase enjoyed by a minority until it reaches mainstream and loses its significance. Counter cultural identities are losing their initial distinctiveness upon reaching the established culture. Thornton (1996) addressed this conception by stating that 'the problem of underground subcultures is a popularisation by a gushing up to the mainstream' (1996:5).

It can be argued that negative coverage in the media promotes subcultural capital for its distinctiveness and paving the way for gaining a popularised status. Approval from the media means the destruction of distinctiveness and the creation of counter-cultural trends by marketing companies; thus media approval being the kiss of death for a subculture. This idea is in consistent with the comments of McRobbie (2005) on moral panic in relations to the 'hoodie' culture in Britain and the way it provoked anxiety at its initial stages. McRobbie indicated the origin of this contemporary youth fashion expression from the black American hip-hop culture. The 'hoodie' culture is now considered mainstream culture due to the global economy of music through rap pop idols like 'Eminem'. The Rap music culture denotes insolence and rebellious behaviour in relation to social exclusion and signifies anger and rage. However, the autonomy of clothing in public spaces is being challenged in Britain with the prohibition of hooded tops obscuring the face in shopping centres. According to McRobbie (2005), the reaction to this prohibition will result to further its popularity because it promotes this style as a representation of distinctiveness and anti-social behaviour.

Another contemporary form of counter cultural identity, which is losing its distinctiveness and becoming popularised is the 'Emo' culture. Emo, short for emotional hardcore punk rock, was a form of underground music in the late 1980s. It describes emotional performances of bands singing poetic,

ecstatic songs with an inner meaning of break the limitations of the self. However, a series of schisms has emerged between those who relate to particular eras of emo. This music genre originated within the American cultural sphere and infiltrated European countries through media communication mainly the popularity of the MTV. Frustration and apathy are distinctive element of the emo culture. The song lyrics imply a deeper meaning of anguish situations and sadness leading to self-harming connotations. Guy Picciotto, as the leading musician for the emo genre, sings that 'hope is just a rope to hang myself with' (Greenwald, 2003:12). This is a typical example of the manifestation of depressive modes and introspective lyrics.

Emo fans associate themselves with apathy, open display of strong emotions and being sad. The glorification of sadness, depression, introversion, self-harming and even suicide is part of the ethos of this youth culture. Emo is also a form of fashion statement resembling goth fashion and characterised for wearing tight jeans, long fringe, dyed black hair and studded belts. This culture has now infiltrated the mainstream popular culture. In this stance, such youth (sub) cultures cannot be seen divorced from cultural production and consumption within the confines of the global music industry. Redhead (1997) referred to the notion of contemporary youth subcultures and in a similar manner to Frank's (1997) approach, he saw a close association with corporations and the commercial music industry.

> It does not mean that there are no subcultures any longer: these abound in youth culture today, but are frequently grounded in market niches of the contemporary global music industry – techno, bhangra, gangsta, rap, ambient, jungle – even when they 'originally' came from the 'streets' (Redhead, 1997:103).

4.5   Clubbing Culture: Youth's Hedonistic Behaviour

When examining contemporary youth display and modes of expression, it is important to refer to the leisure industry, often associated with youth's hedonistic behaviour. Various studies focus on the clubbing culture as a popular form of leisure activity for youth in the 2000s (Redhead, 1997,

Measham et al., 2001). According to the Home Office publication *Safer Clubbing* in the United Kingdom, it was estimated that four million young people each week attend clubs (Webster et al., 2002).

The commercialisation of drugs is often assumed to be an intrinsic aspect of club culture. The buying and selling of 'dance' drugs such as 'ecstasy' is considered to be a prominent feature of the illicit night time economy associated mostly amongst young people (Measham et al., 2001). However, the commercialisation of drugs is not a recent phenomena used only by young people in the 2000s. The use of amphetamines consumed by the mods of the 1960s was also associated with their out of control behaviour. In similar respects, there was a clear lineage to the ecstasy fuelling rave culture of the 1990s (ibid.) as well as the tendencies for binge drinking culture in the late modernity.

Becker (Pearson and Twohig, 1976) in his study on youth hedonistic lifestyles analysed the social construction of drug-induced experiences. Its practice is not directly related to the chemical effects. The cultural meanings attached and the ways others define this act are important factors in the experience of drug-use. This leads Becker to argue that the cultural definition is so essential that a person who has taken the drug 'may be totally unaware of some of the drug's effects, even when they are physically gross' (1976:120).

There was an increase in illegal drug use for recreational consumption especially for dance drug users in the UK at the end of the millennium (Measham et al., 2001). The demand and availability of 'dance' drugs, used to boost stamina in clubbing, is said to have resulted in the 'normalisation' of drug use (ibid.). Indeed clubbers (94.1%) are the most drug-experienced segment of the youth population. 'Cannabis' followed by 'Speed' is the most popular drug amongst clubbers (ibid.). Consequently, the popularisation of drug use corresponds with smoking tobacco and alcohol consumption.

Studies on alcohol consumption disclose that in general clubbers consume most alcohol amongst young people. Also, a growing tendency amongst young adults is that of drinking at home prior to going out. Such attitude requires to be addressed within a cultural meaning aura. The chemical effects of being drunk and out of bodily control are not the sole motives why young people are consuming alcohol. The dynamic cultural definitions and the social construction are determinant indicators for excessive alcohol consumption. The action of consuming alcohol requires textual and ideological analysis not only of its effects but also as a lifestyle creating a binge-drinking culture. These attitudes involve consuming more than five units of alcohol in one session and indulge in anti-social behaviour. The study of Measham et al. (2001) revealed that alcohol consumption was seen as problematic because it ignites violence and anti-social behaviour.

Mass media play a significant role in the transmission of flows of information on hedonistic lifestyles and the tendency of a 'don't care attitude'. The media presents what Baudrillard (1988) called 'the ecstasy of communication' through the production of endless procession of cultural fragments creating euphoria for the viewers. It is made to excite viewers and form simulated fantasies in the process of the creation of simulate lived experiences especially for young people.

Manuel Castells (1996, 1997, 1998) strikes a typical note in his three volume series *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* on the changes in the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). He claimed that the dynamics of the information age rests of three pillars; the technological revolution, the reconstruction of capitalism and statism, and the emergence of social cultural movements. However throughout his study, he emphasised mostly the importance of technological innovation to an extent that he was criticised of technological determinism. He suggested that changes in social relations are instigated by technological changes.

4.6 Transmitting Youth's Consumer Culture

MTV, the music television station is a typical medium that works to imprint powerful images about expression, self, lifestyle, and individuality with consumption in the minds of young people (Fry and Fry, 1987). These images in music videos, for example, represent ideal body shapes, cars, clothes and a chic lifestyle; all images are coded to create a fantasy. The leading global media company Viacom television, owners of MTV, is fuelled by advertising agencies seeking to reach the youth as their demographic audience on a global basis. The Viacom's CEO in 2006, Tom Freston looked at the influence of the MTV on the transnational youth as creating a shared identical affinity for popular consumer goods (Miller, 2003). Youth culture is made profoundly interrelated with the value of consumerism. MTV's strategy inevitably serves this global media conglomerate as well as advertising agencies in the attraction of receptive young audience and their attempt to subtly define transnational youth culture (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003). As Seel (1997) aptly maintained 'the interactivity of video games, the information of computers, and the images of MTV and thus the internet created an entirely new means of social interaction' (1997:5). Just like any other technological devices the mobile phone and the Internet are means of communication with considerable social and cultural significance (McGuigan, 2005).

The enthusiastic engagement of youth in social networking sites like Facebook needs to be examined in an attempt to make sense of youth's customary activity in everyday life in late modernity. Facebook is an open, democratic space offering possibilities for empowerment as well as a marketing research tool used to gather information about people. It is typical for the younger generation in late modernity to voice their everyday private life experience online on social network sites like Facebook and on video sharing network sites like YouTube. The growing importance given to YouTube is evident in its global increasing visitors, from around 63 million visitors per month in 2006 to around 375 million per month in 2009 (Trefis Team, 2010). It is estimated that the number of visitors will continue to increase and reach 700 million by 2016. Its success however may raise the

question of its benefits to the audience. Elizabeth Clark (2008) in an academic paper 'What Good is the 'You' in YouTube?' attempted to make sense of this.

Primarily, Clark (2008) understood the word 'good' as both in terms of its worth and as a commodity. She made an intriguing question on whether the audience are themselves the alienated workers who are labouring for the culture industry during their leisure time when uploading home videos. Clark's ideas on 'Youtubers' dovetails nicely with Debord's (1994 [1967]) argument that 'alienated consumption is added to alienated production as an inescapable duty of the masses' (1994:29). But what is important for the capitalist system to continue to run smoothly is that 'workers must know little of the marketed lives of the products they produce and consumers must remain sheltered from the production lives of the brands they buy' (Klein, 2000:347).

New technologies may also be 'good' if 'YouTubers' are using them 'as potential tools in resisting dominant hegemonic ideologies and power structures....[Or are they] more powerfully seductive cyber spectacles?'(Clark, 2008:2). In teasing out these questions, Clark attempted to explore how new media such as 'YouTube' work hard to place themselves and their users within cultural spaces and the consumerist system.

4.7   Consumerism Furthering the Divide in the World

The United Nations Development Plan declared that even though there is greater wealth in the world, its distribution is becoming more unequal. Whereas for some the concept of class has been pronounced as dead (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]), for others it has been undergoing a renaissance in the new global context, with new inequalities growing worldwide (Klein, 2005 [2000]). This gap between the rich and the poor is visible everywhere and is increasing especially between countries in the first world and third world countries. Whereas consumer choice increased, it is

too naïve to speak about consumer sovereignty, mainly because it is only a minority who are granted choice in society.

Naomi Klein (2005 [2000]) in *No Logo* described how the gulf between the rich and poor countries is becoming widened by neo-liberal globalisation. Klein (2005 [2000]) referred to the way brand-name multinational corporations produce their goods in free-trade zone for cheap labour and they simply insist that they are bargain hunters searching for best deals in the 'global mall'. The desires for people to consume more as well as the increase in transnational practices have resulted in a deeper class polarisation between the rich and the poor. Evidence on the growing global inequality is provided by the 'United Nations Development Report' (2009) which state that the gap between the income of the richest and poorest countries had grown.

The labour conditions in the production of branded gear are often exposed to raise awareness on the system of exploitation. The rather recent phenomenon of 'culture jamming' by anti-capitalist movement activists is one example of the empowerment of people to do something about the pervasive effect of corporations. In a form of 'semiotic Robin Hoodism', cultural jamming referred to adbusters and their mission is of 'hijacking billboards in order to drastically alter their messages' (Klein, 2000:280). Without undermining their political work, some scholars like Thomas Frank (1997) argue that these symbolic contestations can easily become incorporated into mainstream culture and simply become another market segment.

4.8   Conclusion

Aside from the need to locate youth generation to its time and space, it is just as important to study the material conditions when making sense of the behaviour and changing tendencies of youth. This chapter mainly focused on consumption, not simply as a necessity to satisfy bodily requirements such as hunger and shelter, but as having deeper cultural meanings. The semiotics attached to consumption are arguably felt the strongest amongst the youth generation in late modernity. There is an undoubted interest

amongst scholars to study conspicuous consumption and brand consciousness and its impact on youth's self identity. This chapter followed most of these studies in an attempt to trace the construction and growth of youth mass consumerism since the making of 'teenager'. It examined the seductive elements in the present-day consumer culture along with its consequences on the younger generation.

This chapter also examined subcultural studies and their critique on the notion of youth resistance. Such conceptualisation has become even more doubtful in the analysis of the contemporary club culture. This chapter referred to the way former signs of resistance are being incorporated in the media saturated world, losing their shocking power and obtaining a populist edge.

In the age of corporate globalisation, it is not only the inequity in the allocation of resources buttressed by diverse economic situations that are resulting in generational differences but also the transformation in the consumer culture. Whilst the younger generation in late modernity are facing greater challenges than their predecessors, it is paradoxical how they are entering into more debts to satisfy 'artificially created desires'. This irony only makes sense when examining their complete immersion into a consumerist neo-liberal mentality since early childhood. In effect, this hegemonic consumerist mentality is distorting the actual definitions of needs and wants and more than ever is being regarded as legitimate and natural. Despite that youth in Malta, as the case study, share many of the cultural tendencies of Western Europe; however they operate in a totally different socio-economic system that is considered in detail in the next chapter.

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Chapter 5:   The Research Location:
Malta as a Case Study

5.1   Introduction

This chapter outlines the case study chosen to investigate generational change. The research location is chosen as an exemplary case to analyse the dialectical relationship between global processes with local conditions in a 'glocal' manner. It is only by making sense of the peculiarities and social structures of a location at a particular period that one can analyse their impact on the life situation of youth. In line with Wright Mills's (2000) approach of the 'Sociological Imagination', this chapter addresses the influence of socio-economic and cultural conditions on life trajectories of two generations of youth in question. While global processes tend to have significant impact on a youth generation at a particular time, such processes do not result in a homogenous youth experience. Following the 'glocalisation' thesis, this chapter aims at analysing how the peculiarities of a location heavily influence the life expectations, trajectories and habitus of youth.

Whereas such analysis has a worldwide significance, this study happens to be located in Malta. Malta's post-colonial past and its dynamics as a small island state in the Mediterranean Sea with peripheral dependence, offers an intriguing location. Therefore this chapter explores the social and cultural structures of Malta with its persistence of tradition as a Catholic country and its family-oriented principles and analyse how such particularities shape the life trajectories and expectations of Maltese young people. This chapter also traces the similarities of Malta's social and cultural structures with other locations, especially those in the Southern European area. Common religious and family values in these locations are amongst the common characteristics that make up the peculiarities of the South.

This chapter first examines the socio-economic and historical particularities of the chosen research location. It analyses the proposed political integration

with Britain in the late 1950s, followed by Malta's Independence and its aftermath. This section also refers to the neo-liberal global processes and its application in Malta. This chapter then turns its attention on cultural conditions referring mainly to the strong kinship networks and the influence of the Catholic Church. Furthermore, this chapter examines the opportunities in education and employment of young people in the 1960s and today to highlight generational change.

5.2 Western European Youth Experience

The principle aim of this study is to analyse generational change and critically assess the existence of a 'common' youth generational experience amongst a particular youth group in Western Europe in the 1960s and 2000s. As explained in the first three chapters, it is argued that Western European youth shared similar life experiences in their transition from the socio-economic post-Second War situation of organised capitalism to the application of neo-liberal globalisation (Hobsbawn, 1996). It is considered conventional wisdom that the period following the Second World War brought institutional stability, mostly reflected in the advantageous life chances experienced by youth at a time when welfare was considered a fundamental feature of Western statehood (Kus, 2006, Hobsbawn, 1996). The Bretton Woods agreement that controlled the international economy and considered to be 'the backbone of post-war embedded liberalism' (Kus, 2006:492), emphasised the common realities amongst Western European countries during the post-war period. This period is often referred to as a 'golden age' especially for young people (Hobsbawn, 1996). Such institutional stability is said to have been reversed in the last quarter of the 20th century in response to the changes in the international economic environment (Kus, 2006, Hobsbawn, 1996). This crisis disturbed the life chances young people enjoyed in the 1960s by their stable jobs and linear life course transitions into adulthood.

Nevertheless, it is naïve to assume that countries in Western Europe with their different institutional histories interacted with policies for organised

capitalism and expansion of the welfare state in the same manner and at the same time. It is equally naïve to suggest that these countries diagnosed the nature of their economic crisis in the 1970s and adopted a neo-liberal solution in the same way. Kus (2006) spoke with confidence that this crisis which resulted from the changes in international economic environment during the 1970s affected 'virtually all countries' (Kus, 2006:489). However, he admitted that the turn to neo-liberal economic management was not linear and different policy adjustments were applied across Western European nations. This state of affair, as described correctly by Kus (2006), is the raison d'être of this chapter; that is the analysis of the particularities specific to Malta, as a European island state in the South and the investigation of the resultant causes for variations in respect to the European median experience.

5.3   The 'Glocalisation' Debate

It is conventional wisdom that Western globalisation created a global culture of sameness and uniformity whilst dissolving in the process the diversity of peripheral cultures. This viewpoint, mostly emphasising the pervasiveness of Western culture (Lieber and Weisberg, 2002) suggests the loss of cultural diversity, in which the local and authentic disappears in the ambush of cultural homogenisation processes (Schirato and Webb, 2003). This is mostly exemplified in the argument of the core/periphery relations whereby the core centre allegedly dominates the periphery (Featherstone, 1995).

The life situation of young people is often considered to be inevitably shaped by the process of globalisation; in which Malta is no exception. Grixti (2005), speaking on communication and entertainment, maintained that the dramatic developments in technology coupled with world-wide processes of deregulation in broadcasting, resulted in Malta becoming an inevitable part of the process of globalisation.   Patterns of influence transmitted from leading world communication companies, are said to be mostly pronounced in youth. In particular, Grixti (2005) maintained that these influences are

particularly noticeable in young people' style of dress, modes of speech and in the types of films, TV programmes, video games and music which they find most appealing and claim as their own, and which appear increasingly identical in different parts of the world. The homogenizing influence of youth-oriented media is thus frequently indentified as a key feature of life in the global village (Grixti, 2005:30).

Such a supposition perceives local communities as being powerless or insignificant. Appadurai (1990) strongly opposed this viewpoint by saying that whereas cultural influences from dominant political powers do influence peripheral cultures, however, the issue is that global cultural influences can become indigenised within local communities. It is indeed an assumption or as described by Ferguson (1992) 'the mythology about globalisation' to regard such process as a large-scale cultural homogenising force, overriding the local. Robertson (1990) argued that

the distinction between the global and the local is becoming very complex and problematic – to such an extent that we should now speak in such terms as the global institutionalization of the life-world and the localization of globality (1990:17).

Having its roots in Japan, the concept of glocalisation, is closely related to micro-marketing within the business marketing sphere. Robertson defined its scope by referring to 'the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets' (Robertson, 1995:28). He extended the use of this concept to refer and highlight the importance of local cultural identities when conceptualising the global. The global is not seen here in opposition of the local, instead the local is an aspect of the global. The localisation of the global, therefore refers to the interrelationships and complementarities of the global with the local; a notion which parallels Appardurai's (1990) concept of hybridity.

When speaking about the globalised process of media and entertainment, it is thus misleading to assume technological determinism and argue that media entertainment juggernauts are injecting their beliefs on passive recipients, irrespective of their distinctive culture. Speaking about the Maltese youth culture, Grixti (2005) admitted that

when cultures come in contact the influence is likely to go in both directions, so that traditional Maltese youth culture is not so much getting replaced by global mass culture as coexisting with it and being inflected by it (2005:31).

In this regard, both the concept of hybridity and Robertson's (1995) thesis of glocalisation are pertinent when examining Malta as the research location and its past colonial history. Undoubtedly, global processes need to be addressed with local ones. The location cannot be studied in isolation but within the context of global development. Anthony Giddens (1994) asserted that

> Malta cannot be studied […] as though it were an isolated unit. It is part of a wider global society and the influence of the wider global order appears almost everywhere […] unless the analysis of Maltese society is situated in the context of these debates, it will be impossible to understand its own distinct characteristics, let alone relate these satisfactorily to the turbulence affecting the global order (Giddens, 1994: xxix).

Southern European countries have been seen as having certain characteristics that distinguish them, that include not only their geographic proximity but also their common historical and cultural legacies. By referring to the characteristics of Cyprus, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Malta, Israel and Turkey, John Gal (2010) underlined the existence of a Mediterranean welfare state model. For Gal, these countries share common characteristics such as the influence of religion (in particular Catholicism) on all aspects of social life and the major role of the family that distinguish them from other countries in the North. However, the notion of 'Southern European Model' has often generated diverse critique (Esping-Anderson, 1999). With the accelerated processes of integration of these countries into the European Union, critiques have implied that this process is leading to convergence with other European states, thus hindering the distinctiveness of the Southern European model. Rather than seeking to defend the viability of the notion of a Southern European Model, Gal (2010) focused on the commonalities of what he called an extended family of Mediterranean welfare state.

5.4   The Maltese Case

> Developing slowly throughout the twentieth century, but exploding in its last two decades was a veritable industry of identity, geared towards investigating, explaining and debating who 'the Maltese' are. Central within this is an image of Malta as a place 'in between' – with three significant historical influences: Italy, Britain and the Catholic Church (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2008:7).

Malta is an archipelago of islands in the Mediterranean Sea occupying only 122 square miles, and has a history starting approximately 5,000BC with the Neolithic and the first farming communities (Blouet, 1993). Its history of domination dates back to 2,300BC during Bronze Age, and was followed by a series of occupations by the Cartagians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Spanish, the Hospitaller Order of St. John, French and the British before being granted its Independence in 1964. Lying 93 Km south of Sicily and around 300km from the Tunisian and Libyan coasts, Malta has a marginal European position, which is also referred to as being 'ambivalent' European (Mitchell, 2002).

The assumed north-south divide in Europe with different trajectories of economic and political development (Tsatsanis, 2009), need to addressed when locating Malta within a wider European context. Compared to countries in the Northern hemisphere of Europe, Southern European states like Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece often manifest socio-economic and political underdevelopment. Rhodes (1997) expanded on this assumption that these countries are considered as

> Under-developed, both politically and economically and outside the mainstream of Western democratic societies, even though Italy had been a solid member of that camp since the late 1940s, and Portugal, Spain and Greece had all made transitions to democracy and experiences rapid economic development since the late 1970s (Rhodes, 1997:2).

Moreover, one significant commonality in all these four countries according to Tsatsanis (2009) is their subjection to authoritarian rule experience.

> The authoritarian tendencies that existed for decades in the politics of the four countries constitute one of many manifestations of what can be labelled Southern European 'particularities' within the European family of nations (Tsatsanis, 2009:208).

The 150 years history of British colonial rule and its position in the Mediterranean makes Malta no exception. Moreover, Malta's particularities fit very well to those explained by Tsatsanis. Southern European countries are prevalent of

> patterns of late industrialisation and relative economic underdevelopment, persisting institutional weakness, paternalistic political networks marked by the

pervasiveness of informal-vertical political linkages, and widespread cultural conservatism (Tsatsanis, 2009:208).

Similar to other Southern European countries, Malta experienced different patterns of industrialisation compared to those experienced in Western Europe. Brincat (2009) distinguished four features marking this difference in Malta's process of industrialisation. Primarily industrialisation in Malta was not accompanied by an 'Industrial Revolution' and most productive activities continued to be carried out by small labour-intensive family-owned businesses and sole traders. This feature coupled with the large agricultural sector was a significant characteristic which distinguished the South from the North of Europe (Tsatsanis, 2009). Further evidence of how Malta's industrial process did not fit with the Western model is in state-owned industries. Industries such as the dockyard remained state-owned up till late 2000s and thus the idea of private businesses run for profit on capitalist lines was rather absent (Brincat, 2009). In line with this, such industries produced a substantial blue-collar working-class but not an industrial bourgeoisie. The income generated by the colonial 'military-industrial' establishment also served in a way to help the Catholic hierarchy to increase its wealth, mainly by renting its land as well as with the rise of property value resulting from urbanisation. Moreover, it is worth noting that industrialisation in Malta was in no way associated with the degree of secularisation as in Western European countries. Religion still occupies to this day, a privileged position in Maltese society. The Catholic Church has enjoyed hegemonic power for centuries. This was clearly manifested in 2011, when even though the majority of the Maltese voted in favour of divorce legislation, the anti-divorce campaign, orchestrated by the Church was in its full force using its means to transmit the traditional Catholic values.

There is a sharp difference in Western and Southern youth in their affiliation to an organised religion. For instance, Bynner and Côté (2008) referred to Canadian statistics that reported that youth are less affiliated to an organised religion (40% of 24 years or younger were not affiliated to a religion). With these outcomes, they maintained that organised religion is continuing to

decline in its normative influence in the transition to adulthood and therefore it is becoming less of an important source for adult identity. In contrast, in more traditional religious backgrounds like in Southern European countries, religious backgrounds still present youth with direction in terms of values in their transition to adulthood.

5.5   Historic Peculiarities about Malta: Its Proposed Integration with Britain

Just like Britain, Malta's material destruction and human sufferance during the Second World War insisted on the need for an urgent reconstruction and contingent financial aid. The amount deemed necessary totalled to over 42 million pounds (Woods, 1946). The House of Commons however declared that the financial aid given for Malta's reconstruction would not exceed 31 million pounds, whilst excluding funds for economic development. The Maltese Labour Party in its 1947 electoral proposal favoured domestic social reforms similar to those proposed by the British Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee (1945-1951). This seemed possible because the Attlee's administration itself worked

> to guide the colonial territories to responsible self-government within the commonwealth in conditions that ensured to the people both a fair standard of living and freedom from oppression from any quarter (Ansprenger, 1989:162).

During the 1950s, the leader of the Malta Labour Party, Dominic Mintoff, favoured integration with the UK (Pollacco, 2003). Malta's 'British connection' was, by the majority of the Maltese population taken for granted mostly because they believed that Britain would never voluntarily give up the islands and Malta would not survive without the British rule (Pirotta,1991). In line with this, the plan for political and constitutional integration was seen as means to allow economic development, security and national pride. In the Malta Labour Party manifesto for 1955, the Integration proposal was described as the gradual incorporation of Malta into the political, financial and social institutions of the British Isles (Malta Labour Party Election Manifesto, 1950). This would guarantee that Britain would work to raise the social status of the people of these Islands to heights recorded in Great Britain (ibid.).

The Interim Report submitted by Balogh and Seers (1955) to the Maltese Prime Minister Mintoff stated that

> Malta's development and stability would be automatically assisted under the 'development area' arrangements for dealing with economically backward areas within the United Kingdom, Maltese social expenditures would be raised with external help towards the United Kingdom standards, and a much more direct political channel would be provided for influencing Service expenditure (Balogh and Seer, 1955: XXXIII).

It is worth noting the benefits for Britain and private businesses by this proposed integration. Balough's report shares a belief for the need of export-led diversification of the Maltese economy, by stressing that 'there is labour relatively cheaply available that is the only attraction of Malta' (Brincat, 2009:49). Between the years 1950 till 1955, Mintoff approved of Malta becoming a constituency of the Westminster Parliament based on grounds of having an economic equivalence with Britain. This could have meant that Maltese people especially youth would share the same advantageous life chances as in Britain. During the integration negotiation in the 1955 Legislative Assembly, the British government agreed to offer Malta their own representation in the British House of Commons. The Maltese parliament would have the responsibility to all Maltese affairs except defence, economic policy and taxation. Social and economic parity with the UK was also to be guaranteed by the British Ministry of Defence. Furthermore, Mintoff insisted that the Maltese, just like British, should have to be guaranteed with full employment and a raise in the Maltese economic standards within twelve years to the same levels enjoyed in the UK (Time magazine, 1958). 'The Times of London' of 2nd December 1953 reported about the closer ties between Britain and Malta involved that Malta:

> would be given a status comparable to that of the Isle of Man, which comes under the jurisdiction of the Home Office though making its own laws and raising its own taxes (Times of London, December 2, 1953).

Despite the plan for integration, the Maltese population was segmented into two; the 'pro-Britishers' (Frendo, 1988:198) who supported this plan and those who refused this integration, including the Conservative Nationalist party and the Roman Catholic Church who feared competition by Protestantism. In effect, although the referendum in February 1956 revealed

a large support for integration, the Nationalist Party and the church boycotted this decision.

Also, the lack of agreement over the redundancy of naval dockyard workers made Mintoff to abandon the plan for integration and instead supported Independence outside the Commonwealth (ibid*.)*. In December 1958, as part of his new plan for Malta, Mintoff stated:

> We would pledge ourselves never to make any military or other warlike alliance with any bloc or state. We would solemnly undertake to repair the merchant or naval shipping of any nation. As a denuclearized zone with a stable free society we would rapidly develop into a little Switzerland in the heart of the Mediterranean – a heaven of peace and rest for weary, disarmed tourists… Given a stable outlet, American and European capital would flow into our parched land and the harmless industry of the West would serve without strings the rapidly expanding demands of the Arab countries (Mintoff, 1959:101).

At the same time, however, Dr. Borg Olivier, the leader of the Nationalist Party, was supporting Independence within the Commonwealth (Pollacco, 2003). Independence was finally granted on 21st September 1964.

One significant historical event that showed the Maltese opposition to the British colony was represented through a football game on 25th March 1945 in a match between a Maltese XI team playing against the Yugoslavs of Hajduk Split (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2011). The 'Empire' stadium in Malta was crowded with around 25,000 applauding the presence of the British governor Lord Schreiber. The crowd listened to the band of the Kings Own Malta Regiment playing two anthems for the two teams after entering the field. The first anthem honoured the Yugoslavs whereas the other was a rendition of 'God Save the Queen' (ibid.). The Maltese supporters felt insulted and midway through the second anthem, they spontaneously began to sing *l-Innu ta' Malta* – the Maltese hymn, written in the 1920s by the National poet Dun Karm Psalia, which would become the National anthem. The occasion was commemorated in the poem by Ruzar Briffa – Jum ir-Rebha (The Day of Victory);

> The crowd suddenly awoke and cried 'I am Maltese'.
> Who dares to insult me? Who dares to laugh at me?
> The crowd sang all together in order to be heard.
> The anthem of our beloved Malta and the voice was victorious.
> Dozing off the past this sleepy apathy. When our spirit was sleeping in a foreign occupied bed.

> And the soul of Vassalli [the first person who wrote using the Maltese language]
> got up from his tomb.
> And cried 'Now at last I can rest in peace' (translated in Armstrong and Mitchell,
> 2011:318).

5.6   Malta's Post-Colonial status: Post 1964 – 1970s

Similar to other post-British colonial nation-states like Cyprus, and Singapore, the Independence of Malta in the 1960s was bequeathed with grievous social and economic problems. In addition, Malta's economic dependence on other countries for its development cannot be ignored.

> Independence in 1964 gave the power of political decision-making to the Maltese but it did not end the islanders' dependence on outsiders. The limit of political independence constitutes a well-known fact of life in all post-colonial countries and Malta is no exception (Beeley and Charlton, 1994:112).

The socio-economic and cultural situation in the aftermath of Independence in Malta needs to be addressed when examining the youth generation at that time. Structural determinants, namely the lack of financial and human resources which limited educational opportunities for youth, coupled with high levels of unemployment were key factors shaping the life chances of Maltese youth in the 1960s. Moreover, incentives for young people to emigrate hand in hand with the persistence of gender inequalities and traditional values made up a peculiar youth habitus. The generational experience of Maltese youth in the 1960s was different to those in neighbouring countries. Whereas it is often assumed that during the post Second World War young people experienced a time of institutional stability which was reversed in the last quarter of the 20th century in response to the changes in the international economic environment (Kus, 2006, Hobsbawn, 1996, Harvey, 2005), this economic situation was delayed in colonial countries like Malta. Despite development plans in the aftermath of the Second World War, it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that Malta embarked on ambitious development plans to guarantee universal welfare benefits for all; a similiar socialist plan to that of Britain twenty years earlier.

In a 1969 Irish journal, Norman Atkinson, a British politician who served for the British Labour Party between 1964 till 1987, analysed Malta's

educational system since the Post Second World War. What is most important about this work is his perception of Malta at that time, just a few years after gaining Independence and struggling hard to set foot on the road to development. He referred to Malta and presumably similar post-colonial countries as

> Small, unproductive or backward communities [which] are hard put to keep pace with the technological progress of their more fortunate neighbours. In particular, communities with a surplus population, which must emigrate to live, are confronted with the problem of how to prepare their emigrants for a worthwhile place in some highly-industrialized environment. Malta, the subject of the present case-history, makes a fruitful study for the comparative educationist because of her island position, and her intimate relationship with several different European cultures (Atkinson, 1969:29).

As already stated, the socio-economic situation of Malta at that time cannot be studied in isolation. Similar to newly Independent countries like Cyprus, Malta in the 1970s became a member of the Non-Aligned Movement; a group of nations made up of ex-colonies that did not form part of the 'developed' world. One of the purposes of such movement was to ensure sovereignty and the struggle against colonialism and imperialism. Both Malta and Cyprus ceased their membership in 2004 and joined the European Union.

5.7   Malta's Insularity and its Application of Neo-Liberal Practices

It is often taken for granted that micro states like the research location are easily absorbed into the larger global economy due to their vulnerabilities (Easterly and Kraay, 2000). Similar to other European micro-states, Malta is more exposed to exogenous shocks than larger states because of its vulnerability to external economic, political strategies and environmental shocks (Briguglio, 1995). Sutton and Payne (1993) maintained that some of the common features found in small states are openness, insularity or 'enclaveness', resilience, weakness and dependence. Moreover, Malta is not only a micro-state but also a micro island state, thus adding insularity and peripherality to the dynamics of its small size (Buttigieg, 2004).

The term smallness itself often denotes negative stereotypical images in comparison to larger states. Baldacchino and Milne (2000) clearly explained this by referring to the assumption that small states like Malta are often associated with 'a diminished and constrained state of small economy: insufficient population and labour market, diseconomies of scale, absent entrepreneurship and capital […] high dependency upon imports and exports' (Baldacchino and Milne, 2000:4); in short it is a popular belief that small equals weakness, powerless and vulnerability. Armstrong and Read (2002) delved into the issue of economic integration of small states entering regional trade agreements. They studied the accession of Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the European Union. They asserted that the integrative proposals may not always fit the distinctive characteristics of micro states, leading to negative effects on their economies and the need to implement political strategies to combat negative effects.

Tsatsanis (2009) and other scholars within this field pinpoint some of the characteristics of Southern European countries which 'inhibit' the process of neo-liberalism. Even though Tsatsanis did not study Malta as such but examined Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece, the Maltese society shares similar characteristics to his perceived Southern European model. To mention a few, the socially conservative norms and values and the limitation of neo-liberalism practices such as that of the individualist ethos, constitute typical attributes of the Southern European model.

This is in no way suggesting that *laissez-faire* measures were not implemented in Malta. In a number of occasions, especially during the last decade, manufacturing companies in Malta had either to relocate to cheaper labour costs elsewhere, or threatened to do so; thus shaking the traditional solid foundations which guaranteed job stability. Most of the time, the government of the day adopted *laissez-faire* policies and seemed powerless to halt this trend (Debono and Farrugia, 2008). Such policies often resulted in a threat of massive redundancies of employees within the textile industry in Malta; a case in point was the Denim services, where around 1200

employees faced redundancy. Due to the smallness of the Maltese labour market, the closing down of one major company can result in huge strains on the economy. With the threat of a sudden upward curve in unemployment rates, the need for collective bargaining increases. Another case in point is the company ST Electronics, one of the largest semiconductor suppliers in Europe, which in 2006 planned 3,000 layoffs from its European branches including from the Maltese branch (ibid.). With the union's persuasion for collective bargaining, an agreement was eventually reached to shield Maltese workers (mostly young people) from redundancy. In another similar situation, the union intervened to avoid dismissal in one of the leading clothing manufacturer Bortex when parts of its production were transferred to Tunisia, Bulgaria and China to cut labour costs. In order not to have any job loss in the Maltese factory, the union agreed to a wage freeze and for the company to postpone the renewing of the company collective agreement. Recent measures taken to counteract this situation is that instead of competing for cheap labour costs within the low-end high volume market other niche markets are being considered as a more viable option. Such examples are foreign direct investment in high value-added sectors such as pharmaceuticals and IT (ibid.).

