THE PLACE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE RECOVERY OF IDENTITY IN ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS AFFECTED BY WAR AND DISPLACEMENT IN CROATIA

by

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Abstract

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by

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The purpose of this study was to examine the role of participation in the formation of identity among young people in Croatia whose lives have been affected by war and forced relocation. Recognizing that reconstruction and reconciliation are simultaneously personal, social, and structural processes, the research examined the multiple contexts within which youth live, participate, and develop the competence to effect the necessary transformation from a war-ravaged country to a peaceful, democratic society. This dissertation set out to present an alternative to the medical and pathology models prevalent in war and postwar research, and which portray youth as passive victims. This was accomplished by investigating the long term effects of war on youth, their environment, the structures within which they live and the society as a whole in order to illustrate how these young people understand their life situations and circumstances. The current project studied three populations in Croatia. The first was comprised of young adults, living in a city with a Croatian majority that was under siege during the war for independence (1991-1995). The second study site was a village which was occupied and

where Serb returnees and Bosnian Croat refugees now attempt to live together. The third site was a city that was entirely destroyed during the war and has been undergoing the process of reintegration. Data from these three sites revealed the ways in which sense of identity is being shaped through level of engagement in the democratization and reconstruction processes, and how participation leads to a sense of personal empowerment, efficacy and competence. These three sites represent different contexts, a wide range of experiences and life story narratives. As the present findings illustrated individuals living in postwar areas face many obstacles in an almost all spheres of life. In line with a sociocultural approach the research also examined the context in which the youth live and participate; examining the forms participation takes as a mode of transformation. This involved exploring the resources and strategies that young people utilize in this postwar transitional situation. It is out of these processes that identity emerges, and participation influences emerging identity on individual, social and national levels and influences how they envision their futures. Focusing on the experiences of youth and their contexts will contribute to an understanding of the processes that make up the successful transition to a peaceful postwar society. Insights from the experience of Croatia may then be applicable to other situations in which similar social transformations are taking place.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of participation in the formation of identity among young people in Croatia whose lives have been affected by war and forced relocation. Adolescence and young adulthood is a critical period in the formation of identity. This research adopts a sociocultural approach that argues that identity is realized through participation and "can emerge only as one moves actively between private and public, personal and cultural, past and present" (Gover, 2003). For young Croatians, the transition to adulthood has taken place during a unique period in the history of their country. Croatia has emerged from a long period of communist rule, followed by a bloody war, to achieve independence, democracy, and international recognition as a sovereign state. Participation defines the extent to which youth have the opportunities to engage with their society by being active agents of change and development, and to exercise their power to influence and change their own lives, surroundings and society. Participation is viewed as essential for achieving a sense of competence, and is developed through the application of local knowledge and involvement in local and community practices. The research aimed to investigate to what extent youth can participate in their society, for example in politics, social and community activities, educational or labor activities.

The challenge faced by young people is that years of communist rule have resulted in little history of civic engagement or the encouragement of a foundation of personal initiative. In contrast to previous vertical and hierarchical structures democratic principles and more horizontal, civic engagement must now emerge. Thus, it is predicted

that different levels of participation will depend upon localized social structures that either enable or hinder the development of a sense of competence to engage with the social structures that shape youths' lives.

The development of competence in youth is essential for the establishment of both a positive identity, and for successful reconstruction on a local and national scale. There are various kinds of competence. For example, one type of competence is the ability to make sense of the postwar situation or understand the new social structures. Researchers have found that children have different capacities when it comes to understanding and making sense of stressful or traumatic situations and events. Another kind of competence called "representational competence" describes children's capacity to understand what is happening around them (Anthony & Cohler, 1997; Garbarino, 1992). The data analysis will aim to illustrate what kinds of competence youth have developed in a postwar environment. Competence in this study is not defined as a trait but rather, as a process that develops out of participation. The idea is that through participation and engagement with the wider society empowerment and competence is developed. Qualitative data will be utilized in order to examine how and where youth are able to engage and participate.

In this study recovery will be applied using Summerfield's (2002), and Bracken's (2002) definition. This definition of recovery assumes that it occurs, not in "people's psychologies", but in people's lives through the resuming of everyday activities. Recovery is "grounded in the resumption of the ordinary rhythms of everyday life- the familial, the sociocultural, religious, and economic activities that make the world intelligible" (Summerfield, 2002, p.1107). The meaning of recovery used here is closely tied, if not intertwined, with participation.

Reconciliation occurs through communication and the development of tolerance and understanding between ethnic groups that have been at war. This includes forgiving paired with an understanding of the mutual responsibility and accountability for past events (Broneus, 2008). Reconciliation here will not be viewed as a static endpoint, which is achieved once and for all, but as a process that is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. It depends on the context and activity of the participant. Reconciliation is essential to building tolerant and peaceful democratic societies in which individuals are equal citizens.

The current project studied three populations in Croatia. The first is comprised of young adults living in a city that was under siege during the war for independence (1991-1995) and which is now undergoing both physical and social reconstruction largely without outside help. The city in 1991 had a 83.4% Croat majority, with 10.5% Serbs, and 6.1% other ethnicities. The second study site is a village which is the site of a community reconstruction project. The village was a predominantly Serb town with about 70% Serbs and 24% Croats. This area suffered considerable physical damage and social disruption during the war, as it was one of the earliest areas to be occupied by the Serbs and then, three years later, reclaimed by the Croats. The researcher was invited by an NGO to take part in their revitalization and reintegration project as a volunteer. Observing a community of mixed ethnicities in a village that is actively engaged in the process of reconstruction provides a different experience to the situation in Location I where no such program exists. The third site is a city that was entirely destroyed during the war and has been undergoing the process of “peaceful reintegration”. Data from these three sites revealed the ways in which sense of identity is being shaped through

level of engagement in the democratization and reconstruction processes, and how participation leads to a sense of personal empowerment, efficacy and competence. These three sites represent different contexts, a wide range of experiences and life story narratives.

This research examined the ways in which rebuilding and recovery take place on structural, social and community levels, as well as on a personal level, recognizing that reconstruction and reconciliation are simultaneously individual, social and structural processes. The levels on which these changes are taking place and through which individuals strive to make sense of their lives include constitutional, legal, political, military, educational, health and welfare, as well as infrastructural changes that affect business and industry, and local organizations. In line with a sociocultural approach the research will also examine the context in which the youth live and participate; examining what forms participation takes as a mode of transformation. This involves exploring the resources and strategies that young people utilize in this situation. A critical question to examine is the degree to which opportunities for participation in this rapidly transforming society are present for youth and young adults. It is out of these processes that identity emerges, and the manner in which participation influences emerging identity on individual, social and national levels will form an important part of the analysis.

The model (Figure 1) that underlies this research suggests that the degree to which young people are able to participate in a variety of social roles affects the development of their sense of competence. This in turn affects their identity development. Effective engagement with social structures is essential for the development of democracy. The openness of the social structure to the individual's

efforts becomes an important factor as youths seek integration into their community and become active in pursuit of a meaningful life. It is expected that different levels of participation will depend upon localized social structures that either enable or hinder the development of a sense of competence to engage with the social structures that shape youths' lives.

The following questions will be explored: How do youth make meaning out of their present situation and how do they imagine the future? Can youth participate in activities that affect them and their community? What are the social structures in Croatia and how do they enable/hinder participation? What are the obstacles that youth face in their development?

Researchers have studied the effects of war on children, including studies on child soldiers. However, there is much less research available on the long term consequences of war on children born during or even after the war (Daiute & Turniski, 2005). Much less is known about children and youth growing up in postwar transitional situations. The researcher learned from a visit to Croatia, in June 2002, that often youth and young adults fall through the gaps in terms of counseling, interventions and psychosocial programs. In addition, there seems to be few programs or attention given to young adults who were children and teens during the war and now teens or reaching adulthood (Udovice Rata, 2002). One reason for this may lie in the fact that under Yugoslav socialism there was a more paternalistic and conformist attitude towards youth (Ule & Renner, 1998). Research on youth was not deemed necessary and youth were not an area of sociological inquiry, as this did not fit within the prescribed research themes under the Yugoslav socialism of that period (Corkalo et. al., 2007, Juul, 1997; Ministry of Science

and Technology, 1995). In Yugoslavia only a very sterile version of psychology was permitted (Juul, 1997). The psychological laboratory at Zagreb University, Croatia, was founded in 1920, where modern, empirically based psychology began. After WWII the areas of research were: "psychophysics and sensory psychophysiology, the psychophysiology of work and fatigue, and the development of new psychological measuring instruments" (Ministry of Science and Technology, p.1, 1995). Today, psychology is broader and research is conducted in number of areas such as: information processing, work and organizational psychology, basic and applied social psychology, personality research, mental health and clinical psychology with a focus on war-stress and refugee issues and evaluations of intervention programs (Corkalo et. al, 2007). During the war (1991-1995) and in the post war years there has been an increase of scholarly work offering alternatives to the medicalized approach such as in anthropology, political science, psychology and areas conflict transformation (Daiute & Turniški, 2005; Freedman & Abazovic, 2006; Mihalic, 2004; Povrzanovic-Frykman, 1997; Spajic-Vrkaš & Illišin, 2005; Documenta, 2005). Consequently there is a limited, albeit slowly growing, local body of theory and practice to shed light on the processes of youth development, apart from clinical research on war induced stress and anxiety.

The data for this research was gathered using several methods. These included the collection of narrative accounts of youths and young adults, interviews with professionals in pertinent fields, compilation of archival and media material, qualitative field observations and participant observation in a grass-roots reconstruction project.

Qualitative analysis of the data was directed towards evaluating the relevant experiences of youths from the three groups. An ethnographic approach was utilized to

examine the developmental processes in the formal and informal sites of reintegration, reconstruction and reconciliation. The analysis focused on the sites of participation as well as the participants within each setting in addition to the social structures that either hinder or enable the development of a sense of competence to engage with the social structures that impact youth. From this perspective, analysis of the sites shed light on the link between the historical and sociocultural levels of the youth's experience. In contrast to existing literature and research in this area that predominantly focuses on the individual (e.g. trauma, violence and war as it impacts the individual), the focus of this research will be the social, cultural and historical settings that are manifest at each site, and in which the individual acts and defines his/her identity.

The above methods will shed light on how youth make meaning out of their present situation and how do they imagine the future, their ability to participate, the enabling or hindering social structures and the obstacles they face in this transitional country.

A number of topics will be discussed in the background section that serves to locate the present situation in Croatia in a historical and sociocultural context. These include a historical and geopolitical account, the attempts at construction of a Yugoslav identity, the nature of psychology as a discipline as it was permitted in Yugoslavia, and the effects of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the subsequent war on the population.

Three theoretical frameworks will be described to provide the context and assumptions for the research, which are fully explored in a later section. The first is a sociocultural approach that emphasizes that meaning and identity emerge in the interplay between individuals acting in particular cultural contexts. In a social constructionist

perspective identity is seen as emerging from ongoing interaction between the individual and the social environment (Holland, Skinner, Lachiotte, & Cain, 1998). This model provides a conceptual alternative to the individualized, medicalized, trauma-and-pathology models used by many research and intervention projects in war-affected regions (Adjuković, 1998; Farver & Frosch, 1996; Macksoud & Aber, 1996; Muldoon &Trew, 1995; Živčić, 1993). The individualized, medicalized, trauma-and-pathology models locates the trauma within the individual person rather than viewing this as a social phenomenon and as a result social processes often tend to be neglected. However, war trauma is not within the individual alone and occurs on all levels; individual, communal, and societal (Bracken & Petty, 1998; Summerfield, 2000; Summerfield, 2002). Thus, it should not be treated as only an individual problem apart from societal and cultural structures.

The second framework is an action competence approach that focuses on developing strategies for change through reflection on our actions, and is also especially relevant to issues of empowerment, participation and democracy (Jensen and Schnack, 1997; Simovska, 2000). The third perspective is a generational or cohort perspective, an approach that explores the potential effects of sociopolitical forces on groups of individuals at specific developmental stages.

Importance of Study

Youth and young adults represent the first generation in Croatia to grow up in a democracy as members of an independent nation with fixed boundaries and international recognition. They are the first generation to have the opportunity to openly develop an

identity as independent Croatians, having emerged from a four-year war during which a significant portion of their country was occupied. The war created a series of disruptions to their development as families and communities were fractured and the social and physical fabric of their lives was disturbed or destroyed. Pilot research conducted in January of 2003 (Turniski, 2003) indicates that in the aftermath they face a new post-war reality where the traumas of the war have in many cases given way to an ongoing struggle to cope with the realities of postwar life. These include high levels of unemployment, educational disruption, absence of family members, and basic shortages of life's necessities. These problems must be balanced against the conclusionof the war, the freedom to proclaim a Croatian identity and engage in political and economic activity as Croatians. In such a situation the individual's experiences take on a socially constructed meaning as they seek to define a new role for themselves in a new society.

Research in this area, utilizing the proposed theoretical perspectives, is important because much of the work in terms of interventions, programs and research that has been conducted focuses on the pathological impacts of the trauma. This often results in a labeling of survivors as victims suffering from various pathological states, rather than focusing on the regenerative and recuperative strategies that help to make sense of the past and guide future actions. This study will explore the ways in which participation and engagement serve to foster a sense of personal and communal efficacy and competence and aid individuals in moving forward with their lives.

The following section will cover the discussion of the theoretical approach of the research. In addition, a number of issues are addressed in order to place the dissertation

research into context including: a historical overview and geopolitical background overview.

Theoretical Perspectives and Approach

Non-Pathologizing Stance

There is a growing body of literature and research on civilians and war. The focus, frequently, has been on the traumatic effects of war. Available research often portrays children and youth as passive victims (Boyden, 1994) and focuses on dysfunction and the need for outside intervention (Adjuković, 1998; Farver & Frosch, 1996; Macksoud & Aber, 1996; Muldoon & Trew, 1995; Živčić, 1993). Trauma and its effects have typically been the dominant discourse in many war torn countries. Views of trauma that stem from a particularly Western psychology have often been imposed on non-Western cultures and societies. This kind of approach often views individuals living in war torn areas as traumatized victims, and almost never as active survivors experiencing normal and appropriate reactions to very difficult circumstances. It fixes a label to traumatic experiences and isolates them from social, cultural, historical and political contexts. The most commonly used framework that psychologists have utilized stems from research on stress. For example, studies of the impact of bombing raids during World War II concentrated on the short–term impacts of these events on mental health. Studies examining the long-term effects of traumatic events on normal personality development have been relatively few (Stewart & Healy, 1989). According to Pupavac (2001),

> The therapeutic paradigm effectively reduces the human subject to the idea of the vulnerable depoliticized inner child and its flipside of primordial violence. The trauma/violence model is not only problematic as an explanation for social violence and war, but the approach delegitimizes the recipient population as political actors (p.15).

In the field of children, youth and war, the literature can be broadly defined according to two major approaches. The first approach may be called a pathologizing or *deficit approach* as this body of literature emphasizes the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in children's reactions to trauma and extreme stress. Other findings that are prevalent within the deficit approach not only include PTSD, but also psycho-somatization, sleep disturbances, psychic disturbance, increased delinquency and other negative psycho-social manifestations of war experiences (Adjuković, 1998; Farver & Frosch, 1996; Macksoud & Aber, 1996; Muldoon & Trew, 1995; Živčić, 1993).

The second approach takes less of a pathologizing stance and suggests that there are non-pathological reactions to extreme trauma. Hence, this approach employs what may be termed an *adaptive approach.* Among other things, research in this area has found that, although war compromises the optimal environment for development, children's experiences of war and violence may contribute to non-pathological reactions to trauma. Examples would be the development of a precocious morality and high self-esteem. In addition, researchers under this approach have reported that there may be no increase in violent behavior, as would be expected in the deficit approach (Cairns& Dawes, 1996; Coles, 1986; Garbarino, Kostelny & Dubrow, 1991; Punamäki, 1996; Punamäki & Suleiman, 1989; Rosenblatt, 1983).

Most studies fall somewhere between the deficit and adaptive approaches. An example of this is Punamäki's (1996) study that investigated the mental health role of ideological commitment. This study revealed that children with strong ideological commitment experienced less psychosocial problems than those with weaker ideological commitment, who experienced anxiety, feelings of failure, insecurity and depression. Combining aspects of both the deficit and adaptive approach, Apfel and Simon (1996) propose another medicalized model that discusses how trauma can create both negative and positive effects. Trauma produces 'salutogenic' or health-promoting, forces (Antonovsky, 1987) as well as 'pathogenic' effects. Apfel and Simon (1996) believe that interventions, either individual psychotherapy or communal programs, can take advantage of the resilience implied by the salutogenic effects. However, taking account of what children, youth and young adults can tell us about their experiences in their own voices, provides another perspective in terms of the understanding of the effects of war and postwar life on this population. Addressing the subject in this manner usefully provides information about how exposure to conflict affects development, and contributes to insights into ways of helping individuals to process and assimilate their experiences productively.

Research indicates that there are no universals to trauma and have found that research is mostly based on a medical model (Bracken & Petty, 1998; Summerfield, 1999, 2000, 2002). Instead, the secondary consequences of war on family, social, and economic life are revealed as essential predictors of psychological outcomes. To emphasize this point, for example, among Iraqi asylum seekers staying in London, poor social support was more closely related to depression than was a history of torture

(Summerfield, 2000). Thus, the major protective factor is the presence of a community that is able to provide mutual support and nurture problem-solving strategies in the aftermath of traumatic incidents. Research in South Africa conducted by Higson-Smith (2006) conceptualizes violence as a process of fragmentation and disempowerment and uses a four level ecological model of society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Garbarino, 1985). The four levels proposed by Higson-Smith are the individual person, small group, communities and society as a whole. According to Higson-Smith (2006, p. 186) healing occurs through "linking and empowerment" and multidimensionality including the four levels of society.

Another common misconception is that it is only individuals that are traumatized, when in fact war touches entire communities and all social structures. To individualize war and its consequences it to fail to take the sociocultural aspects of war into account in which the outcomes are resolved and shared. The pinpointing of traumatized individuals needing intervention can contribute to alienation, victimization and helplessness. This is especially true in countries where medical models of psychology are rapidly gaining momentum and where approaches are predominantly positivist, such as in Croatia (Corkalo et.al, 2005, Juul, 1997; Ministry of Science and Technology, 1995). This kind of neo-colonialist mentality contributes to the apoliticization of the events of war, and promotes the idea that entire communities are traumatized and unable to function, and is often used to disqualify them from self-government (Pupavac, 2001; Summerfield, 2000).

A fundamental aspect of the processing of traumatic experiences are the particular social meanings that are assigned to them by the individual's culture. It is important to take into account such considerations as attributions of supernatural, religious, and

political causation along with more formal considerations. Of equal importance is the fact that there has been little research on what occurs after a war and even less on postwar reconstruction of the self, the surroundings and the nation (Daiute & Turniski, 2005; Turniski, 2003, 2004). International interests and interventions while intense during wartime often disperse quickly after the conflict has ended. This is accompanied by a focus on research and interventions on children and adults that have been directly affected by war with a corresponding tendency to ignore those that have experienced war indirectly (Daiute & Turniski, 2005; Turniski, 2003, 2004). War and violence are not only experienced by the individual but also by groups, communities and all levels of the society (Daiute & Turniski, 2005; Higson-Smith, 2006; Nordstrom, 2004).

Although the war in Croatia ended 16 years ago, little research has been conducted on the aftermath for the inhabitants of this new nation (Daiute & Turniski, 2005, Turniski, 2001, 2003, 2004). Current models of intervention largely fail to acknowledge the role of social action, participation and empowerment in regaining mental health. It is important to turn attention towards strengthening the war-weakened social networks of postwar populations. In line with a social constructionist approach, the capacity for recovery and psychological resilience lies in attending to the reconstitution of cultural, social and economic activities that allow individuals to make sense of their lives. Examples from such diverse locations as Guatemala and Mozambique (Summerfield, 2000) demonstrate that reconstruction of identity through building of houses, planting of crops, and resumption of normal activities, is central to both social and personal recovery. Summerfield (2000) noted that, “Ultimately a population recovers from war not as recipients of aid or as patients but as active citizens.

In addition, Summerfield (2000) concludes that “structural poverty, landlessness, and lack of viable jobs too often retard this rebuilding of lives” (p.236).

The present research contributes to the understanding of recovery from war by focusing on the reconstruction process from a non-trauma perspective. This involves a commitment to using a health-promoting rather than disease-validating model. In the health promoting model symptoms are reframed by education and the normalizing of experience. In this manner, a future may be created that is based on an alternative to victimization (Creson, 1997).

This research proceeds from the understanding that the introduction of medicalized models of psychology without consideration of local values may impose an alien and inappropriate system on the local population. According to Martin-Baro (1994), a psychology must be historically and culturally relevant to those whose lives it seeks to comprehend. He argued that psychology has created a fictionalized and ideologized image of what it means to be human, based in its own ahistoricism and bias towards individualism. In this distorted picture we cannot possibly hope to comprehend ourselves and our realities. What is worse, we are likely to accept what this says about us as right and immutable.

Medical models of psychology, as manifested through practices adopted in Croatia, has tended to ignore the social, political, and economic conditions that shape our daily lives. The PTSD model that is commonly used in dealing with victims of war has grown out of this apolitical and asocial framework. When political expression is suppressed a critical piece of the self is denied. For the poor, minorities, and other disenfranchised people, living in a situation in which political reality is manipulated in

such a way that it is impossible to comprehend ones' circumstances causes a false sense of self to emerge. According to Martin-Baro (1994):

> Consciousness is not simply the private and subjective knowledge and feelings of individuals. More than anything, it represents the confines within which each person encounters the reflexive impact of his or her being and actions in society, where people take on and work out a knowledge about the self and about reality that permits them to be somebody, to have a personal and a social identity (p.38).

In order to gain a more complete understanding of the developments that are taking place in Croatia it will be important to take full account of local "psychologies", local histories and the stories or myths that individuals tell to make sense of their lives, their past, present and that guide the future. These are both the common understandings that people use everyday and approaches that guide local professional practices, as these affect the development of adolescents and young adults. In addition, by turning the focus away from individual trauma and pathology and towards recovery and reconstruction on all levels, this research will study the empowerment and participation processes present in the construction and reconstruction of identity development in these recovering communities.

An example of the problems that are faced by agents charged with dealing with war–induced trauma and the effects of adopting medicalized psychotherapeutic techniques into Croatia is provided by data gathered in January of 2003 (Turniski, 2003). While Croatia is a comparatively sociocentric culture in which family and community figure prominently, it shares with Mediterranean cultures a tendency towards machismo

in the male population. Through the Ministry of Defense PTSD counseling according to the Western or medical model is provided for individual men who are struggling to come to terms with the horrors that they have experienced. While counseling may be of value in helping individuals to recover from traumatic incidents in Western cultures, individuals from cultures less familiar with Western modes of self-expression may find it difficult to respond appropriately. There is a strong tendency for men, used to putting on a brave face and suffering silently, to view the need for such counseling as a personal failure, a stigma and humiliation. At the same time, attempts to start social support groups for the wives, of former soldiers suffering PTSD, to learn how to cope with their sometimes violent and irrational husbands, have failed because the men refuse to allow their wives to attend out of fear that they will expose their weakness to others (interview with Vučenović, 2002) (Turniski, 2003). In such a setting the individual PTSD counseling model, whatever its virtues may be in other circumstances, may unwittingly undermine the individual's ability to recover by pathologizing and isolating the individual from potential sources of social support, as well as by fostering the view in the community that it is an individual problem amenable only to professional help. A multidimensional approach focusing on group work and building of relationship could be a more culturally appropriate method (see Higson-Smith, 2006).

Pilot interviews with youth strongly suggested that, for these youth at least, the trauma that they had experienced during the war is now overshadowed by the ongoing struggle to create a meaningful life in a transitional country and under conditions of unemployment and loss (Turniski, 2003, 2004). Framing the problem of reintegration, recovery and reconciliation as one faced by the entire society may allow the emergence

of dialogue and understanding that de-emphasizes the 'failure' of certain individuals to cope with the traumas of war and emphasizes the strengths of social support networks. The social model would help in revealing the negotiation and construction of the self and the society, and how they are interrelated.

Social Construction of Identity

As previously stated, the theoretical framework for the current study is based on sociocultural constructionist theories of self and identity. Constructionist theories are concerned with the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or account for themselves and the world in which they live (Gergen, 1985). These theories are concerned with the social and personal construction of the self, which is constituted in and through connections and relationships with others. Sociocultural theory emphasizes the idea that individuals are constantly interacting with their social environment. More specifically, the theory is based on the idea that meaning emerges in the interplay between individuals acting in social contexts and its mediators such as language, tools, activity structures, signs, and symbol systems in our social worlds (e.g. cultures, environments, history). As individuals we both construct and are constructed by these mediators.

Holland et al. (1998) articulate four contexts within which identity is developed through sociocultural processes. Their formulation is grounded in both practice and activity theories, and is directed towards understanding "identity in practice." The authors assert that forms of personhood and society are the products of historical forces. Identity is placed within both intimate and public landscapes, and is formed and reformed

over individual lifetimes and social histories. How these authors' formulate identity is particularly suited to the present study in which both individual and social identities are in the process of reformation and renegotiation.

Holland et al. (1998) pay special attention to improvisations that take place as individuals seek to solve their problems through manipulating the cultural resources at their disposal. This approach highlights the fact that we are not just products of our cultural and historical worlds, but actively engage in appropriating cultural artifacts and reforming them for our own purposes. Improvisation occurs in situations in which our present, shaped by our past, comes up against a particular set of conditions for which our habitual responses will not do. In such situations, the emergence of improvised behavior offers the possibility of liberation from oppressive social structures.

The response that novel situations require becomes a *space of authoring*, as individuals improvise within the constraints that are imposed by social position (*positionality*) and culturally constructed *figured worlds*. *Positionality* is inextricably linked to power, status, and rank, and defines the individuals' access to social and material resources. It is defined in terms of activity and often relies on historical antecedents. *Figured worlds* refers to social and historical worlds which develop through the activities of their participants, and into which individuals are drawn through social contact. Examples such as the world of romance, therapy, or disability, constitute 'as if' worlds through which individuals place themselves in relation to identifiable groups of others, and around which their practiced identities coalesce as. Examples of such identities, following from the previously noted worlds are, lover, patient, handicapped, et cetera. Immersion in a particular *figured world* offers specific resources with respect to

action in responding to events in the world. The form of response may vary from nearly automatic, as under authoritative discourses such as those in communist Yugoslavia, to much more flexible, as in personal style of dress for example. Working from within these *figured worlds* and utilizing the cultural resources that are at hand, individuals exercise agency as they improvise their responses as a means to achieving their ends.

In Croatia today, contrary to conditions under communism, authorship becomes an individual matter as new social discourses and practices emerge and democracy replaces the old hierarchical system. Young people in Croatia have little history or experience of individual authoring among older generations to draw upon, while at the same time, the social structures may be supervised by older individuals for whom ingrained patterns of authoritarianism remain dominant. These tensions in the system become the sites of contested and negotiated identities. At the same time, instances of personal authorship are linked to change in public venues as newly *figured worlds* begin to find expression through the media, cultural genres, and the activities of particular groups. Holland et al. (1998) labeled this context of identity as *making worlds*. Vygotsky's understanding of play is central to this conception of *making worlds*. In the same way that children build their symbolic competencies that are invaluable in adult life through play, the act of 'social play' develops "new social competencies in newly imagined communities" (Holland et al. 1998, p.272). The crystallization of new 'as if' worlds leads us back to figured worlds as a context through which identity is developed and practiced.

For Holland et al. (1998) it is through the four contexts of identity described above that the individual becomes an actor in a cultural world. Identity, and the *figured*

worlds that define the horizon of possibilities through which they create meaning, are both individual and collective products. The *space of authoring* remains social and cultural, even though it may come to operate without the immediate presence of others. In addition, it remains a contested space, as intimate forms of identity vie with political processes that occur within specific sociohistorical contexts. In this respect, the present situation of young adults in Croatia presents a particularly interesting example of the negotiation and renegotiation of identities on both individual and social levels. It is a developmental process through time on an individual level, as personal experience becomes organized around specific discourses and practices that draw on cultural resources. And it is a developmental process that takes time on a public and institutional level, as newly *figured worlds* meet oppositional forces, and support or undermine the ongoing struggles to establish new public and political identities (Holland, 1998).

