



School of Humanities

Language Education for Refugees and Migrants

M.A. Programme

**Transcending Boundaries:  
A study of multilingualism and cultural adaptation  
in the life of an immigrant woman living in Greece**

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**Supervisor:  
Dr. Achilleas Kostoulas**

Patras, June 2023

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## Abstract

This case study examines the life story of a woman, J. E., of Hungarian-Romanian background who immigrated to Greece. The life narrative approach was used to allow J. E. to express the different aspects of the long journey of integration, how languages and different cultures interacted with a system of internal characteristics and social frameworks to not only help her survive but succeed. As a result, valuable data has been collected about her life, from her early years to the present day. Through careful analysis of this data, an understanding emerged of J. E.'s **resilience**, a dynamic process that is sustained by her multilingualism and multiculturalism, and of the multi-layered **hybrid identity** that she developed.

The study, which examines resilience as a **process of becoming**, against the backdrop of the refugee and migrant experience, reveals the inner strengths and supportive social structures as interconnected elements within a dynamic system that lead to actions that enhance her overall well-being. This process of conscious becoming is seen as a resilient adaptation that enables the participant to succeed in the ever-changing ecological context. By thoroughly examining the interplay between her diverse background, language skills and rich cultural heritage, this study seeks to analyse the strength of conscious becoming and its role in cultivating resilience among migrants.

Finally, regardless of its limitations, the study contributes to a better understanding of migrant populations and their efforts to succeed and therefore provides educators and policymakers with thoughtful insight for more appropriate educational and social interventions.

**Key words:** hybrid identity, intentional becoming, investment theory, resilience theory

## Περίληψη

Αυτή η μελέτη περίπτωσης εξετάζει την ιστορία ζωής μιας γυναίκας, J.E., Ουγγρορουμανικής καταγωγής που μετανάστευσε στην Ελλάδα. Η αφηγηματική προσέγγιση χρησιμοποιήθηκε για να επιτρέψει στην J.E. να εκφράσει τις διαφορετικές πτυχές του μακρινού ταξιδιού της ενσωμάτωσης, τον τρόπο με τον οποίο οι γλώσσες και οι διαφορετικοί πολιτισμοί αλληλοεπιδρούσαν με ένα σύστημα εσωτερικών χαρακτηριστικών και κοινωνικών πλαισίων για να τη βοηθήσουν όχι μόνο να επιβιώσει αλλά και να πετύχει. Ως αποτέλεσμα, έχουν συλλεχθεί πολύτιμα δεδομένα για τη ζωή της, από τα πρώτα της χρόνια μέχρι σήμερα. Μέσα από προσεκτική ανάλυση αυτών των δεδομένων, επιδιώκεται να κατανοηθεί η πολυγλωσσία και η πολυπολιτισμικότητα της συμμετέχουσας τόσο ως πηγές ανθεκτικότητας που ανέπτυξε κατά την ένταξή της στην ελληνική κοινωνία, όσο και ως βασικά συστατικά για την ανάπτυξη μιας πολυεπίπεδης υβριδικής ταυτότητας.

Η μελέτη αποκαλύπτει τις εσωτερικές δυνάμεις και τις υποστηρικτικές κοινωνικές δομές ως αλληλένδετα στοιχεία μέσα σε ένα δυναμικό σύστημα που οδηγούν σε ενέργειες που ενισχύουν τη συνολική της ευημερία. Αυτή η διαδικασία συνειδητού γίνεσθαι θεωρείται ως μια ανθεκτική προσαρμογή που επιτρέπει στην συμμετέχουσα να πετύχει στο διαρκώς μεταβαλλόμενο οικολογικό πλαίσιο. Εξετάζοντας διεξοδικά την αλληλεπίδραση μεταξύ του διαφορετικού υπόβαθρου, των γλωσσικών δεξιοτήτων και της πλούσιας πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς της, αυτή η μελέτη επιδιώκει να αναλύσει τη δύναμη του συνειδητού γίνεσθαι και τον ρόλο του στην καλλιέργεια της ανθεκτικότητας μεταξύ των μεταναστών.

Τέλος, ανεξάρτητα από τους περιορισμούς της, η μελέτη συμβάλλει στην καλύτερη κατανόηση των πληθυσμών μεταναστών και των προσπαθειών τους να επιτύχουν, και ως εκ τούτου παρέχει στους εκπαιδευτικούς και τους υπεύθυνους χάραξης πολιτικής μια προσέγγιση για πιο κατάλληλες εκπαιδευτικές και κοινωνικές παρεμβάσεις.

**Λέξεις κλειδιά:** σκόπιμο γίνεσθαι, θεωρία της επένδυσης, θεωρία της ανθεκτικότητας, υβριδική ταυτότητα.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

J. E. handed over her suitcase to the regime officials. They looked at and touched her personal belongings and she felt that they soiled them. She was overwhelmed with feelings of despair and sadness. Afterwards, they sealed the suitcase in a sack, 'the way they pack the dead', she says. Then, she flew to Greece and on arrival at Hellinikon airport she went to the side and tore the case apart and as she admits, it felt so nice! That was how J. E. began her life in Greece in the late 1980s, somewhat earlier than the great wave of migrants from the Eastern Bloc countries who fled after the collapse of the USSR and the change in the political situation in their countries. The emerging Greek economy made the prospect of life in Greece very promising.

Unfortunately, the ethnocentric cultural understandings that underpinned Greek society at the time, and to a great extent prevail to this day, meant that newcomers were received as 'Others'. In Greece, a society where distinctions between ethnicity, language, religion, and citizenship were always blurred (Archakis, 2020; Fragkoudaki, 2001), different cultures, languages, and values, such as the ones that J. E. embodied, were viewed with suspicion and perceived as a possible threat to the existing order. Negative stereotypes about foreigners were further amplified when, shortly after J. E.'s arrival, the dissolution of the Soviet bloc brought large numbers of new arrivals to Greece.

Negative stereotypes about foreigners are a constant issue emerged that migrants have to face, as they often lead to unfortunate misunderstandings (Batziou, 2011; Swarts & Karakatsanis, 2013). These challenges are heightened when the language(s) spoken in the host county are not part of the new arrivals' repertoire. In J. E.'s case, this meant that even though she was fluent in Romanian and Hungarian, including challenging academic discourse, her linguistic capital (Peirce, 1995) was not acknowledged. The lack of linguistic common ground caused difficulties in expressing herself and managing everyday situations. In addition to language barriers, differences in mentality, values and beliefs also posed additional obstacles to the integration process.

After more than three decades, this wave of immigrants to Greece, including J. E., has mostly integrated into Greek society. In J. E.'s case, however, and probably more, this does not mean that they have been assimilated – this is not a case of 'becoming Greek'. Even before her arrival, her identity was shaped in a multilingual and multicultural environment. Now, many other notable achievements have helped her build an even more complex hybrid identity. Some key features of this identity include an impressive set of language skills, a university education including advanced post-graduate studies, professional stability, and high standing in the local community. This hybrid identity consists of the features of the past blended with new achievements and traits which are interconnected (Kaplan & Chacko, 2015; Smith, 2008).



J.E.'s story is a story of resilience. Resilience is the process of personal development in spite of, and through adversity. In J. E.'s case, she had to confront multiple challenges during her integration process. And yet, she was able to overcome them and achieve her goals. The resilience she has shown in these adversities makes her an outstanding example of migrants who have not only survived but also succeeded in their new country.

### **1.1. This Study**

It is on account of these striking qualities that J. E. will be the study case of this research. Following Stake (1995, p. 4), by engaging with her story, an attempt will be made to understand and explain her experience, and to use it as a lens through which to observe the workings of resilience.

There are multiple suggestions in the literature that are helpful in understanding resilience, but not all of them are equally suited to describing resilience as a process of constantly reinventing oneself in an entirely new setting – as is the case with migrants, such as J. E., and refugees. In this study, which retrospectively examines several decades, resilience will be viewed as a process of 'becoming' (Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021). The multitude of factors, some social, some cognitive and affective, and others behavioural, which helped her to cope, will be synthesised by drawing on complexity-informed scholarship (Kostoulas & Laemerer, 2018,2020). The life narrative method, which aims to construct a life story by including stories from the past that help to understand decisions and actions throughout life (McAdams & McLean, 2013) will be used in the longitudinal reconstruction of J. E.'s experience.

More specifically, the study draws on three in-depth interviews, with increasingly narrow focus, and progressively greater depth. Through these interviews, and the interaction with the researcher's emerging analytical insights, J. E. generated a narrative of her past, from her early years in Romania to her current experiences in Greece. In J. E.'s narrative, the details of her experiences, the challenges she faced and the choices she made are all synthesised into a story of resilience. In this story, the complex interplay of intra-personal, societal factors that collectively shape resilience become salient against the backdrop of the social ecology.

J. E.'s story of resilience is a personal story. But it is also a story that is potentially relevant to all people in similar circumstances. By exploring resilience in ecology and using a holistic approach to uncover patterns and themes of adaptation, an understanding of resilience is generated which can helpfully inform the migrant and refugee experiences. In the understanding that is put forward by this study, individual experience is construed as contextualised and dynamic; similarly, resilience is re-conceptualised as a transformative process of "intentional becoming".

### **1.2. This Dissertation**

The study of J. E.'s resilience as intentional becoming is presented in five chapters, including this introduction. Chapter 2, the literature review, presents readers

with an overview of resilience theory. The chapter begins by presenting the development of resilience theory, starting from early work on ‘super-survivors’ (Garmezy, 1971; Werner, 1993) to more recent perspectives that highlight the universal nature and relevance of the resilience construct (Masten, 2001). Relevant work on language teacher resilience (Kostoulas & Laemmerer, 2018) and similar constructs (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017) is reviewed, with emphasis on the conceptual tools that have been deployed, and the complex dynamic systems perspective that informs it. This chapter concludes by presenting the idea of ‘intentional becoming’ (Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021), which provides the conceptual backdrop that informs this study.

Following that, in Chapter 3, the methodology of the study is presented. This presentation begins with information about the life-history interviews (Clandinin & Huber, 2010) that were conducted to generate data for the study. This is followed by a discussion of the analytical procedures that were deployed, which eclectically synthesised aspects of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2017) and grounded theory (Straus & Corbin, 1990).

J. E.’s story is presented in Chapter 4, which focuses on the interview data. The chapter contains an overview of J. E.’s story of adaptation, which serves a contextualising purpose and provides an example of intentional becoming. Following that, thematically organised sections present selected aspects of J. E.’s becoming. These include focused discussions of psychological antecedents of resilient adaptation (‘inner strengths’), social antecedents of resilient adaptation and forms of investment.

The dissertation concludes with Chapter 5, which puts forward and evaluates the conceptual model that was produced from the case study. The model adopts an ecological perspective (Bateson, 1987; Bronfenbrenner, 1977), which situates the individual refugee/migrant in a cascade of micro-, meso- and macro-level social and psychological structures (Kostoulas & Stelma, 2016). The correspondence between the social and intrapersonal aspects of their experience is viewed as intentionality (Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021). Intentional becoming, then, is defined as the individual’s activity, which constantly reshapes the ecology (and the self) leading to resilient adaptation. The chapter concludes with evaluative comments.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Developing a Novel Understanding of Resilience**

The construct of resilience refers to an individual's ability to adapt and survive adversities (APA, 2014). In this chapter, an attempt will be made to provide an overview of resilience theory and how it has been used in the fields of psychology and language education research. Resilience is a multifaceted construct, and on account of this, different theoretical perspectives will be examined, starting with early understandings of the resilience concept, moving on to what has been called an 'ordinary magic' perspective, and –finally– a systems / ecological perspective. This theoretical overview paves the ground for a discussion of resilience in multilingual and multicultural, which brings the interrelation between culture, resilience, and language to the fore. The role of language will be considered in combination with Norton's investment theory (Pierce-Norton,1995) and how language learning complements individual 'capital'. By exploring all these theoretical constructs, a better understanding of resilience and its impact on individuals will be achieved before we turn to the aspects of resilience in this particular case study.