These instances are clear examples of how global neo-liberal processes have significant impact on the local labour market. This is felt not only in the relocation of companies but also in privatisation of various entities such as Maltacom (state telecommunication company), Seamalta (state shipping company), and Malta International Airport. But globalisation is not just an economic phenomenon. It has a wider social and cultural ramification.

5.8   Cultural Conditions of the Location

5.8.1   Strong Family Networks

In an island where Catholic rules of conduct have been followed more stringently than in neighbouring countries of the same faith, opposition to family limitation was strong (King, 1979:110).

Whereas the aforementioned structural economic conditions are key factors in shaping individual's life trajectories, the cultural setting that enable or inhibit the spread of different ideas and practices, cannot be left unnoticed. Primarily when examining everyday practices it is relevant to consider the difference in the way the model of 'imagined community' applies to large nations in comparison to smaller states like Malta. As outlined by Armstrong and Mitchell (2011), instead of

> the distant personalities who one only know through mass media, public figures in Malta are intimately known. They might be neighbours, friends, patrons people with whom one can develop, or at least envisage developing, personal relationships (2011:305).

This is indeed the case when looking at the degree of familiarity public persons has in Malta. For instance, the president, as the highest rank in society and a very respectable person, he is intimately known by the public rather than being a face in the media.

Roussel (1992) maintained that families in Northern Europe (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway) tend to have relatively high fertility rates and divorce incidence as well as higher levels of cohabitation and births outside wedlock. The family in the South (Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece) however tend to have lower fertility and divorce rates and few instances of cohabitation and births outside wedlock (ibid.). The Maltese family network with its strong kinship networks, nuclear family-oriented values constitutes typical attributes of the Southern European family. Indeed it fits very well in Guerrero and Naldini's (1997) model of the Southern European family. This model characterises the Southern European family as having tendencies of generations living together in one household, high institutionalisation of marriage, and relatively low cohabitation, divorce rates, births outside wedlock and lone parent households. The Southern European family also has high intensity and wide extent of family and kinship networks in which relations between generations are seen in terms of obligation, as well as a tendency of low female employment in formal labour market and high continuity in employment patterns.

The Dutch Anthropologist Jeremy Boissevain (2006) who did extensive studies in Malta highlights the importance of the Maltese family as an institution with an extensive wide network of blood relatives.

> Not only is the family the basic unit of Maltese society, it is also the basic unit of the Catholic Church, which [..] plays an extremely important part in Maltese social life. The Church regards the family as the principal unit of religious socialisation. In the family the individual first learns the values and mission of the Church into which he is born. The family is also the primary unit of reproduction for the Church, the agency through which it replaces and increases its numbers. (Boissevain, 2006:17).

Boissevain (2006) outlined the interplay between the family and the Roman Catholic religion in Malta. Whilst examining Maltese society in the 1960s, Boissevain gave a vivid description of the family at that time. Marriage was (and still is in a way) not only considered as a 'natural' process but as a rite of passage to a distinctive patriarchal division of roles for males and females. It is conventional wisdom that the husband/father is the breadwinner, with the responsibility to provide food and shelter whilst the wife/mother is to produce children and 'train [them] for the service of Christ' (Boissevain, 2006:17).

5.8.2   The Influence of the Catholic Church

Catholic oriented values are given a central position in the Southern European family (Guerrero and Naldini, 1997). In the sphere of cultural conditions, Malta may in many ways be considered a paradigm of the Southern European model. Malta's culture is based on the centrality of family-oriented principles, socially conservative norms and values, intra-generational solidarity and family obligations, and it is deep-rooted in communal practices and religious norms. Religious institutions acting as socialisation agents play a crucial role in shaping young people's experiences and dispositions. Church intellectuals work as educators primarily by rooting the ideology of the Roman Catholic Church at a very early age.

Catholicism in Malta equates to nation state identity and occupies a privileged position generating consent over the masses; often seen as instrumental in promoting good citizenship and social conscience. The Maltese historian Henry Frendo (1988) addressed the importance and presence of the Church in Malta by stating that

> The parochial structure was intact: religion was at the heart of Maltese lie just as the church was physically in the centre of the village, and formed part of the strong social nexus by which the common people looked up differentially to the 'respectable' members of the community (Frendo, 1988:188).

Undoubtedly, this highlights the way the Catholic Church in Malta and its deeply rooted ideological web, permeates Maltese society. It works to socialise people from an early age to maintain not only mass consensus but the status quo. This was confirmed in the study of the Maltese sociologist Anthony Abela (1998) who examined the perceptions of young people in the last decade of the twentieth century. Amongst the respondents, 64% of young people opposed divorce and 71% opposed abortion. Also 73% were against the use of contraception and 78% opposed premarital sex (Abela, 1998).

From a very young age, these cultural conditions shape the dispositions as well as the life expectations and trajectories of members in Southern European societies. This is evident in statistics which manifest the similarities in behaviour of youth in countries in Southern Europe compared to those in the north. For instance, when analysing higher education for young people, statistics indicate that especially in Southern European countries, there is a tendency for a gender gap in the choice of courses. Girls tend to outnumber boys in general programmes, however the opposite is said when analysing vocational programmes (Eurostat, 2009:8). In countries like Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Malta, less than 70 girls for every 100 boys were registered in vocational programmes (ibid.). The feminisation of courses is found in certain fields of education like humanities, arts and education.

5.9   Gender Roles: The Predominance of the Traditional Family

The institutional particularities of Southern European countries, with the predominance of 'familism' (family solidarity and dependency), has significant impact on employment and family strategies. In countries like Italy, Spain and Greece, the rate of female participation in the labour market is the lowest (less than 50%) amongst EU countries (Del Boca, 2003). Various scholars attempted to define the characteristics of the Mediterranean welfare regimes and outlined the tendency of family solidarity and dependence, unequal division of family work between the sexes that, in part, restrict participation in the labour force (Guerrero and Naldini, 1997). In this regard, Malta is considered as a paradigm of this Southern European pattern, with the lowest rate of female participation in EU countries at 43.6% in 2011 (National Statistics Office, 2011).

The Catholic Church and all-male clergy along with the political structure limited female's participation in the labour market in Southern European countries. Taking the situation of Malta as an example, it is evident that the baby boom generation was socialised into separate gender duties which limited girls' opportunities for education and employment. The Social Action Movement (a Catholic lay association), in the 1950s clearly demonised women who participated in the labour market by highlighting the detriment done to the family life.

> Married women should, as a rule, avoid all kinds of employment. The consequences of the employment of married women on married life may be generally classified as adverse effects, such as the refusal to bear children or neglect the children's education (Social Action Movement, 1956:5-6).

By the end of the Second World War, the baby boom generation is said to have become more sceptical of traditional practices in general (Pirotta, 1991:12). The increase of young women entering the workforce in the post Second World War was one factor which challenged the status quo of society (Ganado, 1975:159). Nevertheless, structural determinants were still too strong to combat gender inequalities. The Church was constantly discouraging women's participation in the labour market, mainly through the

use of mass media which penetrated public opinion into believing that 'woman's place is at home'.

Young women were advised by this institution that 'good' Christian would have to give up their free time and independent social lives, away from entertainment and the generated 'permissive' environment. In addition, financial independence for women would translate into difficulties of financial management when they reach their presumed 'ultimate' goal in life – Holy Matrimony (*Lehen is-Sewwa* [Voice of Truth] – newspaper of the Catholic Church, 1945). This clearly manifests the hidden messages that the 'baby boomers' were receiving during their childhood and adolescence. Woman's employment rate increased for this generation especially with the drive for industry plans in the late 1950s and 1960s to increase economic activity. Labour intensive industries investing in Malta created job opportunities for many young women (Pollacco, 2003). However, at that time, the reactionary Catholic agenda was working to counteract fear of the deterioration of the traditional family.

The gender gap was also revealed in the discrepancy of males and females wages. Women in the 1970s experienced low wages which often reached only 50 per cent of the wages paid to males (Pollacco, 2003). According to the 'Report of the Department of Labour and Emigration' in 1964, the average hourly wage rate in the Maltese private industry for males was 13 pence and a half and 6 pence for females. Moreover, young women were discriminated by the 'marriage bar' legislation, in which up to December 1980, female workers in the public sector had to resign from work upon marriage.

> The marriage bar served as a constant reminder that, in the eyes of the State, the place of the married woman was not in the labour force, despite her talents, but in homemaking and nurturing (Camilleri, 1997:27).

Apart from its aim to keep male unemployment low, a side effect of this legislation was the promotion of unequal treatment between the sexes; evident in a patriarchal family setting. The role of the wife/mother is still highly considered as 'one of domestic labour: cooking, cleaning and

nurturing, but also taking care of the family's spiritual needs' (Mitchell, 2002:71) whereas the 'male model of 'standard' full-time paid employment remains a norm' (Camilleri, 1997:21). Therefore, the limited family policy together with the family dependence and a labour market that offered little opportunities for women to work, had shaped a work and family model in Southern European countries characterized by the permanence of the male breadwinner figure and the 'ambivalent familism' (Saraceno, 1994).

5.10 The Local Adaptation of Western European Youth Culture in the 1960s

Undoubtedly, one cannot refer to the creation of the Maltese youth culture in 1960s without mentioning the influence of the Western European youth culture model as a trend setter. During the 1960s, exposure to latest fashion trends as well as the British top charts was made accessible to most young people in Malta by means of the cable radio (Rediffusion). Youth oriented programmes in Malta started on the BFBS (British Forces Broadcasting Station), being the only wireless station transmitting at the time.

The influence on Maltese youth however needs to be seen within a 'glocalisation' debate. Following Robertson's (1995) thesis of 'glocalisation', it is important to examine the relationship between the local and global/foreign. It is too simplistic to assume that Maltese young people were passively adopting trends set especially in Britain. Instead, Maltese young people were more likely to adapt to such trends according to the local cultural and socio-economic context.

In this analysis, one needs to refer to the level of importance given to honour and shame and its limitation on youth's sense of individuality and expression. Honour refers to the values in the eyes of the community. Similar to goodness and virtue in line with the collective conscience, honour runs parallel to compliance to traditional patterns of behaviour (Schneider, 1971). On contrary, shame accentuates a state of no decency, modesty and loosing or lacking respect of others in the community (O'Reilly Mizzi, 1994). The importance given to honour and shame are in itself a form of social

control which regulates social behaviour. This kind of highly connected family network can be seen as smothering youth's sense of individuality and adventure (Sultana and Baldacchino, 1994). Speaking about the Maltese society, Sultana and Baldacchino (1994) maintained that 'it could feel like growing up in a strait jacket of community surveillance, given the dense psycho-social atmosphere' (Sultana and Baldacchino, 1994:17). Those young people who try to oppose the mainstream culture by the sense of dress or behaviour are looked down by the rest of the population.

Maltese young people in the 1960s were living in times of rising unemployment, heavy emigration and fears for the future of the newly independent country. Such financial constraints left them little money in their pockets to spend on fashion; as opposed to their British youth counterparts, living in times of economic stability and a booming economy. Yet still, Maltese young people, with their limited resources, followed such trends by adapting to their different situations; for instance, by sewing their own clothes and imitating designs from magazines and listening to the radio.

Aside from the cable radio and cinemas as media for trend setting, televisions soon started infiltrating Maltese homes in the 1960s and especially in 1970s. Television was introduced in Malta in 1957 transmitting only Italian programmes for the first five years. There was a class gap in the persons who could afford a TV set and the others who could not. In fact, television in the 1960s was a status symbol. On 29th September 1962, three minutes to eight, the first picture bearing the eight-pointed cross with the words 'Malta Television Service' appeared on national television for the first time (Times of Malta, 1962). It is no surprise that the Archbishop Michael Gonzi was amongst the first speakers appearing on television to give his blessing and read a telegram of blessing from the Pope (Ibid.). This clearly shows how the Church immediately put its hegemonic stamp on a device considered potentially evil. On that day, streets were deserted as people gathered in front of screens (Ganado, 1975). This does not mean, however, that everyone gathered at home to watch this event because only a few could afford a television set. Instead most people gathered in band clubs to

watch this event. Herbert Ganado (1975), writing in 1948, anticipated the increase of television in households.

> It won't be long before we will have a television set in our room, and we will be able to see and hear the world from our armchair, with a book on our knees and a pot of tea on the table! Much better than standing at the local club's doorway' (Ganado,1975:242).

5.11 Life Trajectories of youth in the 1960s: Opportunities for Higher Education and Employment

5.11.1 Education

There is no doubt that opportunities for higher education and full employment were distinguishing factors for the creation of 'teenager' as a distinctive age in most of Western Europe during the 1960s. It is said that young people in the West experienced the expansion and extension of education, which had a direct impact on their advantageous life chances (Hobsbawn, 1996). For instance, in Britain students coming from all social backgrounds benefitted directly from policies implemented to combat 'ignorance' and initiatives that opened doors to higher education (Heath, 2003). Moreover, policies based on the principle of equality of opportunity offered student support grants. Such advantageous opportunities offered to British youth in the aftermath of the Second World War were a far cry from the life chances of youth in Malta during the same time. The delay of economic development in colonial Malta when compared to the situation of Britain during the 1960s manifested itself in the dissimilar life chances of youth in both countries.

Whereas during the 1970s and 1980s Malta developed the welfare state, the National Health Service, and implemented subsidised housing, in Britain the reversal process was occurring with the implementation of a neo-liberal agenda. While in the late 1970s Britain was experiencing a process of privatisation, the Maltese state had control over banks, telecommunications, broadcasting, air and sea transport and the dockyard. This suggests that the

socio-economic conditions of Malta as a post-colonial nation state hand in hand with its peculiar characteristics resulted in the postponement (or even absence) of the economic shifts taking place elsewhere in Western Europe. Lack of financial and human resources in Malta delayed the process to build an educational system based on meritocratic principles and accessibility for all. A report presented by Ellis in 1942 offered suggestions on measures needed to be implemented to (re)establish an adequate educational system in Malta (Times of Malta, 1943). The newspaper 'Times of Malta' reported on Ellis's assessment, emphasising the fact that 'the immediate and most pressing duty of the educational reformer is to provide for the children of the islands the best schooling possible under siege conditions' (Times of Malta, 1943:3).

Speaking on the situation of schooling during the Post-War years, Ellis stressed the deficiencies in schools and the problem with lack of staff. Notwithstanding its limited resources, however, the education system in Malta made a substantial leap forward between the years 1946 and 1971. Prior to 1946, parents had to pay fees to educate their children. With the introduction of compulsory education up to fourteen years of age in 1946, parents with financial difficulties could apply for exemption from fees. Later in 1955, with the financial help from the British government new schools were built and the Minister of Education introduced free education for all (Zammit Mangion, 1992). Students attending the morning classes at the Secondary Schools, Preparatory Secondary Schools, Teacher Training Colleges and Technical Schools became free of charge. Whereas its aim was to open the doors for a meritocratic educational system irrespective of one's class background, the places offered for students to attend state owned secondary schools were not meeting the demand. Only a few students were chosen by means of an eleven-plus examination and given the opportunity for higher education.

During the Post-War years, another obstacle in the Maltese educational system was the lack of training provision for teachers. It is worth mentioning, however, that solutions to this problem resulted in the design of teacher

training courses which attracted many of the youth generation in the 1960s. Between October 1948 up to 1953, students attended a one-year residential training course, whilst plans were made to extend this to a two year course. However such change required a much larger building to accommodate both first and second year students attending this course. The Society of the Sacred Heart went ahead with the plan and the 'Mater Admirabilis Training College' for young women was opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1954 (Report of the Department of Education, 1948/54). In a state of urgency to open a similar institution for young men, grants from the United Kingdom made possible the construction of St. Michael's Training College which opened in the same year. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Teacher Training Scheme in 1960 offered scholarships for academic and training courses in Britain to an average of twenty-three candidates every year (Department of Education, 1960).

Moreover, opportunities for tertiary education at the Royal University of Malta were scarce for young people. Only a few hundred new candidates entered University per year between the 1950s up to 1970. One major reason for this is that the University generally admitted fee-paying students (Galea, 2003). It was only in 1971, that Maltese students were exempted from paying tuition fees to follow a course at University (Cassar, 2009).

Another obstacle young people in the 1960s faced were the limited opportunities for trade educational provisions for those who did not or could not enter university and had the desire to learn a trade. The Minister of Education Agatha Barbara claimed that technical education '[had] been suffering form a confused and deficient structure. We never had any serious training in the trades' (Legislative Assembly Debates, 1972). With the help of Italian grants, tools and equipment were donated to local trade schools (Zammit Mangion, 1992). Apart from the opening of Trade Schools for boys over 14 years of age, a similar school was opened for girls, specialising in trades of dress-cutting, industrial sewing, needlework crochet and toy-making (Sultana, 1992). The specialising of these schools manifests clearly the division of labour based on gender differences.

In line with this, one cannot ignore the significant gender gap in tertiary level education. In 1960, only nineteen female students (eight percent) attended the Royal University of Malta. This number rose to 109 female students (nineteen percent) in 1965 and up to 165 (twenty-one percent) by 1970 (Nicolas, 1974). Such statistics need to be seen within a wider national and cultural context; as a reflection of the patriarchal society which infiltrated not only the educational system but also participation in the workforce.

5.11.2   Employment

Similar to other peripheral locations, Malta's post-war unstable social and economic situations determined the life expectations and opportunities of youth. The economic challenges in the 1960s affected heavily the habitus of the younger generation being brought up in times of hardship and lack of economic security.

The government of the day designed strategies how to overcome such difficulties. The first Development Plan, published in 1959, aimed at counteracting unemployment by creating 7,500 new jobs (Jones, 1971). It was based on measures for economic diversification, mainly by promoting manufacture, tourism and, to a much smaller extent, agriculture (Dept. of Information, 1959). However, by 1964, only 1,800 new employments were created. This modest rate of progress did not in any way compensate for the high number of redundancies resulting from the British Forces rundown in 1962 and throughout the following years. In 1946, 30% of the population was either directly employed by the British forced or in industries serving the military machine (Pollacco, 2003). The shift to Independence, thus, had a direct impact on job opportunities of young people, especially with the decrease in employment opportunities. By 1964, the number of unemployed increased almost nine-fold since 1946 and amounted to 8% of the total work-force, mainly because HM servicemen had decreased its workforce by 45.5% (Ibid.). A number of 14,700 workers lost their jobs with the HM Services department between the years 1958 to 1969 (Ibid.) In light of these shifts, being young in the 1960s meant living at times of rising

unemployment, heavy emigration and fears for the future of the newly Independent country. The second Development Plan for the 1964-69 period, aimed to target these economic realities and thus preventing the lowering standards of living.

The government of the day was faced with the task of creating an economy from scratch, with no natural resources to fall back upon. Efforts were made to diversify the economy, primarily with the growth of the tourist industry, which to this day remains a pillar for the Maltese economy (25% of GDP), and in more recent years the expansion of financial services and the IT sector.

During times of economic crisis, having as its symptoms high rates of unemployment, emigration was considered as a safety-valve. In an attempt to stablise the standards of living, an annual average net emigration of 7,500 people was aimed over a five year plan between the years 1959 to 1964 (Jones, 1971). Cachia Zammit (1963) regarded emigration as inevitable and indispensable for the country to avoid widespread unemployment and lowering of a standard of living. The Maltese peak of emigration in the mid-1960s is very much a reflection of the economic fluctuation in Malta coupled with economic expansion in the respective destination countries; in this case Australia, the United Kingdom and North America. In the same manner, the downward curve in the number of migration witnessed after 1974 reflects rising unemployment and economic fluctuations in the destination countries. Maltese migration patterns show links to Australia, the United Kingdom and North America, in which their common bond is the English language. In this regard, there are certain similarities with Cyprus, and other small island communities, such as the Azores and the Aeolian Island, whose migrants have also tended to move longer distances (to the U.S.A. and Australia respectively); probably because of the seafaring tradition of small island communities (King, 1979). In an attempt to attract foreign investment and for Malta to remain competitive, wage increases were low in the 1970s. The Labour government of the day, embarked on an ambitious development plan

of nationalisation with the intention to promote economic growth and social reform as well as to lesser British influence in the country.

5.12   Opportunities for Higher Education and Employment for Youth in 2000s

It is often argued that the *laissez-faire* ideology, in countries were neo-liberal policies are embraced and applied by removing regulations and restrictions on trade, tends to destabilise the life chances of people, especially those of the younger generation (Bauman, 1998, Sennett, 1998, Kamenetz, 2007). Burdened with loans and unstable working conditions, the contemporary youth so-called 'generation debt' is often seen as having its life chances shattered, especially when compared to benefits of organised capitalism experienced by the so-called baby boomers (Kamenetz, 2007). Growing uncertainty in the youth life course into adulthood is often seen as a symptom of this global neo-liberal economic shift; having direct impact on the increase in youth unemployment, student loans and fixed-term job contracts (Bauman, 1998, Sennett, 1998, Kamenetz, 2007).

Such financial situation is the main reason why youth tend to delay leaving parental home according to the 'Youth in Europe' survey (Eurostat, 2009a); as already explained in chapter two. In countries like Malta, Slovenia and Slovakia the average age of leaving parental home is at twenty-nine for women and over thirty for men (Eurostat, 2009:7). Another sociological explanation for this phenomenon is the high intensity of kinship networks (Guerrero and Naldini, 1997). However, it would be too naïve to ignore the smallness of the Maltese islands and its short distances which limit the scope of living on campus, away from parents' nest. It would be equally naïve to ignore the long time spent in education and training as well as the higher unemployment rates of youth which have considerable impact on the transition of young people into independent living (Eurostat, 2009b).

Statistics reveal that there is an increasing rate of youth unemployment in all 27 EU member states; a situation to which Malta is no exception. In all EU

member states, youth unemployment rate range from 8% to more than 20%. In Malta, 13.4% of the 15-24 age group was found to be unemployed in March 2009 (ibid.). Such statistics show that young people are more affected by unemployment than their elders. Due to the shortage of permanent stable jobs, more young people are engaging in temporary employment on fixed-term contracts. Indeed, it was found out that 37% of temporary workers aged between fifteen to twenty-four and 65% of those aged between twenty-five and twenty-nine were working on fixed-term contracts (ibid.).

Education is one key factor determining the life chances of contemporary youth. Eurostat statistics show that in the majority of European countries, over 80% of the youth population remain at school for at least a year beyond the age of compulsory education (ibid.). Malta and Turkey is an exception to this rule, with just over 60% of the population remained in education one year beyond the end of compulsory schooling. Furthermore, in the United Kingdom and Malta, less than 50% of young people remained in education two years after the end of compulsory education (ibid.).

The issue of equal opportunities for all in higher education is on the agenda of all countries in the European Union, especially those who engaged in the Bologna process (ibid.) that aims to promote mobility in higher educational systems (The Bologna Process, 2010). Irrespective of social and economic background, the Bologna process strives to stress the need for appropriate conditions for students, especially those coming from socially disadvantages situations. Statistics show that a certain level of mobility between generations is visible when comparing the educational attainment of youth with that of their parents. Indeed in most countries, young people whose parents have low education completed upper-secondary education.

Moreover it is an important to consider the situation of poverty amongst youth (Eurostat, 2009). Around 20% of young Europeans aged eighteen to twenty-four are at risk of poverty with disposal income less than 60% of the median income of their country. Young households in countries like Belgium, Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom and to a lesser extent France, Italy

and Malta are living worse off than their older counterparts (ibid.). Less than 10% of young households in Mediterranean countries like Italy, Spain, France, Cyprus and Malta maintain that they could not afford to buy a car (ibid.). Whereas consumption preferences varied according to different age segments, respondents were asked on their ability to purchase regardless of whether they actually want the item or not. For instance, young people had stronger preferences for computers and holidays away from home when compared to their older counterparts. Nevertheless, whereas, young people in countries like the Netherlands, Denmark, Luxemburg, Slovenia, Iceland and Norway maintain that more than 80% of young households were able to afford a holiday, in countries like Malta and Portugal, more than 50% of youth state that they could not afford such an expense (ibid.). The need for young people to travel to other countries is not simply to satisfy the sense of adventure but in more ways than one, it is a source of knowledge and personal development. A relatively high share of European youth form part of the tourist population.

Undoubtedly, poverty and social exclusion statistics need to be studied in line with the role of the welfare state. It is worth noting that the role of the welfare and the informal support networks of families play are important considerations in the analysis of such statistics in Southern European countries. The particularities of Southern European countries, in particular the importance given to kinship networks tends to limit the understanding of the functioning of the welfare state. Esping Andersen (1990) was one of the first scholars to speak about the particularities of the Mediterranean welfare regimes and included Spain, Italy and Greece in the conservative welfare regime, as opposed to countries like Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. Pereinha (1997) maintained that Esping Anderson's (1990) model on the decommodification of welfare services contains two limitations when applied to Southern European countries. Primarily, such model excludes the informal labour market which has a significant presence in the South. Also, it ignores mechanisms of social solidarity and the informal institutions, such as the Catholic Church and its various organisations that work to combat poverty and social exclusion in society. Thus, Pereirinha (1997) supported the

argument that studies on the welfare state cannot rely exclusively on the state and the market but need to address the role of the civil society, families and the voluntary sector.

The importance given to the voluntary sector in Southern European countries is in part manifested in the large number of Maltese youth involved in voluntary religious groups. Various organisations such as 'The Society of Christian Doctrine', 'the Catholic Action' and 'the Salesians' are committed to influence moral behaviour of youth in Malta. Abela (1991), in the 'European Value Survey 1981-1984' argued that most young people, compared to other European youth, were found to be the most religious, and conservative, with no radical aspirations for social change. Young people in Malta are socialised in a community environment with the mentality of reciprocal duties. Such attitudes, mainly driven by the influenced by Catholic ethics of community-orientation, as opposed to the more individualist Protestant ethics, are reflected in the strong sense of obligation that family members have to each other.

5.13   The Pension System in Malta

The situation of Malta of an ageing population is very much similar to other OECD countries. It is typical that all higher income countries are facing an ageing population; a demographic change that is putting a strain on the pension system. When comparing the number of individuals of working age to the number of people over retirement age, in most OECD countries the average is 2.7 working individuals per potential retiree. However, Malta has around 3.1 working individuals per retiree. Also, Malta appears more generous, with higher benefits and lower retirement ages than in other OECD countries (Schwarz, Musalem and Bogomolova, 2004).

The current Maltese pension system follows what is traditionally defined as 'pay as you go' system, with contributions from current workers being used to finance benefits for pensioners. Current pensions are determined by a formula based on the average of the best three out of the last ten years'

salaries for employees. For self-employed, an average of the last ten years' salary is calculated. A pension is given for those who paid at least 30 years of contributions and it amounts to two-thirds of the average basic wage however it is capped at a fixed ceiling. Fewer years of contribution result in linearly reduced pensions, with the minimum years of contribution required to collect a pension set at nine (Schwarz, Musalem and Bogomolova, 2004).

However, the problem of financial sustainability is present. With no projections of fertility increase in the coming years, the system will continue to run at a deficit. Various countries have been changing the parameters of the pension system by for example raising contribution rates, raising retirement age or otherwise generate more revenue for the pension system. The Maltese guidelines relevant of pension reform included lowering of the contribution rate and gradually increase retirement age from 61 to 65 for both genders to be fully phased in by 2015. Nevertheless, whereas riots broke out by such proposed measures in countries like France, no real resistance was experienced in Malta especially by those who will be badly hit; the younger generation.

5.14   Conclusion

Malta may be considered as a paradigm of how global processes are adapted in terms of local particularities within the 'glocalisation' thesis. Whereas global processes are contributing to generational change, this chapter proved that such change is not homogenous but varies in relation to social and cultural conditions of a location. Evidence of this is in the fact that in locations with comparable social and cultural conditions, global processes are adapted in a similar manner. This chapter referred to studies which analyse the particularities in other Southern European countries like Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The existence of a Southern European model is in part evident in the presence of common features; mainly their level of development and institutional forms, as opposed to the characteristics found in Northern European countries. Malta is no exception to such a model and is herein used as an exemplary case. Comparable to other Southern

European countries, the Maltese cultural heritage, the role of religion and strong kinship networks and its peculiar historic and socio-economic characteristics buttress the life situation of its members in society. Therefore this chapter referred to Malta as the research location in an attempt to outline the ways in which social and cultural structures in a location shape life expectations, trajectories and habitus of youth within a specific time and place context. The following chapter focuses on the design of the fieldwork.

Chapter 6:   Design of the Fieldwork

<u>6.1   Introduction</u>

This chapter explains the key issues and processes in the research methodology of this study. The participant-oriented methodology is tailored to champion the idea of a holistic understanding of youth generational change, examined in relation to social structures and material conditions of a specific location as well as the subjectivities of individuals. Instead of dealing with culture as a deterministic system, this research is focused on making sense of people's interpretations of their youth culture. With the intention to examine the meanings people give to their behaviour and actions, there was little scope to make use of quantitative research methods. Instead, ethnographic interviews were used as the main research method in order to provide in-depth knowledge on youth experiences.

This chapter rests on three main premises; the location, the selection of participants for ethnographic interviews and the question of symmetry. The first part of the chapter deals with the structural factors of the study, mainly the *raison d'être* of choosing the 1960s and 2000s as the main historical and cultural moments to explain social change in the life situation of youth.

The second part of this chapter explains the scope of applying ethnographic interviews to suit methodological aims. It is only after having outlined clearly the objectives of this study that the research methods could be adopted and adapted to deal with the research problem. With reference to sociological studies that inspired the research design (Willis 1977, Pryce 1979, Oakley 1981, Skeggs 1991, Lawler 2008), this chapter explains the process involved in doing ethnographic interviews, used in order to compare a specific social group of two generations of youth. Herein, I explain how I followed the participants around their various activities and recorded numerous conservations in public places as well as in their domestic space. During fieldwork probing questions were used for generating flowing narrative

content within the settings of family life, education, employment, consumption and the use of technological devices in their everyday life. Conversations were recorded with only minor editing to make the translations meaningful.

Furthermore, this part of the chapter explains the selection of two particular social groups of youth in post-compulsory education, experiencing their youth forty-five years apart, who have the necessary social and material capital that allows them certain life chances (Brannen and Nilsen, 2002). Inspired by Willis's (1977) study *Learning to Labour* on the lads and the way working-class boys get working-class jobs, my objective was to obtain knowledge on the life situation of middle class youth and how they get middle class white-collar jobs. Ten participants from each generation were selected in relation to their educational attainment. A great deal of attention was lavished on presenting the participants' life story and their meaning of everyday experiences as youth. A journal was kept with the intention to build a profile on each research subject and keep record of interactions with participants.

The last part of this chapter outlines the limitations and constraints encountered in the process of doing fieldwork. The problem of symmetry when presenting two youth generations at different moments in time, was undoubtedly a challenging task. In this regard, special attention was put on the interpretation and construction of memory and imagination.

6.2   The Research Problem and Locating the Site for Fieldwork

This study inquires into the problem of youth generational change, framed and conditioned by larger structural processes and material conditions. The aim is to analyse the applicability of the individualisation process in the life situation of youth in a peripheral European area and consider whether it is typical or atypical of the Western European mode of change in youth's trajectories. Whereas this study has a worldwide significance, Malta was chosen as a case study to explore how the material conditions influence the

life situation of youth. Its material conditions and its rather 'ambivalent' (Mitchell, 2002) and peculiar characteristics, makes Malta an intriguing location to study youth's experiences. Due to its long history of dependence and influences from foreign rule, the dialectical relationship between the global processes with local conditions is manifested in the everyday life experiences of people. The dynamics of the Maltese social structures, specifically in the 1960s and 2000s, explained thoroughly in the previous chapter, are useful considerations when making sense of the vernacular accounts of the fieldwork participants.

6.3   The Forty-Five Year Difference

The design of the study specifically focused on young adults during the first half of the 1960s, who are now retired, as well as those experiencing their youth in late 2000s. I was well aware that there were various changes happening in a decade and it would have been naïve to assume that such a period can be regarded as a homogenous historical moment. Taking Britain for instance, whereas the beginning of the 1960s were characterised by prosperous years, what Hobsbawn (1997) called a 'golden age', the economic climate started to digress by the late 1960s, coinciding with the heralding in of neo-liberalism (Harvey, 2005). In the first part of this study I presented a thorough explanation of the specific historical, socio-economic and cultural changes taking place throughout this decade.

However, my main focus was to study young adults who were in their early twenties by 1965 and who were privileged enough to have had post-compulsory education. This generation born around 1944 are the so-called 'baby boom' generation and are now in a life stage referred to as the 'third age' (Laslett, 1991). Nonetheless, it was also considered necessary at times to allow greater flexibility when choosing the ages of the older generation because there were key informants for fieldwork who happened to be a couple of years younger than the specific age. For instance, it proved to be a difficult task to get to know retired women who were in post-compulsory

education in the 1960s because of the significant gender gap in tertiary level education.

The first half of the 1960s was of particular interest for this study because it is renowned as a time of rapid social changes in Europe. Western European countries implemented policies to stand back on their feet and reconstructed the economy in a way that guaranteed social security for everyone (Hobsbawn, 1996). Also, another interesting phenomenon is that youth of this period were the first fully-fledged 'teenagers' who expressed themselves through the use of commodities from the expanding consumer market. This generation in Western society is assumed to have enjoyed full employment and standardised life course transitions into adulthood (Hobsbawn, 1996, Ormerod, 1994). For the research location in peripheral Europe, this decade marked a historical moment in its history; the granting of independence from Britain in 1964.

Youth's life situation of this generation was compared with individuals born roughly forty-five years later, around 1989, during a period in the West characterised by the minimisation of state intervention, deregulation and privatisation. They were experiencing their youth-adulthood by the end of first decade of the new millennium. The chosen social group were in post-compulsory education during the time of fieldwork. This specific generation was particularly interesting because it was the first cohort fully trained within the neo-liberal mentality in Western Europe. They experienced a climate of economic insecurity and taken for granted individualised lifestyles (Beck, 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Bynner and Roberts, 1991, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kamenetz, 2007, Quart, 2003, Sennett, 1998). Moreover, this generation in the research location experienced dramatic reforms as Malta became a new member state of the European Union in 2004. These young adults were facing a globally more mobile, flexible and deregulated work environment; a far cry scenario from the opportunity of a 'job for life' for young people in the post Second World War. Both periods with their different cultural and economic conditions proved fertile grounds to study the changes in the life situation of youth.

6.4   Ethnographic Interviews as Conceptual Grounds for Fieldwork

One very important consideration in this study is that the methodology was tailored to fit and make sense of the research problem on youth generational change. Thus, the methods are chosen to 'serve the aims of the research not the research serve the aims of the method' (McGuigan, 1997:2). This clearly outlines the function of research methods and how the research problem itself governs the methods. One of the best ways to make sense of youth's life situations was by conducting in-depth conversations with individuals on their youthful years. For this reason, qualitative methodology was used. There is limited opportunity to discover and interpret meanings and actions through quantitative data.