The role of social and cultural factors in shaping identity is further explored in the work of a number of researchers investigating the relationship between participation and identity. Rosenthal, Feiring & Lewis (1998) found that we should examine social structures that constrain or enable individuals from being involved rather than looking at early antecedents. They propose that the link between social structure and volunteer activity has important implications for further research. This notion is further developed by Yates & Youniss (1998), who found that political commitment in adolescence can be a a key aspect of identity formation and that the sociohistorical context plays an important role in this process.

Macek, Flanagan, Gallay, Botcheva, & Csapo, (1998) in their post communist research on Eastern European countries found that youth “were trying to form their own

identity during a time when society as a whole was searching for a new identity, a time when the dominant theme was the negation and rejection of the existing social system" (p. 549). Croatia today is not only facing the challenge of defining itself in relation to post-communism, but this situation has been exacerbated by the post-war vacuum left as international agencies turned their attentions elsewhere and the government, lacking sufficient funds, began to struggle with the process of rebuilding the nation's infrastructure destroyed by the war.

The sociohistorical context, in which adolescents' identity is shaped, together with their social relationships and actions, plays a pivotal role in the process of political socialization and identity formation. As a social phenomenon, embedded in political, cultural and economic structures, a sense of identity on a national level is one dimension of the identity field, which consists of a large number of overlapping identities (Nielsen 1985). Sociocultural theory adopts a developmental approach in its methods for tracking change over time, as well as in its emphasis on identifying the role of meaningful encounters and events throughout the human lifespan. Sociocultural theory also focuses on how a person's thinking changes as they make and create meaning from their experiences. Through engaging in practical activity an individual's identity is shaped. As a result of transforming things in the external world an individual gains self-awareness (Breakwell, 1986).

The underlying assumption of this study is that identity develops through social interactions where individuals participate and actively construct identity. In this case individuals are participants in a newly democratized civic society. Participation and activity within this emerging society will be related to the development of identity.

Action Competence and Participation

This research will in addition, utilize an action competence approach within a sociohistorical and sociocultural framework. The action competence approach may prove useful in that action is seen as focused upon the transformation rather than the amelioration of adverse or unfavorable living conditions (Jensen & Schnack, 1997; Simovska, 2000). Action competence includes the ability to reconcile principles with practice, with a focus on developing strategies for change through reflection on our actions. It is especially relevant to the theme of empowerment, participation and democracy. Jensen and Schnack (1997) stated that "perhaps it could be said that common experiences are a prerequisite for democracy, while collective actions are functioning democracy". The conclusion may be that without action and participation there will be neither behavioral nor social change. This seems to suggest that youth have to be actively involved, participate and develop action competence in order to be empowered and become democratic citizens of peaceful nations.

Action competence is an approach that seeks to build a positive sense of competence through attending to methods of engaging effectively with those structures that control participant's lives. Thus it fits with a sociocultural constructionist approach to questions of identity by acknowledging the reciprocal relationship between the social world and individual identity. At the same time, it is consonant with a liberational approach in promoting active participation in social change as a means of discovering an authentic identity.

The relevance of these approaches to the current research lies in the idea that peace building processes in a war torn country do not simply depend on educating youth,

under the assumption that they are passive recipients of knowledge. Instead, it is essential that they become actively engaged in the process. The long-term consequences of such engagement are tremendous for a country emerging from oppression, war, and conflict, and working towards a democratic, critically aware, and peaceful society. Giving voice to young peoples' experiences and concerns is an important step towards encouraging their participation in issues that affect their lives. In addition, children's participation is fundamental in establishing and improving children's rights. Participation in society is a crucial aspect of both citizenship and the development of democracy for children as well as adults (Hart, 1992). The term 'participation' is increasingly used by those working with children and young people to indicate the ways that children and young people think for themselves, express their views effectively, and interact in a positive way with others.

Participation requires involving children and youths in the decision-making processes on issues that affect their lives, the lives of their communities, and the wider society in which they live (Save the Children, 2001). Hart (1992), found that in a number of countries the improvement of children's rights is based on encouraging participation. Furthermore, a nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, especially at the community level. The importance of participation according Hart (1992) is that "participation is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Thus, participation is the fundamental right of citizenship" (p.5).

In addition, participation is key to the kind of civic engagement that fosters citizenship. According to Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss (2002), citizens participate in

democracies and “should be informed about, interested, and involved in local and national affairs” (p 264). Thus, citizens must participate if democracy is to survive. The effects of participation are evident on both individual and national levels. For the individual, developing a sense of shared efficacy is important, as well as developing a voice in the community, having a valued role, and assuming responsibility (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002).

Political socialization research from the 1950s viewed children as passive participants. This changed during the 1960’s when youth began to be viewed as active, and a force that contributed to social change. Research in the past twenty years has focused on the importance of the sociohistorical context that youth grow up in and discovered that political awareness develops throughout life (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998). Nugent (1994) found that the development of children’s relationship with their country is a “developmental phenomenon mediated by cognitive processes, but that the affective quality of the child’s attachment to his/her country is influenced by the cultural-historical milieu in which it emerges and develops” (p.281). The importance of sociocultural factors in the development of identity is also revealed by Coles (1986) when he states that children’s emotional lives are energized by their feelings and attitudes towards their countries. From the earliest years in the child’s life nationalist sentiments and passions become associated with the instincts and the energies of the id. These findings are echoed by Nugent (1994) who found that a child’s relationship with his or her country is adaptive to the extent that it aids the child in finding their bearings and developing a sense of commitment, and provides motivation towards making a contribution to their society. The implications, from the above cited research, are that individuals’ identities

are influenced by sociocultural factors throughout development. Attitudes towards their own country will influence their future participation, interaction and involvement with their own society. Through interviewing adolescents, young people's insights into the processes of identity formation through participation in social reconstruction will be revealed.

Participation has both personal and social dimensions. For example, Gilbert's (1997) research in South Africa indicated that changes at the legislative level need to be mirrored by changes at the level of everyday action if a new society is going to be created. Initiatives to create change at local community levels require people to change the way that they think and act in order to produce a more equitable and productive society. However, problems may arise as groups of individuals who comprise the 'target' for change have potentially different systems of knowledge and practice imposed upon them by change agents. Thus it becomes important to evaluate local systems of knowledge and practice for their potential contributions to change.

In order for individuals, communities and social structures to function in democratic ways and for these communities to be able to live peacefully reconciliation is essential. Since disruption and violence occurred on all levels; individual, communal, and societal it is important that reconciliation also occurs on all levels. For example, Croatia is facing a difficult and complex task that involves resettlement of returnees, displaced and refugees, reintegration of war veterans, victims and survivors as well as issues of justice and accountability in addition to reconstructing its economy and the rebuilding of towns, businesses and factories. Reconciliation can only occur when "deep democracy" is applied (Arye & Audergon, 2003; Mindell, 2002; Udruga Mi, 2003). Deep democracy

is based on the premise that reconciliation is possible if all voices are included, and especially including different views, emotions, experiences and histories (Arye & Audergon 2003). Deep democracy and conflict resolution can only be successful when it welcomes all voices and participants equally, acknowledging their differing views, emotional experiences and histories. Rather than avoiding the sensitive issues, conflict resolution based on deep democracy needs to carefully investigate them, deliberately and carefully finding a way forward through what may appear difficult conflicts. Any other approach risks provoking the opposite effect, as conflicts are bound to resurface and cycle at these points if they are not properly processed (Arye & Audergon, 2003). The war polarized local communities, allowing long held grievances to find expression in often brutal form. The official position of the Croatian government is that all ethnic groups are welcome to return to their communities and their minority rights will be protected (Mesic & Bagic, 2007). In addition, Croatian legislation and the Constitution have incorporated standards for the protection of national minorities based on international and European guidelines and standards (Mesic & Bagic, 2007). Thus a framework has been established for coexistence between formerly antagonistic neighbors. However, as indicated, local practices will need to fall in line, requiring accommodation to be made in order to begin to develop the trust that is necessary for a community to reestablish itself and grow. In one of the research locations, a small town that was formerly 70% Serb, national identity, as one among several identities, will be subject to negotiation and reconfiguration.

The Generational Approach

The third theoretical approach is a generational or cohort perspective that explores the potential effects of sociopolitical forces on groups of individuals at specific developmental time periods. Thus, exposure to a particular historical period for any cohort will tend to produce a shared political awareness (Pilcher, 1994). This approach is discussed by Pilcher (1994) and based on Mannheim's 1923 essay "The Problem of Generations," which introduced the concept that generational location is an important aspect of the development of knowledge. According to this concept individuals become stratified according to their cultural, geographical, and historical locations. Individuals must be born within the same historical and cultural context and experience the same social currents in order to constitute a generation in a meaningful sociological sense. The relationship between individuals of a specific generation and their society is a dialectical one, as they both constitute a defined historical configuration and are constituted by the historical moment (Pilcher, 1994).

Generational units develop out of actual, rather than potential participation in the social world of their time and place. The degree to which a particular cohort develops a shared awareness is held to be dependent upon the tempo of social change, and the critical period through which such a cohort comes to be defined is during youth and young adulthood. According to Mannheim's view, during times of accelerated or abrupt social change attitudes need to change more quickly than during normal periods of gradual development. When norms are abruptly changed the challenge falls to a particular youth cohort whose developmental stage allows them the flexibility to respond in novel ways (Finchilescu & Dawes, 1998; Pilcher,1994).

The generational approach will be used in the present research as the social and historical factors that are operating in Croatia are influencing a specific cohort in new and challenging ways. Previous cohorts have not had to deal with these kinds of social changes and thus there is no previous experience to draw upon.

Conceptual Model

In the present study, identity is conceptualized as emerging from the processes outlined in Figure 1. According to this model, participation takes place through multiple channels that may vary in their degree of openness to the individual's efforts. Through participation, competency is developed in a number of areas, which may lead to further participation and a cycle of growing competencies in varying degrees. This conceptual model is not an outcome model to be tested nor is it intended to be a complete model. The model illustrates the rationale of framing this research and serves as a conceptual map for the process of identity development. The intention is to develop this model further as a part of the dissertation research.

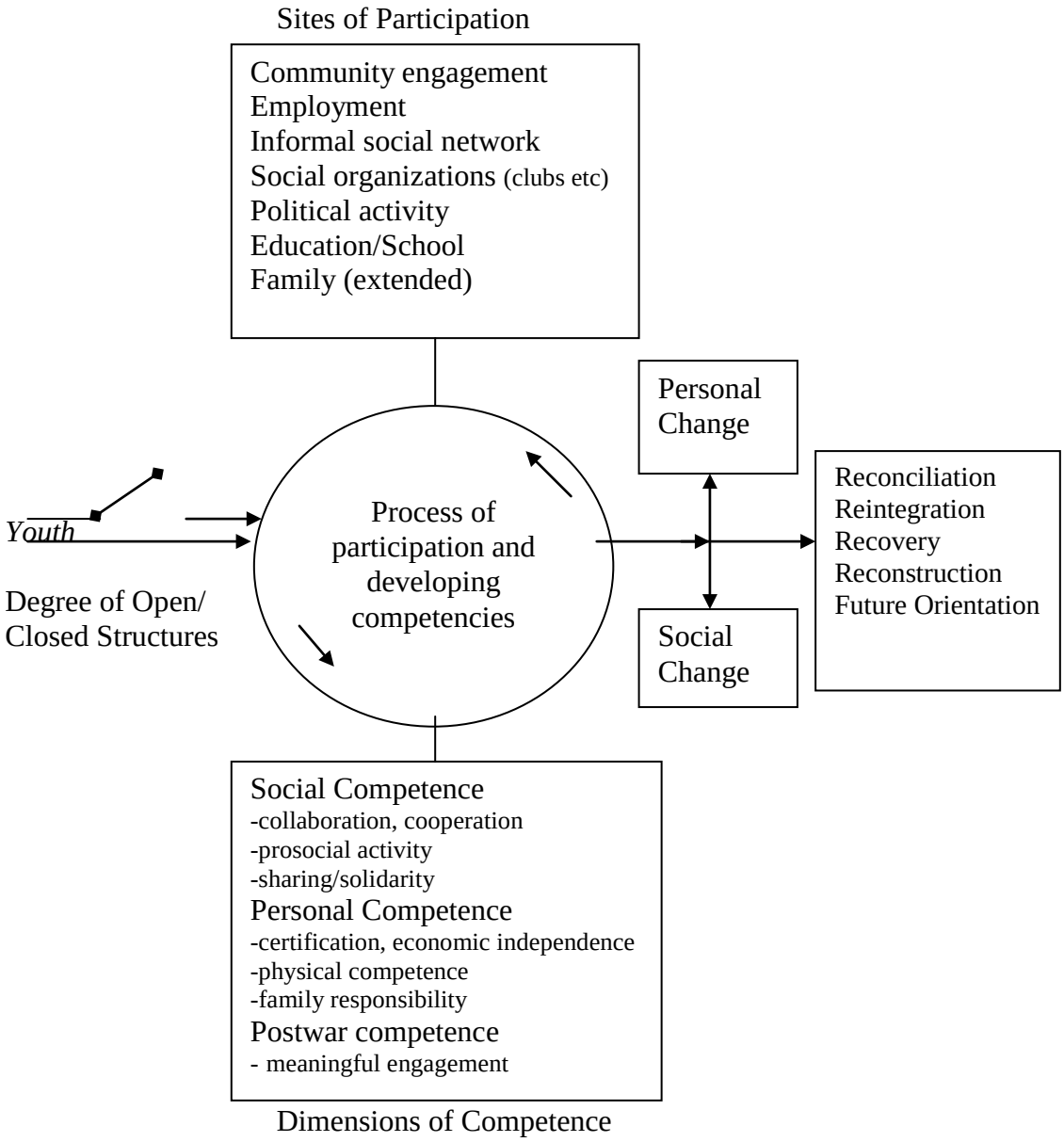
The conceptual model illustrates the possible processes that occur in young people's lives in post-war Croatia. The model develops the notion that the society consists of structures that vary in the degree to which they are open or closed, and that youth have to actively negotiate through participation and improvisation. Out of this active engagement, different competencies are developed. Participation and the development of competence takes place in a number of social realms, from the intimate family sphere to community, educational and political spheres. Participation will vary across this range as these structures vary in the degree to which they are open or closed,

either enabling or constraining youths' attempts to engage. The individual's response will reflect their ability to improvise and negotiate their position given the cultural tools at their disposal. Out of this process, change takes place on both personal and social levels as new identities emerge. The nature of these identities and the changes that produced them will affect the ways in which reconciliation; reintegration, recovery and future orientations are developed and achieved. For example, young people express knowledge and points of view across the war and post-war generation and take on an active participatory stance (Daiute & Turniski, 2005).

The following chapter will present the situation in Croatia in a historical and sociocultural context out of which the previous model (Figure 1) was developed. These include a brief geopolitical account, the "attempts to construct a Yugoslav identity, the nature of psychology as a discipline as it was permitted in Yugoslavia, and the effects of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the subsequent war on the population. The chapter ends with a description of Croatia today and the choice of research sites.

Figure 1

Hypothetical Conceptual Model no. 1 of the Processes of Personal and Social Identity Formation



Chapter 2

As you can see, bad leadership has caused
The present state of evil in the world,
Not Nature that has grown corrupt in you
--Dante Alighieri, Purgatory

This chapter describes the historical and geopolitical background in order to show the processes of emergence, and describe the sociocultural, as well as, sociohistorical situation of the society in which this research was positioned. The different historical events, political developments and prevalent myths are important to understand when observing the newly independent country and the development and lives of its inhabitants.

Background

Historical Overview- History of Yugoslavia

Croatia has had a turbulent past of brief periods of independence interspersed with state unions (e.g. with Hungary and then the Austro-Hungarian Agreement) and absolute rule by the Hapsburg Monarchy. Before the creation of The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, in 1918, the Slovenes, Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Macedonians, and Albanians had practically independent histories (Curtis, 1992). The Serbs suffered 500 years of Turkish rule before freeing themselves in the Balkan Wars of 1912. Meanwhile, Slovenia and Croatia were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The first Yugoslavia, created in 1918, was called the "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes" and was ruled by a Serb king. The Serbs favored a central government while the Croats wanted a loose federation of autonomous republics. In the end, Croatia lost

her statehood institutions, the civil government and the Croatian parliament (Curtis, 1992; Dukić, 1993; Shapiro, 1989). In 1929, the name of the country was changed to the kingdom of Yugoslavia and was ruled by a Serb king.

World War II broke out in Europe in 1939, and in 1941 Yugoslavia signed the Tripartite Pact put forth by the Germans to avoid invasion. Yugoslavia was attacked in 1941 and forced to surrender within two weeks and occupied by the Germans, Italians, Hungarians, and Bulgarians. During World War II, this area faced two wars: a civil war and a war against the occupying Fascist forces (Thompson, 1992). Two fascist puppet states were now established: Serbia and Croatia. In Croatia's capital, Zagreb, Mussolini and Hitler installed the Ustasha in power lead by Ante Pavelic, a Bosnian, and the Independent State of Croatia (NHD) was formed, which also included Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croatia was now divided up in a German sector and an Italian sector. The Croats, in great numbers, joined the Partisan opposition, showing their disapproval of the Ustasha regime. The Partisans were a communist resistance led by the Croat Josip Broz, who is better known as Tito (and will through out this paper only be referred to as Tito). Tito later became the president of the second Yugoslavia (1945-1980).

In 1945, Tito took over Croatia and a new Yugoslavia was created called the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1963, the name was changed to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The SFRJ was a federation of 6 republics and 2 autonomous provinces. The country was an integration of five different peoples, twenty different ethnicities, three main different religions, three different languages, and two different alphabets (Curtis, 1992). Tito ruled the country after the Stalinist Soviet model but eventually Tito broke the ties with the Soviet Union and established

Yugoslavia as non-aligned nation between the Eastern and Western blocks. Yugoslavia then ended up as not being part of either the East or West block during the Cold War. Instead, it made a nonalignment movement where Tito positioned Yugoslavia, as a neutral entity, between the two superpowers and the ideology of choice became known as self-management socialism. This non-alignment move made Yugoslavia very important to the West as an example that it was possible to break out of the Eastern Block as well as preventing the Soviet Union from gaining a "foothold" in the Mediterranean. It was also believed that Yugoslavia could be used to illustrate, to other Eastern European countries, an alternative political model. Thus Yugoslav unity was always important to the West during the Cold War (Zimmerman, 1996).

In the previous section it is stated that the SFRJ was a federation of 6 republics and 2 autonomous provinces however this does not imply sovereignty by the different republics (members) of the federation. Supposedly the six republics were sovereign and could secede if they were dissatisfied with the state of the federation. However, the republics "were no more sovereign that the USSR itself" (Thompson, 1992, p. 91). Tito needed the Serbian support that was needed to control the country and the Ustashas' stained reputation was perfect for his intentions. Tito's plan succeeded; after a while, all Croat nationalism was viewed as Ustasha friendly and thus fascist and a threat. However, Tito needed the Serbs and would gain nothing by tarnishing the Serb reputation. According to Thompson (1992), "Titoism operated by setting Yugoslav nationalisms against each other, and the Ustasha record was too convenient not to use…" (p.267).

Yugoslavia, through extensive reforms, moved towards market socialism as a way to decentralize the economy (Sofos, 1996). In the 1960's and 70's there was widespread

dissatisfaction with the country's economy and several uprisings took place such as the "Kosovo Riots" in 1968, the "Belgrade Summer" revolt in 1968, and the "Croatian Spring" in 1971, and the Bosnian Muslims campaign on the late 1970's. In the spring of 1971, the "Croatian Spring" occurred, when students in Croatia went on strike and people demonstrated but were quieted down and/or imprisoned by Tito's police and soldiers. The "Croatian Spring" or MASPOK (meaning mass movement) agitated for greater rights for Croatia, greater civil rights, the right to take pride in Croatian history and called for democratic, economic reforms and decentralization of the economy (Tanner, 1997). The movement received much support from students and student organizations.

Alleged nationalists were then fired from all Croatian organizations and institutions. In addition, Croatia's oldest cultural society Matica Hrvatska was disbanded. Tito also replaced most of the party leaders with more politically reliable individuals, "anti-reform veterans", who would guarantee that there were no changes and dissident voices (Banac, 1992).

The above section illustrates that there was in fact dissent within Yugoslavia. The reason Yugoslavia lasted for 50 years is due to several reasons such as the personality of the country's leader and his iron fist politics. Tito was a charismatic and powerful leader, who in 1974 got 'elected' as party president for life. This lifetime 'election' was the biggest step towards dictatorship. Attempt at free speech was silenced, the press was muzzled, dissidents were arrested and people were fired for holding different opinions than the ones espoused by Tito (Curtis, 1992). After Tito's death in 1980 the country was plagued by a declining economy and national debt, and Yugoslavia's superficial unity began to disintegrate. Following Tito's death a collaborative body called the federal

presidency ruled the state. The federal presidency consisted of one member from each of the six republics and the two autonomous provinces in addition to the president of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the minister of defense (Thompson, 1992). In addition, with Tito's death separatist and nationalist tensions emerged. According to Thompson (1992), "When Tito died, Yugoslav unitarism dies as a federal project. When Yugoslav unitarism reappeared a few years later, it was a nationalist project sponsored by the biggest republic [Serbia]" (p.38). In 1989, riding a wave of nationalist sentiment Serbia's leadership re-imposed direct rule over the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. This re-imposed direct rule prompted Albanians in Kosovo to argue for separation from the Republic of Serbia.

In 1989, the multi-party system was introduced. This system was a reaction to the social and economic crisis in Yugoslavia as well as an effort to join the developments of Europe. In 1991 and 1992, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia all held their first democratic elections and voted to secede from Yugoslavia. In April 1992, Serbia and Montenegro together passed the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Republic of Croatia, 2002). Croatia and Slovenia held their first democratic elections in 50 years. In May, 1991, 94% of Croats voted for a sovereign independent state. A month later, the Yugoslav Federal Presidency rejected the request for a con-federal settlement. Croatia and Slovenia, instead, went ahead and proclaimed their independence. Both states desired a peaceful solution and proposed to solve the problem by changing the federation to a confederation of independent and sovereign states. The efforts failed and the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) attacked both Croatia and Slovenia in July of 1991. The JNA claimed to be neutral and stated that they had to act in order to

protect the Serb minorities living within Croatia and Slovenia. Since June 1991 the JNA was no longer under federal control but was ruled and sponsored solely by Serbia. Most, non-Serb commanders had left the JNA, making the JNA a Serbian army and no longer a Yugoslav army representing the 6 republics and 2 autonomous provinces. The military attacks that Croatia faced were a multifaceted challenge. First, Croatia faced the Yugoslav Army, while at the same time not having an army of its own. Second it faced the Serbian irregular forces that operated inside Croatia in the Serb occupied areas (Krajina and Slavonija) and later in Bosnia.

The previous section described the turbulent past of Croatia as shaped and reshaped by cultural and political forces throughout recent history. The purpose of this historical background section is based in the belief that what happened in Croatia and the Balkans during the war was not an isolated civil war based on ancient ethnic hatreds and instead depended on a variety of factors. The previous section illustrated how ethnic and national identities formed, maintained and suppressed in various ways through the political turbulence and manipulation. The following section explores Yugoslavia's role during the Cold War, as wedged between the Eastern and Western Block and the investment of the West to keep this nation unified no matter the cost.

Cold War and Geopolitical Background

During the Cold War the world's countries were divided by clear political ideologies (the Eastern Block and the Western Block, communism vs. democracy, evil vs. good) and the status quo upheld by everyone knowing where they belong. The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and

dissolution of the Soviet Union left the West with a diffuse sense of who the enemy was and how to ensure national security. The perception of the world changed from being divided by East and West and between democratic and communist. According to Woodward (2000), this worldview was replaced by the emerging perception that now the world was instead divided into "violence-prone areas" and "zones of peace and stability" (p.19). The war in Yugoslavia immediately placed the Balkans on the list for "violence prone areas".

The Balkans was characterized as a hotbed of ancient ethnic rivalries (Bowman 1994) where violence was a norm. This characterization promoted an attitude of inevitability and otherness that defined the Balkans as non-Western. The war was viewed as a civil war and it was suggested that the situation would improve by itself. It has been shown however that, in fact, the breakup of Yugoslavia and the ensuing war was more a result of "the incapacity of political institutions and political leaders to manage the severe conflicts of economic crisis and constitutional reform peacefully" (Woodward 2000, p.25). Furthermore, Woodward (1997, 2000) notes that the war can be better explained by reference to the economic crisis that was exacerbated by external pressures on constitutional reform that came from the IMF and the World Bank. The economic crisis was initially the result of the cumulative effect of hidden errors in the system. Radical reforms during the 1980s that were intended to rectify the errors were mishandled, resulting in a drastic decline in GNP that averaged 18.7% per year (Korac, 1998). The outcome was a severe foreign debt crisis that led to an ethnic/national pluralization that took on an extreme nationalistic form in nearly all the former republics. The society experienced a conflict of ethnic and national identities resulting from a cumulative effect

of economic crisis, social instability, uneven development, and the lack of vital elements of a civil and democratic society (Korac, 1998). These events led to a complete rejection of the state socialist experience, and brought about a loss of societal identity and a sense of disorientation with regard to the future.

The international community, for its part, exacerbated the situation and "helped to make violence more likely" (Woodward, 2000, p. 31.) in at least three ways according to Woodward (2000),

> by contributing to the weakness of the federal government and state capacity, by legitimizing the people and ideas that would win, and by failing to do (or even understand the need for) the hard work required to make peace when they accepted the peacemakers' role (p. 31-32).

The previous section attempts to illustrate that Yugoslavia collapsed not because of ancient hatreds but due to economic, social, and civil decline. Nor was the country destroyed bottom-up, the destruction was top-down straight from the leaders of the various republics relying on nationalistic rhetoric, propaganda, using past events and historical myths as a prelude to war. The following section discusses the various views of Yugoslav identity and the consequences of these views. The Balkans is such, steeped in many cultures, religions and languages, that there will never be one view point or one truth. There have always been revisionist truths which in turn have led to the present confused set of affairs.

Yugoslav Identity

Drakulić (1994) observed that for many people living in Yugoslavia, mixed ethnic/nationality marriages and relationships were common; people did not discuss the different nationalities. Drakulić (1994) continues,

> not because it was forbidden, but because it was unimportant to the majority of our generation. It wasn't an issue. Maybe it was a consequence of the repression of the communist regime, of the brainwashing of our education system, the plan to create and artificial 'Yugoslav' nation- the fact is that in the 1980 census 1.5 million declared themselves Yugoslav, people of a non existent nation, and interestingly enough, they were all born after the War [World War II] and approximately thirty years old (p.129-130).

Simić (2000), also notes that the use of the term Yugoslav in the data on mixed marriages in the census may be misleading because it was used by the different ethnic groups in order to mask their true ethnic/national identities and to avoid discrimination and harassment.

Previous generations grew up in an oppressive, hierarchical, communist Yugoslavia that stifled initiative and promoted a very different sense of personal identity for Croatians and members of the other republics (Ramet, 1996). There existed a culture of silence and resistance to change fostered by the regime after WWII until the early 1990's when Yugoslavia finally fell apart. For Croatian's in Yugoslavia, their deepest personal pain had to be kept secret, and they were forced to suffer in silence (Juul, 1997). Not only was intellectual and political dialogue absent, but a vital part of personal dialogue was absent. With the fall of Yugoslavia, Croatia as a culturally advanced war-

torn area was opened to a variety of alien psychological interventions, programs and interpretations (Juul, 1997), as covered in the previous chapter.

