

Resilience and Posttraumatic Growth of Refugee Women: Impacts and Challenges

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Resilience and Posttraumatic Growth of Refugee Women: impacts and challenges

Bachelor thesis

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1. Introduction

In June 2017, UN Refugee Agency ‘United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees’¹ recorded 65.5 Million forcibly displaced people worldwide, including 22.5 Million refugees. 55% of the global refugees come from only three countries, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria (UNHCR, 2017). The main reasons for forced displacement are man-made disasters such as civil wars, violence and feared persecution of individuals. Also natural disasters and changing environments pose a serious risk that can lead to internal or external displacement (Kirmayer, Kienzler, Afana, & Pedersen, 2010; UNHCR, 2017).

Until today, 5.5 Million people have fled the Syrian civil war that erupted in 2011 and are now hosted mostly by the neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, with 92% of refugees living in urban and rural areas and 8% in camps. More than six Million people are internally displaced within Syria (UNHCR, 2017; UNHCR, Syria Regional Refugee Response, 2018). Due to the on-going armed conflict in Iraq, more than three Million people have been internally displaced since 2014. Over 260.000 refugees found their shelters in other countries (UNHCR, 2018).

Despite the dangerous journey and the protracted reception processes, many refugees fleeing from conflicts and wars such as in Syria and Iraq, keep searching for protection in European countries. The former promising strategy of adult males traveling first to a European country with the prospect of family reunion was interrupted by legal decisions. After the border closure and the implementation of the EU-Turkey agreement in 2016, thousands of refugees and migrants were and still are stuck in so called transit countries such as Greece or the Balkan countries. This is especially the reality of countless single mothers and children that are held up in transit countries from where they must apply for family reunification with their family members in Western Europe – a process which is known to be protracted and can take up to two years (UNICEF, 2017). The impact of being “[...] at risk of psychosocial distress caused by living in a protracted state of limbo“ over a long period of time is devastating, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund warns (UNICEF, 2017). The constant uncertainty during this migration period, a life between different countries and refugee camps, struggling with legal challenges and being separated from the family, can be extremely difficult and psychologically wearing (George, 2012).

¹ In the following, the UN Refugee Agency ‘United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees’ will be referred to as UNHCR.

As part of my studies, which is titled 'Social Work Plus - Migration and Globalization', I spent four months working in a refugee housing project in Athens. "Welcommon" offered housing and promoted social inclusion of refugees and vulnerable populations in Athens. The institutional frame comprised of a cooperative scheme between the social enterprises "Wind of Renewal" and the "Athens Development and Destination Management Agency", within the framework of the relocation programme of the UNHCR (Chrysogelos, 2016). Besides participating in the construction process of the building, my tasks included administrative and pedagogical matters such as supporting the department of social services and human resources and assisting in casework with refugee families. As I was present during the opening of the accommodation, I accompanied the first families and individuals that arrived at Welcommon after having waited for a long time at a camp on one of the islands or in different parts of the country. Some arrived with special medical needs, others were waiting for family reunification or relocation to other European countries. Most of them came originally from Syria, Iraq and Palestine. Most noticeable was the high number of single mothers who had up to eight children, all hoping for being reunited with their husbands, fathers or other relatives in countries such as Germany or Sweden. Most of the family members had not seen each other for two years since they left their war-torn home countries. This reality made me think of how these women managed to continue their journey and carrying several responsibilities at a time. I experienced women, who have not lost hope, despite having experienced unjustified detention, being transferred from one refugee camp to another, facing legal challenges and at the same time caring for their children. My experiences awakened my interest for these women's resilience and the possibility of posttraumatic growth as constituted in the title of this thesis.

In this paper I want to examine the following research questions: What are refugee women's neutral (resilience) and positive (posttraumatic growth) responses to traumatic experiences caused by war and displacement specifically in the transitional phase. In which way do their experiences strengthen them? And is growth after adversity possible? This thesis frames the results of a field research, which was conducted by the author in Athens in March 2018. Therefore refugee women from Syria and Iraq were interviewed. They were either currently residing in Greece, but in the application process for family reunification to a third country, or had initially planned to continue their journey but have now decided to stay in Greece. Due to the limited space of this thesis and the small number of participants, it has to be stated that the qualitative

research is not perceived to be representative. The results should rather underpin the research done by the author. As academia lacks information on the experiences of refugees made in transit countries, this thesis aims to fill this gap. Besides, I expect to not specifically enlarge upon challenges and impacts in the context of resilience and posttraumatic growth of refugee women, as stated in the title of this paper, but rather think that these dimensions will be self-descriptive.

This study is divided into eight chapters. The first part explains the circumstances and traumatic events refugees may face during the three migration trajectories: pre-migration, transit and post-migration. Furthermore, it is focused on the impact on mental health during these three stages. The next chapter discusses adversities caused by war and displacement and human responses to them. Chapter three focuses on the concept of resilience as a neutral response to adversity. Moreover, this chapter contains a brief overview of resilience research related to refugee's experiences, the examination of protective factors and the meaning of culture and how it shapes experiences and determinants of stress. Chapter four highlights the posttraumatic growth model, the factors for growth and again the meaning of culture being a context related dimension. Chapter five focuses on the empirical study, its framework and the research methods and evaluation. The next chapter analyses the results of the empirical research and connects them to the discussed literature. The results of this study and possible new findings are evaluated and discussed in the last chapter. The conclusion connects the insights of this research to social work and highlights the relevance of the findings for practice as well as giving an outlook for the future.

2. The Refugee Context due to War and Displacement

Reasons why people are forced to flee from their home countries are diverse. Root causes such as socio-political circumstances can be war, violence and persecution initiated by states, or political and military groups (Papadopoulos, 2007; Allen, Vaage, & Hauff, 2006). According to the United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees in 1951, a refugee is a person with: “[...] a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group” (UNHCR, 2010, p. 14). In 1967 this definition was extended with Article 33, which stated the prohibition of refoulement to one’s home country where his or her life would be threatened (UNHCR, 2010).

2.1 Migration Trajectories

The refugee experience caused by war and displacement entails a rather protracted migration process, which can be understood through three different migration trajectories. Those are namely pre-migration, the transitional phase and post-migration. They are characterized by a series of events, which are interdependent, heterogeneous and influenced by several factors that have an impact on the mental well-being of a person. (Bughra, 2004; Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008).

According to Silove (2013), stable societies are grounded on five core psychosocial pillars: safety/security, bonds/networks, justice, roles/identities and existential meaning. War, displacement and the consequences of flight can lead to severe disruption of these pillars, unbalancing a person’s psychological immune system. It is therefore crucial to understand the different migration phases in relation to the psychological pillars and the effects on mental health as well as for the pursuit of reparation and psychosocial recovery (Silove, 2013; Papadopoulos, 2007).

2.1.1 Pre-Migration Phase

The pre-migration phase under circumstances of war and conflict can be characterized by irruptions of one’s every-day life. This can have an impact on meeting basic needs or having guaranteed access to water, food, medical care and shelter. In a qualitative study on the refugee experiences of Sudanese refugees in Australia, participants also stated that loss and separation of loved ones were unexceptional experiences while fleeing war zones. Furthermore, the socio-political circumstances had an impact on their life activities such as education and employment, which is due the demolition of schools and workplaces or the problematic access to those places.

Experiences of physical violence such as torture, beating, gunshots or brutal interrogations can cause fear and persecution and are likely to occur in the pre-migration phase (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008).

2.1.2 Transitional Phase

The transitional phase represents a time of crossing international borders and moving between refugee camps or communities. The UN, host governments, or non-governmental organizations mostly control refugees' lives until they reach their status, including the restriction of movement and employment. Depending on the host countries' legislations, refugees are granted certain rights after recognition of their protection needs by the host government. Although a refugee camp is usually established as a safe haven for forcibly displaced people, providing basic needs for its inhabitants still entails several risks. Not only does the often-impooverished camp setting increase the probability of malnutrition and communicable diseases, but also violence and abuse seem to be the reality for camp residents suffering with the consequences of depression or other responses. Also, undergoing asylum-seeking processes can be stressful and even re-traumatizing. At the same time, people are exposed to personal bereavement such as being separated from their family and friends or realizing their losses which can cause anxiety and depression. The study on Sudanese refugees in Australia further reveals the difficulty of meeting basic needs, both in the communities and the refugee camps. This is due to food rations distributed by the United Nations that appear to be insufficient and consequently fought over. Furthermore, with the aim of meeting basic needs, illegal work in the communities implies high risks as permissions may not exist and workers' rights are not guaranteed.

In the transitional phase, refugees are confronted with legal uncertainty, instability and fear for the future, which coincides with the traumatic experiences made at home and in the countries of transit (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; George, 2012; Steel, Liddell, Bateman-Steel, & Zwi, 2011).

2.1.3 Post-Migration Phase

Refugees being resettled in a new society, in which they face new social and cultural rules, characterize the post-migration phase. "The period of adjustment will depend upon individual's personality, reasons for migration and new society's welcome to the newly arrived" (Bughra, 2004, p. 244). The process of adaptation might entail learning a new language and how to access existing resources. It is not uncommon that

people experience a culture shock due to the loss of culture, habits and identity in the new host country. George (2012) emphasizes that in particular people who have not prepared or planned their departure in advance and must flee immediately, are likely to suffer more from a culture shock. Acculturation stress can possibly lead to an identity conflict; facing the challenge to adjust to a new social identity, at the same time preserving own traditions (Berry, 1997). Furthermore, the lack of social support and consequently social isolation are experiences, which refugees might make in the resettlement countries. As reported in the study conducted by Khawaja et al. (2008), participants describe that many social networks did not last due to death or separation of family and friends. Economical and material difficulties also form a challenging part of the post-migration period (Bughra, 2004). Experiences of racism and xenophobia such as “[...] difficulties attaining employment, increased attention from the police and verbal abuse” add up to the challenges mentioned above (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008, p. 504). George (2012) also points out that, as claiming for justice from their persecutors is not possible, many refugees direct their demands to the host government or the supporting agencies, constantly demanding for more to compensate their unjust destiny. This in turn can supervene to the perception of being discriminated against.

The lack of environmental familiarity, social isolation, financial difficulties and the impacts of perceived discrimination are potential experiences made by refugees in the post-migration phase (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; George, 2012; Bughra, 2004).

Throughout the migration trajectories, the feeling of safety and security cannot be created due to the exposure to several adversities such as “[...] on-going conditions of threat, uncertainty about the future, lack of control over their lives, and an absence of social support or resources to achieve recovery” (Silove, 2013, p. 241). Furthermore, bonds and networks are forcibly dissolved due to personal bereavement and separation. The lack of social support reportedly challenges people’s lives in all migration phases and the reparation of the integrity of interpersonal bonds and social support systems are of high importance. Regarding the pillar of justice, post-conflict societies who have been exposed to an everyday life of severe human rights violations and hardship, struggle with restoring their sense of justice within the community. “Frustration and disappointment, with a failure to achieve social justice in the form of economic opportunities, social stability and good governance, are all shortcomings that are typical

of many post conflict societies [...]” (Silove, 2013, p. 242). War and displacement also have a disruptive impact on established roles within families and societies that are connected with broader issues of identity such as culture, nationality and ethnicity. “Unstable conditions can persist for long periods for survivors of mass conflict, interfering with the person’s capacity to re-establish a coherent and durable sense of identity, and/or to find consistently meaningful roles” (Silove, 2013, p. 243). These forms of identity are especially challenging when refugees find themselves in outlasting and unstable conditions such as being forced to live in a refugee camp or detention centre, in which they face prolonged statelessness or find themselves in rather hostile host societies. Within the setting of displacement, unemployment coupled with the lack of social support can likely result into mental health problems. Furthermore, marginalization, prejudice and discrimination are experiences that can cause disorientation and the perception of not belonging. Lastly, the striving for existential meaning is inherent in every individual. War and displacement are circumstances that lead to disruption of a person’s narrative, meaning that refugees are often forced to revise their worldviews and systems of beliefs radically. “Communities from traditional backgrounds grounded on a single, dominant system of beliefs often find themselves resettled in pluralistic societies, in which a multiplicity of faiths, lifestyles and world views co-exist” (Silove, 2013, p. 244).

In conclusion, the importance of considering that “[s]tressors may occur throughout any stage and their nature, meaning and impact is likely to vary depending on both the individual’s strengths and the difficulties incurred prior to the stressors” adds to the heterogeneity and interdependency of the different migration phases (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008, p. 491).

2.2 Responses to Adversity

The circumstances of conflict and disaster and the experiences made throughout the migration trajectories can lead to several psychosocial disruptions in peoples’ lives, which need to be understood in order to meet their needs especially in post conflict settings (Silove, 2013; George, 2012). Those events can be categorized as traumatizing and life-threatening events. (Papadopoulos, 2007; Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008).

First, the trauma-grid by Papadopoulos (2007) will be used to explain individuals’ possible responses to adversity. Before discussing this model in detail,

Papadopoulos (2007) and Bonnano (2004) emphasize that the consequences of adversity and going into exile highly vary from individual to individual. The bare existence of an extreme threatening event does not automatically result in a person being psychologically traumatized. When relating to refugees and their experiences during their journey, it seems irrational to presume that every person experiencing refugee-related adversities will suffer from traumatization in a psychological or even psychopathological way. Still, the possibility and probability of an extreme adverse event causing “[...] some degree of psychological discomfort, upset, upheaval, turmoil, pain, disruption or even disturbance” is given (Papadopoulos, 2007, p. 304).

The term trauma, meaning ‘wound’ or ‘injury’ in Greek, refers to a range of psychological impacts of experiences or threats of violence, injuries or losses (Kirmayer, Kienzler, Afana, & Pedersen, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2007). When taking a look at the word’s root ‘teiro’ (‘to rub’), it can result in two connotations such as ‘to rub in’ or ‘to rub off’. The ‘rubbing in’ can be referred to the trauma or the injury leaving a scar on a person. This understanding is predominant within psychology and psychopathology. In turn, ‘rubbing off’ can mean that the trauma moves something away and creates a clean surface, referring to a new start or new perspectives in one’s life. Although this approach is less acknowledged and recognized, it is possible in the same way. The following part outlines the three responses to trauma, negative, neutral and positive, in order to create a deeper understanding of the effects of trauma (Papadopoulos, 2007).

2.2.1 Negative Response

The negative response refers to the actual psychological wound that can be affected by traumatic events and which can lead to an essential pathological status. There are three sub-categories pointing out the level of severity of a negative traumatic effect. The categorization seems crucial to highlight that not all negative effects on trauma lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)².

On the one hand, persons of concern can suffer from ordinary human suffering which is known to be the “[...] most common and human response to tragedies in life” (Papadopoulos, 2007, p. 305). Suffering is part of each and every life and does not always have to be put into a psychopathological context. A more severe form would be a distressful psychological reaction involving a stronger experience of hardship. Still professional intervention is not always needed as distressful experiences are rather

² In the following, PTSD will be used as acronym for the term ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’.

common and can often be dealt through human resilience. On the other hand individuals can develop a psychiatric disorder, which is the most severe response to an adverse event. “The most common type of this effect is PTSD and most of the literature on refugees experiencing trauma tends to be focused on this disorder” (Papadopoulos, 2007, p. 305). In this case professional support is seen as rather necessary.

2.2.2 Neutral Response

A neutral response to trauma is resilience. Resilience is a term that originally derives from physics, meaning that an object doesn't reshape after being exposed to several extreme conditions. Related to the human being, the American Psychological Association defines that resilience is “[...] the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant source of threat...’bouncing back’ from difficult experiences” (Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017, p. 90). Bonnano (2004) refers to resilience as maintaining an inner psychological balance despite adversity. It is evident that the resilience construct can also be understood referring to families, communities, organizations, societies and cultures, highlighting that not only individuals can be resilient (Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017). In other words, resilience means that a person or group can keep specific characteristics, such as “[...] basic values, skills or abilities” despite disturbance of their psychological immune system caused by adversity (Papadopoulos, 2007, p. 308; Silove, 2013).

2.2.3 Positive Response

Against the predominant societal understanding of trauma being pathological and calling for professional help, human strengths and positive responses towards adverse experiences have been rather neglected in literature. “Undoubtedly, there are refugees who not only survive the inhuman and cruel conditions they have endured with a significant degree of intactness but, moreover, they become strengthened by their particular exposure to adversity“ (Papadopoulos, 2007, p. 306). The predominant term for positive responses on adversity in trauma literature is ‘Post-Traumatic Growth’ (PTG)³, which goes back to the model of Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004). The initial point in this model is trauma, assuming that individuals who experienced PTG must have been exposed to trauma and therefore growth occurs after the trauma. “The posttraumatic growth model postulates personal growth as an outcome of cognitive-

³ In the following, PTG will be used as acronym for the term ‘post-traumatic growth’.

emotional processing of challenges triggered by a stressor event” (Weiss & Berger, 2008, p. 2). By referring to the positive transformation of distressful and extreme suffering of human beings, Papadopoulos calls this response ‘Adversity-Activated Development’ (AAP). In comparison to the PTG model, the initial point in AAP is adversity in addition to the focus on the positive developments that result from the exposure to adversity. The model assumes that adversity may still continue in refugees’ lives, even during the process of relocation in a new and safe environment. This is why Papadopoulos speaks of development of new and positive characteristics such as finding meaning in suffering, new strength or the transformation of self-perception. Adverse situations can push individuals to their own limits and subsequently to the limits of their prior understanding and expectations of life; these experiences can open up new horizons and perspectives in life (Papadopoulos, 2007).