#### **2.1. A Review of the Construct of Resilience and its Development**

The construct of resilience has been the subject of psychological research for several decades. At this time, the theoretical tools used to conceptualise resilience and how it has been operationalised in research have undergone significant changes. An overview of resilience research is presented in the following paragraphs to clarify and contextualise how resilience is understood in this study. This theoretical overview is structured in three main 'moves'. The first two correspond to the two 'waves' of resilience research in mainstream psychology, which focused on resilience as a trait (Richardson,2002) and resilience as a process of adaptation (Masten,2001). Following that, we move on to an 'ecological' perspective of resilience (Ungar,2012), which lays the ground for a definition of resilience that is specific to the multilingual and multicultural 'ecologies' of language teaching and learning.

##### **2.1.1. Resilience as a Trait**

The 'first wave of resilience research' was an attempt to understand, and harness, the personality traits that might protect people from negative life outcomes. Unlike previous psychological research, which aimed to identify risk factors that cause mental health problems, the focus of early resilience researchers was on examining the characteristics or qualities of individuals that help them cope with and recover from stressful situations (Richardson, 2002).

In what follows, we will examine how longitudinal research first led researchers to conclusions about the emergence and development of various personal factors or qualities in coping with adversity. In addition, we will look into how research has been enriched with new data on the types of stressful situations individuals face and how

research has focused on the interaction of individuals with their environment not only for coping difficulties but also for their further development.

Since the 1950s, there have been long-term studies on children coping with stressful situations. Werner (1993) studied more than 700 children who lived in at-risk daily lives, in poverty and with parents facing mental health problems. Several of them had developed resilience traits to cope with stress. Some of these traits are self-confidence, tolerance, and various skills such as problem-solving and sociability. Similarly, Garmezy (1991) conducted longitudinal studies with children growing up in families with schizophrenic parents, while Rutter conducted extensive research with adolescents in rural areas and London (Richardson, 2002). Rutter (1985) stated that social problem-solving skills, i.e., strategies and techniques for solving interpersonal problems, and characteristics such as self-confidence and self-esteem can act as protective factors against stressors, and added to these are positive self-image, sense of purpose, and future-oriented plans (Garmezy et al. 1984).

Another common finding in many of these studies was the importance attached to support of a protective environment, especially in early childhood. This might refer to the person's family, school, or other organisation, or a relationship with adults and peers that positively influenced children and supported them emotionally (Werner, 2005). The importance of the connection between the individual and their environment is crucial to the development of resilience and is a topic that is constantly being researched. More recent scholarship continues to show that the development of caring, affectionate and supportive relations, together with shared values among friends or family, and appreciation of and connection with nature, create a sense of belonging and are qualities that help people cope with and overcome their health problems (Denz-Penhey & Murdoch, 2008).

Viewing resilience through this lens fails to recognise its dynamic and complex nature, which is influenced by temporal, spatial and cultural factors (Southwick, 2014). Furthermore, viewing individual characteristics as fixed traits that individuals possess overlooks the fact that these characteristics evolve in the process of coping with adversity. This, therefore, hinders a comprehensive and holistic understanding of resilience.

### **2.1.2. The 'Ordinary Magic' Perspective**

While early resilience research sought to explore those uncommon traits that typified extraordinary adaptation, it eventually became apparent that resilient adaptation was relevant to much wider populations. In the words of Ann Masten, a prominent resilience researcher, 'what began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary' (Masten, 2001,p.235). Masten is also credited with coining the phrase 'ordinary magic', which appears in the title of her 2001 article, to describe resilience. With 'ordinary magic', Masten captured the concept of resilience in everyday life, formulating the view that resilience is about ordinary people finding a way to cope with life's difficulties by using their ordinary

mental skills. These challenges do not always have to do with catastrophic events, loss, illness, or trauma. They also include everyday stressors like arguments and doubts that can affect a person's well-being and require successful coping (Ong & Leger, 2022). Everyday stressors can be related to the family environment, work and interpersonal relationships, and their successful management varies from person to person (Almeida, 2005).

The understanding of resilience as a process that combines coping and development has thus changed. Researchers no longer focus only on examining the traits and protective factors associated with resilience and seek to understand how these can facilitate personal growth (Luthar et al., 2000). In this context, coping strategies related to cognitive, emotional, and behavioural individual efforts are seen as supportive, because they help individuals not only to recover from challenges but also to develop and progress successfully (Leipold & Greve, 2009).

Although this view moved from a static conception of resilience to its most evolutionary form, linking positive coping with stressful situations to subsequent well-being, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the developmental process of resilience, as not all interrelated factors are thoroughly studied. In her conclusion, Masten (2001, p.235) emphasizes the future steps researchers should take by saying: 'The task before us now is to delineate how adaptive systems develop', urging for further exploration.

### **2.1.3. Systems and Ecological Perspectives of Resilience**

As hinted above, recent years have seen a reorientation of resilience research toward systems thinking. This is captured in the following definition of resilience, again by Masten: 'Resilience refers to the capacity of *a dynamic system* to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the viability, the function, or the development of that system' (2014, p. 6, emphasis added). This is hardly a surprising development, since the study of adaptive (alternatively called 'complex' or 'dynamic(al)'; systems has always focused on developing understandings of how such complex entities adapt to contextual change (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). According to Masten, the concepts related to resilience are interlinked and connected in intricate (or complex ways). Viewing resilience as a unified system helps not only to understand the process of recovery but also to other aspects of development and growth during and after going through a challenging situation. In the following, we will analyse the dynamic system of resilience and how the different factors interact to deal with adversity.

A similar perspective has been put forward by scholars working in the ecological tradition. For Ungar (2008), for instance, "resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their wellbeing and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways" (p. 225), when individuals are exposed to adverse situations. Ungar's definition of resilience brings to the fore its 'ontological and ecological

variability' (Ungar,2011, p.10). Four aspects of resilience are particularly important in this perspective:

- a) **Decentrality:** resilience is not just an individual characteristic, but rather the result of interactions between individuals and their social and physical environment.
- b) **Complexity:** A variety of factors contribute to resilience, including biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors.
- c) **Atypicality:** Resilience can take many different forms and does not always comply with traditional notions of success or well-being.
- d) **Cultural relativity:** Different cultures may have different values and ideas about what it means to cope with adversity. Therefore, the cultural context should also be considered (Ungar, 2011).

Individuals are therefore able to support their well-being, by 'navigating' to a variety of heterogeneous resources—psychological, social, cultural, and physical. At the same time, these resources are negotiated within the adaptive systems of individuals and their environment, both individually and collectively, and individuals can shape their environment and have their identities shaped by it (Ungar, 2012).

It should be pointed out, however, that this conception of resilience has some limitations because it was developed in certain areas and with a certain group of people. Therefore, we must consider that there may be differences depending on the environment, culture, or group of people (Ungar, 2008).

## **2.2. Resilience in Language Teaching and Learning**

The recent turns of resilience scholarship, which highlight the shaping role of context, raise the possibility for developing domain- or context-specific understandings of the construct, or—more pertinently for our purposes in this study—understandings of resilience that connect to the process of language teaching and learning.

### **2.2.1. Language Teacher Resilience**

An example of such work is described by Hiver & Dörnyei (2017), who uses the term 'immunity' concerning language teachers and compares it to the immunity that protects the health of individuals. Accordingly, teachers' immunity shields them from challenges in the classroom and helps them to thrive. Hiver & Dörnyei distinguish between 'productive' and non-productive forms of immunity, and list the following factors connected to the former:

- a) **Specificity:** Finding a solution to an emerging problem that is appropriate to the situation by using the variety of strategies learned.
- b) **Memory:** Based on past experiences, the teacher selects the best possible solution by using his/her cognitive skills and self-efficacy.

- c) **Adaptability:** The teacher is receptive and can adapt to different situations by finding the best possible solutions.
- d) **Durability:** It accompanies the teacher throughout his or her professional life.

The combination of all these factors helps teachers to develop a positive immunity that helps him/her to find solutions to everyday situations in the classroom and to teach with motivation.

A similar strand of research is described by Kostoulas and Lämmerer (2018, 2020), who draw on complex systems theory to develop a dynamic model of resilience. In their description resilience is the emergent outcome of activity in a 'resilience system', which consists of (a) inner strengths, (b) external support and (c) learned strategies. The first category, that of inner strengths, refers to individual characteristics that have been widely researched and include a wide range of factors such as positivity, optimism, and hope (Werner, 1993, 2005), positive emotions and reassuring memories (Mancini & Bonano, 2009). The second category, external support, includes various forms of assistance. Support can be individual, e.g., from family members, teachers, and carers (Masten & Garnezy, 1985), but also in the form of environments such as workplaces, schools, hospitals and even nature itself (Denz-Penhey & Murdoch, 2008). These sources can support individuals to overcome challenges. Finally, learned strategies relate to 'behavioural tendencies' that individuals may possess. These techniques may be cognitive or behavioural, and the individual may use them consciously —taking steps to confront an aggressive person at work— or unconsciously. For example, Mancini and Bonano (2009) describe pragmatic coping as a learned strategy in which the individual focuses on the problem and takes action to solve it. Another learned strategy is flexible adaptation, which is facing a situation with an open mind and being ready to employ appropriate strategies.

Both the models examined above provide interesting insights into the structure of resilience, and how it can connect to various informing theories. Although neither description was specifically developed with language learners in mind, they both offer hints into the forms and outcomes of resilience in multilingual and multicultural settings, which are typical of language education.

### ***2.2.2. Resilience in a Multilingual and Multicultural Environment***

When thinking about the ecology of language education, the most salient characteristics that concern us are the linguistic and cultural differences between an individual's origin and their target language and culture. The distance between the two can be perceived as a route of adversity, in the sense that was described in the previous section, and their adaptation in the face of this adversity is, then, a manifestation of resilience. This process has often been described using economic metaphors, such as the use of 'resources' (Ruiz, 1984) and the 'investment' of effort to increase this 'capital' (Norton Pierce, 1995).

In this perspective, cultural beliefs and values can be both an origin of adversity, and one of the 'inner strengths' (Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018) which sustain resilient adaptation. Seen as strengths, cultural beliefs and values could mean a strong attachment to the community, a sense of belonging and collectivism, and the practice of traditions and rituals (Ungar et al., 2007) The example of African Americans drawing on 'racial socialisation' for support and empowerment when confronted with discriminatory behaviour shows how cultural context can be part of their resilience context (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019). At the same time, however, the universal influence of a dominant Western culture should not be neglected (Ungar, 2013). Thus, a person's culture is not one-dimensional, but should be considered as their 'cultural wealth'. Hopes and dreams, the ability to navigate in different social contexts, the relationships built between people and communities, the cognitive and social skills of multilingualism, the far-reaching ties of extended family, community, and collective memory, and 'resistance capital' —resistance to oppression— are the characteristics that individual's 'cultural wealth' comprises (Theron & Liebenberg, 2015).

The perception that a person's cultural and linguistic resources are a form of capital is not a novel idea in linguistics scholarship, although its implications have not always been explored exhaustively. In the early 80s, Ruiz (1984) argued for viewing linguistic repertoires, especially among plurilingual people as a resource. This 'language-as-a-resource' orientation was contrasted with what he described as dominant perceptions of other languages as sources of potential difficulty to integration, and with emerging discourse in linguistic activism, which viewed linguistic otherness as a right, but remained agnostic about its actual benefits. In addition to highlighting the importance of linguistic diversity, the elevation by Ruiz (1984) of linguistic otherness to the status of a resource also showed how attitudes towards language are socially shaped. His description of attitudinal orientations as "complex[es] of dispositions toward language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society" (Ruiz,1984, p. 16), also draws attention to the multifaceted nature of these socially shaped attitudes. Though not explicitly anchored in ecological theory, much less in the study of multilingual ecologies, this important distinction provides an important foundation for understanding how individuals develop linguistically and socially in context.