Ethnography deals with describing a culture and understands its way of life from the point of view of the native. The core of ethnography is the concern to make sense of meanings and actions of the individuals that we seek to understand. The objective of ethnography, as Malinowski (1961[1922]) stated is 'to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world' (1961[1922]:25). Having this in mind, this fieldwork was directed to study what the world is like for young adults living in different socio-economic and material conditions who have learned to see, act and think differently.

Personal narratives, with in-depth details of one's practices and experiences are best elicited through interviewing. Various sociological studies (Willis 1977, Pryce, 1979, Oakley 1981, Skeggs 1997, Lawler 2008) inspired the design of the research method in this study. In particular, the ethnographic study of Paul Willis (1977) was highly influential. Willis used a variety of research methods when studying a group of working class boys in a town in the West Midlands in England during the 1970s. Willis's use of observation, interviewing and participant observation provided valid knowledge on how schools may not always be successful to produce docile and passive future workers. Through a number of ethnographic interviews with twelve boys and observing them at school and during leisure activities, Willis obtained in-

depth subjective knowledge on their life situation and their own distinctive counter-school culture that opposed the values of the school.

Similiar to Willis's approach, I became familiar with the taken for granted actions and behaviour of participants through various conversations. Respondents in this fieldwork were given the necessary space and time to explore issues they considered important. Ethnographic interviews have the advantage that they can be adapted to suit both practical and theoretical needs. A list of questions (a copy is found in the appendix) was prepared in advance to serve as a topic guide during the interview. The intention was not to follow the questions rigidly but flexibility was allowed depending on how the discussion developed. The definition by Kvale (1996) of interviews as 'a conversation that has a structure and a purpose' (1996:6) made sense in this regard. This is because interviews in this study went beyond the spontaneous exchange of views in the form of a conversation, but focused on careful questioning and listening with the intention to present youth's perspectives. However interviewing was not simply an occasion where questions were forced on to the interviewees' in a formal environment. This is too formal and may not yield in-depth knowledge on their life situation.

 My primary concern was to elicit relevant knowledge on both the cultural and economic situation of both youth generations. This knowledge was obtained by primarily building rapport with participants through informal meetings with participants to become familiarised with their lived experiences. When meetings become frequent and trust was built, the participants feel more at ease to provide valid information. This approach was inspired by the feminist Beverley Skeggs (1991) who obtained valid data on the sexuality of young women by developing a close relationship with her participants.

Moreover another influential study in designing the fieldwork was the work of Ann Oakley (1981). Oakley (1981) made her research in a collaborative way and instead of looking at her participants as passive respondents, they became her collaborators and even her friends. Her participants became so

involved in the research that they contacted her after the interviews to give her more information. Similar to Oakley's collaborative methods, my intention was to develop a strong relationship with participants in an attempt to get closer to their subjective viewpoints.

The aforementioned relationship was important in order to gain trust. Participants were briefed about the scope of the study and the reason why their participation was important. They were also asked permission to record conversations and to use the information they provided. The meeting places were not established beforehand for the simple reason that it depended on what participants' desired to feel comfortable.

With reference to Lawler's (2008) argument, the language used during my interviews was not simply a 'transparent carrier of facts, but as integral to the making of meaning' (Lawler, 2008:36). Interviews were transcribed not only word by word from oral to written language, but emphasis on intonation and emotional expressions were also included in the transcript. Even the use of language is considered crucial here, having in mind, the use of both Maltese and English languages in Malta. Nevertheless, these minute details in the interpretation of knowledge do not suggest that the fieldwork lost sight of the primary objective of the study; that of eliciting knowledge pertinent to the research problem on youth generational change.

In order to record details and events, a journal was kept that documented every encounter with participants. I met the research participants on various occasions, many a time for a conversation over coffee. Similiar to the study of Ken Pryce (1979) who found himself going to clubs at night to become familiar with research subjects, I met participants on various occasions, at times following them in their leisure activities. In some occasions I also attended events that participants were involved in. For instance, Mona, a young green activist invited me on numerous occasions to events which I attended, most of the time protests to combat ecological destruction. Moreover, I often met Sandra at bars for sessions of beer drinking, an activity that signifies relaxation for Sandra and her likes. I was also involved

briefly in a youth organisation headed by Andre, an adventurous and spontaneous individual who is keen on being actively involved in managing youth organisations.

As for the older generation, I also did my utmost to involve myself in their everyday activities. Despite the fact that I found it more difficult to mingle in with participants mainly due to the age difference, however I did manage, with certain reservations, to get familiarised with their lifestyle. For instance, one of my encounters with Richard, a radio presenter on the National Radio station, was to visit him at his studio. I met Richard on various occasions including at his home and at the radio station. He was very much interested in discussing the 1960s with particular attention on young people at that time. In his programmes, he invites key persons in Malta, such as the Prime Minister, Members of Parliament, and university professors, to elaborate on their youth experiences in the 1960s. Richard was kind enough to give me a copy of the recordings of these programmes, which I later analysed. He invited me to his studio during one of his recording sessions in which he also introduced me to his audience and I briefly spoke about my study on air. What was quite striking was that Richard received a couple of calls off air from his audience who were keen on letting me interview them; one particular caller was Charles, whom I later interviewed. As a young adult, Richard was involved in youth activities such as in the organisation of leisure activities in Malta. His account was important because he described not only the socio-economic and political situation of Malta during his youth and his efforts to climb the social ladder, but also to the often-referred-to hegemonic conditions of the Catholic Church in the 1960s which shaped the lives of many young people. I was keen to get familiarised not only with his private family life but also his public life as a radio presenter. In a similiar manner, I also visited Ann, a retired bank manager, several times at her home, especially for the fact that she retired due to an injury and often felt in need of company.

Various ways were established to improve the integration with this generation during fieldwork, keeping in mind that it was more difficult to

establish rapport with this group due to age difference. A complete immersion into the 1960s culture was not possible. However it was possible to get familiarised with representations of this period, its music and material commodities; which are a constant reminder of this period. My aspiration to locate myself into this milieu was partly fulfilled by becoming familiarised with social and material conditions of this generation; by reading 1960s youth magazines that I'd bought from an auction, listening to 1960s music and archival recordings of youth oriented radio programmes. Moreover, materials that represented their youth such as 1960s youth magazines, songs and photographs were used during interviews to stimulate the memory of this generation and establish a flowing conversation. Repetitive visits with participants and having various casual conversations with them made it possible to gain their trust and to integrate better with them with the intention to present a vivid account of their life situation as youth and their future expectations.

6.5   Selecting Participants for Fieldwork

The research problem itself often suggests a particular group or place and the selection of participants is most often part of the 'initial puzzle' (O'Reilly, 2009:195). This study is no exception to this situation. There is no doubt that the study of youth is vast and often incorporates individuals between the ages of early teens up till the early thirties. After the teenage years which mark the start of the consciousness of sex and its expression, most young people in their twenties, in Western societies, are in the transition phase into adulthood. Most young people have not yet fully acquired adult responsibilities and the majority still tend to be living at their parental home at this stage. However, it is usually the time they start to plan their adult life. Their quest for self-determination and autonomy from their parents, and their imagination of the future are some of the driving forces to consider when studying this life stage.

The number of individuals studied was determined by the parameters of the study. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, twenty ethnographic

interviews, ten from each generation, of well selected people proved to be sufficient. The parameters of the study also dictated the way participants were chosen. Participants were selected deliberately for their specific particularities, mainly the fact that they have completed post-compulsory education and their family background. My personal network was used to handpick the most ideal participants that fitted these criteria. Nevertheless, this proved to be a difficult task at times due to the fact that it was hard to find women who pursued tertiary education in the 1960s.

6.6   Social Types of Individual Life Biographies

This study referred to the social types of participants in order to present illustratively an image of the person studied. Although informal, social types tend to become well conceptualised and belong to any particular kind of person who characteristically plays them. By the term social type, I am referring to the way an individual is recognised as a typical kind of a social category or social group and how this individual reminds us of others with similiar values, behaviour, style and habits (Almog, 1998). Klapp (1958) stated that social types are 'consensual concepts of roles that have not been fully codified and rationalised, which help us find our way about in the social system. . . . they are a chart to role structure otherwise largely invisible and submerged' (1958:674).

Simmel (1950) regarded each particular social type as being cast by the specifiable reactions and expectations of others as well as having a typical orientation to the world. For instance, the social categorisation of Mona, one of the young participants, is in terms of her position as an environmentalist with a strong determination to 'save the world'. I met Mona at an annual World Fest event, an event selling fair trade products and promoting tribal and ethnic cultures. She embraces the karma of inner spirituality, adapted by East philosophies and prioritises going to India in the next couple of years. In her rather romanticised vision of the East, she maintained that she is attracted to Eastern philosophies because unlike the West, they focus on one's spiritual well-being instead of the zeal for money-making. She

expressed her anti-consumerist ideology by refusing to wear or buy any brands. She strongly declared that the West is corrupted not only by multinational corporations but by the neo-liberal ideology that infiltrated the hearts and minds of her friends. She described herself as 'ambitious, energetic, environmentalist and a bit existentialist sometimes'. She told me that 'where there is a quest for social justice, I tend to be involved'. Indeed, she strives very hard to live up to her ideals. I followed Mona around to some of the events she helped organising to fight for social justice such as in the seminar 'Freedom for Palestine, Boycott Israel' and the march against censorship in Malta. Her verve to reach her ideals and change the world was very striking and not very much consistent in other discussions with young people.

Mona's social type has some affinities with that of Anthony's, yet the latter present himself in a more formal manner rather than in Mona's more hippy style. As a law student, Anthony, aims to work for the common good and he is actively involved in the university students' organisation; 'I have certain ideals and I believe that if they are implemented they will be for the greater good and I can implement it if I am elected'. Anthony looks forward for a career in politics and dreams to be a member of parliament within the next ten years. It is his priority at the moment and he is determined to reach it. He does his utmost to be heard and seen on television and is a popular face in talk shows defending students' rights. He stated with strong conviction that in ten years time he sees himself

> Flashed on about four newspapers, two of them calling me liar and two say I am right in my ideals and hopefully most people would believe the papers who say I am right.

When I asked Anthony the question what kind of person is he, his reply was

> I see myself as normal in inverted commas because I have the same wishes and needs as other young people my age. Normal in inverted commas because I don't think that everyone involves themselves so much in organisations as I do. Others tend to be more passive and enjoy more their free time rather than being so involved.

On the other hand, Matthew is more of a 'nonchalant' social type. Dressed in typical rocker dress code with long hair and piercings, Matthew's laid-back approach typified certain basic orientations to the world, a kind of

passiveness that is quite obvious in the way he sat back without thinking of lifting a finger to change things, even though he was frustrated by the capitalist system. His reasoning for his lack of interest to 'save the world' was that

> There is a limit with what I can do and the more you stretch your arms the more chances you have to have it chopped off, metaphorically. Like, I went to protest against censorship but nothing ever happened. If there was change all well and good but..my brother is a vegetarian for example, but, is it really resulting in less killing of animals? If he is doing it for health reasons, so well and good, because you are seeing the benefits.

Matthew's attitude toward changing society very much typifies the attitudes of this social type of young people who tend to feel they lost a battle against giant corporations before even moving to the battle ground; an idea that clearly manifests the hegemonic state of the neo-liberal capitalist society. They fear their reputation of being known as an outsider.

Such social types are not representative of all young people in their age group. It is worth noting that these participants saw their life situation and future aspirations in relation to their particular middle class habitus. In effect, the power relations existing due to one's class background that gives certain advantageous positions to one class over another is examined. All participants from both generations were fortunate enough to have post-compulsory qualifications. For the younger generations, most of them had the intention of applying for a second degree. Their perception of their life situation is casted with a backdrop of family backgrounds, living comfortably at their parents' nest without any hurry to move out. Such upbringing shaped the way they saw their present life situation and the way they prioritised their future. The educational attainment of these youth made it possible to develop a more rationalised state of mind that questions conventional traditional models. Their life situation is undoubtedly different to youth with low levels of education who are more inclined to follow the traditional model of their parents and enter into a marriage relationship in an earlier age. This is more likely the case for girls with low levels of education who may be stuck at the lower end of the hierarchy and often tend to see marriage as the only possible escape from monotonous paid work.

6.7   Establishing a Balance in the Narrative Accounts of Youth in the 1960s and in 2000s

Older participants were also selected for the fact that they have had completed post-compulsory education in their youth. Their social type was also presented in an illustrative manner to give a descriptive idea of the person. The presentation of a symmetrical approach in studying the life situation of youth at different moments in history is crucial and a challenging task. Whilst present-day youth were speaking about their current experiences as young adults now, the older generation relied on the memory of forty-five years ago to describe their lived experiences as youth. Nevertheless, despite efforts to produce an even-handed account between young people today and those forty-five years ago, the interviews could be seen as asymmetrical.

Nonetheless, the relevance of studying the social interactions of older participants to make sense of their youth cannot be excluded. People are a condensation of their lived experiences and their historical location as a generation. The best approach to understand the youth of forty-five years ago is to observe this generation in their daily everyday life, have long conversations with them about their youth, and obtain archival knowledge on this generation. Specific attention was placed on the interpretation and construction of memory.

> Memory is a method by which historical data can be brought to life and fruitfully contextualized with depth, detail and alternative perspectives, while historical enquiry can help make sense of the changing role of memory over historical time (Keightley, 2008:191).

For this reason, the elicitation of memory is analysed to make sense of the memory of the older generation. Undeniably, the concept of memory is often, in commonsense parlance, associated with the psychological information storage of an individual to recall the past. The scope of analysing memory in this study however goes beyond this mere definition. Memory is more than an expression of individual consciousness. It is socially and culturally constructed and consists of an active process of using information from the

past and transforming it to the needs of the present situation (Halbwachs, 1992[1925], Bartlett, 1932).

Key studies suggested that memory is related to the production of social identity and the narration of the past involves a process of producing the self (Halbwachs, 1992 [1925], Tonkin, 1992). For instance, Tonkin (1992) maintained that the memory of an event modifies itself in relation to the person's reflections and understanding of that particular event. 'Truth', thus, depends on the genre of the story and its audience. Moreover, one of the most significant work which stands out in doubting the individualistic thesis of memory is the work on collective memory by Halbwachs (1992 [1925]). This work is particularly important because it gives a vivid explanation on the development of collective memory for a generation.

Halbwachs (1992 [1925]) argued strenuously that memory is socially constructed and should not be simply referred to as a property of the individual. Whereas, of course, it is the person who remembers past accounts, individuals are located within a specific group context or generation. On this stance, Halbwachs maintained that one's conception of the past is affected by the mental images one employ to solve present problems, thus, the 'collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present' (Halbwachs, 1992[1925]:34). He emphasised the collective role of remembering in saying that the individual's memory is the intersection of collective influences from the family to the norms and values of a culture of an individual.

Recent works have linked the notion of collective, social or cultural memory with the notion of nostalgia to explain

> how memories are generated, altered, shared and legitimated within particular sociocultural environments, yet in both senses it is connected with the characteristic features of modernity, such as its relentless social uprooting and erosion of time-honoured stabilities, while both the phenomenon itself and commentary on it have intensified proportionately to the acceleration of social and cultural change during modernity and late modernity (Keightley and Pickering, 2006: 922)

Older participants in ethnographic interviews showed a sense of loss when speaking about their past. This concept of loss, or nostalgia, is simply ingrained in the concept of the irreversibility of time and to the perception of what is lacking in a changed present. Nostalgia, however, involves not only the feeling of regret for social change; it also questions how the past may actively engage with the present and the future (Keightley and Pickering, 2006). Speaking about nostalgia, Jameson (1991) went as far as to argue that it is almost impossible to have an active relation with the past in contemporary society. For him, the conditions of contemporary society coupled with the loss of a sense of historical location and the depthless present is inhibiting relations with the past. Nevertheless, this study did not look at the notion of nostalgia from this viewpoint, but drew from a more positive standpoint which opened up new possibilities in studying the past.

The scope of using memory in this study is to serve the aim of the research by outlining the everyday life experiences and economic and cultural situations of youth forty-five years ago in comparison with those in the late 2000s. Memory was not studied in a vacuum but in relation to social interactions with public structures. It was the main research objective, therefore, to understand youth experiences under particular social, historical and economic conditions. The study of memory in this work, thus, aimed to produce a vivid representation of the specificity and the collective nature of youth experience; similar to Keightley's (2008) definition of memory as 'experience reconstructed or literally represented'. Its usefulness was to make sense of experiences by taking into consideration form and performance of memory, such as for example viewing a family album or observing a ritual. This investigation also is concerned with the social factors like gender and class which played an important part in the encoding of memory.

My fieldwork also drew much of its strength from Halbwachs's (1992[1925]) argument that the habitus of the person influences the way he/she remembers. It is not simply what is remembered but how it is remembered and transmitted to others, as well as how it is embedded in national culture

and history. The study aimed at obtaining knowledge not only on the hegemonic memory of the past, or the 'official' memory, but also of the other personal 'insignificant' memories that shape individual life histories. Particular attention was put on the three pillars of memory as identified by Mitchell (2002).

> The first lies at the cross-over of the personal and the social. I will call it collective memory. This is where autobiographical memories of personal experience are – more or less – shared by a number of people….The second process I would identify is social memory proper. This is where autobiographical memory is carried across the generations even following the death of those who actually experienced the events referred to…. Social memory is reinforced by the third level of memory, which is history. ..Accounts are even further scripted, written down and certified as official memory. The historical element is often state-sponsored, with a distinct mode of production and dissemination. (Mitchell, 2002:42-43).

Mitchell examined collective memory and autobiographical memory. Nevertheless, I was aware that the fabrication of memories by research subjects can be an epistemological problem. This concern on the notion of truth and accuracy of memory narratives, as addressed by Crawford et al. (1992), is based on the fact that the construction of memory may not be in line with the historical account of the past. A way how to overcome this problem, but still maintain the importance of vernacular accounts, was to use methodological strategies such as triangulation by using documentary evidence to ensure the validity of the data. In this study, the vernacular accounts were supplemented by 'official' memory as a legitimate source of knowledge on the 1960s. Archival materials like newspapers, books and documentaries provided information on the socio-economic position of Malta in the 2000s and that in the 1960s. This was supplemented by the use of archival audio and visual materials from the Public Broadcasting Services and the Department of Information as well as the use of statistical data of the 1960s and 2000s to obtain state sanctioned information about the Maltese society. The bridging of the difference between 'historical truth' and personal recollections in the 1960s was needed to test the main assumption underlying this study.

6.8   Imagination

Just as memory is shaped by the present and the experiences making up the present, so does imagination. Vincent Crapanzano (2004) in *Imaginative Horizons* presented a fresh approach on human experience especially on the boundaries that separate the present with what lies beyond, the future. For him, the notion of imaginative horizons is influenced both by the lived experiences and also by the way individuals interpret these experiences. My goal was not to analyse the broad definition of imagination, but to see its construction in relation to the structures of social and cultural life. Central to this goal was my commitment to explore the dreams of young people and how these were shaped by the habitus of the individual and its time and space.

In my pursuit of imagination's workings, I examined the creative process involved in the construction of imagination and the perception of the future. The way individuals perceive their future is constrained not only by their past experiences but the present state, whether they have fears or anticipation for the future. This study made uses of Starobinski's (1970) vivid description of perception. He referred to perception as

> mixed with the operations of memory, opening up around us a horizon of the possible, escorting the project, the hope, the fear, speculations – the imagination..hence, the ambiguity that we discover everywhere, the imagination, because it anticipates and pre-views, serves action, draws before us the configuration of the realizable before it can be realized (Starobinski,1970:173-174).

Following this, therefore, the fieldwork sought to outline the constructions of young people's future perceptions. It was entirely worth exploring youth's goals in life and assess the benefits and constraints that youth think they will have in future years. Their reflection on the future was seen within the framework of the current and projected economic, climate and demographic changes.   In a symmetrical manner, this study attempted to obtain knowledge on what the present-day older generation remembered of their dreams when they were young. This proved to be interesting because it explored whether they had indeed fulfilled their ambitions and lived up to

their expectations. It also sought to understand the imaginative consciousness of older people today and their anticipations for retirement.

It cannot be ignored that imagination and memory can never be represented in a transparent manner. Both imagination and memories are reconstructed and communicated in a narrative form which, to an extent, can be seen that 'all memories [and imagination] are representation[s]' (Terdiman, 1993:8) of the individual's subjectivity. The researcher was thus aware that reflexivity is a fundamental criterion in the research process.

6.9   Reflexivity

Within the social sciences, researchers have long been concerned with the issue of reflexivity and how knowledge is 'constructed' (Latour, 1987, Gergen, 1991,Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Gergen (1991) suggested that knowledge is 'not something that people possess in their heads, but rather, something that people do together' (1991:270). No knowledge is ever strictly transparent and neutral for Latour (1987). For this reason reflexivity was investigated in this study. The research problem in this study rested on the interpretation of youth's life situation and the way they made sense of their life, at different moments in time. Thus, it focused on the

> Interpretation rather than representation of reality on the basis of collected data …there is no such thing as unmediated data or facts; these are always the result of interpretation (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000:9).

Youth's situatedness of time and place and the impact of the cultural and economic situation influenced significantly their reflexive stance. It therefore made sense that this study involved the consciousness of social contingencies influencing the knowledge produced by participants, especially when having to rely on memory. Speaking on the situatedness of time and place, the feminist scholar Donna Haraway (1988) maintained that this factor influences the type of knowledge produced; often generating a limited version of 'truth'. With this in mind, I was also attentive to the social, political, economic, and ideological contexts involved in making sense of archival knowledge. In this study, archival historical knowledge was useful in

the construction of the wider structural socio-economic frame of the 1960s in Malta. However, my concern was not to present 'one' type of historical knowledge but to explore different versions of 'truth' of the same event such as the different interpretations of Independence Day in 1964. I was very much aware of the deployment of knowledge and the powerful relations and position of the persons 'constructing' knowledge; for example, examining and stating the standpoint of newspapers presenting 'true' knowledge forty-five years ago.

Researchers had long regarded reflexivity as part of the 'scientific method' with the aim to protect objectivity, validity and generalisability of the research (Johnson and Duberley, 2003:1293). Nevertheless, this viewpoint is too narrow for most scholars as they cast their doubts on whether researchers can 'with objectivity, clarity, and precision report on their own observations of the social world' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:11-12). An alternative to objectivity is the importance put on the social position of the researcher and the awareness of power relations throughout the fieldwork (Harding, 1986, Haraway, 1988, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The researchers' interpretation of the social world is embedded in the world of language, ideas and social relationships. Indeed, this process is inescapable for the very fact of our own 'being in the world' (Heidegger, 1992) and thus, interpretation-free, apolitical and theory-neutral facts are simply not possible (Alvesson and Skolberg, 2000:9). In line with this, my own situation as a young person made it easier to integrate with young people during fieldwork than with older participants. However, an awareness of this situation made it possible to strive harder to establish a rapport with older participants, similiar to the one I established with young people, in order to present a balanced account on both generations.

6.10   Conclusion

This chapter outlined the fieldwork process that is designed to suit the research problem. Through the use of a qualitative research method, this study aimed at comparing the life situation of two youth generations at different historical moments by using ethnographic interviews. This chapter

explained in detail the chosen research method which was adapted to serve the research problem. Nevertheless, the fieldwork was not flawless. Awareness of the difficulties and limitation which were foreseen to occur were outlined in this chapter. Namely, one of the most challenging tasks was the question of symmetry when presenting the accounts of young people in the late 2000s with the accounts of on the 1960s. However a clear outline of the study of memory was presented to understand the interpretation and construction of knowledge. The main scope of this chapter was not only to explain the fieldwork process, but also to examine how the chosen research method was the best tool to make sense of the research problem.

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Chapter 7:   The 'Individualised' Youth Generation

7.1   Introduction

Evidently, the traditional model for youth's transition into adulthood, anchored in strong religious values and customs, has been challenged in the last forty-five years. Youth's life biographies in Malta, a conservative Catholic location, were studied within the wider framework of an Anglo-American neo-liberal context that is considered as promoting individual choice and competition, whilst diminishing job security through the increase in flexible short-term contract jobs. The strong connection between neo-liberalism and the process of individualisation is therefore examined, in order to make sense of the life situation of youth within the era of individualising modernity . The works of contemporary social theorists, notably Beck (1994, 2002[2008]) and Giddens (1994) on reflexive modernity, have drawn attention to the increase in incessant choice on how to plan out one's life yet having the burden of new structural demands. With reference to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002[2008]), this chapter contributes to an understanding of the applicability of the individualisation process in the life of a group of relatively affluent youth in post-compulsory education.

This chapter puts attention on youth's advantageous position in devising their own life, not always in line with the standardised traditional model. This is especially the case for young women in post-compulsory education, whose life experiences and expectations have changed dramatically. Another advantage for this youth generation is that they are more technologically proficient and trained to incorporate technology into their everyday lives.

Nonetheless, this chapter addresses the fact that the process of individualisation is not only a liberating experience but also a contradictory condition that produces increased dependence on institutions like education, the job market and the consumer market. This paradox was empirically grounded. With increased competition in the job market, young people are

spending more time investing in their qualifications compared to previous generations, with no guarantee of job stability. The individualised youth living within the global neo-liberal society has to shoulder responsibility for events like unemployment. Neo-liberal practices are also manifested in the production and consumption of commodities, especially targeted for the youth segment. This chapter also incorporates empirical research with sociological studies on the dire financial situation of youth in terms of conspicuous consumption in the West.

As explained in chapter five, this fieldwork is located in Malta, a typical southern European location that adapts at a slower pace to wider socio-economic and cultural changes happening in the Anglo-American and broader European context. From the accounts of young people on their everyday activity, it is evident that everything that is 'traditional' has not been forgotten or dismissed. Malta does not completely fit within the Western model of youth's transition into adulthood, in part, due to its colonial past. Its 'take-off' (Rostow, 1960) stage of development process was 'delayed' compared to other Western European countries. This chapter highlights that despite the increasing sense of competition in such a small island state, the stronghold of religious values and moral constraints are still an integrative force in society.

7.2   The Individualised Youth's Transition into Adulthood

This study has verified the fact that similiar to Beck's (1992[1986]) argument on individualised biographies, young adults are more reflexive about their life situation compared to the youth generation in the 1960s. Young participants living under conditions of individualisation felt autonomous in designing their life with thorough planning and rationalisation. When 'inherited recipes for living and role stereotypes fail to function' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002[2008]:26), individuals are deciding themselves what they want to do with their lives instead of following the traditional standardised model. In effect, they are also shouldering the consequences of their decisions. Fieldwork participants referred to the compulsion to orchestrate their lives on

their own, as a sign of adulthood. With incessant choice on what roles to enter, participants found it hard to distinguish which events bridge adolescence and adulthood. Most participants maintained that they felt at the crossroads somewhere between youth and adulthood.

The majority of privileged young respondents in post-compulsory education planned to first satisfy inner desires instead of focusing on events like marriage and family formation. In one of the group conversations with Mark, Jane and David about life course transitions, they all referred to the individual ethic of self-fulfilment and achievement as priorities in their present situations. They felt too young to commit themselves to a lifelong relationship that brings with it certain individual limitations. Sandra, an adventurous type whose priority in life is to work abroad voluntarily with no sense of permanence, detested traditional transitions into adulthood. She maintained that the rigidity of traditional life course stages limited an individual to 'just go through life'; instead she consciously devised her own life away from such a traditional model. She felt tied down to her work. Even though it provided financial security, it was not self-fulfilling. She maintained that she wanted to quit her job and do voluntary work abroad, irrespective of her parents' opinion that she should settle down.

All young participants interviewed shared common urges; to have a career and to travel around the world before settling down in a marriage relationship. Most participants referred to having a career and becoming financially stable as a step towards adulthood. Similiar to Arnett's (2004) argument, it was evident that young people were self-defining their adult identities on the basis of psychological factors like accepting responsibility for their own actions as well as making independent decisions. A case in point was Mark, who regarded adulthood as a stage when individuals become responsible for their own actions;

> I think when I started working at eighteen it was a step towards becoming an adult. It's a stage where you become responsible for yourself and your own actions. It also allows you to have your own money and decide for yourself what to do with it.

He also made an intriguing remark that preoccupations with the future are in themselves symptoms of adulthood; 'the future is a terminology that adults use. I still feel young to think about the future and prefer living day by day'. Despite the fact that Matthew found it hard to define adulthood, he referred to events like 'taking decisions that influence your future' as important in the transition to adulthood. He added that adulthood 'is not just one thing but a mixture of events'. Likewise, David considered attending post-compulsory education as an imperative stage towards independence and maturity;

> I think that every life transition has an effect on you. Primarily I think we need to define the word maturity. I see maturity in terms of wisdom and not facial differences. An experience which matured me was when I entered college. I learned to think more rationally. Also my circle of friends and relationships helped me grow up.

Most participants believed that one significant step towards adulthood responsibility was their decision on what academic courses to choose; a decision that created anxiety because its consequences are a burden on the individual;

> The difference is that now you have to take your own decisions compared to previous years. Till 16, my mum used to take most of my decisions but now I have to take some myself, for instance when it comes to university stuff, my mother can't help me. I have to take my own decisions now (David, 22 years old, following a university course in Information and Communication Technology).

Leaving the parental home was also considered a major event for this group of youth in post-compulsory education towards adulthood. Mark, remarked that there are

> Alot of similarities with birds; they start their lives once they leave their nests. You start your life as soon as you leave your parental home. I don't see myself as an adult. I look at older people and I compare myself. I don't look like an adult.

Youth's autonomy is manifested in the desire to have a 'life of one's own'. Participants all agreed that they were more in control of their life than previous youth generations. However, my own analysis empirically verified through various interviews suggests that it is only in certain roles that young people felt autonomous. Rather than seen as whole persons, the idea of Beck's fragmented self comes into play here. Young people felt in control

when dealing with their future priorities and career choices but they do not consider themselves responsible adults in terms of their living space and financial situation. Their choices were compromised by structural factors as mediated by the family, education and the economic conditions. Such structures continue to have a commanding place in shaping their transition into adulthood. The empirically proven concept of 'compromised choice' developed in this study refers to the forms of constraints in the choices of youth, especially evident in more conservative European locations.

7.3   Youth's 'Culture of Dependency'?

What is quite striking is the fact that while this youth generation referred to having more individual autonomy, they are prolonging the period of economic dependence on their parent(s). According to recent EU statistics in 2008 (Eurostat, 2010), 51 million (46%) young adults in the European Union in the age group of 18-34 live with their parent(s). This tendency is much more consistent in Southern than Northern European countries. Malta has one of the highest percentages of young adults living at their parental home at a later age; on average women leave their parental home at 29.3 years and men at 31 years (Eurostat, 2009).   This gender difference is also a consistent pattern in most European countries. A key factor in the gender imbalance is that young women, on average, marry or move out with a partner earlier than men.

There are various factors to take into consideration when making sense of why young people are prolonging their dependence on parent(s). The lengthening of time spent in education and training as well as high unemployment rates tend to have a considerable impact on young adults' decision to live longer with their parent(s). It is worth noting that 20.7% of youth are unemployed in all 27 EU member states (Eurostat, 2011). In Malta, 11% of the 15-24 age group were found to be unemployed in the first quarter of 2011 (NSO, 2011). Furthermore, the fear of job instability is resulting in a situation in which young people have to finance multiple university degrees in an attempt to have better marketability in the job market. It is thus not

surprising that all young people interviewed in post-compulsory education had applied for or were thinking of applying for a Masters degree. During one of the discussions, Maria told me that entering into post-compulsory education felt like the natural thing to do for her middle class friends and herself, even though at times she loses track of what she actually wants to get out of life. She told me

> I am studying but don't know for what. It was just a normal process that I entered university after obtaining my A' Levels. But still I don't know what I want to do in life and which job to go for.

Similarly, Mark told me how it is expected from young people today to continue post-compulsory education. He maintained that 'even those who do not enter university usually follow another course even if for a diploma'. This clearly manifests that instead of acting on their own free-will, this social group of young people are following new forms of structural paths. Matthew, who is concerned about his future job prospects, maintained that he applied for a Masters degree with the hope of finding a job. He argued that 'I would have preferred to study creative writing but my priority right now is to find a job. I am anxious about it'. It is often assumed that youth in their twenties are looking for a stable job with the hope of moving from parental dependence to independent living.

Nonetheless, having a job does not automatically lead to financial self-sufficiency. In Malta, 75% of young adults living with their parent(s) have a job (Eurostat, 2010). Reasons to postpone the decision to leave the parental home may be due to the limited availability of affordable housing as well as the fact that their current job could not provide them with enough resources to be self-sufficient. These may be some of the reasons why Maltese young people are delaying the stage of family formation, when compared to previous generations. However, aside from material difficulties as the main obstacles young people face in gaining their independence, there are also cultural aspects, such as the relatively strong significance of the kinship network.

Similiar to other Southern European countries, Malta's high institutionalisation of marriage, as an event towards independent living, plays a crucial role in this analysis. It is typical for most parents to feel obliged to financially support their children and expect them to leave home only upon marriage. Two respondents maintained that their parents would not be pleased if they decided to live on their own before getting married. Elena said that her mother warns her that she will never accept her back home if she decides to leave; 'my mother... she always says that once we leave, she won't accept us back home'.

It is equally relevant to address the short distances in Malta that limits the scope of living on campus. David spoke about this peculiarity when saying

> In Malta due to the short distances, even if you opt to leave, your roots with the extended family remain strong and if something happen to you, you can easily go back home.

Moreover, as a general rule, the young people I spoke to have no interest to live on their own but hoped to prolong this stage and remain in partial dependence as long as possible. They admitted that they were living comfortably at their parental home, with no expenses to pay for, like rent or bills. Matthew, for instance, had no intention of leaving his parental home, seeing no scope in such a move; 'I am comfortable at home'. Also, Anthony, with a highly ambitious personality, is an exemplary case of the replies received when I asked whether they looked forward to live on their own. He maintained

> I still live with my parents and I will leave when getting married. The reason is that my parents never restricted me in anyway. If I want to go back home at five in the morning, they don't restrict me not to. I don't see why I should leave. Water and electricity bills are sent to my father and I am happy as it is.

7.4   The Individualised Life Situation of Young Women

With the shift from the 'ascribed' to 'achieved' status, women are increasingly releasing themselves from ties to the traditional family model. Changes in expectations and experiences of middle class young women are

becoming more evident. More women are aspiring to further their studies and have their own career. In effect, it is argued that the female biography underwent the process of individualisation (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002]).

A significant shift in the life situation of young women is the increase in educational opportunities. On average, young women in late modernity have a higher educational level compared to their parents, in particular their mothers. Most young females in this study were not considering marriage as a goal to be achieved instantaneously. They worked hard to find an intrinsically satisfying activity from which they can earn their own living, without being dependent on a male breadwinner. Jane, exemplifying a very ambitious self-declared feminist, prioritised having a career instead of starting a family.

> I see myself as a career woman. I don't think so much about having a family. I am more career oriented. Hopefully I would have earned my masters and would be working as a psychologist. People won't look at me as in the shadows of my parents, but for what I am and what I have achieved.