In conclusion, Papadopoulos (2007) emphasizes that a person is not just ‘traumatised’ or ‘resilient’ in an undifferentiated way. Each refugee, besides experiencing the negative effects of adversity resulting from events that made him/her a refugee, also retains some existing strengths as well as acquires new positive qualities. Silove (2013) calls on the importance of assessing and understanding the contextual meaning of trauma that has an impact on a person’s mental health and ways of attachment to the new situation and environment. Furthermore, he points out that a broad understanding of trauma is necessary in order to avoid the assumption that every trauma leads to PTSD. Recent research indicates that there is always potential for positive adaption depending on the availability of resources, which can be intra- or interpersonal. Therefore, it seems crucial to recognize that posttraumatic growth is possible, even in the most conflicting circumstances (Papadopoulos, 2007; Silove, 2013; Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008).

The following discusses the neutral (resilience) and positive (posttraumatic growth) responses to trauma as well as the context related dimension of culture and their protective factors.

3. Resilience

Several researchers working on topics related to refugees and mental health indicate that refugee research mainly focuses on trauma and harmful psychological experiences such as PTSD, though with limited attention on understanding positive adaptation of refugees. Afana et al. (2010, p. 2) point out that “[i]nvariably, these emphases tend to medicalize people’s reactions to violent situations and traumatic events rather than seeing their experiences as part of an adaptive response to an extraordinary predicament”. There is no doubt that chronic PTSD is alarming, however, the fact that the vast majority of people exposed to violent or life-threatening events do not develop this disorder, has not received enough attention. Even though there is a correlation between trauma and psychological disorders, it is necessary to explain the relatively low rates of psychiatric symptomatology in post-war societies and the occurrence of forms of positive adaptation (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; Bonnano, 2004; Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007).

The concept of resilience is a form of positive adaptation that can be defined in different ways, referring to different contexts of occurrence. Resilience can refer to developmental aspects such as children growing up under disadvantaged circumstances but still reaching their full potential throughout their lives. At the same time it can imply coping skills under stress. Also, resilience can lead one to activate own resources for the benefit of recovering from trauma. Scholars researching on resilience agree that resilience occurs in the presence of adversity (Ungar, 2008).

„Resilience to loss and trauma, [...], pertains to the ability of adults in otherwise normal circumstances who are exposed to an isolated and potentially highly disruptive event, such as the death of a close relation or a violent or life-threatening situation, to maintain relatively stable, healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning” (Bonnano, 2004, p. 20).

There is evidence that resilience can not only be seen as an existent trait of an individual but that it can grow within the context an individual is being socialized and living in. Therefore it seems relevant to include the context in which resources to nurture resilience are found (Ungar, 2008). As expressed by Gilligan, considering the influence of interactions between an individual and its surrounding contexts may be of great importance towards developing resilience (Gilligan, 2001). Consequently, culture and context form major components when speaking of resilience. There is a need to study the meaning of inner strength of people from different cultural backgrounds, when exposed to an adverse situation. With the emerging literature on the resilience concept, most research focuses on investigating protective processes and factors that are related to health concepts in a Western-based reality (Ungar, 2008). Loh and Klug

(2012) point out that the widespread Western definition of resilience defines a survivor coming from an individualistic society and reflects a model of autonomy. This perspective acts on the assumption of having the ability to independently solve problems. In turn, resilience in a collectivist society might be defined in a different way such as attaching more importance to problem solving in community and the model of interdependence. Despite the predominant focus on resilience in Western societies, recent studies have focused on coping mechanisms and the factors that promote positive adaptation in different cultures. The international resilience project with Michael Ungar as principal investigator carried out a cross-cultural research on the resilience concept with 1500 youths in 14 countries on 5 continents. This research underlines the multidimensionality of resilience and protective factors that are defined by communities and cultures (Ungar, 2008). A study on Sudanese refugees resettled in Australia identified several strengths and resources that allowed the persons to cope with stressors in all migration phases (Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007). Goodman's (2004) study on unaccompanied refugee youths from Sudan who resettled in the United States revealed that culturally based coping strategies helped this group to counter traumatic experiences. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the belief system and cultural aspects of trauma symptoms and coping. To find a more contextualized definition of resilience, Ungar (2008) defines different dimensions such as family, community and culture as crucial environments of building and learning resilience.

„In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways” (Ungar, 2008, p. 225).

3.1 Culture – A Contextual Dimension

Culture can be understood “[...] as a highly complex, continually changing system of meaning that is learned, shared, transmitted and altered from one generation to another” (Chi-Ah Chun, 2006, p. 31). This system of meaning with its dynamic character embraces the values, beliefs and norms that guide and shape our behaviour and actions.

In order to comprehend culture as an important aspect of building and learning resilience, it seems relevant to refer to the concepts of individualism and collectivism by G. Hofstede, that are the most widely studied concepts to describe exclusive and mutual elements of culture (Theron & Liebenberg, 2015; Chi-Ah Chun, 2006; Hofstede, 2001).

Individualism and collectivism are orientations or worldviews that consist of a set of values, attitudes and behaviours linked to different societal emphasis on either the self or the in-group. When focussing on individualistic societies, individual rights, the responsibility for oneself and the immediate family, personal autonomy and self-fulfilment are components that rather form the cultural system, meaning that the self is the central unit of society. In collectivist societies it is the in-group, which builds societies central unit and obliges the individual to its demands, needs, aims and its fate. Individuals are bound to fulfil certain duties and social roles to the in-group, which is characterized by interdependence. These different concepts in turn have a high impact on the environmental and individual systems with the probable effect of the context that can influence one's behaviour (Chi-Ah Chun, 2006; Theron & Liebenberg, 2015; Hofstede, 2001). Theron & Liebenberg (2015) speak of culture being a strong macro-systematic influence on different levels such as the global, national and local one with effects on the microsystem and its social environment. Macro- and micro systems are interdependent, dynamic and idiosyncratic. When transferring this theoretical concept into practice, one could say that the macro-socio cultural impacts shape the microsystem's structure, which could be the extended vs. the immediate family. These influences shape the microsystem's goals, morals, positions, forms of communication and socialization. Therefore, the culture of the microsystem has an impact on children's development and behaviour and on how resilience develops and is characterized within the extended or immediate family (Theron & Liebenberg, 2015).

A cross-cultural study on resilience has found that black youth from a traditional and rural community in South Africa are rather acknowledged to be resilient when ascribing themselves to the extended family or a social network and acting with respect towards the communities' traditions and heritage. An example of youth in a rather individualistic urban setting shows that those are considered to be resilient who demonstrate self-determination and commitment towards an independent life from the family as well as from the state (Theron & Liebenberg, 2015).

While aspects of wellbeing and resilience such as self-efficacy, participation, attachment or ethnic identity might be significant in different populations worldwide, their importance might differ when examining these aspects in consideration of cultural background and context (Ungar, 2008).

Culture as a context-related dimension in turn, could have a profound impact on illness and adaptation as it shapes an individual's experience and the determinants of stress. Afana et al. (2010, p. 2) emphasize, "[...] the social representations of traumatic

experiences and the meaning attached to these varies, according to social, cultural and political contexts and individual biographies”. This can be linked to one’s own response and understanding of symptoms, explanations of disease, coping patterns and strategies, devotion to certain medical care and ways of emotional expression and communication (Kirmayer, et al., 2011; Afana, Pedersen, Duncan , Rønsbo, Henrik, & Kirmayer, Laurence J. , 2010). It is therefore crucial to comprehend the context in which several resources to develop and nourish resilience can be found. Furthermore, comprehending social representations and reactions of individuals may aim towards preventing a hegemonic characterization on favourable progress and adequate coping strategies (Ungar, 2008; Wessels, 2008; Afana, Pedersen, Duncan , Rønsbo, Henrik, & Kirmayer, Laurence J. , 2010).

Studying resilience implies a culturally embedded understanding that can be received by questioning and respecting individuals’ and communities’ ways of strengthening experiences and healthy development (Ungar, 2008). The concepts of individualism and collectivism should not be understood as cultural relativism but rather as an underlying theory that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of resilience processes. Moreover, the research conducted with refugee women from rather collectivist societies, discussed in chapter five and six requires the theoretical understanding of the participant’s cultural and societal background.

3.2 Protective Factors

The question of what promotes resilience and nurtures people’s strengths and resources has been researched in several studies in the context of traumatic experiences such as war and displacement. According to Bonnano (2004) there are several ways of coping, developing and making use of one’s resilient traits. Ungar (2008) points out that there is evidence for survivor processes being very distinctive. Also, these strategies might not always be advantageous under ordinary circumstances but can help a person in the specific extraordinary event (Bonnano, 2004).

Most studies have found that social support from families, communities or other sources is one of the most important strengthening factors. As a well-known source for psychosocial well-being, social support can be a kind of safeguard against stress and trauma (Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017; Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007). In her study on experiences of Sudanese refugees resettled in Australia, Khawaja et al. (2008)

concludes that social support networks served as a protective factor throughout all migration phases. As their traditional support networks broke down due to war and displacement, new and alternative systems of support such as family members in exile or governmental and non-governmental organizations in the transit or post-migration country provide the necessary assistance. Those networks guaranteed participants better access to social support such as appreciating one's sense of belonging as well as material resources in form of housing and food.

Another protective factor often mentioned in the literature is religion and spirituality. The religious commitment can help to reframe and redefine meaning of a stressful event, amongst others, by attributing these events to a "higher power" and thereby finding answers to live with. Khawaja et al. (2008, p. 492) mentions that in some cases, "[...] religious beliefs are linked to a style of coping that emphasizes 'enduring' the adversities of the present for the reward of a 'better future'" or as Afana et al. (2010) expresses, for the benefit of a spiritual growth. Furthermore, individuals can regain a certain control over and meaning to their lives that they had lost through stressful events. Religion and spirituality can also mean to join religious groups that may increase a sense of social as well as informational and material support and in turn contribute to resilience. Religious commitment, individual or social practice through prayer, rituals or other forms, can be a significant coping strategy of survivors in a stressful environment throughout the migration trajectories (Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017; Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007; Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008).

Studies revealed that also personal attitudes and beliefs as a cognitive strategy can constitute a protective factor for individuals experiencing stressful events. This can be linked to reframing ones situation and interpreting it in a different way such as falling back on and trusting in ones personal resourcefulness and inner strengths as well as normalizing or minimizing the severity of the situation. When further considering perceptions of oneself and one's situation, "[...] refugees' attitudes toward their internal resources, such as taking a positive approach, identifying strengths, reinforcing the determination to cope and self-perception as a survivor rather than a victim" can enable individuals to cope with the given circumstances (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008, p. 492). Furthermore, it has been found that hope for the future and the comparison with the devastating situation in the home country were reportedly helpful and supportive in some cases (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007). In addition, certain personal attitudes

may benefit the protection from extreme stress. Bonnano (2004) speaks of traits such as hardiness meaning that individuals are able to find meaningful purpose in life and believe in affecting ones enclosing. Also the belief of being personally enriched by positive and negative life experiences is characteristic. According to this literature, also positive emotion and laughter can have a healing effect on individuals.

Besides the already mentioned aspects, literature reveals that cognitive processes like wishes and aspirations for the future serve as relevant protective factors. This can be connected to the wish of continuing education in order to improve the quality of life and guarantee the safety of the family. Aspirations that were often mentioned in relevant studies were a better future and peace in the home country. This in turn can maintain a sense of purpose in an individual's life and help to define certain life goals (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017). As Tsai et al. (2017, p. 97) outline, purpose also “[...] provides a renewable source of engagement and personal meaning that may dramatically impact an individual's reaction to a stressful situation”.

Moreover, research has shown that political commitment and becoming involved in political activity can be a significant form of active coping and resilience. Orosa et al. (2011) shows that political hardship has been found to be a protective factor amid activists who have been tortured in Turkey. He further gives the example of a study on Palestinian children who suffer from a low level of psychosocial problems due to their political activity.

In conclusion, there are several pathways to resilience and to make use of available resources, depending on the event and the affected person. In a study on resilience of migrant women in Australia, Loh and Klug (2012) found that the higher their level of resilience, survivors are less likely to suffer from psychological distress. This, in turn, shows that the availability and activation of resources to nurture resilience, whether it may be through positive adaption, coping skills under stress or the enablement of own resources, are of great importance for a person's well-being, the individual safeguard against stress and for the benefit of recovering from trauma (Ungar, 2008).

After discussing the concept of resilience being a neutral response to trauma, focus will now be set on the positive response to trauma and the concept of PTG developed by Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004).

4. Posttraumatic Growth

Traumatic experiences can possibly lead to constructive and positive transformation in a way that it influences survivors' perceptions and appreciation of themselves, others or life in general. Survivors may feel strengthened and wiser and may explore new characteristics in themselves. PTG, as a significant beneficial psychological conversion within a person, can be the result of struggling with trauma and its psychological effects. The PTG model was developed by Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004), which constitutes that growth after adversity can be shown in a variety of ways. The five-dimensional model includes "[...] increased appreciation for life in general, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, an increased sense of personal strength, changed priorities, and a richer existential and spiritual life" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004, p. 1). Despite its beneficial character towards responding to adversity, distinctions should be made between the concepts of PTG and resilience. Resilience is the ability to keep an inner psychological balance after experiencing hardship whereas PTG can be rather understood as a fundamental personal change after facing extreme challenges to deal with the traumatic experience (Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017). The model is also assumed to be more applicable to adolescents or adults than young children as it entails a developed set of patterns that are transformed in the face of adversity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004).

Literature on PTG describes the concept as a phenomenon that can take place in various contexts in which people are confronted with traumatic experiences. Besides the research on PTG in relation with different sociocultural contexts on survivors of torture, natural disasters and accidents, rape and sexual abuse, loss and bereavement and serious illness, it has also been studied related to refugee experiences (Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017; Weiss & Berger, 2008; Salo, Qouta, & Punamäki, 2005). Powell et al. (2003) have analysed PTG of survivors of the Yugoslavia war (1991-1995) who became refugees or internally displaced during the war and now live in Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina. Considering the high number of traumatic events experienced over a long period of time, the results of the study demonstrate a relatively low level of PTG. Former refugees who had spent time abroad, have shown more growth than the participants who had been internally displaced (Powell, Rosner, Butollo, Tedeschi, & Calhoun, 2003). In a study on PTG of Latina immigrants in the United States, Berger & Weiss (2008) describe a quite high level of stress especially relating to forms of separation and who of the related persons

were left behind. The participants reported severe stressors such as “[...] risks of drowning, exposure to wild animals, starvation, physical and sexual assault and exploitation” (Weiss & Berger, 2008, p. 5). Another study was conducted to assess trauma and growth in Palestinian adults in Gaza who have been exposed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over a long time. Researchers found a modest to moderate degree of PTG in the group of participants. The reported growth experiences were not associated with PTSD but with cumulative trauma. (Kira, Abou-Median, Ashby, Lewandowski, Mohanesh, & Odenat, 2012). These different results can be traced back to different contexts which will be highlighted in the following subsection in detail.

As it has been discussed in the chapters above, several authors claim that PTG and positive change are possible despite facing extreme adversity. Still, psychological growth and maladaptive response do not necessarily exclude each other, meaning that people can gain from their experiences but still struggle with other aspects in the near or continuing response to war and displacement (Silove, 2013; Papadopoulos, 2007; Kashyap & Hussain, 2018).

4.1 Culture – a Contextual Dimension

Culture, being disseminated through circumstantial influences and through interaction with other individuals, is strongly connected and integral to the individual. This calls for the necessity to review PTG in the framework of culture (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018). There are several cross-cultural matters that seem relevant examining against the background of culture. Kashyap & Hussain (2018), for example, make references to emic and etic perspectives on PTG, meaning the comparison between insiders’ and outsiders’ perspectives on the concept. They state that most PTG research comes from etic studies which seems to be problematic despite their cultural adaptation and translation of the Western-based scales. They claim that such an approach might not be able to give a more distinctive conception of PTG in many other cultures, as it does not consider the „[...] non-universality of the term trauma [...]“ and the pertinence of the different dimensions of its model (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018, p. 4). The possibility of gaining strength without being aware of it, needs to be taken into account as well as the necessity of theoretical and conceptual contributions from the emical perspective (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018).

Another issue discussed in the literature is the one of proximate and distal cultural influences that have an impact on an individuals sociocultural context. Proximate influences may be a person’s primary reference group such as family, friends

and peers, teams or religious groups. The social reactions of the primary reference group towards the behaviour of an individual, - whether they are positive or negative, rewarding or punitive, - have a meaningful impact on the individual. In practice, this can refer to the jargon used related to trauma, stress, coping and growth and a specific stressful event (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018; Weiss & Berger, 2010). Expressions like „[...] „Everything happens for a reason“, „God never gives you more than you can handle“ or „Random shit happens“ [...]“ are thoughts and beliefs that further influence the extent to which an individual experiences PTG or copes with a situation (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018, p. 6). Besides, societal norms of the primary reference group “[...] influence the expected coping behaviour, desirability of disclosure, and growth in the individual following the crisis” (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018, p. 6). On the other hand, distal influences comprise social narratives that are transmitted via impersonal media, including television, books or movies as well as orientations or worldviews such as individualism and collectivism. Hence, if the primary reference group also shares the distal influences and individuals who have experienced adversity function as a role model with the experience of a positive development, the impact on a person’s PTG process can be even more strengthened (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018; Weiss & Berger, 2010).

Furthermore, the literature reveals specific cultural influences on rumination and cognitive strategies connected to growth. Individuals need to alter and restore their beliefs that comprise their assumptive world as adversity can lead to extreme disruption of these beliefs. Rumination, in the context of PTG, refers to cognitive work that allows for the reestablishment of this assumptive world in response to stressors. Through the process of analysing one’s life in the outcome of a traumatic event, “[...] in the context of basic assumptions about how events were expected to unfold, how one is connected to others, and how one is able to affect outcomes and experiences [...]”, appreciation and recognition of PTG are likely to arise (Weiss & Berger, 2010, p. 7). Especially distal culture, the societal characterization of individualism or collectivism, has an impact on the rumination process through dimensions such as personal control, sources of causation, stability over time, relationships with others or self-disclosure. To name one example, studies reveal that regarding relationships with others, individuals from collectivist societies are more likely to take into account how their behaviour will affect their fellow human beings and themselves, viewing themselves from a third person’s point of view. It seems necessary to stress, that growth is not the only possible outcome of this cognitive process but it is likely to happen under the beneficial circumstances

that promote growth (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018; Weiss & Berger, 2010).