This process of development is described in more detail and theoretical nuance in a series of conceptual and theoretical contributions by Bonnie Norton [Pierce] and colleagues (e.g., Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Darvin & Norton, 2015). Taking as a starting point that language is part of an individual's capital or wealth, an idea that is traced to Bourdieu (1986), Norton develops a theory of identity construction as a process of *investment*. In other words, language learning is reconceptualised as a complex process, mediated by various social, cultural, and individual factors, through which they build a sense of linguistic competence by acquiring the ability to perform various communicative acts in the new language (Norton Pierce, 1995). A learner carries different identities in their new home country, which contribute to a multi-layered, pluralistic individual: gender, age, ethnicity,



language, and socio-economic status, and thus a hybrid identity emerges (Smith, 2008). Norton and Toohey (2011), by examining various studies, emphasise the role of gender in the hybrid identities of migrant women who struggle to find their place in society, both socially and linguistically. Learning a language is seen as an investment, as it contributes to their cultural capital - their knowledge and educational credentials - as well as to their social capital - their status in the new society and their power relations (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Consequently, their hybrid identities are constantly evolving and changing in a social context where they must struggle to grow (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Investment theory can be seen as an immigrant resilience coping strategy. This is because it reflects the immigrants' struggle to integrate into the new society in which they face adversity, while at the same time developing and expanding their identity.

Investing in language learning could provide a learner with more perspectives - regarding ideological approaches, values and beliefs when interacting in culturally and linguistically new environments (Harvey, 2017). The learner has the opportunity to come into contact with different beliefs about social hierarchies, political ideologies and cultural ideas that lead individuals to re-examine their established ideas, challenge their existing beliefs and develop new or reformed understandings. This process of individual becoming takes place gradually and is influenced by different contexts in which language occurs. During this process, a person can negotiate, accept or reject the values and beliefs they encounter and thus reshape their own identity.

In this section, we saw how language learning —and indeed all the activities that a person undertakes when they endeavour to integrate into a society that is new to them— can be seen as a manifestation of resilience. Though the studies surveyed were always not explicitly situated in language education psychology, the insights gained from this can be readily connected to the understanding of resilience that is being developed in this chapter. Seen under this light, linguistic resources and linguistic capital are forms of 'inner strength' (Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018), and all the activities associated with 'investment' could be viewed as falling under the category of 'learnt strategies' (Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018). Similarly, the scholarship that was reviewed draws attention to the way that adversity, and adaptation to it (i.e., resilience) are socially shaped, rather than purely intrapersonal phenomena.

### **2.2.3. Resilient Adaptation as a Process of Becoming**

One final step that remains in this conceptual journey is the synthesis of all the information above in a coherent theoretical framework. To do this we turn to the *Intentional Dynamics* proposed by Stelma and Kostoulas (2021). Originally developed to study language education, the model centres around the psychological and philosophical notion of 'intentionality'. Intentionality, in its philosophical sense, is the 'orientation' or 'aboutness' of thoughts, actions, emotions etc. In a seminal publication, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, by the German philosopher Franz Brentano, intentionality is defined as follows:

Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not do so in the same way. In presentation, something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. (Brentano, 1874 / 1995, pp. 88–89, cited in Jakob, 2023).

Stelma and Kostoulas (2021) view intentionality as a driver of individual and social development, a process which they describe as intentional becoming (Figure 1), i.e., a movement from past states to new, more desirable, ones (the states towards which development *intends*).

In the Stelma and Kostoulas (2021) model of intentional dynamics, intentionality is shaped by a synthesis of multiple social and psychological structures that, together, form an ecology or complex system within which individuals are placed. These structures include intrapersonal characteristics (individual aspects of intentionality), interactions with other people (shared aspects of intentionality), routinised procedures and policies (derived aspects of intentionality) and sociocultural structures (sociocultural aspects of intentionality). This description can be loosely applied to our developing understanding of resilience: In this reconceptualised model resilience can be viewed as a process of adaptation, adjustment, investment, or development, which is intentionally driven.

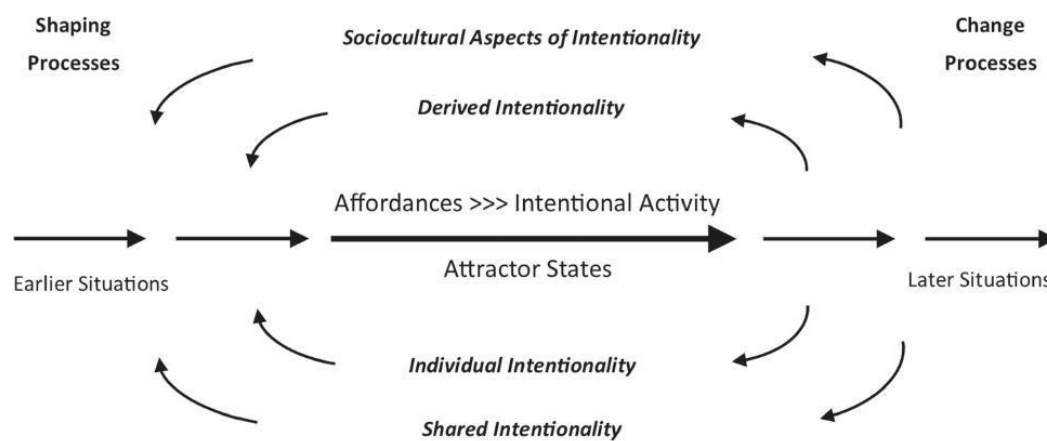


Figure 1 Aspects of intentional activity (from Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021, p. 80)

Similar parallels can be drawn between what was described as ‘inner strengths’ (Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018, 2020) and what is described here as ‘individual aspects of intentionality, or between the sociocultural aspects of intentionality and what was described above as sociocultural milieu of language learning (Norton Pierce, 1995; Ruiz, 1894).

Stelma and Kostoulas (2021) distinguish between various types of synthesis of the aspects of intentionality, which they term ‘intentional dynamics’. In its simplest

form, the synthesis could be contingent, i.e., an *ad hoc* unreflective adjustment to external stimuli. Applied to resilient adaptation, this could mean becoming absorbed in a new culture, in ways that are unnoticed. A second type of synthesis is normative, i.e., adjustment under the pressure to conform to stated policies. In the case of resilience, this could be viewed as adaptation by conforming to externally imposed rules about language, social behaviour and so on. A third configuration of intentional dynamics is creative: a resilient adaptation driven by creative intentional dynamics would likely allow space for hybrid and highly personal identities to develop. Finally, a purposeful configuration of intentional dynamics would drive highly focused processes of adaptation, with a clearly stated sense of direction and purpose.

### **2.3 Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter, we have explored the different components of resilience, including protective factors, coping strategies, and a supportive environment. In addition, we have analysed resilience as a dynamic system and explored how it is approached in ecological and multicultural terms, as culture is a strong component in the perception of resilience. This literature review, which is by necessity limited by the scope of an MA dissertation, has highlighted the multifaceted nature of resilience, a construct that fuses intra- and inter-personal aspects. Moreover, it has shown that resilience is a socially situated construct, which emerges within social ecologies, including the complex multilingual ecologies associated with migration. Additionally, the dynamic system of resilience since it depends on and is influenced by different fields like psychology, ecology, sociology etc needs to be examined on a broader basis. Finally, the area of culture opens many perspectives regarding the research that would examine the reciprocal relationship of culture and resilience in different contexts (Ungar, 2008 & 2011).

Given the complex interconnections of the elements that shape resilience, it is doubtful that it would be possible to trace specific outcomes to specific determinants (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). Because of this, a holistic hermeneutic attempt, such as the one put forward by Stelma and Kostoulas (2021) may be a better way forward. This model, it should be noted, was not originally developed for the study of resilience, so many of the mappings of the construct against the categories of the model are tentative. Moreover, there is a need to test the validity and usefulness of such an approach, using empirical data. The following chapter (Chapter 3: Methodology) describes such an attempt and paves the way for a presentation of findings in Chapter 4.

Further research can contribute to the development of strategies and interventions that promote resilient behaviour in individuals and communities.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, various aspects of resilience were presented, which may be relevant to understanding how people with migrant and refugee backgrounds cope with the challenges of integrating into their new host countries. To better understand how these aspects can be synthesised, a case study was implemented focusing on, J. E., a woman who migrated to Greece. Already a member of a linguistic and cultural minority in her home country of Romania, J. E., repeatedly relocated to new places where she had to re-negotiate her identity in order to integrate. As such, her life experience can provide useful theoretical insights into how resilience helped her overcome adversity, insights which can be relevant both for theory construction and for understanding the unique challenges that people like her face.

This chapter presents the methods that were used to study J. E.'s life experience. It begins with a presentation of the aims and research questions of the case study (Section 3.2). Following that, in Section 3.3. the methodological underpinnings of the study are discussed, and the rationale for the use of case studies and life narratives is presented. Section 3.4 presents information about the participants of this study, J. E. and the researcher. Next, Section 3.5 provides an overview of the recruitment, data generation, and data analysis procedures, respectively. The chapter concludes with some brief remarks (Section 3.6), which pave the way for the presentation of findings in Chapter 4.

### 3.2. Aims and Research Questions

The theoretical aim of this study is to inductively generate, from J. E.'s case, a conceptual frame that can be used for the description of resilience among people with a migrant and/or refugee background. This theoretical aim has been expressed as Research Question (RQ) 1:

RQ1: How can the resilience of refugees and migrants be described as a process of intentional becoming?

This conceptual frame should be able to account for aspects of resilience that are particular to this specific population, including but not limited to (a) the challenges associated with different cultural norms and linguistic codes; (b) the role of societal attitudes associated with multilingualism, multiculturalism, diversity and migration; (c) the role of linguistic and cultural capital that people with refugee and migrant background have; and (d) the development of hybrid identities as forms of intentional becoming. These intermediate aims have been operationalised in the following, 'instrumental' (see Section 3.3), research questions:

RQ2: What challenges did J. E. face as a result of her linguistic and cultural otherness, and how has she overcome them?

RQ3: What opportunities did J. E.'s linguistic and cultural otherness generate for the development of hybrid identities, and how did these recursively shape her sense of identity and belonging?

RQ4: To what extent has J. E.'s intentional becoming affected her experiences of discrimination, exclusion, or marginalization?

### **3.3. Research Design**

The research method chosen to develop the theoretical model of resilience is an 'instrumental' case study (Stake, 1995) Case studies are methodologically versatile (Yin, 2014) which means that a variety of methods can be used, and combined, to answer research questions. In this case, however, a narrative inquiry (Clandinin&Huber,2010) was conducted, as this enabled the synthesis of data that spanned the participants' past and offered insights into the longitudinal development of her identity.