Equally determined to establish herself in her profession as an accountant, Sandra does not see her future in terms of the traditional patriarchal model but seeks to construct her life biography. Despite such claims, it is not the case that females in the research location have completely let go of the traditional model of the family. Gender stereotypes still play an important part in the everyday life of youth although to a lesser extent, compared to life in the early 1960s. Even though most young women saw their future in terms of a career, a great deal of attention was put on their need to get married before their thirtieth birthday. Elena, a conservative type of person, told me that she saw herself as married with a family. Elena also saw marriage as a priority before turning thirty, stating that 'otherwise I would be too old'. Equally conservative, Luisa decided to get married last year although she was still in her early twenties.

Young female participants referred to their need to be independent and have their own career. However, they also felt the need to have stability in a

marriage relationship. In their everyday life, with unfavourable structures of work and attitudes of employers as well as the shortage of child care centres, young women face the obstacle of having to combine a career and a family. Most young women in this study planned a career and a family but chose not to discuss childcare and career management with their partners. Hochschild (1990) observed similiar avoidance strategies amongst her students. She maintained that most girls interviewed by Anne Machung

> planned to interrupt their careers from one to five years to have the children but they didn't think this would disadvantage them at work. The students I teach fit this description too. When I show my students a picture of the woman with the flying hair, briefcase in one hand, child in the other, they say she is 'unreal', but they want to be just like her (Hochschild,1990:263).

Regardless of the fact that all young female participants were in post-compulsory education and were autonomous to choose their own career paths, twins Maria and Elena believed that women still have to carry out housework and childcare duties. They maintained that their reaction to such a situation would be to give up their career for a few years to stay at home taking care of the family. Elena told me

> I prefer staying at home and do all the housework myself and take care of the children rather than the man staying at home cleaning the house....I may ask him to help out when washing dishes for example. I see with my parents for instance, when my dad tries to help out, my mother always scorns at him that he doesn't do things right. But the question is whether I will be able to afford not working. It's not only finance, the fact that I will be able to bring my own children up is very important for me. I prefer it then taking my children to play school or leaving them with their grandmother.

It was empirically evident that males were less anxious about having their family before they are thirty years old and instead saw the need to feel a sense of belonging to a family structure later on in life. Anthony asserted that 'I don't imagine myself single all my life. It's because I don't like being alone and it nice to have that significant other in your life'. Showing the need to feel fulfilled and a sense of belonging, Andre declared

> When I look that far I think I will have my family because it is good to keep the generations going. I see my father enjoying his time with his grandchildren so I would want that. So in the future I would like to have my own family.

Unlike the situation of young females in the 1960s, more young women today are part of the workforce. The justification for this, in a conservative

location, still remains related to the financial difficulties of young families. Far from having female economic activity justified as a personal need for self-fulfilment, it is often regarded in terms of the 'reserve army of workers'. Women are called back into the workforce to tame the instability in the economic situation of not having enough workers to provide for pensions in an ageing population.

7.5 Youth's Structures of Dependencies – Educational Institution and the Job Market

It is obvious that young people are less constrained by traditional standardised structures. Nevertheless, they do not exist in a vacuum with no determining structures to conform to. In a paradoxical manner, especially for middle class young people, their life is being devised on their own choice yet they have more responsibility than previous generations of youth. Their 'compromised choices' are more than ever being conditioned by the educational system and the job market. The new demands of the labour market to fill jobs are often the driving factor that influences youth's choices in their career paths.

The opening up of the educational system provides youth with alternatives when planning their own life course. Indisputably, all young people I spoke to agreed that they have many more opportunities for higher education compared to their predecessors. The increasing expectations in one's educational attainment have nonetheless given the rise to more anxiety amongst youth. In addition, young people in late modernity are lengthening their dependency on the educational system in order to be well prepared for the competitive job market. Competition for finding a job is considered by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008[2002]:33) as a manifestation of the process of individualisation;

> Competition rests upon the interchangeability of qualifications and thereby compels people to advertise the individuality and uniqueness of their work and their own accomplishments. The growing pressure of competition leads to an individualization among equals i.e. precisely in area of interaction and conduct which are characterized by a shared background (similar education, similar experience, similar knowledge). Especially where such a shared background still

exists, community is dissolved in the acid bath of competition... It causes the isolation of individuals within homogenous social groups.

It is also predictable for young people to find temporary jobs, paying pocket-money wages, as well as to put up with jobs they do not want in order to make ends meet. In line with this, Jane told me: 'I am quite anxious to find a full-time job. I always had summer jobs which pay little, so now I'm looking forward for a pay-check'.

Such uncertainty needs to be addressed within the context of youth unemployment rates in Western society. In the monthly monitor of the (un)employment situation in EU member states, it was argued that the 'marked deterioration in the labour market situation for young people during the crisis, unemployment has become an ever more severe problem in many member states' (European Commission, 2010:8).

Even though youth unemployment cannot be seen divorced from the contemporary socio-economic crisis, young people are shouldering responsibility for the shortage of job opportunities. They blame it on their lack of qualifications and training, thus dedicating more time and effort to post-compulsory education. Irrespective of Malta's more sheltered environment as a small island conservative state compared to the broader Western European context, participants admitted that they were anxious about their future. They maintained that they were hoping to better their marketability in the job market by acquiring skills needed to find full-time employment. Jane said that the lack of opportunities for full-time employment led her to start a second degree although she was anxious about her situation.

> Right now I'm really anxious. I don't have a full-time job and thank God I'm starting another university course because I hate doing nothing. Financially, I want a full-time job to feel more stable.

Equally worried, Maria maintained that the lack of job guarantee made her anxious; 'I am really anxious about my future. The fact that I won't have things planned out really scares me'.

The argument of shouldering individual responsibility dovetails nicely with Bauman's (2008) viewpoint that neo-liberal politics encourages individuals 'to devise individual solutions to socially generated problems and to do it individually, using their own skills and individually possessed assets' (Bauman, 2008:4). It is worth noting that this generation have been trained to believe that one's failure is one's own fault. In one of my conversations with Sandra, it was evident that she was strongly convinced that unemployment was a personal failure and that the individual is to blame for such a situation. She told me, 'I believe that if you really want to work, you will find work'. Typically, this is not just Sandra's perception but a culturally binding mode of attribution. Social crises like unemployment are shifted as a burden on the individual. Similiar to what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, (2008 [2002]) argued, 'your own life – your own failure', social problems become linked to psychological dispositions like guilt and anxiety. Young people are trained to take responsibility for personal misfortunes and unanticipated events.

In a form of social Darwinian 'survival of the fittest', individuals are driven by the neo-liberal ideology of competition. Moreover, neo-liberal practices of the deregulation of the labour market produced more flexible and fixed-term contract jobs, thus young people are offered more informal employment than their predecessors. Laurie Penny (2010) in 'Smile Till It Hurts' drew upon the life situation of the youth generation in neo-liberal capitalism when saying

> The political psychology of this generation is unique. Our youth and adolescence passed in a bubble of neoliberal ideology that popped as we entered the job market, leaving us bereft.....We had imagined adult life as a broad and brutal trajectory, in which we would be thrust all alone onto the conveyor belt of neoliberal growth, obliged to scramble to stay in forward motion...an inculcated fear of failure, we had accepted ceaseless toil and pocket-money wages (2010:137).

Such a harsh statement about this generation strikes a typical note on the anxieties young people are experiencing especially when it comes to the lack of job stability irrespective of one's qualifications. Luisa spoke about her dire financial situation, not only as a student but also as a newly-wed. At the age of twenty-two, Luisa said that she never had a job and is very concerned about not finding one. She started a Master's degree with the hope of finding

stable employment so that 'at least it would be worth all that studying'. She told me that

> The problem today is the loans that we have to pay for a long period of time. My mother freaked out when we told her that we are taking a house loan. My mother helped up alot financially. My husband had started working when we took the loan and we have to stretch out his wage to pay the loan and pay the bills.... My husband supports me financially. We saved up money to furnish our house. Now it is hard if we want to do something at home. I just paid for my masters degree plus you have to pay for bills....My parents buy us food.

It is a popular belief that young people are now burdened with the responsibility of financing their own education with the consequence of entering into significant debts before joining the workforce (Kamenetz, 2007). From her everyday encounters with young people, Kamenetz (2007) in the book *Generation Debt* clearly illustrated the crisis they are living through as a consequence of the current economic and cultural climate. While it is undoubtedly an American-centric research, its message on the consumer aspirations and financial insecurity of young people is too deeply entrenched and pervasive to be limited solely to US capitalism.

Virtually all Western European countries are facing a massive task in getting their public finances back in order by means of austerity measures. For instance, drastic cost cutting in Greece, Portugal, Spain, France and UK, who ranks most badly hit by the current economic crisis, were implemented (Neuger, 2010). Even though Malta experienced cost cuttings measures during the last few years, it is considered to be back on the road of recovery and showing signs of economic growth. Together with Germany, the largest economy, Malta as the smallest economy in the euro-region actually boosted its competitiveness and fiscal sustainability in the past five years, according to a study carried out by Lisbon Council (Neuger, 2010).

Equally significant is Malta's social wage, comprising of universal benefits like free healthcare and free education. Unlike the situation of Kamenetz (2007) in America, none of the students I encountered had taken up loans to finance their first degree mainly because all local students at the University of Malta do not pay fees and are given universal maintenance grants as well

as receive a stipend during their course of studies. Such local peculiarity therefore tends to encourage young people into post-compulsory education. Nevertheless this initiative is not completely reaching its objectives because compared to the average of 78% for EU member states that complete upper secondary education, Malta has the lowest rate at 55% (European Commission, 2008).

Yet, just like in Kamenetz's (2007) study, most young people I spoke to were not financially stable and relied on their parents for support. In addition, they maintained that they agreed to work for 'pocket-money' wages with the intention of making ends meet but at times to no avail. Andre was very clear about how his dire situation. He said that he was finding it hard to keep up with the maintenance and fuel to run his car when relying only on a part-time job as a source of income. He argued that

> At the moment I am restricted when it comes to money. Although I have a summer job, the running costs of the car takes most of my money. I spend about 60 euro in fuel and the rest of the money earned is spent during weekends. Then my car broke down and the remaining money which I intended to save was spent on the car.

Owning a car is a step toward independence for most young people. In particular, Sandra emphasised the need of having a car in such a fast paced society. She admitted that although a car is a need rather than simply a want, she found it hard to keep up with its running costs. She told me 'do you think I will survive without my car? And having a car means needing money for fuel. So yes, unfortunately, money is important'. For Jane owning a car meant more independence because 'you don't rely on your parents. I'm looking forward to having my own car so I will be more independent'.

7.6   Youth's Experience Seeking and Conspicuous Consumption

It is undoubtedly the case that young people perceive their immediate surroundings and the way they experience broader global distances differently than previous generations of youth. Indeed, youth's 'own life is no longer sedentary or tied to a particular place' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008 [2002]):180). Young people in this study referred to their customary

activity of travelling for study, work or leisure purposes. This generation have the advantage of not having their experiences limited to one location but they live a transnational life stretching across frontiers; what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008 [2002]) call the 'globalisation of life biographies'.

Moreover, they seem to experience lack of space coupled by a strong desire to escape to more exciting locations. Klein (2009 [2000]) aptly described this feeling of lack of space by saying that young people feel like 'in Alex Garland's novel *The Beach*, looking for the one corner of the globe uncharted by the Lonely Planet to start your own private utopia'. The quest for time-out from the everyday so-called cutthroat life is felt by most participants I spoke to who were very keen on their travel escapes. It is worth noting that such an attitude is in part fuelled by the insularity emanating from the smallness of the Maltese Islands. Also, in a period were young people are living beyond their means economically; they maintained that regardless of the expenses involved, travelling is a top priority. Andre goes as far as to say that his priority for the next five years is to travel around the world. He works part-time jobs and saves money simply to travel. His thirst to experience new cultures and roam around freely without a care in the world is his main motivation to get through university life and drag himself to graduate.

> My priority is to travel around Europe and Australia. So I am planning to spend the next five years travelling. As soon as I graduate I will not start working immediately, I will travel instead. Ten years are too far off but I hope I will be settled by then. For instance, I wish to start my own business on web design. I wish to have a job which allows me to travel.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the meaning of leisure in postmodern society is not only related to the idea of freedom but it has become more diverse than simply an 'escape' from everyday life. Chris Rojek (1995) in his book *Decentring Leisure* maintained that leisure should not be seen as a separate aspect of social life but as part of other experiences and within its social context. He addressed the shift in leisure activities from modern to postmodern societies and argued that with the use of simulations and virtual reality machines, leisure in postmodernity has lost its distinctiveness as an activity away from work. Leisure has become an end

in itself instead of an activity designed to reach a goal or to pursue an authentic experience. This is particularly the case when examining how global communication, for instance, is blurring the distinction between work and leisure.

Moreover, aside from the shifts in leisure activities, improvement in global communication has also led to the global marketing and consumption of style from which people can choose from a wide range of different global identities. For the younger generation, global identities presented by marketing machines are shaping youth's self-images. In line with this Giddens (1991) addressed the influence of marketing in 'what to wear, what to eat..all such choices are decisions not only about how to act but who to be' (Giddens, 1991:81). Young people have a set of 'multiple options' in shaping the definition of themselves. With the presentation of an array of multiple identities to choose from, the consumer market is the main motor for youth living in late modernity.

It is often argued that the contemporary youth generation are being 'marinated into aggressive advertising' that stresses the benefits of consumerism to satisfy 'artificially created needs' (Sklair, 2002, Kamenetz, 2007). Declaring herself as being easily lured by consumer goods, Luisa exemplified youth's socialisation in consumer seduction. During one of our discussions, she maintained that she couldn't help at times not spending all her money at one go.

> I used to look forward to spending my money all although then I have to spend the rest of the days broke. I like spending money, having no control at times. I hate it when I go home without any shopping bags. So thank God that my husband takes care of our money otherwise we would be bankrupt. We recently went to Berlin and I couldn't help not shopping. I had to buy another luggage to come back.

Equally manipulated by aggressive marketing, David saw the 'benefits' in advertisement. He said

> Ads are important because you would be updated on latest products. Like for example when it comes to Apple iphone, there are so many other brands like it but we only know about Apple because it has the name. Adverts create desire I

> think but it also keeps you updated with latest stuff on the market. I think you need to be updated so you can socialise with others.

The need to stand out from the crowd is often an integral feature in the marketing of 'cool' commodities. Nevertheless the popularisation of such products results in creating further standardisation amongst youth. Research participants like Mark were aware of this situation and commented on the lack of individuality produced by such goods. Very much aware of his need to be unique, Mark disagreed with David during one of our conversations and emphasised that branded goods produce 'clone-like' personalities. For that matter, he chooses not to wear any branded clothes.

> I don't like to look like others so I don't buy branded clothes...because you see people all dressed alike because they all buy the same brands. I prefer to be more unique. No one dictates what I should wear. I try to find these small shops and buy from them. When you buy branded gear, you are simply showing off the brand and not you.

In line with Adorno and Horkheimer's (1997) argument on the element of diversity in consumer goods aimed to tailor for different market segments, David disagreed with Mark by saying that one can still showcase his/her own identity through different brands.

> I don't agree with you though. You don't simply buy from one brand. You can still express yourself by mixing and matching different brands to have your unique style. So like this I don't feel that brand companies are dictating what I wear cause I am choosing finally.

What struck me most was the fact that David, like most other youth felt in 'control' because he is choosing what brands to define his identity. People's desires in consumption are many a time associated with their need to realise themselves in what they consume. This seduction is often interpreted as being freely chosen rather than embedded within the globalised capitalist system. Matthew stated that he is not at all seduced by brands and is in full control to buy commodities that he likes not simply because of their logo. Nevertheless, when asked whether the same applied for buying technological devices, he said that there is only one brand for mobile phones for him; 'Mobiles I only buy Nokia! I want to buy an Iphone but I don't have the money, probably if I have some money I would buy it'.

It is no surprise that young people are oblivious to the way advertisements slither into every crevice of their public life. This idea was brought home to me during my visit to the university campus on 'freshers week' at the beginning of an academic year. Aside from the unsettled students, the campus was filled with commercial entities aggressively marketing their goods. It was a constant reminder of Klein's (2009 [2000]) cry on 'no space'. Klein's idea of 'no space' was further manifested when seeing on the news in October 2010 the thirty-three Chilean trapped miners wearing Oakley sunglasses whilst being brought to the surface. The worldwide media that was riveted to Chile at that moment in time to capture the miners being rescued also permitted millions of eyes to fall on the Oakley's Radar model sunglasses miners were wearing to protect their eyes, apparently retailing at $450 a pair. It was estimated that Oakley garnered $41 million in equivalent advertising time, according to research done for CNBC from Front Row Analytics (Huffington Post Online, 2010).

For a generation that grew up trained with the seductive lure of consumer goods, it is undoubtedly the case that some youth experienced the need to stray away from the mainstream. This need to be 'different' was quickly accommodated by marketers; what Gladwell (1997) called 'cool hunters'. It seems evident that the notion of 'being cool' had kicked in with a vengeance in these last few years. Young individuals are more than ever at the crossroads, anxious and apprehensive of whether or not they happen to be amongst the 'cool' ones. Coolness is shifting itself constantly in an attempt to keep seducing people with its new versions. In using the term 'cool', Matthew meant that 'it is when you break the edge and are no longer mainstream; For instance, going to India is cool because not everyone does that'.

Market researchers, toying with the notion of diversity, built their brand identities around the different group segments of youth. When speaking to Matthew about fashion, he clearly stated that he tries to be different instead of following trends. He maintained,

> I try to challenge what others say in order to be different. Sometimes I hate feeling part of the group. When it comes to fashion, I am neither an outcast nor a follower. I don't follow fashion I just buy things I like.

Mona in her anti-corporate militant tone stated that she is not lured by material goods. To the question whether material goods express her identity, she replied

> No, cause I don't identify with the things I have because they are material things and for me they mean nothing. So for me the most important thing is that I have the basics, cause there are some things that you need. But consumer goods like branded goods no, I don't need them. Like for example, for coffee at home we are now using fair trade coffee. Things which you can live without we don't buy.

For Mona, environmental activists were the 'cool' ones; 'People who work on things that they believe in. People who are genuine. Things which go beyond trend and there are principles and values involved'. She commented on the marketing frenzy on consumer goods. In her critical appraisal of this situation, Mona referred to her favourite singer, Lily Allen, whose songs comment about consumption, fame and superficiality of contemporary life, driven by marketing machines. In the song The Fear, Lily Allen comments

> I am a weapon of mass consumption
> And it's not all my fault it's how I am program to function.....
> I don't know what is right or real anymore,
> I don't know how I am meant to feel anymore....
> Cause I'm being taken over by the Fear

What is quite intriguing is that this form of resistance to capitalism is becoming incorporated and absorbed into mainstream culture and this style simply becomes another market segment of alternative music. Mirroring Thomas Frank's (1997) remarks, resistance is incorporated into mainstream culture. Such symbolic contestation is simply taking the form of what it is opposing and becoming absorbed into what McGuigan (2009) calls 'cool capitalism'. What is seen as an anti-capitalist activity may soon become absorbed by niche segments and rather than fighting the system, it feeds it.

According to Kamenetz (2007) young people are facing a harsh reality of maxed out credit cards. In line with what Leslie Sklair (2002) called 'the

culture-ideology of consumerism', Maria, enthusiastically referred to her desires to have branded goods. Yet she admitted that she cannot afford branded goods most of the time because she is financially dependent on her parents. She told me

> I'm not the kind that if my stuff is not branded I won't wear them or use them. I won't search for branded clothes but will love it if I have it. If I find a brand which is bargain, I really like that.

Like Maria, most of the respondents embraced the mantra of 'always spend as much as I have and never spend more'. Even though most research subjects confessed to being easily seduced by branded consumer goods, they proudly declared that they kept their feet firm on the ground and never stretched out for something that they cannot afford. David summarised this by saying 'I love Nike. I have to have branded watches.. but...I am not ready though to buy stuff just to be like others and end up with loans'. Likewise, Jane said that 'I do like them [branded goods] but I buy things that are within my budget. I am practical, I won't buy just because I like it'.

Such characterisation has affinities with the principle to 'save up for a rainy day' as one of the traditional fundamental values of the Maltese society. Moreover, one cannot fail to address the influences of the family background that plays a crucial role in the taken for granted attitudes of youth. Mark, in particular, was trained during childhood with the mentality to be financially responsible especially when his father passed away and his mother struggled to make ends meet. He declared that he doesn't have any financial problem;

> I don't really have a problem. My mother...because of the fact that she brought us up in the absence of my father, always taught us to save money. If I am buying a mobile, I won't go for the fancy one but for the cheapest as long as it does its function. I spent some time working part-time and managed to save up some money so if I want to buy a car I won't have to borrow or rely on anyone because I have my money.

Jane could relate to Mark's way of dealing with finances. She was also trained by her parents to be responsible, and as opposed to conventional wisdom, she would not enter into debt to live up to an upper-class existence.

> My parents always taught us to save money and before I buy something I always ask myself, do I want it or need it? I like saving money. I cannot understand

> people who do a shopping spree and spend all their money, I wish but I know I
> can't afford it and also to part with my money, I'm a bit of a Scrooge...heh I think
> that during my youth it makes sense to save so I build some solid foundations so
> if I need money, like for starting my masters, I would have.

Like Sandra who regarded herself as quite frugal, Jane's interpretation of herself as 'scrooge' just because she is financially responsible, manifests the training into conspicuous consumption in which spending money is considered as an ordinary activity amongst youth. Besides her family who taught her to be financially responsible, Sandra believed that her working experience also trained her to be more responsible.

> The fact that I used to work from a young age, although I didn't really need
> money at fifteen or sixteen, but I learnt to save money. I admit I am thrifty, but if
> I'm on holiday I will spend money. I would prefer to buy a pair of jeans from the
> market rather than a branded one because its cheaper.

Even though participants said that they tended to stray away from maxed out credit cards, most young adults in Malta cannot escape bank loans, especially when it comes to buying their first property. It is typical for young people in Malta to buy a property rather than rent it. Jane exemplified the rationale behind this when she said 'I would prefer to have my own place because when you are renting, it's not really yours'. It is often the case, therefore, that the financial situation of young people becomes more dire when they take their first home loan; usually after finishing post-compulsory education and having their first pay-cheque. In view of this, it can be argued that whereas youth declared that in their present situation they are somehow making ends meet, most of them are aware that they don't afford to fully enter independent living before having a 'stable' full-time job; an assurance needed for the bank to issue a house loan.

The close-knit family environment in Malta is at times sheltering young adults from the preoccupations of financial debts. Despite the fact that most of the time parents cannot afford to financially support their children when buying a property, they tend to find ways to ease the financial burden. Jane, for instance, referred to a typical solution that some parents are adopting;

> We thought of redesigning again my mother's house cause my brother is an architect and we were planning to reconstruct the house so I will have the upper floor and he will have the lower floor. But that is a future plan.

It can be argued therefore that although parents are working hard to mask youth's financial difficulties and support their every need, to say that young people are doing fine is an understatement. Upon entering independent living, this generation are bombarded with loans, not necessarily to live up to a middle class existence, but simply to live decently. Cognisant of this situation, Andre affirmed that 'in the future I will have to take a house loan. My older sister simply works to pay off her debts'. Such an argument suggests that my interpretation of youth's dire financial situation does fit in with Kamenetz's (2007) remarks of a 'generation debt'.

The pervasive consumer ideology hand in hand with 'celebrity democracy' is clearly manifested in the popular belief that everyone can achieve stardom through their own merits (McGuigan, 2009). The seemingly easily accessible fame through programmes like 'Britain/America/Italy's Got Talent' and reality shows seduce the audience whilst creating the illusion that stardom is within reach with a little effort. There are various role-models of individualisation, like celebrities that enjoy high esteem. Mark declared that he liked 'watching the Entertainment channel and their reality shows. I really wish to be in a reality show because their lives are so perfect and famous'. Sandra also acknowledged her fascination of the celebrity world and the fact that she actively engages in reading gossip in magazines. Nevertheless, she was well aware that most of the writings are not authentic and their aim is simply to increase readership. Some participants loathed the idea that so-called stars become famous just by trying to shock people. Jane told me for instance,

> They are famous not cause they did something extraordinary but because they shock people. It really annoys me. I always say to myself how their only talent is to shock and scandalise people.

From my understanding of youth, it is evident that youth desires fame through achievement. Something that was prominent in the interpretation of youth's life situation is that they fail to find satisfaction in the present and are

continuously driven and seduced to acquire more. Highlighting generational differences in terms of this seductive lure to commodities, Mark acknowledged that his

> Grandmother says that they didn't have anything and were always happy whereas we have it all and are not happy. It's true. We always want something else and are never happy with what we have. It's like you buy a new mobile phone and when you see the latest edition a month later, you simply want the next model.

The rather subjective definition of happiness is herein associated with the level of contentment and satisfaction of what one has achieved and obtained. Jane linked this to her lack of satisfaction in her educational achievements because she always craves for more.

> The same is said about qualifications. After a degree, you want a second degree and then find employment. We are never happy always wanting more. They took more time to be happy and found inner happiness whereas for us we tend to find happiness with material things. They didn't live in the future they used to live in the present.

Almost every young person I spoke to expressed the wish to acquire fame in one way or another. For instance, Jane claimed

> I'm very ambitious. I always want to excel in what I do and this tends to create anxiety for me. I always focus on the future and I am never happy with what I have, I always want to achieve more.

Her thirst for power and prestige was very evident throughout our conversation. She was one of the few young participants who emphasised several times during our meetings that she wants to be renowned. She clearly declared that she 'wants to achieve immortality through writing'. This strong desire to reach stardom is consistent in most of my conversations with young people. In line with the idea of 'celebrity democracy' and the assumption that anyone can achieve stardom with their own efforts, most of the young respondents dreamt of achieving popularity, mainly by using their creative skills. During a group discussion with Jane, Mark and David, they all agreed, with strong conviction that they want to be recognised.

> Mark: I want to be a person not to be forgotten after I die. I want to leave my imprint on the world.
>
> Jane: Me too. Not simply to have lived my life and that's it. I want to be successful and remembered. I want to be powerful, not

> malicious power but to climb up the social ladder. I don't want to be average, I want to excel. I don't want to be good, that's not good enough, I want to excel.

David: I want to be myself but not sure what I want to do yet. I want to remain a simple person but be remembered. I want to be remembered for my simplicity and my philosophy. But not be known for material things. It would be nice to have my writings published so that when someone feels the same like me they can relate to my writings. I want to have my own autobiography and sign the copies.

Matthew's dream of publishing his novel would, in his own words, 'give me immortality'. To my question about the meaning of all this, he replied,

> Not only cause life is too short but I don't like things that are ordinary. The book gives me something not abnormal but it gives me something above the ordinary. It's like ordinary is a straight line and I want to be above that line and people will look up at me. And I will be above that line because I have a skill not because I was born a celebrity. I admire people like Bill Gates cause they achieved by their own merits.

7.7   The Technologically Proficient Youth Generation

Castells's (1996, 1997, 1998) three-volume treatise *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* strikes a typical note on the use of technological innovation. In spite of being vulnerable to the critique of technological determinism that denies human agency, he maintained that the technological revolution remains one of the many facets fashioning the world in late modernity, whilst also including as part of today's society feminism and the restructuring of capitalism. Indeed the younger generation is keener on the Internet and mobile digital devices than previous generations. The mobile phone in particular, is considered as a tool of social life. David's interpretation of the use of mobile phone is an exemplary case of technological determinism; 'I can't imagine myself without it though. Even when you are going out and want to meet somewhere, it is useful because you can easily make a phone call'.

Clearly, young people experience the artificially created need (Sklair, 2002) to have their phone with them, not only as a device that connects them to their network, but also as a form of identity symbol. Technological devices

such as the mobile phone and wireless Internet are continuing to blur geographical boundaries. One of the participants, Jane, addressed this fluidity in location when saying that 'our life is online after all'. Likewise, Andre showed the extent to which his life is online.

> I have my computer on everyday at 7.30 in the morning. Even after work, although I say to myself that I won't switch the computer on after work, I still do when I arrive home, especially to check my emails. I am addictive to the Internet.

No kind of technological virtual world is fetishised and pervasive in all aspects of lived experience to a greater extent than Facebook. There is an undoubted interest in the customary activity of this social networking site especially by youth. For instance David divulged that he 'want[s] the Facebook page to be always open on my computer'. Similarly, Luisa considered herself as a 'Facebook freak'; 'I want it on all the time, can you believe it I left my computer switched on so that as soon as I arrive home I find it on'.

This continues to manifest how the process of individualisation is indeed contradictory. The use of Information and Communication Technologies are designed to offer more flexibility and choice, yet at the same time, participants felt that they were 'wired-up' to technology. Maria told me 'I wish they never existed so that we won't be dependent on them'. Equally concerned, Matthew maintained that 'unfortunately technology has handicapped us'. He referred to the way that 'technology is a detriment as much as it is a blessing'.

Technological devices can also be tools for blurring the fine line between their private and public life. Andre, for instance maintained that his friends 'post their lives' when changing their activity statuses. Studying Facebook ethnographically, one notes the blurring of the fine line that separates the private and public lives of people. It is considered ordinary for young people to give detailed descriptions of their everyday accounts as well as upload pictures and videos that are windows to their private life. In an attempt to study Facebook ethnographically, I used it as a tool by posting on the status bar the question whether people thought that Facebook was invading our

private life. Within a couple of hours, I received around thirty comments. A typical pundit was 'Facebook can invade our private lives, but then one can choose how much information one shares on it'. Likewise, David wrote 'its up to the individual what to make private or not.. it's I who decide what to make public or not...I hate..when they TAG you'. Amy disagreed with a comment that read 'What's good about FB is that you can choose who sees your profile pics'. Rejecting the idea that Facebook offers a 'democratic space', she replied by saying 'Just so you know....a complete stranger, like me can still see your info page and all your photos so I guess you're not being as private as you think'.

It is undoubtedly the case that Facebook is blurring the effacement of the private and the public space. It comes as no surprise therefore that Facebook is embroiled in a privacy controversy after confirming that personal information was shared without users' consent. Mike Vernal, engineer for Facebook commented on this by saying 'in most cases, developers did not intend to pass this information, but did so because of the technical details of how browsers work' (Merrison, 2010).

Moreover, Facebook allows you to upload group pictures and therefore some people may have no say on the extent of their life's exposure. On this matter, Maria told me 'I don't upload much photos and when we go out with friends and they take a photo which I don't like I always remark not to upload it on Facebook'. Elena also remarked on her privacy intrusion when she remarked that the status on Facebook may not always translate into friendly updates. She told me

> I recently realised how invasive Facebook is. Recently my boyfriend was on vacation leave, and his colleagues used to follow my Facebook page to check on what is he doing during his free time.

She doubted the idea of 'meeting' friends online instead of face to face

> I am very afraid for the upcoming generation because they may not want to socialise with friends but prefer to 'meet' on Facebook. They make friends on Facebook an prefer staying at home and chat on Facebook. But in fact, Facebook is not reality.

Networking sites like Facebook and the use of mobile phones are fast changing the patterns of sociality and consumer seduction. Whereas not so long ago the mobile phone was a tool that besuited business persons, it has fast became a necessary popularised leisure medium especially for the younger generation. Luisa admitted that she could not live without a mobile phone, and always carries two mobile phone sets with her; 'I always carry two mobiles with me because from one I have a contract with free smses. I sent about 200 messages this last month. So I am saving'.

7.8   Leisure

Studies on youth's leisure activities often address hedonistic behaviour and alcohol as well as drug recreational consumption. It is a popular belief that youth enjoy 'getting wasted' on the dance floor in an atmosphere induced by alcohol and drug consumption during weekends. Drawing on from Measham et al. (2001), alcohol consumption is often associated with violence and anti-social behaviour. As is normally the case with arguments of this nature, moral panic stirs in the minds of the public. I ought to mention here that Malta is renowned for its clubbing night life with bars and clubs fuelling hedonism mainly at the town of Paceville; a meeting place for many youth who are often assumed to dress up to dance and drink till the early hours of the morning. Nevertheless, it would be naïve to assume that only hordes of teenagers flock onto dance floors. I happened to visit on a number of occasions the clubs to try to interpret the cultural definition of clubbing and identify the segments of the population that visit such places. It is quite evident that the population of the so-called 'rave generation' of the 1980s is still feeling the thrills of spending the nights clubbing. Starting late at night, the club scene gathers momentum in the early hours of the morning; a trend that most parents find hard to comprehend. Elena argued on this notion

> I don't understand that my father gives me a fixed time that I have to be home. I obey him because I still live under his roof but I can't understand it. If I want to do something I don't need to be out till 5, I can do it at 2.

During nights out, many young people head to public spaces and to a nearby beach with crates of lager and cheap alcohol bought from the bottle shops mushrooming around the whole town. The social construction of alcohol-induced experience needs to be addressed in this regard. A common ground in the understanding of binge-drinking culture is the argument that young people seek a 'cool' identity. This comes as no surprise when the typical lyrics you hear on dance floor are 'I wanna take you higher'. Alcohol from clubs is often over-priced and therefore most young people have the habit of drinking at home prior to going out. Andre referred to this trend as well as the thrills of clubbing and the preparation before going out when he said that

> I like house music and party style music so I enjoy going to parties too. I do follow the party scene and when a good one is organised, I attend…I like the atmosphere and even the preparation for it like doing up our hair before we go and meeting up to drink before we go, even in the car before we go to the party. There is always trouble around and drugs circulating. But on the whole I really enjoy them.

Sandra also spoke about social drinking that made up most of her weekends.

> During weekends we usually go out for beer. During summer we go discoing. I enjoy going out. I spent a whole summer clubbing on Fridays and Saturdays, sleeping and relaxing.

It may be an overstatement however to assume that all young people, irrespective of their age, enjoy their nights clubbing in high-minded hedonism. Most young people I spoke to said that they also enjoyed going to quieter and more tranquil places like wine bars; a typical leisure venue targeting young adults and couples.

> I like going out, not always to Paceville. We like going to wine bars, somewhere relax. Sometimes we go for a pizza and a bottle of wine somewhere. The important thing is that I meet up with friends. Sometimes even at each other's places (Andre).

From their interpretation of leisure, most young people emphasised the need for the good company of friends. As in Maria's argument 'its more of who I am with which makes the difference'. This argument is exemplary of what most young people said. Counter to conventional wisdom, some young people resented the clubbing culture and the commotion of out of control

bodies moving to dance music. Some said that they regard clubbing as a very expensive leisure activity. Others like Jane, preferring quiet nights with friends, resented the hubbub at the town of Paceville and the hedonistic mind setting; 'I don't like crowds and drinking alcohol. I don't like the thing that people lose control. I hate crowds especially a crowd that is induced by alcohol'.

7.9   Conclusion

This chapter addressed the interpretation of a group of youth in post-compulsory education on their life situation, living in a small Mediterranean island state. Such an interpretation cannot be seen divorced from the wider socio-economic and cultural conditions within the Anglo-American and wider European context. Specifically, this chapter dealt with making sense of the individualised youth by focusing on the life experiences of youth in late modernity. Participants outlined their compulsion to orchestrate their own lives. Irrespective of the fact that they lost some of the ties to traditional structures, young people experience new structures of dependencies – by the increase demands of the educational system, the job market and the consumer market.