Kashyap & Hussain (2018) examined a further issue concerning cultural biases that can be found in the PTG theory. Among other components, a traumatic event can lead to disruption and challenge an individual's assumptive world. This theory refers to core assumptions that are related to self-regard, self-control, luck, anticipation of events and common kindness of people. Even though there may be universal assumptions, there are still individuals and societies that have different perceptions. Also, the specific cultural context may affect the influence of a trauma on a person's worldview, related to individualism or collectivism. This in turn shows that within the PTG theory foundations of the assumptive world are examined but not their explicit origin, meaning that the cultural context with all its facets is rather neglected. Furthermore, the component of cognitive consistency of PTG contributes to the understanding of the growth process. Though evidence is still ambiguous, there is much accordance with the "[...] drive for self-consistency [...] [being] culturally defined [...]" and not "[...] a universal motivation [...]" (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018, p. 10). Studies have revealed that in comparison to self-centred and self-consistent individuals, individuals coming from a collectivist society with a strong sense for community have shown more concern after the traumatic event related to the maintenance of their social role than their consistent self-view.

Moreover, the component of universal completion comprises the human thriving for fulfilment, based on the humanistic work of Carl Rogers and his concept of self-actualization (1951). As already mentioned, literature reveals the interplay of growth and adversity, claiming that they are not mutually exclusive. Having this in mind, self-actualization, in an individualistic sense, could be referred to the trait of autonomy and independence. On the contrary, in collectivist societies, self-actualization can be rather understood as doing good to ones society and community in form of "[...] self-criticism, self-correction and self-examination, which lead to personal sacrifice for the sake of the group harmony [...]" (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018, p. 11). A broader view on individuals meaning and understanding of PTG seems necessary to do justice to cultural diversity.

Among the few developed measures for PTG, the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) has been most commonly used. It is a 21-item scale that was developed on the basis of trauma response literature and interviews with trauma survivors (Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004). The original phrasing used in this measure is explicitly coined to one specific crisis whereas many stressful and

potentially traumatic experiences are complex, a conglomerate of crises processes. Davey et al. (2014, p. 132) emphasize that sensitivity is crucial when using the PTG measure on refugee populations as "[...] they have been standardized on other populations and they may provide varying sets of norms, which may not be representative of refugee experiences". Therefore, they recommend to reshape the questionnaire by assessing aspects ahead of trauma pathology and clearly referring to experiences during the migration trajectories and the new social and cultural influences on the individual. Hence, Powell et al. (2003), Weiss & Berger (2006) and Kira et al. (2012), who applied the PTGI on refugee populations from Bosnia, Latin America and Palestine, used the inventory as main measure of their studies. However, they adapted it, not only linguistically and culturally, but also including experiences of war or immigration process in their questions. Furthermore, the measures were translated into Bosnian, Spanish and Arabic. Nevertheless, the PTGI has also been translated into other languages such as Chinese, Hebrew, German, Japanese, Turkish and Dutch (Kira, Abou-Median, Ashby, Lewandowski, Mohanesh, & Odenat, 2012).

Though, several cross-cultural studies have challenged this model that is originally based on five domains of posttraumatic growth. Along with single- and two-factor models, suggestions for a three-dimensional model exist. This refers to a more culturally adapted design, in particular when working with family-focused, collectivist societies such as Middle Eastern cultures. A three-dimensional model, which includes social, individual, spiritual and philosophical domains, referring to relationships with others and belonging, new opportunities and personal strength as well as devotion and thankfulness for life, seems to be more suitable for this group (Salo, Qouta, & Punamäki, 2005; Weiss & Berger, 2008; Davey, Heard, & Lennings, 2014). Davey et al. (2014, p. 132) point out, that "[t]his difference in structure may be due to more unclear boundaries between social experiences, spiritual beliefs (often infused in social, cultural, and political practices), and self-awareness in collectivist societies".

In conclusion, several aspects of PTG against the backdrop of cultural contexts have been discussed. The components of emic and etic perspectives, proximate and distal cultural influences, rumination and cognitive strategies, cultural bias in theories and the measurement tools related to the PTG theory and growth processes, show that there are certain aspects to consider when applying this model in a cross-cultural context. As with the resilience concept, cultural awareness and an unbiased approach are relevant when examining growth in different cultures with the aim of avoiding

hegemony and acknowledging local understanding and practice.

4.2 Protective Factors

There are several psychosocial factors that are associated with PTG and favour the emergence of growth after adversity. Amongst others, personal characteristics are one of them. Human traits such as optimism, extraversion and openness to new experiences are relevant to evoke PTG and are supportive for being more open towards making a growth experience after trauma. Except for optimism, literature refers to the little amount of longitudinal studies on which these findings are based on, and the need for more evidence on the moderating role of personality characteristics on PTG. Also, the personal quality of optimism indicates that the link to PTG is rather through cognitive processes. An example is optimistic survivors who see life in a more positive way. This explains why these individuals are more future-oriented and in turn more likely to experience growth. Those individuals might also be able to focus more on activating their capabilities and act solution-oriented. There is evidence that positive emotions can extend one's range of momentary thought-action, which supplies a higher amount of personal resources. Amongst the Big Five personality traits that include openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism, only neuroticism is negatively associated with PTG (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016; Joseph, 2009; Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017).

Furthermore, cognitive factors such as rumination, cognitive appraisal and reappraisal are relevant for experiencing growth after trauma. Rumination linked to a traumatic event may provoke growth and help rebuilding an individual's impaired worldviews as well as developing new life goals after trauma. As Tedeschi et al. (2004) point out "[...] the sense of movement toward achieving goals is crucial in life satisfaction" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004, p. 10). This form of positive rumination is expected to start as soon as the individual experiences less intrusive or self-punitive rumination in the aftermath of the traumatic event, which can be long lasting. In the case of an effective process, a radical change of the assumptive world is likely to take place. Although the person is exposed to extreme distress and perceived threat during the negative rumination process, it is this intensive perception of threat and harm that is needed to evoke growth. The greater the challenge of a survivor's core beliefs, the higher the probability of experiencing growth. Besides, cognitive appraisal and reappraisal are relevant in order to discover in which way the traumatic experiences

are going to be accepted, comprehended, remembered and stored in a person's life narrative. Also this allows a person to make sense of the level of threat and harm one has perceived as well as the controllability of and the meaning ascribed to an occurrence. According to Orosa et al. (2011) various studies point out that a traumatic event can generate contemplation about fundamental and philosophical questions of life. Cognitive appraisals that influence the growth process in turn often concentrate on the ascription of meaning, the event's significance, the question why it happened and what implications it has for the person's future. In general, literature suggests that any form of positive coping can be beneficial and enforce the PTG process (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016; Joseph, 2009; Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017; Orosa, Brune, Huter, Fischer-Ortman, & Haasen, 2011).

Apart from personality and cognitive factors, also social support is an important protective factor that can help developing growth after trauma. Social support is likely to play a significant role in the context of PTG when it is reliable and steady over time. Also, determinants such as type and quality of social support have an impact on the efficacy. Social support can also be a relevant predictor of PTG whereas lacking social activities is negatively associated with the concept. "A socially supportive environment can allow one to safely express and explore thoughts and emotions surrounding trauma" (Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017, p. 99). Powell's et al. (2003) study on survivors of war in Sarajevo showed that those who had escaped the conflict and resettled in socially safe and reliable environments disclosed a higher level of growth than those who survived the hardship in the city. Also, mutual support, survivors helping survivors, can be highly resourceful as sharing experiences and empowering others can lead to confronting oneself with questions of purpose and how own experiences can be reconstructed. Literature shows that strong social support systems provide a variety of resources that can encourage the PTG process (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016; Joseph, 2009; Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017).

Religion and spirituality are further factors that are positively associated with PTG. Tsai et al. (2017) report that the dimension of religion is reliably linked to PTG though those results are founded on only few longitudinal studies. According to the literature, religion can be a strengthening source for individuals recuperating from a traumatic event. Religion as a source for strength can also be developed as a consequence of adversity. Positive religious coping methods are found to be supportive

in the healing process. At the same time, there is also a possibility of religion being a negative influence on a person and rather being of stressful nature with negative forms of religious coping, which will not favour the growth process. Spirituality is found to be positively associated with PTG. In the aftermath of a traumatic event, individuals can reportedly establish more awareness towards existential questions that may further enrich their religious and spiritual notions (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016; Joseph, 2009; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017).

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out that the factors reviewed in this chapter are suggestions based on conducted studies but they do not account for every individual in such situations. Jayawickreme & Blackie (2016) further emphasize that most studies on PTG use cross-sectional data, which challenges the assumption that the adverse-like event is the only reason for positive change. At the same time, authors suggest raising more awareness towards distinctions in individual stability, meaning that every survivor reacts differently towards a traumatic event and experiences possible growth individually due to different maturity levels and prior adversity experiences. For them, the only valid method to fully grasp the growth experience after trauma is by applying prospective longitudinal studies, containing great logistical challenges. Although in depth research and more empirical evidence is needed to support the concept of PTG, the existing literature gives many indications for possible growth processes (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016). Moreover, it is noticeable that several factors potentially supporting the growth process can also be found as protective factors linked to the resilience concept. Those are social support, religion and spirituality as well as different cognitive strategies (Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017).

5. Methodology

The following introduces the methodical approach used in this empirical study. This study has been conducted with the following research questions: What are refugee women's neutral (resilience) and positive (posttraumatic growth) responses to traumatic experiences caused by war and displacement specifically in the transitional phase? In which way do their experiences strengthen them? And is growth after adversity possible?

Illuminating the purpose of qualitative approach, as well as the sample selection and the material collected, this chapter focuses on an applied approach in order to

answer the research questions. Further context related dimensions are introduced. The final part of this chapter introduces the evaluation method.

5.1 Qualitative Research Approach

This research was conducted by using the method of qualitative social research. Contrary to quantitative research, this approach allows the provision of a deeper understanding of a topic and its complexity as the individual human experiences associated with extreme events can be captured in a more profound way. Khawaja et al. (2008) give the example that “[...] an exclusive reliance on quantitative checklists of psychiatric symptoms suggests certain a priori assumptions about the range of relevant variables to be assessed, and overlooks other factors associated with distress and coping in refugees, such as a loss of identity and crises of existential meaning” (p. 493). In the context of cultural understanding of both concepts, resilience and PTG, Kashyap and Hussain (2018) suggest to apply qualitative methods in order for researchers to “[...] consider the effect that context has on meaning and experience [...], to explicitly acknowledge his or her worldviews and keep the tendency of imposing them on cultures where they may not be useful in check” (p. 12). Besides, using a qualitative approach can be further beneficial to comprehend a person’s own understanding of growth, the perceived process and its outcomes, yielding towards more authenticity. It provides an opportunity to register more information that are relevant in a cultural context and furthermore examine the results with a greater cultural awareness (Kashyap & Hussain, 2018).

This research follows the combinational approach of inductive and deductive processes. While the inductive process refers to the development of new theories through empirical observation, the deductive process focuses on analysing the existing theories for their validity (Mayring, 2010).

5.2 Sample Selection and Limitations

In the framework of this study, seven girls and women between the ages of 15 to 48, currently residing in Athens, were interviewed. Due to the limited number of participants and the short time frame, the results of the qualitative research cannot be seen as representative. Their aim is rather to underpin the reviewed literature with the possibility of new findings.

In order to provide a precise analysis of the results, several criteria had to be met in advance to choose the interview partners: The target group were female participants

currently residing in Athens, Greece, in a country that is considered a place of transition. They could have travelled to Greece alone or with their children but due to the limited time frame this criterion was rather neglected. The participants could have or could have had the plan to move on to a third country to either be resettled or reunited with their families. Another criterion was that the interviewees come from an Arabic-speaking country. The research capacities allowed the support of a female Arabic-speaking translator during the interviews and a translator for the transcriptions from Arabic into English.

The sample selection was made based on convenience sampling/random sample. Several institutions and day centres working with refugee women in transit in Athens were contacted via email beforehand to inform about the purpose of the research. An interview guide and a consent form in both English and Arabic were attached to the email. The institutions and centres were asked for potential Arabic-speaking women as participants of the research. As responses were scarce, visiting the centres in person was rather successful and resulted in better access and acceptance.

Two of the participants are from Iraq and five from Syria, including one girl who is of Palestinian origin, however, she has lived in Syria before coming to Greece and is therefor considered as Syrian. Four out of seven participants are married with one who had married in Greece. Four out of seven are childless, two women have five children each, and one woman has born her first child. Two of the participants travelled to Greece on their own whereas the other five travelled with their families. Amongst the two married, one's husband has already reached Germany with their two sons. In the other case, the woman's husband as well as her son had died in Syria. Six out of seven participants have an educational background: four of them have a high school degree, thereof two have a bachelor degree; one had started her first year of masters but could not continue due to the difficult circumstances. At the time of the research, two had been in Greece for about two years, three for almost one and a half years now and two for about one year.

5.3 Further Contextual Dimensions

To further clarify the sample selection and limitations of the research group, it seems necessary to refer to the focus on the transitional phase of migration and the reason for concentrating on women. Furthermore, a short introduction of the strength-based approach underlines the contextual reference of the topic and the composition of the interview guide.

The Transitional Phase

Based on the findings of literature that studies refugees experiencing adversities throughout their migration phases and the potential resilience and growth experiences, it was striking to find only little evidence on such experiences during the transition phase. Especially refugee research applying a biomedical model of trauma “[...] typically examines only the pre-migration phase or the post-migration experience, it neglects the impact of transit stressors as well as the temporal nature of the refugee experience” (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008, p. 491). Stressors are not uniform but alter over the period of flight and migration. Therefore this research aims at grasping the experiences of survivors in this specific period, especially because the transition involuntarily turned into a protracted time period with no certainty of when one would be resettled or reunited with their families. Furthermore, the researcher decided to reach out to the affected persons in the immediate situation in Greece and not contact those who had been in the situation of transit but now resettled in a third country. Using this approach aimed towards giving a more authentic and reliable picture on the actual situation and avoid “[...] “potential reconstruction of events resulting from recall deficiencies and retrospective interpretation” (Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007, p. 286).

Why Women?

Pulvirenti and Mason (2011) highlight the risks of refugee men, women and children of being exposed to physical and emotional violence. The threats of exposure are present throughout the migration trajectory, including their experiences of war and persecution in their homeland, when seeking to cross borders, moving between refugee camps, being imprisoned in detention centres due to invalid entry documents and even during resettlement caused by possible hostile groups of the host society (Pulvirenti & Mason, 2011; George, 2012; Weiss & Berger, 2008).

According to UNHCR, women and girls affected by war and displacement are more likely to face gender-based violence and discrimination. Making up around fifty percent of any refugee population with a high rate of vulnerability for unaccompanied minors, pregnant, disabled or elderly women (UNHCR, 2018). An Amnesty International report from 2017 highlights the extreme vulnerability of women and girls in areas of armed conflict due to “[...] abuses such as human trafficking by the death or disappearance of spouses and other male relatives” (Amnesty International, 2017, p. 53).

Besides, focusing on the refugee situation in Greece, especially single mothers with their children are being hold up in transit and waiting for resettlement or family reunification papers. The possible impact on a person's mental wellbeing during this state of uncertainty has been examined in the first chapters of this paper (UNICEF, 2017).

The Strength-Based Approach

The research project was designed against the background of positive psychology and the strength-based approach with the aim of shifting the focus from a medicalized perception of refugees and their experiences towards the one of survivors who, despite suffering, are resourceful and strong. The strength-based approach focuses on the abilities and power within a person of concern, seeing the client as an expert of his/her own situation. A possible way of intervention through a strength-based approach is by drawing on solutions and encouraging people in rediscovering their inherent abilities of problem solving. With the aim of overcoming adversity, this approach aims to separate the person from the problem and awards him/her with self-effectiveness (Barkil-Otea, Abdallah, Mourra, & Jefee-Bahloul, 2018).

This approach further served as theoretical background for the interview guide, aiming towards acknowledgement of the women's experiences and their empowerment.

5.4 Data Collection

The interview guide was drafted following the concept of semi-structured interviews to reconstruct subjective viewpoints of participants (Flick, 2009). The questions have a predetermined but open-ended character in which probing can be used whenever necessary. The author used the combination of open questions that can be answered based on the personal experiences and the participant's knowledge on the topic, and theory-driven, hypotheses-directed questions that aim at underpinning the reviewed literature (Flick, 2009). "The assumptions in these questions are designed as an offer to the interviewees, which they might take up or refuse according to whether they correspond to their subjective theories or not" (Flick, 2009, p. 153). Also, the interview guide provides certain standardization and therefore comparability of the individual interviews.

In order to provide cultural sensitivity, the interview guide was drafted taking into account linguistic and cultural dimensions (Ungar, 2008). The interview guide and the consent form were translated into standard Arabic beforehand, though adapted to

colloquial Arabic during the interview situation. Also, the relevant reference to the transition phase of migration was underlined. The questions related to the growth experiences were inspired by Davey et al.'s (2014) suggestion on a three-dimensional model when working with participants from Middle-Eastern cultures.

Moreover, several tools were used to further collect data. A short informal questionnaire was drafted to record social data. The questions included references to age, origin, relationship status, number of children, persons the interviewee travelled with to Greece, the arrival date in Greece and their educational background. Another instrument used was audio recording. All participants agreed on the applied method. This provided an authentic and exact documentation of the interviews and allowed for transcription afterwards (Flick, 2009).