Case studies and narrative research are methodologically congruent. Both the case study and the life narrative approach fall under the framework of qualitative research, which looks at and explores the world through practices such as field notes, interviews and observations. Researchers examine various phenomena in people's lives and the meanings they ascribe to them, seeking to gain a deeper understanding through the use of interpretive practises. Qualitative research involves three interrelated activities: ontology - theory, epistemology - method and methodology - analysis. The researcher brings to this process his or her own identities, which are shaped by a variety of factors such as age, gender, class, culture and ethnicity and influence the researcher's perspective and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

#### **3.3.1. Using a Case Study for Theory Development**

Case studies are easy to understand but often challenging to define. Typically, they involve the in-depth study of a particular 'case' (a person, a school, an incident and so on), which is defined as a "specific, complex, functioning thing" (Stake, 1995, p. 5), with a view to developing insights about its operation, evolution, and interconnections with its environment (Crowe et al., 2011; Yin, 2014). The boundaries between the 'case' and the 'environment' are often 'fuzzy' (Miles & Huberman, 1994), a feature which makes case study research well suited to research in the complexity and ecological tradition. As Kostoulas (2018) notes, it is a characteristic of research in complex systems that the boundaries between the system and its context are porous.

In a case study, a researcher investigates a particular case through an extensive collection of material shared by the participant(s) that contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). Why does a researcher choose a particular case to study? As Stake (1995, p.xi) explains, a

researcher chooses a case because it is of “very special interest” either in its own right (intrinsic case studies) or because it will facilitate the understanding of more abstract theoretical problems (instrumental case studies). The study of J. E. fulfils both criteria: For one, there is intrinsic interest in how the participant, an individual with an unusually rich multilingual and plurilingual background, was able to achieve successfully adapt to different contexts, despite leaving behind her family, friends, and a way of life she knew and loved. This is consistent with the comment, by Stake (1995) that case studies examine data in broader contexts, with the aim of understanding the particularity and complexity of the case in a variety of circumstances. Secondly, by examining J. E.’s resilient adaptation in multiple settings over a period of years, a theoretically abstract description is expected to be derived.

### **3.3.2. Using Life Narratives to Trace Intentional Becoming**

The life narrative is a qualitative method that aims to collect personal life stories that show how individuals construct and reconstruct their stories. Through their narratives, which convey their subjective meanings and perspectives, one can enter their worlds and has the opportunity to gain insights into their life experiences (Atkinson, 2007).

As Chase (2005) explains, researchers approach narrative material through the prism of 'five lenses'. First, stories help us make sense of the past and understand the implications of actions and events. Second, when someone tells a story, they not only *speak*, they also *do*: they explain, entertain, complain, and question. Therefore, narratives can shape and reform identities and our perception of the world. Third, researchers are aware that narratives are influenced by a variety of factors and contexts. These are related to the narrator's background, community, environment, and culture. Fourth, the way the narrative unfolds depends on the social context in which it takes place and the purposes it serves. Finally, researchers themselves become storytellers as they not only analyse these stories but also interpret them through their worldviews and ideas. Hence, employing a life narrative approach is suitable for the participant in this study, as it allows her to reveal her diverse and multifaceted life stories that will help explore the multilingual and multicultural aspects of her life. These experiences will be analyzed through the prism of the five lenses explained earlier considering the interconnectedness of the individual, and the interaction and relationship building with the researcher during the interviews (Clandinin & Huber, 2010 ).

In order to allow the participant to actively participate in the interview process, the dialogic approach presented by Harvey (2016) was used. This is presented in more detail in Section 3.5. In that sense, interviews were a result of collaboration in both the design of research and the data collected and there was active involvement of the interviewer and interviewee.

### **3.4. The Participants**

#### **3.4.1. J. E.**

The woman who served as the case study, J. E., was chosen because she has some specific characteristics that allow for a holistic examination of resilience theory in different contexts through the lens of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

J.E. grew up in Romania during the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, in a mixed-ethnic family with a Hungarian father and a Romanian mother. She was bilingual, and although she showed a preference for Hungarian, she could communicate perfectly in both languages. While within the family both cultures were well accepted and respected, this was not the case in society due to the repressive policies of the regime. The Hungarian minority faced particular difficulties due to measures such as systematisation that affected their language and culture. J.E.'s family was under surveillance, religiously discriminated against and faced job insecurity and therefore lived in constant uncertainty.

In the late 1980s, J.E. moved to a small village on an island in Greece. She described it as a step back in time due to the conservative attitudes, especially regarding the role of women. This affected her lifestyle, her work, her communication and her ability to make friends. Linguistic and cultural integration in Greece became a lengthy process and J.E. attributes her success to her personal efforts. In the following, her resilience and approach to life are viewed through the lens of resilience theory.

#### **3.4.2. The Researcher**

J. E. and I were colleagues at the same school for several years. Her rich linguistic and cultural background, as well as her constant endeavour to expand her knowledge in various fields and the appreciation she received from the students and the community were some of the qualities associated with her. Her achievements despite many challenges and adversities make her a very interesting case for our study. As our relationship developed over the years and we had many conversations about different aspects of her life, during the interviews I had to approach her life story from the start and give her the opportunity to talk. At the same time, we should both realize that an interview goes beyond an everyday conversation and there are some rules to follow. Above all, I had to respect her narrative and allow her to talk about the issues she wanted to share. For her part, she felt the need to talk about the challenges she faced and the interviews were a good opportunity to recall and evaluate decisions she had made in the face of adversity. Knowing her mindset and life story, it is easier to approach her expressions and understand her incentives or choices as presented in the narratives.

### **3.5. Procedures**

This section describes the procedures that were used to conduct the case study. This covers the procedures used to elicit informed consent (Section 3.5.1.),

information about the interviews that were used to generate data (Section 3.5.2.), and the data analysis procedures (Section 3.5.3).

### **3.5.1. Eliciting Informed Consent**

Before the first interview, J. E. was informed about the topics around which the interview would revolve and her informed consent was elicited in writing to record the interviews. It was agreed that the interviews would take place in her study, as she could concentrate better there and narrate undisturbed. She also consented to the use of the data in this case study, after the policies of confidentiality and anonymity were explained to her in detail. It should be noted that J. E. was familiar with the process, as she had conducted similar research herself. The interviews and data collection were conducted with respect and understanding, while prejudices against other ideas were put aside. Finally, a relationship of mutual understanding, trust and positive cooperation was established to achieve the best possible outcome (Josselson, 2007).

### **3.5.2. Conducting Life History Interviews**

Data for the case study were generated using three life history interviews, in a procedure that was loosely based on a similar study by Harvey (2016). All the interviews were conducted in Modern Greek, a language in which J. E. was highly fluent. This reflected pragmatic considerations, as well as her personal preference. This information is outlined in Table 1 (below).

**Table 1** *Overview of the Interviews*

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Summary</i>
1	01/04/2023	Approx.75 min	Initial exploration of life history
2	11/04/2023	Approx.75 min	Elaboration on themes from Interview 1
3	29/04/2023	Approx.60 min	Validation of emerging themes

The first interview, which lasted about 75 minutes, served an exploratory function. Following Harvey (2015), this interview was based on open-ended questions and took the form of a conversation in which J. E. could tell stories about her multilingual and multicultural life both in Romania and after moving from Romania to Greece. In this way, the conversation was built collaboratively, and she was actively involved in the conversation process. After initial analysis (see Section 3.5.3), the following salient themes were noted:

- a. **Learning languages:** through a variety of incentives, J. E. learned new languages, often not in the usual way;
- b. **The pursuit of knowledge:** The common parameter throughout J. E.'s life is gaining knowledge in many different areas;
- c. **Environments:** J. E. was influenced by her multilingual and multicultural community, which contrasted with the monolingual and monocultural community she moved to. In both cases, she used a variety of coping strategies to integrate;



- d. **Situations:** This referred to social and family situations, relationships, routines and so on that have contributed to their identity construction.

These themes formed the basis for the second interview, which followed 10 days later.

During the second interview (approx. 75 minutes), J. E. elaborated on her life experiences, using the above-mentioned themes as prompts. She noted that she had the chance to self-reflect and rethink situations or emotions that she has faced and never had the chance to process or evaluate. After the second interview, the rich material was processed parallel to the first one, as recurring themes emerged:

- a. **Use of languages** to add to her knowledge and broaden her worldview;
- b. **Multiculturalism** as an asset in strengthening identity and confronting challenges;
- c. **Factors of influence** in identity construction:
  - i. Family (support)
  - ii. Regime (staying strong, questioning, opposing)
  - iii. Multicultural environment (a variety of norms and values)
  - iv. Monolingual environment (strengthening by claiming rights)
  - v. Relationships

These emerging themes were grouped, as previously, and were presented to J. E. in the third, final interview.

In the third one-hour interview, the participant had the opportunity to comment on the topics in detail, negotiate them and support her explanations with incidents from her life. Through the dialogical approach, the interviewee had a fair share in the conduct of the interview, an ethical aspect of the relationship between the interviewer and the participant (Harvey, 2016).

### **3.5.3. Data Analysis**

As noted in the previous section, pre-analytical work and initial analysis of the data were intertwined with the data generation process. This involved the transcription of data, and the identification of salient themes, which were recorded as 'marginal comments' (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in the transcripts. Following that, recurring themes (see above) were grouped in analytical memos (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which provided impetus and structure for the analysis. The emerging understandings were then discussed in subsequent interviews, allowing J. E. to validate, elaborate on, or refute the analysis. This procedure allowed for a dialogical, co-construction of meaning.

A second stage of 'vigorous' (Stake, 1995) analysis was undertaken after the end of the data generation. This stage fused aspects of Thematic Analysis (TA) and Grounded Theory (Straus & Corbin, 1990). TA is a method used to identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning (themes). It is a flexible method allowing the

researcher to identify the themes arising and analyse them based on both the research questions and the context (Braun & Clarke, 2017).

Following recommendations in the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Straus & Corbin, 1990), the following analytical steps were implemented:

**Familiarization with the data:** The interview transcripts were read multiple times to ensure thorough familiarity with the data. This step complemented the initial analysis and iterative interview process, which had already helped in developing my familiarity with the data.

**Open-coding:** Building on the themes that had been identified during the dialogical data generation, the research questions and the literature, an initial set of codes were identified. This procedure was relatively unstructured, similar to what Straus and Corbin (1990) describe as 'open coding', in order to prevent the premature generation of rigid taxonomies.

**Axial coding:** The initial codes were then grouped into larger themes, using criteria of thematic coherence. This process involved a rigorous process of constant comparison, as the emerging themes were juxtaposed to identify conceptual overlaps between them and refine their differences ('discriminatory utility') (Straus & Corbin, 1990), and the emerging understandings were recorded in analytical memos. Ultimately, the following themes emerged: (a) Multiculturalism, (b) Multilingualism, (c) Identity, and (d) Environments.

**Theory development:** The themes that were identified previously were related to concepts from resilience theory and the intentional dynamics model (Chapter 2), such as personal characteristics, environments and learned strategies. These were coupled with aspects of J. E.'s resilient adjustment that were more particular to her migrant background, such as incentives to learn a language, investment, hybrid identities etc. The end product of this process was the development of a tentative conceptual model of resilience which can be helpfully brought to bear on the description of how people with refugee and migrant backgrounds adjust to their new settings.

### **3.6. Concluding Remarks**

In summary, this methodology chapter has presented a framework for the study. The choice of case study as a research method was made with the aim of looking at resilience theory holistically and exploring the topic from different perspectives. Through the use of narrative enquiry, both the participants and the researcher were able to construct and negotiate the meanings embedded in these narratives, which offered valuable insights.

Finally, processing the material is about ensuring the validity of the analysis and interpretation. There are a variety of methods used to ensure reliability, such as triangulation, member checking, peer reviews, etc. (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Therefore, triangulation was applied in this case as the existing literature on resilience theory, multiculturalism and multilingualism was used to support the data and the

interpretations given. In addition, the themes that emerged after each interview were discussed with the participant on an equal footing, following Harvey's dialogic approach, so that the data was processed and reviewed by both the interviewer and the interviewee.