This is a crucial point as out of Yugoslavia's population of approximately 23 million only 1.5 million identified themselves as Yugoslav (6.5%). It is then not surprising that Yugoslavia fell apart when the majority of the population did not identify themselves as Yugoslav, despite the attempts of the communists to set up a country with an artificial identity and sense of belonging. Those living in Yugoslavia expressed public and private identities. The public identity was an assumed or imposed identity, defined by the state, and was expressed in the workplace and other public forums where expressions of ethnic or national affiliations were discouraged by threat of punishment. Subsequently, non-Yugoslav identities, such as ones ethnicity, could only be expressed in private situations.

The transition from being a republic in a socialist federation that constituted Yugoslavia into becoming an independent democratic republic was a violent one. Povrzanović (1997), describing Yugoslav breakup states that "the former Yugoslav ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' which insisted on South Slavic 'kinship' among its six nations has succumbed to an overnight deconstruction when the members of one nation started to kill the members of the other" (Povrzanović, 1997, p.159). The war and communal conflict was not just specific to Croatia. After the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin wall, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia proved fertile ground for the resurgence and re-emergence of repressed ethnic, cultural, religious identities (Engstrom, 2009; Conversi, 2004).

The war and violence broke people's ties to family, social networks, homes and place and the very core of identity was shattered (Fullilove, 1996). It is out of this disintegration of the Yugoslav state that the present study seeks to explore the nature of the identities that are being formed.

The previous section attempted to illustrate the different views on Yugoslav identity and the militarization of civil society. The next section will describe the role of myths as narrative practices and how they create the present context.

Myths Creating the Context for Croatia in the Present

This section describes the myths that influenced the use of historical facts presented in this section and that creates a framework from which people create their life narratives. The myths that are part of a master narrative are part of socializing the youth and affect their values and views. The section ends with a consideration of the myths that today's youth have to deal with more directly and that are present in for example music and the internet.

Myths as narrative practices play an essential role in the socialization of younger generations and in self-construction, has a socializing effect, serves as a means to transfer values in the young and as a way of making meaning of past events (Gates, 1989, Malinowski, 1926/1984; Miller, 1994) and serve as preparation for adulthood (Herdt, 1981). Myths are tools used to educate younger generations and maintain collective wisdoms, serving as both "socializing tools" (Miller, 1994, p. 158) and "culture preserving instruments" (Miller, 1994, p. 158). The myths prevalent in the countries of former Yugoslavia are remnants of unresolved and repressed ideas that were never

resolved during the existence of Yugoslavia. These myths reflect the present discourse and points of tension and resistance of the former Yugoslav countries. Some of the historical events and ideas where never resolved during Yugoslavia's existence and were instead suppressed, denied or served as a tool to fuel mistrust and keep the different peoples in check. These unresolved issues have become rich breeding grounds for legends, myths and narratives that people tell and retell in order to give some structure to the unstable and insecure postwar environment. Most often the myths serve to show the self and the group to which one belongs as superior to the other ethnic/national groups. The myths also serve as stories to justify and explain own and others behavior as well as providing a justification for the war and related events.

Often myths and private stories serve as narratives to "socialize the young" (Miller, 1994, p.158) are used to justify and make sense of experiences and life stories. These stories, myths and discourses occurred in conversations and everyday interactions. These private stories are most often reiterated at home stay within the family and are not public. The outsider only gets access to these stories in a moderated way when they are retold by children and youth or by adults. Youth sometimes touch upon the myths when reflecting on the past, what life was like before the war and comparing the current situation to the pre-war situation. These myths are also evident in social networks sites such as Facebook where groups drawing on historical events or persons are common.

The war in the Balkans was fought not only with weapons but also with words using the media and public sphere as a battle ground. Slavenka Drakulic (1993) in Balkan Express writes that long before the real war there was an ongoing media war. The war of words served a specific purpose which was to manipulate victim images in

order to explain and justify the war. With the help of media myths were created, distributed and reinforced until they became the truth.

Political psychologists have identified the various myths that are used in nation building (Kecmanovic, 1996; MacDonald, 2002). For instance, MacDonald (2002) describes a model composed of three myths. These he calls the myths of the "nation … (of covenant and renewal)", primary myths of identification, negative myths of identification. Using these definitions he analyses the Serb and Croatian nationalist myths.

MacDonald (2002) provides examples of a number of powerful myths such as: Schopflin's fall and persecution myths. The first is the myth about redemption and suffering and the second is the myth of unjust treatment. Both of these myths justify acts of violence. Kecmanovic (1996) also provides examples of fall and persecution myths but provides five examples. The five themes are threat of damage, threat-internal or external, universal culprit, plot, victim and sacrifice.

This myth creation serves many purposes such as to explain the past and justify the present, legitimize the own state building based on claims of victimization or external threat of annihilation, to neutralize intra-group differences and re-write and re-tell the past to create the future.

MacDonald's (2002) analysis of myths provides a new approach to conflict analysis. His analysis is used in this chapter to provide a short background to the prevalent myths in the political psychology research and to provide a context for the myths analyzed for this research. The myths described in this dissertation research are

those myths that are found in the media, literature, in everyday life and that have become personal myths to explain and justify ones life and actions and to explain political events.

The following section will discuss the effects of the war on Croatia and the population and identity in order to provide more context and background.

Effects of War in Croatia on Population and Identity

After half a century of communist rule, Croatia held its first free parliamentary elections in 1990. Ninety-four per cent of the votes favored independence and in the spring of 1991 Croatia and some of the other republics attempted to secede from the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The Yugoslav National Army subsequently attacked Slovenia and Croatia in order to prevent the secession, initiating a war lasting from 1991 to 1995. As an example of the scale of this conflict and its impact on civilians, consider that in 1994 one-third of the country of Croatia was occupied and about half a million Croats were displaced (out of a total population of 4.8 million) from the occupied territories, and another 400,000 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina sought refuge in Croatia (Documenta, 2005, Povrzanović, 1997). Of these displaced persons and refugees, an estimated 320,000 were children between the ages of 0 to 15 (UNHCR, 1993). 240,000 inhabitants left the country, 20,000 inhabitants were killed or disappeared, 30,000 were disabled (Documenta, 2005).

During the war people had to flee the occupied zones and were expelled from their homes. People became refugees when fleeing from the other republics and displaced when having to leave their homes within Croatia. The refugees and displaced people suffered abrupt loss of their homes, their ties to the land and their belongings, loss

of their very core of stability. In addition, they suffered a loss of social networks, family members, and livelihood. The end result is that the country now faces the extensive responsibility of caring for refugees, resettling and reintegration of refugees and displaced individuals, reconstruction and recovery, reintegration of war-veterans, psycho-social aid and mental health assistance to the displaced, refugees, widows, orphans, and dealing with high levels of unemployment.

A pilot study (Turniški, 2001) that analyzed displaced and refugee children's autobiographical life history essays indicated that refugee and displaced children in Croatia experienced a breaking of the bond between self and place. What remained were romanticized memories, a longing for the past and a deep desire to return home to the ruins of their towns and houses. Many children wanted to be part of the rebuilding process and hoped for a better future. Seeing their home and community destroyed by the war led them to long for the place they had known, and idealize the past. This led to a future-wish that expressed a longing to return home to the places they identified with and loved, and to be a part of the rebuilding process.

Children's and youth's accounts from a wide variety of contexts demonstrate that they act as moral agents in the structure and course of their lives (Mayall, 2000). Thus it is the responsibility of adults to ensure that their participation leads to a sense of empowerment (Swedish Save the Children, 1997). As the narratives revealed, there is a strong desire to recreate what has been taken from them. As other researchers have indicated, making them a part of the process of reconstruction may prevent children from experiencing further disenfranchisement (Hart, 1992; Mayall, 2000; Swedish Save the Children, 1997). This has both political and social implications. From this we may infer

that reconstruction efforts in former war ravaged regions should allow for the participation of children and adolescents as a way of including them, promoting well-being and furthering their education.

The following section considers the structure of Croatia today in order to provide a context in which the dissertation research and development of youth can be situated.

Croatia Today

Croatia today has a population of 4.4 million people. These break down into the following ethnicities: Croat 89.6%, Serb 6 %, Muslim 0.6%, Hungarian 0.4, Slovenian 0.3%, and others 3.1% (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). There are several religions such as Catholic, Orthodox, and Slavic Muslim. The official language is Croatian. This is a South Slavic language that uses the Roman script.

The country is a Parliamentary democracy and the constitution was adopted in December 22, 1990. Independence from Yugoslavia was achieved on June 25, 1991. The country suffers from a high rate of unemployment at 22.3% (Republic of Croatia, 2002). Croatia has emerged as new nation and new democracy with new social structures. Currently the country is in the process of solidifying democratic process and human rights, rebuilding and reintegrate refugees, displaced and returnee populations.

An example illustrating Croatia's situation today and the effects of war were shown in Jutarnji List (August 4-8th 2006, v 9, nr. 409, p.29).

Table 1. Effects of the war in Croatia.

30 percent of Croatian territory was occupied
6695 soldiers were killed
5139 civilians were killed
1176 defenders missing
1878 missing civilians
1140 missing that are still being searched for
1631 defenders that committed suicide from august 5. 1990- end of 2005
7666 defenders that were prisoners of war
34 610 military war disabled
306 children were killed
1267 children were wounded
5053 children lost one parent
111 children became war orphans losing both parents
365children missing
200 000 people were displaced, expelled or fled
40 000 people were wounded
20 billion dollars is the estimated cost of material damage due to the war

According to Documenta the Centre for Facing the Past and the Croatian Government the war damage actually amounts to 37.4 billion dollars. Seventy-four percent of counties in Croatia suffered war damage and over 1200 companies were harmed and suffered losses and 150 000 places of unemployment were lost (Croatian Government, 1999; Documenta, 2005)

In postwar areas, the density of population has decreased 3.5 times when compared to before the war. Croatia as a whole lost about 3% of its population and Croatian postwar areas, between 1991-2001, lost 40% of its population (Documenta, 2005). The effects of war have in the postwar areas contributed to serious demographic issues and drastic demographic changes. Documenta (2005) in their document titled "Platform for Peace Building" point out that there is a diminished capacity to develop postwar areas due to reduced human potential. The reduced human potential is illustrated

by the statistics that 32% of inhabitants of post war areas are over the age of 60, 47% are middle aged, and 21% are under the age of 20 (Documenta, 2005).

Conclusion

The available historical and political literature suggests that Yugoslavia's creation was not artificial as it was encouraged by all the different national groups so that they could escape the dominant powers that threatened to engulf them (Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Serbs by the Ottomans). However, what made the Yugoslav identity artificial was the denying of other national identities and the imposition of a Yugoslav identity as the only option. Forbidding open national identities only bred secret nationalist tendencies due to the desire to be able to express ones national identity. This was not the reason the war tore Yugoslavia apart, nationalism was a tool, as was propaganda to instill fear in order to get the polity to believe that they needed to use lethal force to defend themselves. Yugoslavia was destroyed from the top down (Zimmerman, 1996) by their own leaders that had something to gain by war such as gaining territory, wealth for personal gain and power.

This section described the historical and geopolitical background in order to illustrate the processes of emergence, and describe the sociocultural, as well as, the sociohistorical situation of the society in which this research will be positioned. The theoretical perspectives chosen were selected on the basis of processes and developments in Croatia to date.

Chapter 3

Methods

This chapter will describe the research study, the methodology utilized and rationale for the chosen approaches. A description of the three data collection locations and descriptions of the NGOs and participants is also provided. Finally, data analysis methods are described.

The Research Study

The challenge faced by young people in the current study is that years of communist rule have resulted in little history of civic engagement or the encouragement of a foundation of personal initiative. In contrast to previous vertical and hierarchical structures, democratic principles and more horizontal, civic engagement must now emerge. Thus, the current research study explored how youth engage and negotiate with the new structures and how they make meaning of the war events, of the postwar situation and construct future narratives and goals. These different levels of participation depend upon localized social structures that either enable or hinder the development of a sense of competence to engage with the social structures that shape youths' lives. There were two aims to this study. The first aim was to explore the ways in which participation and engagement serve to foster a sense of personal and communal efficacy. The second aim of this study was to investigate the role of competence and how it aids marginalized individuals in moving forward with their lives by focusing on the regenerative and recuperative strategies that help to make sense of the past and guide future actions.

The young people that participated in this study represent the first generation in Croatia to grow up in a democracy as members of an independent nation with new social and political structures. But they also face new challenges such as negotiating the realities of living in a transitional country, managing the new structures, and facing identity issues such as being refugees, returnees, and internally displaced or having become disabled during the war. They also have to make sense of war-related events, historical events and issues surrounding inter ethnic tensions. The war created a series of disruptions to their development as families and communities were fractured and the social and physical fabric of their lives was disturbed or destroyed. Pilot research conducted in January of 2003 (Turniski, 2003, 2004) indicated that in the aftermath youth face a new post-war reality where the traumas of the war have in many cases given way to an ongoing struggle to cope with the realities of postwar life. These include high levels of unemployment, corruption, limited opportunities, educational disruption, absence of family members, and basic shortages of life's necessities. These problems must be balanced against the backdrop of a nation in transition and facing many challenges. In such a situation the individual's experiences take on a socially constructed meaning as they seek to define a new role for themselves in a new society.

Research in this area, utilizing the proposed theoretical perspectives, is essential because only modest amounts of research has been conducted with socially excluded and marginalized populations (Peterson-Badali, Ruck, Koegl, 2001; Surratt, 2005; UNDP 2006; Walsh, 1992). In addition, there is limited research on the long-term consequences of war for the postwar generations (Daiute & Turniski, 2005; Turniski, 2001, 2003, 2004).

Research Plan

This research examined the ways in which rebuilding and recovery take place on structural, social and community levels, as well as on a personal level, recognizing that reconstruction and reconciliation are simultaneously individual, social and structural processes. The levels on which these changes are taking place and through which individuals strive to make sense of their lives include constitutional, legal, political, military, educational, health and welfare, as well as infrastructural changes that affect business and industry, and local organizations. In line with a sociocultural approach the research also examined the context in which the youth live and participate; examining what forms participation takes as a mode of transformation. This involved exploring the resources and strategies that young people utilize in this situation. A critical question was the degree to which opportunities for participation in this rapidly transforming society are present for youth and young adults. It is out of these processes that identity emerges, and the manner in which participation influences emerging identity on individual, social and national levels formed an important part of the analysis.

The data for this research were gathered using multiple methods, including the collection of narrative accounts of youths and young adults through in-depth interviews, interviews with professionals in relevant fields, compilation of archival and media material, qualitative field observations and participant observation in a grass-roots reconstruction project and youth NGOs. Each data-gathering method generated material that made a specific contribution to the research project and together they helped form a complete picture of the research topic.

Life story interviews were collected and the aim of the interview was to get the participants to talk about their lives, and to tell their life stories (Peacock & Holland, 1993). The life story interviews were utilized to examine the role of participation in the formation of identity among young people in Croatia whose lives have been affected by war and forced relocation. This research adopts a sociocultural approach that argues that identity is realized through participation and "can emerge only as one moves actively between private and public, personal and cultural, past and present" (Gover, 2003).

Interviews encouraged subjects to construct a narrative account of their experiences reflecting upon questions of identity and the nature and extent of their participation and engagement in social development.

The semi-structured interviews used open questions designed to elicit basic demographic information while also encouraging participants to construct their own narrative accounts. The interview guide (Appendix 1) provides a detailed list of the areas of information that were sought, but does not represent a strict interview schedule and was not used as such. Experience with the pilot interviews revealed that some youth required considerable encouragement to talk. Asking them simple general questions such as age, school, about Croatia, hobbies et cetera, got them talking and allowed them to feel more relaxed, and thus allowed them to begin to create a narrative account.

Narrative accounts are especially valuable in the context of this research project. Narratives and life history essays provide a way to investigate children's and young adults' understanding as well as revealing how they experience events. Both Engel (1995) and Bruner (1990) have found that narratives aid in organizing and understanding experience. In addition children tell stories in order to master their traumatic experiences.

Such storytelling allows children to create narrative accounts of their lives (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1996; Garbarino & Stott, 1992). Narratives, thus may provide insight into how individuals organize information and experiences, and reveal what these experiences mean and how they are understood (Engel, 1995; Walsh, 1992). As Engel (1995) stated, "stories are not merely a nice or fun decoration added to the real stuff of mental development. They are, in many respects, the real stuff of mental development" (p.207). Children, adolescents and young adults learn about their world, and reflect on their knowledge through the telling and retelling of stories. Constructing their personal stories in this way allows them to know themselves, and develop a sense of self that can be communicated to others, to make meaning of experiences and plan for the future.

However, narratives are not simply stories of individuals' actions and reflections on experience in isolation. Narratives are both social and relational, and gain their meaning from the collective social histories in which they occur. As illustrated by Johnson & Golombek (2002) stating that "narratives cannot be separated from the socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts from which they emerged" (p.5). Due to the fact that they are deeply embedded in socio-historical discourses they represent a socially mediated account of experience (Gee, 1999; Johnson & Golombek, 2002). In addition, narrative research gives us the opportunity to "capture the lived experience of people in terms of their own meaning-making" (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003, p. 260).

In the context of this research project interviews were structured to encourage the emergence life stories, representing a narrative account of the experiences of adolescents and young adults. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their attitudes and expectations. Through this process an understanding of their sense of identity in relation

to their confidence and ability to participate and interact with their environment emerged. Of special interest were the perceived governing factors that account for their beliefs about their own agency and efficacy and their ability to have an effect on their surroundings (e.g. participating in community events, NGO activities, volunteerism etc).

In addition to the in-depth life story interviews additional data were collected through informal conversations, field observations and participant observations. Qualitative field observations were conducted to examine the developmental processes in the formal (Location II) and informal locations (Locations I and III) of reintegration, reconstruction and reconciliation. Field observations and participant observations took place, with some variation between the sites depending on logistics, and structural/political obstacles. Observation at all three sites took place through daily participation and contact with the various organizations through which subjects were recruited. Participant observation also provided a means of investigating how participants' narrative accounts reflect their behaviors and actions, as well as providing additional insight into their experiences and the impact of the social structures in place and the role of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The research involved immersion in three post war communities for extensive periods. In 2002, the researcher visited different locations and set up contacts. In 2003 and 2004 research was conducted in three postwar locations. In addition to the participant observations conducted at the three sites the researcher, also traveled extensively within Croatia and the surrounding countries such as The Bosnian Federation, Republic of Srpska, Serbia, and Slovenia. The purpose of the trips was to meet with other researchers working and exploring similar issues in the Balkans as well as to

explore and experience the wider context in which this research is taking place. In addition, the researcher also attended different seminars dealing with community development and civic activism in order to make contacts with other NGO's and activists to get a sense of what is occurring within the NGO circuit and development at community levels across Croatia .

Documents including archival materials, news and printed media sources were used to provide a background context to the interview and participant observation data. These sources included news articles, and archival materials from the NGOs such as institutional records, texts, handbooks, publications, brochures and information materials were collected if available.

These documents were utilized to create an understanding of the complex individual and social forces that affect the development of young adults. Newspaper reports of significant events associated with postwar conditions, especially those relating to the social structures and issues faced by youth were compiled. Newspaper and magazines were searched for articles pertaining to identity, participation and social reconstruction, as well as specific widespread social issues such as corruption, unemployment, education, crime, violence, and other issues affecting the lives of youth and young adults.

The principal function of this segment of the data collection was to ground the research in the particular local context. In addition, the programs (the NGOs at the three sites) themselves were included as a level of analysis to explore the individuals' relationship to and within these organizations. Photographs were also used to document, activities, participation and community events and projects. The photographs served to

supplement field notes and increase retention of observations. The photographs also provided concrete illustrations of the differences between the various environments that the youth negotiate and attempt to participate within.

Research Sites

Data were collected from three sites in Croatia. In order to protect confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and participating organizations I have chosen to call the research sites Location I, Location II and Location III. The participants were recruited through three organizations that will also be kept anonymous and throughout the text will be referred to as: Organization I, Organization II, and Organization III.

The research involved immersion in three postwar communities where individual accounts were collected, in addition to analysis of the wider context, community and region. Specifically, this research study examined three populations in postwar Croatia with different proximities to war, different structures and contexts. The following section provides a brief overview of each of the three locations. This section also presents a detailed description of the locations and participating organizations.

The first site, Location 1, is a coastal city with approximately 73,000 inhabitants. The research participants were young adults living in an area that was under attack during the 1991 to 1995 war for independence and was isolated from Croatia during the war. In the vicinity several decisive battles were fought. The city is now a tourist town and thus has undergone physical and social reconstruction. In 1991 the location had a 85% Croat majority, with 10% Serbs, and 5% other ethnicities (Miroslav Krleza Lexicographical

Institute, 1991). Today the site has a Croat majority of 93%, and a Serb minority of approximately 2.4%

The second site, Location II, is a village which at the time of the research was the site of a community reconstruction project. The entire municipality (research site plus surroundings) is predominantly Serb with approximately 70% Serbs and 30% Croat population, while the site itself (village only) is predominantly Bosnian Croat (60%) with a Serb minority (40%). Prior to the war the area was predominately Serb with approximately 94% inhabitants being of Serbian background (Croatian Statistics Bureau, 2009). This location suffered considerable physical damage and social disruption during the war, as it was one of the earliest areas to be occupied by the Serbs and then, three years later, reclaimed by the Croats. Observing a community of mixed ethnicities that are actively engaged in the process of reconstructing itself will provide a different experience to the situation of Location I that is fairly homogenous, and Location III going through a formal program of reintegration of the different ethnic groups.

The third site, Location III, was heavily damaged and nearly leveled during the war and the site of numerous human rights violations. Today Location III still faces segregation and division along ethnic lines. For example there are separate schools, daycare centers, and even cafés for the different ethnic groups. In addition, the economy, factories and other businesses were destroyed during the war and the location faces large challenges in restoring its economy. Prior to the war the area thrived on a strong economy based on factories and industries in addition to being a rich agricultural and wine producing region. Prior to the war the city had roughly 44,000 inhabitants with a Croat majority (47%) and 33% Serbs (Croatian National Census, 1991). The population now

consists of approximately 32000 inhabitants with 57% Croats and 33% Serbs (Croatian National Census, 2001).

When this research was conducted in 2003, Croatia had an unemployment rate of 21.7% (Croatian Bureau of Statistic, 2003). The unemployment rate declined over the past years but increased again with the global economic crisis in 2009. The unemployment rate in Croatia in 2009 was 16% (Croatian Bureau of statistics, 2009).

Table 2. Demographic Overview by Location

SITES	**Population**	**Croats**	**Serbs**	**Participants**
Location I	72,718	92.77%	2.38%	Croatian IDPs Croatian domicile Bosnian refugees and child/youth soldiers
Location II	3,779 inhabitants municipality of Location II 1800 inhabitants of site Location II	30 58.3%	70 39.69%	Croatian Refugees from Bosnia Croatian IDPs Serb returnees
Location III	31,670	57.46%	32.88%	Serb returnees Former youth soldiers

www.dzs.hr (2010)

Description of Research Setting Locations and NGOs

Location I

Location I is a beautiful city located on the Dalmatian Coast. It is a homogeneous city with predominantly Croatian inhabitants. The city was besieged during the war and cut off from the rest of Croatia. Location I is a city that caters to tourists and therefore shows little war damage as there has been much restoration in order to attract tourists.

War damage is not as apparent in the historical center of the city but becomes more apparent towards the peripheries and especially the surrounding villages that were under heavy attack and intensely mined. The surrounding suburbs and towns show more damage because these areas were occupied and closer to the battle front. The surrounding villages experienced even harsher conditions and the inhabitants there were forced to flee to city itself or the surrounding islands were they lived as internally displaced persons (IDPs). When they returned to their towns and villages they returned to completely devastated towns and mined environments.

The villages surrounding Location I, were heavily mined during the war and as a result many of the youth were injured and disabled by mines. Mine clearing is a major issue and a great concern in the city and disability awareness is a prevalent topic and widely publicized. For example, there are infomercials on TV and posters on how to relate to and approach disabled individuals in public buildings such as the post office. Even today it is common in the news to hear about mine related injuries and deaths either of the local population or professional pyrotechnicians. Economically the situation is difficult because of the war damage to factories and also due to the irregularities in the privatization of factories and businesses. There is high unemployment and few opportunities.

Description of the NGO- Location I

The NGO association in Location I is different from the NGOs in the other locations as it is a non-governmental organization that developed from the war of independence with approximately 160 members. It was funded after the war to support

and promote the rights of disabled civilians. It provides support to those families who lost family members during the war and also provides support to civilians who were disabled or lost children as the result of the war. It also holds presentations about topics such as dealing with mine awareness. The governmental association has its main office and president in Zagreb with branches in the municipalities. The association office is run by two staff and the NGO is funded by membership fees, donations and grants from governmental ministries. The goal of the NGO is to help the victims of war and in some instances this includes staff who themselves may be civilian war victims themselves. They have good connections with other governmental organizations and are trusted members of their community. The members that come to the organization are treated as friends and there is a close bond between the members and the president and vice president of the organization.

The members of the organization are civilians wounded during the war and in some cases wounded youth who were child combatants. The organization's members range from small children who have been injured by mines to adults and senior citizens who have been injured during the war or lost family members. The members are predominantly Croatian including Croatian refugees from Bosnia. Members receive assistance in social service delivery, aid and information regarding their rights, legislation and social policy and help with forms and medical records. In addition, each member receives a membership card giving them the right to not have to wait in line in governmental institutions and banks. The staff organizes yearly youth camps, environmental clean ups, workshops and seminars.

Location II

Croatia faced the burden of accommodating and taking care of the internally displaced Croatian population, Croatian refugees from Serbia and Croatian refugees from Bosnia that began streaming into the country in 1993 when violence in Bosnia erupted. Subsequently there were two waves of expulsions, first in 1991 when the Serbs took over the area and again in 1995 when Croatia reclaimed this territory.

Location II is in a rural area in central Croatia. Before 1996 the population of the town was predominantly Serb. After 1996 the resettling Bosnian Croats (refugees) renamed the town XXXX, street names and names of squares were changed as well. Location II was completely destroyed during the war and remains an isolated and socially deprived municipality. The town was occupied by the Serbs from 1991-1995.

The war had a significant effect on Location II and surrounding areas. Economically the town and the surrounding areas face difficulties such as high levels of unemployment (HZZ 2009), lack of opportunities and a poor economy. In addition, the demographics in town have now changed significantly because of the war events as described in the previous section. The population in the municipality has been reduced by half and today totals approximately 3800 inhabitant. The town's population declined by half and now has 1800 inhabitants which consist of Serb returnees and Croatian refugees from Bosnia, and Croatian internally displaced individuals that are settling and resettling in this area, as well as a Serb domicile population (i.e., those Serbs that did not leave in 1995). The area is isolated and the poor economy magnifies the issues youth have to overcome.

Description of the NGO-Location II

At the time he field research was conducted the programs in Location II were run by a national NGO based in Zagreb founded in 1992. In Location II the focus has been on revitalization and reintegration. The NGO facilitated the opening of the community center in Location II where children and youth, from all national groups, can find a place to gather and to participate in numerous structured activities, classes and workshops as well as unstructured activities. The program was run by 5 staff from Zagreb and 7 local staff. Funding for the project ended in March 2004. From March 2004, the Centre was run entirely on a voluntary basis by a few local former employees. Eventually the Community Centre found funding and support which enabled them to continue and expand their activities. The individuals volunteering and working at the community centre decided to break from the national NGO and founded their own local grassroots NGO in September of 2004. The community embraced the NGO and there is a sense of community ownership.

Location III

Before the war Location III was one of Croatia's more developed municipalities with several factories employing thousands of people. It was a multi-ethnic city but now is divided between Croats and Serbs. The area, was occupied from 1991-95 by the Serbian military and paramilitary forces. The Serbs from Location III moved to Serb held suburbs and surrounding towns, while most Croatians fled or were expelled or killed. The city represents the worst of war horrors for those familiar with the events that occurred there. The city was leveled during the war and is currently being slowly rebuilt

and there are still several sites of mass graves. In 1995, Croatia reclaimed this area in a military action. All business, factories and buildings have been destroyed and a high percentage of the population is unemployed. Not surprisingly, only half of the Croats that fled in 1991 have returned to Location III. Location III is entirely divided along ethnic lines on all levels of society from the political, educational, down to neighborhoods and even cafes. Children attend separate kindergartens and youth separate schools. The very structure of this town and all of the sub structures such as education and politics are completely segregated.