5.5 Interview Procedure and Transcription

The interviews were conducted in two Athenian institutions, Melissa network⁴ and Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development⁵. Interviews came about spontaneously while being on-site, with special help from the responsible psychologist in the case of Melissa network and the project manager of Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development. After introducing and discussing the project with them, they supported the research team by finding potential interviewees. Access was eased, as both were perceived as persons of trust in the institutions. The interviews were conducted with the kind support of a female translator for Arabic, English and German, Ms. Alisa Mayer. Firstly, introducing each other in Arabic and briefly describing the research purpose of exploring positive experiences of refugee women lightened up the situation. At the beginning of the interview situation, a consent form in Arabic language was signed by all participants to guarantee confidentiality, the voluntary participation in the project and the use of audio recording.

The interviews started whenever the women were ready. Despite few interruptions, the interview flow was not disturbed. It was of great importance for the interviewees to feel comfortable and relaxed, knowing that they could express their thoughts and feelings without being judged and perceiving the communication being on eye and heart level. The aim of the study was to gain an authentic and genuine insight

⁴ Melissa Network is a network for migrant women in Greece, promoting empowerment, communication and active citizenship.

⁵ Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development is an international non-profit organization registered in Belgium, Sweden, Greece and Lebanon. In Greece, the team of volunteers, who are refugees themselves, work on the topics of emergency response, shelter, child protection, capacity building and livelihoods.

into the participants' personal experiences and perceptions on the topic, which is why the interviewer and translator did not give their view on the spoken word but exclusively showed understanding, approval and empathy. While an open attitude in qualitative research is important, avoiding bias is often challenging due to the existing knowledge inherent in the questions of the interviewer. Questions can be leading. Helfferich (2011) suggests conscious awareness, critical reflexion and control over one's selective attentiveness due to the acquired prior knowledge.

The interviews lasted ten to twelve minutes on average. Afterwards, the interviewer, the interviewee and the translator often proceeded with an informal talk, mostly related to the research topic. Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed and translated from Arabic to English by Mr. Deya Debaja. He is a translator based in Jordan who kindly supported the researcher.

5.6 Evaluation: Qualitative Content Analysis by Mayring

The interviews were evaluated, using the qualitative content analysis by Phillip Mayring (Mayring, 2010). Therefore, the text is structured and divided into several categories that are oriented towards the research interest. Certain aspects of the narration are filtered according to the relevance of the research study. The methodical procedure implies three approaches. In this case, the summarizing content analysis was applied, which entails the paraphrasing of the content and reducing it step by step to the most relevant information. The categories that are being formed are not determined in the summarizing content analysis but are discovered in the text in an inductive manner. Still, these categories are developed according to specific criteria, based on the literature, which is why the process is of inductive and deductive character concurrently. The text is being reviewed line by line to recognize relevant categories and subdivide the appropriate passages into these categories. Categories need precise phrasing to avoid intersections (Flick, 2009; Mayring, 2010).

Categorization

The focus of this research was on exploring experiences of resilience and posttraumatic growth in refugee women in the transitional phase and probing the validity of both concepts. Openness towards new findings was given throughout the processing procedure. Every aspect that seemed relevant for this topic was respected and taken into consideration, either as a category or subcategory. The following categories that were found were: community perspectives on growth, individual

perspectives on growth, sources of strength on the journey and in transit, growth processes.

Limitations of Qualitative Research

Limitations of the small sample size should be considered. More voices of refugee women in the same situation may have revealed different aspects and experiences of strength and growth. To further examine this issue and giving it more evidence, a study involving a larger number of participants is required. Also, a comparison group of refugee women from different cultural backgrounds highly represented in this context or of those women who have been in this situation but are now resettled in a third country, would provide more evidence.

6. Results

In the following, the results that have been analysed with the method of qualitative content analysis will be presented, according to their categorization. Results will be further discussed and associated with the elaborated literature on resilience and PTG.

6.1 Community Perspectives on Strength

Several aspects were named when asking about the particular community's understanding of strength. This category contains the aspects of social support, independence and self-reliance, religion and life experiences.

Social Support

On community level, women reported social support as being a crucial strengthening factor. Interviewees refer to the parents, the core family, the wider family and the community in general. Family ties and bonds build a strong hold for the individual and are perceived as being beneficial and supportive when facing difficult situations. J. expressed that “[...] *the most relevant thing is the family ties and bonds that we have in our societies, the family always sticks together, ties don't fall apart [...] we keep feeling that our family is in front of us whether it be the father, the mother or the brothers and sisters, uncles from both sides of the family, those are all considered to be a single network, so we feel that this thing gives us strength*” (l. 49-56). M. emphasizes that parents hold the main role in being a source of strength and further

expresses that, *“when your family and friends are beside you and your community to make sure you stand back on your feet again, this thing helps”* (l. 25-26). E. refers to her family as being a place where you can find *“[...] a person to speak like your mother or sister. You can speak with them and together you can find a solution”* for a difficult situation (l. 21-23).

Furthermore, aspects of male dependency, marriage and the aim to keep up family reputation were mentioned as being important for a woman within the community. A. for instance said *“[...] if a woman is married she can certainly rely on the family, especially we Arabs, a woman has to be dependent always on her brother and father and so on. Since I am married (...) how do I say it, a husband has a certain place he fills in one’s life, he is a point of strength [...]”* (l. 22-25). L. too mentioned the importance of family bonds for saving ones face in the Syrian community by saying *“[...] when people are together, when a female is separated people have to talk and say oh look she is divorced and this has an effect in the children, so no with a family it is better”* (l.16-18).

N. stated that she didn’t perceive any strength or empowerment given from the community side. She emphasized that *“ [...] we lived under the control of my uncles from my mother, and I didn’t finish my studies because of them, and we saw a lot of injustice in Iraq, let alone war and all the other things”* (l.12-14). Still, she said that people experience strength *“from things they love, from their family sometimes”* (l.23).

Independence and Self-Reliance

It was noticeable that the aspect of independence and self-reliance regarding the understanding of strength factors in the community was mentioned in four out of seven interviews. The women related their statements to education and work, which gave them the sense of safety and strength. M. answered that it is especially *“[...] work and study, those two things, work and education”* that give women power in her community (l. 4-5). Also A. expressed that *“when a woman gets a proper education and work and becomes productive she will feel safe and strong for sure”* and highlighted the connection between educational opportunities and financial protection (l.17-18). Especially one woman emphasized the crucial role of education in the case of divorce or unforeseen events, in order to be able to provide for oneself. L. stated that she receives strength *“either from education or work [...]”* (l.3). *“But the most important thing is education. To be strong, whenever a problem happens, divorce or something, she would have a degree and a salary and that’s it”* (l.7-8).

N. described that she experienced a lot of injustice and hardship due to the authority of her uncles and the circumstances of war. She expressed *“I didn’t finish my studies because of them” (l.13).*

Religion

When asking for the role of religion being a strengthening factor in the communities, answers varied. M. stated that she does not perceive religion as being one of the most important strengthening factors, *“[...] not everyone with religion is empowered by it, that is not a must, some people pass through certain circumstances in which they question their beliefs, during the war like if someone dies, or if your belongings disappear, stop your education, this puts psychological stain on you so that you would explode, you would forget religion” (l.17-21).* Therefore, adverse situations would rather lead to questioning one’s belief due to the experienced challenges and the psychological burden it puts on a person.

According to N.’s view, *“religion has nothing to do with it; everyone has a religion that fits them” (l. 35).* In her opinion religion is not connected to strength. *“I mean religion is different from empowerment, I mean it’s true that it gives you some strength, when you get fed up and bored you go back to your religion, but religion is something separate from strength” (l. 39-41).*

Still, a young girl mentioned her community’s belief in a social narrative, claiming that God is testing his people, meaning that an adverse situation is a test from God. According to Achour et al. (2015) this belief is deeply rooted in Islamic Coping Strategies, which is meant to allow Muslims to better cope with adverse situations in life. E. expressed *“[...] we know that if we have a problem like the God is testing us. He the God wants us to be happy always but this is the life and we know we will die so we have to (...) this life is life testing” (l. 15-17).*

Life Experiences

In one interview, the role of life experiences and especially adverse situations were perceived to be a strengthening factor in the girl’s community. There is a general understanding of hardship making a person and community stronger by learning problem solving through challenging experiences. E.’s community draws strength *“in general from the experiences. We had experience and we can learn from it and it gives us the power to continue” (l.3-4).* She further stated *“and also from the problems and you’re looking to find a solution [...] from the difficulties what we had before, we can*

learn from the mistakes. And it gives us more information about ourselves what to do” (l. 8-11).

6.2 Individual Perspectives on Strength

The following aspects were named when asking for individual definitions of strength: independence and self-reliance, social support, safety and security, religion, personal beliefs and attitudes as well as arts and literature. It is noticeable that aspects on the community and individual level coincide.

Independence and Self-Reliance

Independence and self-reliance in the context of educational choices, occupational opportunities and financial independence were named the most. The women’s understanding focussed on education and work as being crucial elements in overcoming financial dependency on the family or on a male. Not all women received education or only until a certain grade, some had studied, or study and/or work. Still, all believe that these aspects are the most crucial. J. stated that her most important source of strength is *“my education, because I’m independent, like (...) I can get a job and I can work and I can get my salary and I can be like independent like (...) from my family” (l.60-61)*. Similarly, N.’s criteria are *“that a woman is independent, to get education, is not dependent on anyone else, to be dependent on herself, her education, on herself only” (l.45-46)*. Tools that provide M. with strength are also *“my education and my work” (l.40)*.

L. also considered educational and occupational opportunities, but rather in conjunction with her children. As she could not continue her education from grade nine onwards, it is the educational achievements of her children that give her the feeling of strength and safety. She said *“[...] I don’t have a degree honestly, but for me when my children study and acquire degrees then this thing gives me strength, when they have a degree then it’s just like I got a degree, to ensure their future” (l.22-24)*.

Social Support

Social support was mentioned as being strengthening as well. Here, the role of mother and family were described as being helpful sources during hardship. When E talked about strengthening factors in her life, she stressed the special relationship to her mother and characterized her as being her role model, generally in life but also throughout the different phases of migration. *“[...] I also take this power from my mom*

[...] she is with us and she is really strong” (l.34-38). Also S. emphasized the formative role of her family and said that “[...] no one gave me strength except for my family of course, they gave me strength to study and grow myself” (l. 8-9).

Safety and Security

A. described that safety and security are the two factors that give her strength in life. She stated *“honestly, feeling safe (...) that is the most important thing (...) I feel strength when I’m safe” (l. 50-51).* More women enhanced this aspect when talking about the journey and the time in transit.

Religion

One of the women considered religion and belief as being a source of strength. M. believed, *“to have faith in Allah, that Allah will choose life for us, we will live and Allah will choose. I mean Allah already decided this life for us before we were anything, before we were created” (l. 34-36).*

The conviction of having faith in Allah as he has determined each and every life is again an element found in Islamic coping strategies. Achour et al. (2015, p. 9) state, *“Muslims are instructed to place their full and utter faith in God and to show unconditional trust that God’s plan always works best”.*

Personal Beliefs and Attitudes

Personal belief as a cognitive strategy was mentioned, meaning that strength derives from the belief in yourself and trusting your own resources. S. therefore stated that *“strength first of all will not come from a physical aspect such as the body, strength is from your own belief in yourself during hard times, this is better than giving in to weakness” (l. 19-21).*

Arts and Literature

Finally, N. articulated a connection between strength and artistic activity. Arts and literature help her to find new energy. It is *“sometimes from poetry, other times from some writing, maybe from a word, or when I see something in front of me that gives me strength, various things” (l. 58-59).*

6.3 Sources of Strength on the Journey and in Transit

The following part presents strengthening factors that were noticed to be helpful on the way from Syria or Iraq to Greece, and that are still considered as helpful within the current situation in Greece.

Cognitive Coping Processes

Cognitive coping processes can be of strengthening character in different ways and were used by several interviewees. Khawaja et al. (2008) demonstrate that various kinds of cognitive coping strategies serve as strengthening factors for refugees throughout the migration trajectories. Focusing on the journey to Greece and the time in transit, refugees concentrated on hopes for the future and have specific goals in their mind in order to provide for a better future. For instance, M. stated *“what made me strong is that I knew that it is extremely hard for me to go back to Syria, this is what made me strong, it was impossible for me to go back to Syria, I had to start my own life with my own hands, from myself with my heart, the decision I had to live”* (l. 47-50). L.’s hope was to be closer to her children, so they did not have to worry about her in Syria anymore. *“My strength and inner push was that my children were in Germany, I mean I was telling myself that when I get here I would be reaching my goal to not be far from my children, when I was in Syria they were worried about me [...]”* (l. 41-44). J. mentioned that during the journey and her time in Greece, specific goals in mind helped her stay strong. She said *“I have like goals, so I should arrive to my goals, it’s like this, so this has given me strength to come step by step to do what I want to achieve”* (l. 88-89). The death of A.’s husband and one of her sons as well as the difficult experiences she has been through, made her *“[...] feel that I have to be self-dependant and to be strong even in front of my children, I have to be strong as to not make them sense any weakness”* (l. 29-31). A. stressed that when she left Syria, her children were young adults and she *“[...] had a determination to stay strong and hold my ground until my children reach safety [...]”* (l.61-62). A. spoke about finding new hope in Greece again. *“Of course the part where we are in Greece is the easiest part, half the journey was from our city to Turkey, there lies the hardship, but here I felt that I had hope, there was no hope at all back in Syria”* (l. 137-139). M. also articulated a clear goal. She wants to continue to study and work for the wellbeing of her family. She said, *“now the most thing I have to focus on is that I have to educate myself and work (...) for my daughter as well, and to help my husband”* (l.223-224).

Furthermore, reframing ones situation by comparing the current situation with the old one and with people in a similar place as well as relativizing ones hardship were strategies applied by participants. These coping approaches were also found beneficial in a study on Sudanese refugees conducted by Khawaja et al. (2008). L. compared her current circumstances with the one in her home country and pointed out that *“we did go through a hard time, it is true that when you get here it is hard but it’s much better than Syria, because in Syria there is trouble”* (l. 29-30). A. relativized her situation on the journey when she said that *“[...] there were people who needed my help far more than I needed their help. I did not have a baby, there were mothers with little babies, there were a lot of people who needed help, more than me [...]”* (l. 73-75). When referring to the situation in Greece, L. explained that *“when I came here I met people and saw people and new things, everyone is living their own catastrophe {laughs} you would say I’m tired in my life but when you see what people are facing your issues become small, you say Praise Allah {laughs}”* (l. 90-92).

Personal beliefs and attitudes that are connected to concentrating on inner strengths and resources help to cope with the given circumstances and are a way of reframing ones situation. According to Khawaja et al. (2008) it is possible that refugees establish resourcefulness that helps them to cope with any situation. E. for instance pointed out *“I didn’t have free time to sit with myself and remember all this. No, I said to myself, this is a new life now and it’s a safe place, there is no war”* (l.47-50). When thinking of her time in a camp on one of the Greek islands, she said *“you know (...) you don’t have to sit and cry. Nothing will change, really nothing will change. You just have to think what you will do tomorrow or for your future”* (l.54-56).

Furthermore, cognitive processes involved aspirations for the future. Concrete aspirations for the future are aspects that people of concern will possibly face and which gives them strength (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008). In this study those were related to continuing one’s journey in A.’s case. She did not want to stay in Greece but reunite with her son. *“No, I want to go there, I have a reunion application because my son there in Germany is a minor”* (l.143-144). N. talked about her dream of continuing her education and fulfilling her dream. In Iraq, it used to be difficult for her to pursue her education due to the control of her uncles and the circumstances of war. This seems more possible in Greece. *“My dream is to become a computer engineer (...) It’s something I’m very passionate about, I used to format and download software in Iraq for my brother, he had an Internet café, so I used to help him”* (l.182-187).

Safety and security

The necessity and natural longing for safety were factors of strength named by several women. These factors are also interconnected with personal beliefs and following a certain goal. The cognitive strategy of having a goal in mind to specifically reach safety was proven to be a strengthening aspect by Khawaja et al. (2008). Furthermore, Silove (2013) explains how the disruption of the core psychosocial pillars - inter alia safety and security - can unbalance a person's psychological immune system and be of stressful character. Regaining it can be strengthening and healing.

When A. mentioned her determination to stay strong and get herself and her children out of Syria, she also spoke about her goal of reaching safety. She had lost her husband and one of her sons in the war and felt that the most critical issue was to reach a safe environment. She said, “[...] *I had a determination to stay strong and hold my ground until my children reach safety, this is the reason, I went through hard times where I had a nervous breakdown because I lost one of my children in Syria [...] I always try to stay strong, the most important things is for my children to get to safety*” (l. 61-65). When N. talked about her flight she stated, “*frankly, when we decided to leave we just wanted to escape death [...]*” (l.68). L. pointed out that despite the challenges of getting along in a foreign country, the mere absence of war is a reason to endure these challenges. She said, “*I mean when you get here at first it is difficult but you know in the back of your head that there is no explosions, no kidnappings, nothing, and everything is secured and provided*” (l.34-36).

Reaching safety can mean the start of a recovery process, re-finding hopes and setting new goals in life. E. for instance sees the safe environment as a chance when she said “*no I said to myself, this is new life now and it's a safe place, there is no war. I have to see my education, to continue studying and see the world*” (l. 48-50).

Social Support

Also support from family, friends and networks were named as being beneficial for the women. Khawaja et al. (2008) and Schweitzer et al. (2007) point out that these social support systems are crucial in order to endure the hardship. Especially during the journey and in transit, supportive networks are not always available as women travelled alone or lost relatives. Therefore also alternative networks such as volunteers working in camps or NGO's can be beneficial.