Thematic analysis served as an approach to analysing the data collected and contributed to a deeper understanding of the participants' resilience characteristics. Common themes were created which formed the basis for meaningful conclusions. Finally, the study was conducted responsibly and respectfully, adhering to ethical standards, so that the credibility of the study was maintained.

## Chapter 4

### Becoming Greek: J. E.'s Resilient Adaptation to a New Country

This chapter presents the salient themes that emerged from the analysis of J. E.'s interviews. At the beginning of the chapter (Section 4.1), a brief outline of J. E.'s life trajectory is presented, to provide context. The presentation of findings about J. E.'s resilience is organised in three sections: Sections 4.2 and 4.3 present the psychological and social antecedents of her resilience, and 4.4 shows some aspects of her investment, as a form of resilient adaptation.

#### 4.1. Overview of Life Trajectory

J. E. grew up in Romania during the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu<sup>1</sup> and belonged to a mixed-ethnic family of Hungarian and Romanian origin. She was bilingual and initially preferred the Hungarian language. During her school years, however, she made use of both languages in her repertoire depending on the situation. Her parents tried to balance both languages and cultures, but social interactions were difficult due to the repressive regime, which emphasised national unity policies that privileged Romanian. These policies had a negative impact on the Hungarian minority, including linguistic and cultural restrictions. J. E.'s family lived in constant fear of surveillance, job insecurity (as employment was centrally organised by the state) and punishment for practising their religion (they were practising Catholics in an atheist state).

In the late 1980s, J. E. moved to a small rural town on an Aegean island in Greece, where she found a way of life characterised by conservatism. Adapting to the new culture and language was a long and difficult process for her. In her words: 'My mindset felt restricted' and then 'I gained freedom and lost another,' referring to leaving behind the regime but entering a conservative society. She had to struggle every day to realise her plans: to maintain her identity, learn the language, fit into the new community, meet new people and find her dream job. More than 30 years later, J. E. has achieved most of her goals and attributes her success to her constant personal efforts.

In the early 90s, the fall of Ceaușescu's regime and the transition to a Western economy triggered considerable economic upheaval. Because of this, some years after J. E. settled in her new home, a significant number of Romanians migrated to Greece in search of better opportunities. This massive influx of newly arrived migrants was met with the emergence of negative stereotypical ideas about Romanians, and Eastern Europeans in general. J.E., who had come to Greece a few years before, says:

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<sup>1</sup> Nicolae Ceaușescu served as President of Romania between 1974 and 1989. His tenure in the office was marked by severe human rights violations, including extensive surveillance by the secret police as well as repressive measures.

### Extract 1<sup>2</sup>

I was saddened that these people were spoiling the image of Romanians in the eyes of Greeks [...] it occurred to me that they would say I had married N... for his money, which had nothing to do with it because we did everything together. (Int3, 45:50)

Influenced by these negative ideas, she was worried and distressed that she would be judged unfairly for her choices and her incentives to migrate. As she explained, these negative stereotypes did not correspond to her values. When expressing her worries to her doctor he stressed that she should not be the one to worry, reflecting the positive image she has gained. As she stressed, people knew who she really was.

Another problem that had arisen shortly after her arrival was language. The only language spoken in the village and in the wider island society was Modern Greek. This language has completely different characteristics from both languages she already knew, Romanian and Hungarian, including the script, phonetic system, morphology and syntax. Some of the more predictable problems she mentioned related to the Greek alphabet, which was completely unfamiliar to her:

### Extract 2

In Greek, you know what I met new, regarding- regarding letters from- yes, delta and gamma. And in the beginning theta too. (Int 2, 53:54)

Less expected, but equally perplexing to her as a newcomer were the differences in pragmatic usage. She describes this as follows:

### Extract 3

Here in Greece, after a while, the noise disturbed me because everyone is shouting...almost. many [...] I mean. I asked in the shop- I went to with N., I was scared and I said "Oh my God, why are you fighting?" "No, my child, we say that tomorrow it will rain". I think... that they are fighting.' (Int3, 224:226)

The above texts show the challenges she had to face in the learning process because she not only had to learn a new language but also recognise the pragmatic and semantic dimensions of the language and use it appropriately as it is the dominant language.

Although her lack of familiarity with the language was potentially face-threatening and possibly stressful, she reports that she approached it with confidence and humour:

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<sup>2</sup> The original Modern Greek wording of the extracts is presented in Appendix A.

#### Extract 4

[I learnt Modern Greek] on my own. I was talking, everyone was laughing, I was laughing too. I was saying πορτοκαλες, σαντάλες, everything ends with -ες. (Int1, 668:669)

One of the goals she set for herself to integrate into the Greek society was to improve her linguistic skills and communicate with greater accuracy.

#### Extract 5

And what did I do —because my writing and spelling were not correct— I registered in an Internet forum on a site. And I started writing there on the site and posting. (Int 1, 721:723)

Today it is obvious that she has succeeded in her goal of speaking Modern Greek. During the interview, she responded to questions and shared her views with accuracy, precision, fluency and confidence. Furthermore, she is successful and well-appreciated in the small society of the town where she lives, leaving no room for stereotypes and misconceptions.

To better understand how she managed to adapt in this challenging setting, in the following two sections we will examine the various qualities and factors that have helped her to withstand the numerous adversities she has faced throughout her life here in Greece.

### **4.2. Psychological Antecedents of Resilient Adaptation ('inner strengths')**

A common feature that runs throughout her life and gives her the strength to carry on is her motivation. This is expressed in incentives, which range from simple daily life things to more ambitious goals, such as being an excellent student in Romania, learning languages, becoming a teacher, or writing her doctoral thesis.

Thinking specifically about her linguistic skills, J. E. already spoke her parents' languages, i.e., Romanian and Hungarian when she moved to Greece. This linguistic capital was of limited value to her in her new country, however, since neither was widely spoken in Greece, less so in the small village where she settled. In Greece, she learned Modern Greek, the socially dominant language, and English, which was (and is) a widely spoken *lingua franca*. To do this, she often resorted to alternative routes, rather than formal study. These included self-study or writing in a forum to practice her production skills, listening to music or talking to other people.

Such self-directed learning requires a considerable and consistent commitment of effort across time. J. E. mentioned that it was her powerful motivation that helped her to master the unfamiliar script and complicated morphology. In Extract 6, below, she describes her motivation for learning Modern Greek by participating in online communities:

#### Extract 6

I had incentives and had a nice time. I liked it a lot, learnt to write correctly' (Int 1, 734:735)

In addition to the intrinsic qualities of her motivation (i.e., the fact that she enjoyed participating in the internet forums and the communities that cohered around them), J. E. also explicitly mentioned the pragmatic benefits of learning the language of the society in which she now lived. In Extract 7, she compares the experience to that of learning foreign languages while she was a student in Romania and later in her life.

#### Extract 7

Hey, look, I remember some things [in German] like *der, die, das* and so on, but I did not like it, I was not motivated, I probably did not see any benefit in learning German. [...] With English, I wanted to understand the songs I was listening to music. (Int1, 128:129,154)

To summarise the above, it appears that her strong motivation to become part of her new community helped her to invest the effort necessary to learn multiple languages and indeed develop a true multilingual identity.

This central role of motivation was not confined to her language learning. Rather, they were a consistent aspect that drove many aspects of her becoming. Motivation was everywhere in her life, the interview data suggest. For example, it was one of the key reasons behind her professional and academic success. In the third interview, she mentioned that she had been driven from a young age by a clear goal of becoming a teacher.

#### Extract 8

I wanted to work at the school [...] That was the biggest [motivation] and that has stuck with me very strongly. (Int3, 551:552)

As she went on to explain, it was her determination to succeed in this goal that sustained her during her undergraduate studies, despite the discrimination she faced as a minority member, and as a provincial who has newly arrived in the capital city.

Closely linked to J. E.'s strong motivation is an ethos which values learning and gaining knowledge, that resonates throughout the interview data. This is vividly described in Extract 9, where the choppy sentence structure conveys a level of emotion that has not diminished despite the passage of time since the incident described:

#### Extract 9

I have this good thing that I will find motivation, I will always find motivation and without motivation- When I'm not motivated, I might- For example, when I finished the master's degree that I had as a dream, can you believe I came home and cried? I felt "now what?" "From now on, what>," "That was it?" And when the professor suggested the PhD to me, I found this again. (Int2, 1177:1181)

J.E.'s active participation in the process of language learning and knowledge acquisition illustrates her advanced cognitive abilities, which are an essential characteristic of resilient people. For her, cultivation of the mind is of great importance and goes beyond material possessions. It is an ongoing process that began in her school days and continues to this day. As she notes in Extract 10:

Extract 10

It was more that the culture I grew up in emphasized the spirit, yes. Much more. There weren't the materials to be able to pay attention to, but you paid attention to the spirit to a great extent. And I kept that. For example, I brought this with me [i.e., to Greece]. (Int 2)

An important aspect highlighted by Extract 10 is that it highlights the interconnection between psychological phenomena that are experienced at the individual level (“you paid attention to the spirit”, “I kept it”) and the social processes that co-shape them (“the culture I grew up in”).

One last salient theme that J. E. highlighted in her data was her ability to mobilise self-control and self-regulation in order to cope with adversity. She reported that she often processed difficult situations logically without getting carried away by her emotions. She also explained that it was this attitude which helped her to achieve positive results in the face of difficulty. An incident during Interview 2 illustrates this. During the interview, I —as the interviewer— reacted to her narrative by remarking that J. E. had made many sacrifices in her life. She responded to this emphatically, by giving the following rationalised account (Extract 11) of her actions:

Extract 11

What is [a sacrifice]? I didn't have anything else. I don't see it as a sacrifice, it was as if my life brought it in front of me. I made some choices. Speaking of which, let's say I would have done it differently. If the circumstances were the same, we would do the same. Depending on the circumstances we find ourselves in, we make choices. [...] They were choices I made because that's how the circumstances were and those were my needs I never made any sacrifice, not any. (Int2, 1159:1167)

Overall, these inner features of motivation, cognitive development and self-control have led to the formation of a hybrid identity that encompasses a rich combination of linguistic efficiency, cultural understanding, and cognitive skills. Thus, J.E.'s experiences have provided her with the ability to connect with different worlds and mentalities and promoted an appreciation for different cultures, languages and thinking, while these same characteristics provide her with tools for her development.

### **4.3. Social Antecedents of Resilient Adaptation**

When J. E. moved to Greece from Romania, she left the protective environment of her family and close friends in Romania, and —considering how less networked the late 1980s were compared to today— she was essentially cut off from most of her social



support network. In the small community where she eventually settled, she found that she had more freedom compared to her country's strict regime, but it was nevertheless not very easy to integrate. As she explains in Extract 12:

Extract 12

I used to come to the shop [i.e., her place of employment at the time], I worked all day, but I didn't have a face, I didn't have friends for a long time. I didn't have a person to talk to. You're right, See? I lost a freedom, gained a freedom and lost another' (Int2, 846:849)

Cultural differences between her previous and current communities doubtless accounted for part of the difficulties J. E. faced. However, in the same part of the interview, J. E. explains even though the community was welcoming, the process of integration was partially hindered by her hesitant attitude.

Extract 13

They [i.e., locals] wanted to be friends with me. I didn't... I was bored. I wasn't interested in any of the things that people I could be friends with at the time were interested in anything, nothing. (Int2, 844:846)

The feelings expressed in Extract 13 should not be superficially accepted as negative or superior attitudes towards the local community. Although deeper psychological probing would be outside the scope of these research interviews, and cannot be ethically implemented due to competence boundaries, such resistance to networking is often associated with unconsciously experienced fear of rejection. This is an interesting observation because it highlights the often-overlooked fact that integration is a two-way process, and that while a lot of work needs to be done to challenge societal reservations towards immigration, there is also a need to engage with the newcomers' fears and hesitation.