Therefore, this chapter highlighted how the process of individualisation is contradictory. Despite the fact that the individualisation process offers 'precarious freedoms' to think, plan and decide individually, young people are constrained by new structures of dependency. Participants addressed their sense of anxiety when thinking about joining the job market because of the ever increasing demands in academic qualification. They maintained that it was taken for granted for young people like them, with the availability of cultural and material resources, to finance a second degree in order to have better marketability.

This chapter also turns its attention on youth's interpretation of their dependency on the consumer market. With reference to ethnographic interviews, this chapter addressed the consumer capitalist mentality that seemed to have entered every crevice of youth's everyday life; whether in

their sociability or in their everyday customary activities. It is the main aim of this chapter to outline the material and cultural conditions of individuals experiencing their youth in the 2000s. This is intentionally made in order to compare their life situation with those experiencing their coming of age in the early 1960s.

Chapter 8:   Young Adults in the 1960s

'I was there while it was happening, although at the time and being young, you may have naive attitude towards the events unfolding just before your very own eyes' (Charles, 61 years old).

8.1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to make sense of a group of privileged individuals who were in post-compulsory education in the early 1960s. Specifically, it examines the structured traditional model for youth's transition into adulthood in the aftermath of the Second World War in relation to Anglo-American socio-economic processes. Participants in this study referred to their opportunities as young adults in the 1960s and the events that bridged their transition into adulthood; mainly finding a 'job for life', getting engaged and married in a span of a few years. This chapter deals with analysing the interpretation of participants on their life plan as youth in post-compulsory education who had more opportunities than other youth social groups. Nevertheless, traditional structural factors still played a crucial role in planning their lives, especially for young women whose customary traditional role was that of a house-maker. Despite the constraints these standardised life course markers may have produced, it also provided traditional certainties.

A great deal of attention is lavished on presenting the participants life story and illustratively refer to their typical characteristics as well as their meanings of everyday experiences as youth in relation to higher education, employment and their life situation in general. Of course, the presentation of youth's accounts cannot be studied divorced from the international and local social, cultural, and material conditions at that time. In effect, the intention in this chapter is to move towards a greater understanding of the interplay between the historical and socio-economical structural framework in society, as a key factor in the formation of youth generational habitus. In this respect, this chapter fits well with previous chapters on the detailed analysis of the

economic and cultural structures in which these young adults had lived through.

This chapter also turns its attention on the communication devices in the 1960s and examines the sociality of the cable radio and television. Participants were asked their perception on contemporary communication devices such as the mobile phone and the Internet. During the various casual conversations, participants commented, many a time with nostalgia, on what it meant to be a young adult in the 1960s. This chapter include many excerpts of these conversations as recorded with only minor editing to make the translation meaningful, in an attempt to take out examples of their everyday life as youth in the 1960s and make sense of their meanings and motives.

8.2   The Adaptation of the Anglo-American Model on Youth's Life Situation

In a perhaps romanticised version of youth in the 1960s, Naomi Klein (2000 [2005]) referred to the often called 'baby boomers' by saying that 'all my parents wanted was the open road and a VW camper....some acoustic guitar' (2000[2005]:64). The 1960s youth generation is many a time interpreted in terms of the making of 'teenager' and the popularisation of youth consumption during a time of economic stability especially in the Anglo-American context. With the development of organised capitalism, social democracy transformed capitalism in the USA and Western Europe. It is often argued that in most Western countries, young people in the 1960s had solid grounds through the provision of a secure wage and a guaranteed 'job for life' (Hobsbawn, 1996). Such measures also brought a significant increase in earnings and gave way to the making of 'teenager', as a market segment.

Despite the fact that there is a common trajectory of Western social change from what Beck (1992) calls first to second modernity, it is mistaken to simplify this process and assume that this change happened everywhere at the same time. The research location adapted to the development of the

West, however their development process was 'delayed', in part due to their colonial status and Mediterranean situation; a location that often experiences a mode of stereotyping as 'backward' or 'other' than northern Europe and North America (Cassano, 2001).

8.3   The Construction of Memory

In the analysis of the meaning of youth in the 1960s, attention is put on youth's construction of memory by understanding how and why certain interpretations were constructed. With the use of materials like magazines and photographs, I tried to stimulate the memory of participants on their adaptation to mainstream Western trends. Recent works on the construction of memory have linked the notion of collective, social or cultural recollections with the notion of nostalgia to explain how memories are generated, altered, shared and legitimised within particular socio-cultural environments. It comes to no surprise that all of the participants were very nostalgic when speaking about their youth. For instance, Joan in a pensive tone told me 'looking back, the sixties will not come back for anybody, they were the best times and they never come back, not for us, not for anybody'.

8.4   Traditional Certainties in Youth Life Histories

It is evident from the various conversations with participants that they were well aware of the rigid transition into adulthood. Traditional preconditions shaped the life situation of these youth however the fact that this group of middle class youth had opportunities for post-compulsory education due to their particular habitus, widened their options in designing their own life. Nevertheless, they all maintained that traditional standardised life course markers like finding a full-time stable job, getting married and having children immediately after, were much more defined than they are today. Life happenings that are now being weighed and decided upon were most of the time unquestioned and regarded as fate. Marriage, for instance, was an indisputable event, anchored on religious obligations to fulfil established gender roles. Victor, a retired professional stressed this point when saying

> At the time, young people used to get married at the age of twenty-four, twenty-five...not like today, young people tend to lengthen their time at home as much as possible and marry late, at times they don't even opt to have children, whereas during my youth, you get married and you start a family immediately.

This generation experiencing their youth in a small island state with a highly charged Catholic atmosphere, were trained in a community environment embedded in common beliefs and integrated together by religion. Roles and obligations were mostly predefined in terms of ascribed characteristics like class and gender that limited individual actions. Paul, a conservative and highly religious kind of person, maintained that it was appropriate for middle class youth like him to gain qualifications that guaranteed a 'job for life' and prepare himself for his role as a breadwinner.

Strong adherence to Catholicism cemented collective conscience. Equally strong was the reaction against those who challenged the status quo. Joan is a kind of person who rebelled against the standardised life plan in her youth.

> Everybody wanted to get married when I was young, but I wanted to enjoy life. But then when suddenly I fell pregnant with a daughter I had a child from my boyfriend at that time. I had to escape. I went to Sicily, I lived with a family, and I used to work in their shop and babysit their children. At that time, being pregnant and not married was something big. My mother came with me to hospital when I gave birth. Then she didn't want me to keep the child. My mother didn't want me to come to Malta because of people's gossips.

The very fact that she questioned the rigidity of youth's life plan at that time and had a child out of wedlock made her leave the country, fearing a sense of shame not only for herself but her whole family. She told me how she was trained with strong religious values and strict discipline at home, yet that did not impede her from challenging the system and devising her own life plan. She maintained,

> My parents were strict. My dad used to oblige me to be home by midnight and five minutes after midnight he used to lock me outside. It's not the first time that I slept outside on the door steps. At first, he used to leave me outside for a bit but comes and opens up for me. But then when he started to lock me outside till morning, I didn't use to stay outside till morning, I used to go and sleep at a friend's house. I was naughty in a nice way though, like a typical teenager.

Nonetheless, most participants maintained that the preconditions of traditional structures promoted a sense of stability and certainty. They were trained to think in terms of constancy; 'A job for life' guaranteed financial security, whereas marriage provided emotional security. Paul interpreted this sense of stability and support structure during his youth,

> The family was more united. Life back then was more relaxed and stable. The day seemed longer than it is today. In the sixties we didn't have any disruptions; we didn't have television or computers to waste our time.

In various occasions, Elise, a retired psychologist and a feminist, also stressed her sense of stability during her youth. She repeatedly emphasised that she felt 'my ground beneath my feet was firm, real solid'. Working as a youth counsellor on part-time basis, she was aware that her interpretation of stability as a youth is undoubtedly different to that of young people today.

8.5   Life Biography of Young Women in the 1960s

The traditional model of the family, having the female as the homemaker dependent on the male breadwinner, shaped the expectations and experiences of young women in the 1960s. Most female participants maintained that during their youth marriage was seen as a goal for economic and emotional stability. Most girls followed such standardised transition into adulthood, often seeing employment as a temporary phase until marriage. In this manner, females' roles were mainly defined in terms of family life.

Social structures like the church continuously reinforced the traditional expectations and attitudes of young women, tied to their nurturing roles. The Catholic Church and its all-male clergy constantly discouraged women's participation in the labour market by using mass media to infiltrate public opinion that woman's place was at home. In a memorandum by the church entitled 'The Employment of Women and their Role in Society' in 1956, it declared

> Married women should, as a rule, avoid all kinds of employment. The consequences of the employment of married women on married life may be

This model of females' role confined to the home restricted their choice to work out their future. Secondary education for girls was designed not to promote girls' individual interests and abilities but to prepare them for their future family expectations, by emphasising on subjects like needle-work and housekeeping. Post-compulsory education for most females was often considered a waste of time and resources. It is therefore worth stressing that the life chances of this group of middle class female participants, who pursued post-compulsory education, were not typical in the 1960s. In effect, it was quite difficult to find retired women with more than thirty years of work experience. Despite the fact that most of these women married and had their own family, they felt more autonomous compared to the majority of females at that time. These female youth group were at a better position to devise their own life plan although they still had traditional restrictions like the 'marriage bar'.

Up to December 1980, young women working in the public sector had to resign from work upon marriage. Irrespective of females' ability, the 'marriage bar' legislation was a constant reminder of the female nurturing role at home. Due to the 'marriage bar' regulation, most participants decided to postpone marriage to a later age and establish their own career first. Newspaper articles speaking on this matter were presented to participants during our conversation. Ann argued that although such legislation had a direct impact on her career when she got married, she still fulfilled her personal interests and continued working after marriage and childbirth, with only a short career break.

> If we decided to get married, we had to change job if you were employed with the civil service. You either stop working or change your job to work with a private enterprise and I honestly tell you that I did not wish to stop working. I am not one of those who leave their job just because they got married. However, when we got married, I quit my job and I took a couple of months off. Soon I found that I was pregnant. Then one fine day, my former boss phoned me. He said 'we want you back'. Well I told him that I have to speak to my husband. We decided that I will take the part-time job, because part-time work was offered to me because of my pregnancy. My boss who was British was very open-minded because they had family-friendly measures in the UK for years. So to me it was

a golden opportunity. I was one of the lucky ones who knew what family friendly measures were in the seventies.

Likewise Elise commented on her experience of the 'marriage bar' legislation and the way she managed to devise her own life plan and postpone marriage in order to lengthen the years of being economically active.

> I lived through that. But I knew that I had a job and I would only quit once I got married. In my case I postponed marriage. I got married when I was thirty. I wanted to work because my family couldn't support me and I think the meaning of my existence is very much based on my success. I knew that I wasn't getting married any time soon to work hard. By the time I sent my resignation to get married, we received a letter that those who wanted to continue to work after marriage, they could.

The 'marriage bar' reinforced the unequal treatment between the sexes and ensured the continuation of the patriarchal family setting. All married working female participants addressed their 'second shift' at home, in a similiar manner to Arlie Hochschild's (1990) argument. Even in 'fortunate' situations, when the husband contributed to household chores and child caring, he was considered as 'helping out' rather than doing his duties as a husband/father. This is clearly evident in Ann's account in which with pride, she explained how her husband always lent a helping hand.

> My husband always supported me. If it meant preparing the sandwiches for the children for school while I dressed them up, he made the sandwiches, if it meant that I do the washing and hanging and he collected the clothes, he collected the clothes, whatever and whenever I needed help, he always supported me. I wouldn't have done it without my husband's help. I would have been half a woman without his help, because half of me was connected of the work place and half of me was at home to take care of the family, it was a dilemma; a very big dilemma.

With strong determination to keep her job and be able to plan her life on her own free-will, Mary never married so that she could pursue a career instead. She also maintained that being the eldest child in the family, she felt responsible to take care of her sick mother after her father passed away; a typical attitude in Malta's conservative close-knit family environment. She still lives in her childhood home, now an old apartment that still bears various mementos of her childhood years with her family. She was very happy to invite me at her home and prepared tea and cakes for my encounter. Before we started discussing her youth, Mary showed me round her home and eagerly went through printed memories in her family albums.

On the other hand, Ann, a middle class retired professional with more than thirty years experience in the banking sector, explained to me her struggles along the years to overcome gender stereotyping by pursuing a career along with family obligations. Notwithstanding all stereotypes, with pride, she recalled how she managed to overcome challenges as a working mother. Ann had worked with a private foreign company that offered her family friendly measures in the 1970s. She admitted that this fact made it possible for her to go up the social ladder to a managerial position. Ann told me,

> I am somewhat rebellious in a sense that I didn't follow the trend of people, I wanted to get married and start a family, it was important to keep the house clean, still I also felt that I have to apply my years of study to something and not throw them away.

However, for those women who were fortunate enough to have post-compulsory education, like the fieldwork participants, their career paths were still limited. Elise emphasised this when saying that

> The only career paths were a teacher, a nurse or a secretary in a government department or a bank clerk. Those were the only options. There were university courses but it never crossed my mind to even consider them.

One cannot ignore the significant gender gap in tertiary level education. In 1960, only nineteen female students (eight percent) attended the Royal University of Malta. This number rose to 109 female students (nineteen percent) in 1965 and up to 165 (twenty-one percent) by 1970. Such statistics need to be seen within a wider cultural context, as a reflection of the patriarchal society, which infiltrated not only the educational system but also participation in the workforce.

8.6   Opportunities for Higher Education and Employment

Without a doubt, in most of Western Europe during the 1960s, opportunities for higher education and full employment were distinguishing factors for youth at that time. For instance in Britain, students coming from all social backgrounds benefitted directly from policies based on the principle of equality of opportunity and initiatives that opened doors for post-compulsory education (Heath, 2003). However, such advantageous opportunities offered to British youth in the aftermath of the Second World War were very different

from those offered in Malta during the same time. The peculiarities of the location, its strong moral structures, its colonial status and socio-economic situation different from other countries, were key factors influencing the life situation of youth.

Despite the reforms in the educational system aimed to open the doors for everyone irrespective of one's class background, the places offered for students to attend the state owned secondary schools were not meeting the demand. Only few students were chosen by means of an eleven-plus examination. Richard explained the significance of passing the eleven-plus exam.

> The thing that I remember well with great nostalgia is when I managed to pass the eleven-plus examination to enter secondary school. I had to have private lessons in Maths and English to be able to cope with my classmates at the state school. I managed to overcome this and succeeded to pass the entrance examination. When I passed the exams, it was not only my personal satisfaction, but more; the parish priest came to congratulate me. Imagine, the parish priest coming to congratulate me. The parish priest called us at the parish hall to 'prepare' us for the move from a small local school to a bigger school. This was something that I will never forget.

Likewise, Elise recalled her experience when she was determined to sit for the secondary school entrance examination. Very much aware that it was far from the norm for young girls to sit for the eleven-plus exam, Elise remembered that she kept back from telling her friends about her determination to sit for this exam, fearing humiliation. Relying on memory, she recalled

> Everyone would have suggested to go working in a factory or with the British military. Only three from the whole village passed to secondary level, two boys and a girl. Our teacher made a promise to God so that we would pass, this shows how strong religion was. It was a big deal that we passed to the eleven-plus exam. I was already fourteen when I passed because I had already sat for the exam the previous year and failed. But I did not give up. I was aware that I was older than the rest. Something inside me told me not to give up.

In spite of the financial help from the British government to build new schools and introduce free education for all in Malta, only a few continued post-compulsory education. Aside from class and financial boundaries that were the main obstacles for young people to continue post-compulsory education,

it is also important to mention the educational expectations of youth in the 1960s. Richard interpreted his educational expectation as youth by saying that 'studying was not popular as it is today'. Moreover, John 'didn't even dream of going to university'. The main reason for this was that only a few hundred fee-paying students entered the Royal University of Malta per year between the 1950s up to 1970 (Cassar, 2009). John was one of the few lower middle class youth who strived hard to enter university during the 1960s. I met John and his wife Grace one Sunday afternoon, after being introduced by family members. Very eager to speak about their youth, they invited me to their home for afternoon tea. After spending some time getting to know each other, the conversation was focused more on their youthful days in particular on their opportunities in post-compulsory education. John regarded himself as very ambitious in his younger years and although he was aware that opportunities for post-compulsory education were slim, he strived hard to obtain a university degree. He admitted that 'opportunities that we had back then are not the same like it is today'. John maintained that his family could not understand his strong determination to enter university;

> I still remember my mother asking me why I bother to study and doubting my ambition saying that I was aiming too high. In those days only professional people used to enter university and it was unheard-of to enter university unless you come from a professional background...I really wanted to enter university although I knew it was very hard. I didn't dare to ask my father to pay for me.

The only other feasible way to enter university was to win a scholarship. John's grit to achieve his goal made him work very hard. Not only did he obtain several 'O'Levels and graduate from teaching college, but he also decided to study for City and Guilds examinations in engineering during evening classes, thus making him over-qualified when applying for the scholarship.

> In those days the government used to issue two scholarships to the university. It was very difficult to get it. I always wanted to study engineering, so I used to go to evening classes to obtain my City and Guilds. When I applied for a scholarship, I was overqualified. I had my City and Guilds and O' levels. So I got the scholarship.

John's determination is quite outstanding principally when he recalled that his crowded home environment was not very much suited for his long hours

studying. With nostalgia, he remembered his youthful days when he used to share a room with his brothers; typical young men who were keen on music and leisure rather than in studying.

> I used to share a room with my two brothers at home. They used to spend evenings playing guitar, so I used to wait patiently until they go to sleep so that I could study. I used to start studying at eleven in the night till early morning....In the morning I used to pretend that I slept so that not to worry my mother.

I also asked Elise whether she ever considered entering university in the 1960s. To my question, Elise replied, 'it didn't even cross my mind. I could stretch myself to become a teacher. That's as much as I could stretch. University was beyond my reach'. Paul also referred to university being out of reach because he did not belong to a professional class; he maintained that

> University was purely for the well-off. I never ever dreamt of going to university. We used to dream of finding a stable job to earn money and help out the family.

Most participants maintained that they had opted for post-compulsory courses that were considered appropriate and reachable for middle class youth; like teaching or nursing courses. Just like in Willis's account on working class boys wanting working class jobs, this study empirically suggests that middle class youth in the 1960s were aware of their limitations and did not aspire for upper-class jobs; their educational expectations were directed towards middle class white-collar work.

In effect, respondents commented on the changes in academic expectations of youth. They all considered that qualifications had more prestige in the 1960s than today. For most of them, they maintained that what is considered today as a prerequisite like 'Ordinary Levels', in the 1960s only few students each year sat for such exams. For instance, Richard told me that 'it was a big deal doing your O' Levels at that time not like today'.

Brought up in a village, highly embedded with moral values, Elise's parents never expected her to pursue post-compulsory education. What is most remarkable about Elise is that although she knew her lack of opportunities for higher education, she had a strong determination to reach her goal and

be able to plan her own life based on her personal aspirations. To my question whether the family background played a central role in her construction of her imagination to become a teacher as a young girl, she replied that it was mostly her sturdy conviction that pulled her through.

> What I remember is that my cousin was one year older than me and she used to be a year ahead of me at school. I remember very clearly, on my grandmother's stairs rubbing off the answers from her copybook and trying to write the answers. I used to rub so hard that my hands used to hurt. I am a hard worker. I remember learning by myself, trial and error with no academic support not so ever from the family.

Moreover, Richard explained how his family background played a significant part on whether one could enter university or not. Recalling from his autobiographical memory, yet at times forgetting the exact details, he maintained

> My problem was mainly financial... because you had to be from a well-off family to enter university. There were no student stipends and if I'm not mistaken, there was a period when you had to pay to attend University. But I do not remember that much since I focused on my University studies much later in life. But it was hard; it was no question of someone interceding for you, it was not that, you had to have the means and not everyone had the means. If you had an aunt, a sister or anyone for that matter, to support you financially, but it was hard to take this step and further your studies.

There is no doubt that the teaching profession was considered as one of the most prestigious career for middle class young people in the 1960s. It is important to emphasise the fact that this profession in the 1960s symbolised social mobility and many youth aspired to become a teacher not only for its guarantee of job stability but also as a status symbol. As a young girl, Elise always imagined herself a teacher, because teaching guaranteed independence and financial stability.

> It was the highest prestigious job that makes you independent and gives you status in society. It used to fascinate me because for me a teacher is someone who dresses up smart and have money. I also used to like the presence of the teacher in a class. Authority, power and success; I didn't see it as I do today to transmit what I feel is important for the well-being of students. At that time it was more to do with what this experience will give me. I am being honest here. Ultimately, I took the opportunity and it became something very close to my heart.

John also referred to the prestigious position teachers enjoyed;

> As a teacher, it had high social honour in the community. After the priest, the teacher was the most respected person in the village. Everyone used to call you 'sir'

'Mater Admirabilis Training College' in Malta for girls opened in 1954, followed shortly in the same year by St. Michael's Training College for boys. In view of the limited career paths available, teaching was one of the highest ranking careers. Remembering on her days in the boarding teaching college, Elise referred to this period as rather challenging because most students could speak English quite well, unlike herself. Her rural background made it difficult at times to keep up with the other girls.

> My experience gave me a bit of everything. ...It was a very significant period. I wouldn't say I was excited. It was stressful and very challenging that you had to leave your family and live with others. I always had the idea that I was inferior; I don't look at myself like that today, but I used to...The English language used to put me back. The culture of my village was completely rural. I never uttered a whole sentence in English in my village...I was only one of the few from my village who entered the college.

Despite spending a long career working within the tourism industry, Mary also gave a vivid description of how it was like to attend the teachers college for young girls, by relying on the memory of her friends' accounts on such an institution.

> Teachers used to follow a two-year course as boarders. They used to sleep and eat, everything there. They stayed away from their home. They used to go home only during holidays or something similar. I remember well because I had friends training for teachers and we rarely saw them but it was amazing how they used to enjoy themselves. They studied because they were disciplined there. They had nuns watching over them.

Similiar to the teachers' college, girls had to attend a boarding college to follow a nursing course. Grace, relying on memory, maintained

> I had a friend who always wanted to become a nurse and she encouraged me to pursue the same career. It was the time when the nursing course was introduced. It was a three year boarding course. We used to sleep there. I spent three years until I graduated as a state registered nurse. Ultimately, as a girl, you either had two openings, the teaching or nursing course.

8.7   Employment Opportunities

The majority of youth who did not pursue post-compulsory education in the 1960s were living in times of rising unemployment and heavy migration. Charles explained the peculiarities of small colonial locations like Malta in the aftermath of gaining Independence and passing through a climate of economic instability, unlike Britain;

> The Maltese economy was going through a bad patch as hundreds of Maltese men who were employed with the military services were being made redundant due to the run-down of the British forces. This was a big blow for the local government. The local authorities had talks with the British counterparts and tried to extend the period of the run-down so as to find alternative jobs to these ex-servicemen. These had some priority for certain jobs, most of them being breadwinners. In the meantime many ex-servicemen found jobs as kitchen hands in hotels having already served as stewards in the Royal Navy. These were the days before any catering school was established. Eventually in time many were absorbed in the hospitality industry which was taking shape about that time, with hotel chains, the likes of *Sheraton* and *Hilton* opening hotels in Malta. It was very difficult for inexperienced school leavers to get a job. Although I had enrolled to business studies training course, I remember I was reluctant to spend further years dependant on my family. It was different times then. Getting a number of 'O' level passes, which I did, was considered quite an achievement and seemed sufficient to get you anywhere in those days.

He further commented on the way political parties were struggling to reduce the rate of unemployment. One of the attempts to reach this task was to expand the civil sector workforce.

> The problem was that jobs were scare and many people were jobless. The 1966 electoral campaign slogan of the Malta Labour Party was ' Jobs for All in Three Months'. They lost the election and the dream remained just a dream. If by chance you did manage to the interview stage they would eventually employ someone with experience. So it was hard for a school leaver at the time. The most popular jobs in demand were in the civil service but, personally for some reason or other I opted out. I did not fancy learning the typewriter to sit for an examination. It was too girlish. But many did take that path and to decrease the number of school leavers joining the jobless queues, the government absorbed a number of them on a yearly basis. No wonder the number of civil servants exploded in subsequent years. It was a buffer to shield unemployment figures.

Charles also referred to the incentives offered at the time for migration; a situation that was used as a safety-valve to the high rate of unemployment. He remembered with a sense of nostalgia his unplanned temporary migration to the UK.

> An opportunity arose for me in April 1968 when I accompanied a friend of mine to an interview in Valletta, held by representatives of the British Consulate and of the Malta House in London, to recruit prospective emigrants to the UK. Although I had no prior appointment for an interview, I managed to have the interview just

the same along with my friend. The following day we were asked to have a medical examination and ten days later we found ourselves on a plane heading for London. Malta was still a colony and a member of the Commonwealth and the Maltese were somewhat given preference to immigrate to the UK up to a certain quota per year. My trip to UK only costed me two pounds 17 shillings (€6.60) since it was subsidised by the Malta government. I told my parents about me having the interview but I never thought that a decision to migrate would be taken so soon. I remember my father giving me twenty pounds, about €46, (more than two weeks wages) in case I wanted to return after a few days...I returned the money that he gave me after a month, knowing fully well that my family needed it more than I did.

It is worth mentioning the linguistic context in relation to the monetary historical background in Malta. Up till 1972, British pounds circulated in Malta. The pound was subdivided into 20 shillings, each of 12 pence with 4 farthings to the penny (CoinLink, 2008). In 1972, the Maltese monetary system adopted a decimal system, based on the lira, subdivided into 1000 mils and 100 cents. Henceforth, the name 'lira' was colloquially used jointly with 'pounds'. The Maltese Lira was replaced by the euro on 1st January 2008, in accordance to the 'Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union'. In some instances, such as in the case of John, participants referred to their wages in euro; 'I used to earn around 60 euro a month'. Such references to the euro are a mental calculation of translating old money into contemporary value.

It was undoubtedly the case that the peculiarities of the research location, as a newly independent country in the 1960s and its struggles to build a sustainable economy, heavily influenced the life situation and expectations of youth. Notwithstanding the economic instability in the 1960s, most participants stated that jobs were guaranteed for those with post-compulsory education. Various participants like Paul who entered the workforce in the early 1960s embraced the mantra of finding a 'job for life'. Paul recalled how in the 1960s he felt rest-assured that his job was secure. In particular, working for the civil service provided such guarantee for job stability.

> Back then the emphasis was to find a stable job and working for the state provided job stability unlike today. I was never unemployed, not even my father because he used to work in the civil service. Those who passed the state examination to work in the civil service had a job guaranteed. Not like today.

For Elise, graduating as a teacher meant that she had a job for life. John also regarded the teaching profession as a financial guarantee for life. Now, a retired engineer, he looked back at his job opportunities and maintained that he decided to work as a teacher for over forty year, irrespective of having an engineering degree, because of the sense of job stability. Elise also referred to this when she told me 'when we got our certificate, we didn't have the stress that we wouldn't find a job because automatically the teacher's certificate guaranteed a job'. Grace also maintained,

> Our scope was to make money. I always dreamt to get married. There weren't many openings that would make you want to dream to achieve, like to work abroad. We had nothing.

Victor, who came from a family with economic and material resources that shaped significantly his life chances, maintained that his qualifications guaranteed job stability; 'if it wasn't for my qualification, I won't have got the job'. He interpreted this situation by saying that white-collar work was provided to young people who acquired post-compulsory education;

> We had no competition at that time. There was the need for white-collar workers in the sixties whereas there was a large workforce of blue-collar workers. However, today the situation is different because there are a surplus university graduates.

8.8 Financial Situation of Youth

Various participants maintained that the average wage in the 1960s was low. Such statement needs to be interpreted in line with the participants' construction of memory mirroring also the present. Older people considered their income as low in the 1960s when thinking about the average wages today; a far cry from their earnings as youth. Still, even though participants considered their wages as low, they believed that they were able to keep aside some of their earnings and live comfortably. John's comments exemplified the responses of all the research subjects. He maintained that as a young adult, he managed to buy a car as well as support financially his mother;

> I used to earn around 60 euro a month. I managed to buy a car with my salary and I used to help my mother financially. I was proud for doing that.... My wage was sufficient. Not only I used to help out my mother and pay for my car but I used to keep aside some money.

John's wife Grace interrupted him to say that they also bought a house with their earnings. Aside the hard work to repay their loan borrowed from family members, Grace proudly maintained that they repaid all their debts within a few years. It felt natural for both John and Grace to consider debt as temporary and it was a priority to repay it as quickly as possible.

Far from being part of their ordinary life, older respondents abhorred debts completely. John emphasised this when referring to the lengths they went through to repay their debts

> To pay off the house we used to struggle to make ends meet; at times, we didn't have enough money to cover the full month. It was difficult to pay off the house. Those years were quite tough though. I never had any money not even to buy a book. We didn't have any money at the bank but we used to work just to repay our family members and pay off the house. However, we use to go out and dine with friends every now and then.

His comment stimulated Grace's spontaneous talk and she said that due to their financial instability when they bought a house, they could not afford a wedding reception or to invite a large number of guests. They considered a small family dinner to be the appropriate solution.

> When we decided to get married, we couldn't afford to do a reception party. We only organised a small family meal. We never dreamt to borrow money from banks.

What was quite striking during our conversation was the fact that even though John considered their first few years of marriage as financially unstable, Grace pointed out that they were still having a good time, even though their house was empty; it was, in her words 'part of the fun to fill up your home along the years'. She was also astonished that they could afford to maintain a car during those years. John remarked the generational difference when saying

> Our house was completely empty. All we had was the kitchen and bedroom and alot of boxes everywhere.... do you remember? Not like today, they get married and have a house fully furnished. But compared to my friends, I was well off. My friends didn't have anything and I had a wage when I was at university.

Grace also pointed out that when she used to work extra shifts as a midwife, they were able to save up all her husband's wage and live off her wage; 'we

used to get by with only my wage and save up his wage. When I started working I had to help out financially my parents too'. Only Victor's parents did not oblige his siblings and himself to contribute financially. Nevertheless, he recalled that most of his friends used to help their parents financially. His upper-middle family background permitted his family to live comfortably despite the fact that they were a family of eight members. He told me that

> My mother's concern was that we don't go into loans. She used to teach us how to save money and investing our money in the banks so that we would not need loans.

Even though Mary lived at her mother's house all her life, she told me that her wage was enough to financially support her mother, save money and live contently.

> I used to earn twenty-eight pounds a month, but I used to save, give something to my mother, buy personal items and now we have a relatively high salary and it doesn't stretch that far.

Likewise, Joan also referred to the customary activity of given part of her wage to her parents; 'I used to give twenty pounds to my mother every month to help out; kind of, but the rest of the money was for me'. Following such arguments, it is evident the disparity in the attitudes towards financial support between both generations of youth under study. A prominent dissimilarity is the fact that whereas youth who pursued post-compulsory education in the 1960s, were often considered as being upwardly mobile and felt obliged to help their parents financially, youth who are now in post-compulsory education are lengthening their years of financial dependence on their parents. What is most obvious is that youth in the 1960s did not consider it appropriate for their parents to support them financially even though they were still in post-compulsory education. Instead, most of them had a job to be financially independent and contribute to the family earnings. A case in point, Charles admitted that he felt accountable during his financially dependent days on his parents.

8.9   The Creation of 'Teenager' and the Marketing Machine

Undoubtedly one cannot refer to the so-called Britain's 'swinging sixties' as a motor to the creation of youth culture without mentioning the importance given to music and fashion. The popular music genre 'Rock and Roll', often identified with the emergence of teen culture of the so-called 'baby boomers' was absorbed via Cable radio, record buying, jukeboxes and TV programmes. It also extended to movies, clothes, hair, cars, motorbikes and distinctive language especially for British and American youth who had relatively greater affluences and who adopted 'Rock and Roll' as part of their culture. Moreover, the newly popularised sound of eclectic, psychedelic rock, having 'The Beatles' as the most prominent commercial exponents of this genre, was considered revolutionary at that time. Most participants I spoke to maintained that the music and fashion scene in America and Britain inspired them; it was considered what is now termed as 'cool' to do so. Even though young audience in the research location were beginning to encounter American and British 'Rock and Roll', social determinants limited in some way the adaptation of such Anglo-American trends.

An enthusiast on psychedelic rock, Charles spoke profoundly of his passion for the 1960s fashion and music culture. Charles was keen to go through his LP collection that showcases not only his enthusiasm but his exhaustive information on the music scene in this period. What was striking about my visit to view his LP collection was that Charles was able to present a very vivid and detailed description of the story behind every song he chose to play while I listened to his fervour of his glorification of the 'golden years'. One of his favourite songs that he wanted me to listen to was the song *Sunday Will Never Be The Same*, by 'Spanky and Our Gang'. Whilst carefully polishing the vinyl record before vigilantly stacking it on the spindle, he explained that this particular band group made efforts to sound like the group 'Mamas and the Papas', who had acquired fame by then. With the same zest, he moved to speak about another song while presenting me with snippets of his life story as a youth experiencing the 1960s in Malta and Britain. He was keen to elaborate on the comparison of the two locations. Charles maintained that it was considered ordinary for him to spend

Saturday mornings at record stores, going through and buying latest LPs. Such youth consumer practices were regarded as part of this generation's identity.

During one of our conversations, Charles highlighted the close affiliation between fashion and music. He told me

> When it came to fashion, I followed the trends that most young local people were adhering to. Besides our social habits, which was timidly an imitation of what was happening overseas, particularly the UK, the dress culture for instance, of the Malta, youth was remotely different from that of the trends of the 1960s in the UK. Us boys were too keen to hold on to our ties and jackets and put on the Sunday's best whenever we have a 'big' occasion, like a date. Casual wear was for the few or the foreigners residing here. The influential wave of pop/rock music of the golden sixties also invaded our shores. I for one, sometimes used to wear a black or white polo neck under my jacket, just to be 'with it' and to look trendy!!. We were simply imitating the dressing style of the Beatles from pictures found in chewing gum wrappers, doing different poses in polo neck tops.

Exposure to latest fashion trends as well as the British top charts was accessible to most young people in Malta by means of the Cable radio (Rediffusion). Youth oriented programmes in Malta started on the BFBS (British Forces Broadcasting Station), being the only wireless station transmitting at the time. Participants spoke about the significance of this medium as a communicative tool to keep updated with what was happening abroad. Richard referred to this by saying

> The cable radio was everything to us youth, at the time, and also to those that were not so young. But let me speak for myself, it was everything for us from information to entertainment. It was the trendsetter for us. If you are listening to the top 20 charts, you can later talk about the recent records...you tune to the BBC to listen to the top 20 every week. Therefore the main influence on youth at the time was mainly the Redifusion. It directed young people on which music to listen to. If it was played on cable radio, those who could afford could buy the records from the local record stores. If the DJ Victor Aquilina [a radio presenter] praised a particular record, we used to say that it is a good record. If he plays it, everyone used to sing to it.

In a similiar manner, Grace referred to her recollections of the Cable radio during her childhood and youth;

> When we were young at my parents home, we couldn't live without a rediffusion set. I remember we used to come home from school, hurry up to finish our homework and stay close to the rediffusion to listen to children's programmes.