Two women talked about their mothers as being of great help during the journey and in the new country. M. travelled alone from Syria to Greece, but her mother gave

her psychological support at any time through the phone. *“My mother, a lot a lot [...] she supports my psychological state”*, she said when she was asked for her sources of strength (l.59-63). E. also regards her mother as a source of strength and considers her as her role model. She admires her endurance throughout the challenging journey from Syria to Greece. She said, *“[...] I also take this power from my mom, because I came here with my mom alone and my brothers. I have three brothers and when I came my brother was 2 years old. When we went from Syria to Turkey, two mountains, we have to climb and my mom was putting my small brother on her back and until now she works also and she is with us and she is really strong”* (l. 34-38).

J. also travelled alone. In order to persevere, she pointed out the importance of the psychological backing from her family who lives in Germany. *“I forced to travel from Syria because all my family was in Germany [...] they always try to support me too, you should travel you should go you should not stay in your country alone so”* (l. 105-115).

E. further mentioned volunteers who became her friends and helped her to stay strong. *“Also I met a lot of friends (...) I was working there as a volunteer with them. I met a lot of volunteers from Portugal. Until now I speak with them”* (l. 43-47).

N. talked about the support of an employee at MSF who registered her at a school for studying. She said, *“[...] Uncle Dhafir is Tunisian, I call him uncle because he is older than me, he used to work at the MSF and he was the one who enrolled me here [...] I started studying poetry, art, computer science, English, Greek”* (l.131-145).

A. referred to the centre that gave her psychological support on the island and in Athens. She explained, that *“when I first arrived to Greece, my psyche was depleted, but when a centre opened in the island like Jafra here, where they had handcraft activities such as drawing and wool work (...) my psyche improved fifty percent”* (l.31-37).

Occupation and commitment

Often, the mentioned aspects were also related to occupation and commitment, and to doing something meaningful. According to Silove’s “ADAPT Model” (2013) war and displacement may have a great impact on established roles and on a person’s ability to rebuild purposeful roles. He explains *“[...] refugees who are offered appropriate opportunities are able to adopt new roles and identities through access to education, professional advancement and other pursuits”* (Silove, 2013, p. 243). This can be related to a centre offering recreational and artistic activities, finding a

supportive environment that recognizes and activates a person's resources or through self-activation of own resources.

For A. handicraft activities gave her strength and helped her out of her negative psychological state. With the support of a centre on the island and in Athens, she could commit herself to activities she loves. *"I come here as well to work and change the scenery, I love to work with wool a lot (...) and I like to draw"* (l. 40-41).

In N.'s case an employee of MSF supported her in continuing her studies and registering at school. As she was not able to follow up on her education in Iraq due to the strict control of her uncles, she now found strength in committing herself to education. She said that *"[...] he registered me here, and I started studying poetry, art, computer science, English, Greek"* (l.144-145).

When E. was in a camp on an island, it was the activation of her own resources such as her English skills that helped her to not contemplate about her experiences and circumstances but rather gave her a task, structure and the feeling of being valuable. *"My English was good. I started to remember all my English and that's why I want all the children to learn and to know the languages. So it helped them (...) I was working there as a volunteer with them. I met a lot of volunteers form Portugal. Until now I speak with them. So that's why, I didn't have free time to sit with myself and remember all this. No I said to myself this is a new life now and it's a safe place, there is no war. I have to see my education, to continue studying and see the world"* (l. 43-50).

Religion

Religious practice and commitment was, according to several studies on refugees in transit, reported to be one of the main sources of strength. In this study, this aspect was not represented as much. Although religion was not one of the main protective factors mentioned in the interviews, J. for instance stressed that her strong trust in God helped her throughout the time. *"Well (...) first I trust my God [...] then I trust myself"* (l.81-84). Again, Achour et al. (2015) relate the trust in God back to Islamic coping strategies, claiming that having absolute faith in Allah can give Muslims guidance and certainty that God's plan is the right one and has significance.

At the same time, the participant's statements reveal that religion was not perceived as being a relevant factor of strength as it is culturally inherent for some people and therefore rather practiced for cultural adherence than gaining strength. S. further referred to the personal relationship between her and God. *"Yes, I mean my belief helps, I mean I have no problem with that, we have to respect each others*

religious beliefs, but religion is something that belongs to me, between me and my God and according to our customs”(l.52-54).

In turn, L.’s statement demonstrates the belonging of different religions to different individuals and does not see a connection between strength and religion. She articulated, *“religion has nothing to do with it (...) it’s normal, everyone has his own religion, you’re free and I’m free” (l.73-82).*

6.4 Growth Processes

When it comes to growth processes, experiences greatly differ and were experienced on different dimensions. Those are namely changed perspectives and priorities, growth through interaction and social support and increased sense of personal strengths. All women reported that they feel they have grown and become stronger through their experiences.

Changed Perspectives and Priorities

The literature on PTG gives several indications for possible growth processes. For instance, regarding cognitive processes, rumination linked to the traumatic event may generate growth and support in re-establishing a person’s damaged worldviews. This can happen through developing new life goals (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016; Joseph, 2009; Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017; Orosa, Brune, Huter, Fischer-Ortman, & Haasen, 2011).

The interviewees mentioned aspects related to changed perspectives and priorities in their lives including new opportunities and goals for themselves. Some referred to a change in their mind-set. M. for instance explained that she had learned that *“[...] no one stands by your side except Allah, you have to be strong for yourself, no one helps you, you have to be strong” (l.80-81).* She further elaborated, *“I cannot be dependent neither on a brother or a father or a husband, it has to be from my own self” (l.106-108).* Also N. related to the idea of independence and said, *“I mean in Iraq I thought you have to always depend on either your husband or your family, but when I got here (...) my thoughts were different from those of my family, I always thought that we should always rely on ourselves, but when I got here I mean (...) it was confirmed to me that a woman should only rely on herself, to improve herself (...) this is the most important thing I have learned “ (l.115-119).* When L. was asked whether she feels strengthened, her answer was: *“definitely, when you arrive to a European country you’re bound to change automatically, you will change when you see the people and the*

world here, you are bound to change for the better [...] you are bound to change your mind-set” (l.111-115).

J. felt that the experiences had taught her to focus on transmitting a message to other girls and women living in the same situation and empowering them. She said, that she has learned *“to share my experiences more than when I was in Syria (...) to be more independent and to give the strength to the other people to be like me because you know I’m a girl and I am here alone without my family without anyone (...) I want the people here to be like independent that’s why we are here and that’s why I’m trying to share our experiences”*(l.129-140). Bonnano (2004) speaks of traits such as hardiness, meaning that individuals are able to find a meaningful purpose in life and believe in affecting one’s environment through their actions. Those individuals further believe in the personal enrichment of both positive and negative life experiences. While hardiness is rather related to resilience, it may also be related to growth, being a product of experiencing adversity.

Growth through Interaction and Social Support

The majority of interviewees reported that the interaction with different people from different cultures and backgrounds was perceived as positive and eye-opening. Also the warm inclusion and support on the part of the particular network contributed to this perception. According to the literature on PTG, social support deriving from different sources can have a positive impact on the growth experience. Especially support that is reliable and steady over time was proven to be beneficial (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016; Joseph, 2009; Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, Lawrence G., 2004; Tsai, Harpaz-Rotem, Pietrzak, & Southwick, 2017).

M. for instance referred to the Melissa network and expresses her appreciation, as the centre did not reject her. She said, that *“the opportunity that I loved the most, the empowered me the most this year [...] is Melissa”* (l.94-95). Furthermore, the establishment of places for encountering and meeting specific people subsequently result in drafting new perspectives and opportunities for these women. N. pointed out that *“it is very nice here. In Iraq a girl shouldn’t mingle around with anyone she shouldn’t talk to a man, she shouldn’t go out alone [...] here its different, me mixed with everyone, we had teachers (...) from all around the world (...) It’s nice to interact and mingle with people and communities [...]”* (l.222-233). Also, S. confirmed that *“each time it’s something new, I met new people, I took from their own personal experiences and to connect with people I did not know before, my stay in Greece is*

giving me opportunities to grow and better myself, this is what I've learned" (l.62-64). She further referred to the different things she has learned in Greece, things she would not have encountered in her community in Iraq. She said, *"yes, I became much stronger, I mean in my community in Iraq was a closed community, but when I got here to Greece I met a lot of people, a thing that made me learn even more" (l.73-75).* E. spoke about the acceptance that was shown to her despite her fears of being too different due to her religious belief and her veil. This in turn has further strengthened her. *"[...] I knew that I'm strong and I knew that now I have a new life and that I can continue my education so now I have this goal. I want to make it true" (l.73-74).*

Increased Sense of Personal Strengths

Growth processes also took place on a personal dimension. Tedeschi et al. (2004) point out that an increased sense of personal strengths is one of the fields of PTG. This can be related to the feeling of being able to accomplish much more than was thought before. Challenges or aspirations that seemed to be unthinkable are now feasible; enduring and overcoming hardship shapes and strengthens a person.

For instance, due to cultural rules that imply, for example, that women need male companion for outdoor activities, A. was not allowed to travel long distances alone as a woman. When she arrived in Greece she was afraid of going out alone but her experiences throughout the migration strengthened her. She said, *"[...] when I first came to Greece I was afraid to go out alone, I would wait for my son to accompany me, but little by little I got used to it" (l.98-99).*

J. mentioned that all the adversity that she had endured, all the negative experiences made her much stronger. Also, she has learned to share her experiences that had a lasting impact on her, in order to empower other women and girls who find themselves in a similar situation. She wants to *"give the strength to the other people to be like me because you know I'm a girl and I am here alone without my family without anyone [...] I want the people here to be like independent that's why we are here and that's why I'm trying to share our experiences" (l.133-140).* Similarly, S. feels that the difficult circumstances have strengthened her, especially on a personal level. *"I felt that I have discovered a lot of things about myself that I didn't know before. Despite of the many hardships yet we have learned a lot of lessons from them" (l. 37-39).*

Acquisition of New Abilities

Moreover, the women have cultivated several new abilities that in turn entail the feeling of growth such as learning a new language, manual activities and other subjects. For example, nearly all participants mentioned that they learn the Greek language. And, L. learned “[...] *how to weave wool, this is something new to me*” (l. 103).

7. Discussion

Despite the small sample, the results of the present study give an informative image regarding the research question and provide new insights into the refugee experiences in the transit situation.

In order to comprehend refugee women’s understanding of resilience and PTG, it seemed necessary to direct the questions on individual and community level, in order to grasp the participants’ understanding of these concepts holistically. The culture dimensions by Hofstede (2001) served as theoretical background. The Hofstede Insights is an online platform that allows for comparison of Hofstedes (2001) developed cultural dimensions on a national level between countries of the world. It presents the occurrence of the six cultural dimensions power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and indulgence in percent (Hofstede Insights, 2018). This study only focused on the dimension of individualism and collectivism. As elaborated in chapter 3.1 and 4.1, world views such as individualism and collectivism are orientations that consist of a set of values, attitudes and behaviours linked to different societal emphasis on either the self or the in-group, that is reflected in the meaning people attach to various aspects of life (Chi-Ah Chun, 2006; Theron & Liebenberg, 2015). According to Hofstede Insights, Iraq and Syria are considered as collectivist countries. The low measure of individualism, counting 30% in Iraq and 35% in Syria, speaks for a high rate of collectivism in both countries. This means that members of collectivist societies are built on a high level of interdependence of members of the in-group. Loyalty and responsibility for fellow members in their group are therefore seen as important traits (Hofstede Insights, 2018). At the same time it is important to see the complexity of these concepts and be aware of heterogeneity and differences within every culture (Gunnestad, 2006). Based on this understanding, the theory of Ungar (2008, p. 221) states, that it is critical to comprehend “[...] the context in which the resources to nurture resilience are found in order to avoid hegemony in how we characterize successful development and good coping strategies”. It is therefore

relevant to discover the communities and individuals understanding of strength and resilience and to grasp people's views on well-being concepts in a more holistic and culturally embedded way (Afana, Pedersen, Duncan, Rønsbo, Henrik, & Kirmayer, Laurence J., 2010).

Against the background of this knowledge, it is striking that the women's answers on community and especially individual perspectives on strength contain strong elements of individualism. The interviewees spoke about independence and self-reliance being the strongest source of strength on both dimensions. According to Hofstede (2001), characteristics of an individualistic society are responsibility for oneself and the immediate family, personal autonomy and self-fulfilment. All these characteristics were mentioned related to educational choices, occupational opportunities and financial independence. Community interdependence fades into the background as the communities, to which the women belonged to and lived in, are no longer present. It seems like as if they have cut their bonds with their home countries and their "emotional secure base" by having no way of return and no other choice than leaving the relationship to the community and the social networks behind. What is then left is the trust in oneself. Now, the close family and/or new networks and relationships build the social support system of these women. Through contact with a new society, different cultures and the exploration of new possibilities, new priorities can be set and focused on. Furthermore, the mentioned change of mind-set and the drive for independence can be seen as growth processes, as this allows for the exploration of new possibilities and opportunities in the women's lives. Literature on place attachment reveals that the attachment to a specific place is "[...] directly connected with an individual's or a group's identity" and a potential confusion regarding one's identity, when forcibly leaving this place behind (Bogaç, 2009, p. 269). All these aspects raise issues of how the journey and the time in transit due to war and displacement, can impact an individual's worldview and to which extent the loss of the place attachment and its social ties influences an individual's sense of belonging. This could be relevant content for further research.

Also religion, supposedly a strong factor of strength for Muslims in preponderantly Islamic countries such as Iraq and Syria, was not perceived as being strengthening by the majority of the interviewees, neither in a general sense nor related to the specific event of flight and transition. Religion was rather understood as being culturally inherent and infused in social practices. Similarly, religious and spiritual growth was not an aspect mentioned and experienced by the interviewees although it is

one of the expected components of change according to the PTG dimension by Tedeschi et al. (2004) and the adopted PTG dimensions by Davey et al. (2014). As acknowledgement of heterogeneous views on religion, practice and coping is crucial, these results could bring up the question on the relation between war and displacement and religious belief. One of the women mentioned that war makes you question your belief and makes you forget about religion while the psychological stain through adversity is predominant (M., 1.17-21). Further research could focus on this phenomenon and explore in which way war and displacement can impact a person's religious commitment and belief.

At the same time, there is a significant correlation between the elaborated literature on resilience and PTG and the experienced processes of the interviewees. Sources of strength such as social support and cognitive processes are dimensions found in the resilience and PTG literature and are confirmed as being a strengthening and beneficial factor of growth for most of the women in this sample. Likewise, occupation and commitment were often mentioned, being a source of strength and resilience shaping. Literature refers to political commitment as being a potential source of strength, whereas information lacks about general occupation and commitment in transit. Silove's (2013) ADAPT model relates to the importance of re-establishing purposeful roles that have been disrupted by war and displacement. Further research could focus on the significance of rescue centres or stations in transit individuals cross and their role of providing a supportive and empowering environment for the individual. Hopeful examples such as the one interviewee who became an English teacher in the refugee camp or the psychologically burdened woman who found strength through artistic activities in the camp provided by an NGO, show that these small opportunities could mean a lot and have a long lasting and positive impact on the affected person.

Personality characteristics in relation to resilience and PTG are factors that need more research and focus. Bonnano (2004), Jayawickreme & Blackie (2016), Joseph (2009), Tedeschi et al. (2004) and Tsai et al. (2017) point out that personal traits such as optimism or openness have an impact on looking at life stressors in a more positive way. This is why these people are more future-oriented and in turn more likely to experience growth. These factors were also found in some of the participants who were future-oriented and open towards change by setting themselves goals for the future.

8. Conclusion

This paper aimed towards the examination of the following research questions: What are refugee women's neutral (resilience) and positive (posttraumatic growth) responses to traumatic experiences caused by war and displacement, specifically in the transitional phase? In which way do their experiences strengthen them? Is growth after adversity possible?

The results of the research show that survivor processes are very unique and distinctive and can be connected to different kinds of coping strategies and protective factors. Reported factors are partly proven through literature. Yet this study could detect significant aspects raising new issues and calling for further research. These aspects comprise the drive for independence and self-reliance of refugee women, which goes along with a shift in mind-set and the change of perspectives and priorities. The focus on the time in transit, including experiences made on the journey to Greece, gave new insights of how impacting this period may be. Despite the experienced adversity, women are actively striving for recovery through their natural push to activate their own resources, their endeavour to survive and adapt to a new situation. The time in transit developed into being a permanent situation for many, which is why there is an apparent desire to normalize one's life and re-establish roles and routines. Although some women still have the desire and are open to continue their journey to a different European country, they also seemed to have accustomed to the situation and can draw various positive aspects out of their difficult circumstances. Therefore, it can be stated that growth after adversity is possible. The hardship and struggle has opened up new opportunities for the participants, new priorities were set and inner strengths increased. This has taught these women priceless lessons and provided them with motivation to achieve their goals.

The focus on strengths and resources allowed for acknowledgement of participants' own achievements that sometimes fade into the background when talking about refugees but not with them. Furthermore, the results of this study are of great significance as a prevalent medicalized view on people of concern often blanks out their strong and resourceful survivor processes and their acquired capabilities. This in turn should raise awareness among professionals in the field such as social workers who are in immediate contact with people of concern. The ADAPT model by Silove (2013) implicates the necessity of restoring the psychosocial pillars that have been disrupted through war and displacement as well as internalizing a strength-based approach in order to recognize, support and encourage people's resiliency, their inner strengths and

resources and their possibility to grow. Mental health professionals and institutions have the responsibility to claim for and create safe and stable environments for survivors that are supportive and provide the possibility for individuals to heal, nurture and grow. When individuals are given opportunities to contribute their knowledge and skills and re-establish meaningful roles in their environment, they can further grow to be healthy members of society. Besides, considerations on how to take advantage of the acquired skills and strengths in an institutional framework could be relevant to acknowledge a person's formal and informal resources and yield towards simplifying the access to education and work. Social workers should therefore actively promote and protect refugees' rights and their chances for educational, economical and other participation by eliminating barriers of access. The availability of supportive environments with skilled personnel in place can make a major contribution to creating resilient and stable societies.