Description of NGO-Location III

The NGO is run by youth and focuses on peace and activism. It was founded in 1999 by Serbian youth activists. The aims of the organization is the creation of a safe place for youth, providing support of youth volunteers and the promotion of interethnic dialogue in the region and to provide assistance in reconciliation between the ethnic groups. Although, the aim of the NGO is to include all ethnic groups in their activities it still consists of mainly young Serbs and also some youth from other ethnic groups as well as international volunteers. The NGO appeals to youth of all ethnicities and nationalities and is one of the very few places in this town where people from all ethnic groups have a possibility to spend time together. Besides various workshops (trainings, creative, art, video, etc.) and special events (concerts, exhibitions, public debates, etc.), it offers a space to meet and talk, play table football, darts and read magazines. When this research was conducted the youth center had 18 members and about 70 participants. The participants range between the ages of 14-26. The majority of participants are

predominantly Serbian but the NGO advocates integration and reconciliation and is open to anyone interested regardless of ethnicity. The table presented below provides a brief description of each the three locations.

Table 3. Description of Locations

Description	Location I	Location II	Location III
Status during war	Besieged/Surrounded	Occupied	Besieged then occupied
War damage	Heavy damage and mines	Some to heavy damage	Total destruction
Ethnicity	Croat	Majority Serb, Minority Croat	Majority Croat Minority Serb
Population	Homogeneous site	Reintegration site	Segregation site
Issues faced	Disability, reconstruction, de-mining.	Refugee and returnee issues, housing, poor economy, unemployment,	Atrocities/mass graves unresolved war responsibilities e.g. known war culprits living in community. Mistrust

Study Procedures

IRB approval from the Graduate Centre at CUNY was received and data collection at the three sites commenced. Potential participants were recruited from the previously mentioned organizations at each site. Program managers and staff informed potential participants that a study was going to take place and helped in the recruitment of study participants. In addition, participants themselves suggested friends and family members that would also be willing to be interviewed. The interviews were scheduled in agreement with the various NGO's in order to minimize disruptions in their work or activities. Before the start of each interview, participants were given consent forms explaining the purpose of the study and the opportunity to ask any questions about the

study. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, they were told that their participation or non-participation would not affect their relationship with the NGO's and organizations. Each participant was offered a token of gratitude such as candies, sodas, coffee or tea, etc.

Individual face-to-face interviews, lasting approximately 45-60 minutes, were conducted either in the NGO's office or some other quiet space that was available at the time. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. In order to protect confidentiality and participants' anonymity and minimize risk to participants the tapes were numbered and no names or identifying information were put on the tapes. A master list with all the names and consent forms were kept in a locked room. Numbered tapes and the master list were kept separately. In addition, the names all NGOs taking part in the study and have been changed and the actual locations will not be disclosed.

The research involved immersion in each of the communities. Data were collected in Location I in January 2003, as well as in May and June of 2003. Data in Location II were gathered from June to September and during November 2003, and throughout 2004. Data from Location III were collected during August and November 2003. A total of thirty-eight taped interviews were conducted with youth at Locations I and II. The participants ranged in age from 12-26, (Male-22 and Female-16) and were either Croatian or Serbian with only a few Muslim or youth from mixed ethnicities. The final sample included Croatian refugees from Bosnia, Serb returnees, Croatian internally displaced individuals, Croatian non-displaced, as well as youth with disabilities that were civilian war casualties. Youth with disabilities and former child/youth soldiers were

included because their subjective realities provided a unique context for identity formation and development in postwar areas and research with persons with disabilities populations and marginalized youth is scarce. In addition, another 6 non-taped interviews were conducted at Location III and some of these were in a group setting, as opposed to one-on-one interviews, depending on what the participants and situation allowed. The participants in Location III were predominantly Serb males with the exception of one Croatian male activist. The participants ranged in age from 16-26 years of age.

In addition, to the interviews with youth, numerous informal interviews/conversations conducted with adults, activists, psychologists, politicians, community workers, directors and managers of NGO's and governmental organizations. The in-depth interviews were complemented by the researcher's immersion in the communities and daily participant observations and participation in the various activities offered at each site. In addition, archival material, media sources and photograph data were also examined.

Semi-Structured Interviews-Life stories

Face to face in-depth interviews were conducted and the interviews were designed to encourage subjects to construct a narrative account of their experiences reflecting upon questions of identity and the nature and extent of their participation and engagement in civic and social development. The semi-structured interview questions were intended to encourage participants to construct their own narrative accounts while also eliciting basic demographic and background information.

The in-depth interviews and an interview guide collected basic background information (age, education, whether a refugee, returnee or displaced) and also included a number of broader questions such as future outlook, and present situation etc. An interview guide was used to focus the interviews (Appendix 1). The interview guide provided a detailed list of the types of information that was being sought, but did not actually represent a strict interview schedule. The guide was used to elicit information and the participants were encouraged to create a life story. The interviews were similar to "guided conversations" (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p85). Hence, the interview guide contained questions that represented the types of information that could assist in the construction of life story narratives.

Past experience with the pilot interviews revealed that some youth required considerable encouragement to talk (Turniski, 2002) and the interview guide was helpful in aiding youth to construct life-stories. Then the questions were used to initiate conversations. The interviews were structured to encourage the youth to tell a narrative by asking them to describe their lives. The interview guide enabled the researcher to keep track of the various topics the participants covered raised and also helped when participants had a difficult time creating their narratives. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their attitudes and expectations. Through this process an understanding of their sense of identity in relation to their confidence and ability to participate and interact with their environment emerged. Of special interest were the perceived governing factors that account for their beliefs about their own agency and efficacy and their ability to have an effect on their surroundings.

In terms of variation between the sites, interviews with youths, students, and young adults in Locations I and II followed the same semi-structured interview format.

For Location III the research format was modified because of the difficulties of participant recruitment and ethnic, political and social segregation of the site. Therefore, the bulk of the data consisted less of formal interviews and more of participant observations and some informal conversations. A few individuals, however, were willing to be interviewed if the conversations were more informal in nature and not tape recorded. As in the other two locations, prior to the informal conversations and interviews the participants were informed that the researcher was conducting a study as part of her dissertation research and that they could withdraw at any moment.

In all three locations conversations took place with educators, psychologists, social workers and those involved with the local NGO's. In addition, informal conversations were conducted with researchers, psychologists and activists in all three sites as well as well as in many other locations to provide an understanding of the broad context in which the research was framed. These conversations provided information on the types of programs and interventions that existed and their effectiveness, and illustrated the situation of youth living in postwar areas and highlighted the issues prevalent in a transitional country. This segment of the data gathering provided a view of the current methodologies and attitudes that govern local interventions and practices.

Breakdown of Participants by Location

Study Participants - Location I

Organization I was recommended by a psychologist working the Ministry of Defense in Location I. The psychologist, Dr. V, provided organizational and clinical support for these interviews. The staff at Organization I assisted in recruiting the 19 participants aged 15-26 (8 Female and 11 Male). The participants were disabled youth who had lost family members during the war or had disabled family members. All participants were from the Croatian domicile population, some had been internally displaced during the war and only one youth was a refugee from Bosnia. In addition, a few youth had been soldiers during the war. Participant recruitment also took place through word of mouth by members of Organization I, and through recruitment by the president of the organization. Informal conversations were also conducted with the staff of Organization I, and also community members working in related fields, such as psychology and education.

Study Participants - Location II

Participants at Location II were recruited from the NGO Organization II. Nineteen participants ranging in age from 13-27 years (8 Female and 11 Male) were interviewed**.** The participants included Serbian returnees, internally displaced Croatians, and refugees from Bosnia who are predominantly Croatian with the exception of two Serbian/Croatian and Muslim/Croatian interviewees (children from ethnically mixed marriages). Recruitment took place through word of mouth of the participants at the centre run by Organization II, and through recruitment conducted by the centre's program

manager. Informal conversations were conducted with activity leaders, the Organization I program director based in Zagreb, local program manager, and local staff, as well as visiting staff from Zagreb and visiting psychologists from Zagreb, politicians, local and international volunteers, and community gatekeepers. Young children were not interviewed but many informal conversations with children and their parents, in addition to other community members, took place.

Study Participants - Location III

Study participants from Location III were recruited through a local youth Organization. The interviewees were Serb youth living in Location III and the surrounding small towns and suburbs. The youth were predominantly Serb returnees or displaced Serbs (from other location in Croatia). They ranged in age from 17-26 years. Recruitment took place through word of mouth, and through the assistance of the two program managers. Due to the difficulties of access and logistics the research in Location III did not follow the same research plan as in the two previous sites. A small number of un-taped informal interviews and conversations were conducted. However, the bulk of the data consisted of participant observations. Informal interviews and conversations were held with the NGO president and vice president and other members of the organization, as well as with youth activists and volunteers.

Data Analysis

Interviews were tape recorded, and transcribed as close to the time of the initial interview as possible. Interview transcription was verified by comparison to the original

recordings. Field notes and notes on participants and locations were used to supplement recorded data. Data were imported into a qualitative data analysis program called Atlas.ti. The qualitative data analysis software was used for content and thematic analysis and allowed the data to be read, analyzed and coded.

A thematic content analysis of the data was conducted which involved "multiple readings and re-readings" (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003, p. 268). The first reading was aimed to understand the whole narrative. Secondary and tertiary readings were utilized to identify topics and themes. The initial focus was on the emerging topics and patterns, and these were assigned appropriated codes and themes. The data analysis also looked at connections, what is the story they are telling, what they are not saying, what do they have in common and what is different? The several readings allowed for narrower themes to emerge, such as how they construct the self, what are the conflicts, opposing statements etc.

Subsequently, participant grids were constructed identifying: age, gender, location, disability, ethnicity and status identifying whether the participant is a returnee, refugee, IDP, or domicile.

In addition, data were coded in order to identify certain processes, described in the previous section, such as participation, activity and competence that are results of open and closed structures in society. In addition, data were coded for certain reoccurring topics or themes. The coding revealed that youth described similar situations, issues and problems. Thematic analysis of narratives involved open coding of data, exploration of patterns, while also labeling and grouping coded data (Daiute & Lightfoot 2004; Riessman, 2007; Riley & Hawe 2005; Stewart & Malley 2004; Strauss

1987). In this study, the patterns and themes were derived and generated inductively from the transcripts instead of a priori codes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

The approach of generating codes from collected data transcripts was similar to coding processes conducted in grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The interviews were read as a whole in order to maintain the voices of the participants and to hold them and their stories central. However, in the write- up, sections or excerpts from the narratives as a whole were used to illustrate the coding and the themes that emerged. Excerpts of narratives were used to illustrate those issues that youth felt were the most important to them. The aim of the analysis was through youth's narratives to understand how participants made sense of their lives and context.

In addition, thematic content analysis of data also involved analyzing the processes of participation, activity and competence and the development of self in the current transitional social structures present in Croatia. In the analysis these social structures were categorized as either opened or closed structures. This approach aimed to capture the youth's voices and understand the context while connecting it to the processes of the figured world of growing up in a transitional post war area.

Qualitative analysis of the data consisted of evaluating the relevant experiences of youths from the three research locations. Field observations and participant observations were utilized to examine the developmental processes in the formal (Location II) and informal (Location I and Location III) sites of reintegration, reconstruction and reconciliation. The analysis focused on the sites of participation as well as the participants within each setting. From this perspective, analysis of the various locations addresses the link between historical and sociocultural levels of the youth's experience.

In contrast to existing literature and research in this area that predominantly focuses on the individual (e.g. trauma, violence and war as it impacts the individual), the focus of this research were the social, cultural and historical settings that are manifest at each site, and in which the individual acts and defines his/her identity.

Analysis of the qualitative data explored the interrelations between participation, social structures, and youths' identities developing in postwar areas. The analytic process focused on interpreting narratives, in terms of the content and themes but also essential was the meaning participants made of their experiences in their narratives. The main aim of the qualitative approach was to remain true to the voices of youth in postwar areas and placing their meaning making and understandings of their experiences at the center of the analysis.

Short or brief summaries were created for each interview with main points and key events of what seemed most important to each interviewee. In order to create a visual cue for the researcher and to provide an overview of the data, time line charts were created based on each interview and served as a visual short summary of each life history. The timelines were created to highlight salient events in youth's lives. The Time Lines provided a visual representation of important life history benchmarks and highlighted important events in the life story narratives. In addition, a historical time line was created to give a short overview of key events in the Croatian history. In addition, an historical timelines for each location was also created to illustrate other key historical events.

Comparisons of time lines and summaries were conducted. Comparisons of narratives between locations served to highlight different and similar issues youth face and provide an indication of regional differences affecting identity construction in each

site. In addition, narratives were partially translated from Croatian into English. A few whole narratives were translated in addition to excerpts of narratives used in the dissertation to provide salient examples.

The following table illustrates the processes that were investigated and the codes assigned. The table contains the codes with a description, summary or examples derived from interviews.

Table 4. Codes

Coding Scheme-Codes	Example
Social structures opened/closed	
Social structures	Includes conceptions and ideas about the society and what it is like, social, work, infrastructure etc.
Brain drain	Educated individuals leaving Croatia
Connections/Corruption	Jobs through connections not on merit
Regional differences	War affected areas vs. not affected, urban/rural, coast/inland
Religion	A source of comfort or a source of intolerance
Family	Source of support, Loss of family,
Politics-	Privatization, new laws (e.g. disability)
Political disengagement,/Participation	Mistrust, cynicism, belief that politicians are selfish
Housing	A source of tension, Refugee and returnee resettlement,
Employment/unemployment	Insecurity, high unemployment worrisome
War-effects/transitional issues	Poor economy, poor infrastructure, corruption. Burden war results- war vets, disabled, finding
Worse after war, postwar situation	Insecurities, societal and structural changes, corruption
Rights	Not equal for all, inequalities, unawareness, mistrust
Education	A way to excel. Youth already know that they will not get a job in their field. Provides structure and inclusion.
Drugs/alcohol	Café/bar lifestyle
Feeling helpless/powerless/have no influence	Social exclusion, no power nor influence
Lack of support	PwD, interethnic relationships, structural/societal support
Status-refugee, returnee, IDPs, soldier, Disabled,	Social service delivery gap
Tensions	National issues/tensions need resolved.
Present-Life	What are their lives like, what are the obstacles they face in the present, what issues do they deal with
Role of NGOs	NGOs a buffer but also a catalyst. NGOs have a difficult time balancing political and communal pressures and requirements. activists, “anti nationalists”

Participation	Positive participation- community programs Negative participation- bar brawls, nationalistic music, fights and vandalism.
Cafe culture	Both positive and negative. A place to socialize and a place for conflict.
Activity-educational, entertainment, Passivity-resisting participation-non-participation	Non-formal sites of participation, afterschool programs offer activities-educational, entertainment, hobbies, sports. Difficulty participating, have little power in decision making, they do not really have the means for decision
Participation in NGO activities	making…unemployed, poor, mistrust Community of peers, organizations, civic actions, organized events. Joining with others to realize a common identity as disabled, feeling of belonging. Participate for own benefit meaningful/entertaining use of time, activities/collaboration with others
Competence	
Social context and structure	Understanding war, postwar and the community they live in In relation to work, and knowing where to apply for aid. Recognizing the limiting social structures and finding an alternative space to be active.
Ethnic issues	When to divulge identity and when not
Disability	When to divulge disability and when not, employment, invisible disability
Sense making-	Understanding past, present, having a future outlook
Self, Identity, Change	How they speak about themselves
Belonging	Finding places of belonging
Organization reflections	Reflecting on community issues, and places of participation Development of competence through community center and programs . Participation in activities, community projects offers a space for competence to develop increasing social capital
Recovery-Reconstruction	
Resumption of normal activity	Lack of future, burden of no job. Post-war and social changes to blame. Work, routines, normalization.
Rebuild/repair	Village & home ruined and rebuilt.
loss	What they lost in the war, in the transition period
Fleeing/displacement	Being dislocated and returning
Improvement	How has the town changed,
Friends	Peer situation, pressure, support
Present	What are the current issues, positives
Past-present changes-	How do they talk about the past
Place-attachment, Place-detachment	Environment
Devastation	Returning home, different environment
Lucky to be alive	Ability to see beyond trauma, the disability, wounds and war consequences and despite it all feel to be lucky to be alive

Reconciliation	
Making sense of what one learns at home, at school, church, friends, NGOs etc	Issues regarding ethnicity, Gives example of where Serbs and Croats have to tolerate each other, no reconciliation
Joint activities	Accepting –rejecting participation in joint activities
Nationalist music	Sources of tension
Generational	Different experiences
Town before war	Understanding that times are different
myths- the mentality	Hinders reconciliation instill fear or promote reconciliation
Forgiving but not forgetting, tolerating but not accepting	Tragedy, stigma, social inclusion
	Try to move on
Reintegration	Starting a new life
PwD- wounded,	Youth participants
Forget past, Returning, soldier	
Future Orientation	
Dreams-	What they hope to achieve, employment, education
Life	Talk about their life in new nation, place themselves in the social context
Living day to day-no future	Inability to plan for the future because of personal reasons but also because of the social and contextual barriers.
Future outlook	How do they see the future, what will happen, what can they do to change it? or can they not plan for the future
The Role of Myths	Silences, what is not said, public and private speech, stories of the other (Bosnians are like this, Serbs are like that), revisionist history, myths about WWII, myths about Yugoslavia, myths about homeland war, myths justify actions, and as victims one is not to blame
Is related to reconciliation and the creation of a joint future, fears, creating a positive or negative future narrative	

Chapter 4

Study Findings

The following chapter will review the study findings and provides illustrative excerpts from the interviews. The research questions listed in the table below (Table 5) provide an overview of the main research questions. The case study presented below provides concrete examples of the postwar situation of adolescents and youth. The analysis section provides a more detailed excerpt from an interview illustrating the issues disabled youth face in this postwar society.

Table 5. Research Questions and Summary Findings

Social structure What are the social structures in place in Croatia? How do they hinder participation? How do they encourage participation?	 Privatization, new laws (e.g. disability) Unemployment New NGO's & Gov. Organizations
Participation How do youth and young adults participate in decision making processes that affect their lives, in relation to family, community level and greater society? Where, when, and why does participation occur? What does participation do, what does it mean?	Difficulty participating Community of peers, organizations Participation of resistance /contention-nationalism Avoiding participation in certain events to make a statement. Joining with others to realize a common identity as disabled, feeling of belonging
Competence Where and how do participation and competence take place (sites)? What is the role of participation relating to competence? What are the manifestations of competence in the different sites/contexts?	In relation to work, and knowing where to apply for aid. understanding how the "system works" To be able to function in Croatia one has to understand the structures and learn how to navigate them and get round the bureaucracy/ incompetence. Knowing when to reveal disability and when not. When to reveal ethnicity and when not to reveal ethnicity

Recovery-Reconstruction How do youth and young adults make and create meaning out of what is going on, and their circumstances? What does their everyday situation mean to them?	Lack of future, burden of no job. Post-war and social changes to blame. Village & home ruined and rebuilt. Living day to day, inability to plan Confusing reconstruction rules Confusing assigning of housing
Reconciliation Why does reconciliation occur or not? What potential is there for reconciliation to occur? If so where, and how?	Gives example of where Serbs and Croats have to tolerate each other, no reconciliation Reconciliation does not occur because of fear, memories, loss, stuck in the past. Reconciliation occurs when making friends, falling in love across ethnic boundaries. Occurs in NGO centre where activity, action and participation are the tools to community development, reconciliation occurs.
Reintegration Is reintegration occurring?	Reintegration war vets, refugees/displaced. Inequalities and tensions between returnees and those who stayed during war Reintegration in G ,less in Z, Not in V.
Future Orientation What is important to these young people? How do they describe their lives and how do they picture, imagine, and expect the future to be like? What are the issues that they face?	Employment, Live day-to-day, no improvement, can't make plans for future. Unemployment Friends, belonging, opportunities

The following case study from Location II, which is a small village in a postwar area, is somewhat unusual because many of the individuals involved are employed. However, the case study is included to illustrate some of the main barriers and difficulties that youth encounter.

Case Study- Location II

B.S (Female, age 23) is a Croatian refugee from Bosnia. She went to elementary school in Location II and to high school in a city located one hour away by bus. She then went on to a teachers college in a nearby town where she studied for 4 years. She is a primary school geography teacher. Upon graduation she got a temporary position for one semester at a school in a middle-sized town in the Northeast of Croatia but has been

unemployed since. She applies for jobs and spends her free time with her boyfriend and friends. She keeps trying to find a job in her profession and has not been successful. Over the past years she worked at a local NGO promoting volunteerism in her local community, working with children and assisting children with tutoring. Recently this volunteer position ended and she is now unemployed and not sure what to do next. She is still not able to find a job in her own profession. She has applied to many job openings at various schools and even one in Location II but other applicants, always from out of town, get the positions. She says that she cannot understand why people from out of town are hired instead of local people and this just contributes to the "brain drain" where young people leave Location II and move to bigger cities or move abroad. She still lives with her parents, grandmother and brother in a small flat. She says she has no responsibilities as her grandmother and mother do all the cooking and cleaning and she does not need to contribute financially. It is quite unusual in this small village for youth to have parents that both work. In this case, both her parents are employed so their socio-economic standing is solid and she is aware of this and says that she cannot complain. She has a long-term boyfriend, who is employed, whom she plans to eventually marry. It is, however, not possible for them to get housing locally as the housing rules are applied arbitrarily and the housing availability and distribution of housing is unclear and corrupt. It is hard to plan for the future since her position at the NGO has ended and she has no job offers. Unemployment is very high and even if is she was able to get housing it would be questionable if she would be able to make enough to pay the rent and utilities. She continues to actively search for jobs and has applied for several but most often she does not even get a reply or rejection letter and finds it very discouraging. She is unable

to gain work experience and without work experience it will be hard to get a job. She says that in order to get a job especially in Location II she would need connections or at least belong to a political party. She acknowledges that she does not have the connections needed to find a job and wishes she could be hired based on her education and achievement and not based on political or personal connections.

The case study illustrates the difficult situation in which youth find themselves. The young woman spoke about the necessity of connections to get a job, the difficulty in understanding the structures and bureaucracy she faces (e.g. in getting an apartment), and understanding the high unemployment and realizing that she is in fact very lucky because both her parents are employed. In addition, she touches upon the inability to plan because she does not have a job, no sense of when she will be able to gain employment, not being able to become independent and find housing.

The dissertation research examined the ways in which rebuilding and recovery take place on structural, social and community levels, as well as on a personal level, recognizing that reconstruction and reconciliation are simultaneously individual, social and structural processes. The excerpts throughout this chapter illustrate how youth make sense and talk about their lives. The levels on which these changes are taking place and through which individuals strive to make sense of their lives, as illustrated by these case studies, also include obstacles in other spheres constitutional, legal, political, military, educational, health and welfare, as well as infrastructural changes that affect business and industry, and local organizations. In line with a sociocultural approach, the research also examined the context in which the youth live and participate; examining what forms participation takes as a mode of transformation. This involved exploring the resources

and strategies that young people utilize in this postwar transitional situation. It appears that limited opportunities for participation in this transforming society are present for youth and young adults. It is out of these processes that identity emerges, and participation influences emerging identity on individual, social and national levels and influences how they envision their futures.

The following summary is from a conversation held with a young man from Location III and provides a sense of what youth face in an ethnically divided town where unresolved war issues, mistrust and deep division between the ethnic groups construct the community they live in. In his narrative he decided to share an event that had a great impact on him and that he feels is important.

Summary - Location III (male, age 17).

He is a young Serb currently attending high school. He is active in a youth organization and a peace activist and calls himself as “anti-nationalist”. He is concerned about issues he sees around him and is preparing a presentation on bullying to present at his school. He sees this as a big problem for youth today. He states that he is of Serb ethnicity and that he was born and grew up in Croatia and also said that he feels Croatia is his home. He described to me about his life during the war. He was a small child during the war. When the war started and Location III became besieged his family moved to one of the surrounding Serb towns. He said that he was little then and understood nothing about the war. The only thing said he knew was that he was born and was

growing up in Croatia. His first week in the new town he spent bicycling around the neighborhood. He had not yet made many friends. One day while biking around the neighborhood he was stopped by a group of local children. They asked him "what are you?" He was not exactly sure what they meant but figured they meant where he was born, where he had lived his entire life. He answers "I am Croatian". The other kids pulled him off the bike, beat him up and dragged him along the gravel road. He says, "I was so badly hurt I still have gravel left in the scars". He understood later that "his own" had harmed him. He had not understood that he was supposed to reveal his ethnicity and not refer to the country where he was born in. It was stunning to him that children can be that cruel.

Brief Summaries of Participants by Location

The Participants - Location I

Most youth interviewed in Location I, were from the surrounding villages. During the war these villages came under heavy attack and were severely damaged, destroyed and mined. The youth speak about being internally displaced or being refugees abroad most often in Germany. The area surrounding Location I was liberated in 1993 when a strategic key point, was liberated. The youth were most often internally displaced persons (IDP's) and relocated to Location I or the islands or lived abroad as refugees for only 2-3 year before returning to their villages after 1993. All the youth interviewed in Location I had been wounded during the war or lost a parent. Often youth experienced multiple stressors because youth were often wounded at the same time together with

family members. There are also instances, in the interviews, of youth admitting to having been soldiers during the war. One youth living in Location I, originally from Bosnia, told stories of when his village was surrounded and that he fought with grown men and by definition was a child soldier. He was 14 years old at the time and when his village became occupied he fled to Croatia and fought here even after he was wounded. Analysis revealed that some of the youth that were wounded, want to forget the past. For some the war events were so painful that youth reported that they want to entirely forget the past. Many believed that if the past is crossed out then they can go on with their lives.

A 26 year old male from Location I, speaks of participating in the war and talks about the importance of forgetting:

Respondent: I was here throughout the whole war, I was here the whole time, I was only in Germany for three months. Three months. I was in Bosnia throughout the whole war. And in Croatia, so I was in both the one and the other army. So.

Interviewer: yes,

R: I was relatively young, really, with 14.5 years I was.

Interviewer: No one asked you for your personal documents (IDs)?

R: Listen, the times where like that. I remained in a town that was surrounded, so. You don't have a choice.

I: Yes

R: But it is good when, eh, you know simply, it is best to forget what happened, those who can, right. All that I experienced in the hospital down there, from a doctor that I am acquainted with, a family friend, he told my sister that I had gone

crazy, (sighs). I am saying this seriously. No one could believe the pain I was in when I was in the hospital. Then they said that I suffered from PTSD. But I on the other hand listened to other people. But ok. A person can survive anything.
But listen, I went through a lot in the war. In places I was not supposed to be but I was, but then again so what. It is a part of life that one needs to forget and that is it. That's it. (ID 14)

The Participants-Location II

The youth interviewed in Location II were Serb returnees, internally displaced Croats, and Croat refugees from Bosnia. Their stories vary because their contexts, experiences and chronologies differ based on whether they are returnees, internally displaced persons or refugees. For example, the Serb youth who talked of living in Croatia in the Serb occupied area, remember it as peaceful and speak of memories of a happy childhood. Analysis indicated that their stories of fleeing and setting up a new life in Serbia are detailed and dramatic and they also tell their stories of returning back to Croatia to an almost totally different town. In comparison, internally displaced youth either lived in Zagreb and after the war moved to Location II or were displaced from other occupied areas in Croatia. Data analysis indicated that participants usually described the regional differences comparing their town to Location II, spoke of moving for financial or housing reasons and desire to move back to more urban areas. The Bosnian Croat refugees talked of moving to Location II and settling in this new town, fleeing from Bosnia and they also mentioned the losses and what they faced in this new hometown.