This situation began to change, however, as she eventually began to make connections with the local community. The impact of being accepted is clearly stated in Extract 14, where J. E. talks about a woman who befriended her and had a similar worldview with her.

Extract 14

I love her! So, she showed me my world again. We just started talking and I opened up and the rest. I say "yes, here we are". And it helped me a lot because I found what I knew (Int1, 1021:1023)

As is hinted in this extract, it was this act of acceptance by the local community that seemed to validate J. E.'s perception of belonging ("here we are").

It should be noted that the little town where J. E. settled, offered few opportunities to meet more friends. Rather than resign herself to this challenging situation, J. E. took a more active approach to overcoming the difficulty: When the Internet, which was then a nascent technology, became available, she registered in an online forum. Forums, which were popular at the time, were online bulletin boards,

where people posted content and reacted to each other's comments, often resulting in long threaded discussions. Typically, they also functioned as meeting posts for communities that were organised around common interests.

Participating in a forum served two purposes for J. E. First, it helped her to improve her communication skills, and her accuracy in using Modern Greek. Secondly, she was able to meet people with interests more expanded than the people of the rural town. In the interviews, she suggests that this online space proved to be very helpful for her, both linguistically, and socially, as she made friendships that have lasted up to today.

Extract 15:

...and then I found friends on the Internet. [...] L. [a common acquaintance] is my friend that I met on the forum. Another girl who is a very good friend of mine is in Corfu, but we talk every day and every two days. (Int2, 1131:1132)

In this way, she effectively re-shaped the community in which she was part, by renegotiating its horizons.

Another aspect of her integration which J. E. appears to value, based on the interview data, refers to her professional life. When she eventually fulfilled her dream of becoming a teacher, she came to meet other teachers, with whom she shared similar values and felt an affinity. As she mentions:

Extract 16

At school I found [friends] and could be close with, that is, I felt close, love. There was another world and I have them.....But it took many years before I succeeded and it didn't just happen' (Int2, 1146:1148)

While it is obvious that inclusion was not achieved without effort, it is important to recognise that there were individuals and environments that provided valuable assistance and emotional support during difficult times.

#### **4.4. Forms of Investment**

The above characteristics, as well as her relationships with various supportive people, led her to employ some strategies to respond to the difficulties that occasionally arose. These strategies were used by her because they seemed appropriate at the time she applied them. As it turned out, some were very useful, others not so much over time.

Starting with the languages she has acquired, both Greek and English, she followed the same approach to learn and later, acquire an official certificate to prove her competence. Initially, she turned to friends to get information, help and support learning the Modern Greek language, and to a language school to learn English. She describes this process as follows:

#### Extract 17

I went to a language school to learn if I can take the Cambridge [exams], for Lower [i.e., the First Certificate of English]. And I did some tests there and he told me that I have richness, that my vocabulary is rich, that I should read the grammar, but that was in Athens, so I went anyway just to see, and I took some books. [...] And I studied by myself.' (Int2, 191:194,198)

Then, by using these resources, she used her cognitive skills effectively to succeed. As she states about the pattern she followed:

#### Extract 18

I was studying, I didn't deal with essay writing at all because I had learned from the forum. [...] And I say I will go with what I know about essay writing. (Int1, 853:856)

She also developed her problem-solving skills through her integration process. An example of this strategy was her ability to adapt and find solutions to meet her need for friendship. When she realised how helpful the internet could be, she joined a forum and made connections with like-minded people. In this way, she made meaningful friendships by adopting an open-minded attitude at a time when the use of the Internet for communication purposes was not as common as it is today.

She also demonstrated the ability to set realistic goals and gradually approach their attainment. Step by step, she began her path of personal and professional development. She started by acquiring the Greek language, made efforts to do so and eventually obtained a certificate for her language skills. Soon after, she started working as a part-time teacher. At the same time, she began further studies to deepen her knowledge in her field by pursuing a PhD. Finally, she fulfilled her ultimate goal of becoming a tenured teacher.

It is important to note that not all the strategies she used produced the desired results. There were instances when she resorted to repressive coping strategies to ease tensions in her immediate environment. She describes this as follows:

#### Extract 19

First I adjusted, I did like ...the ostrich [...] First, I pretended not to understand so as not to spoil everything I had built inside my mind.' (Int1, 958:959)

As a result, she refrained from expressing her thoughts and suppressing her desires, which led to worry and increased stress levels. For example, when discussing her difficulty making friends, she explains this as follows:

#### Extract 20

It is due to the family in general so that I have peace and quiet, I was a little isolated from the world. For many years. So, I can survive, you hear? I mean, okay, then some tough years followed. For some time, it was difficult for me. But ok then I found my balance again.' (Int2, 1152:1155)

In summary, J. E.'s journey is a remarkable example of resilience. In difficult times, she drew strength from her motivation, self-control, and cognitive skills, as well as from the support of her friends in the village and her internet connections. The use of coping strategies helped her to successfully overcome obstacles in most cases by setting realistic goals and applying her problem-solving techniques, which led her to successful growth professionally, socially, and personally.

## Chapter 5

### Towards an Understanding of Resilience

This chapter explores the concept of resilience as intentional becoming through the findings of J. E.'s case study. The data collected in the interviews were analyzed to identify conceptual patterns and to provide a theoretical framework that offers a conceptual understanding of resilience as intentional becoming. For this reason, these patterns were then linked to the existing literature on resilience (Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018), intentional action (Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021) and ecological thinking (Bateson, 1987; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1978).

By synthesizing these different sources, this study put forward a model of resilience in multilingual and multicultural settings, which is of particular relevance to understanding the experience of people with refugee and migrant backgrounds. The following section (5.1) presents the model, and this is then followed, in Section 5.2, by evaluative comments.

#### **5.1. A Model of Resilience as Intentional Becoming**

As noted repeatedly in previous chapters, the challenges and the affordances that people with refugee and migrant backgrounds face (and consequently, their adaptation to this) are shaped by multiple interconnected factors, some more social and some more intra-personal in nature. The complex interconnections between these factors preclude causal attributions (Kostoulas, 2018) connecting outcomes to specific antecedents. Because of this, a holistic outlook was adopted, which views human action as situated in context, and highlights the mutually shaping interplay of context and activity.

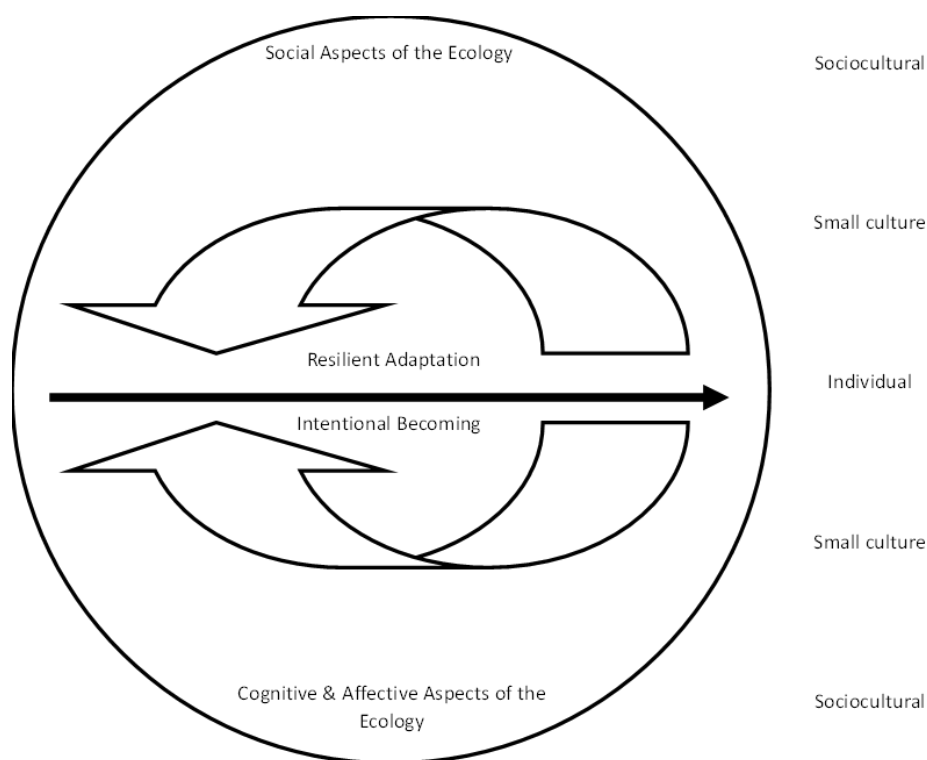
The model is schematically presented in Figure 2 (overleaf). In the model, the context in which human action takes place is defined as an 'ecology', following Bateson (1987). This ecology, and how it is stratified, are described in Section 5.1.1, to help understand where the backdrop against which the refugee and migrant experience is set. The second aspect of the model is intentional action, i.e., the trajectory of development that the refugees and migrants, such as J. E., experience (Section 5.1.2). This process of 'becoming' is driven by societal and psychological antecedents. Examples of such antecedents, drawn from J. E.'s intentional becoming, are presented in Section 5.1.3, which explains how intentional becoming is shaped. The process of intentional becoming, however, also drives change processes in the ecology, and these are presented in Section 5.1.4, which concludes the description of the model.

##### ***5.1.1. Situating the Refugee Experience in the Ecology of their Host Countries***

As Bateson (1987) argues, individuals and their actions cannot be understood or interpreted in isolation, but only within a social, cultural, and natural environment. This is represented by the large circle in Figure 2. The interaction among individual entities and between these entities and what is collectively referred to as 'their

environment' is at the heart of ecological thinking. Writing specifically about language learning, Stelma and Kostoulas (2021) describe this ecology as a complex system of interlinked beliefs, ideas, practices, and sociocultural structures (Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021). The model that is presented here extends their thinking in the multicultural and multilingual ecologies that people with refugee and migrant experiences face. As is shown, with reference to J. E.'s data, resilience is a process of achieving harmony with the salient aspects of the context.

In a series of publications, Bronfenbrenner (e.g., 1977, 1978) draws attention to the structure and stratification of ecologies. Bronfenbrenner's highly nuanced distinctions have been somewhat simplified in this study, to align with what the data analysis can support. For this reason, the ecology is divided into three broad levels, a micro-level, a meso-level and a macro-level (see also Five Graces Group, 2009; Kostoulas & Stelma, 2016).



*Figure 2. A conceptual depiction of resilience in multicultural and multilingual settings*

The **individual level of interaction** corresponds to the micro-system of the ecology. This refers to the relationships that refugees and migrants establish with their immediate environment. Since refugees and migrants are typically cut off from their family and friends, re-establishing such connections is a first challenge, as well as an important step for their intentional becoming. J. E.'s narrative lucidly shows the importance of such relationships. As seen in Section 4.3., her initial challenges in establishing meaningful social contacts at the village where she relocated hindered her ability to integrate. However, when she developed a friendship with a like-minded person in the local community, this had a tangible impact on her sense of belongingness. Her successful integration largely connects to her ability to create and

sustain such meaningful relationships, even by using the internet to overcome the boundaries of her community. Interactions with these friends helped J. E. adjust to her new life not least because she felt that her friends understood and respected her multicultural and multilingual identity.

The **small-culture level of interaction** describes interactions in the mid-range (or mesolevel) of the ecology. The term ‘small cultures’ is derived from Holliday (1999), who defines such groupings as groups of individuals who get together to engage in activities that they share in common (e.g., religion, language, culture, or work). For refugees and migrants, small cultures could refer to workplace social groupings, groups of people who engage in language learning (either for integration or for language maintenance), or religious communities. J. E.’s experience shows the importance of such interaction: perhaps typically for refugees she initially found it hard to integrate into the ‘small culture’ that was the tightly-knit community of the village where she settled. However, she actively fostered the generation of such ‘small cultures’ around her: In the data, she describes how people gathered in the shop where she worked, providing her with a connection to the wider society. Furthermore, she actively sought opportunities to network in such communities, such as internet forums, and –more ambitiously– the communities of practice (Wenger, 2009) of the schools where she eventually became employed. As above, the ‘small culture’ aspects of the ecology provide people with refugee and migrant backgrounds with both challenges and opportunities to integrate.