This research did not specifically enlarge upon challenges and impacts related to resilience and PTG as stated in the title of this paper as those dimension are self-descriptive. In addition, the paper could not go deep into contextual representations of strengthening resources that are rooted in a person's family, community and culture. A biographical approach including childhood and youth memories and experiences as well as references to the attachment theory could have given a wider, deeper and more informative picture of the women's understanding of strength and their use of protective factors. Several aspects related to the women's past were mentioned in the interviews that are interesting to explore more deeply but were restricted due to the limited research framework. Besides, the integration of all people of concern, irrelevant the country of origin, would have given an even more authentic and current picture related to the research question. Limited capacities of working with Arabic-English translators only allowed for Arabic-speaking participants. However, experiences in the field show a great shift in the refugee population in Greece since 2016, with a majority of women from Afghanistan and African countries.

Further research could try to grasp the phenomenon of being stuck in transit and the experiences of resilience and growth in a more holistic way. Inclusive and comparative studies with persons of concern from different cultural backgrounds could give more information about culturally relevant protective factors. Besides, additional research could be directed towards the importance and impact of supportive centres such as Melissa Network and Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development to

further prove the necessity of their availability and ensure their existence and funding.

9. References

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10. Annex

10.1 Interview guide

Variables

1. Age
2. Nationality
3. Married/Unmarried
4. Do you have children? How many?
5. Relocation country
6. Flight over sea or land?
7. Travelled alone or with family?

Questions

1. What gives people in your community strength despite facing difficult situation's?
2. How would you personally define strength?
3. When you think of your way to Greece, what kept you strong? What made you strong?
 - a. Social support
 - b. Religious awareness
 - c. Cognitive strategies
 - d. Other
4. What have you learned through your experiences in Greece? Do you feel you have grown?
 - a. Social (relating to others and belonging)
 - b. Individual (personal strengths and new opportunities)
 - c. Spiritual & philosophical (religiosity and appreciation in life)
5. Would you like to add anything?

10.2 Interview transcripts

Interview: A.

28.03.2018

Interviewer: AM, LP; Translator: AM

Location: Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development

Interviewee: Woman, 48 years old, Syria

1 LP: Okay

2

3 AM: Okay, My first question is what gives people strength in your community? For
4 your community in Syria in general?

5

6 A: For me I have always felt strong since I was a child, but when my husband died I felt
7 weak.

8

9 AM: May Allah have mercy on his soul.

10

11 A: May Allah have mercy, although my children have all grown up... but the hard
12 circumstances we had to go through in war have planted the seeds of fear within me...
13 this along with what we had to go through to get here made me fear life and the future.

14

15 AM: Regardless of the hard circumstances what give people strength?

16

17 A: When a woman gets a proper education and work and become productive she will
18 feel safe and strong for sure.

19

20 AM: What about the family in general?

21

22 A: I mean if a woman is married she can certainly rely on the family, especially we
23 Arabs, a woman has to be Dependant always on her brother and father and so on. Since
24 I am married (...) how do I say it, a husband has a certain place that he fills in ones life,
25 he is a point of strength, I don't know (...) {laughs}

26

27 AM: And for you personally?

28

29 A: The things I went through made me feel that I have to be self dependent and to be
30 strong even in front of my children, I have to be strong as to not make them sense any
31 weakness. When I first arrived to Greece, my psyche was depleted, but when a centre
32 was opened in the island like Jafra here where they have handcraft activities such as
33 drawing and wool work.

34

35 AM: On the island?

36

37 A: Yes, my psyche improved 50 percent.

38

39 AM: That's good.

40

41 A: I come here as well to work and change the scenery, I love to work with wool a
42 lot...and I like to draw.

43

44 AM: I may have asked you this question before but allow to repeat it once more, what is
45 the definition of strength as far as you are concerned.

46

47 A: For women in general?

48

49 AM: For you personally.

50

51 A: Honestly, feeling safe (...) that is the most important thing (...) I feel strength when
52 I'm safe.

53

54 A: When you think about the journey to Greece, what made you strong, what gave you
55 strength?

56

57 A: I don't understand.

58

59 AM: When you went through the hard journey to Greece, what is it that gave you
60 strength, what sustained the strength in you?

61

62 A: I mean when I got out of Syria my children were young adults, not babies, I had a
63 determination to stay strong and hold my ground until my children reach safety, this is
64 the reason, I went through hard times where I had a nervous breakdown because I lost
65 one of my children in Syria (...) he was killed (...) I always try to stay strong, the most
66 important thing is for my children to get to safety.

67

68 AM: Okay(...).

69

70 A: This is my only hope in life.

71

72 AM: During your journey, was there anyone that helped you and stood by your side?

73

74 A: how can I say this, there were people who needed my help far more than I needed
75 their help, I did not have a baby, there were mothers with little babies, there were a lot
76 of people who needed help, more than me, did you understand me?

77

78 AM: I understood.

79

80 A: The road from Syria to Greece is extremely extremely extremely hard!

81

82 AM: Did religion play a role in giving you strength? Is religion important for you or not
83 that much? As a point of strength I mean?

84
85 A: Everyone has his own dogma, I am a Muslim, I don't like... how do I say this... I
86 mean I'm a practicing Muslim, I pray, I worship Allah, not more.
87
88 AM: Okay. What experiences did you gain from being here in Greece, what did it
89 change in you? How did it develop you?
90
91 A: I had a weak personality when it comes to traveling alone, for example if the place is
92 new I would fear going there, but here I had the strength a bit, we are not allowed to
93 travel alone as females, we have to have a man from the family to be escorted by (...)
94 we don't have such strict rules in my family but when I am traveling I have to have my
95 son or my husband with me if I'm traveling far, you know what I mean, but in my
96 family it a bit easier, but sometimes life imposes certain things on us.
97
98 AM: Do you feel that you have become stronger with this experience?
99
100 A: For certain, I mean when I first came to Greece I was afraid to go out alone, I would
101 wait for my son to accompany me, but little by little I got used to it.
102
103 AM: And your two boys are young men correct?
104
105 A: Yes.
106
107 AM: They are about 10 years old?
108
109 A: No.
110
111 AM: 20 years I mean?
112
113 A: One is 20 and the other is 25.
114
115 AM: And did they have a change in character as well?
116
117 A: Yes they are going through the change process praise Allah.
118
119 AM: For you personally did you find a new path? Something new?.. I cannot seem to
120 find the proper word AH! A new opportunity!! Did you find a new opportunity
121 {laughing}
122
123 A: {laughing} New like what? A better life you mean?
124
125 AM: do you have anything to add that may be important to you?
126
127 A: No I mean for me when you asked if I found opportunity here?
128
129 AM: Yes.

130

131 A: In Syria we lived a happy and pleasant life.

132

133 AM: Yes.

134

135 A: But when war came we lost all hope in life, no hope whatsoever, I mean we lived
136 seven years with no hope at all, I even had a psychological problem like depression.

137

138 AM: Ah.

139

140 A: Of course the part where we are in Greece is the easiest part, half the journey was
141 from our city to Turkey, there lies the hardship, but here I felt that I had hope, there was
142 no hope at all back in Syria.

143

144 AM: Okay (...). Do you want to stay here in Greece or do you want to go to Germany?

145

146 A: No I want to go there, I have a reunion application because my son there in Germany
147 is a minor.

148

149 AM: Okay, and was his asylum request granted?

150

151 A: He's been there for 3 years, I haven't seen him in 4 years. He has been there for 3
152 years and you're waiting for all of you to unite.

153

154 AM: Do you know when this will happen and you'll be able to join him?

155

156 A: I was granted permission 8 months ago but the authorities here won't let me leave.

157

158 AM: You've taken it 8 months ago?

159

160 A: Yes, approval to travel, from July, but they won't let me leave.

161

162 AM: Do you have any idea why is that?

163

164 A: There are no reasons, the German authorities even contacted the authorities here to
165 inquire as to why I'm still here, I'm not doing anything here.

166

167 AM: So you did not take the approval to exit Greece.

168

169 A: I have a stamp to be deported from Greece to Germany, I have a stamp, we call it
170 (Kick out stamp) I don't know what it's called, I mean my issue is done here in Greece,
171 I have nothing more to do here.

172

173 AM: When did you arrive to Greece?

174

175 A: I've been here a year.

176

177 AM: Okay, Thank you so much.

178

179 A: Thank you!

180

181 LP: May Allah grant you strength {laughter}.

Interview E.

29.03.2018

Interviewer: AM, LP; Translator: AM

Location: Melissa Network

Interviewee: Girl, 15 years old, Syria/Lebanon/Palestine

(Interview conducted in English)

1 LP: What gives people in your community strength?

2

3 E: In general from the experiences. We had experience and we can learn from it and it
4 gives us the power to continue.

5

6 LP: And what else?

7

8 E: And also from the problems and you're looking to find a solution and like you can
9 know more how to find the solution easier for the problem. Like from the difficulties
10 what we had before, we can learn from the mistakes. And it gives us more information
11 about ourselves what to do.

12

13 LP: Also from religion? Does it play a role?

14

15 E: Yes yes, from religion yes. We can eh, we know that if we have a problem like the
16 god is testing us. He the god wants us to be happy always but this is the life and we
17 know we will die so we have to...this life is life testing.

18

19 LP: What about the family?

20

21 E: Yes of course also the family. You can find in your family a person to speak like
22 your mother or your sister. You can speak with them. And together you can find a
23 solution.

24

25 LP: How would you personally define strength?

26

27 E: Like for me, I used to cry always when I have something. Like if I have a problem or
28 something I was scared and I cried immediately. I didn't know that one day I would
29 travel and I will have all these difficulties and I will be standing on my feet until now.
30 Really, I was afraid and it didn't come to my mind that one day I will go. But yeah
31 really I had very difficult things in my life and now I know that I am strong and I can do
32 more if I want. Because I discovered myself until now I cant believe that I did that. I
33 came from Turkey Greece and from Syria to Turkey. And the mountains and oh my god
34 yeah. And I also take this power from my mom, because I came here with my mom
35 alone and my brothers. I have three brothers and when I came my brother was 2 years
36 old. When we went from Syria to Turkey, two mountains we have to climb and my
37 mom was putting my small brother on her back and until now she works also and she is
38 with us and she is really strong.

39

40 LP: So you answered it a little bit already but on your way to Greece, what was it that
41 kept you strong and gave you the power to continue your way?

42

43 E: I had a hope like one day I will have this, one day I will have this. And also I met a
44 lot of friends and also my English was good. I started there to remember all my English
45 and that's why I want all the children to learn and to know the languages. So it helped
46 them...I was working there as a volunteer with them. I met a lot of volunteers from
47 Portugal. Until now I speak with them. So that's why, I didn't have free time to sit with
48 my self and remember all this. No I said to myself this is a new life now and it's a safe
49 place, there is no war. I have to see my education, to continue studying and see the
50 world.

51
52 LP: Wow, bravo. This was in Turkey when you were working as a volunteer?

53
54 E: No in Greece, I was in the island when I came there. You know eh you don have to
55 sit and cry. Nothing will change, really nothing will change. You just have to think what
56 will do tomorrow or for your future. For me, now I am 15 years old I am thinking about
57 when I will go to the university, what I will do if the university can give me the
58 certificate. If I can work in my country or another country? To tell my story to the
59 children and the girls.

60
61 AM: Do you like to write?

62
63 E. Stories? Eh {laughs} I am not good at it but I can yes. [Laughs]

64
65 LP: So what have you learned through your experiences in Greece?

66
67 E: In Greece ehh {laughs} in Greece like I knew many things about myself, about the
68 people, like here also the people they are very kind. I was afraid if I go there, maybe the
69 people will not like me because I'm a Muslim, I wear Hijab or something. But now I go
70 to the school and you know all the school they are my friends {laughs}. We play
71 together always and if they want to play they don't play alone, no they ask me, do you
72 want to play, come. We have tomorrow a test, come we have to study this...so yeah.
73 And I knew that I'm strong and eh I knew that now I have a new life and that I can
74 continue my education so now I have this goal. I want to make it true.

75
76 LP: So you found new opportunities for yourself?

77
78 E: Yeah!

79
80 LP: And you found friends in the school (...)

81
82 E: A lot of friends, I have friends from Greece more than from my country or Arabic.
83 And they don't have problem if I am wearing hijab or something. And yeah. I have
84 friends from Portugal, I have also from Germany, from Holland, from America.

85
86 AM: And in which language do you speak with your Greek friends?

87
88 E: In Greek because I am learning and I know Greek.

89
90 AM: You came in 2016 so in two years you learned Greek?

91
92 E: Yeah I can speak but not everything but I can speak yeah. And I am learning French
93 also. Because when I live in Lebanon, the last two years I learned French once a week.
94 And here I am learning twice a week.

95
96 LP: Also here in the centre?
97
98 E: No somewhere else. There was a girl but she left.
99
100 LP: So you have the feeling that you have grown here in Greece?
101
102 E: Yeah yeah yeah. I can speak, I can do whatever I want you know.
103
104 LP: You wouldn't have thought about that back in Syria?
105
106 E: Yeah I feel like. I didn't even have a phone. I wasn't looked at. I was just playing in
107 my area. But here there is a garden, you can go to the school, yeah Greece is a nice
108 country and a lot of nice places here.
109
110 AM: And the school is a public school here in Athens?
111
112 E: Yeah with Greek children, a Greek school.
113
114 LP: Would you like to add anything; would you like to say something more?
115
116 E: Ehh I don't know I just ant to say to the girls to be strong and because I was waiting
117 for 9 months or more just to take my papers and to go eh but I wasn't thinking about it
118 and I took and I'm here now and everything will change just you have to wait. You
119 don't have to take like everything quickly quickly I want to go there; I want to be there.
120 No just wait and slowly slowly you will have everything and this is a life and you have
121 also (...) like you are still young and you can do whatever you want. And all these
122 difficulties on day it will go and you will have your own life. Don't be afraid because
123 one day you will know that you are strong (laughs) and do what you want and what you
124 believe and don't listen to the people yeah.
125
126 LP: Wow, you're 15 and saying all these incredible things (...) so nice I wish I would
127 have known these things when I was 15!
128
129 E: {laughs} you know that's why, in Greece I knew everything!
130
131 LP: Does your family want to stay in Greece? Do you also have family in other
132 countries in Europe?
133
134 E: I have my relatives there yeah in Germany and in Palestine and in Lebanon. Maybe I
135 can visit them. But my family is here. And I want to stay here because I feel more...this
136 is the language it's similar to Arabic and like that. They have a lot of things like Arabic.
137 [Counting words in Arabic and Greek]
138
139 LP: Does your mom also want to stay here?
140
141 E: Yeah yeah.
142 LP: And do you already have a plan what you, I mean you still have time, but what you
143 want to study or what you want to work?
144
145 E: Yeah English teacher {laughs} I want to be an English teacher. Eh I will know the
146 language more and can work like a teacher or translator. To travel to another country to
147 translate.

Interview J.

28.03.2018

Interviewer: AM, LP; Translator: AM

Location: Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development

Interviewee: Woman, 28 years old, Syria

1 LP: Okay, so my first question is what gives people in your community strength despite
2 facing difficult situations?

3

4 J: You mean in Syria or here?

5

6 LP: In your community in Syria or like in your (...) when you think of your cultural
7 background, your family, the community you grew up in, what is it that gives people
8 strength even though something bad happened or something difficult happened.

9

10 J: Okay, yeah, actually (...) our community (...) you mean if (...) how they support us
11 to make strong or?

12

13 LP: Yeah.

14

15 J: Umm (...) I don't know to answer this question (...) even in Arabic or in English.

16

17 LP: Aha.

18

19 J: Because like (...) umm, like we have in our community (family ties) that is.

20

21 AM: How you grew up in your family?

22

23 J: Aha, it's like we (...) all the family surrounds us when we are child.

24

25 LP: Aha.

26

27 J: To be bigger and bigger.

28

29 LP: Aha.

30

31 J: So (...) and (...) umm (...) yes.

32

33 Lena: {laughing with J}

34

35 AM to L: Or do you mean in the community, or would you also be interested in the
36 community here?

37 LP: I was thinking about the community where you grew up.

38

39 J: Yeah.
40
41 LP: Like your bigger family.
42
43 AM: What does give people strength in your community?
44
45 J: Aha.
46
47 Lena: The strength yes.
48
49 J: This is the idea, the most relevant thing are the family ties and bonds that we have in
50 our societies, the family always sticks together, ties don't fall apart, like when a child is
51 18 years old, they have to leave the family or to become independent, like that, we all
52 stay together we live together, until for example the time comes, like for instance when
53 I have to make a family of my own and get married, so this thing gives us strength, we
54 keep feeling that our family is in front of us whether is be the father, the mother or the
55 brothers and sisters, uncles from both sides of the family, those are all considered to be
56 a single network, so we feel that this thing gives us strength.
57
58 LP: And how would you personally for yourself define strength?
59
60 J: Actually in my education, because I'm independent, like (...) I can get a job and I can
61 work and I can get my salary and I can be like independent like (...) from my family.
62
63 Lena: Yeah.
64
65 J: So, I can be stronger.
66
67 LP: Yeah (...) that's true, okay.
68
69 AM: Generally, what does strength mean for you?
70
71 J: For me? To be independent, to not be dependent on someone else financially, to be
72 able to work and study, even when I was in Syria, I only had the ability to do this here.
73
74 LP and AM: Okay.
75
76 LP: Umm (...) when you think of your way to Greece from Syria, what were the things
77 that kept you strong to get here and to continue your way.. like.. or what are the things
78 that kept you strong, what made you strong, maybe something.. some experiences made
79 you stronger?
80
81 J: Yeah! Well (...) first is I trust my God {laughs}.
82
83 Lena: Aha.