The life stories from Location II deal with the convergences and divergences of ethnicities. Currently in Location II Bosnian Croat refugees and Serb returnees have to live together and interact or chose to avoid one another. On the other hand, Location I, is more ethnically homogenous and youth there had less daily experiences meeting and relating to other ethnicities and issues of living together. The youth also provide examples of contention, conflicts, cooperation and reconciliation. The youth tell stories of fleeing, returning and setting up a new life in another country. All the refugee youth fled from occupied areas only to end up living in an ethnically mixed community. This rural area is poor, isolated and economically devastated which offers little opportunity for youth. All mention the problem of living in a small town where everyone knows everyone. However, although they all know one another they feel little solidarity and support especially from the older and supposedly "wiser" generation.

The Participants-Location III

Participants from Location III were recruited through a local youth Organization. Location III was under heavy attack and then occupation during the war and was heavily damaged. Location III, is entirely segregated and divided along ethnic lines. Students go to school in segregated classes. Even daycare centers are segregated, and there is implicit knowledge of which cafés are for Serbs and Croats. Youth stated that, individuals who committed atrocities during the war walk around freely and this increases the feelings of injustice and mistrust. Location III is characterized by deep mistrust and resentment between ethnic groups, in addition to poverty and unemployment.

The interviewees were Serb youth living in Location III and the surrounding small towns and suburbs. The youth were predominantly Serb returnees or displaced Serbs (from other location in Croatia). They ranged in age from 17-26 years. A small number of un-taped informal interviews and conversations were conducted. The Youth Center in Location III has 18 members and about 70 participants. The participants in NGO activities range between the ages of 14-26. The majority of participants are predominantly Serb but the NGO advocates integration and reconciliation and is open to anyone interested regardless of ethnicity. The two program managers are in their mid twenties and are Serbian returnees and former combatants and are able to fund the NGO through grants. The term "anti-nationalist" was very commonly used among the youth. The youth that gather here and participate in different activities often call themselves anti-nationalists and are young activists concerned about the situation of youth in Location III, the future of their city and the environment. The youth most often spoke of the division in town and the problems of attending segregated schools. In addition, they also spoke about the social pressures they face that discourage contact with the other ethnic group, the tensions between ethnic groups, war events. They also mentioned issues that are prevalent such as bullying, and the deep mistrust between inhabitants of this town. One of the youth activists was married to a young woman of the other ethnic group and he asked a poignant question. "Which day care will my child attend, since the daycare centers are segregated?"

In this data analysis section, I present shorter segments and longer excerpts from the life story narratives. The shorter segments illustrate the themes that emerged and were especially salient to the participants. The longer and more detailed excerpts were

used to keep the youths voice central while illustrating, for example, how people with disabilities view their situation, construct their reality and discuss the various obstacles encountered.

Social structures

The analysis of the life stories indicated that youth believe in the new country and the transition from a socialist to a democratic country. Youth also indicated that they do not to trust politicians or the government. Similar findings have been reported by other researchers studying transitional countries including studies conducted in Croatia (HDR 2004; Illisin & Radin, 2002; UNDP, 2006). The data suggest that youth in the interviews express a sense of alienation and powerlessness as they believe they have little influence in the political sphere. Through their narratives youth indicate that social progress is determined by economic stability and indicate that unemployment is one of the issues that bother them the most. Other studies (e.g., HDR, 2004; Illisin & Radin, 2002) with youth have also confirmed youth an awareness of the importance of employment, and social and economic progress.

Unemployment

In 2003 when the data was collected, the unemployment level was 21.7% (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2003) and unemployment remains one of the main issues in Croatia (Illišin & Radin, 2002, UNDP/HDR, 2004, UNDP, 2006). The analysis of the data indicated that the youth were burdened by unemployment issues, feelings of not being able to compete in the workplace and a sense of injustice regarding employment

opportunities often stating for the importance of ‘connections’. In addition, even if youth manage to find a job it is often within the “grey economy” or black market. In Croatia, the black labor market consists of approximately 25% of the GDP (Bohutniski, 2003; HDR UNDP, 2006; Matković, 2003). Youth speak of problems regarding employment and describe situations where there rights were violated in the workplace (e.g., not getting paid, not getting benefits, etc.), where they are on sick leave but still have to work (e.g., in a private firm), getting jobs through connections and not based on merit, or where they have worked but do not receive the wages and there is no recourse. For example, one young disabled male (aged 26) in Location I stated:

> “That is the biggest problem here, I changed (jobs), and they ended up owing me, owing me wages and wages. But I say, keep going and just forget, simply. Just good as long as you can forget. (laughs)”

The lack of available employment for youth forces them into the “grey labor market” which has longstanding negative consequences such as limited opportunities to gain skills and qualifications, and no or limited access to social benefits. In addition, in the end they will not have been able to earn a decent pension. Youth often mention the lack of security, multiple job changes and just drifting from one job to another not because of their on volition but due to the nature of the job market. The example, by a young Croatian man, age 25, from Location I, illustrates the insecurity youth express in this new system.

> It was more secure before… I have already changed five jobs, that’s five jobs, from this to that, here and there. I was a waiter, driver, then I worked on my

uncle's boat, a fishing boat, then I drove a truck for my uncle again. And that's it and this is what I do now.

The data analysis also indicated a generational dimension to the unemployment issue. Youth compare their situation today to their parents' situation prior to the war in a different political climate. The parents and grandparents of these youth grew up and worked in a totalitarian socialist society where life-long employment was almost guaranteed and included health and retirement insurance and depending on the company also the right to public housing. Youth and adults often mention the prior system, sometimes labeled as "Yugonostalgia", which refers to a longing for the past, and youth describe how it was common for one to get a job and stay in that job for their entire life. The changes that affected Croatia during and after the war also changed the reality for these youth. Especially detrimental was the uncontrolled and non-transparent privatization of previously nationalized property. The privatization as a result of economic reconstruction was catastrophic and characterized by corruption, fraud and embezzling (Illišin & Radin, 2002; Transparency International Report, 2009). For example, the yearly corruption perception index in 2003 in Croatia was 3.7 (0 indicates high corruption, 10 indicates no corruption), and in 2009 decreased to 4.4 (Transparency International Report, 2003; 2009). Public opinion surveys indicate that perceptions of corruption are high and researchers warn that these are the foremost obstacle to socio-economic development (Budak, 2006). Cases of corruption are widely publicized and youth see examples of it in their own communities. One example is from Location II, where the former judge and president of the municipal court allegedly took bribes, conducted fraud and abuse of office. However, it has been a public secret in town until

2006 when the Croatian Office for Corruption and Organized Crime (USKOK) filed charges against judge who then fled the country.

Data analysis indicated that the youth viewed privatization as the main reason for the ruined economy, they suggests it destroyed existing firms and businesses which severely reduced job availability. Youth often mentioned the problems created by corruption and fraud. The analysis showed that youth are very aware of the corruption, problems caused be privatization as they are directly affected by these structural failings.

Youth give examples of their insecurity caused by the fact that they do not know when a business is going to close or go bankrupt or how long they will be employed. In addition, they express concern that they are never sure whether they are going to get paid or even if they will get their benefits. In addition they also mention that people cannot get work within their vocations and often you have university graduates employed in jobs they did not train for. The youth find this extremely de-motivating and discouraging. Not surprisingly, youth suggest that the lack of employment is the root cause of other problems such as drug and alcohol use, the inability to plan for the future and the lack of meaning in their lives. In addition, there were daily accounts in the news and printed media regarding employment irregularities, non-transparent processes, and numerous financial scandals of high profile politicians and business people involving embezzlement and dubious financial affairs. In all locations, but especially apparent in small towns, were numerous instances of nepotism and corruption where people employed abuse their positions, did not behave according to the ethical codex of their workplace, or did not even attempt to do their job professionally. Still, the social structures are such that it allows the connected and corrupt to remain in power, and remain in their workplaces.

Such closed social structures keep young and innovative people from gaining access to the labor market. However, the government has started to take a tougher stance on corruption and there has been a big increase in uncovered financial scandals and embezzlement schemes often connected to very high profile individuals and politicians (Jungvirth, 2009).

The excerpt below, from a 19 year old disabled male, illustrates what youth face and how they perceive the situation.

> Jobs/employment is one of the biggest problems. Look, one thing. If a person is going to go do something on their own, like his own business it is tough. The loans are huge, you have to go through procedures for loan interest and this and that. My guys, the younger ones, I honestly tell you that if they simply do not have education, I think it is even worse with education. People think that with education it is better or easier but it is not. I will tell you how many friends I have that finished university and this and that. They don't have anywhere where they can find a job. Here the only thing that saves the situation is the season (tourist) because waiters are needed, drivers, some physical/ manual labor. It is not like you will have a job for 10 to 15 years, for sure not. These are all pointless jobs. You never know when the business will fold or something, nothing is secure anymore. I now have my job and I will have it my entire life, that does not exist anymore. That is the problem. And then young people simply have nothing to do. But to drive those vans, drive what do I know, be a waiter and stuff. Only when the season is on and after that's it. And

> when the season is over some of my friends go to Zagreb to work. On trams and stuff. It is all pointless. To have a secure job in Croatia is impossible. All this other stuff you can live with. At least for me, I don't know how it is for others. But work that is just really tough. (P16)

In addition, youth often suggest that if the social structures changed and employment opportunities were created they would be able to participate in the work force which would allow them to gain experience and competencies. In addition, they stated that they would have money and then could participate in other activities and plan for the future. Youth that have gained access to the labor market, usually describe getting the job through connections and this is a reflection of the non-transparent and nepotistic structures in place.

Another problem that youth frequently mention is related to housing. The following section addresses this major issue.

Housing

In postwar areas, especially in Location II, housing is an area of major conflict. Bosnian Croat refugees settling in Location II moved into houses belonging to the Serbs that had fled. Serb returnees, however, have not been able to get their houses or apartments back, thus ending up living in someone else's house or apartment. In some cases, if they get their house back, then refugee family living there has to relocate to another vacant house or apartment. The problems of housing and unemployment appear to go hand in hand in Croatia. However, in rural postwar areas one cannot just rent an apartment as is possible in bigger cities where renting and subletting is common. In

smaller postwar towns, no one actually owned their apartments because the apartments were nationalized and companies and factories assigned them to their workers.

The change of political structures, the privatization of formerly nationally owned apartments has created a difficult situation. Individuals now find themselves without apartments because the business or factory that gave them the apartment no longer exists and the long-term tenant is not the legal owner of the apartment. The apartments now are owned by the municipality and one has to apply to get an apartment. The right to get an apartment is based on prior "ownership" of an apartment during the Yugoslavia period, regardless of whether one is a refugee or returnee, has ownership elsewhere, is a war veteran, or marital status. Many youth after meeting with the housing office reported being told that they, do not have the right to an apartment because there parents have an apartment or were told they have to get married in order to be eligible for an apartment. Often youth mentioned that giving bribes increased the chance of getting housing issues resolved.

In Location II, it is virtually impossible for young individuals to find an apartment. It is very common, that youth live with several generations of family members in a very small and cramped apartments or homes with little possibility of planning for an independent future. In addition, often there are tensions between generations living together and hence overcrowding is a big issue. This does not foster a nurturing or stimulating home environment. The problems related to housing are also sensed in the town itself. Housing problems and how apartments and houses are assigned to people is a common topic of discussion and often people feel a great sense of injustice. Unfortunately it is often not obvious why someone was assigned a house or apartment

and another person was not. Often this contributes to people's frustrations and inhabitants are further burdened by weak community support networks and lack of civic society and institutional support. In addition, since a large number of people are unemployed, there is plenty of time to become bitter and develop a sense of injustice. Not surprisingly, entitlement and resentment are common topics among adults. In contrast, youth are often more concerned about practical issues such as how to get a job, security, housing and plan for the future.

One young female returnee, age 19, attending higher education, describes the situation in her town in the excerpt below.

> R: Yes, that is what I mean, I will have some own money, I will be more mobile, I will be able to go places, and easy I will not have to be constantly in Location II. It means I can get in the car, and go somewhere, see people, I don't know I will be able to be mobile.
>
> So it will not be just like the town (where she attends higher education) and Location II, to study, to travel and so that that is life. Yes, it is very important that a person has something to do. That they are occupied so that they don't sit like in a cave because then it is bad anywhere not just in Location II. I believe that there could be life here, laughs. Maybe some time still has to pass. Because many things about the war have not yet been resolved, and maybe that contributes to all that. People are returning, everything is tied to the war, so all those assets, to come and enter their houses. Yes, everything is tied to the war and then maybe war/conflict breaks out again.
>
> Interviewer: So when people return someone else lives in their house?

R: Then it always becomes a conflict/tensions, of course.

I: Yes, so that means that that would need sorted out?

R: When that is resolved, then I think it will. No I think, I say that those tensions between people will always exist but I am sure they will be less when those problems disappear. People will carry themselves easier. When people return to their homes, yes.

I: And that there would be work, so that one could work/do something?

R: Yes, yes, for sure. I don't think about anything else but that. Work, that a person has a life, that he/she talks to people, learns to know others, and not that he does not know anyone and then he only thinks about that and assaults people on the street, I don't know. He blames others because his life is miserable.

R: I hope so, then I will be able to teach children tolerance, since that is necessary. I think that is very important in that age, I think the students are influenced by their teachers. If he/she is good, because they are influenced at home too. Also in that age the peers are influential too. That is when children are divided in groups a lot. That age.

Youth are also aware that it is not just hard for them but that the country faces a similar situation. She continues to describe the overall situation in the excerpt below:

I think the overall situation in Croatia is hard...it is unusual that anyone has any possibilities. I got this job through connections. Listen, standard, the standard is that you should enable people to live better. I don't think

> you have to tell anyone, here you live, you know. Instead allow each and everyone to work so that he can earn for his own living and that the work will be fairly paid.

Social Structures

Localized social structures either enable or hinder participation and throughout I have chosen to call them open or closed. As mentioned previously, research has indicated that different levels of participation will depend upon localized social structures that either enable or hinder the development of a sense of competence to engage with the social structures that shape youths' lives. The following section, illustrates how youth talk about and experience the social structures (open or closed) and how the structures enable or hinder participation The youth interviewed talk about the importance of jobs which concurs with the notion that resuming normal everyday activities is key (Summerfield, 2002). Youth expressed relief when they have jobs and money and talk of how difficult it is when this is interrupted. Many said that the war is over and they now have to go on with life but it is not possible if you cannot work, earn money, educate yourself or start a family because of the closed nature of the structure within which they live. They often stated that they had to deal with the stressors of post war life and not with issues such as war trauma and PTSD. The ability to resume normal life by getting a job, making money, obtaining an education, and finding housing is more a structural problem than purely a mental health issue.

According to the youth interviewed social structures are somewhat more open in Location I because of a slightly better economy and the fact that things are developing

faster because it is a tourist city by the coast and there are more opportunities for youth than in Location II. There are more opportunities available for youth on the coast because of the seasonal work during the summer. Individuals from all over Croatia come to work in coastal towns during the tourist season. It gives the youth in coastal towns somewhat greater opportunity to participate they may see some potential employment possibilities related to tourism in Location I.

A young man, aged 19, describes the development and opportunities around Location I.

> Yes, there are people that started building apartments over there, and renting out. They come, the Germans, Czech come. Only thing missing is the sea, if we would have the coast we would have everything. Then there would be everything. The come, they come, there are (tourists). Slowly people open, some want apartments, others this and that. Since it is not far from the city (Location I) and everything is close. It is fifteen minutes to the city.
>
> You know what I would do, I would build some apartments to rent and stuff and live off that. Since there aren't any jobs. But you cannot do it, since you cannot get the loans, you cannot do anything. (ID13)

However, some youth stated that disability severely limits their opportunities (in Location I) and they describe the hardships that they encounter. The following excerpt is from a young man, age 25.

> It is not easy, especially not for the disabled. For us who stepped on a mine, that were wounded. Because everyone is looking for manual labor, I did not finish a fancy degree or anything that wonderful. They all look for something, but I cannot do many of those jobs. So it is hard to find a job, and then it is a hard job which is even harder, then it is even harder to find a job (because of disability). That is it. (ID15)

For youth and their families unemployment is very challenging. The lack of employment opportunities is a challenging closed structure. Often youth mention their dreams and visions that in other societies would be seen as obtainable but here become almost impossible. Even the smallest dream in the youths stories are impossible dreams to them. Often they mention issues such as; “getting a job”, “getting money for university”, “opening a business”. These activities to them seem like unobtainable goals. The youth also state that there is no future in towns like these because if there are no jobs, factories, or businesses then people have to leave or relocate to where there are jobs. This kind of mobility in Croatian is called “following your stomach to the bread” (“trbuhom za kruhom”).

Support Networks

The social structures are often closed to youth or they are perceived as a problem or burden, not taken seriously and are not yet seen as being an asset to society or having social capital (HDR, 2004, Ilišin & Potočnik, 2010). Further, youth are socially marginalized and passive (Ilišin & Potočnik, 2010; UNDP, 2004). Youth often describe situations where they were treated poorly or unfairly by adults such as teachers, priests,

and other adults in the community. This contributes to the abandonment that young people often describe. The youth describe and give examples of closed structures such as the lack of support from the adults, teachers, preachers, and from the society and community that they live in. Their stories often describe feeling a lack of community and support. They often talk of the jealousy and envy that they encounter and state they are common and that youth are acutely aware of the judgments imposed by a small-town community.

A young man from Location I, age 19, below was wounded with many of his family members and speaks of the issues they face.

> R: Here people are no longer normal after the war, today, now everyone is envious of everyone else. They want to fight, want to kill, all kinds of things. Because everyone has become mentally ill from this already. I have a brother like that, for example, that was not wounded. But the other brother was wounded. Four of us were wounded in the family.
>
> I: Four?
>
> R: Four, mom, dad, me, and my other brother that stepped on a mine while in the military. Everyday there are effects, I have problems with my eye, cannot be out in the sun. They/It is all disturbed (messed up). (I 13)

A 25 year old young man in Location I describes what he feels has changed and why.

> Everyone looks out for themselves, how they will scam someone, how they can get some money. Get this and that. That is all. It would be easier if they worked together. But see one thing, before the war, we from Location I, real

inhabitants of the City of Location I. It was totally different, than it is now. Now people have come here to the city, I don't have anything against anybody, everyone from the villages have come here, from here and there, and Bosnians. (I 15)

A young disabled man in Location I stated:

> Mainly concerning my family, I am glad in a way that I survived all this, and in some ways there are bad aspects too. Yes, a person does not have anyone to lean on, and that's it.

The excerpt below is from an 18 year old refuge girl in Location II whose father had a life threatening accident which resulted in brain damage and she candidly describes the community's reaction and the lack of support.

> My dad had an accident and was really bad. He nearly did not survive. He is now at home after a long time in the hospital and in rehabilitation centers. The doctors told us he was going to be a vegetable but he's now almost fine. The neighbor lady came in and told my mom that " now we have to deal with your crazy husband" and said that she is afraid my dad will kill her and her daughter. My mom started crying and asked the neighbor to leave. My dad overheard the conversation and cried and said that he would never harm anyone." While he was hospitalized we were accused of abandoning him, locking him away in an asylum and we were told that we wished him to be dead. People were so mean. Everyone had an opinion and gossiped and no

> one helped. Very few people offered to help and it became really clear who our friends were. It was a really hard time and they made it even worse.

A young man, age 23, a returnee in Location III describes the situation in town.

> "No work. No future if there is no work. Work is number one if the situation is to improve a little. It is hard for people. They suffer from envy and jealousy". (II 13)

Religion and Church

Croatia has undergone religious changes similar to most countries in transition and post-communist countries in Eastern and Central Europe (Ilisin & Radin, 2002). In Croatia nationalism, politics and religion became intertwined. In addition, there has been a revitalization and increase in religiosity and the church has attempted to influence education, healthcare, social policies and legislation. Since the pre-war period, the church has attempted to gain the position and influence that it had prior to the creation of Yugoslavia (Borowik, 1997, 1999, Illisin & Radin, 2002).

Perhaps not surprisingly, youth in present day Croatia, are much more religious than before the war (Illisin & Radin, 2003). In Location II, people frequently attend services and it is an important part of the Bosnian Croat ethnicity. There is no Orthodox church in the village and Serb returnees attend their services in other towns. Because of the presence of a Catholic church in town it is much more visible who participates in religious life in town and who does not among the Croatian refugees from Bosnia. For the Serbs religious life is less obvious because they do not have a church in town and have several other Orthodox churches in various surrounding towns and villages that they can

attend. Some Croatian spiritual or religious leaders are sometimes, as in Location II, often quite extreme and conservative and not really conducive to reconciliation and tolerance. Localized social structures either enable or hinder participation and can be either open or closed. The youth give examples that indicate that religion can be perceived as either an open or closed structure depending on the context as seen in the example below. It is more along the lines of the promotion of ignorance that according to Moore & Tumin (1949) serves to "reinforce ultimate values and heighten the sense of community "(p. 791). In addition, promotion of ignorance is necessary to preserve social differences, maintain a particular social order, power structure and social structure (Moore & Tumin, 1949; Valsiner, 2000).

> An 18 year old female Croatian refugee from Location II stated:
>
> My dad does not set foot in the church in XXXX after the priest during a sermon mentioned my cousins first and last name and presented her as a bad example, to the congregation, just because she had married a Serb man.

The excerpt below is from a 19 year old female refugee in Location II:

> Before elections our priest during the sermons preaches to us to vote for parties that have a C in front of the party name (e.g. Croatian Democratic Party-right center, Croatian Right Party–right wing).

A 20 year old male refugee in Location II stated that:

> I don't go to church anymore because when I went to confession the day after the priest told everyone in his sermon about what I told him in confession.

Postwar structures -"Worse than war"

Youth expressed the belief that the postwar situation is more stressful than the war. They suggested that the war was to some degree predictable, you are under attack and you try to survive. There was also the realization that eventually the war has to end and things would be peaceful. Now that the war has ended, everything is unknown and uncertain and there does not seem to be an end to the current situation (political, financial and job market). The country is establishing a new order and people are lost in the system. Some individuals are good at taking advantage of the transitional period, such as involving organized crime or wide spread corruption. However, youth do not reap the benefits in this transitional postwar situation (Ilisin & Radin, 2003; UNDP 2006). Youth in the interviews describe the war was very difficult. The postwar period is also described as a difficult time. Specifically, there is no place, nor function for youth, and the majority of young people are unemployed, as a result of a poor economy, limited resources, and a new political, economic and social structures in which they are not included.

The excerpt below is from a 19 year old female returnee.

> Life was hard those 4 years, it was hard, because as it turns out the war was nothing compared to life after war, we arrived without anything. Without a roof over our heads, I don't know. You don't know anyone,

and until you get used to the language even if it is not a huge difference, but you feel it. Everyone looked at you funny, they thought, when they hear war, everyone who has not survived/lived it pictures that differently. They thought, I don't know that we had not eaten for 15 days, something. They did not have that feeling, like, they looked at us funny. Yes it was hard, we did not have anything. But I don't know somehow we managed to assimilate/fit in, we found really good company, really. They accepted me super well, all of us I think. None of us had any problems, like many had. Some kids were isolated and I even if I was unbelievably withdrawn, with tongs you had to pull out words out of me. And I managed to find my gang so to speak. And I really remain super with them.

Maybe I was in that age, it maybe also depends on the parents and family and everything. Mom did everything for us, I don't know. We never really felt deprived of anything. Really she did everything for us. That is why I think that some had harder lives because they needed to work and everything. We really had, if you take into consideration that it was war, a super childhood.

The following section will briefly describe the open and closed structures that youth have to negotiate and understand. The participants described the open and closed structures that they encounter in their everyday lives.

NGOs or Local Associations as Open or Closed Structures

The youth describe the NGOs or Associations that they belong to as a tool or a way that helps them develop competencies to negotiate and make sense of the new structures and find a place of belonging. The NGOs community centre, for example, is a place of participation, where young people develop inter-ethnic friendships, learn and gain skills and competencies (e.g. homework help, language learning, computer skills etc.).

In Location I the association is not a place where youth hang out rather it assists them with issues related to disabilities that occurred during the war, assists children who lost parents and helps war widows. The association helps with the various forms and documents necessary to secure disability money and helps them navigate the social welfare system. Youth described the annual gatherings of the association as a place of belonging and support. When the narrative turned to the annual gathering of young civilians injured in the war there was a shift in tone that revealed the importance of this event to the interviewee. For example, the youth in the excerpt below clearly demonstrates a close emotional bond with others who have suffered in the same way, and appreciates the empathy that emerged from these encounters. The identity that is expressed here is clearly distinct from the rest of his community and society. In the rest of the narrative the youth could be characterized as engaged with his community and society, expressing concern and dismay about events and things he sees around him. The excerpt below from Location I is from a 20 year old male with a disability.

R: Good, you know why it is good? Because, people who are disabled are hard to understand. If you don't have an arm, or your arm is hurt, you will hide your arm. I went up to Rovinj, there was one boy in an explosion, burnt in a fire. He will never be able to take off his shirt, to go for a swim in the ocean normally or something, he will always wear a shirt, and long trousers. Because he is ashamed. There are many people without both legs, without an eye, without… what do I know? And on these gatherings there will be about 200. Some 200 kids. Then people get close, and in these few gatherings they relax. And then, because when you get there all are the same, have the same problems and stuff. And somehow people relax and it goes super.

I: Then it is not embarrassing anymore?

R: Well you stay for those 3 or 4 days and you forget, you forget everything. And after all the bad things that happened, you now see that someone actually thinks of you. That's the way it is. But for this you have to collect donations, and that is very hard. Now you can somehow still see it but every year it is less and less. In a few years there will be no gatherings, … is my estimate. My estimate is that there will be nothing of this.

I: That is sad

R: That is to say that not all organizations are good. This one in Location I is good. Duska (the founder) started 4-5 years ago, she worked for 2-3 years, not one Kuna [Croatian currency] she benefited. Like that she

> worked for 2-3 years and little by little she managed to gather everything. Later they gave her some insurance… (P.I.20)

The analysis revealed that youth in their stories express feeling abandoned by the system and believe that the politicians are more concerned with taking care of themselves first. These beliefs find support in the fact that in Croatia there are frequent reports of politicians involved in, just to mention a few, financial scandals, money laundering, embezzlement, and fraud (Jungvirth, 2009). Political disillusionment and disbelief in the political structure is based on what youth see in the media and their constructions and interpretation of a number of widely publicized political scandals.

A male youth, 19 years of age, from a bigger town, who was wounded during the war and is now disabled describes the importance of having an association that assists persons with disabilities.

> It is good at least there is an association at least for us, at least (they care) since no one else does, the big shots. At least there is someone. If we only had some rights, not like the ones above (in power) who just look out for themselves. There are many people that were wounded, a lot of people are disabled (P.I.14)

An internally displaced female youth, age 17, in a small town describes the efforts of the local NGOs community centre.

> This is great at the NGOs community centre because they really make an effort for Serbs and Croats and Bosnians to come. Because that somehow teaches kids about co-existence (P.II.8.)
>
> It would be a disaster if the centre stopped, if there is no money for the centre it would be a catastrophe. The kids would just go to school, come home from school, back to school, there would be nothing and they would hang out on the streets. (P.II.8).

Young people spoke of events where they experienced a change, often related to opportunities provided by more open and accessible social structures. As social structures change, they may offer or limit opportunities for youth. A Croatian female (age 17) provided a description of how her changing self was related to the postwar social structures and the opening of a new NGO which new opportunities, places for participation and action:

> Well, in the beginning it was a little boring, horrible when I first moved here, I did not even go out, the sports field was not renovated. The situation was very tense, I was at home, I read books. Or walked around in nature. Then when the NGO arrived, then I started participating more. I started going to the sports field, started going to the NGO Center and stuff. (P.II.8)

She also gives examples of the self changing and her narrative explores having become involved in a youth exchange program based in Zagreb and then had the opportunity to live abroad as an exchange student.

> I have changed a lot. I have become really confident, independent, persistent, stubborn and selfish. But still, when I am with people that I am close with, all those negative traits somehow diminish. I am always happy to help. Anytime something is needed I will help, I like to listen to people, give them advice. Sweden helped me a lot too. When I came back from Sweden, I started to put on airs, became self-oriented bordering on the rude, like, me, me, me. And I do not care about anyone else.