During one of Richard's weekly radio programmes, he invited renowned Professor Oliver Friggieri to speak about his recollections of the 1960s. Friggieri interpreted the rediffusion as a central element in the everyday lives of people who experienced the 1960s.

> Rediffusion was central to our lives partly because it was the only medium. For us children it used to cultivate our imagination. The absence of television and its picture also was fertile to the imagination. The rediffusion did not present us with pictures but it gives you the challenge to create your own pictures. It is more vast that cinema and theatre performances. It was part of our everyday life; we used to join together to listen to the sayings of the rosary...we used to hear the news. It was like a law to listen to it, not a forced law but a needed one. Malta used to unite to listen to what was like a mass meeting. We used to listen to the same programmes; there was a consensus in what we were hearing.

The rediffusion was a medium in Malta to boost the imagination of young people and a means for inspiring them in the adaptation of customary activities happening elsewhere. A case in point was their enthusiasm towards rock concerts. Charles happened to remember precisely an odd event in Malta of having a rock concert hosted by famous British bands in the sixties; an event which in his own words was 'revolutionary';

> One time the local programmes were advertising that two band groups were coming to Malta, we used to see the 'News Reels' or 'Pathe' news before the movies at the cinema on how young people used to fanatically greet pop stars like the Beatles at that time. The groups were 'Freddie and the Dreamers' and the 'Mind Benders', who were in the top twenty at that time with the song 'Groovy kind of love'; they were supposed to arrive to Malta on Sunday 8th May 1966. As a young man who was so keen on such groups went to see them arriving at the airport. On the newspaper, there was the exact time they were supposed to arrive. I remember I went to the airport waiting impatiently to see them arrive, we saw them landing and I remember all young people shouting fanatically as they saw them. Today local youth are used to seeing popular band groups live but back then it was unique experience. I remember that the atmosphere was mind blowing....I also remember when we were in the airport and ran to the arrival lounge. We waited there in vain because they were escorted from a back door in a Rediffusion van to avoid crowds.

In line with Robertson's (1995) thesis of 'glocalisation', it is too generic to assume that young people in the research location were passively interpreting British trends. Instead, Maltese young people were more likely to adapt to such trends according to the local material and cultural conditions; for instance, by sewing their own clothes and imitating designs from magazines and listening to the radio. Joan said that Italian and British

fashion scenes influenced them. Richard's reply is an exemplified case of explaining how Western European trends were adapted.

> We used to dress up fashionably, and did things that were fashionable then; leave your hair long, put up your shirt collar the Teddy Boys way, or wear bell-bottoms. When I was young I never bought branded clothes, but my mother used to sew my clothes, trousers, and match it with those bought in the shops...My mother could not afford to buy me new shirts; my sister was a tailor and she used to sew shirts and even trousers for me and my shirts used to have flower patterns and the trousers were made different from those worn by my father; they were trousers similar to those worn by my friends.

Sewing was considered as a customary activity for young girls in the 1960s. All females interviewed referred to the significance of sewing, partly because it was cheaper to sew your own clothes rather than buying ready-made ones. For Grace, it seemed ordinary to sew her own clothes; she maintained,

> We used to buy the *Burda* magazine and make our own clothes. We were three girls at home. With one wage and seven children at home, it was difficult for my mother to buy us ready-made clothes. So we used to sow our own clothes. I remember we used to wear the miniskirt, the platform shoes and the trousers. We used to wear elegant clothes, very lady like not like today, men and women dress the same.

Ann also stressed that she sewed her own clothes by copying British fashion mainly from magazines.

> At that time London was the in place to be. A lot of Maltese used to live in London and the place to go for a holiday was London. Nowhere else, only London. So friends used to go even myself. We used to follow the trends by magazines as well...Mainly it was from the British fashion, from magazines, from the people who lived here who were British. We had to find the material and sew. I used to sew my own clothes.

8.10 Leisure

In line with Rojek's (1995) study, leisure needs to be understood within its existent social context. What is considered as leisure has undergone significant changes over time and therefore the meaning of a leisure activity needs to be located to its social milieu. This is very much evident when examining the changing nature of leisure for youth in the last forty-five years.

A particular leisure activity for many young people in the 1960s in the research location was the *passigata*; the stroll along the sea front or the main streets of the capital city Valletta. Mary nostalgically interpreted the sociability of such leisure activity. She elaborated on the end of such 'innocent' fun. Herein, the concept of loss, or nostalgia, is simply ingrained in the concept of the irreversibility of time and to the perception of what is lacking in a changed present. She maintained

> We used to go to the city to walk around. When I started work, it was like stopping in the city after office. I was about twenty then; we used to stroll along Kingsway [former main street in Valletta and now Republic street] and if I meet someone I know, we chat near Cordina [a renowned coffee shop]. In those days, The 'Premier' [a well known open-air café] had music playing and singing going on and so the city was just fantastic. In my days many used to walk the city streets..we had alot of fun but we never had drugs in mind or indulged in drinking alcohol.

Likewise, Ann referred to this customary leisure activity by saying that they

> used to go to *Ghar id-Dud* [a central sea- front meeting place in the town of Sliema], *Fond Ghadir*, we used to meet the clique, about twenty people or twenty-five people and we used to have really good time.

During our conversation, Joan commented on the nightclubs they used to visit especially during weekends.

> We didn't have a lot of places to go to but we used to really enjoy ourselves. We had three places were to go, *Palm Beach, BJ's* and there was another place close to it. These are the only places we had and then parties at each other's place and we used to meet there and play cards and eat there.

Elise, in her flamboyant description, referred to her rural upbringing and made a salient comparison of the leisure activities in the village compared to that of the city. She considered herself lucky because although she was brought up in a conservative rural village, her mother's family were coming from the city, thus 'this have helped me to see the two different worlds'. She explained how she was trained with a strong sense of religious values that were embedded in her upbringing.

> I remember at times I am surrounded by the religiosity of the village of *Hal-Ghaxaq*. All women covered up and with religious institutions everywhere but when I used to go to the capital city to visit my grandmother, I used to see another world of the miniskirts, women's cleavage, and sailors. Every Sunday

there used to be the dances. I remember my grandmother scaring me about these things because she had strong moral values. Especially the value of fidelity in marriage was very strong. I don't remember that people were less religious in the city. It could be that my grandmother's family were very careful and safeguarding the men against other women. I think that the fact that I experienced both worlds, it made it possible for me to think outside of the village life. I was seeing that life was not only centred on religion. In the 1960s, I wanted to express my sexuality and dress up in miniskirt.

Going to the cinema was also a very popular entertainment especially enjoyed by many young people. Richard commented that going to the cinema was not just an activity to enjoy a film with friends, but also an informative event to keep in touch with what was happening in Europe. Cinemas were tools to expose what was considered hip at that time;

For instance when we first watched 'The Beatles', it was through the weekly newsreels that were shown before the main feature film. These were 'Pathe' news or 'Movie Tone', screening the weekly news before the main film starts. There used to be small boards advertising what is showing on newsreels; 'The Beatles' concerts or an important football match which was not shown on television, because when local television started in 1964 [the actual date was 1962] it was very rudimentary. If you wanted to see excerpts of 'The Beatles' or 'Rolling Stones' concert or an FA Cup Final, the newsreels poster used to give this information of what is showing before the main feature. The cinema was in a way a means of keeping oneself informed and we were influenced by these trends.

The local social determinants of the research location such as religious constraints played a central role in the training of this youth generation. This religious kind of socialisation is often seen as smothering youth's sense of individuality and adventure. Undoubtedly, the Catholic Church in Malta and its deeply rooted ideological web permeated the Maltese society. It worked (and still does) to socialise people from an early age to maintain not only mass consensus but the status quo. This was achieved through various means such as the media and educational foundations. Various organisations were committed to a hegemonic form of youth socialisation, with the aim to influence moral behaviour. Richard clearly demonstrated how the infiltration of religious organisations in youth leisure activities seemed appropriate, almost natural.

'The Teens and Twenties Talent Trust' who together with the help of other persons from St Aloysius school, including two clergies used to organise cultural and theatrical activities and above all, discos that we could also attend. One

thing about other discos around the island, they used to warn us not pick a girl that patronizes the *'Palace'* or *'Dragut'* discos, because you were likely to pick up a street girl.

He remembered with a grin, his experience in trying to persuade the village priest to organise a disco in the local village hall.

> It was one of the hardest things to convince the local parish priest to organise a disco at the youth club. We set our minds on this and after trying very hard to persuade the priest, we finally managed to organise the disco. It was a great success and I have a playlist of that first disco. The main problem was the slow dancing routine. In the past, dancing couples used to keep their distance, but the 'Teens and Twenties' were the first to introduce it [slow dancing], but when we tried to similarly introduce it at youth centres we encountered great opposition. But we did it and today I look back and I laugh at the idea. The parish priest finally conceded with the idea but he told me and the committee members not to play too many slow records. In fact we had to mark those 'slow music' records on the playlist and show it to him beforehand, because he did not know which ones were slow and which weren't.

Religious institutions had a strong hold on young people and at times limited the way youth adapted to trends taking place in countries like Britain. Fearing youth delinquency and social rebellion, the religious institution in the research location controlled through consent the way youth adapted Western tendencies.

Even though Richard highlighted the importance of religion throughout the interview, he admitted that his peer used fashion as a tool for distinction from laymen religious members.

> It's worth mentioning the laymen religious society [*tal-muzew* – a Maltese transliteration of a Latin acronym representing a sentence from the Bible] which is still very significant to this day was also very influential during the 1960s. And not to be associated, personally in my case, with this society, we used to keep our hair long, dress in bell bottom trousers, high heel shoes, hipsters, and even wear a tie in the hot summer weather, so if you did not do these things you could be labelled as a member of the religious society. The cigarette played an important part in one's identity. If you did not smoke you were labelled as one belonging to the religious institutions. Not everyone though. Being young, although there was nothing wrong to be part of *'tal-muzew'*, you have to appear as modern looking, more hip, so you leave your hair long, or wear a tie [religious members refrained from wearing one]. Yes as youthful girls and boys we were influenced almost immediately by the great changes that were instigated by the arrival of 'The Beatles' era and the 'swinging sixties'.

> I was seeing the world of television and rediffusion opening up to me but I wasn't lost in it. I was seeing my future as wanting to reach my goals (Elise).

Paul, having in mind today's digital technology, outlined the limitations in the flow of information and referred to their material conditions during their childhood and youth.

> To deliver news to family members abroad, one had to send a telegram which took around two days to arrive. Not like today. To send a telegram, you had to book via the company 'Telephone and Wireless' and then only God knows when your message is delivered. Not like today you use your mobile phone if you want to call. We didn't even dream about it, it was sci-fi at that time. I also remember during my childhood that we didn't have a fridge but we used to buy ice. We used to place food in the well so that they remain cool. Even to bath, we didn't have a bathroom at home.

In a similiar manner, Charles explained the communication limitations in the 1960s especially when needing to keep in touch with family members whilst abroad.

> Migrating to another country simply meant being exiled, detached from your familiar surroundings and persons close to you. You lose contact with your family and friends and the only means of communication was a monthly letter. The various methods of communication that exists today were unthinkable in those years. My family spent years without a telephone and in the late sixties when we had it installed you have to go through the exchange operator first to give him the number you want him to dial for you.

Aside from the cable radio and the cinema as media for trend setting, televisions soon started infiltrating Maltese homes especially in 1970s. Television was introduced in Malta in 1957 transmitting only Italian programmes for the first five years. On 29th September 1962, at three minutes to eight, the first picture bearing the eight-pointed cross with the words 'Malta Television Service' appeared on national television for the first time (The Times of Malta, 1962). It is no surprise that the Archbishop Michael Gonzi was amongst the first speakers appearing on television to give his blessing and read a telegram of blessing from the Pope. This clearly shows how the Church immediately put its hegemonic stamp on a device considered potentially evil. On that day, streets were deserted as people gathered in front of screens. This does not mean, however, that everyone gathered at home to watch this event because only a few could afford a

television set. Instead, most people gathered in band clubs to watch this event. The historian and politician Herbert Ganado (1975) anticipated the increase of television sets in households.

> It won't be long before we will have a television set in our room, and we will be able to see and hear the world from our armchair, with a book on our knees and a pot of tea on the table! Much better than standing at the local club's doorway (Ganado, 1975:242).

There was a class gap in the persons who could afford a TV set and those who could not. Television in the 1960s was a status symbol. Richard maintained that

> Households in a higher income bracket could afford television, and television sets increased in the higher middle class sector by the late 1960s, so the importance of cable radio diminished in a way. However, in my opinion, it remained a powerful means, as television did not provide alternative offerings to young people at that time. We could not follow 'The Beatle mania' as such, the beat boom, although there were some musical programmes on the Italian TV channel, still those who were keen on popular music then we were influenced by the films released in those years.

Television however, was not simply a privatised medium used within the confined of one's home; it was open to the community and those who could not afford a TV set often joined their neighbours who owned one. The sociality of television made up part of the collective memory of this generation; Grace maintained that 'when television was first introduced in the community, we used to go to our neighbour's home to watch it. It took us long for us to have a television set at home'. Moreover, Elise also remembered the introduction of television in her childhood village.

> I remember the television on, always in the background. I remember that if you are at home or in the streets you were always hearing the television. I do remember when television was introduced, close to my adolescence years. However, I remember running in the streets as children and stop in front of a door of someone who had the TV set and the lady of the house used to open the front door to let us peep in to watch it.

Likewise, Paul spoke about the sociality of television, by saying that television, as a technological device, was not simply a form of individualised leisure activity but a tool that reinforced the strong sense of community. In particular, Paul recalled with a grin, that even though his family could not

afford a television set, they used to go to a shop selling televisions in their street and spend time watching TV from the shop window.

> At first we didn't have a television set, it was after ten years I guess when we got a set at home but we used to get by. There was a shop selling television sets down the road and we used to go and watch TV from the shop window. We also used to go to our neighbours because we were very close to our neighbours. There was a sense of community.

Mary recalled when her family bought their first television, because it coincided with her father's death.

> I recall that when television started in those years there was only the Italian channel, then the Malta station opened. I remember my father telling us that the local station will soon open and I will get you a television set once it starts, and we were so excited, and we got it one year later, a black and white television set. I was not allowed to watch everything. We watched *Carosello* [a very popular 10 minute commercials slot on RAI], there was *Carosello* in those days on Rai 1. It was on around nine or ten to nine there was *Topo Gigio* [puppet show] on and we stayed on watching them because the commercials were in the format of a short sketch. Everyone watched *Carosello*, we used to enjoy watching these commercials and then after nine we were not allowed to watch TV.

Contrary to the more privatised use of mobile technologies of youth in late modernity, the older participants maintained that all the family members joined together to watch television or listen to the cable radio. Mary elaborated on this by saying that television 'used to bring the whole family together and everyone would sit together and listen up'. To the question whether participants used a mobile phone today, most of them said that they owned one although not being too keen on having to carry it with them. Joan told me that today her mobile phone is often considered a necessity although she admitted that they used to get by in the 1960s without such a technological device. She maintained

> Today it is part of me. I always need it close. It didn't exist then. We used to agree on where and the time we are meeting before we go out then. Today, they decide there and then.

Albeit being a keen enthusiast on technological devices, Paul admitted that contemporary mobile phones, irrespective of their seductiveness, are 'too complicated'.

> Recently I was thinking of buying a new Smart phone but it is too complicated for me. I bought one and gave it to my son-in-law because it was too complicated

for me. This mobile had a GPS, it was complicated. These Smart phones drive you crazy.

Charles felt that people his age tended to use the mobile phones only for emergency.

> People of my generation, the baby boomers may be a little more cautious when using today's gadgets, like the mobile phone for instance. I only use it for an emergency and not for idle talk.

Older respondents also claimed that there is evidence of generational difference when taking into consideration the enthusiastic engagement of youth in late modernity in social network sites such as Facebook. Albeit that many of the older research subjects admitted that they have a Facebook account, none of them could relate to the youth's customary activity in using such sites. What was striking is that older participants were very much aware of their privacy invasion and abhorred the idea that other people could have access to their information, even if it is simply their email address. With conscious conviction Paul explained his uneasiness of such sites 'I don't like it. I like emailing but not Facebook'.

Charles also showed his concern that social networking sites like Facebook are seeping into the private life of individuals. Irrespective of the fact that he considers himself a keen Internet user and sees the advantages of connecting places and people, Charles claimed that young people in the 1960s used to meet up to enjoy themselves together rather than chat in the virtual world.

> I have my reservations as regards to Facebook; when people post various pictures and write various comments on it for all to see and read. It is practically a showcase of all sorts and I don't approve it much. ..As for the internet I only wish it existed during my youth days, it has such a huge potential in all aspects, but then again on the social side, we used to enjoy meeting friends and enjoy each other's company as often as we could. But as I said earlier those who migrated overseas in the years missed their family and friends profoundly, as it was too difficult to communicate unlike today. I remember a long distance call to Australia was six pounds for a three-minute call. It was almost a week's wage, for just a minute. It was prohibitive.

<u>8.12   Conclusion</u>

This chapter presented a detailed account of how the older research participants remembered their youth in the 1960s. Their interpretation intertwined with biographical information and the socio-economic situation in the research location is needed to make sense of this group of youth and compare it to the youth group in late modernity. Casual conversations were aimed to obtain knowledge on the taken for granted attitudes of youth in the 1960s in the research location. Following the 'glocalisation' thesis, the social determinants and peculiarities of such location were outlined because of their direct influence on youth's life situation. Attention was put on their everyday life experiences as youth in post-compulsory education during a time of socio-economic instabilities, yet still being heavily influenced by the popularisation of youth culture in Western Europe, particularly in Britain. This chapter also referred to what participants considered as 'appropriate' behaviour as youth. Relying on memory, their assumptions, practices and their future expectations were called into question in this chapter. Hence, this chapter explored what it meant to be a young adult in the 1960s through relying on biographical memory of participants. It made sense of the customary activities of these youth, their life situation and their 'common' generational experiences.

Nonetheless, whilst it is conventional wisdom that a specific generational habitus shares common characteristics and trajectories by virtue of its specific contextual setting, this chapter did not assume a homogenous youth generation because such argument would ignore the various indicators like the family background and gender which are motors to different life chances in society.

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Chapter 9:   The Discontinuity of Youth's Life Situation

With the use of empirical evidence, this chapter outlines generational differences in the life situation of youth in the last forty-five years. Various studies have referred to this shift by assuming that Western youth in the 1960s were brought up with a more organised life-plan, cemented in traditional social structures (Ashton and Field, 1976, Coles, 1995, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Kohli, 1996, Mills and Blossfeld, 2001), whereas individuals experiencing their youth in neo-liberal society have more autonomy when devising their own biography (Bauman, 1996, Beck, 1986, Beck 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Giddens, 1991). The accounts of participants on their youth were analysed in line with socio-economic, cultural and technological changes since the aftermath of the Second World War. Despite the different cultural histories, the research location has adapted, at a different speed, to the Anglo-American and broader European socio-economic systems. Compared to other Western locations, economic developments as well as the individualisation process were 'delayed' in conservative Southern European locations. Ex-colonial locations like Malta, gaining Independence in the 1960s meant that they tended to be late in the process of socio-economic and cultural changes compared to other Western European countries.

This chapter specifically focuses on interpreting and comparing sociologically the accounts of individuals by providing a contextual framework. This study uses Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977) to explain how the social determinants of a location shape the life situation of youth. The concept of habitus refers to the behaviour and attitudes of young people as products of history and structural determinants in a specific time and space. Moreover, Williams's (1965[1961],1977) concept of the 'structure of feeling' is emphasised because it deals with explaining the culture of a period with reference to its cultural, historical and material conditions.

Qualitative citations were selected to reflect typical patterns of responses. Older participants spoke about their life course transitions into adulthood and the preconditions that influenced their choices in designing their future. The promotion of greater individual choice, with the increase of Western neo-liberal practices challenged the rigidity of traditional structures. Individuals experiencing their youth in the late 2000s referred to their advantageous position of having more choices to devise their own life plan. This chapter also interrogates the paradoxical dimension of the process of individualisation. While young people living in neo-liberal societies have more choice, they still have to face new forms of structural conditions in a world with no certainties, only alternatives. This is particularly manifested in the shifts in the life biography of females. This chapter addresses the increased equalisation of sexes that promises women recognition, financial independence, and personal development beyond the family, while at the same time creating anxiety about juggling work and family life.

Moreover, the shifts in the structures of dependencies are outlined; mainly the degree of dependency on the educational system and the job market. With reference to the accounts of participants, this chapter addresses the extended periods of dependence, mainly due to education and training. In addition, whereas traditional structures defined youth identity in the 1960s, young people are now relying more on the consumer market and communication technological devices to construct their own identity. This chapter also addresses the changing setting for both generations of youth, in particular, the advancement of neo-liberal practices in Western society. Herein, the 'glocalisation' thesis is adopted to explain the influence that the socio-economic and cultural conditions in Malta, as the case study, have on global trends in shaping the life trajectories of the two generations of youth in question.

9.2 What does the Maltese Case tells us about the Applicability of Individualisation in a 'Glocal' Manner?

The individualisation thesis rests on a number of premises, mainly detraditionalisation, institutionalised disembedding, compulsory pursuit of 'a life of one's own' and the intensification of risks of the individual due to precarious freedoms. Western society is manifesting the intensification of individualisation through the impact of globalisation as well as the increased impact of neo-liberalism as a hegemonic mode in the everyday life of individuals. Countries in the West are increasingly reducing state-sponsored institutions and individuals are more than ever compelled to fend for themselves.

There is clear disparity between different locations as to how far the individualisation process has advanced. In effect, it makes sense analysing how this process is adapted in a glocal manner in relation to peculiar conditions of Malta, as the research location. The process of 'glocalisation specifically refers to the interaction between the global and the local. Robertson (1995) is widely credited for popularising this theoretical concept and for resisting the claims that globalisation is a homogenous and monolithic process that eradicate local culture. Instead of having a universally cultural development that suggests global uniform trends, the process of glocalisation addresses the increasing diversification and the importance of the particularities of the location that make up one's dispositions. A case in point in how this is manifested is in the life biography of young women and their efforts to replicate global trends while simultaneously adapting to local characteristics.

Furthermore, as explained thoroughly in this chapter, this study suggests that there is a degree of 'compromised choice' manifested in the concessions youth in conservative Southern European locations are willing to make to satisfy both cultural norms and their desires to design their own life in line with Western trends. There are certain characteristics that distinguish Southern European countries from the rest of Europe include their religion (mainly Catholicism), strong family relations, and their 'delayed'

socio-economic processes. Gal (2010) examined the common social, demographic, cultural and structural characteristics of the European South, as distinctive from other countries in the West. Furthermore, Tsatsanis (2009) maintained that the common authoritarian tendencies as well as patterns of late industrialisation and relative economic underdevelopment are some of the distinctive characteristics peculiar in the South. Malta is no exception of these characteristics. Brincat (2009) addressed the distinguishing factors of the process of industrialisation in Malta that makes it relatively different to that experiences in Western Europe; including the absence of 'industrial revolution' and the fact that productive activity continued to be carried out by small labour-intensive family owned businesses. Aside from economic factors that differentiate the South from the rest of Europe, there is also a disparity in cultural conditions.

Michell (2002), in his book *Ambivalent Europeans*, spoke about the dialectical relationship of 'tradition' and 'modernity' in Malta, especially from the 1990s. Tradition in such a small island state is associated with Catholic morality and the organisation of family life; associated by younger people as a "backward' and increasingly anachronistic orientation to the world, that bore the hallmarks of Church hegemony' (2002:16). Conversely, modernity is associated 'with education, material wealth and progress, but on the other hand with material excess and the erosion of 'traditional' morality' (ibid).

Abela (1991), a Maltese sociologist, attempted to locate Maltese society on the European model of development and concluded that Malta was 'neo-traditional'; traditional because it still has a Catholic morality, but 'neo' due to its incorporation of a modernist orientation to the economy and rationality. Furthermore, such characteristics, typical of Mediterranean locations, influenced the advancement of the individualisation process. Such characteristics manifest that Malta, similiar to other Mediterranean societies like Cyprus or Greece, have been incorporated into wider European economic and cultural networks, yet at a different pace.

In a similiar manner to Abela (1991), Argyrou (1996) studied the characteristics of 'tradition' and 'modernity' in Cyprus in order to analyse the extent to which Cypriot culture is becoming subject to Western hegemony. His anthropological study focused in particular on Greek Cypriot weddings, seen as a symbolic struggle between traditional identity and the more Westernised outlook to life. By acknowledging the 'backwardness' of this culture, Argyrou (1996) also emphasised the modernising trends that places Cyprus in a continuous struggle for symbolic domination.

Clearly, Malta's historical and economic trajectories indicate how they do not completely fit in with the Western European model of economic development since the Post-Second World War. It was not until the 1970s that Malta embarked on a development plan to guarantee universal welfare benefits. This plan guaranteed full-employment and universal welfare benefits; a similar socialist plan to that of Britain twenty years earlier. In such a setting, the shifts in the life-plan of youth from the traditional to a more individualised model, was in effect, 'delayed'. It was only within the fashion and music scene that Maltese young people in the 1960s felt more or less at par with young people in Western countries like Britain. Young people adapted to such trends in a way that was considered 'appropriate' in line with their religious training. One participant, Charles, aptly commented on the delay in the cultural processes;

> In reality the sixties attitude happened in Malta in the eighties, some twenty years later. The only culture that some local youths absorbed rather simultaneously and contemporary with the youths of the UK and USA was the musical culture, although not necessarily to the same extent.

Not surprisingly, the emergence of the 'spirit' of individualisation intersected with socio-economic changes, in particular, the increase of neo-liberal practices. Despite the increasing advancement of the individualisation process, the Catholic Church, as the main supporting pillar in society, continuously work to promote the traditional model for youth. Although there was a marked decline in the last forty-five years, Maltese youth are still highly engaged in traditional voluntary organisations such as religious

associations and church bodies compared to other European counterparts (Abela, 2001).

Moreover, it is worth noting that the process of individualisation is adapted in line with the Southern European family model, comprising of strong kinship ties, nuclear family-oriented, the high institutionalisation of marriage, and relatively low cohabitation, divorce rates, births outside wedlock and lone parent (Guerrero and Naldini, 1997). Boissevain (2006) addressed the characteristics of the Maltese family and its interplay between with the Roman Catholic Church. Hence, it can be argued that the old bonds of family and religion did not lose their significance altogether. Nevertheless, this is not suggesting that the Maltese society is static and did not change since the 1960s. From the accounts on their everyday life of young people in post-compulsory education, it is evident that they are more than ever devising their lives on the individualisation model.

9.3   The Shifts in the Rites of Passage into Adulthood

The present life situation and biographical patterns of youth in late modernity compared to their predecessors is less determined by the past; also the present is not so much binding on the future. Numerous sociological studies referred to the Western model of youth transition into adulthood; from the so-called 'golden age' in the 1960s (Hobsbawn, 1996) to the crisis in youth's life trajectories from the mid 1970s onwards (Chisholm, 1995; Evans, 2002, Evans and Furlong, 1997). Scholars have elaborated on the rigidity of youth's transition into adulthood in the post-war period (Kohli, 1996). This contrasts with the prevailing imagery of more individualised, yet uncertain individual identity in late modernity (Bauman 1996, Beck, 1994, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2008[2002], Giddens, 1991).

Primarily, it is worth examining the commonalities of both generations in question. Both generations referred to their consciousness of sex and their quest for autonomy in their transition from dependence to independence. This is a stage when the individual becomes more concerned about the

future. In one of the conversations with Maria, she commented that lately she became more anxious of what she wanted to get out of life. She told me

> Sometimes I just do not give a damn about things but lately I have been more conscious about my future. The fact that now I am twenty-one I feel that I have grown up. A few years ago, I did not care about the future, about what I want; I am still confused about what I want out of live, but now I think more about what I am going to do after I graduate. However, a few years back, I did not care and just took each day as it comes.

Young people, irrespective of the time and space context, experience an urge to become autonomous and independent. Respondents from both generations referred to common events that lead to the transition from dependence to independence, including finding a job and being financially independent, leaving the parental home and marriage. However, whereas there was consensus on the events bridging youth and adulthood, individuals experiencing their youth at the two different periods, interpreted these events differently.

Youth's life biographies forty-five years ago, embedded in the tightly knit community, were much more predefined within the family association and the village community compared to youth in late modernity. Even though youth in post-compulsory education had more autonomy to design their life-plan, this generation were generally trained with the mindset that established norms and values, anchored in religious beliefs, were more important than the individual's freewill. The accounts of participants on the sense of community they experienced in the 1960s are very much related to Berger and Kellner's (1974) explanation of traditional communal life;

> Marriage and the family used to be firmly embedded in a matrix of wider community relationships... There were few separating barriers between the world of the individual family and the wider community.. The same social life pulsated through the house, the street and the community (Berger and Kellner, 1974:160).

The close-knit social network of the family and village community is a typical characteristic of a conservative Catholic Mediterranean setting, like the research location. The historian Henry Frendo (1988) commented on this by referring to the Church as a motor for the sense of community;

> The parochial structure was intact: religion was at the heart of Maltese life just as the church was physically in the centre of the village, and formed part of the strong social nexus by which the common people looked up differentially to the 'respectable' members of the community (Frendo, 1988:188).

Collective conscience stemmed from the strong adherence to Catholicism by the vast majority. In effect, Catholicism equates to national state identity and it is instrumental in the compliance to traditional patterns of behaviour in the research location (Schneider, 1971). For this youth generation, the community environment was held together by a homogenous lifestyle, shared values and beliefs and integrated together by religion. Ascribed status generally determined one's fixed identity for life; seen as reflecting the will of God. The newly retired psychologist, Elise, in one of our conversations told me about the central position religion had in the everyday life of people. She said 'I was brought up in a closed village with high religiosity. My religiosity is embedded in me in the training I was given'.

Joan also highlighted their 'constrained freedom' and sense of fear toward their parent generation;

> We were different [from young people today]. At least we used to be afraid from our parents at a young age. But as later teenagers, we were more independent I would say. We were still afraid but we were independent.

Common beliefs, moral codes and sentiments played a crucial role in directing youth's behaviour. Life on earth was interpreted more as a passage to the afterlife; investing in faith for life beyond this one. The older participants commented on their fear of God and their duty to do God's will. The Church and its promise of eternal life was an 'insurance policy against the end of one's own life' (Beck and Beck-Gernheim, 2008 [2002]:153). Subjected to such constraints, young people in the 1960s compared to those in the 2000s were more controlled by the family network, acting as a regulator to smother any form of individuality and adventure. In line with this, Sultana and Baldacchino (1994) maintained that 'it could feel like growing up in a strait jacket of community surveillance, given the dense psycho-social atmosphere' (Sultana and Baldacchino, 1994:17).

However, irrespective of the fact that thought and conduct were more constrained by traditional structural factors, older people I spoke to maintained that in their youth, they felt stable and certain about their future-plan. One of the older participants, Paul, stressed his priorities that were the normality for every young person in the 1960s; 'When I started working, my priority was to get married. Our priority was to find employment preferably within the civil service because it guaranteed job stability'. This generation trained to think in terms of stability, regarded marriage as a guarantee for emotional security and 'a job for life' an assurance for financial security.

Elise remembered vividly her sense of security in a sheltered environment of the village community. Relying on memory, she recalled,

> I remember running in the streets I felt a certain amount of groundedness. I am seeing myself running in one of the narrow streets of the village, with the church and the background sound of the television and the rediffusion.

Other older participants referred to the way the family extended to the streets, and how the sense of security ran through the village. Charles remembered the customary activity of villagers leaving their front door open, at times with the key in the keyhole. It was also ordinary for people to congregate in the streets, especially in summer, for a communal chitchat. The shift in the sense of community and family network in a way runs parallel with Berger and Kellner's (1974) explanation of changes in family life;

> In our contemporary society, by contrast, each family constitutes its own segregated sub-world. ..This fact requires a much greater effort on the part of the marriage parties. Unlike in earlier situations in which the establishment of the new marriage simply added to the differentiation and complexity of an already existing social world, the marriage partners now are embarked on the often difficult task of constructing for themselves the little world in which they live (Berger and Kellner, 1974:160).

Participants experiencing their youth in late modernity were aware of the differences in their life-plans compared to those of their parents and grandparents. Jane, who is in her early twenties commented that unlike her, her mother was not offered a choice on what to do with her life.

> My mother regrets that she never continued her education...I don't think that women used to think so much about career but more on marriage. If they

worked, it would be to have enough money to get married and stop working upon marriage. If a woman was career oriented she would be the odd one out unlike today.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008[2002]) claim that individuals in late modernity have more choice to live a 'life of one's own'. Especially evident for the generation who had their coming of age in the first decade of the new millennium, individuals are less determined by rigid traditional roles. With the diminishing traditional gender roles young people have more alternatives as to how to devise their lives yet they are also facing new demands.

For the privileged youth in post-compulsory education like the fieldwork participants, adulthood was defined in terms of financial stability, careers, and leaving parental home. Jane maintained 'I find it difficult to consider myself an adult because I still live with my parents'. Entering into first employment, even on part-time basis meant becoming an adult for others. Adulthood is clearly, a complex multi-faceted term that confused most young respondents who tried to make sense out of it.

Most young people I had spoken to were conscious of the fact that their life course transition into adulthood is less structured on traditional factors than their predecessors. During one casual conversation, Mark was well aware of the decrease in the influence of a rigid pattern in life course transitions.

> I see that today there is no childhood, adolescence and adulthood. They has become mixed up. Today adolescents are having children and the boundaries separating different stages are disturbed. Maybe that is why I find it difficult to say that now I am an adult mainly because I am still studying.

Sandra consciously rejected any form of traditional model into adulthood and desperately sought to construct her own life-plan, instead of 'just going through life'. She felt that she did not want to 'settle down' into a 'stable' job and a marriage relationship, without acquiring new experiences beforehand. For the time being, she wanted a more adventurous and spontaneous life. During one of our conversations, she acknowledged the fact that life still remained highly structured for youth.

> Our life revolves around the fact that we go to university, find a job, find a partner and get married, but I believe that there is so much more to that. From the

comments I receive from my parents I realise that I am not normal... My father always asks me whether I had found the one....I want to travel and find a job which allows me to travel.

Similarly, Mona said that 'after I graduate I am planning to travel. After that, I want to work on things which don't frustrate me'. Sandra's idea that 'you only get one life so might as well do something about it' stimulated her to search for new experiences by leaving her full-time job to travel and work voluntarily. When I later contacted Sandra, she told me that she left her job and was working for a voluntary organisation in Spain. This idea of living a 'life of one's own' with having options to devise one's life plan, contrasts with the more conservative Catholic society of forty-five years ago.

For the more secularised European society in late modernity, all certainties of transcendence are mainly lost. Individuals strive to live to their full potential, keeping in mind that death is an end; an absolute and irrevocable end. The meaning of life and death has shifted for youth over the last half a century. Dying is a threat to one's own life and thus produces anxiety for those alive to have full control of how to devise life. Despite that young people expressed more secular and rational viewpoints of the world, nevertheless, the majority of them maintained that they were active participants in their religious catholic community. Some of them, like Sandra, were involved actively in a Catholic youth organisation. For Mitchell (2002) the Catholic 'tradition' places Malta, at the margin of Europe, both inside and outside European 'modernity'. Catholicism was a means of legitimising the accession to Europe; however, it was also means of resisting it (Mitchell, 2002).