84 J: Then I trust myself.
85
86 Lena: Aha.
87
88 J: So (...) and (...) I have like goals, so I should arrive to my goals, its like this, so this
89 has given me strength to come step by step to do what I want, to achieve.
90
91 LP: Aha, so you (...) it was more about yourself?
92
93 J: Yeah.
94
95 LP: Like you trusted yourself but were there also people around you that (...)?
96
97 J: Tried to (...)
98
99 LP: Give you power or like (...)?
100
101 J: Yeah!
102
103 LP: Made you continue and (...) or?
104
105 J: Umm (...) actually umm (...) I forced to travel from Syria because all my family was
106 in Germany.
107
108 LP: Aha!
109
110 J: So (...) they go to Germany by but my visa refused because I am over 18.
111
112 LP: Oh.
113
114 J: So (...) umm (...) they always try to support me too, you should travel you should go
115 you should not stay in your country alone so.
116
117 LP: Aha (...) yeah (...) umm, okay when you think of your time in Greece now and the
118 time you've lived in Greece (...)
119
120 J: Yeah?
121
122 LP: What have you learned through your experiences in Greece? {laughing}
123
124 AM: A lot!
125
126 AM: A lot of stories!

127 AM and LP: Yeah?
128

129 J: Umm (...) to share my experience more than when I was in Syria.
130
131 LP: Aha!
132
133 J: Umm (...) to be more independent and to give the strength to the other people to be
134 like me because you know I'm a girl and I am here alone without my family without
135 anyone.
136
137 LP: Hmm.
138
139 J: And (...) I want the people here to be like (...) independent that's why we are here
140 and that's why I'm trying to share our experiences.
141
142 LP: Yeah (...) Okay.
143
144 J: Yeah.
145
146 LP: Did you also find new opportunities for yourself like (...)?
147
148 J: Yeah! Sure!
149
150 LP: Yeah!
151
152 J: Like (...) umm (...) actually (...) hmm (...) after (...) like I got scholarship from the
153 American university here.
154
155 LP: Ah!
156
157 J: I (...) like I have more new people to know to have like friends, new friends, new
158 people too, new experience, a new work.
159
160 LP: Aha.
161
162 J: And everything is (...) it's good.
163
164 LP: Okay. So do you feel you have grown kind of?
165
166 J: Yeah, yeah.
167
168 LP: So this experience made you stronger?
169
170 J: Yeah, yeah!

171 LP: Okay.
172
173 J: Aha.

174
175 LP: Umm, would you like to add anything! It's my last question [smiling and laughing]
176 if you think you (...) if there's something missing or that you would like to share?
177
178 J: Umm, I don't think so {LP laughing}
179
180 J: I hope to (...) I don't know {laughing}.
181
182 AM: Or if you prefer to talk in Arabic?
183
184 J: No but (...) there is nothing almost that I can add except that I hope that everyone
185 you'd interview wouldn't be talking about the negative aspects, that they would talk
186 about positive aspects to give people a push forward, like that, because I talk about the
187 positive.
188
189 LP: Aha.
190
191 AM: Yeah.
192
193 J: but I faced a lot of bad things when I came here.
194
195 AM: Yeah.
196
197 J: So (...) but these negative things, these bad things make me stronger.
198
199 LP: Yeah, good.
200
201 J: So (...).
202
203 LP: Do you (...) are you planning to stay in Greece? Or (...)?
204
205 J: Umm, maybe yes (...) maybe no [laughing] but first I will go to Germany, I will see
206 everything, if I like Germany I will be there with my family.
207
208 LP: Okay.
209
210 J: If not I will come back.
211
212 LP: Okay, because (...) are you like (...) the (...) like the (...)
213
214 J: Asylum seeker here?

215 LP: No, no I mean of the centre?
216
217 J: Aha.
218

219 LP: Like which position?
220
221 J: This here in Jafra? Programs manager.
222
223 LP: Programs manager!
224
225 J: Yeah!
226
227 LP: Yeah!
228
229 AM: Mashallah!
230
231 LP: it's a good job! {both laughing}
232
233 AM: Sweet!
234
235 J: Yes!
236
237 LP: Okay, thank you!
238
239 J: You're most welcome {both laughing}

Interview L.

29.03.2018

Interviewer: AM, LP; Translator: AM

Location: Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development

Interviewee: Woman, 46 years old, Syria

1 AM: Okay, umm what gives people strength in your community?

2

3 L: Either from education or work, these things give strength.

4

5 AM: Aha.

6

7 L: But the most important thing is education. To be strong, whenever a problem
8 happens, divorce or something, she would have a degree and a salary and that's it.

9

10 AM: And family? Is it a source of support?

11

12 L: When the family is together that is even better.

13

14 AM: So in general in the community in Syria, what is the source of strength there?

15

16 L: I mean when people are together, when a female is separated people have to talk and
17 say oh look she is divorced and this has an effect on the children, so no with a family it
18 is better.

19

20 AM: And when it comes to you personally, what does strength mean?

21

22 L: For me personally, I don't have a degree honestly, but for me when my children
23 study and acquire degree's then this thing gives me strength, when they have a degree
24 then its just like I got a degree, to ensure their future.

25

26 AM: Okay, when you think about the journey you had to go through to reach Greece,
27 what are the things that gave you strength during that hard time?

28

29 L: We did go through a hard time, it is true that when you get here it is hard but it's
30 much better than Syria, because in Syria there is trouble.

31

32 AM: Aha.

33

34 L: I mean when you get here at first it is difficult but you know in the back of your head
35 that there is no explosions, no kidnappings, nothing, and everything is secured and
36 provided.

37

38 AM: And when you were going through the journey and all was hard from where did
39 you summon the strength?

40

41 L: My strength and inner push was that my children were in Germany, I mean I was
42 telling myself that when I get here I would be reaching my goal, to not be far from my
43 children, when I was in Syria they were worried about me, get out! Get out! To make
44 this fear disappear.

45

46 AM: Ah! Your children got out before you did?
47
48 L: My children got out a long time ago, three years ago.
49
50 AM: Aha, okay, but you said that you travelled with your children?
51
52 L: No, the girls were with me.
53
54 AM: Aha
55
56 L: The young men were there, and the girls here.
57
58 AM: Ah, okay. With your daughters and your husband together?
59
60 L: Yes, I have two girls, my husband and me; my eldest daughter is married, as for the
61 boys when I was still in Syria they had been already in Germany.
62
63 AM: Okay. And you were planning to travel to Germany straight away?
64
65 L: No because (inaudible)
66
67 AM: Okay, because the borders were closed?
68
69 L: I don't know. I took refugee status here.
70
71 AM: Okay. When it comes to strength, does religion and culture play a role?
72
73 L: Religion has nothing to do with it.
74
75 AM: What?
76
77 L: It has nothing do to with it, what does it have to do with strength (inaudible){laughs}
78
79 AM: And culture?
80
81 L: Of course culture, but religion it's normal, everyone has his own religion, you're free
82 and I'm free.
83
84 AM: What experiences have you gained from staying here in Greece?
85
86 L: I didn't understand.
87
88 AM: I mean when you think about the experience you've gained.
89
90 L: When I came here I met people and saw people and new things, everyone is living
91 their own catastrophe [laugh] you would say I'm tired in my life but when you see what
92 people are facing your issues become small, you say Praise Allah [laugh].
93
94 AM and LP: {laughing}
95
96 AM: Did you see something new when you got here regarding education degree's in the
97 centre or?
98

99 L: Yes!
100
101 AM: Did you learn something new?
102
103 L: For sure, I learned how to weave wool, this is something new to me, I didn't know
104 that before [smiling] as for people, if you don't interact your mind will stay closed, you
105 get to know the culture more, you meet the people, when I used to hear about Greece, I
106 used to say so what it's just a country, but now that I'm here I know that they have
107 certain customs and habits.
108
109 AM: Do you feel that you are stronger now with this experience?
110
111 L: Definitely, when you arrive to a European country you're bound to change
112 automatically, you will change when you see the people and the world here, you are
113 bound to change for the better, it's not like going to any other place, not like here, going
114 to a European country is different, Arab countries are different from European one's,
115 you are bound to change your mind-set.
116
117 AM: So are you happy here?
118
119 L: Yes praise Allah.
120
121 AM: Would you like to add something?
122
123 L: Like what? {Laughing}
124
125 AM and LP: {laughing}
126
127 L: May Allah Grant you strength.
128
129 AM and LP: Thank you!
130
131 AM: She [LP] is asking if you would like to stay in Greece or travel to Germany?
132
133 L: It depends; most probably I will stay here.
134
135 AM: Aha.
136
137 L: But if I have to leave maybe I will travel.
138
139 AM: Okay.
140
141 L: But I mean the weather in Greece is nice indeed {laughing}.
142
143 LP: It's nice isn't it? {laughing} I like Greece!
144
145 L: Indeed like they say, I don't know about other European countries like Germany and
146 others I didn't see them but here.
147
148 AM: It's a bit colder {laughing}
149
150 L: No it's not about colder, I mean how do you say it, some people here have a
151 sensitivity towards refugees, but those are a minority, the majority loves refugees, I

152 heard that in Germany it's not that much.
153
154 LP: Aha.
155
156 L: Yes.
157
158 AM: Okay.
159
160 LP: Thank you!
161
162 LP: You are most welcome, may Allah grant you strength.

Interview M.
29.03.2018
Interviewer: AM, LP; Translator: AM
Location: Melissa Network
Interviewee: Woman, 29 years old, Syria

1 AM: Okay, My first question is what gives people strength in your community in Syria
2 in general?
3
4 M: That gives women power? To work and study, those two things, work and
5 education.
6
7 AM: What about parents?
8
9 M: Parents? Of course! Parents have the leading role in that, the mother and the father.
10
11 AM: And religion?
12
13 M: Religion, yes perhaps.
14
15 LP: Perhaps, but not that much?
16
17 M: Of course religion, but not everyone with religion is empowered by it, that is not a
18 must, some people pass through certain circumstances in which they question their
19 beliefs, during the war like if someone dies, or if your belongings disappear, stop your
20 education, this puts psychological stain on you so that you would explode, you would
21 forget religion.
22
23 L: Yes.
24
25 M: But when your family and friends are beside you and your community to make sure
26 you stand back on your feet again, this thing helps.
27
28 AM: And for you personally what does strength mean?
29
30 M: Strength?
31
32 AM: How do you define strength?
33
34 M: To have faith in Allah, that Allah will choose life for us, we will live and Allah will
35 choose. I mean Allah already decided this life for us before we were anything, before
36 we were created.
37
38 AM: But what are the things that give you strength in life?
39
40 M: My education and my work.
41
42 LP: The independence.
43
44 AM: Okay, when you think of the journey you went through to reach Greece, what was
45 it that gave you strength?

46
47 M: What made me strong is that I knew that it is extremely hard for me to go back to
48 Syria, this is what made me strong, it was impossible for me to go back to Syria, I had
49 to start my own life with my own hands, from myself from my heart, the decision that I
50 had to live.
51
52 AM: One chance, one road.
53
54 M: A clear reason, I had to live, this is what made me do this, I had to live, forget the
55 past, this is the reason.
56
57 AM: Were there anyone supporting you?
58
59 M: My mother, a lot, a lot!
60
61 AM: Aha.
62
63 M: (...) support my psychological state.
64
65 Unknown voice: Is your mother here or?
66
67 M: No she's in Lebanon, she always calls me and supports me psychologically.
68
69 AM: And when you were on the journey did you call her on the phone?
70
71 Melissa: Yes, quite a lot, but when I was going to start the journey I did not call her so
72 she won't get worried, but she always supported me until I got out.
73
74 AM: She was with you always?
75
76 M: Yes in my heart.
77
78 AM: What experiences have you learned from being here in Greece?
79
80 M: I will tell you (...) that no one stands by your side except Allah, you have to be
81 strong for yourself, no one helps you, you have to be strong.
82
83 AM: Do you feel that you've become stronger here?
84
85 M: Yes, because quite frankly, here is different from Europe in its entirety, in Europe
86 maybe if you fall down Europe helps you and stands by your side, but here no one helps
87 you, even the state itself does not have the ability to help you, you have to be strong to
88 help yourself, for example if you are going to look for a job, if god forbid some family
89 problems occur or marital problems occur or any other kind of problems you are the one
90 who has to be strong, the state will not help you.
91
92 AM: And did you find new opportunities here?
93
94 M: The opportunity that I loved the most, that empowered me the most this year not the
95 previous one is Melissa.
96
97 AM: And what are you doing here?
98

99 M: I'm learning Greek, I met good people, if something happens with me I can ask
100 them for help, whether is be socially or in anything else, health wise.
101
102 LP: And can you continue your work as an English...like...what you studied? Do you
103 think it's an option for you?
104
105 M: I think that there is a chance for me to continue if I master the Greek language and
106 stayed here, if I stay here, for sure if I stay here I will work, I can't just around jobless,
107 because if you stay still life will give you nothing, you have to work, I cannot be
108 dependent neither on a brother or a father or a husband, it has to be from my own self
109 (...) exactly {laughter} not just for that reason itself, here the financial situation is
110 extremely difficult!
111
112 AM: Yes!
113
114 M: The situation in Greece especially is difficult, I mean I was forced to stay here, I
115 even tried to get out to Sweden but my asylum request was declined because my name
116 is on the system here, so I was forced to go back with my dignity intact without them
117 telling me to go out, you know what I mean, so I came back here.
118
119 AM: But was your asylum request granted here?
120
121 M: Yes, residency.
122
123 AM: And do you want to stay here?
124
125 M: For sure, I'm forced to stay here, it's not up to me to decide, going back to Syria is
126 not an option, and to take my chances and try another country is also not an option
127 because I will be rejected due to the fact that my data is already on the system here, so I
128 decided to go back.
129
130 LP: You had the idea to go to a different country or you had the idea to continue to a
131 different country or?
132
133 M: No, I will stay here.
134
135 LP: Yeah, okay.
136
137 AM: But you said that you have someone in Sweden? You have family there?
138
139 M: I have a female relative in Sweden.
140
141 AM: Aha.
142
143 M: And I have my brother and uncle and aunt from my mother's side in Germany.
144
145 LP: Okay.
146
147 M: I thought at first after I leave Sweden to go to Germany but I was worried that I had
148 to wait for a long time without benefiting and just sitting for two years doing nothing.
149
150 AM: Yeah, yeah.
151

152 M: Waiting for nothing (...) It's cold isn't it?
153
154 AM: Yeah, would you like to add anything?
155
156 M: I don't know maybe I can say something as an idea, I don't know if my voice can be
157 heard, for example when they want to help someone here they would tell him if you are
158 married then you are the one responsible for your family, but if the situation barely
159 allows him to be responsible for himself only, how can he be responsible for his family
160 as well! Me for example I went to ask for help for myself...they won't help me, they
161 won't help me here with anything, they tell me your husband is responsible for you,
162 okay I understand that he is responsible for me but he can't afford be responsible for
163 himself to begin with...you know what I mean, so this is a hard thing, and it's causing a
164 lot of stress.
165
166 AM: Yes.
167
168 M: They will not help in anything, your husband is responsible for you and that's it, and
169 if by chance they help you have to be the one who goes from one place to another
170 asking for that help.
171
172 AM: But here in the centre the people did not reject you?
173
174 M: No they did not reject me at all!
175
176 AM: Aha.
177
178 M: But what I mean is help to be provided like the rest of Europe.
179
180 AM: Yes.
181
182 M: That they would provide me with work, help me a bit with a place to stay, with
183 anything else, here they don't help, I even tried to ask, they told me that your husband is
184 the one responsible for you, we are unable to help you with anything.
185
186 AM: Aha.
187
188 M: And my husband went through a period where he had no job, they even don't pay
189 you for work here sometimes.
190
191 AM: And is he employed at the moment?
192
193 M: Now he's working, but sometimes they won't give him his pay and deduct from his
194 pay a lot.
195
196 AM: Okay.
197
198 M: This is a huge problem.
199
200 Unknown voice: Does he have a contract, just recently, but there's some problems, the
201 man he used to work for held out on his payroll and didn't give it to him.
202
203 AM: Has he been here for long?
204

205 M: Yes, he's been here for long, my husband love Greece.
206
207 AM: Aha.
208
209 M: I find it quite difficult especially that when we were in Syria we were self sufficient,
210 but when we got out Syria the situation became very hard, job opportunities, and until
211 you can stand on your feet from the previous situation you were in before and so on
212 (...) it's hard.
213
214 AM: Aha.
215
216 M: Especially that there are no relatives here no one, no friends, we are still new, it's
217 very hard...so I don't know how can we assimilate here, if someone can give us an idea
218 on how to support ourselves...I don't know.
219
220 AM: But now when we talk about strength, on what do you focus, I mean okay, the
221 situation is very hard but certainly you focus on positive things.
222
223 M: Now the most important thing I have to focus on is that I have to educate myself and
224 work (...) for my daughter as well, and to help my husband.
225
226 AM: Yes.
227
228 LP: Perfect.
229
230 M: That is all.
231
232 AM: Thank you!
233
234 LP: Thank you, May Allah grant you strength!
235
236 M: Thank you!