How she speaks of herself and her explanation on how others would describe her are quite contradictory. Reconciliation and tolerance are not static endpoints, which are achieved once and for all, but rather are processes that are constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. Her description of the self and how others experience her depends on the context, location and activity of the participant as can be illustrated by the example below. The excerpt below is from a Croatian 17 year old female youth whose parents are both employed by the municipality. Her reality, as in internally displaced person, is somewhat different because it is quite unusual in this small town setting to have parents with higher education and who are both employed.

> People in Location II would describe me as a conceited rich brat. That I do not at all want to hang out with them, because I think I am above them, better than them. But that is not true at all. My friends would describe me as open towards all people, towards all ethnicities, all religions. As a communicative person that people can confide in, that makes them laugh, that is always happy, merry, cheerful. Like, intelligent.

> I am not sure about the percentages, I think half Serbs, half Bosnians, so that Croatians very few, the real ones so to speak. Those who are from Croatia somewhere. Culturally I think that Serbs are more cultured [polite] than the Bosnians. I don't know, maybe I am prejudiced. But I go to school with them. They are very uncivilized and ill-mannered. I don't like them. I do not like to hang out with them, and they can be uncomfortable and known to provoke.
>
> They all say that they are from Sarajevo but they are not they are from the surroundings of Sarajevo from those forests and that's their upbringing and they do not know better. And our school cannot dedicate to them enough attention for their disciplining/upbringing, since they do not have it. The rest are like that. Serbs are a little more civilized, it is easier for me to hang out with them, and talk and everything. They can tell you everything to your face, they do not hold back. I hang out with all national (ethnic) groups. But most my friends I have all over Croatia and in the world and in Zagreb, than I have here. Here maybe there are 2 or three people all in all that I can talk to or have coffee with. And those are usually the volunteers.

Past and Present Changes

Bosnian Croats and internally displaced Croatian youth often describe their first time in Location II as arriving in a mismanaged overgrown village since they just see the

postwar situation and have no emotional connection to this new town. This is a town to which they were forced to relocate and they do not know what it looked like before the war. The only thing that matters is the name. The name of the town was changed when the Bosnian refugees arrived. The Bosnian refugees arrived to settle in Location II which was renamed, but the Serb youth returnees know the town by its old name. Sometimes it is as if people are talking about two different towns. It can be argued that the towns they speak of are different because the war changed the town, including the name, demographic makeup and street names, and people do not know one another as they did before the war and because of this the returnees and refugees do not have a shared past.

Youth who are returnees have vivid descriptions of the town, the way it looked before the war, their hang-outs and special places. They often speak of what it was like before the war. The past and present emerge in the returnee narratives from youth that remember Location II before the war. They tell vivid stories of what the town was like when they were children. They most often have happy memories connected to the town. They are able to reflect on the past and compare it to the hardships they faced as refugees and what it was like to return.

A young female returnee (age 19) who is a student describes what it was like to return.

> R: Hmm, when it was that, when we fled. Well, I was very little then. Honestly, there were not any here. This was not the front line of the fighting. The only thing was that dad was not here, that is the only thing left for me from the war and the pictures from the TV, it was not close to me (the war was not felt). Only in the beginning were there «alarms», of

course in the beginning of the war it was more frequent. But in between (91-95), it was like we were here and they were there and there was a period of standstill, it (the war) was somewhere else. And in the end when the attacks began, that was the only times. This in between, I don't know, for me it was ok.

We played, because most of it was, when, I was a child then. I was in elementary school from third to sixths grade. We played outside the entire day, there was no electricity for a while, for about 6 months we were without. So we, those were really some games, we were very lively children full of ideas, we played we did not sit in front of the TV. For me, ironically, those were the best times! Really. I did not know anything, mine took care of everything. See we had that in the country, it was close by so we had (food), we did not have big crisis at least when it came to food, and the rest we did not need. I knew about "Old Name " Location II, and that was enough, it was a big town to me, indescribable. When I left, oh, "Old Name" Location II, when I saw the department store, what a big building. Then it was cool/exciting, but when I returned in 1999, while entering I thought what is this?

I: Did it change much?

R: Yes, it became very small, something had changed, it was no longer it/the same. When I entered I felt the difference, like I don't know.

R: Yes, I got used to something different, I grew up as well, I don't know. Like someone had stopped time, like, in between nothing had happened. I

> remembered everything, but I saw it was no longer the same. I remembered everything but I saw it was no longer it. I had all sorts, all vivid pictures inside myself, and then when I returned like this never was. Like it was yesterday, and today when I wake up it is no longer it. It is called [Location II] now. (P.II.9)

Participation in Location I

The youth talk of participating in family events and in their homes. Participation and activity within the family are common. Most often they talk about spending time and talking, playing cards and watching TV. Most report good family support and emphasize the importance of family as a source of support and strength. Of course, café culture is important and they participate in the club and bar scene too. They are limited in participating in sports because of their disability and they do not mention cultural associations. The youth who have hobbies such as music participate in a wider culture by playing music with friends, at parties and at other events. They do refer to not participating in social structures such as taking part in organized activities. They are also less active within their NGO/organization. In addition, they also describe not participating in activities with friends and describe the passive and apathetic stance of many youth and an inability to get organized. Not surprisingly, drugs and alcohol are common themes in this particular setting and they often refer to it as one of the main problems for youth. Below an 18 year old disabled female participant from Location I stated:

> I think I participate, very little because all of us young people do not have the will for anything. They would like some changes to happen. But they cannot happen by themselves. Why not? someone has to initiate it. But when someone has to initiate it, based on my friends where I live, well there is like 30 of us from the same cohort. There is really tons of us. We all want something. Let's go, and then no one wants to, for example, let's go for a trip to Split because a friend has a yacht. But, oh, no, no. And then in the end we end up sitting in front of the building all afternoon. (P.I.18)

A 19 year old disabled male from Location I, during the interview had an interesting reply when asked if he is interested in politics and where he participates. His answer shows the disillusionment with government and social structures, leading to the inability to plan the future and living day to day:

> I don't even want to think about it. In fact, those are not my problems. I am not paid here to think. So why think, I don't care. That's the best way to live. Day to day, yes, that works best for me. (P.I .17).

Participation in Location II

There are two types of participation in Location II. One can participate in constructive activities such as learning, socializing, volunteering, sports and music events. Or one can participate in destructive activities including binge drinking and vandalism (graffiti, cutting down the Serb flag, tearing up plants, breaking newly planted trees, burning posters, breaking windows of abandoned houses, littering, bar brawls, etc). The youth describe these different kinds of participation and social engagement. They

offer examples of participation in constructive activities, for altruistic reasons because the like to help others, for fun, as a way to new meet people, to learn, and to socialize and spend quality time but also for personal gain.

A young internally displaced Croatian 17-year old girl describes volunteering and participating for personal gain as a way to get ahead:

> I would leave my parents, go to university, finish university, and never come back here. (I want to leave) because of the town, the people and my dad.
>
> Simply, people here are not like me. But I know people that are like me and I hang out with them, have a super time, and they suit me. And these people here do not suit me, I don't like them, and I do not know…
>
> Maybe I can get a donation or scholarship, just so I do not feel guilty, or I will wait until I turn 18 and leave for university. To leave here. Like most intellectuals. I am not from here, I do not draw roots from here, I do not hold any particular love for this place. The NGO Community Centre only serves me as a way to get ahead, so that I have something good on my resume, but I like what I am doing and at least I do not sit at home watching TV. Like, I use my time well.

Participation within the family is common. Most often young people talk about spending time and talking, playing cards and watching TV. In more dysfunctional families where there is physical or psychosocial abuse or alcoholism, others have more

demanding roles where they serve as support to a parent that is being physically and psychologically abused.

> Responsibilities, I have to take care of my sister. I have to take care of the home, clean, cook and stuff. I have to be very good in school; in fact I have to be excellent. And I have to study a lot. I have to wash the car.
> My role is to help in the home, talk to my mother about her problems. So I help her, talk to my sister, help her in school… eh
> I: who helps you?
> I help myself, I like to be independent.

In their interviews youth are aware of corruptive local politics and often blatantly refuse to be part of politics. They describe politics as boring and something that they are not part of, alienating and not very useful. They do not see themselves as actors of change who could influence and create change in the community. There are many examples in the town where people are not in politics to improve and better the community but purely for selfish reasons.

Although drugs and alcohol are very common themes, drugs are uncommon in this small town. The main problem in this small town is mostly excessive tobacco and alcohol use even by underage children and youth. There is much talk about the bars, and partying where alcohol consumption is high. The abuse of alcohol is often spoken about in terms of boredom and “what else is there to do”.

Disability

Youth participants in Location I were disabled and there were no other persons with disability interviewed in the other locations. Persons with disabilities face many stigmas, and deal with problems relating to access to healthcare, adequate aids and lack of assistance. Disability increases social exclusion and creates a different set of issues for youth when wanting to participate in the social structures such as employment, education, sports and recreation.

The following are several excerpts of narratives from an interview with a male in his early twenties who resides in a small village outside Location I. From these excerpts themes begin to emerge, as the interviewee locates himself within his social environment and reveals his view of this world. The excerpts illustrate an understanding of the issues that affect the interviewees developing identity and (non) participation. Notions of competence are expressed through a discourse that locates the individual in relation to the society where he attempts to find ways to negotiate and belong to.

The data analysis reveals several themes that relate to the social identity of disability. Disability creates a social identity where youth have to decide whether to admit or deny being disabled for work purposes. Analysis showed that youth speak of instances where major disabilities are made invisible to others and of occasions where they are very visible. By participating in the Association for the Disabled NGO they are joining with others to realize a common identity as disabled. Youth speak of inhabiting a environment of bombed and deserted factories with limited opportunities but also of the reconstruction and recovery of their towns and villages.

The extended excerpt, which follows, highlights the theme of being strong in a macho culture and working through pain and holding manual labor jobs. There are also occasions of denying the label of being disabled in certain situations. Many of the youth speak of the burden and shame of not having a job and state, "when you don't have money, you feel like it is all your fault, like you are all to blame" as stated by the young disabled youth from Location I.

Extended excerpt from Location I by a 20 year old disabled male youth.

R: it is all privatized so you cannot get a job in that. You cannot get a job anywhere. Mostly nowhere. That is the main problem here. Down here [points] you have some closed factories.

Interviewer: why are they closed? Because of the war or privatization?

R: some because of the war and some after. There you have that …, that factory employed a couple of thousand people. Even up until the war.. Ruined factories, now they are rebuilding something else, over there… there is a lot rebuilt, down there. There is also a lot that is closed and in ruins. Just by the edge of the city… down there.

R: there are many (unemployed), I did not work up until a few months ago.

I: it must be difficult, I mean how do people live without jobs and money?

R: in no way, you survive. It is survival. Most were in the military. That was downsized. And then even if one has a job it is hard to get used to that job. Because one cannot take (stand, tolerate) that someone says why this, why that, orders. They went through much, most went through a lot. Then one simply

cannot tolerate selling flowers somewhere, in some flower shop, to be ordered around by someone for little money, and nonsense. And real jobs, what can you say, there are not any. Very little is returning.

I: well, that must be some feeling?

R: motivation is poor, nonexistent, moral is poor. Everything has sunk, fallen; people simply don't have the will to live. After the war in Croatia, I think 2000 people who were in the military that later were disarmed committed suicide. I as disabled, 40%, receive 199 Kuna ($28 per month).

R: I do not see an improvement. Some things here are renewed, others are forgotten and others… there are many people who were wounded but you cannot see it (tell). Who could tell that I was wounded? You have lots of people, mostly you have psychological more than physical disability. There are many who were captives (POW). Those who have someone that died, they suffer too. ……. In the psych units you cannot speak to these people normally or anything. And when you see someone like that… walks in the middle of winter in short sleeves and short trousers. Or the reverse, walks in a coat in summer or something. People say he is crazy stay away from him but one should help them.

R: How, you know, those who do not have a strong morale in the family, or good family support that one is ruined. Those that have a good family, that get along with one another, they can somehow pull through.

R: That PTSD, many people have that here, but no one cares about that here, not at all. I go somewhere to work and if I tell them I am disabled then they will not

take me. Understand? I am now working this temporary job and there no one knows that I am disabled. If I say that I am disabled they would immediately tell me that… he is not for work. You have to fight for survival.

I: is it harder for disabled?

R: I was wounded, got hurt at 13. I stepped on an 'anti-personnel' mine, the one on a little string. It exploded two meters away from me. And [first name] was some 5 or 6 meters further away. That mine usually kills within 30 meters. So I do not know how we pulled through, what saved us there. I have some 100-120 of those pieces, [shrapnel], in my hand, in my head, and in the leg. It is all still in there. It would have been too much to take out because they would have probably damaged the muscles. It gets encased in there and then it does not disturb. It shouldn't anyway but you feel it when the temperature changes, weather, many changes.

R: And with that one has to do some really hard labor. Stuff that the healthiest could not do. I worked for a while in a stone quarry, pulling out stone.

R: lots of stone passed through your hands. Sometimes we took out 2 truckloads of stone. Then after, they don't pay you, they belittle you. So it is hard, but if you had, if one had that to work you would be happy.

I: so it would be better if there was work?

R: that is it…to live at all, when you don't have money, you feel all to blame…..

I: so it is important then, jobs, for young people? What's the goal?

R: people live off alcohol and drugs. I think Location I is at the top when it comes to dependencies in Croatia.

R: yes, especially that area down there. Like these villages more or less they don't have that. But in the city. It is different in the village; people behave differently, a different context.

I: so it is better in the villages?

R: when it comes to that, yes it is. When it comes to upbringing and life (living) to a certain degree it is better. Before people suffered from the urge to go to the city, city, city. Now people in masses flee the city. As long as someone has a corner in the country, they go to the country.

R: in elementary school, I started smoking in 5th 6th grade. The war changed a lot. I know that, when the war began, when we came here, I was in 4th grade and then we had class 20 minutes a day.

I: 20 min?

R: 20 minutes, and after that a lot was tolerated, so that people would pass and not fail grades. And then somehow most people loose the habit to study and the will or motivation to go anywhere. And then there is no view of the future and many, surely 80% of students enroll in classes just to finish something and so that they have high school. Even with a university degree it is hard to find a job. …in Location I there are these, it is not bad work, but the street cleaners with a university degree, lots of them. To study one should go to Location I or Split or somewhere.

I: can you explain about the 20-minute lectures?

R: because there were raids (alarms), and shelling. I was in 4th grade when the war started, I was nine, I was born in '82. The war started in '90… '91, I finished

three grades up in the country. Then I came here, and we were in hotels outside the city, here and there, then we did not have class. I took a break, two months I was out of school. I came back in the third semester, so fourth grade lasted only two or three months for 20 minutes a day. You did not learn anything nor do you know anything. I changed… 5, 6, in the same school but 5, 6 locations. Because one day it would be in one shelter in one building and the next day in another shelter elsewhere. Then by the factory in some shelter, and in some basement.

R: then today you come to class and then tomorrow you would not know where you are, the day after tomorrow… that was what it was like. And after that a lot of things were tolerated (re passing) and now it is all nothing. People simply don't have, they don't see any kind of future to finish this and go on and do that. You just finish something to have it on paper. To have a high school degree you really don't have anything. That is sad.

I: is that a big problem? Not being able to plan

R: well, you cannot, if you have something, on average if a person works somewhere it is only enough to survive. Most… go hang out in cafes, that is the way it is

R: you don't work, spend 2/3 of the days there, and then most nights you are out. And then.

I: aha, how to change that?

R: in no way, it has to change. If workplaces would open up. Or some go to the employment agencies or welfare and queue, but nothing.

This extended excerpt illustrates the many issues that the youth face, including finding meaning in the aftermath of the war. Youth speak of the prevalence of suicide among youth and war veterans, substance abuse in youth and the café culture predominant. They also describe what it feels like living day-to-day and the inability to plan. In addition, there are also moments of defining what society should be like: "People say he is crazy, stay away from him, but one should help them." In the extended excerpt the young man who was wounded and disabled during the war speaks from a recognition of the difficulties of coping, the visible and invisible disability and identifying with persons with disabilities but clearly differentiating himself at the same time. Recognition that help is not forthcoming makes the future seem insecure. When completing one's studies does not result in any hope of a job, it is clear the system has failed.

The narrative that emerges around the theme of disability show the interviewee as an actor where his disability takes on different meanings in the different contexts in which he is engaged. He demonstrates certain competencies in the face of a relatively closed social structure. Having finished school under severely disrupted conditions where normal standards were abandoned and completing vocational training after the end of the war, he found himself blocked by the lack of opportunity to work in his chosen field. He is hindered not because of his particular disability, but rather because of privatization that caused unemployment and the destruction of formerly viable firms and factories. Recognizing that revealing to a potential employer that he is disabled, because of a land mine, could cost him a job, he chooses not to be seen as disabled, thus making an opening in an otherwise closed social structure. Accepting employment in a stone

quarry, a physically demanding job even for someone not disabled, poses challenges to his health and stamina. At the same time, coming from a family in which only his father earns a wage to support a family of five, his ability to contribute to the family's survival provides an important sense of competence. By registering as disabled the interviewee is able to receive a small disability pension that supplements what he can earn through work. This is another example of his successful negotiation through the social structures around him. Knowing when to divulge his disability and when to hide it is a competence that has developed through participation and experience in the non-disabled world.

This analysis of the theme of disability indicates the ways in which it affects participation in work, family, and social settings, and how the competencies that develop lead to identities within these contexts. In the extended excerpt below, the interviewee negotiates the social structures that he faces using disability as a 'space of authoring' to remake his world. In this way he overcomes social constraints through his selective use of disability to get work and contribute to his family, as well as embracing disability as an identity that provides considerable emotional support. This process leads him into new 'social play,' activities through which new social competencies may begin to emerge (Holland et al, 1998).

The extended interview excerpt below serves to demonstrate how one young person, through occasional participation in the workplace, knowledge of his social setting, and participation in the organization for the disabled, has learned how to improvise. In addition, it illustrates how he learned to make the most of his limited resources by knowing how to use the context of disability to his advantage. Disability becomes a space of authoring for him. The excerpt above provided examples of the kind

of improvisation that Holland et al. (1998) recognize as crucial to creating a response to the world. Through this process the young man is also actively engaged in the reconstruction of identity on a personal level that reflects upon and has implications for both cultural and social identities.

Non-Participation or Passivity

While many youth speak of participation, activities and gaining competencies, there are also narratives about passivity, apathy and intentional non-participation. Every year in Location II there is a folklore festival where local, regional and international Serb and Croat folklore groups come to dance together. Sometimes the Croatian Cultural Association engages in an act of non-participation. Usually they are discouraged by the local priest that suggests that they should not perform with Serbs in their community. In other cases, youth give examples of avoiding certain events as acts of non-participation. For example, many youth say that they want to go out with friends and hang out but that there are problems associated with this. They suggest if you go out to enjoy time with friends, many young men drink a lot and then there is the possibility of fights. There is an insecurity expressed by the women/girls that you never know what will happen. They explain that they may go somewhere by car with the boys and then the boys get so intoxicated and cannot drive so they feel stranded. The youth explain that many times nothing happens because there are people around who can calm the situation, but you just do not know what transpire.

The data analysis also revealed passive or apathetic narratives. Some youth had ideas on how to improve the situation in town and ideas of what constructive activities

should be offered that may improve their situation such as quality of life and opportunities in their communities. When youth were asked whether they participated in already existing activities they often responded negatively. In fact, they did not participate in any of the activities offered and felt that the all of the activities were seen as boring, silly, somehow undignified, or thoroughly un-cool. It is not surprising that youth are passive and apathetic because even adult role models sometimes express contempt for participation. For example, a local NGO and a school in Location II decided to do an environmental beautification project by cleaning up the park in front of the bus station, planting flowers and bushes in order to improve the quality of life in town but also to get people to work together. A young female that was a teacher at the time and now the director of a local institution was asked to participate. Her answer in front of all the participants was that she did not go to university in order to participate in such activities.

An internally displaced Croatian male, age 19, shared his thoughts about not participating.

> Well, first you cannot do anything because there are not enough youth. First, no one can open anything if there aren't, when there are too few youth in the center.
>
> Some community actions could be started and interest some a little. Take the NGO in Location II, for example, they planned some camps and that is really great.
>
> I: Did you participate in the camps?
>
> R: No, I didn't, but some actions/activities I was.

I: So the NGO started something?

R: Yes, a little but I still think that there isn't anyone who will do anything here, this here. There are not any donors or anyone that can do anything. Because, I really think that there really are not enough youth. And who comes here, at my age. Finishes school and immediately thinks only where they will go away and work.

I: So what do you do?

I honestly do not know what to answer, we do absolutely nothing, that's the point, absolutely nothing. That is why it is boring because we don't do anything, we just talk, that is it, nothing. I don't know, maybe we go for a walk. I don't do anything.

I: Nothing

R: Yes, I don't know how to explain it. In the NGOs community centre, for example, music, a little guitar. I learn that and maybe I enroll in the fall. In the guitar class. Eh, other than that I don't know, I don't participate too much in any kind activities. I have some obligations, school and stuff. I don't want any now, everyday or, once a week to have time when I got to go somewhere. I don't want to take on more. In the community centre, nothing much happens except that people get together, but since there is no where else, then you come here even if it is boring but you see someone and stuff. There does not have to be any activities, but still it is here, always here.

Others also have ideas and try to start something useful but then interest fades quickly and nothing comes of the activity. A 19 year old female returnee from a neighboring village described the situation in her village.

> I don't, know, everyone has given up on that already. In our village there was this one building and we asked for it to be repaired since lots of youth would gather there. My age 20 to around 25. And some of us gathered there. We would celebrate New Years and Christmas and stuff there. And here we would hang out. And slowly, how these boys, there were more boys than girls, and then girls from Karlovac would come and Zagreb and would be there. And every one would gather there, gather, gather. And then. I was really keen that there should be some renovations. Why should we not get together? It would be great, we could gather and hang out. But they (village and town council) moved slowly, not this year, maybe.

The analysis indicated that non-participation and passivity relates to not feeling part of a place or place detachment. The youth express feeling of not having much influence, not being able to participate nor to organize anything because you are limited by feeling like a stranger in your home town, not knowing enough people. There is a sense of place detachment because the place changed so much and they feel they do not belong anymore.

A 20 year old female returnee, from Location II, below, describes why she does not participate in town and different activities at the centre and other events in her

hometown. Instead, she describes her studies as a place of belonging and participation where she has found what she wants to do with her life.

> But I say I am not here, I feel like a stranger here, I could not start anything here. I don't know anyone, no one is familiar, I feel like a stranger. So I don't know, when it turned out the way it did. I think I picked a great interest/career, I like it very much, When I enrolled I fell in love more with the subject, I did not regret that I enrolled, but I regret that I cannot get involved/active/engage. Nor am I here nor there. (P.II.9).

They also talk of not participating because they do not feel that they belong and give examples of place detachment. There are examples of engagement and non-engagement with the community and it seems feelings of not belonging and place detachment influence whether or not one participates in activities and the larger community. A17 year old, internally displaced female from Location II states:

> I am not from here, I do not have roots here, I do not have any special love for this place… And these people here, I don't like them (they don't suit me). (P.II.8).

Place detachment and Place attachment

Refugees such as the Bosnian Croats had to flee their homes and leave their country and come to an unfamiliar town to which they had no connection or sense of belonging. They live in temporary housing, often apartments or houses of people who

have not returned. However, people may come and claim their homes at any time. The Croats here only know the town as Location II and do not know what it looked like and what it was like prior to the war. Everything they have they left in Bosnia to start new lives here. For the Bosnians the hardships started around the early 1990s when the war there made them refugees.

The returnees are the Serbs who fled in 1995, but they are now returning to a renamed town now called Location II. This is one of only a few towns in Croatia where the town name and all the streets have changed as a result of the war. The returning Serbs have a different sense of connection to the land and the town. As one returnee youth said "every building, tree and stone has a memory for me." The town name changed and returning former inhabitants and settling of refugees created challenges to developing community solidarity and promoting community development.

Café Culture - A Form of Participation:

Café culture in the various locations is also a way to participate, to be a part of something, exchange information, something to do and a place to spend time since most youth do not work and have limited opportunities for participation. Csikszentmihalyi (1991) described café culture participation:

> For instance, the institution of 'drinking buddies', so prevalent in small communities all over the world, is a pleasant way for adult males to get together with men they have known all their lives. In the congenial atmosphere of tavern, pub, osteria, beer hall, tea room, or coffee shop, they grind the day away playing cards, darts, or checkers while arguing

> and teasing one another. Meanwhile everyone feels his existence validated by the reciprocal attention paid to one another's ideas and idiosyncrasies. (p. 186).

Bars and cafes especially in Location II are also a place of conflict and tension where the jukebox and choice of music becomes a place to assert ones identity and is a place of frequent contention (see more below in the section about competencies). Cafes and bars serve as a place to vent one's frustration and blow off steam. Cafes also become places to enforce ethnicities, mark territory and make political statements. There is a great deal of frustration exhibited, especially by males, due to unemployment and apathy and when individuals get intoxicated one outlet for the frustration is through fighting.

One young man, aged 19, from Location I comments on the café culture in his city.

> Mostly everyone hangs out in cafes/bars. Now when you go out in town on main street. All cafés are full, no one works, because everyone is in the café. Coffee, and this and that, no one works and everything is full.

Competence

Overall, the youth are quite competent when it comes to making sense of a fairly chaotic system. They have a good grasp of the structures and barriers that they face. They have learned when to divulge their disability or ethnicity and when to keep it to themselves. Youth have learned ways to negotiate some of the barriers and find ways around them. One youth describes her role in enabling friends of different ethnicities to

date in secret because the families and town were generally not supportive of such practices. In addition, the narrative below describes dealing with peer pressure when a friend of the same ethnicity discourages her from dating a Croatian boy. A 19 year old female Serb returnee stated:

> R: No to me that is important and problematic. I had a friend, it is a secret so no names, and they are an inter-national relationship. It lasts two years, one and a half years in secret. I was participant and helper, and they remained, today they are great and others could do nothing but accept it, both were strong, I am so happy for them, and when they started I was always afraid how will this and that go, but now it has been long, and they are really ok, but they have problems, they are here and feel the slander and all that, but the important thing is that they function, so I know that it is a problem. I mean it was a catastrophe that first year, I know since I helped them out. I mean, from both one and the other side there were problems, so.
>
> I: wanted to bring that up as one of the problems, because I think it is very important. Especially in these years, you have to be with some one and be bonded or something. Have something, and it is unbelievable what a problem that is.
>
> I: and you have to think it through well.
>
> R: Wow, there is one statement that really got me, you know. He is Serbian, for example, a guy when I was spending time with friends. He told me , please don't ever like, that I see you, I mean it was a threat through a joke, that I ever see you with a Croatian, well I said, you will never see me with

you ever. That was one statement that made think that, about that person totally, so that is what the thinking is like. From some young people, that is a big problem, exactly that. So it means not just with friendships but also these relationships are blocked, so that is also a problem, one of the bigger problems.

I: So it is not only that you have to go home and explain but it is also a problem your friends?

R: Yes, yes, yes, the whole environment. So the whole environment exacerbates it. It is one of the problems that no-one takes into account but talk about it nonstop because they are against it. So no one solves that instead they just judge, they judge.

I: Poor couple, that dares to do that, then they are really in trouble.

R: And what can people do, I don't know those 18-20, or teenagers for example, what they can do, hide? Laughs, I don't know. But a relationship it is a risk you take together (inaudible) how it will turn out, you cannot fight the whole world, I don't know. I mean, around me it is not like that… but I cannot see why that could not work in reality, it is just because people do, it I just because of other people.

R: yes, that is a problem in a way invisible, no one talks about it. They are all like, fine, yes there are problems but no one talks about it. But the every one talks from the other side, and from the other perspective. (those against it)

R: Hmm, yes, well it is sort of like it is fine, it is like all talk, and sort of it is all developing but nothing is fine. But this is one of the problems that, but it is the stepping stone for living together. To live, together, two people, that life begins together. That. So that fact kills that whole situation no matter how much we socialize, and laugh together (at one another?). And it kills all the effort and everything else. I don't know I wish I could talk to some guy without some condemnation (being judged) I don't know. Yes, when people become independent, that they can make decisions, here this is my life and I decide with whom I will be, well there are few of those because it is such an environment/milieu and that is why it is a problem. This way it is not, people can be together and we can see that it is not a problem that they are different ethnicities. Yet again this environment is undeveloped, so everything leads to that issue.