The **sociocultural level of interaction**, i.e., the macro aspects of the ecology, refers to the broader cultural and social beliefs, practices, policies and ideologies within which human activity takes place. For people with refugee and migrant backgrounds, navigating these aspects of the ecology is probably a source of considerable challenges. This is not only due to the unfamiliarity of the sociocultural norms of the host community but also because ‘higher-order’ systems tend to be more conservative and reluctant to change (Byrne & Callaghan, 2014). In J. E.’s case, she reports that the sociocultural norms in 1980s Greece, especially in the rural community where she settled, were very conservative and intolerant in a range of topics such as the role of women and religious practices. This was quite different from the more progressive society to which she had been accustomed, and these differences in existing values and beliefs made it difficult for her to integrate. It took many years for Greek society to change and for her to get used to the idea that she had to fight for her plans and intentions.

When thinking of the multilingual and multicultural ecologies that interest us, it is important to note that social structures are not ontologically concrete. That is to say, they are mirrored in the unique perception of each individual and re-constituted in them. To illustrate this utilizing a concrete example, it is of little importance whether the local community in which J. E. settled was welcoming or not (4.3. Social Antecedents of Resilient Adaptation); rather, what is important for her intentional becoming was how she perceived the locals’ stance. It is the interaction between social

structure and psychological perception that generates affordances for action, and ultimately drives action forward. This connection, or 'aboutness' of psychological stances, is defined as **intentionality** (Brentano, 1874/1995, cited in Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021). For example, it was J. E.'s intentional stance towards the local community (her positive views *about* them) and her perception of their attitude ("They all loved me") which generates affordances for action at the small culture level. Similarly, it was her intentional stance towards the Greek language (one of strong admiration) which generated interaction at the sociocultural level and sustained her affordance to study the language. J. E.'s experience with repression, and the association of Greece with freedom, were examples of intentionality forming at the sociocultural level, which related to her resilience.

### **5.1.2. Intentional Becoming as a Process of Integration**

Moving to a new country and thus a differentiated ecology from the one they are used, can be a real challenge for refugees and migrants. J. E had encountered many obstacles during the integration process, on all levels: a great gap in communication and understanding with the people close to her due to differences in mentalities, biases and communication gaps. As seen in the previous section, these challenges connect to various intentional structures in the ecology; but equally, the intentional structures in the ecology provide opportunities for action that help refugees and migrants to achieve resilient integration.

In the attempt to integrate into the new society, a process of adaptive resilience (Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2020) is initiated, where individuals move from their previous experiences to new circumstances that are ideally more supportive of their well-being. In the past resilience was associated primarily with the inner processes of an individual. More recent studies though acknowledge the impact of social processes in resilience formation. The term 'becoming' emphasises both the active role of the individual in shaping their experience and the inseparable link between social reality and interpretation given by the individual. Intentional becoming is symbolised by the right-facing arrow shown in Figure 1, which represents a movement from past to future states.

The movement from past to future states is associated with intrapersonal and social processes, which shape intentional becoming, and —at the same time—are generated by it. This is, of course, an analytical distinction that is not always easy to maintain in practice, since individual action often fuses its intrapersonal and social aspects. With this caveat in mind, the aspects are described below.

**Intra-personal aspects** refer to all the actions taken by a person with a refugee or migrant background with a view towards their integration. In her narrative, for example, J.E. describes her thorough self-study to pass the demanding exams for the Greek certificate that would help her teach in a Greek school (Extract 21, Int.1,853:856). Thus showing a person who has a plan and is self-disciplined and committed to working towards that goal. This process is akin to the ones described in



investment theory (Peirce-Norton,1995), according to which a person invests in a language to contribute to their social, linguistic, and cultural capital. But it is not only the language they invest in but also the cultural traits, behaviours and tendencies they acquire. J. E. focused on learning the language but also through the years she tried to approach different aspects of Greek culture, for example by learning folk dances and by incorporating habits according to her opinion the Greeks have. As she says: 'From the Greeks, I have taken, and I like it a lot, that part of being open. And I like this, yes this I like it a lot.'

The **social aspects** of intentional becoming refer to how individuals with refugee and migrant status renegotiate their status in the host society. This could be done by activity at the micro-level of interaction (e.g., through interaction with peers), the small culture level (e.g., by joining a group of like-minded people) and the macro-level of interaction (e.g., by attaining citizenship). To exemplify, J. E. started working at the very beginning of her arrival and after a few years changed to another profession that was a better match to how she perceived her identity: she became a teacher. In both cases, she had the opportunity to meet many people from different backgrounds who gave her the opportunity to connect with other groups that would help her integrate into Greek society. So, she joined a club to learn folk dances or went to university to continue her studies. And each time she created a new link, that would give her better access and involvement into Greek society.

### ***5.1.3. Intrapersonal and Social Antecedents of Intentional Becoming***

The process of social becoming involves a complex interplay between cognitive and affective factors and the presence of supportive social structures, as Kostoulas and Lämmerer (2018, 2020). This interplay forms a dynamic system in which individuals' cognitive abilities, motivations and aspirations interact with social frameworks such as family units and communication networks. This dynamic system is closely linked to the ongoing process of continuous adaptation and personal growth.

While refugees and migrants are often viewed through a deficit perspective, which brings into focus the challenges they face. On the other hand, a resilience perspective (e.g., Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018) acknowledges that individuals carry within them a diverse set of strengths which can be deployed at times of transition. J. E.'s experience provides a vivid example of thinking and acting consciously to improve her well-being and development. She used her cognitive skills to achieve positive outcomes in her language learning and inclusion or growth efforts. Growing up and receiving an education in the time of Ceausescu's strict regime, she acquired qualities that would appear inflexible, even negative, to a Westerner. However, she used them in such a way that she could achieve a positive result. In her interviews, she often mentions: 'I am not allowed to make mistakes' because that is how she grew up (Extract 22, Int1,838). That feature acted as a trigger for her to participate in the forum and prepare her texts so that they were well-written. As a result, she improved her ability to speak and write properly. Moreover, as she had often been discriminated against in the past because of her ethnicity or religious beliefs, she considered possible signs of

discrimination inevitable and would take action accordingly either by ignoring them or standing up for her rights.

The intra-personal antecedents of resilience are complemented by the social structures which generate and sustain intentional becoming. This perspective does not overlook that social structures in the host countries generate obstacles to the integration of refugees and migrants, which are well documented (Norton & Toohey, 2011). But it also posits that these structures generate affordances for integration. At societal levels, J.E. turned to people or groups that were positive to support her. At this point, it is significant to understand how the systems coexist and are interdependent and interact with the individual accordingly (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Byrne & Callaghan, 2014). These two elements provided an opportunity for social mobility and networking within the close community. In the context of small island society, a thick web of established connections across the three systems of micro, meso, and macro, existed. This facilitated her active participation and interaction in all three systems. Moreover, despite the forum being outside her immediate environment, she successfully integrated it into her ecological framework and was given the opportunity to explore new individuals and diverse values beyond the limits of her conservative surroundings.

#### **5.1.4. Resilient Outcomes**

The process of intentional becoming, as described above, leads to the generation of resilient outcomes for people with refugee and migrant backgrounds. In J. E.'s case, the creative and purposeful (Stelma & Kostoulas, 2021) way in which she approached adversity led to the emergence of a hybrid identity that encompassed aspects such as multilingualism and multiculturalism. She is now a multilingual individual, who uses each language according to the context while multiculturalism helps her have a more holistic approach to situations that may arise. As she says. Extract 1 *I think I have a more global and comprehensive view of the world and the environment around us.* Furthermore, approaching her identity holistically, we can take into account additional facets such as gender, education and profession, making it an ongoing and evolving identity interacting according to the environment she is in.

Furthermore, it is worth examining J.E.'s evolution from a reserved and timid woman to a respected teacher and researcher active in her community. Moreover, her involvement in the forum has not only helped her personally but has also enabled her to share knowledge and broaden the horizons of her community at a time when the use of the internet was not as common as it is today. She has consciously developed and invested in her cognitive skills to improve her quality of life. By engaging with others and overcoming personal obstacles, she transformed herself into an inspiring individual. Her journey is an example of how intentional becoming can lead to purposeful growth individually and within the context of ecology.

The above should not be interpreted as saying that all cases of intentional becoming will lead to outcomes similar to the ones observed in J. E.'s narrative. In her case, the process of becoming was driven by a creative and purposeful outlook, which

helped to overcome challenges. J. E.'s remarkable inner strengths (Kostoulas & Lämmerer, 2018, 2020) and the lack of normative societal pressure seem to have greatly contributed towards such outcomes. What the addition of 'outcomes' as a parameter to the model does, however, is provide the model with a well-defined sense of direction.

## **5.2. Evaluation of the Model**

After outlining the model of resilience as intentional becoming, in the previous section, the dissertation concludes with some evaluative comments. These include a discussion of the contribution the study makes to scholarship (Section 5.2.1), some comments about limitations and suggestions for further research (Section 5.2.2.), and a discussion of implications (Section 5.2.3).

### **5.2.1. Contributions to Scholarship**

This study, which developed a novel way to understand resilience in multilingual and multicultural settings has made several worthwhile contributions to our conceptualizations of resilience, intentional dynamics and the refugee / migrant experience.

Firstly, the new model **complements existing understandings of resilience** in the literature. Similarly, to studies such as Kostoulas and Lämmerer (2018, 2020) and Hiver (2018), it develops situated understandings of resilience that take into account the particularities of context. It also enriches our understanding of resilience by taking into account the dynamic and complex nature of the construct. In doing so, it adds theoretical depth to the study of resilience, which is connected to the epistemological paradigm of complexity research (Byrne & Callaghan, 2014).

Secondly, the conceptualization of the construct **extends the relevance of work on intentional dynamics** by Stelma and Kostoulas (2021), Taxiarchou (2022) and Papoutsi (2023). This is achieved by testing the relevance of the intentional dynamics model in another conceptual domain, that of resilience, and by empirically demonstrating its utility. Importantly, the study did not use the Intentional Dynamics model as a template for analysis. Rather, the analytical categories used emerged inductively and were then related to the model. This accounts for the deviations from the analytical categories proposed by Stelma and Kostoulas (2021), and it also shows the flexibility and robustness of the conceptual frame they propose. What this study and related work demonstrate is the potential of intentional dynamics thinking to act not just as an 'object theory', i.e., a narrow theory which explains a phenomenon, but also as a *meta-theoretical frame* that provides conceptual coherence for a range of phenomena.

Lastly, the model proposed in this study **adds conceptual depth to existing research on the refugee and migrant experience**. In this study, resilience is examined in a multilingual and multicultural setting, and the unique circumstances and individual actions that shape the refugee and migrant experience are brought to the fore. It offers

valuable insight that complements existing theories that focus on the difficulties refugees and migrants face and often take a deficit approach. By emphasising the strengths and adaptive capacities of these people, this alternative perspective offers a new understanding. It also provides a theoretical framework that allows for the study of the long-term integration and development of migrants over time. In contrast to static research that focuses exclusively on the present, this dynamic view values the evolving nature of their experiences.