9.4   Changes in Family Life and the Meaning of Marriage

Generational differences in youth's life situation are also visible in the attitudes toward family life in general. Individuals differ greatly from each other in their everyday family life dynamics such as temporal rhythms, locations and demands because of the conditions imposed by the individualisation process. Furthermore, they struggle between finding time

for themselves and their quest for common family time. As Jane has pointed out, we are living a 'life on the fast-track, always in a hurry to satisfy all the roles in our life'. This comment runs counter to the remarks of, retiree Paul, who in a very nostalgic mode told me how 'life went at a slower pace, the day seemed longer and the word stress was rarely used in everyday language to define a state of being'. Young people are now struggling with the conception of time and do not realise that they are 'selling' most of it to the workplace whilst devising their career as a separate entity to family life. In *Time Bind*, Arlie Russell Hochschild (1997), referred to this when saying how today individuals

> speak of time as if it was a threatened form of personal capital they have no choice but to manage and invest, capital whose value seems to rise and fall according to forces beyond their control (1997:51).

Marital relations have acquired new meaning in the individualised society. The institution of marriage for the older participants was almost a natural rite of passage into adulthood and many a time it was not regarded as a real option. Marriage was not so much based on self-discovery but it was anchored in religious obligation, in serving God and the community.

Undoubtedly, the values of the family and sexuality in Maltese society had shifted. The Maltese sociologist Anthony Abela (2001) analysed this in line with the incidence of marriage failure. On the European map, Malta shares with neighbouring Southern European countries a predominant Catholic family culture. Nevertheless, Malta remained an exception up to 2011 in its resistance to the legalisation of divorce. Older participants maintained that no one used to question the binding factor of marriage and marital breakdown stirred gossip and outcasted one from the community.

The Southern European family model is characterised by a family culture where marriage is very much under the influence of the Catholic Church (Abela, 2001). In the Latin family of nations such as Portugal, Italy and Spain, divorce law was introduced very late in the process compared to other Western countries. This is a clear case of how Southern European

countries adopt glocally Western tendencies. Similarly, in Ireland, a non-Latin Catholic country, divorce was introduced in the 1990s. Young participants maintained that the meaning of marriage was neither exclusively 'Western' nor 'traditional'. Instead, they attempted to strike a balance between the two and adapted glocally to the Western model. Manifesting the traditional southern European family pattern, they put attention on the importance of marriage. On the other hand, they saw it as a rite of passage they are willing to postpone. Maria in particular interpreted marriage as a fearsome rite of passage when saying 'marriage scares me sometimes because what guarantee do I have that we will live together for all our lives?' Sandra also commented on this by saying

> I have friends my age who are getting married at twenty two, twenty three...they seem happy, they seem in love, but for me it's foolishness, nothing else. I'm not saying it can't work, because it can work when there is real love, but there are so much things I want to do in life, that I'm sure that if I will have a partner I simply can't do them.

One reason Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008 [2002]) gave for this shift in the attitudes towards marriage is the increase in complexities and biological uncertainties in youth. The increased choices and alternatives on how to devise one's own life brought forward a feeling of uncertainty. When compared to the older generation, young people felt that they were not so sure about what events make them adults. Most of the young people felt lost somewhere between youth and adulthood. This is not implying, however that marriage lost its meaning altogether in the research location. Regardless of the fact that marriage is being postponed to a later stage, young people especially female participants maintained that eventually they see themselves getting married. Thus, marriage especially in conservative Catholic locations, still remains an invariable event that bridges youth and adulthood for both generations.

Moreover, the glocal adaptation of the concept of individualisation is clearly manifested in the life situation of women in Malta. Young women with post-compulsory education, continuously strive to strike a balance between their desires for a career and their need to satisfy cultural norms and have their own family. Irrespective of the advancement in equalisation of the sexes,

unlike Becks' assertion of detraditionalisation, young women in the southern European research location are not completely released from traditional gender roles; their choices are compromised in line with cultural conditions.

9.5   Shifts in Gender Relations and the Compromised Choices of Young Women

Fundamental changes in women's lives have occurred in various area including education, work and legislation in the last forty-five years. The interpretations of female respondents about their life chances as youth in post-compulsory education enabled me to make comparisons of the life situation of young women experiencing a different historical context.

As a feminist, Jane placed great emphasis on her advantageous position of being young today compared to her mother's and grandmother's youth. When I asked Jane to elaborate on her situation, she told me,

> I don't think that women used to think so much about career but more on marriage. If they worked, it would be to have enough money to get married and stop working upon marriage. If a woman was career oriented she would be the odd one out unlike today.

In line with Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2008[2002]) views on the individualised women's life biography, it is a popular belief that the roles of young women, especially those with post-compulsory education, are not defined solely in terms of housework and child rearing. The process of individualisation in the female life biography comes into play when looking at how young females today are developing their own ideas about the future, with little support from any traditional model. To a certain extent, this was the case for the young female participants who displayed prospects that extended beyond the family. Most young females I spoke to maintained that they were working hard to find an intrinsically satisfying profession from which they could earn their own living. Far from the previously traditional female role of homemaker, various young female participants said that they were directing their energies towards establishing a career that brought them

autonomy; unlike the traditional model of being dependent on a male breadwinner.

For most women from both generations with post-compulsory education, paid employment was not so much an intermediate phase until marriage. Furthermore, the majority of the older female participants tended to wait longer to have their first child and kept working after childbirth. However, this is not assuming that there was no evidence of a gender gap in opportunities in the 1960s. The gender divide was further reinforced by legislation. In Malta, up till December 1980, young women working in the public sector had to resign from work upon marriage due to the 'Marriage Bar' legislation. Whereas Elise postponed marriage, Mary decided not to get married to pursue a career. Ann, in particular, mentioned the traditional constraints as a married woman who wanted to pursue a career.

> First of all it was a disgrace to hear that a pregnant woman is working, it was a real utter disgrace. But I had the best thing, I was fulfilling my desires and at the same time I was satisfying the family.

Twenty-one year old Luisa commented on these constraints by relating to the life situation of her mother

> I look at my mum, she wanted to continue studying, but her father did not let her and told her to take sewing classes instead. My mother loved history and she wanted to continue studying it but she was forced to train as a seamstress. She hates sewing today. She studied something she did not want to. Today we have much more opportunities. Even when it comes to mentality, it is completely different from ours.

Compared to young females in the 1960s, Jane felt she had more alternatives today on what role/s to have and being a homemaker was just one option that she was not too keen to take. Her desires were to be a psychologist and a writer. Regardless of Jane's perceived advantageous position in having the ability to devise her own life-plan, she also felt anxious about her future. In a powerful discourse about the shift in females' life chances, Jane compared her situation with her grandmother's. She said that she has more things to think about, more stress to deal with and more uncertainty about what to do.

> Life was simpler. Although I think today women have more opportunities but I think life was simpler. Women had fewer anxieties. They only thought about marriage. So advancement has also brought about negative consequences like

> anxiety. A woman used to think about marriage and childcare whereas today she needs to balance the family with a career. Sometimes when I'm very anxious, by the way I'm a feminist, but sometimes I say it was better when we were simpler.

Jane felt anxious with no certainty or permanence in her chosen career path. Her 'do-it-yourself biography', albeit exciting, is contradictory. It also creates an aura of the unknown and the fear of failure. She doubted whether she might be risking entering into debts to pay for a Masters Degree course with no guarantee of employment after graduating.

Therefore the liberating conditions from traditional stereotypical roles have also created a contradictory situation; such as the increased demand for women to juggle work and family life. The shifts in the life situation of women when comparing the two generations are an exemplary case of how the concept of individualisation is paradoxical; while it provided more choice for individuals experiencing their youth today, it nonetheless produced anxiety and uncertainty about the future. Traditional preconditions on females, despite their limitations, provided a sense of security and stability for women with no anxiety to construct their own life biography. Young women in late modernity maintained that they are faced with greater individual choice but they also have to shoulder new responsibilities and deal with more anxiety.

Moreover, when young women do find jobs, usually they discover that their motivation and demands may not fit well with 'their' tasks as wives/mothers. Despite the progress made toward the equalisation of sexes in the southern European research location, young females are not completely released from traditional gender roles. In a form of compromised choices, they are satisfying their desires of having a career yet settling for a 'family friendly' one that allows them to cope with multiple roles; as an employee, a housewife and a mother. Besides their individual attribution of success, most female participants were aware of their gender role expectations. It is not the case, as the Becks asserted, that 'in education young women increasingly face the same demands and opportunities as men and not least for this reason they develop increasingly similiar expectations and demands for their

career' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2008[2002]:66). Notwithstanding the credibility of Becks' argument on the detraditionalisation of gender, this study has shown that this process is not consistent and the cultural variables such as traditional and religious values of a specific location play a main part in the career decisions of middle class females.

The majority of young participants were consistent in their argument that the labour market remains biased and based on the male breadwinner model. Jane felt enthusiastic about her career yet she was anxious about not being able to cope in the near future with multiple roles, as an employee, housewife and mother. Similarly, Maria who works as a trainee news editor, showed her concern that her current job might not fit well with a family life.

> I don't imagine myself working as a news editor full-time. It could be because of the long hours working. They work shifts and thinking about it, if in the future I will have my own family, I won't be able to manage. The working hours are not ideal to have a family because they are not flexible hours.

Such a statement, therefore suggests that young women are not completely released from gender roles. More generally, the accounts of participants revealed that besides individual attribution of success, they were also aware of gender role expectations. Regardless of the attempts at the equalisation of the sexes and of granting greater choice for women in designing their own life beyond traditional gender roles, younger female participants felt conditioned more than males to juggle a career and a family in the near future.

Although young participants felt that they had roughly the same chances as men at work, they expressed the view that women must, at some point in her career, choose between work and family. Evidently, the low rate of female employment in the research location, at 43.6 per cent in 2011 (Labour Force Survey, 2011) manifests how women are still 'burdened' with family duties, and childcare is still an 'obstacle' for women's career (Visanich, 2003).

9.6   Youth's Transition from Dependence to Independence

Undoubtedly, youth's transition from dependence to independence has shifted in the forty-five year period. One aspect of this shift is the changing attitude towards parental support. For individuals who experienced their youth in the early 1960s, it felt appropriate to help their parents financially. Especially those who were in post-compulsory education, like the participants, they regarded themselves as upwardly mobile and felt obliged to contribute part of their earnings to the family. Paul told me, 'we used to dream of finding a stable job to earn money and help out the family'.

When speaking about their financial situation in the 1960s, the majority of participants maintained that it was customary to give part of their wage to their parents. It was not considered appropriate for this generation of youth to be financially dependent on their parents, instead they felt obliged to find a job, even whilst studying, and contribute to the family earnings. For instance, Charles is an exemplary case of how he felt accountable during his financially dependent days on his parents;

> When I was eighteen, I was still dependant on my parents. I, like any other teenager, still lived at home, so as far as food and clothing were concerned I had no financial worries, my parents still provided that. But as you reach the late teens you start to get the urge that you want to be independent. It really felt bad that you have to ask your parents to fund your entertainment and any of your humble whims or for joining your friends to buy a coke and a bag of crisps, or your first beer, or taking your girlfriend to the six o'clock cinema show. It was embarrassing, and you felt helpless and guilty at the same time.

Young individuals like Charles in the 1960s did not expect to be financially supported by their parents. John maintained that he strived to enter a university course irrespective that it was too expensive for him. Even though he was determined to reach his goal and become an engineer, he said 'I didn't dare to ask my father to pay for me'. Instead, he worked hard to be over-qualified and win a scholarship to enter university. Older participants maintained that in their youth they felt guilty of their financial dependency on their parents. They often found ways how to ease this burden by contributing to the family's income upon their first wage. In one of our conversations, Charles maintained that when he really needed money to go and work abroad during a period of high youth unemployment, his father gave him

money to settle down abroad. Yet, promptly after earning his first pay cheque, Charles felt obliged to send back his father the money;

> I remember my father giving me twenty pounds, about €46, (more than two weeks wages) in case I wanted to return after a few days...I returned the money that he gave me after a month, knowing fully well that my family needed it more than I did.

Young people felt accountable during their dependence days on their parents. Older participants, unlike younger ones, emphasised the importance of their transition from dependence to independence as a stage toward adulthood. Compared to youth in the 1960s, young people in late modernity referred more to the belief in individual control to live a 'life of one's own'. Nevertheless, this attitude is contradictory. From my interpretation of youth's accounts, they seem to want to be more autonomous yet at the same time they are extending their dependence on their parents. They do not seem to be exercising individual control to move out of the confines of their parental home and state that they are comfortable being supported financially by their parents. Their extended periods of institutionalised education and training, work and unemployment are considered as the main reason why young people are delaying leaving their parental home. The increase in the training period means extended financial dependence on the family.

Delayed entry in the labour market has created extended periods of dependence. Young participants declared that they felt dependent on the parents yet for them this did not reflect a feeling of lack of control. During the various interviews with young people, they maintained that they did not feel obliged to contribute financially at home and to help ease the family's financial situation.

9.7   Shifts in Structures of Dependency

Shifts in the structures of dependency are, in part, the consequences of economic change. In the advanced global neo-liberal economy, based on competition, young people are expected to be highly skilled before joining

the workforce. Youth's academic performance has become a prerequisite for economic survival, in a climate of increasing job competition (Beck, 1992). This generation of youth are in an advantageous position for having an array of courses to choose from, compared to older participants. University courses became greatly accessible, especially for middle class youth, who possess social and cultural advantages. The system is more diverse, with a range of academic and vocational courses to choose from.

Younger respondents regarded themselves as having more autonomy in deciding what to do with their life. When I spoke to twenty-two year old Mona, she addressed what she considered to be her advantageous position of being young today compared her grandmother's youth.

> In certain ways we are better off. Better off in terms of opportunities but at the same time we need to see it within that context and see what opportunities they had back then. My grandmother when she was my age she didn't have so much opportunities for higher education. Also they didn't use to encourage women to advance in their education, and that is something that I don't like. My grandmother lived in a small village and back then they had the idea that she needed to quit school to help her mother and siblings. We are better off in that regard because we have opportunities.

Educational achievement for youth in the 1960s was more based on ascribed characteristics like class and gender and the number of young people in post-compulsory education was limited. University courses were out of reach for most middle class youth and only a limited number of vocational courses were available for this youth group, such as teaching and nursing. Paul emphasised how 'university was purely for the well-off. I never ever dreamt of going to university'. When speaking about their educational opportunities, respondents considered their family background as a key factor in determining one's chances in life. Coming from an upper middle class family background, Victor earnestly explained his class roots when referring to his father as the only notary in the village and his grandfather as the first dental surgeon in Malta. He commented on his parent's educational expectations for his siblings and himself. His brothers entered university and studied medicine or law, whereas, he finished post-compulsory education and found a job within the civil service. He also recalled how his eldest brother even pursued post-graduate education abroad.

For the average middle class youth however, career paths were limited in the 1960s. The life chances of most middle class youth in the 1960s were aptly highlighted by Paul when he said that this youth group could opt for 'either do the civil service exam to work for the government or else you work as a teacher'.

Richard also outlined the same argument when saying

> It was not easy, in the 1960s to say that I want to work in this or that line of work, or that office, or have that kind of job especially if you come from a low class background.

A significant distinctive marker between the two generations of youth is the increase in the importance of qualifications. The achievement of qualifications, especially a university degree, had become a universal goal for the majority of middle class youth. Older participants maintained that an Ordinary Level of education was much more prestigious than it is today. Richard told me that 'it was a big deal doing your O' Levels at that time, not like today'. There was also a dramatic shift in the structure of the courses. Courses like teaching and nursing were part of vocational education, whereas today they are taking place at university. Grace pointed to such a structural difference in courses emphasising in particular the fact that the nursing course was not a university degree during her training years as a nurse. Speaking about the teaching course, Mary pointed out that 'nowadays students need to obtain a Bachelors degree in education but in those days teachers used to follow a two year course as boarders'. In a similiar manner, Paul compared his life situation to that of his son-in-law today;

> My son-in-law just finished his Masters in Radiography. Back then if you wanted to work within that field, you would simply learn at the workplace and maybe spend some time as an apprentice taking X-Rays. Not like today, you have to do a four year academic course to be a radiographer.

Therefore, the delayed transition to the labour market because of training has created extended periods of dependence. Key factors identified by Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) on late modernity are manifested in particular in the shift in youth's experiences within the educational setting. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim crystallised this new form of dependency when saying:

> What we call a life of one's own is thus neither the expression of a bubbling individualism and egoism that has reached epidemic proportions, nor a life in which individuals float free in determining themselves, but rather a life of thorough conformity that is binding on more and more groups within the context of labour markets buffered by the welfare state (2008 [2002]:151).

Within a global neo-liberal climate of competition and diminishing job security as well as increasing flexible short-term contract jobs, young people are anxious and find it a must to spend more time in education and equip themselves with a couple of degrees. Irrespective of the fact that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008[2002]) deny the connection between individualisation and neo-liberalism, there is a close affinity between the two (McGuigan, 2010). In a neo-liberal society, the focus is on the individual, rather than on society as a whole. With the privatisation of state enterprises such as in telecommunications, attention is put on the individual competitor. By using the paradox of 'institutional individualism', Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008 [2002]) referred to the way that legal norms of the welfare state are making individuals rather than groups dependent on institutions as well as the way that 'dependency upon the market extends into every area of life' (2008 [2002]:203).

Youth are increasingly expected to negotiate as individuals. Young people I spoke have pointed out this fact. There is a tendency for youth, living in a neo-liberal climate of competition, to invest in their marketability to compete in the job market. Mark thought that having a second degree is necessary today. With the increase in flexible short-term jobs and the diminishing of 'stable' jobs, middle class young people like Mark and his friends, find it adequate to lengthen their years in full-time education especially in a climate of uncertainty. A second degree is almost a natural step after obtaining a first degree especially for middle class young people like the fieldwork participants. In effect, the educational system is more than ever becoming a structure of dependency of youth. Mark told me that it is taken for granted that one has to obtain qualifications before even attempting to join the job market and getting married;

> I think that 15 years in your life is programmed beforehand for learning. Even those who do not enter university, usually get some kind of diploma...It is only

after obtaining a Masters degree today that young people can start thinking of starting their own life and get married.

The life situation of youth is more anxious and intense, with increasing pressures to obtain more qualifications in a highly commodified educational system. In a form of compromised choice, young people are presented with a multitude of alternatives to choose from however they felt insecure in their decisions. Uncertainty tends to sow the seeds of anxiety in youth. It is a matter of fact that most young people I spoke to were concerned about their future. For instance, Lara expressed her sense of anxiety when saying;

> I am studying but I don't know for what. It was just a normal process that I had entered university after obtaining my Advanced Levels. But still, I don't know what I want to do in life and which job to go for.

Despite having more access to post-compulsory education and obtaining more degrees, young people are not guaranteed secure jobs. Jobs fluctuate with the demands of the market. Various scholars refer to the Anglo-American movement, from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, as the mass transition from the classroom to the workplace (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997]). This process was delayed in the research location, in part, because of its colonial status and independence in the 1960s that generated high unemployment, especially amongst youth. Nevertheless, for youth in the 1960s with more social and capital advantages, their post-compulsory training secured a 'job for life'. To my question, whether in the 1960s young people with post-compulsory education felt anxious when seeking a full-time job, Victor replied that youth with post-compulsory education were automatically guaranteed a job.

Elise also remarked how a teaching diploma guaranteed a job for life; 'For me the fact that I had a certificate made it easier to find employment'. Moreover, she maintained that she felt stress-free after finishing her teaching course because she knew she had a job for life. She said 'I was twenty-one when I started working, but at least I had the job. I think now they have much more stress'.

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Moreover Paul, emphasised the need in his youth to have job stability, especially within the civil service. He elaborated on this by saying that

> after finishing post-compulsory education, I sat for the civil service exam and when I passed I went to work at the customs department. I worked there for the next 42 years.

The notion of greater choice within the process of individualisation is therefore contradictory. In the neo-liberal socio-economic context, youth are conductors of their own lives yet they have no guarantee of job stability. What's more, individuals are burdened with the blame when facing unemployment.

9.8   Youth Identity and the Consumer Market

Ever since the making of the 'teenager' in the 1960s, driven by the consumer market, young people from both generations in the research location constructed their identity especially in line with the Anglo-American mode. The understanding of identity of oneself and of others is an integral part of social life because it is only when people distinguish different identities that they can relate to each other (Jenkins, 1996). It involves establishing similarities and differences between social groups.   A distinctive marker between the two generations of youth is the shift in youth's identity. In line with Stuart Hall's (1992) study on the reconstruction of identity from ascribed status that conditioned one's identity to the existence of fragmented identities, this study establishes a similiar shift.

Participants who experienced their youth in the 1960s enthusiastically commented on how they constructed their youth identity by adopting and adapting glocally Anglo-American trends in line with local peculiarities. The Church occupied a paternal role, censoring anything that was considered inappropriate and sheltering youth from the more secular lifestyles of Western youth. In the research location, youth experiencing the 1960s were aware of the so-called 'sexual revolution' in the West, yet their self-image and identity were still very much preconditioned by tradition rather than by the consumer market alone.

Respondents who experienced their youth forty-five years ago commented on how their identity was mainly based on traditional preconditions like religion that limited their autonomy. Richard, quite vividly recalled his experience of organising a disco in the 1960s and he had to first convince the village priest and have the playlist approved before being given the permission to organise such an event. Aside from this, most youth clubs were run by priests in an attempt to keep an eye on youth's expression of restricted freedom.

Young people adapted to the trends they saw on TV and magazines and made them their own. All older participants referred to the gender-defined customary activity of sewing for girls. Richard commented on the role of his sister to sew his clothes;

> She used to sew shirts and even trousers for me and my shirts used to have flower patterns and the trousers were made differently from those worn by my father; they were trousers similar to those worn by my friends.

Charles, a passionate lover of 1960s music who used to keep updated with the latest hits by tuning in to pirate radio stations in America, referred to the limitations of youth mainly for the reason that the traditional conservative location 'delayed' trends. Charles maintained that in effect in the 1960s, they were imitating the 1950s;

> Subconsciously we were still living the 1950s although the 1960s were mirrored to us through the TV screen, the cinema and magazines of the day, imported from England. Still, feature films were shown in Malta some six months after their release abroad, so as it always happens, we were watching things with a retro effect. It was only the newsreels that were 'current', dated by a few weeks.

Undoubtedly, there is a shift in the material culture available to both youth generations. Older participants commented on the customary activity of going to music shops on Saturday mornings to go through the latest LPs. Charles, as an enthusiastic LP collector, spoke about his weekly visit to the music shop. Whilst carefully polishing a vinyl record during one of the interviews, Charles told me that music is now downloaded easily without the need to visit record shops and thus, its meaning as a collectable item is diminishing. Instead, the use of MP4 players has undermined the significance of having a tangible music collection.

In a similiar way, the contemporary use of digital photography brought a change in the way individuals treat photos and albums. When I visited Mary, one afternoon, she was keen to go through her family photo albums that she treated with great care. Printed memories gave life to what it was like for her to be young in the 1960s. Photographs were not simply representations of her younger self, with different hairstyle, dress and existing in a different time and space, but flipping through the pages of a photo album with her was in itself a multi-sensory activity. The actual feel of the printed picture, its ageing signs present a different experience to that of seeing a digital imaging that uses an electronic image sensor to record the moment, as opposed to chemical photography, involving the chemical change of film to record an event. Just like old books, photo albums acquire a smell with time, often of mildew or mould especially in high humidity storage location. The residue of mildew or mould often changes the texture, colour of the picture and transforms the caption with time. Digital photography is dissolving such a problem and has created a new form of saving intangible memories, without the need to use a film and to print and store photographs.

It is common for young people today to make use of digital 'point-and-shoot' cameras, a widespread consumer product easily available and used to capture events without the need for chemical processing. Instead of the physicality of the photo albums, a number of websites offer free space to upload photos and share photos with the rest of the world in seconds. Young people today enthusiastically use digital photography and find it second nature for them to record their everyday life, upload their pictures online as they carry mobile phones with integrated digital cameras. Unlike film photography, that requires expenditure of supplies and developing, the cost of digital photography only involves the initial cost of the equipment. However, it is interesting to note that twenty-one year old Matthew refused to have the latest Kindle eBook devices for the reason that it hindered the experience of reading a book and collecting them. Such device transforms the reading experience itself. Matthew commented by saying 'when you have a book in hand, you can go and read it by the sea, smell the papers

and feel its texture. There is a romanticised idea about reading a book unlike the use of such devices'.

The increasing influence of marketing mechanisms on youth identities was a significant indicator of generational change in this study. With the advancement in communication, youth identities in the research location became more at par with those in the West. Marketing mechanisms in society are more than ever extending into every crevice of youth's life, and presenting youth with an array of identities. Giddens (1991) maintained that 'what to wear, what to eat....all such choices are decisions not only about how to act but who to be' (Giddens, 1991:81). Quite paradoxically, apart from granting more choice to devise their own identity, it is evident from the interviews that youth are more than ever becoming dependent upon the market. Their compromised choices are taken in line with the way the market dictates and seduces them to consume commodities that promise individual freedom. Whereas youth identity became less of an ascribed fate, it is more than ever dependent upon worldwide marketing.

Most young people interviewed, immersed in the marketing frenzy designed to turn a profit, felt the need to express their identity in terms of what they consume. This was particularly true for twenty-two year old Maria, because she felt she had a 'cool' identity when wearing branded clothes. Maria's comments very much crystallises the quest for cool; a notion that was thoroughly investigated by Naomi Klein (2005 [2000]) in her book *No Logo*. Klein decoded the meaning of cool for contemporary youth and the way such notion is riddled with anxiety and self-doubt. Klein (2005 [2000]) claimed that an industry of 'cool hunters' are constantly searching for cutting-edge lifestyles and advertising it as hip. Moreover, Bauman (1991) argued that 'seduction is the paramount tool of integration (of the reproduction of domination) in a consumer society. It is made possible once the market succeeds in making the consumers dependent on itself' (1991:98). Mona, who was also very much aware of this form of dependency, told me

> actually I think that we are made to believe that we need to have it but in reality we don't need it. I think when you are meeting friends frequently you don't really need a phone. But now it is as if everyone needs to have one.

All participants, except Mona, expressed their seduction for branded goods for the simple reason that everything that is branded stimulates coolness. A consequence of the continuous bombardment of marketing machines to leach on youth's 'pocket-money' wages is resulting in a generation burdened by debt. Anya Kamenetz (2007) commented on this by referring to the way hedonistic consumerism coupled with the financial situation of youth, with student loans and credit card debt resulting in a 'generation debt'. Young people trained into this mentality are brought up with the idea that it is normal to buy on credit. It is not only justified but also seen as an obvious solution to buy things that you cannot afford; to satisfy 'artificially created needs' as Leslie Sklair (2002) very well put it.

However, young participants did not consider themselves to be overspending and they did not believe that they were spending beyond their means. Young participants maintained that they still embraced the traditional fundamental value of keeping some money aside for a rainy day; evidence of how global trends are transcended in a glocal manner. Jane, for instance, said she is not the kind to stretch her means for something that she cannot afford; She told me 'I won't buy just because I like it'.

Nonetheless, the empirical evidence does not suggest a blurring of the boundaries between the two generations of youth in question, as the research by Biggs et al. (2007) has suggested. In their study in Britain, Biggs et al. (2007) explored the relationship between adult ageing and patterns of consumption. They maintained that 'boomers characteristically saw the 'blurring' of generations as something that had taken place between themselves and these younger groups' (2007: 45). This may suggest that whilst boomers in Britain experienced an affluent youth and could therefore show affinity with younger groups (Biggs et al., 2007), the so-called baby boomers in Malta experienced their youth through periods of colonial economic instability. In effect, the 'baby boomers' in the research location emphasised the value of saving money not only in their youth but also today as third-agers.

9.9   Distinctive Shifts in Saving and Spending Money

Particularly, the most salient marker of different generational attitudes is towards spending and buying on credit. This study empirically verifies the dramatic generational difference in the mentality of youth towards money during the last forty-five years. John's reply is an exemplified case of the stark difference in the meaning he gives to money compared to his son's attitude. He told me

> You cannot even compare. Our children were brought up in a completely different world than ours. I see the effect it had on both generations. I still have the mentality of saving up and being careful about how I spend my money but for my son money is meaningless. The idea of saving is non-existent. He spends all his money. What is quite striking is that he doesn't study with the intention of making more money. I used to study to earn more and to be more financially stable but he sees it differently. My son studies not because he wants to be in a better financial situation but because he likes the subject. It is a different mentality. He was brought up differently; he had it all.

For the younger generation, brought up with plastic money, the significance of earning and spending money is being lost. Wages are just digits and payments are taking place against a pin code. Loans too are not seen as dreadful as they really are; they are just digits. Moreover, it seems like it is considered appropriate for young people to spend money to acquire new experiences. Unlike the older generation, participants experiencing youth in the late 2000s expressed their need to travel often and gain new experiences. Just like what Bauman's (1996) calls the 'tourist' attitude, young individuals expressed their desire to experience the world outside their everyday routine, even for a few days or months.

Lara, for example, had travelling as her top priority now and she imagines herself studying and living abroad. Similarly, Andre went as far as to say that his priority for the next five years is to travel. He took part-time jobs and saves money simply to travel. His thirst to experience new cultures and roam around freely without a care in the world is his main motivation to get through university life and drag himself to graduate.

> My priority is to travel around Europe and Australia. So I am planning to spend the next five years travelling. As soon as I graduate I will not start working immediately, I will travel instead. Ten years are too far off but I hope I will be

settled by then. For instance, I wish to start my own business on web design. I wish to have a job which allows me time to travel.

On the contrary, for retiree John, travelling is interpreted more in terms of an expense rather than an experience. He could not make sense of his son's attitude to travel frequently without considering its expense.

> Travelling was also something quite rare to do. Today it is so typical for young people to travel. It is as if you are going to another village. Even now I think twice before we decide to travel. I calculate exactly how much it will cost and take time to actually take my decision. But for you, you travel frequently without a care in the world. Our son travels alot. He meets his friends in Brussels as if he is going to another village.

With the decline in savings and the dematerialisation of money, debt is assumed to be an inevitable part of everyday life for the younger generation. It is a matter of fact that taking loans especially to finance post-compulsory education or to buy a property, hardly needs any justification for youth in neo-liberal society. Debt is seen as an inevitable part of their everyday life and, in a contradictory way, it is associated with one's transition from dependence to independence. Young participants said that it was inevitable to engage in life-long debt payments when they leave their parental home; Mark exemplified the replies of youth when saying 'today we cannot live without loans'.

Such conventional wisdom however was not so ordinary in the 1960s. Empirical evidence showed that it was appropriate for young people in the 1960s to fear debts and save money. During one casual conversation with Paul who is in his early sixties, he maintained that he was trained to save the little money he earned and plan his expenses in life to avoid entering into debts. Debt was assumed to be temporary and it was uppermost in the priority for youth in the 1960s to pay it off quickly. To my question of whether he ever considered taking a loan to buy his house, seeing it as an investment rather than debt, he replied

> We used to fear debts. We never dreamt of buying a place. I didn't even have a car. We used to be satisfied with the public transport. It was later in life when I got my first car. It was after I got married. First I rented a place and then when I could afford it, I bought it and renovated it. It was after I bought my house that I bought a car. I did alot of renovations myself at home to save money. That's

what we used to do. We used to try and do everything ourselves...I remember
giving my mother half my wage. Today young people don't even dream about it.
With the other half, I used to save some money.

In a similiar manner, Victor told me how his

mother's concern was that we don't go into debt. She used to teach us how to
save money and investing our money in banks so that we would not need loans.

Compared to their predecessors, young people in the first decade of the new
millennium are facing more pressure to invest in a private pension fund.
Ongoing reforms in the Western welfare state include policies for 'replacing
social welfare systems by private insurance schemes and private pension
funds' (Gorz, 1999:20). The lack of economic sustainability as regards to
pension schemes suggests that young people should be preoccupied by
what the financial future holds for them especially in their retirement years.

Both generations of youth maintained that they did not think about
retirement. It was not their priority because it seemed to be too far in the
distant future; a typical reply was 'I don't think that far'. Youth did not think
about their distant future because as Jane remarked 'you don't know what is
going to happen tomorrow' let alone in forty years time. Reminiscent of the
lyrics 'I hope I die before I get old' in 'My Generation' by 'The Who', some
youth stated that they may not even live up to their old age. Mona expressed
this view saying 'I wish to live till sixty and then die because I think I would
have lived enough'. Sandra's approach to her retirement years exemplified
the responses of many of the young adults I had spoken to. She said 'I don't
care, honest. I care what is going to happen tomorrow, maybe next year, but
not so far off.... It doesn't even cross my mind'. Likewise Andre claimed

I don't save for my pension. It doesn't bother me. I wish we will still have a
pension but it is not something that I think about now. Maybe in the future I will
save a percentage of my wage for my pension but not now for sure.

Undoubtedly such lack of interest of young people in their retirement is not a
contemporary phenomenon. Older participants also referred to their lack of
concern about their retirement during their youthful days. The older
generation who reached pension age, presently at 61 years in the research
location, maintained that although they were trained to save money, they

never thought as far as preparing for retirement in their youth. Joan told me that as a young woman, she never thought about retirement, let alone saving for it.

When I asked young people whether they are thinking of starting a pension fund to invest for their retirement, several respondents maintained that they could not afford to save for such distant future. Maria maintained, 'what will I have left from my wage? I have other priorities rather than thinking about my pension now. When I will be in my 40s, I may start one'. Jane and Anthony were particularly more aware than others about the lack of pension guarantee. Jane, in her fretful tone declared 'I can't just relax and do nothing because it makes me mad'. She elaborated more on her future concern by asserting

> I am a person who is quite anxious about the future. I do think about it especially now that the pension age is rising and I often think about whether I will be granted a pension. I don't think we will have a pension. I think we need to invest in a private pension fund. It is something that worries me. The indications are showing that we won't have a pension. I would start saving when I will have a stable job. I will keep something aside for a rainy day.

In a more pessimistic tone, Matthew imagined a more aggressive capitalist cutthroat society in forty years time with the invasion of an individualist existence;

> Most probably, when we grow old there would not be retirement and no pensions for us. Most probably we would die on our desks and they would cremate us at work with the idea of recycling the workforce.

Even though Anthony was worried about his financial security, he believed that it was better to 'splash out now whilst I'm free because when I will have a family with children and a house loan, I will not be able to'. The imagination of retirement for others was more to do with relaxation and leisure rather than anxiety. What is most striking is that their imagination of relaxation is parallel to what is presented in adverts of active and luxurious later life. Lara dreamt that during her later life she will have time to 'travel round the world on a yacht and play golf'. For others, their vision of retirement is one of relaxation dedicated to 'creative writing and reading'.