R: that is right, I have my own life and I decide with whom I am going to live. Then it does not matter who and what he is, then things follow, if they see that we are together, then of course that the family will accept it and everything. And the wider family, [laughs] well they will not come and visit. So again we are back at the beginning. It all has the same source.

Young people also give examples of how to live in a small community and how to survive the intense scrutiny and implicit rules governing behaviors, what is deemed as normal and appropriate, acceptable appearances and social norms in a small town. One 17 year old internally displaced female stated that:

> This is a small community, and everyone knows everything about everybody. And you have to be careful what you say. You have to think about what you wear. (P.II.8.)

Another 19 year old female returnee explained that you have to think about who you are seen with in public because people will immediately start talking and there may be repercussions.

> R: Yes, that is the problem. It is strange, it is really a problem. But seriously, you have to watch who you will sit down with, because immediately (people start talking and judging). How is it that you are taking to him? You are hanging out, well he is like this, he is like that. You know you have been with them. Laughs, I mean that for me is, well I think I have not allowed them to judge me like that. I am really glad I am above that. And in that I will always be different from them all.
>
> I: Is it important?
>
> R: yes, that is why I say it is important to me. This is what I mean, not with one action have I allowed them to catch me once. Never done anything so that they can blackmail me in any way. No I always proceed honestly in a way, with open cards and you cannot get me in any way. I don't know, cannot reproach or anything.

Youth are able to read the situation in town quite accurately. They are acutely aware of how people view one another, the current gossip being created and what rivalries are going on. In addition, the narratives contain examples of how they deal with certain situations.

In the example below, a 21 year old refugee explains how he handles certain interpersonal situations that occur.

> There is a lot going on, for example I go partying with X (Serb youth), you know him. We go out to some café bar and then some drunks get together, you know them who always drink, the town drunks. And they start Serb this and that. You are on the Serb side. For me that is totally stupid. It does not matter what ethnicity you are as long as I like you and you are good to me. I go out for drinks with him, but it is dumb, when I hear that stuff, when they shout to him and what do I know. They know he is there right, that he is there. So we Croats and here comes a Serb and they like talk amongst one another but talk bad about Serbs right. So then I crush them. Beat them. Mostly for myself, you have to. It means I can, you know, go into a café where there are all Croats. No problem, fine with me. What do I know if they are bothered by it, it does not bother me. But if they disturbed by me then it is a problem. It means that I cannot safely approach, like what do I care everything is fine. We can have a good time and nothing. It is hard to know when you arrive what will happen, you have to hold back even if you have the best intentions. You do not know whether the guy next to you minds.

The data analysis indicates that youth have developed competencies involving knowing when to divulge their identity depending on the situation and context. Some youth have had to learn how to read others in order to anticipate whether conflicts may arise in certain situations. For example, Serbs and Croats celebrate different holidays and

local Serbs often have village parties commemorating certain World War II events and would be quite rare for other ethnic groups to participate. Youth know how to avoid conflict and sometimes diffuse it but they also know how to create conflict in order to make a statement. One example would be music choices in local cafes. If one wants to create a stir in a local bar it is often enough to just choose ethnically loaded music and with enough alcohol there will be a brawl or at the very least a juke box music duel.

The youth in Location I, despite their disabilities, have a better opportunity to gain competencies, since it is a bigger city and there are more opportunities available. One youth spoke of competencies as something that needed to be discovered early and practiced but also related them to war experiences such as being wounded. For this youth competencies developed by going through hardships and lead him to feel that he could deal with anything and that things could only improve.

The excerpt below is from a 19 year old male who was wounded and is disabled and describes his competence and skill by practicing his hobby.

> R: Everyone has a talent for something, someone is talented in this, someone else that. Some in soccer, some for this, it should be discovered earlier. And practice is necessary. And one has to practice and stuff. One has to be determined and stick it with it until the end. And since we have endured all sorts of things we will have to endure this too. We have gone through the worst then we can do this too. You go through the worst in life and then it becomes better.

One former child soldier and disabled young male, age 26, spoke of creating his own opportunities through hard work and commitment.

> To now expect from someone to give you anything or to help you is difficult. For me it is not bad. For me, I am satisfied. Nine years ago I started from zero. Literally from zero. Because I was left without anything… and now I am entirely satisfied. You can do it, I tell you. A few people have the conditions that I created for myself, conditions, I have a job and it is well paid and stuff.

Recovery-Reconstruction

The youth describe the resumption of normal activities as part of recovery and reconstruction. In addition, they speak of creating new lives for themselves by renovating or building a home, becoming more independent through this or creating a better life for themselves and their families. For youth it is essential that their villages and homes are being renovated. In addition, mine clearance is also an important issue. For youth from Location I recovery and reconstruction also involves their own bodies healing to the point where they can resume their activities and live as normally as possible.

A 19 year old wounded and disabled male explains his situation and his thoughts about the war and aftermath.

> I wish, like everyone else, that this war never happened. And that none of this happened. So that I did not have to go through this experience. But in fact, things are good, what can I say. I do not have any differences that I am

wounded, I do not feel disabled. I am normal, no one would figure out that I am wounded.

Recovery is an individual, social and structural process. Recovery also involves the restoration of satisfactory social services and social inclusion of the marginalized (UNDP, 2006). Recovery can occur when all the refugees and returnees are settled when social service delivery is readily available and there is a social structure of care with trained professionals. Recovery also involves more profound changes such as restoring communication and trust between former enemies, restructuring the government ministries and institutions, reforming laws and policy making to support democratic development.

Reconciliation-Reintegration

Youth negotiate reconciliation by attempting to make sense of what they learn at home, at school, from friends, at the community centre or association. They describe reconciliation as something in the "mentality of people" and something that will occur when the previous generation is gone. The NGO in Location II provides a space where what one learns at home and in other institutions can be questioned based on ones own experiences, participation, competence and interethnic and intercultural interactions experienced at the NGOS Community Centre.

Reconciliation is a process that occurs by creating constructive relationships through communication and the development of tolerance and understanding between ethnic groups that have been at war (Broneus, 2008). This includes forgiveness paired with an understanding of the mutual responsibility and accountability for past events.

Reconciliation is not a static endpoint, which is achieved once and for all, but rather a process that is constantly negotiated and renegotiated. It depends on the context and activity of the participant. Reconciliation is essential to build tolerant and peaceful democratic societies in which individuals are equal citizens.

The NGOs Community Centre experienced that the two ethnic groups can only be brought together in joint activities that are not labeled reconciliatory. The activities can have the goal of creating reconciliation or reintegration but are not publicly called reconciliation activities in order to avoid people's suspicions and fears concerning the two terms. Local inhabitants have resistance towards the concept of reconciliation. People make friends with one another, live side by side and work together. The term reconciliation however, is emotionally and politically loaded and people stay away from it. The NGO figured out that, activities promoting and encouraging reconciliation can still be conducted as long as they are not publicly labeled as such. Joint activities can be anything from educational activities, sports or games, eco/environmental projects, concerts, and foreign volunteers holding workshops. For example, no one would show up if the NGO announced that they would be holding reconciliation workshops. Instead, wide arrays of activities are offered that participants of all ethnic groups can take part in together. Reconciliation begins to take place when trust is built and friendships are created when participants of different ethnic groups engage in the various offered activities. In fact an activity can serve as a mediator between the ethnic groups that in the past have not interacted positively. Activity and participation can serve as a vehicle for reconciliation and understanding.

When youth speak of reconciliation they do not give themselves much credit as actors in the process. Nor do they believe that the older generation is interested in reconciliation. Data analysis suggests that the impossibility of reconciliation is ascribed to the mentality of the older people that transfer intolerance to the youth. Others state that another generation will need to pass before reconciliation will be possible.

A 21 your old male refugee from Bosnia in Location II describes how he thinks the mentality of older people cannot be changed.

> It cannot be changed it's the mentality of people. And you cannot teach an old dog to sit, no chance he can change, he is like that period. Youth are not like that mostly, there are some of course.

A 17 year old internally displaced female describes the bitterness she feels that the older generation harbors and that this is transferred to youth.

> People talk among themselves, this one is a Serb, he did this, this one Bosnian, look how they behave and so on. The problem is that older people have this bitterness inside and they transfer it to youth. So two generations will have to pass for it to change.

Some youth have friends from different ethnic groups. The data analysis indicates that these youth have to reconcile notions of forgiving and forgetting and think about communal guilt versus individual guilt in order to be able to have friends from another ethnic group. In addition, as mentioned earlier music is an area of tension and conflict and youth have to balance listening to nationalistic right wing music with an awareness

that such music is at odds with coexistence and the future. For example, many Croatian youth listen to “Thompson” a Croatian nationalist musician whose stage name is taken from an army issue rifle. This popular Croatian pop/rock musician, banned from performing in the EU for three years, is a nationalist, right wing musician whose music performances attract individuals wearing fascist imagery/symbols.

A 17 year old refugee describes a music genre that can be called “patriotic” rock music.

Interviewer: Do you listen to Thompson?

R: Yes of course. He is the best Croatian musician.

I: Why?

R: Because he does not like Serbs, that’s why. Yes, that is why everyone likes him. You know he has these songs and stuff.

I: Do you think that is good?

R: Next question please. No, I can answer that. Of course it is not good, but no. I already told you, that I sometimes do not like Serbs either. Like, I like him as a singer, but, of course, it is not good.

I: You said you have Croatian and Serbian friends and that what happened during the war is hard to reconcile?

I think it cannot be forgotten. Of course not all Serbs are to blame. No not at all.

I: It is good then that you have your friends T (Croat) and G (Serb), a bit of a mix. Laughs, now the only thing missing is Muslims, I have to have them too. Laughs.

A 20 year old female returnee who is a student describes that she has friends of different nationalities but that something will always happen to bring up ethnicity.

R: no, there will always be some individual, someone that will do something, and it is like that, it is destiny. I think, I have friends from other nationalities, it goes super. It proves that it can work, but always something will happen.

All generations, I think that it always, that it is everyone, everyone has an influence. Small children hear something at home. Then the older ones, it is mostly peers, not parents as much. The older ones have already gone through a lot, but they were already ones in the togetherness and it all broke apart and they know it. So I think it will always be. You cannot erase it. Not much time has passed

I: well, maybe time is needed, and do people think that since it broke apart once it may do it again?

R: yes, yes, yes. Yes. And the situation itself is hard. And it is difficult little like (with envy). And maybe the other one irritated him, and especially here because maybe he is Serb or maybe because he is Croat. Just because the situation is difficult that then emphasizes differences.

R: well, I think it helps the most when people learn to know each other. When I remember when I first arrived, no one knew anyone. The only thing one knew was, look he is Serb he returned. They came from here

> and here. He is Croatian and he hangs out with this one and that one. And it was like you meet on the street and you turn your head. (II 9)

Since Location I is a predominantly Croatian city, and in the surrounding villages Croatian and Serbians seldom mixed, hence there is not much contact between ethnic groups. Youth from these areas and their families were much closer to the violence. The youth often talk of not being able to forget or forgive because of the harm they suffered. In addition, the Croatian youth in this location seem to differentiate between Serbs who stayed and Serbs who left. A 19 year old male in Location I stated;

> The ones who want to return now for reconciliation… No chance. Still today look at all those mines, how many there are. And they want to come back here like nothing happened. Still today people are hurt here and stuff. It will never be cleared. And they want us to just forget

He then continues:

> Since 1995, the war was only eight years ago. That is not so long ago. I have said I will forgive everyone everything but I cannot forget. Because you can forgive. But I don't know why that is. Why not, forget you cannot, right, but forgive you can, they can have it.
>
> Like how many got killed and stuff. And then they want to return like nothing happened. Well I don't think I will ever forgive that. Honestly if I find the person who did this to me I would kill him. I don't know why, I think it is normal, I will not give him my hand. Like everything is fine and nothing happened.

As previously mentioned, many of the youth suggest that change can only happen with the passing of the influence of the generation that grew up under communist rule. Others state that reconciliation can only occur after more time has passed. The older generation is seen as embedded in nationalism and backward in their political thinking although youth often voice similar beliefs. Reconciliation will take time and there needs to be more opportunities for youth before they will feel ready to move forward. Reconciliation also involves more profound changes such as "mutual acknowledgement of past suffering (between former enemies)" (Broneus, 2008, pg 294).

Future Orientation-

A number of research studies have found that Croatian youth, report a positive future outlook (Illisin &Radin, 2002; NHDR 2006; UNDP 2007). Researchers have also found that youth in Croatia who are still in school seem more positive, while unemployed youth appear more discouraged (Illisin &Radin, 2002; NHDR 2006; UNDP 2007). The current data analysis suggests that youth who work temporary jobs dream about finding fulltime employment. However, they realize that their options are limited due to the shortage of jobs. For example, a 19 year old female returnee from Location II states:

> R: I make an effort. I think, so many people are locked in their houses. They do not do anything, I just want to try to make it through. I don't know, I don't think one should surrender. Those four years… that was suffering but see I hope that it will be better for me. I tried to enjoy as much as I could. Because I am really have some hope. A vision, goal. I am not unhappy.

> Yes, I think it can be better only if people try. It really has begun, super. When I see the kids playing everyday, I don't know.

Youth who are employed have concerns about the future that appear more realistic and are connected to the social structures that limit them. They are aware of the low wages and impossible housing situation which limits their ability to plan for the future. The young people interviewed expressed great concern about their situation and how to make sense of and overcome their existing circumstances.

Being in transition can also serve as a motivator for the future. The following narrative below is from a student, (19 year old female Serb returnee) who wants to finish her studies, but feels guilty because it costs her family money. She notes that she would like to finish university and find a job so that she does not need to depend on anyone else and can fulfill the obligations that she has.

> No I feel there cannot be a worse period, get to work, eh because until I finish my family has nothing, I think it will be easier if I find a job, see I would have money for me and then my life starts. Like this I am dependent on others and I cannot do anything here, but fulfill the responsibility that I have.
>
> Leave my parents, go to university, never return here. I think about the future a lot, in ten years I see myself in Brussels, there I will do something for the EU or something. Or I will be an ambassador, representing Croatia or just work there. Travel the world…

In contrast, for some youth there is only the future and having to forget the past because of the numerous losses. The analysis showed that youth report family support and social structures as important and a source of strength and support. The excerpt below is from a 19 year old Croatian male who lost his mom, was himself severely wounded and is 100% disabled, and his sister and father were also wounded at the same time. They have begun making a life for themselves and the dad has met a new girlfriend who has a daughter from a previous marriage. She herself is a widow and lost her husband in the war. So this entire family has suffered multiple losses, multiple wounds, death and disability. The only thing that is bearable to even think about is the future. The excerpt below is from a 19 year old disabled Croatian male from Location I.

> If there was, if only there is the future. Nothing comes from that, if I would think about the past and bygones, what happened, I would not be able to sit here. I would go crazy, do you understand. Because my mom was killed, my dad was wounded, my sister was wounded, and I…. (P.I.2.)

Most youth state that due to issues such as unemployment, financial insecurity, lack of opportunities, and housing issues they cannot and will not plan for the future. Rather they live day to day hoping that the future will be better but are unable to plan for it and feel little conviction that they can make changes in their lives. A 23 year old male Serb returnee stated:

> What the future is like? Work, start a family but in this situation that is difficult and impossible. Better suffer alone than dragging someone down with you, better suffer alone than bringing another person down. Lots of problems, suffocating, many. But I don't think about it, it's a headache.

Summary of Findings

Youth in their narratives describe in detail the tensions that hinder participation and reconciliation. There are differences by site regarding nationalism and interethnic interactions. In Location I there are less interethnic contacts because the town and villages are predominantly Croatian. Disabled youth in Location I, have strong memories and feelings about the war, and talk in detail of the mines, the injuries that resulted in their disability or loss of family members. In Location II there were more opportunities for interactions and for creating activities that promoted reconciliation and tolerance. The youth also describe instances where conflict, often in café's and jukebox arguments, is created on purpose. The narratives indicate, that sometimes youth in Location II are very nationalistic, both Serbs and Croats alike. They offer no clear cut answers on how to achieve tolerance and reconciliation because for every person there is a story and a firmly believed in truth based on their experience, history and how they construct their life stories. However, analyzing the stories youth tell and exploring what myths and beliefs that guide the actions of people in these postwar areas is an attempt to bring them out in the open and to gain an understanding of postwar narratives. As an example of nationalism issue one of the youth interviewed in Location II stated, "everyone knows it and thinks it but no one talks about it". The current mantra of the youth in Croatia is

"nationalist tensions are always there and always will be there". It seems that the mistrust and insecurity that was fostered from the very beginning of Yugoslavia's existence has transferred to the independent Croatia and to the next generation and has taken deep root in even the youngest individuals.

In addition, participant observation indicated that if a conflict between two individuals occurred and it was not an ethnic/national conflict, the community still perceived it as an inter-ethnic conflict between Serbs and Croats. In such cases the community constructed a divisive narrative as evidence of tensions between ethnic groups and also used it as an example of the victimization of their own ethnic group. In one interview a conflict was described by a youth whose father was murdered. The father, a Bosnian Croat, was killed by his best friend, a Serb returnee, and drinking buddy in a bar brawl. The community staged a nationalistic demonstration thus making it into a conflict between ethnicities even though according to the murdered man's son, it was not.

Throughout this chapter many of the themes that emerged during the coding of the data, were considered. Especially prominent were the different descriptions of tensions that arise in the community and disrupted the reconciliation processes. Tensions appear in the society between different actors or tensions can occur within the individual for example in deciding how to deal with tolerance or nationalism. Youth spoke of balancing tolerance and intolerance, forgiving and forgetting, there is even tension about music preferences (See description of nationalism and turbo folk contribution to tensions in Baker, 2005, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, especially problematic are the tensions relating to housing issues. The analysis also indicated that the youth's stories about the housing tensions

were different than adults' stories. Youth describe returning from exile and arriving back to Location II and being housed elsewhere while waiting for their home to be vacated. Being housed in different homes and waiting to be assigned a permanent place. Adult stories are often more elaborate as they in describe in great detail the devastation to the home. In addition, they more often assign blame to a temporary settler and entirely disregard the 5 year occupation, the burning and pillaging during "Operation Storm", and the general disrepair from the house not being properly maintained. A common story is that the settlers entirely ruined the house on purpose or because they are more primitive they do not know how to maintain the house. However, there are few positive stories about the housing issues. Yet, one story that now has become local folklore, concerns how the refugee/settler painted the interior of the house before leaving, and placed coffee and flowers on the table before moving as a thanks to the owner of the house, a Serb returnee. A Serb returnee and community activist pointed notes that returnees never mention the house devastations towards the non-Serb population that were expelled during the 1991-95 occupation. The silence and what is not said also shapes the narration of past events and in creating a joint future.

The site of participation in Location I was the association for the disabled and in Location II the community centre. The youth negotiated ethnicities through friendships and relationships developed at the community center and this provides the first steps towards developing tolerance and reconciliation.

There is partial reconciliation where Serbian and Croatian friends can distinguish between those who did bad things during the war from those who did not but still express that they cannot forgive other events that occurred during the war events. In Location I,

the situation is more complicated because of the proximity of war and direct trauma of the youth.

Youth also speak of inter-ethnic friendships that can create strains on families as well as cause tension between friends of the same ethnicity. At the beginning of the field research there was only one young couple, of mixed ethnicities, dating in secret (hiding it from their families with help of friends) in Location II. Over the years it has become more accepted to date across ethnic lines and there are a few couples dating and a few eventually got married. However, it is not something that is encouraged or widely supported.

To make matters worse there are also intra-group issues. Careful balancing acts are often required in order to be accepted by one's own ethnic group. It is common for individuals to get criticized by members of their own ethnic group for spending too much time with individuals from other ethnic group. Not surprisingly, there is also intra-group solidarity purely based on ethnic belonging which ignores morality, education, or competence etc. The clearest examples of issues such as nepotism and corruption, which reflects the situation of present day Croatia, appear in the political and social life of the town. People are assigned work, jobs, or special posts (on boards and commissions) based solely on connections, political affiliation and ethnicity, instead of based on skill, competence and education. This type of corruption based on ethnic group membership and political affiliation is counter productive to community development and hinders socio-economic development (Budak 2006). This type of corruption also depletes funds from an already impoverished municipality as money is spent to keep an incompetent labor force in place. It also discourages capable individuals with no connections and

youth that do not see the point of even trying because the social obstacles to them seem insurmountable.

Postwar and Transition

In addition to losses and disruptions that occurred to the country as a whole, similar disruptions were evident on an individual or personal level. It is crucial to keep in mind that Croatia is a country in transition which compounds the problems that youth face. Postwar youth have to respond to dramatic changes to a range of structures including life, social/cultural, political, societal and environmental structures. In transitional societies youth are faced with more disadvantages and problems than their peers in other societies (Ilisin & Radin, 2002; UNDP, Human Development Report, 2004). Therefore, youth growing up in transitional societies often face a " double transition or passage, on the one hand, they are passing through the universal period of growing up and preparing to assume permanent social roles, and on the other hand, this process is taking place in a society itself in transformation from one social system to another" (Ilisin & Radin, 2002 , p17-18).

The transitional postwar state is incredibly difficult for youth to negotiate. They have to try to find meaning and gain understanding of past and present events in order to successfully negotiate the past, present, and to create a future. Socio-historical theory, states that all thought occurs first interpersonally and then intrapersonally (Vygotsky, 1978) and the extension of this theory to a post-war context can be used to explain how the legacies of war continue in a process of transgenerational development and how this theory meets praxis, policies and the NGO sector (Daiute & Turniski, 2005). Various

peace activists and NGO's in Croatia have started emphasizing the importance of peacebuilding through the process of "facing the past" (Documenta , 2005).

Chapter 5

Discussion

This dissertation set out to present an alternative to the medical and pathology models prevalent in war and postwar research, and which portray youth as passive victims (Boyden, 1994). This was accomplished by investigating the long term effects of war on youth, their environment, the structures within which they live and the society as a whole in order to illustrate how these young people understand their complicated life situations and circumstances. In addition, an alternative model based on young people's participation was considered (Garbarino, 1996; Summerfield, 2002; Turniski, 2004).

As the present findings illustrated individuals living in postwar areas face many obstacles in an almost all spheres of life. In line with a sociocultural approach the research also examined the context in which the youth live and participate; examining the forms participation take as a mode of transformation. This involved exploring the resources and strategies that young people utilize in this postwar transitional situation. It is out of these processes that identity emerges, and participation influences emerging identity on individual, social and national levels and influences how they envision their futures.

In addition, this research indicates that youth exhibit many strengths, abilities, and coping skills when negotiating this difficult postwar period. Youth showed the ability to make sense of the situation, make meaning of war and postwar situation and find ways to participate, gain competence and ultimately think of a future and a place for themselves during a time when the country itself is undergoing major transformation. Youth are able to understand the social structures; they accurately pinpoint the poor economy and

unemployment, problems with housing, and corruption. Despite these various problems youth are still able to function in this society, participate, develop competence and find support networks and spaces of participation.

Development in postwar areas is a also challenge because of the generational gap between the cohorts that grew up during the Yugoslavia period, individuals who grew up during the war and this current young postwar generation growing up with little assistance or guidance from adults in their communities (Turniski, 2004). Findings indicated that opportunities for participation in this transforming society are limited for youth and young adults.

Social Structures

In their narratives youth described activities in which they participate such as social, educational and community activities. They also note instances where their participation is limited such as employment activities. In addition, many mentioned political participation and the fact that they often chose not to participate at all. Findings also suggest that open or closed social structures encouraged or hindered participation. Examples of open social structures were NGO's, associations, social networks. Interviewed youth provided concrete examples of open structures and most often mentioned different NGOs that provided support and encouraged participation provided spaces for participation, learning opportunities, chances to feel part of something, and also assisted beneficiaries to find ways to negotiate closed structures. Other examples of open structures included informal social networks, school and university and friends and family.

In contrast, closed structures often included the current political and economic climate with corruption and nepotism that makes it difficult for youth to enter the labor market or the housing situation that hinders them from living their own lives. The closed structures that hindered participation the most were unemployment, corruption/nepotism, and housing issues. Interviewed youth across the three locations faced similar issues regardless of whether they were refugees, returnees or internally displaced. However, as described in the interviews youth with disabilities faced additional obstacles such as the stigma involved, lack of quality prosthetics prevalence of old-fashioned prosthetics and that hinders their participation, lack of job opportunities, not enough awareness, accessibility and building adaptation for people with disabilities. Youth have learned when not to disclose their disability e.g. when applying for jobs.

Two contexts that vacillated between being open and closed were churches and cafes. Many youth described religion and church as supportive social structures. However, in some communities church was viewed as a closed and oppressive structure that contributed to intolerance and ethnic tensions. In such cases, youth found other ways to express their spirituality for example by organizing trips to visit churches and holy sites. Bars and cafés were seen as places to spend time, have fun and meet people but were also places of conflict and tension.

Engagement and participation in a community in transition was difficult not only because of refugee and returnee status, but because of closed social structures that led to feelings of injustice, and a less than clear future orientation. My research was also consistent with previous work indicating that one of the main issues of transitional postwar countries is corruption across many levels of society (Budak, 2006). In this

study youth viewed corruption as a major problem that is present in Croatia in all societal structures. As Budak (2006) indicated corruption in Croatia has taken a stronghold and can be found in all the structures of society and in many ways is a "systematic phenomenon" (p.28). Youth gave examples of the most common forms of corruption such as conflicts of interest, nepotism, and bribes in the public service sector. In addition, descriptions of corruption came up in everyday conversations with community members. Both youth and community members suggested that various forms of corruption are part of everyday life. Not only are youth affected by corruption but poor youth in postwar rural areas are disproportionately affected. Corruption affects entire societies but corruption disproportionately affects the poor and limits poverty reduction processes and increases poverty and income inequality (Budak, 2006). The poor and marginalized are more vulnerable by negative effects of corruption and will suffer most by the consequences of corruption.

The clearest examples of issues such as nepotism and corruption, which reflects the situation of present day Croatia, appear in the political and social life of the town. People are assigned work, jobs, or special posts (on boards and commissions) based solely on connections, political affiliation and ethnicity and not on skill, competence and education. This kind of corruption is so common that it is viewed as normal by youth and they have come to expect it. Youth in the interviews clearly understand the importance of connections and this type of corruption based on ethnic group membership and political affiliation is counterproductive to community development and hinders socio-economic development (Budak 2006). Youth in their interviews often mentioned corruption and how if you do not have any connections there is almost no point to make

an effort. This kind of inertia and behavior has often in research been related to PTSD or war trauma but this research seems to indicate that it is more a structural that personal issue.

Participation and Competence

The NGOs in the three locations have created opportunities for participation and the development of competence. For example, the NGO in Location I provided help and assistance to persons with disabilities, Location II provided reintegration and education opportunities in an ethnically mixed community and Location III provided an alternative to nationalism by allowing a space for "anti nationalists" in a segregated town. The NGOs in different way provided assistance, opportunities to spend time and in each location bridged a social service delivery gap not remedied by the government or local municipality.

In addition, to illustrating democratic models of informal education the findings also suggest that after-school programs are essential in creating "peace places" and places for participation (Hart 2006). NGOs in Location II and Location III attempted to offer activities that would create places of tolerance and based their approaches on participation and provided informal education to their beneficiaries and provide opportunities where individuals of different ethnic groups could spend quality time. The gatherings provided a place for children and youth to spend time without feeling different or judged and provided place of belonging as well as opportunities to socialize.

This current research suggests that participation as a process and activity is one of the most important and essential factors of youth development. In accord with the extant

literature (Garbarino, 1985; Hart, 2006) the current findings also revealed that participation resulted in many benefits to youth such as creating conditions for social inclusion and at the same time improving the quality of life, and creating opportunities for learning.