### ***5.2.2. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research***

In evaluating a case study such as this, it is important to bear in mind the **hypothesis-generating** nature of such empirical work. This was an exploratory study aimed at generating a tentative way of understanding resilience, and the model that has been put forward is—at present— little more than a promising suggestion. There is, in other words, a need for additional empirical research with larger populations so as to test the validity, relevance and utility of this way of thinking. Additional case studies, in different settings and with different outcomes could lead to the retrospective generation of similar trajectories, from which richer and more nuanced descriptions would be generated.

Additionally, the **pragmatic limitations** of a dissertation carried out within an inflexible timeframe have meant that the case study itself has not exhausted its generative potential. An additional round of interviews, focusing on the intrapersonal dimension of the model could lead to more in-depth conceptualisations. Such work would by necessity be limited by the fact that narrative research focuses only on narrated experience, which is narrower than consciously perceived experiences and even narrower than unconsciously compared experiences. Because of this, interdisciplinary work, which brings to bear psychological expertise, would likely lead to further refinement of the model. Lastly, time constraints meant that it was not possible to perform participant checking of the findings prior to the submission of this dissertation. Additional qualitative work would need to address such limitations, in order to establish the phenomenological relevance of the proposed model.

### ***5.2.3. Implications of the Study***

The findings from J. E's experience have provided valuable insights that are relevant to several groups. First, **for people with refugee migration backgrounds**, the study offers a better understanding of the intrapersonal dimensions and dynamic relationships that emerge during the migration process. This can help to develop targeted interventions that make good use of affordances present in the ecology.

Secondly, the study provides **teachers and people working with refugees and migrants** with a conceptually robust understanding of how vulnerable populations interact and perceive language as an investment. This knowledge can help educators adopt inclusive teaching practices that value the linguistic diversity of their students and promote effective language acquisition and integration.

Third, **policy planners** can benefit from the study by gaining insights into how newcomers can be perceived in a new context and what social aspects can be used to support their language acquisition and overall integration. This understanding can inform the development of comprehensive policies and programmes that facilitate the successful integration of newcomers into society.

It is important to recognise the limits of generalisability and to exercise caution when applying these findings. However, the lessons learned from J. E.'s experience contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities and dynamics involved in supporting people from refugee migrant backgrounds and serve to guide teachers in their pedagogical approaches and policy planners in their efforts to promote inclusive societies.

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## Appendix A

### Original versions of the extracts

1. 'Στεναχωριόμουν που αυτοί οι άνθρωποι χαλάνε την εικόνα των Ρουμάνων στα μάτια των Ελλήνων.. [ ] μου είχε περάσει και απ' το μυαλό ότι θα λέγανε ότι παντρεύτηκα το Ν...για τα λεφτά του που δεν είχε να κάνει γιατί όλα τα κάναμε οι δύο μας.'
2. 'Στα Ελληνικά ξέρεις τί συνάντησα καινούργιο από...από γράμματα από ναι το δέλτα και το γάμμα. Και στην αρχή και το θήτα.'
3. Εδώ στην Ελλάδα μετά από κάποιο καιρό με ενοχλούσε η φασαρία, γιατί φωνάζουν όλοι...σχεδόν. Πολλοί [ ] Δηλαδή.. ρωτούσα.. τρώμαζα στο μαγαζί που πήγαινα με τον Ν. και λέω Παναγία μου, γιατί τσακώνεστε; Όχι παιδί μου λέμε ότι θα βρέξει αύριο. Και εγώ νομίζω... που τσακώνονται
4. '(Τα έμαθα) Μόνη μου. Μιλούσα, γελούσανε όλοι, γελούσα και εγώ. Έλεγα πορτοκάλες, σαντάλες, όλα με ες τελειώνουν.'
5. 'Και τι έκανα επειδή δεν ήτανε σωστό το γράψιμο και η ορθογραφία μου γράφτηκα σε ένα φόρουμ στο Ίντερνετ σε ένα site. Και άρχισα και έγραφα εκεί στο site και έβαζα..'
6. 'είχα κίνητρα περνούσα καλά. Μου άρεσε πολύ έμαθα να γράψω σωστά.'
7. 'Ει, κοίτα κάτι θυμάμαι der, die, das και τέτοια αλλά δεν μ' άρεσε δεν είχα κίνητρο, μάλλον δεν έβλεπα καμιά χρησιμότητα να μάθω γερμανικά. Τα αγγλικά, ήθελα να καταλάβω τα τραγούδια που άκουγα, τη μουσική.'
8. 'Ήθελα να δουλέψω στο σχολείο [ ] Αυτό ήταν το μεγαλύτερο (κίνητρο) και αυτό με έχει πιάσει πολύ έντονα.'
9. 'Έχω αυτό το καλό που θα βρω κίνητρα πάντα θα βρω ένα κίνητρο και χωρίς κίνητρο.... Όταν δεν έχω κίνητρα μπορεί να για παράδειγμα τελείωσα το μεταπτυχιακό που το είχα σαν όνειρο. Το πιστεύεις ότι ήρθα σπίτι και έριξα ένα κλάμα; Αισθάνθηκα τώρα τι από εδώ και πέρα τι, αυτό ήτανε; Και όταν μου πρότεινε η καθηγήτρια το διδακτορικό, ξαναβρήκα αυτό.'
10. 'Ήτανε πιο πολύ ότι η κουλτούρα αυτή που μεγάλωσα, έδινε έμφαση στο πνεύμα, ναι. Πιο πολύ. Δεν υπήρχαν και τα υλικά για να μπορείς να δώσεις σημασία, αλλά έδινες σημασία στο πνεύμα σε μεγάλο βαθμό. Και αυτό το κράτησα. Για παράδειγμα, αυτό το έφερα μαζί μου.'
11. 'Ποια είναι; Δεν είχα κάτι άλλο. Δεν το βλέπω σαν θυσία ήτανε σαν δηλαδή μου τα 'φερε η ζωή μου μπροστά μου. Έκανα κάποιες επιλογές. Που όλο λέμε, ας πούμε ότι θα τα έκανα αλλιώς. Αν ήταν οι ίδιες συνθήκες, τα ίδια θα κάναμε. Ανάλογα τις συνθήκες που βρίσκουμε, κάνουμε επιλογές. [ ] ήταν επιλογές που τις έκανα γιατί έτσι ήταν οι συνθήκες και αυτές ήτανε οι ανάγκες μου δεν έκανα κάποια θυσία ποτέ, όχι καμιά.'
12. Ερχόμουν στο μαγαζί, δούλευα όλη μέρα, αλλά δεν είχα πρόσωπο, δεν είχα φίλες για πολύ καιρό. Δεν είχα έναν άνθρωπο να μιλήσω, έχεις δίκιο, Είδες; Έχασα μια ελευθερία, απέκτησα μια ελευθερία και έχασα μια άλλη'

13. Θέλανε να με κάνουν παρέα. Εγώ δεν ...βαριόμουνα βαριόμουνα. Δεν με ενδιέφερε τίποτα από αυτά που ενδιέφεραν τότε τους ανθρώπους που θα μπορούσα να κάνω παρέα τίποτα, τίποτα.
14. 'Ναι, εκείνη την αγαπάω! Έτσι εκείνη μου έδειξε το κόσμο το δικό μου πάλι. Μόλις αρχίσαμε και μιλούσαμε και ανοίχτηκα και τα λοιπά λέω να ,αυτό εδώ είμαστε. Και με βοήθησε πολύ γιατί βρήκα αυτά που ήξερα.'
15. '...και μετά βρήκα φίλους στο Διαδίκτυο.[ ] Η Λ. είναι φίλη μου που την γνώρισα στο φόρουμ Μια άλλη κοπέλα που είναι πολύ φίλη μου είναι στην Κέρκυρα, αλλά ,μιλάμε κάθε μέρα και κάθε 2 μέρες.'
16. 'Στο σχολείο βρήκα και μπορούσα να κάνω παρέα, δηλαδή αισθανόμουνα κοντά, αγάπη, Υπήρχε άλλος κόσμος και τους έχω. ....Αλλά πέρασαν πολλά χρόνια μέχρι να τα καταφέρω και δεν ήταν μόνο.....'
17. '..και πήγα σε ένα φροντιστήριο να μου πει αν μπορώ να δώσω Cambridge, για το Lower. Και έκανα εκεί κάτι τεστάκια και μου είπε ότι έχω πλούτος, ότι είναι πλούσιο το λεξιλόγιο, να διαβάσω τη γραμματική, αυτό όμως ήταν στην Αθήνα και πήγα έτσι άσχετα μόνο να δω και εγώ πήρα κάτι βιβλία.[ ] Και διάβαζα μόνη μου.'
18. 'Διαβάζα, με την έκθεση δεν ασχολήθηκα καθόλου ούτε τίποτα τίποτα γιατί είχα μάθει από το φόρουμ.[ ]Και λέω θα πάω με αυτά που ξέρω με την έκθεση.'
19. 'Αρχικά προσαρμόστηκα, έκανα σαν το....στρουθοκάμηλο.' [ ] Πρώτα έκανα ότι δεν καταλαβαίνω να μη χαλάσω όλο αυτό που είχα χτίσει μέσα στο μυαλό μου.'
20. 'Οφείλεται στην οικογένεια γενικά για να έχω ειρήνη και γαλήνη, είχα λίγο απομονωθεί απ τον κόσμο.Για πολλά χρόνια. Για να μπορώ να επιβιώσω, ακούς; Δηλαδή, εντάξει, μετά ακολούθησαν δύσκολα χρόνια. Για κάποιο καιρό μου ήταν δύσκολο. Αλλά εντάξει μετά ξαναβρήκα τις ισορροπίες μου.'
21. 'Και λέω θα πάω με αυτά που ξέρω με την έκθεση, αλλά ιστορία δεν ήξερα. Και θυμάμαι ότι διάβαζα 4 ώρες την ημέρα από τον Απρίλιο μέχρι τον Νοέμβριο που πήγα και έδωσα. Εδώ η τζαμαρία ήταν όλη με μαρκαδόρο πίνακα τα τζάμια μου ήταν με τους Περσικούς πολέμους και με όλα να τα θυμάμαι όλα και πήρα και 20 εεεε!'
22. 'Δεν επιτρέπεται να κάνω ποτέ λάθη'



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟ  
ΑΝΟΙΚΤΟ  
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ

Έντυπο Ενημέρωσης και Συγκατάθεσης Συμμετέχουσας

Εκπαιδευτικό Ίδρυμα :Ελληνικό Ανοικτό Πανεπιστήμιο

Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα : Γλωσσική Εκπαίδευση για Πρόσφυγες και Μετανάστες

Τίτλος Μελέτης : Transcending Boundaries: A study of multilingualism and cultural adaptation in the life of an immigrant woman living in Greece

Ενημερώθηκα διεξοδικά για το στόχο της έρευνας.

Κατανώ ότι η συμμετοχή μου είναι εθελοντική και ότι είμαι ελεύθερη να αποσυρθώ από την παρούσα μελέτη χωρίς την παροχή αιτιολογίας και χωρίς συνέπειες.

Κατανώ ότι μπορώ να αποσύρω τα δεδομένα μου από την μελέτη ανά πάσα στιγμή.

Καταλαβαίνω ότι κάθε πληροφορία παραμένει εμπιστευτική και καμία πληροφορία που να με προσδιορίζει δεν θα δημοσιοποιηθεί.

Συναινώ στην χρήση των δεδομένων στην έρευνα , τις δημοσιεύσεις και την αρχειοθέτηση.

Συναινώ στην ηχητική καταγραφή των συνεντεύξεων ως μέρος της μελέτης.

Συναινώ να συμμετέχω στην παραπάνω μελέτη.

Ημερομηνία : 30/03/2023

Η συμμετέχουσα

Η ερευνήτρια

Παλαβούζη Μαρία

Υπογραφή

Υπογραφή