9.10   Generational Difference in the Use of Information and
        Communication Technologies

During the last forty-five years, changes in youth's life biography included greater individual choice, increased personal isolation, as well as the redefinition of the relationship between private and public life – changes associated especially with the global neo-liberal free-market economy and the advancement of communication technology. A great deal of attention was lavished on the way communication technological devices shifted the patterns of youth's everyday life. From youth's accounts, it is unmistakable that the technologically proficient younger generation, compared to youth in the 1960s, occupies an advantageous position due to having greater access to a range of technological devices. This difference was also noticeable by older respondents like Charles who stated that;

> As for the internet, I only wish it existed during my youth days, it has such a huge potential in all aspects, but then again on the social side, we used to enjoy meeting friends and enjoy each others' company as often as we could.

The usefulness of increasingly technological communication devices such as mobile phones, Ipods and laptops stems largely from their portability and accessibility. They provide access to information more efficiently, with new forms of interfaces that are connecting them to the world. It was empirically verified in this research that 'the medium, or process, of our time – electric technology – is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life' (McLuhan, 2001[1967]:8). Pedagogic training into digital devices especially for the younger generation has brought with it a shift in the ways of seeing, talking, and behaving. Andrew Sibley, the Head of Brand and Advertising for Europe for Cisco Networking Systems, in an interview with Brooker (2010) maintained 'to me, a fridge isn't technology. To me, a phone is technology – but it isn't technology to the younger generation that has grown up with it' (Brooker, 2010:554). This distinction in the interpretation of such devices was particularly brought up in the various discussions with participants. For the older generation who were brought up with the introduction of the fridge

and television, it was difficult to comprehend the new vocabulary, gestures and conventions of the mobile phone and the Internet.

Without a doubt, technological portable devices are amongst the most fetishised by the younger generation and they are fully incorporated into their everyday lives. For the technologically proficient generation, often known by buzzwords like the 'Google Generation' or 'Generation Y', Internet-connectedness on the move is assumed a need, because as twenty-two year old Jane pointed out 'our life is online after all'. When speaking to young people about how they incorporate technological devices in their everyday life, they pointed out that they took it for granted to communicate via email, keep in touch on Facebook or 'Skype'. It is a customary activity for young people to sms friends to decide on the place and time to meet. Maria exemplified this when she told me

> I can't imagine myself without it though. For example even when you are going out and want to meet somewhere, it is useful because you can just make a phone call.

Nonetheless, the situation was different for the youth generation in the 1960s. They did not have such devices and they maintained that they used to decide from a week before about their next meeting.

New portable technological devices are not only carried around for their function but also for their 'coolness' (McGuigan, 2009). For most young people interviewed, they are an identity symbol, personalised with distinction designs, 'mobile accessories', and ring tones. Attention is put on individual autonomy especially in the marketing of 'cool' portable digital devices that are said to empower their users. To quote some headlines on the new Kinect Xbox – 'It's All about You'; 'You are the Controller'. In the comfort of your home, this new technological device sensors your movements and provides what Baudrillard (1988) calls a 'simulacrum' of physical leisure activities. In addition, young individuals I spoke to felt autonomous when they carried their iPods with them to listen to whatever they want wherever they are. They felt free to control what to listen to and see at the comfort of their own privatised shell in a public space. This intersects with Williams's (1988

[1964]) idea of a mobile privatisation in his novel *Second Generation.* With the use of Ipods and laptops, young individuals are cocooned in their own 'windowed shell' of private space. In addition, such devices made cultural consumption a more privatised individual activity. Public places like theatres and cinemas are not the only places for cultural consumption, but individuals can privately choose their own space and time to consume cultural products.

It is also the case that the communication devices like the iPhone and its counterpart BlackBerry are changing one's relationship with the immediate and global environment. Young people interviewed maintained that such devices made it easier to communicate with friends and family around the world. It changed their perception of the immediate urban environment as well as on a more global scale. In effect, there has been a shift in perception when it comes to the idea of distances; the time-space compression. Brooker (2010) aptly referred to the way that such technological devices are changing our immediate surroundings as well as the way we experience broader, global distance. It is second nature for the younger generation today to 'visit' overseas locations through 3D digital re-creations like Google Street views, access online information and become familiar with new words and meanings of the online digital world; terms and meanings that may seem alien to older generations who lacked such training. For instance, it is a customary activity for fieldwork participants to 'Google' information, or to take a photo and Facebook it.

Moreover, technology is changing the definitions of words like 'Blackberry', 'Apple' and 'Notebook'. With words like Blackberry and Apple, the younger generation trained with technological devices as part of their everyday apparatus, understand brands of latest technological devices, rather than types of fruits. There is also a shift in what is meant by the term 'notebook'. For the older generation, the word 'notebook' meant a binder of a number of pages used to scribble notes, while for the younger generation it is associated with laptops. Portable computers have in fact taken the role of the 'original' notebook and it is almost natural for students to scribble their notes and ideas on laptops.

In contrast to the older generation who lacked training into such digital devices, the younger generation today cannot remember life before mobile phones, computers and the Internet, let alone fridges and televisions. They were trained to incorporate digital technology into their everyday lives, using it as a tool to transform the way they study, work, communicate, and navigate space, on their immediate urban and global scale.

Notwithstanding the availability of such technological devices, most respondents in their early 1960s were reluctant to use them, mainly because they were unfamiliar with interaction techniques. They did not clearly understand the benefit of new technology, such as the mobile phone, as a practical tool but perceived it as a 'gadget'. John exemplified the responses of most retirees interviewed. Although new technological devices fascinated him, he found it difficult to use them. He pointed out that the functioning of his new Smart phone was too complicated for him. It is also often the case that screens and buttons of such devices are too small to see and operate for individuals of this generation who may have failing eye sight.

Equally reluctant to use new technological devices, Charles commented on the use of mobile phone;

> the baby boomers may be a little more cautious when using today's 'gadgets' like the mobile phone for instance. I only use it for an emergency and not for idle talk.

Yet, the introduction of new technological devices in the 1960s, like television, brought significant changes in the patterns of the lives for youth in the research location. For the first time, this generation had access, in the comfort of their home, to see events unfolding in other nearby countries. For Williams (1988 [1964]), television brought forward the idea of mobile privatisation by means of a home-centred way of living. Nonetheless, the peculiarities of the research location played an important role in the interpretation and use of this machine. Older respondents outlined the sociality of television that was not simply confined 'privately' into one's home, but it was 'shared' by the neighbourhood community. John explained this

clearly when saying that 'those who used to have a television set at home, used to leave their front door open so that children could peep in and watch it too'.

On the other hand, new technological devices are driving forward the idea of personal isolation. In a form of 'mobile privatisation', individuals are carrying with them their shell-like world of virtual friendships. Despite the benefits of greater individual autonomy and choice, a new standardisation is occurring through the individual's dependency upon communication technology. Young people in this study admitted that they had become hooked on such technology.

Manuel Castells's (1996) in his influential work *The Rise of the Network Society* addressed the Information technology revolution that is determining the lives of individuals in late modernity. Despite the critique of technological determinism, this work reveals the complex power relationships of digital networks that are shaping the individuals' everyday life. Irrespective of youth's increased choices in life by the undermining of traditional structures, Information and Communication Technologies have become new structures of dependency for youth in their everyday life. This was aptly manifested in the various conversations with youth. Sandra, for instance, spoke about her dependence on her mobile phone. She commented on the way her mobile phone was an essential tool for social life;

> It is always with me my Blackberry. If I happen to go to work and I forget it at home, I try to find some time to go back home for it. I am a bit dependent on it cause it is my contact to the outside world, especially when I'm at work.

Whereas not so long ago the mobile phone was a tool that was associated with business persons, it has fast became a necessary popularised leisure medium especially for the young (McGuigan, 2009). Luisa admitted that she could not live without a mobile phone, and always carries two mobile phone sets with her; 'I always carry two mobiles with me because from one I have a contract with free smses. I sent about 200 messages this last month. So I am saving'. Equally hooked Anthony remarked;

I am so dependent on the Internet that I got a mobile phone with Internet and I would never leave home without it. I can forget alot of stuff at home but never my mobile phone.

In line with these comments, it can be argued that individuals are not completely in total control of their lives for the reason that they are more than ever determined by technological devices. There is hardly any kind of technological virtual world like Facebook that is more fetishised and pervasive in all aspects of youth's everyday life experience. Some young people were conscious of how dependent they are to technology. Maria told me 'I wish they never existed so that we won't be dependent on them'. Equally concerned, Matthew maintained that 'unfortunately technology has handicapped us'. He referred to the way that 'technology is a detriment as much as it is a blessing'.

Technological advancement is also eroding the definition between private and public life. A clear distinctive marker between both generations of youth is the interpretation of private and public lives. From the accounts of young individuals, it was evident that they considered appropriate to write detailed descriptions of their everyday life and upload photos and videos that are windows of their private life. When I asked whether Facebook is intruding their private life, a typical response was that 'Facebook can invade our private lives yes, but then one can choose how much information one shares on it'. They felt in control and treated Facebook as a 'democratic' space for voicing one's life. David divulged that he 'wants the Facebook page to be always open on my computer'. Similarly, Luisa considered herself as a 'Facebook freak'; 'I want it on all the time, can you believe it I left my computer switched on so that as soon as I arrive home I find it on'.

Compared to his friends who 'post their lives' online, Andre was aware that he is not a 'Facebook addict'. In a similar manner manifesting her degree of dependence, Lara maintained that 'I feel guilty when I don't update my status. I always update my status; I feel I have too'. Nonetheless, Lara was conscious that Facebook may invade one's privacy, when she said, 'a complete stranger can still see your info page and all your photos so I guess

you're not being as private as you think'. In line with previous comments that read 'people think that Facebook is a diary', Paul pointed out that there 'are fine lines between using social networks as a diary with comments that make public all your personal activity'.

It is undoubtedly the case that this blurring of the effacement between private and public space is made in the name of 'democratic space'. Older respondents felt unable to understand youth's enthusiasm for such networking websites and most of them abhorred this activity. Paul was particularly concerned about data protection in sites like Facebook.

> Alot of people were seeing my contacts too and adding me up to their 'friends list'. I didn't like it that everyone was seeing my profile. Even when it comes to emailing there is no privacy because I can send you an email and you forward it to someone else leaving my email address visible for all to see. So I think that there is no privacy.

9.11   Conclusion

Undoubtedly, there have been significant shifts in the life situation of youth over the last forty-five years. There are indications that the so-called baby boomers perceived their youth as distinctive compared to the youth generation in the 2000s. The apparent changes in youth's life-plan were explained by reference to the accounts of participants. Primarily, common youth experiences for both generations in question, such as the quest for autonomy as well as the consciousness of sex, were articulated. Findings in this study support the argument that traditional life-plans of youth are becoming more obscure and instead a universal belief in individual choice is dominant in youth's life situation in late modernity. The accounts of the interviews demonstrated how the process of individualised youth is adapted in a glocal manner at a 'slower' pace in the research location, in line with its peculiar characteristics such as its socio-economic and cultural situation. Similiar to the argument of Sultana and Baldacchino (1994), it was evident that individuals in Malta have managed to accommodate outside European influences yet retain a strong sense of national identity.

This chapter addressed economic and technological changes and their impact on reshaping the structures of education, work, family network and the everyday life of youth. Furthermore, it contributed to a better understanding of the shifts in youth's attitudes since the early 1960s, namely on events that bridged youth and adulthood and perceptions of savings, travelling and consumption. In many areas of this research, empirical evidence supported the Western individualised model, especially in the case that the more insecure and flexible economic system is promoting greater individual autonomy, yet it is also creating more anxiety. Young individuals are increasingly devising their own life-plan without relying on traditional structures yet having new structures of dependency. For youth in the 1960s, life events were most of the time predicted by traditional institutions that often constrained one's actions and conduct. Older fieldwork participants, speaking about their youth, maintained that they had common unquestionable goals to follow in their transition into adulthood – main events included finding full-time employment, marriage, and family formation. For the more privileged middle class youth in the 1960s', like the fieldwork participants, post-compulsory education guaranteed 'a job for life' and life-long security.

Youth in the 2000s are more than ever in control of their life situation. They manifested a feeling of autonomy in their life-plan and their social environment, but in contrast to youth forty-five years ago, they also have new demands made by the educational system and the job market that are creating anxiety about their future. It is evident from the qualitative research that the process of individualisation is paradoxical. While young people living in the neo-liberal social setting have greater personal choice, yet they live in a world with no certainties, only alternatives and with new forms of dependencies. Youth are more technologically proficient than their older counterparts, yet they are also more dependent on technological devices. Unlike the older participants, it is clear that younger participants felt that they cannot do without technological devices like mobile phones.

This chapter also addressed the way Information technological devices are influencing youth's constructive use of personal time as well as their interpretation of private and public space. Their accounts manifest how individuals experiencing youth in the globalised neo-liberal context are aware of these dependencies. They were also aware of their need to stay longer in post-compulsory education. Compared to youth in the 1960s, it is undoubtedly a fact that there has been an increase in the importance of educational qualifications amongst young participants. The achievement of qualifications is a universal goal for this group of privileged youth, with social and cultural capital. Nonetheless, it is also remarkable that post-compulsory education and training have became dominant features in the increasingly institutionalised extended periods of transition for youth.

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Chapter 10:   Summary and Conclusions

10.1 Evaluation

The development of youth's life situation over the past forty-five years was roughly understood in terms of two successive phases, from an 'organised' to a more 'individualised' period.   Various scholars refer to the changing Western European tendencies of individuals in the so-called late modernity (Bauman 1996, Beck 1992, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2008[2002], Giddens 1991). These changing patterns make more sense when seen against the backdrop of wider economic processes – from organised to neo-liberal capitalism. Giddens (1991) argued that individuals in high modernity are subject to uncertainties; 'no aspects of our activities follow a pre-ordained course, and all are open to contingent happenings' (Giddens, 1991:28). In a similiar manner Beck (1992) pointed out in *Risk Society* that in the 'new' modernity, life biographies are witnessing a threat in predictability and certainty. Individual behaviour and lifestyles are no longer predicted by social class. By saying this Beck (1992) is not suggesting that social inequalities disappear in late modernity, instead they increasingly exert power on the individual rather than on the social group or class. It is argued that youth are now the directors of their own life;

> Individualisation liberates people from traditional roles and constraints in a number of ways. First, individuals are removed from status-based classes....Second, women are cut loose from their 'status fate' of compulsory housework and support by a husband....Thirdly, the old forms of work routine and discipline are in decline with the emergence of flexible work hours, pluralized underemployment and the decentralization of work sites (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2008[2002]:202-203).

Nevertheless this study demonstrated that for Southern European youth, the situation is not so straightforward. This study was concerned with examining the changes in the life situation of youth in the last forty-five years. I used the concept of individualisation to provide a convincing explanation of the transformations in the life situation of youth in terms of their identity and consciousness as well as their biographical patterns. The distinctiveness of this study lies in the fact that it examined the degree to which assumptions of

the typical Western individualised youth experiences are embedded in a more peculiar Southern European location. Of course, a number of studies have referred to the concept of individualisation (Furlong and Cartmel 2007[1997], McGuigan, 2010, McRobbie, 2002) and the dire situation of youth living in a neo-liberal socio-economic climate (Kamenetz, 2007). However, there are no works that have treated thoroughly the concept of individualisation with the aim of making sense of the structural and biographical shifts in the life situation of a particular social group of youth; those in post-compulsory education, living in a peripheral European location.

Whereas this research can be applied to any given location, it traces the applicability of the typical Western youth experience in Malta, a conservative Southern European location. Attention is put on understanding the particularities of this location as a case study of other settings in the south with similiar ambivalences. This study explored how the advancement of individualisation in the research location has intersected with socio-economic changes, particularly with the increase of neo-liberal practices.

The peculiarities of Malta that influenced the applicability of the process of individualisation rest on three premises – the Catholic religion and its hegemonic power deeply rooted in its ideological web, the strong family kinship network, and the 'delaying' process of neo-liberalism coupled with its post-colonial economic status. Similiar to other countries in the South, Catholicism in Malta occupies a privileged position that is likely to generate consent over the masses. The close relationship of the Church and the state often transmits the perception that the Maltese state represents an entirely Catholic population, whilst allowing no space to other forms of religious practices (Frendo, 1988).

Moreover, there is a strong interplay between the Roman Catholic Church and the Maltese family. Despite the various changes in the family forms and functions, the Maltese family retains traits of the Southern European family model, as explained by Guerrero and Naldini (1997). This model comprises factors like strong kinship ties, nuclear family-oriented, the high

institutionalisation of marriage, and relatively low cohabitation, divorce rates, births outside wedlock and lone parenthood.

Another important peculiarity in Malta that influenced the degree of advancement of the individualisation is its 'delay' in economic processes since the Second World War. Mainly due to its colonial status during the 1960s, economic developments were not at par with the situation of Britain and Western Europe. Malta's economic development reached a surge in last two decades of the twentieth century, with the development of the welfare state, the National Health services and the implementation of subsidised housing. During this time Britain was reversing these processes and implementing a neo-liberal agenda. Whereas in the late 1970s Britain was privatising and reducing state control, the Maltese state had control over banks, telecommunications, broadcasting, air and sea transport and the dockyard. Moreover, Malta's welfare state, comprising of universal benefits like free healthcare and education up to tertiary levels differ from the more advanced neo-liberal situation typical Western mode. Whilst the socially conservative norms and values tend to limit the spread of neo-liberalist practices such as the individualist ethos, this is not suggesting that *laissez-faire* measures were not implemented in Malta. Neo-liberalism is slowly seeping through every crevice of the economic, social and cultural life of individuals, but at a slower rate compared to other Western democracies.

It is empirically shown in this study that the concept of individualisation along with socio-economic changes in such a peculiar location is taking place at a 'slower motion' compared to the typical Western mode. However, by using terms like 'slow motion' or 'delay', this study is not predicting that the individualisation process will eventually reach its full potential in the near future. Rather than treating individualisation as a homogenising process geared towards producing unified common experiences, it is considered as having different historical trajectories at different times and places. The traditional and cultural variables are key factors in the way the concept of individualisation is 'glocally' adopted and adapted. I have presented the interpretation of Maltese young people of how they adapted Western

tendencies in line with their traditional and Catholic training. Such dilemmas are at the heart of what makes their identities and cultures distinctive.

10.2   Youth Generational Differences

This study explored generational differences by examining the collectively shared experiences of two groups of youth; those who experienced youth in the first half of the 1960s compared to individuals in their early twenties in the late 2000s. Both groups chosen were privileged enough to have had opportunities for post-compulsory education. Such emphasis on one social group of youth gave light to Bourdieu's (1977) and Williams's (1965[1961], 1977) works on how youth's dispositions and subjectivity are socially constructed. The 'structure of feeling' of a generation was examined as being embedded not only in their particular social milieu but also in wider social structures. Social positioning such as class and gender are still very much relevant in determining one's dispositions. Unlike Beck's argument that 'ties to a social class recede mysteriously into the background […] Status-based social milieus and lifestyles typical of a class culture lose their lustre' (1992:88), class polarisation is still very much evident. As argued in works on the network society (Castells, 1996) and branded capitalism (Klein, 2005), it is undoubtedly the case that the polarisation between classes have intensified; thus a greater gap has resulted between the connected and unconnected, the affluent consumer and the credit card consumer.

Yet, irrespective of their differences, it bears much truth that both generations have shared certain similarities. They both expressed the need as youth for autonomy and to invest in their personal development. For this social group of youth in post-compulsory education, common events lead to their transition from dependence to independence, including studying and finding a white-collar job, becoming financially independent, leaving their parental home and marriage. Although there was consensus on events bridging youth and adulthood, individuals experiencing their youth at the two different periods interpreted these events differently. Despite some commonalities found in both youth generations, there were also significant

discontinuities in youth's everyday life situation in the last forty-five years. Of course these changes were interpreted in line with socio-economic and cultural changes. From the discussions I had with young people, it was obvious that they thought and acted differently from youth in the 1960s. They were aware of the differences in their life-plans, opportunities and constraints. They were conscious of the restructured transition of youth into adulthood – from a more traditional structured transition to an individualised one.

10.3   Compromised Choices

This study concluded that there is significant evidence of changes in youth's perceptions and dispositions when comparing both generations of youth. This study suggests that similiar to the concept of 'structured individualisation' (Côté, 2010, Furlong and Cartmel, 2007[1997], Nagel and Wallace, 1997, Rudd and Evans, 1998), a balanced view of the structure-agency relation is needed when examining the life experiences of youth. Furthermore, in line with Elder-Vass's (2007) analysis, both reflexive deliberations as well as the role of the social context on dispositions need to be given equal importance in making sense of actions.

Young respondents proved to be more self-reliant and self-determining agents in how they devised their own life. They thought about their future primarily in terms of personal development. Compared to youth in the 1960s, they were more prone to plan their immediate future in terms of satisfying inner desires; most of them planned on dedicating their energies and money in travelling after graduating. They worked hard to accomplish their dreams and obtain new experiences.

When I contacted some of the participants a year after my fieldwork, three of them emailed back saying that they were abroad for a long working-holiday, doing temporary work and earning little money just enough to pay for the trip to their next destination. Such desires were not so common among the older generation who interpreted their youth more in terms of stability; primarily

marked by finding full-time employment and getting married. However, despite the fact that for most of the young fieldwork participants travelling seemed to be the upper-most priority after graduating, they also placed a significant emphasis on events like finding a full-time stable job and getting married. They were anxious about their decisions and were very cautious in their choices that had a significant effect on their more long-term future. The concept of individualisation is more pronounced in the increased personal responsibility that young people are shouldering in terms of educational prospects and job opportunities.

It is empirically shown that whilst youth in post-compulsory education are more than ever following common Western trajectories of an individualised lifestyle, their choices were taken keeping in mind the peculiar cultural as well as social and economic situation. Similiar to the assertion of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2008[2002]), young people are not deciding out of their own free-will, detached from any traditional commitments. Instead they compromise their choices rationally. The empirically grounded concept of 'compromised choice' developed in this study seems appropriate to describe the situation of youth in a conservative Southern European location. The bargaining in choice is evident in different aspects in the life experiences of youth; mostly visible in their choices in education and the job market, in the life biography of women and in their choices in consumption.

10.3.1 Education and the Job Market

This study showed that youth chose academic courses that not only suited their interests but also gave them a guarantee for increasing their marketability when going 'job hunting'. It is without a doubt that opportunities for post-compulsory education increased compared to those offered for youth in the 1960s. Nonetheless this research pointed out that this does not indicate that young people are now completely free to decide what they want. It is pertinent to refer to the increased importance given to qualifications. For the majority of middle class youth like the participants, a university degree has become a universal goal. It is not enough to simply

conclude that youth have greater achievements; they also have greater expectations. Within a global neo-liberal climate with diminishing job security, this group of young people are becoming more anxious than ever and found it natural to spend more time in education and equip themselves with a couple of degrees. Furthermore, the value of credentials has dropped and young people without degrees do not have very good employment prospects. Even those with first degrees are finding it hard to find suitable employment and may end up being underemployed. It can be argued, therefore that it is not just a matter of choice for such a youth group to obtain a university degree; it is often expected of them to graduate in order to increase their marketability.

This study showed youth's bargaining position when deciding their academic path. It is evidently clear that an increasingly flexible job market and their need for job stability are dictating the real options for young people. Although short-term job contracts may be interpreted as desirable because individuals can diversify their career rather than having a job for life, however such situation often creates anxiety and fear of unemployment when the contract terminates. Young people who are joining the workforce are paying a high price for this sovereignty as they are trading off their job security. The replacement of stable jobs with flexible labour mainly in the form of fixed contracts is the result of neo-liberal consumer choice (Bauman, 1998). In the name of individual sovereignty, neo-liberal mechanisms built an arena where individuals compete with one another in the fight for economic security. In the face of such dilemma, young people are reaching a mutual concession and choosing courses that increase their marketability and their chances of having job stability. Young people today are negotiating their interests with the demands of the market. It is indeed the case that the labour market is more than ever a structure of dependency for young people in their transition into adulthood.

For example, I also recall that as a teenager in post-compulsory education, I always had a flair for art and painting. Despite the various academic courses available in this field and my efforts to try to establish myself as an artist, I

was always highly discouraged to pursue such a career due to lack of job opportunities in such a small island. Moreover, as a female, I was often encouraged to pursue a 'family friendly' career that allows me to juggle work and family life.

<u>10.3.2　Compromised Choices in Female Biographies</u>

The notion of compromised choices is clearly manifested in the life biography of females. Women's liberation from traditional gender roles is the major contributory factor in Becks' argument on the development of individualisation. Female participants highlighted the changing tendencies and priorities in their life; especially in the meaning they gave to careers and marriage. Both generations of females agree that family ties have become less restricting and they have more opportunities to choose their own career. In effect, most young females in this study stressed that their expectations extended beyond having their own family. On the other hand, females who experienced their youth in the 1960s emphasised the way their behaviour and future plans were at times determined by their nurturing role as a wife and mother. This latter group maintained that they considered themselves fortunate for having the opportunity for obtaining post-compulsory education, yet if they occupied state jobs, they were forced to resign from their work upon marriage.

Just like in Becks' (2008[2002]) study, this research concluded that the female life biography underwent an individualisation boost in the way they directed their energies towards establishing a career. However, it is not the case that young women are directors of their own life, choosing their career of their own free-will, divorced from traditional structures. Young female respondents were aware that in the near future, they needed to juggle a career with family life. They also admitted that they were often encouraged to choose academic courses like the teaching profession that offers flexible hours. It is not a surprise that in Malta the number of females undergoing teaching course drastically outnumbers that of males.

This research outlined that despite the progress towards the equalisation of sexes in the southern European research location, it is not the case that the life biography of young women has been 'detraditionalised' as the Becks (2008[2002]) asserted. It is empirically verified that cultural variables play a crucial role in the way young females in post-compulsory education compromise their choices to satisfy their desires of having a career yet a family friendly one that allows them to cope with multiple roles; as an employee, a housewife and a mother.

10.3.3   Choices in Consumption

The consumer market and its strategies to seduce individuals especially the younger generation provides fertile ground for observing how young people are not completely autonomous in their consumer choices. Young consumers are often not aware of the taken for granted displays of their tastes. Similiar to what Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) has pointed out in his study on the affinity between taste and social class, this study showed that individuals' expression through consumption is determined not only by capitalist economics but also by the educational system that teaches cultural distinctiveness.

Ever since market segmentation replaced the old Taylorist theory of the 1960s, young people felt that they had more choice to consume products that gave them a distinctive identity. Both generations of youth referred to the way Western trends are adopted and adapted in Malta. Especially for youth in the 1960s, their self-image was made to resemble Western styles yet it was also determined by traditional structures like the Church that dictated appropriateness. Despite claims that individuals have more liberty to choose, they are also more than ever dependent upon the market. In a paradoxical manner, the individualised youth living a 'life of one's own' is dependent on the consumer market whose main objective is to turn a profit. Similiar to Bauman's (1992) assertion, this study revealed that compared to youth in the 1960s, young people in 'second' modernity are more than ever caught up in the network of seduction and lured by commodities that promise

individual freedom. In line with this, Côté and Allahar (2006) maintained that identity crisis of youth in late modernity is socially produced by marketing companies who try their best to manipulate young people in what products to buy.

Amongst the most fetishised commodities by youth are technological portable devices. The use of communication devices was a distinctive marker in generational differences in this study. Aside from their function, portable devices also constitute identity and status symbols. They are often advertised as empowering the individuals who uses them. In a form of a 'windowed shell' that allows mobile privatisation of the individualised user, one can privately control and make use of these devices on their own free-will (Williams, 1988[1964]). Paradoxically, such choice is compromising their freedom. Despite the benefits of greater individual autonomy and empowerment, participants maintained that they were dependent upon communication technology and imprisoned in a social virtual web that blurs the line between private and public life. It is undoubtedly the case that the seduced youth are free to showcase their private lives on networking sites in the name of 'democratic space', but at the same time they are consenting for their information to be used by marketing machines.

Conspicuous consumption of technological devices and other fetished commodities also play a significant part in the financial situation of youth. In this study, one of the most salient markers of generational difference is the drastic change in the attitudes towards buying on credit. Debt is assumed as normality and an inevitable part of everyday life for youth in the late 2000s. Ironically, entering into debts to buy a house, a car or to get married is seen as part of the rites of passage from dependence to independence. It is considered ordinary for young people to believe that they cannot live without loans. This was brought forward by various participants who addressed generational difference in terms of changes in the perception of loans.

10.4   Fieldwork Limitations

This study presented me with several challenges, at times hindering the progress of the work. One particular challenge was when I selected the fieldwork participants from both generations to discuss with them their youth. Whereas individuals experiencing their youth in the late 2000s were speaking about their present-day situation, older participants who were young in the mid 1960s had to rely on their memory of forty-five years ago. This asymmetry in the work proved to be challenging. To strike a balance, I had included analysis on the construction of memory.

Another very important factor in this study was my emphasis that the subjectivities of this social group of youth cannot be studied in a vacuum without referring to the socio-economic and cultural situation. Attention was put on establishing in detail the social structures that heavily influence the life experiences of youth. This emphasis might be interpreted as presenting an over-deterministic viewpoint of youth with no room for autonomous decisions. Instead, the interpretation of fieldwork participants of their social world suggested that they have various choices of actions however some social actions were more possible than others. It was the scope of this study to examine how the common cultural and physical space of the two groups of participants had a significant influence on how they experienced their youth. Instead of focusing solely on the individual's reflexivity, this study has shown that youth in post-compulsory education tended to have particular collections of responses, or habitus, that disposes them to certain values and actions.

Moreover, I was also aware of my own personal biases in this study; being myself part of one of the youth generations understudy. Despite that my interest in this study was stimulated by my reflexive views of my actual life situation, I focused on presenting the subjectivities of fieldwork participants rather than mine.

10.5   Research Recommendations

The results of this study point to an important area of research in cultural studies that requires further investigation. Future studies are recommended to explore the intensification of the process of individualisation in the research location in the life situation of youth, especially for the generation born in the 2000s. This generation, currently living their childhood will be perhaps the worst hit with regards to the most financial problems in the near future. Due to the 'delay' in introducing a neo-liberal agenda in post-colonial countries like Malta, this generation experienced the affluence of the early 2000s in their childhood. From birth, this generation were fully immersed in the consumerist mentality. It would be fascinating to explore how individuals of this generation will experience their youth in what will be presumably a more intensified neo-liberal climate. The remaining predictable ties of present times in conservative locations may be subject to change in the near future.

Conclusions from this study can be also useful for policy makers because they provide knowledge on the need for institutional support for higher education and youth's access of the labour market. This study presents Malta as one example of how youth adapted to the concept of individualisation. Further research in other peripheral locations in the West is recommended to verify those conclusions on how individualisation is a contested process.

This study also sparks debates on the Western economic scenario and the generational inequity between the working generation and those retired living off publicly funded pensions. The main argument is centred on the fact that the working population are funding the pensions of today's elderly while they are not guaranteed welfare security for their own retirement. The older people today are taking far more than their fair share, leaving young people paying for their well-being without having any financial security themselves. A growing polarisation amongst the future retired population is predicted as a consequence of schemes implemented to contemporary workers. The heavy reliance on the labour market for the provision of welfare in old age has to be

supported by relatively stable full-time employment for the accumulation of such funds. Failing to provide high and secure wages and instead offering short-term contract employment is the cause for future inequalities and disturbances in the life course later on in life. Further research is recommended on the way the patterns of employment including short-term contracts, coupled with contemporary high rates of unemployment will continue to have significant impact on the pensions of the contemporary youth generation.

10.6 End Remarks

The catch-phrase 'generation gap' is much too crude and general, but it does highlight what youth studies have identified as changing tendencies and attitudes. It is indeed the case that the life biographies of youth underwent dramatic changes. Everyday taken for granted expectations and attitudes of youth in the 1960s have become questionable to the youth generation in late modernity. Young people are increasingly confronted with new demands to live 'a life of one's own'.   They are more in control of their lives, yet more responsible for their actions. It was not the scope of this study to present only a critical outlook of youth in late modernity or to weigh out which generation is better off than the other. It is the case that young people in late modernity are more technologically proficient and formally educated. They have more opportunities to travel and to use communication devices as their everyday tools.

I conclude this study with David Harvey's remarks that 'everything relates to everything else'. Indeed it bears much truth that the concept of individualisation cannot be studied divorced from its context. Far from being a homogenous process in the West, it is clearly evident that this concept has a certain amount of ambivalence. Throughout this study, I have emphasised the importance of bridging structure and agency to reflect on the dramatic changes in the life situation of youth. It was found out that it is more likely for youth in a Southern European research location to balance Western values of modernisation with aspects of traditional culture.   Despite the increasing

advancement of individualisation, the Catholic Church in Malta, as the main supporting pillar in society, is still continuously working to promote traditional values. Hence, traditional commitments and support relationships did not lose their significance altogether.

This study has indicated that although in a 'slower motion' compared to Western Europe, the concept of individualisation in the life situation of youth has advanced significantly in the Southern European location throughout the last forty-five years. When comparing both generations of youth, I have claimed that this process has become well embedded in the life situation of young people and manifested not only in their working life and everyday decisions but also in their personal conduct. Yet, despite the fact that youth are more than ever seeking solutions on an individual basis as Becks' have argued, youth's choices are continuously influenced, at times even determined, by social structures, particularly by the educational system, the job market and the consumer market. Youth's decisions are not completely autonomous but driven by what I have called compromised choices.

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Appendix

Habitus

What kind of person are you?

What can you say about your family?

Do you think that your family influenced your choices in life?

How far did you get in your education?

Did you use to do things differently from the rest?

Did you have financial problems as a young person?

Life Trajectories and experiences

What was considered as fun for youth in the 1960s?

What were you doing when you were 18 and when you were 21?

Which events made you an adult?

What can you say about the rediffusion (cable radio)?

What can you say about the introduction of television?

Do you think that a mobile phone is a necessity today? Do you own one?

Life Expectations

How did you expect your life to turn out? Was it like you expected it to be?

What were your future prospects when you were young?

What did you get out of life?

Did you plan for your retirement in your younger years?

What are you planning to do now that you have more free time?

Generational Change

How do you see young people today?

Do you think your tastes are different to those of young people today?

Do you think that young people today are worse or better off compared to when you were young?

Checklist of the questions covered during ethnographic interview with young people

Habitus

What kind of person are you?

What can you say about your family?

Do you think that your family is influencing your choices in life?

How far did you get in your education?

Do you do things differently from the rest?

Do you have financial problems?

Life Trajectories and experiences

Which events do you think makes a person an adult?

What do you consider as fun today?

Do you think you are cool? What makes someone cool?

Do you use consumer goods such as branded products to express your identity?

Are you easily seduced by advertisements?

What do you think of celebrity lifestyles?

Are you keen on the Internet and mobile phones?

Life expectations

What do you want to get out of life?

What do you think will happen to you in the next ten years?

Are you anxious about the future?

Do you think about your retirement and investing in a pension scheme?

Generational Change

Do you think differently from the people who are in their early sixties?

How do you compare your youth with those living their youth in the sixties?

Do you think you have different tastes compared to the people in their early sixties?

Do you think young people today are worse or better off compared to youth in the sixties?

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