Participation in Location I served as a way for disabled youth to find a sense of belonging where they met with other youth wounded in the war and shared experiences. In addition, participation in Location I assisted youth in getting access to social service delivery and also assisted in constructing an identity as disabled. It gave young people the opportunity to connect with other youth and individuals facing similar situation such as loss of limb, disability, loss of family members, relating to disabled family members, and helped them in finding a space where they are not stigmatized.

Interviews indicated that participation in joint activities at the community centre in Location II served as a way to improving intergroup relations between youth of differing nationalities. Activities such as youth empowerment programs, volunteer camps, informal education and recreational activities that encouraged participation made youth more independent and allowed them to create their own activities and invite others to participate. Participation leads to empowerment, enabling youth to become active in creating the various programs and activities at the centre. Participatory activities serve as ways to "teach" tolerance and achieve some reconciliation-negotiating between what one learns at home with what is learned at the center.

In Location III the obstacles to participation are tremendous because the community is still segregated with separate schools, leisure facilities, cafes etc. The activities youth participate in promote youth volunteerism, increases inter-ethnic dialogue

and create a safe and motivating space for youth to interact in as well as promote young people's civic growth. For example, the activities provided by the NGO in Location III promotes and encourages participation and provides a space for education, awareness raising, tolerance building, inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation.

At the community centre at Location II, children and youth of different ages working together is an important aspect of the NGO's program. Other researchers have also found that children and youth working together across age groups invaluable to the social development of children and youth (Gauvain, 2001; Hart, 2006; Rogoff, 2003). Also adult volunteers, local mentors and staff from different ethnic groups working together provided good role models for youth of different ethnic groups. Providing role models is important and researchers have documented the importance of adult role models but in a more "in the background" approach where they allow youth to "come together but with adults on the sidelines" (Hart, 2006).

Youth participation is related to the development of competence, citizenship, development of civil society, children's agency, social cooperation, democratic culture, citizenship building and creation of social capital (Dauite, Beykont, Higson-Smith & Nucci, 2006; Garbarino, 1985; Garbarino et.al., 1992; Hart, 2006). Other researchers have also found participation to be essential in developing competence (Garbarino, 1985).

This dissertation explored what life is like for youth in postwar areas and the types of competencies young people develop in a postwar transition society where older individuals are not able to serve as mentors because of very different past experiences. The adults grew up in a communist state with an entirely different political structure. The

postwar transitional country creates an entirely different situation with youth growing up during a period of insecurity, difficulty and tension. There are great differences between the experiences of the parent's generation and the new generation. Their parents and grandparents lived and worked in a totalitarian socialist society where life-long employment was almost guaranteed, including health and retirement insurance, and individuals were assigned public housing. Instead, the youth are experiencing insecurities in almost every aspect of life.

Recovery and Reconstruction/ Reconciliation and Reintegration

The youth interviews supported Summerfield's (2002) view that resuming normal everyday activities and routines is key to recovery and that it occurs, not in "people's psychologies", but in people's lives through resuming to daily activities. The meaning of recovery in this dissertation was closely related to participation. For example, Summerfield (2000) noted, "ultimately a population recovers from war not as recipients of aid or as patients but as active citizens. Structural poverty, landlessness, and lack of viable jobs too often retard this rebuilding of lives" (p.236). The participant observations conducted at the different sites support Summerfield's point about the importance of active citizens and the important role of the social structures.

Reconciliation and reintegration are simultaneously individual, social and structural on-going processes (Bracken, 2002; Summerfield, 2002; Turniski, 2003). Activity and participation can serve as a vehicle for reconciliation and understanding. The various sites differed greatly in the level of reconciliation and reintegration that occurred. The NGOs in this study attempted through different activities to promote

reconciliation and reintegration. The role of NGOs is to provide the spaces where youth and the society as a whole are involved in the reconciliation process that occurs by creating constructive relationships through communication and the development of tolerance and understanding between ethnic groups that have been at war (Broneus, 2008). A few progressive NGOs are, through their programs and projects, trying to unearth the truth about the war and thus increase understanding of the mutual responsibility and accountability for past events (Documenta, 2005). Reconciliation is not a static endpoint, but rather a process that is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated.

In their narratives youth described in detail the tensions hindering participation, reconciliation and reintegration. Tensions appear in the society between different actors or tensions can occur within the individual for example in deciding how to deal with tolerance or nationalism. In the current study, youth often spoke of tolerance and intolerance, forgiving and forgetting. Youth for example describe tensions in public places related to nationalist music preferences and the messages of various kinds of music but at the same time are able to enjoy turbo folk from other ethnic groups (Baker, 2005, 2007). Examples of how youth make sense of tolerance and intolerance are seen in: a Croatian youth whose best friend is Serb (or vice versa) but she still is able to hold extreme political views or listen to nationalist music, or a Croatian youth dancing in the Serb folklore group. There are some examples of men who were part of the occupying army but whose children have married Croatians and now need to reconcile their political views with family life.

These findings are also consistent with results from other research studies indicating that Croatian youth, report a positive future outlook (Illisin &Radin, 2002; NHDR 2006; UNDP 2007). Most of the youth interviewed for this study hoped for a better future but were acutely aware of the social structures and issues that limit them such as unemployment, financial insecurity, lack of opportunities, and housing issues they cannot and this limits their ability to create plans future. Youth report that they live day to day hoping that the future will be better but are unable to plan for it.

Limitations and Directions for Future Study

There are a number of limitations that should be considered with regard to the present investigation. First, while the differences between the locations provided a wider range of situations and contexts and provided an opportunity to understand what life is like for youth in different parts of Croatia, these differences nevertheless made it difficult at times to make systematic comparisons between the sites. In addition, this research was also limited by the ethnic segregation and intergroup tensions in the various locations. For example, ethnic segregation in Location III made it difficult to gain access to participants from more than one ethnic group. Despite these limitations, an important aspect of this study was the inclusion of individuals from both ethnic groups and included returnees, refugees and internally displaced. In contrast, the majority of available social science research in Croatia has focused primarily on Serb returnees and minority issues (see Leutloff-Grandits, 2006; Mesic & Bagic, 2009).

The findings of the current study illustrate how reconciliation and community building and development can be promoted though youth participation, volunteering and

various community center activities. Future research should investigate the factors affecting postwar reconciliation and reconstitution among the displaced, returnee and refugee populations. In this study it became clear that meaning making, perspectives and making sense of events also depends on ethnicity and ones' experiences relating to whether one is a refugee, returnee, or displaced. Fullilove (1996) found that factors important in developing a connection to a particular environment include an affective attachment to place, familiarity with a particular environment, and a self-identity that is tied to a particular location. In the present study these are all factors which have either been disrupted (for returnees) or do not exist (for internally displaced or refugees). Research on displacement underscores the need for developing a more complete account of the manner in which displaced, refugees and returnees, as well as other groups in similar situations elsewhere in Croatia, develop their sense of belonging to their common place.

This research focused on exploring postwar youth's competence development and the specific focus was on how young people integrate competence in life. In the current study competence was operationalized as an overarching term, rather than separated into different kinds of competence (e.g., personal, social, and postwar). Differentiating competence into distinct categories could arguably be artificial, but nevertheless there may be value in examining distinctions in the kinds of competency exhibited by youth. Future research could benefit by explicitly distinguishing between the different kinds of competence exhibited by young people in societies undergoing major sociopolitical transformations.

In addition, links between social structure and volunteer activity have important implications for future research. For example, there are instances where modification of social structures can lead to increased volunteering (Rosenthal, Feiring &Lewis, 1998). Yates and Youniss (1998), found that political commitment in adolescence is a key aspect of identity formation and that the sociohistorical context plays an important role in this process. For youth, in postwar Croatia, living in fractured communities' participation can serve as a way to find a place of belonging, a way to spend quality time and promote skill building and ultimately serve as a tool to improve one's own life and at the same time improving the quality of community life for all and increase social inclusion. Also, the transformative roles of community development organizations in postwar areas would be another interesting area of study. This was not possible in the current investigation as it would have required a different methodological approach and data analytical strategy. However, similar interviews of youth experiences should be examined, using both a more appropriate methodology and analysis, for insights into young people's understandings of the role of community organizations for both community and personal development.

Finally, systematic research on how the countries history is taught is needed. It is essential to have a history curriculum, that takes into account the many different realities and war experiences. In the past, history was used and abused in forging national identity development (Hoepken, 1998). For example, Hoepken (1998) stated that "education in the Balkans played a crucial role in fostering a national identity that relied heavily on the memory of warfare and violent upheavals" (p.192). One needs to proceed carefully because of the tendency to construct new historical identities serving a specific agenda, for example to justify war, to justify own actions, to explain other actions, creating the

self as victim etc. (Hoepken, 1998, p.216). The political influence on education needs to be evaluated since all the countries in the region suffer from radical history revision tendencies (Hoepken, 1998). For example, in Location III contemporary Croatian history education was suspended because of a five year moratorium (Cole & Barsalou, 2006; Documenta, 2007). In addition, it is essential to include youth in history education and to take into account that "history should be taught in a way that inspires young people to believe in their own ability to effect positive changes in society and contribute to a more peaceful and just future" (Cole & Barsalou, 2006, p.4.).

Finally, educational systems and schools need to include youth in history education as they are the primary social transmitters of national narratives (Cole & Barsalou, 2006). It is essential that the society youth live in resolves past events of the Second World War and the events of the recent war and in so doing help this geographical area and its people to move forward thus ensuring that its youth and children can develop identities and construct selves not based on old unresolved negative myths (See Hoepken, 1998; Sekulic et al.; 2006, Stover &Weinstein, 2004). However, this topic needs further investigation.

Conclusion

In Croatia today, contrary to conditions under communism, authorship through participation becomes an individual matter as new social discourses and practices emerge and democracy replaces the old hierarchical system (Turniski, 2004). As Youniss, Bales, Christmas-Best et al. (2003) noted, during times when governments and economies are in transition or unstable "citizenship can no longer be taken for granted as a plain matter of

the older generation passing tradition on to the younger generation" (p.123). For example, in the Eastern European nations where communism was replaced with democracies the older generation was unable to teach the young about the new system since the older generation has no experience with this new political system (Flanagan et. al. 1999; Youniss et al. 2003).

Young people in Croatia have little history or experience of participation in civil society and cannot draw upon experiences from the older generations, while at the same time the social structures may be supervised by older individuals that grew up in a social system that consisted of a different political awareness and a totally different political system. According to Bezovan (2001) the majority of citizens expect the state or government to be held responsible to solve their problems. Bezovan also states that "there is limited tradition of civil society in Croatia its development has been hindered by half a century of communism and totalitarian ideology coupled with a lack of experience with the concept of freedom of association" (2001, p.1).

The challenge for youth is to find meaningful ways to participate, and through participation develop the necessary competencies to create meaningful lives for themselves and their families and communities. As a number of other researchers have indicated, making children and youth a part of the process of reconstruction may prevent them from experiencing further disenfranchisement (Hart, 1992; Mayall, 2000). Reconstruction efforts should allow for the participation of children and adolescents as a way of including them, promoting well-being and furthering their education and as tool to build tolerance and reconciliation.

Focusing on participation and activity may be useful in other post-conflict areas where reconciliation and reintegration is essential. Most humanitarian interventions begin internationally and eventually gain momentum nationally. It is essential that reconciliation and post conflict prevention, community building and development occurs locally and at a community level. For interventions to be sustainable it is essential that youth are involved in addition to efforts to include the entire communities. Participation of children and youth in decisions that involve them and in policy making is an increasing trend in the West (Sinclair, 2004; Tisdall & Davis, 2004). Focusing on the experiences of youth and their contexts will contribute to an understanding of the processes that make up the successful transition to a peaceful postwar society. Insights from the experience of Croatia may then be applicable to other situations and countries where similar social transformations are taking place.

Appendix A: Informed Consent in English

Consent Form for Participants

My name is Maja Turniski and I am student in the Developmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Participation and Identity Development of Adolescents and Young Adults in Croatia." The study will add to the understanding of how the development of youth and young adults is affected by their level of participation in social activities. I would like permission to interview you about your experiences.

This interview will take about one hour. With your permission, I would like to tape this interview so I can record the details accurately. Only my advisors and I will hear the tapes. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my secure home office, to which only I will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview.

The risk involved in this study is that we may talk about some personal things. Please keep in mind that you do not have to answer questions that you feel uncomfortable with. Your participation in this study will add to the understanding of how young peoples' participation influences their development. There will be approximately 30 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (516) 674-1448 or _____ (contact number in Croatia), or by email mturniski@hotmail.com , or my advisor Dr. Martin Ruck at (212) 212-817-8720 or mruck@gc.cuny.edu . If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7523, hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

If you agree to be interviewed, please sign below:

I agree to have this interview taped. [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____ _____ _____

Participant's signature Date Investigator's signature Date

Parental Consent Form

My name is Maja Turniski and I am student in the Developmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Participation and Identity Development of Adolescents and Young Adults in Croatia". The study will add to the understanding of how the development of youth and young adults is affected by their level of participation in social activities. I would like permission to interview your child about their experiences. I will also ask permission from your child.

This interview will take about one hour. With your, and your child's permission, I would like to tape the interview so I can record the details accurately. Only my advisors and I will hear the tapes. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office, to which only I will have access. At any time your child can refuse to answer any questions or end the interview.

The risk involved in this study, is that we may talk about some personal things. Your child will be made aware that she/he does not have to answer questions that they feel uncomfortable with. Your child's participation in this study will add to the understanding of how young peoples' participation influences their development. There will be approximately 30 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (516) 674-1448 or _____ (contact number in Croatia), or by e-mail mturniski@hotmail.com , or my advisor Dr. Martin Ruck at (212) 212-817-8720 or mruck@gc.cuny.edu . If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7523, hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for agreeing to allow your child to take part in this study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

If you agree to allow your child _____to be interviewed, please sign below:
(name)

I agree to allow my child's interview to be taped. [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____ _____ _____
Parent's/Guardian's signature Date Investigator's signature Date

Professional Consent Form

My name is Maja Turniski and I am student in the Developmental Psychology Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator of this project, entitled "Participation and Identity Development of Adolescents and Young Adults in Croatia". The study will add to the understanding of how the development of youth and young adults is affected by their level of participation in social activities. I would like permission to interview you in your professional capacity about your experiences working with these youth and young adults.

This interview will take about one hour. With your permission, I would like to tape this interview so I can record the details accurately. Only my advisors and I will hear the tapes. All information gathered will be kept strictly confidential, and will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office, to which only I will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end this interview.

As we are discussing your professional experiences I do not foresee any risk to you. Your participation in this study will add to the understanding of how young peoples' participation influences their development.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. Any scholarly material shared with me will be cited in my dissertation and publications. If you would like a copy of the study, please provide me with your address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at (516) 674-1448 or _____ (contact number in Croatia), or by e-mail mturniski@hotmail.com , or my advisor Dr. Martin Ruck at (212) 212-817-8720 or mruck@gc.cuny.edu . If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Hilry Fisher, Sponsored Research, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, (212) 817-7523, hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form to take with you.

If you agree to be interviewed, please sign below:

I agree to have this interview taped. [Please circle one]: Yes No

_____ _____ _____ _____

Participant's signature Date Investigator's signature Date

Appendix B: Informed Consent in Croatian

Formular pristanka za sudionika

Moje ime je Maja Turniški i studentica sam programa doktorata razvojne psihologije Diplomskog Centra Gradskog Sveučilišta grada New York-a (CUNY), i glavni istraživač ovog projekta, naslovljenog "Sudjelovanje i razvoj identiteta adolescenata i mladih ljudi u Hrvatskoj". Istraživanje će pomoći u razumijevanju kako razina sudjelovanja adolescenata i mladih ljudi u društvenim aktivnostima utječe na njihov razvoj. Molim za dopuštenje da razgovaram s tobom o tvojim iskustvima.

Ovaj razgovor trajat će oko jedan sat. S tvojim dopuštenjem, voljela bih snimiti ovaj razgovor kako bih što točnije zabilježila podatke. Snimke ćemo čuti samo moji mentori i ja. Sve prikupljene informacije bit će držane kao strogo povjerljive i bit će čuvane u zaključanom ormariću s dosjeima u mojem kućnom uredu, kojemu je samo meni omogućen pristup. U bilo koje vrijeme možeš odbiti odgovoriti na bilo koje pitanje ili završiti razgovor.

Postojeći rizik u ovom istraživanju je taj što ćemo možda razgovarati o osobnim stvarima. Molim te da upamtiš da ne moraš odgovarati na pitanja koja te dovode u neugodnost. Tvoje sudjelovanje u ovom istraživanju pomoći će razumijevanju kako sudjelovanje mladih ljudi u društvenim aktivnostima utječe na njihov razvoj. Oko 30 mladih ljudi sudjelovat će u ovom istraživanju.

Možda ću objaviti rezultate istraživanja, ali imena ljudi ili bilo kakva druga identifikacija neće biti korištena niti u jednoj publikaciji. Ukoliko budete željeli primjerak istraživanja, molim te da mi pošalješ svoju adresu i ja ću ti poslati primjerak.
Ukoliko imate bilo kakvih pitanja u vezi s ovim istraživanjem, možete stupiti u kontakt sa mnom na broj telefona (516) 674-1448 ili _____(kontakt broj u Hrvatskoj), te preko e-mail adrese mturniski@hotmail.com , ili možete stupiti u kontakt s mojim mentorom Dr. Martinom Ruckom na broj (212) 212-817-8720, te preko e-mail adrese mruck@gc.cuny.edu . Ukoliko imate bilo kakvih pitanja u vezi s Vašim pravima kao sudionika ovog istraživanja, možete kontaktirati Hilry Fisher, Sponzorirano istraživanje, Diplomski Centar/Gradsko Sveučilište u New York-u, (212) 817-7523, hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Hvala ti na sudjelovanju u istraživanju.. Jedan primjerak ovog formulara dobit ćete za sebe.

Ukoliko pristaješ na razgovor, molim te potpiši se ispod:

Pristajem na to da se ovaj razgovor snima. [Molim zaokružite jednu od opcija]: Da Ne

_____	_____	_____	_____
Potpis sudionika	Datum	Potpis istraživača	Datum

Formular roditeljeva pristanka

Moje ime je Maja Turniški i studentica sam programa doktorata razvojne psihologije Diplomskog Centra Gradskog Sveučilišta grada New York-a (CUNY), i glavni istraživač ovog projekta, naslovljenog "Sudjelovanje i razvoj identiteta adolescenata i mladih ljudi u Hrvatskoj". Istraživanje će pomoći u razumijevanju kako razina sudjelovanja adolescenata i mladih ljudi u društvenim aktivnostima utječe na njihov razvoj. Voljela bih dobiti Vaš pristanak da razgovaram s Vašim djetetom o njegovim/njenim iskustvima. Također ću pristanak tražiti i od Vašeg djeteta.

Ovaj razgovor trajat će oko jedan sat. Uz Vaše dopuštenje i dopuštenje Vašeg djeteta, voljela bih snimati ovaj razgovor, kako bih što točnije zabilježila podatke. Snimke ćemo čuti samo moji mentori i ja. Sve prikupljene informacije bit će držane kao strogo povjerljive i bit će čuvane u zaključanom ormariću s dosjeima u mojem kućnom uredu, kojemu je samo meni omogućen pristup. U bilo koje vrijeme Vaše dijete može odbiti odgovoriti na bilo koje pitanje ili završiti razgovor.

Postojeći rizik u ovom istraživanju je taj što ćemo možda razgovarati o osobnim stvarima. Vašem ću djetetu dati na znanje da ne mora odgovarati na pitanja koja ga/ju dovode u neugodnost. Sudjelovanje Vašeg djeteta u ovom istraživanju pomoći će razumijevanju kako sudjelovanje mladih ljudi utječe na njihov razvoj. Oko 30 mladih ljudi sudjelovat će u ovom istraživanju.

Možda ću objaviti rezultate istraživanja, ali imena ljudi ili bilo kakva druga identifikacija neće biti korištena niti u jednoj publikaciji. Ukoliko budete željeli primjerak istraživanja, molim Vas da mi pošaljete Vašu adresu i ja ću Vam poslati primjerak.

Ukoliko imate bilo kakvih pitanja u vezi s ovim istraživanjem, možete stupiti u kontakt sa mnom na broj telefona (516) 674-1448 ili _____(kontakt broj u Hrvatskoj), te preko e-mail adrese mturniski@hotmail.com , ili možete stupiti u kontakt s mojim mentorom Dr. Martinom Ruckom na broj (212) 212-817-8720, te preko e-mail adrese mruck@gc.cuny.edu . Ukoliko imate bilo kakvih pitanja u vezi s Vašim pravima kao sudionika ovog istraživanja, možete kontaktirati Hilry Fisher, Sponzorirano istraživanje, Diplomski Centar/Gradsko Sveučilište u New York-u, (212) 817-7523, hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Hvala Vam na pristanku i dopuštenju da Vaše dijete sudjeluje u ovom istraživanju. Jedan primjerak ovog formulara dobit ćete za sebe.

Ukoliko pristajete i dopuštate da s Vašim djeteto_____bude
(ime djeteta)
obavljen razgovor, molim Vas da se potpišete ispod:

Pristajem i dopuštam da se razgovor s mojim djetetom snima. [Molim zaokružite jednu od opcija]: Da Ne

_____ _____ _____ _____

Potpis roditelja/staratelja Datum Potpis istraživača Datum

Formular pristanka profesionalnog radnika

Moje ime je Maja Turniški i studentica sam programa doktorata razvojne psihologije Diplomskog Centra Gradskog Sveučilišta grada New York-a (CUNY), i glavni istraživač ovog projekta, naslovljenog "Sudjelovanje i razvoj identiteta adolescenata i mladih ljudi u Hrvatskoj". Istraživanje će pomoći u razumijevanju kako razina sudjelovanja adolescenata i mladih ljudi u društvenim aktivnostima utječe na njihov razvoj. Molim za dopuštenje da razgovaram s Vama u okviru Vašeg profesionalnog rada o Vašim iskustvima u radu s adolescentima i mladim ljudima.

Ovaj razgovor trajat će oko jedan sat. Uz Vaše dopuštenje voljela bih snimati ovaj razgovor, kako bih što točnije zabilježila podatke. Snimke ćemo čuti samo moji mentori i ja. Sve prikupljene informacije bit će držane kao strogo povjerljive i bit će čuvane u zaključanom ormariću s dosjeima u mojem kućnom uredu, kojemu je samo meni omogućen pristup. U bilo koje vrijeme možete odbiti odgovoriti na bilo koje pitanje ili završiti razgovor.

Obzirom da ćemo razgovarati o vašim profesionalnim iskustvima, po Vas nema nikakvog rizika. Vaše sudjelovanje u ovom istraživanju pomoći će razumijevanju kako sudjelovanje mladih ljudi u društvenim aktivnostima utječe na njihov razvoj.

Možda ću objaviti rezultate istraživanja, ali imena ljudi ili bilo kakva druga identifikacija neće biti korištena niti u jednoj publikaciji. Objavljeni istraživački materijali koje budem koristila u mom istraživačkom radu biti će citirani u mojoj disertaciji i publikacijama. Ukoliko budete željeli primjerak istraživanja, molim Vas da mi pošaljete Vašu adresu i ja ću Vam poslati primjerak.

Ukoliko imate bilo kakvih pitanja u vezi s ovim istraživanjem, možete stupiti u kontakt sa mnom na broj telefona (516) 674-1448 ili _____(kontakt broj u Hrvatskoj), te preko e-mail adrese mturniski@hotmail.com , ili možete stupiti u kontakt s mojim mentorom Dr. Martinom Ruckom na broj (212) 212-817-8720, te preko e-mail adrese mruck@gc.cuny.edu . Ukoliko imate bilo kakvih pitanja u vezi s Vašim pravima kao sudionika ovog istraživanja, možete kontaktirati Hilry Fisher, Sponzorirano istraživanje, Diplomski Centar/Gradsko Sveučilište u New York-u, (212) 817-7523, hfisher@gc.cuny.edu.

Hvala Vam na sudjelovanju u ovom istraživanju. Jedan primjerak ovog formulara dobit ćete za sebe.

Ukoliko pristajete na razgovor, molim Vas da se potpišete ispod:

Pristajem na to da se ovaj razgovor snima. [Molim zaokružite jednu od opcija]: Da Ne

_____ _____ _____ _____

Potpis sudionika Datum Potpis istraživača Datum

Appendix C

Interview Guide- Sample Interview Questions

While the intention of the interview is to gather a life-history narrative, the following questions represent the areas of investigation, and will serve as prompts in the case of shy or unforthcoming interviewees. The questions will not necessarily be asked in the order given.

1. What is your name and, How old are you?
2. Are you from XXXX?
3. If not where from? How did you come to be here? Why did you move there? How did you live before, how do you live now?
4. What is it like to live here/there? Compare.
5. How would you characterize/describe Croatia as a country? What is it like? What do you like/what do you not like?
    a. Physically (Probe for physical description).
    b. Politically (Probe for political awareness). Can you describe politically what it is like? Do you follow political events, why/not? Do you find politics important or no not? DO you participate in political matters?
    c. Socially (Probe for knowledge of social structures). How is it to live here? Why? What opportunities obstacles do you face? Does everyone have the same opportunities?
    d. Culturally (Probe for ethnic and cultural awareness and attitudes) What is the ethnical picture of your town? Who did you use to play with when you were a child? How have your friends changed? Different friends now? Do you have friends from other ethnicities? Why/not? How can relations between ethnic groups be improved?
    e. How do you think that others outside of Croatia see this country?
6. Tell me about the community that you live in.
    a. Do you live with/near your family? Describe.
    b. Tell me about your family? Who is part of your family? What do they do?
    c. How is life with them? How do you get along?
    d. What do you do together?
    e. What is your role in your family what do you bring to the unit? How do you participate in everyday life at home?
    f. What are your responsibilities within this family unit?
    g. Tell me what your life is like in this community, town. How would you describe your role and activities? (Probe for degree of participation, social connections, attitudes and values, family, extended family, social roles, ties)
    h. What would you change if you could change anything?
7. How would you describe your life-what is your life story?
    a. Education- where did you go to school? What kind of education or vocational education did you finish? What are you doing now, do you work in your field? Are you a student? Unemployed?
    b. What impact did the war have on your education/schooling, work?
    c. Socially-describe activities, friends etc.

d. What do you do together with friends?
e. What do you do for fun, entertainment, clubs, organizations etc.
f. Describe a typical day/weekend. What do you do?
g. Degree of engagement.-what activities do you participate in? religious, political, socially. Why does this (not) interest you? How did you become involved in it.
h. What would you change if you could change anything about yourself, your life, your situation?

8. How do you see your future?
   a. Where would you like to be in 5, 10, 20, years time?
   b. Why do you not think about the future?
   c. Did you think about the future when you were younger?
   d. What do your friends think about their futures? Same as you/different?
   e. What would you like to achieve?
   f. What skills/abilities do you have that will get you there?
   g. What skills do you need to develop?
   h. What would you need to be able to achieve your goals?
   i. What barriers do you foresee to realizing your dreams?
   j. If you don't have a dream now, did you ever?

9. Have you gone to the retreats? (only Location I). Why?
10. How is it there? Why?
    a. What do you do there?
    b. What things/activities do you participate in?
    c. What do the retreats mean to you?

11. How did you become a member of this organization (I, II, III), what do you do here and what purpose does it serve?

Do you feel that the changes in your country have made you change how you see yourself?
How has your life changed with the political changes?
What are some of the experiences in your life that has made you who you are today?
How do you think other people define you? (friends, family, others, society)
How has your life changed because of the country becoming a democracy and an independent nation?
How do you see your life changing in the future? What will your life be like five years from now? What would you say your goals for the future are?
Is life better now, will it be better than before, how?
What are you doing now to improve life/ what can you do?
What do you feel is your greatest challenge at the moment? What is your countries greatest challenge at the moment?

Self-selectivity issue: In order to get a clear understanding of who participates in the various organizations and who does not a question will be added: what kind of peers do not come here and why, which of your friends come here and why, why would people choose to come or not to come here?

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