Interview N.
29.03.2018
Interviewer: AM, LP; Translator: AM
Location: Melissa Network
Interviewee: Woman, 28 years old, Iraq

- 1 AM: Okay first question is what gives people in your community strength, in your Iraqi
2 community in general?
3
4 N: it differs from one area to another.
5
6 AM: In your community where you lived?
7
8 N: In my community there was no strength given {laughing with AM}
9
10 AM: No empowerment?
11
12 N: No, no empowerment, I mean we lived under the control of my uncles from my
13 mother, and I didn't finish my studies because of them, and we saw a lot of injustice in
14 Iraq, let alone war and all the other things.
15
16 AM: Aha.
17
18 N: I mean (...) there was no empowerment.
19
20 AM: But regardless of the hard circumstances, from where do people get this
21 empowerment to live?
22
23 N: From things they love, from their family sometimes.
24
25 AM: Aha.
26
27 N: From their sister, brother.
28
29 AM: From family.
30
31 N: Yeah.
32
33 AM: Perhaps from religion? Culture?
34
35 N: Religion has nothing to do with it; everyone has a religion that fits them.
36
37 AM: Aha.
38
39 N: I mean religion is different from empowerment, I mean it's true that it gives you
40 some strength, when you get fed up and bored you go back to your religion, but religion
41 is something separate from strength.
42
43 AM: Aha, as for you personally what does strength mean, what is your definition of this
44 word?
45 N: That a woman be independent, to get education, is not dependent on anyone else, to

46 be dependent on herself, her education, on herself only.
47
48 AM: Do you understand? [to LP]
49
50 LP: I understand, not everything, but almost {laughs}
51
52 N: Because life is like that, you shouldn't be dependent on anyone; they might die or
53 leave you, anything could happen, so a person should rely on themselves only.
54
55 AM: And what are the things that give you strength, from where do you get your
56 strength?
57
58 N: Sometimes from poetry, other times from some writings, maybe from a word, or
59 when I see something in front of me that gives me strength, various things.
60
61 AM: Okay, when you think about your journey to Greece, what is it that gave you (...)
62 wait (...)
63
64 N: Strength?
65
66 AM: Yes, what gave you strength?
67
68 N: Frankly, when we decided to leave we just wanted to escape death in Iraq, we went
69 to Turkey, and from Turkey we came here, but we had no idea that we were going to
70 stay here in Greece, we thought that we were going to go to Europe to my uncles.
71
72 AM: Aha.
73
74 N: Afterwards we stayed here we didn't leave.
75
76 AM: During the same journey with all its hardships (...)
77
78 N: With all its fears {laughs}.
79
80 AM: And fears {laughs}.
81
82 N: It was filled with fear, we did not expect to get out honestly because the boat we
83 were in sank and (...)
84
85 AM: Seriously?
86
87 N: And if it wasn't for the Greek coast guard who arrived we would have been all dead.
88 We were a group of 66 in the boat (...)
89
90 AM: Aha, were there people that helped during that time?
91
92 N: Were the only Iraqi's, a man and his son from Syria, all the rest were from Africa.
93
94 AM: Ah!
95
96 N: We were not able to communicate with them at all, and the boat sank, people were
97 on top of each other (...) my Grandmother broke her leg.
98

99 AM: Oh!
100
101 N: when I was transported from this boat to the coastguards boat I fainted and didn't
102 feel a thing, My blood pressure fell, we were in a bad situation.
103
104 AM: Praise be to Allah!
105
106 N: Praise be to Allah, I thought I was going to die that's it {laughs}
107
108 AM: You arrived here from Turkey?
109
110 N: Yes from Turkey to the island of Lesbos, Mitillini.
111
112 AM: Okay, and what are the things you learned or gained from your experience here in
113 Greece if you think about all the time you have spent here?
114
115 N: I mean (...) in Iraq I thought you have to always depend on either your husband or
116 your family, but when I got here...my thoughts were different from those of my family,
117 I always thought that we should always rely on ourselves, but when I got here I
118 mean...it was confirmed to me that a women should only rely on herself, to improve
119 herself.
120
121 AM: Aha.
122
123 N: This is the most important thing I have learned here {laughs}.
124
125 AM: Do you feel that you became stronger here?
126
127 N: Yes! {everyone laughing}
128
129 AM: Did you find new opportunities here?
130
131 N: When I first arrived here I looked for a school to continue my education but I did not
132 find any, I mean each time I go to an NGO or a school they refuse to register me
133 because my age has to be less or have children to be able to enroll to that NGO, at last
134 uncle Dhafir is Tunisian, I call him uncle because he is older than me, he used to work
135 at the (MSF) and he was the one who enrolled me here.
136
137 AM: Sweet, okay!
138
139 N: He was (...) [laugh] everything that went on with the students they used to (...) it was
140 close nearby his clinic but now they are closed this NGO.
141
142 AM: They closed this NGO okay.
143
144 N: They moved it to another area, so I used to go to him, and he registered me here, and
145 I started studying poetry, art, computer science, English and Greek.
146
147 LP: Wow! that's a lot {laughs}!
148
149 AM: Everything {laughs}
150
151 N: Yesterday we drew for easter, see my drawing {laughs}

152
153 AM and LP: Wow!
154
155 AM: You're a true artist! It's so beautiful!
156
157 N: I'm not that good, but if I put my mind to it I can make it work.
158
159 AM: Wow! And the colours are very nice!
160
161 LP: It looks like a (...)
162
163 N: A peacock!
164
165 LP: Peacock?
166
167 N, In Arabic we call it (Tawoos)
168
169 LP: It's really nice {laughs}!
170
171 N: Today maybe at four we have poetry, they'd give us a word and we would build on
172 it.
173
174 AM: Ah! And each one would get a sentence?
175
176 N: No, each one would build a poem on it.
177
178 LP: Wow! That's nice {laughs}
179
180 AM: What would you like to do in the future, what is your dream?
181
182 N: My dream is to become a computer engineer.
183
184 AM: Ah!
185
186 N: It's something I'm very passionate about, I used to format and download software in
187 Iraq for my brother, he had an Internet café, so I used to help him.
188
189 AM: And what's you plan? Do you want to stay here or do you have someone to travel
190 to?
191
192 N: I took my residency papers two weeks ago.
193
194 AM: Oh! Congratulations {laughs}!
195
196 N: And the passport needs a year
197
198 AM: Aha!
199
200 N: Currently we are staying here, but my grandparents want to go to my uncle to
201 Finland.
202
203 LP: Finland? Oh! And you?
204

205 N: Currently we are staying here, my mother and (...)
206
207 LP: Okay.
208
209 N: Because my grandfather needs surgery and more care, that is why he needs to go to
210 his son.
211
212 LP: Okay.
213
214 N: 81 years old.
215
216 AM: Would you like to add something?
217
218 N: I don't have anything {laughs} you ask me and I will answer.
219
220 AM: So the centre here is the most important thing in the end? Or was it the society?
221
222 N: It is very nice here, in Iraq a girl shouldn't mingle around with anyone, she shouldn't
223 talk to a man; she shouldn't go out a lot.
224
225 AM: Not to go to strange places (...).
226
227 N: Yes, here it's different, we mixed with everyone, we had teachers from Canada and
228 Italy, Spain, I mean from all over the world!
229
230 AM: From all over the world!
231
232 N: Yes we saw the entire world here {laugh} and it's very nice to interact and mingle
233 with people and communities, from each country you find a personal!
234
235 LP and AM: Yeah!
236
237 N: There are even students from different countries, from Afghanistan and Pakistan,
238 Hong Kong, Ethiopia (...)
239
240 AM: Hong Kong? You mean Kongo?
241
242 N: Yes, Kongo I mean {laughs}.
243
244 N: I mean there is an array of students.
245
246 AM: And what language do you use to communicate with each other?
247
248 N: Mostly English.
249 AM: And Greek.
250
251 N: No! Greek is still just a little bit {laughter}!
252
253 LP: In a bit {laughs}!
254
255 N: Bit by bit! {Laughs} it still needs time, bit by bit, we are still learning the Grammar,
256 the hardest thing is the Grammar!
257

258 Lena: Nice.
259
260 N: Where did you learn Arabic?
261
262 AM: I learned it in Jordan, we lived in Jordan together!
263
264 N: Jordan and Iraq have the same language.
265
266 AM: Yes, that is why I'm understanding what you're saying well!
267
268 N: Yes, Because Jordan and Iraq have the same language.
269
270 AM: But there are a lot of accents!
271
272 N: Yes indeed, there is a lot of accents, also in Iraq there is a lot of accents.
273
274 AM: And from which part of Iraq are you from?
275
276 N: I'm from Al-Anbar, Fallujah province.
277
278 AM: Al-Anbar, ah okay!
279
280 LP: From the south or?
281
282 N: From the south.
283
284 LP: Okay {laughs}.
285
286 N: The south {laughs}!
287
288 LP and AM: Nice, thank you so much!
289
290 N: You're most welcome!

Interview S.
29.03.2018
Interviewer: AM, LP; Translator: AM
Location: Melissa Network
Interviewee: Woman, 17 years old, Iraq

- 1 AM: Okay my first question is what gives people strength in your community in Iraq in
2 general?
3
- 4 S: In Iraq? How does it give me power you mean?
5
- 6 AM: Aha.
7
- 8 S: First of all no one gave me strength except for my family of course, they gave me
9 strength to study and grow myself.
10
- 11 AM: What else?
12
- 13 S: That is it, I mean I was not expecting anyone to ask me this question “who gives you
14 strength” but I think foremost my family is the one to be credited for this.
15
- 16 AM: Okay, Good. What does strength mean for you personally, what is the definition of
17 this word for you?
18
- 19 S: Strength first of all will not come from a physical aspect such as the body, strength is
20 from your own belief in yourself during hard times, this is better than giving in to
21 weakness.
22
- 23 AM: Anything else you would like to add?
24
- 25 S: No.
26
- 27 AM: Okay. When you think about your journey to Greece, What are the things that gave
28 you strength during that time?
29
- 30 S: You mean when I got here?
31
- 32 AM: Yes.
33
- 34 S: Surely when I knew that we were going to Greece from my family I was surprised,
35 because I never thought that someday I would leave my country, this idea never crossed
36 my mind and I was surprised when I heard it, but when we got to Turkey I wasn't
37 comfortable, but in Greece I got used to it bit by bit, I felt that I have discovered a lot of
38 things about myself that I did not know before. Despite of the many hardships yet we
39 have learned a lot of lessons from them.
40
- 41 AM: You mean to say that those lessons are of importance?
42
- 43 S: No, not like that, I mean when we left the island and it was extremely cold, there was
44 sadness indeed but we also learned from this.
45

46 AM: Did you have people around you that helped?
47
48 S: Yes there were a lot of people from other countries that would volunteer to help
49 people; it was very sweet of them to do such a thing expecting nothing in return.
50
51 AM: Does religion help?
52
53 S: Religion? Yes, I mean my belief helps, I mean I have no problem with that, we have
54 to respect each others religious believes but religion is something that belongs to me,
55 between me and my God and according to my customs, yes.
56
57 AM: And what have you learned from your experience here in Greece?
58
59 S: I didn't understand.
60
61 AM: What experiences have you cultivated here in Greece?
62
63 S: Each time it's something new, I met new people, I took from their own personal
64 experiences and to connect with people I did not know before, my stay in Greece is
65 giving me opportunities to grow and better myself, this is what I've learned.
66
67 AM: Can you give me an example of those opportunities?
68
69 S: To continue my studies, learn a new language, and to establish myself as an
70 independent being, like that.
71
72 AM: Do you feel you have become stronger here?
73
74 S: Yes, I became much stronger, I mean in my community in Iraq was a closed
75 community, but when I got here to Greece I met a lot of people, a thing that made me
76 learn even more.
77
78 AM: And are you attending school now?
79
80 S: Yes I'm attending school here in Greece.
81
82 LP: A Greek school?
83
84 S: A Greek school.
85
86 LP: Okay, sweet. And do you speak Greek?
87
88 S: No I don't, but I'm studying Greek.
89
90 LP: Okay, Good.
91
92 AM: So the community here is not a closed one?
93
94 S: The community here is different from that in Iraq of course, I mean in all its aspects
95 it's different, it's very opened, I was introduced to many things here I knew that (...)
96
97 AM: For example?
98

99 S: For example, studying language, not only English, learning Greek, German, any
100 language.
101
102 AM: Aha.
103
104 S: There is a lot of nice classes here, things like that.
105
106 AM: Aha, sweet. Do you have anything else to add? {Laughs}
107
108 S: No, nothing to add.
109
110 AM: Ah yes! What is the plan now, are you going to stay here in Greece, do you have a
111 residency card?
112
113 S: I have a residency card here in Greece for three years. But my family want's to get
114 out; they want to travel to another country.
115
116 AM: Aha, and you? Do you want to travel with them?
117
118 S: Yes, I want to travel with them.
119
120 LP: Which country?
121
122 S: Germany.
123
124 AM: Germany, do you have family there?
125
126 S: No, there is none.
127
128 AM: Okay.
129
130 LP: Okay.
131
132 AM: Because they think that Germany is better?
133
134 S: Yes.
135
136 LP: Okay.
137
138 AM: Okay, but you don't know when this will happen?
139
140 S: No I don't, we are waiting for the passport to finish. When it's done we'll leave.
141
142 AM: Ah, okay.
143
144 AM: But do you feel like staying here or what?
145
146 S: No, I met a lot of people who left to other countries, I mean if I stay here I won't
147 have any close friends, I mean if I go someplace and meet people who are already
148 settled then that would be a great opportunity for me, just like I came to Greece from
149 Iraq and discovered new things in me, going to other countries will help me discover
150 even more things about myself.
151

152 AM: Okay {AM and S laughing together}!
153
154 AM: So you don't want to stop learning and meeting new people?
155
156 S: Yes.
157
158 AM: Okay, sweet. {LP laughing}
159
160 AM: So this is an opportunity for you as well?
161
162 S: Yes, an opportunity!
163
164 AM: Okay, Bravo.
165
166 S: I have also decided if I work on improving myself and find a job I could come here
167 as a tourist for vacation.
168
169 AM: For sure. {Everyone is laughing}
170
171 AM: The best place for tourism.
172
173 S: Yes, I won't lose hope if I go to another country and leave Greece that I won't be
174 coming here again, No, when I achieve good thing I will be coming here in the nearest
175 chance.
176
177 AM: Okay.
178
179 S: There are a lot of memories that I made here!
180
181 LP: May Allah gave you strength.
182
183 {Everyone laughing}

10.3 Cluster

Category	Example	Coding rule
Community perspectives on strength		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Support 	<p>“(…) the most relevant things are the family ties and bonds that we have in our society, the family always sticks together, ties don’t fall apart (…) those are all considered to be a single network, so we feel that this thing gives us strength”</p>	<p>Social support from family and friends as strengthening factor in the community</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence/ Self-reliance 	<p>“Either from education or work, these things give strength”</p>	<p>Independence and self reliance related to education and occupation as strengthening community factor</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion 	<p>“Of course religion, but not everyone with religion is empowered by it (…) some people pass through certain circumstances in which they question their beliefs, during the war like if someone dies, or if your belongings disappear, stop your education, this puts psychological stain on you so that you would explode, you would forget religion”</p>	<p>Which role religion plays as strengthening factor in the community context</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life experiences 	<p>“In general from the experiences. We had experience and we can learn from it and it gives us the power to continue</p>	<p>The aspect of life experiences being a strengthening factor for communities</p>
Individual perspectives on strength		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence/ Self-reliance 	<p>“To be independent, to not be dependent on someone else financially, to be able to work and study”</p>	<p>Independence and self-reliance as strengthening factor for the individual</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Support 	<p>“No one gave me strength except for my family of course, they gave me strength to study and grow myself” “Sometimes from poetry, other times from some writing, maybe from a</p>	<p>Social support as a factor of strength for the individual</p>

	word, or when I see something in front of me that gives me strength”	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and Security 	“Honestly, feeling safe (...) that is the most important thing (...) I feel strength when I’m safe”	Safety and security being perceived as strengthening factors for the individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion 	“To have faith in Allah, that Allah will choose life for us, we will live and Allah will choose” “Honestly, feeling safe (...) that is the most important thing (...) I feel strength when I’m safe”	The personal role of religion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal beliefs and attitudes 	“Strength first of all will not come from a physical aspect such as the body, strength is from your own belief in yourself during hard times, this is better than giving in to weakness”	Personal beliefs and attitudes that serve as protective factors for the individual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts and Literature 	“Sometimes from poetry, other times from some writing, maybe from a word, or when I see something in front of me that gives me strength, various things”	Arts and Literature as possible factor of strength
Sources of strength on journey and in transit		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Coping Processes <p>- Hopes for the future & goals</p> <p>- Reframing and comparing one’s situation</p> <p>- Inner strengths and resources</p>	<p>“What made me strong is that I knew that it is extremely hard for me to go back to Syria, this is what made me strong, it was impossible for me to go back to Syria, I had to start my own life with my own hands, from myself with my heart, the decision I had to live”</p> <p>“We did go through a hard time, it is true that when you get here it is hard but it’s much better than Syria, because in Syria there is trouble”</p> <p>“I didn’t have free time to sit with myself and remember all this. No, I said to myself, this is a new life now and it’s a safe place, there is no war”</p>	<p>How hopes for the future and specific goals in mind helped refugee women to find strength throughout their journey and in transit</p> <p>Reframing and comparing own situation with the old one as strengthening factor</p> <p>How the concentration on inner strengths and resources can be a protective factor</p>

<p>- Aspirations for the future</p>	<p>“My dream is to become a computer engineer”</p>	<p>How aspirations for the future can be a strengthening factor for refugee women</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and security 	<p>“What made me strong is that I knew that it is extremely hard for me to go back to Syria, this is what made me strong, it was impossible for me to go back to Syria, I had to start my own life with my own hands, from myself from my heart, the decision I had to live”</p>	<p>Longing for safety and security as a source of strength on the journey and in transit</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Support <p>- Family support</p> <p>- Institutional support</p>	<p>“My mother, a lot, a lot (...) she supports my psychological state” /</p> <p>“When I first arrived to Greece, my psyche was depleted, but when a centre was opened in the island like Jafra here, where they had handcraft activities such as drawing and wool work (...) my psyche improved 50%”</p>	<p>Family support may help refugee women to gain strength on their journey and in transit</p> <p>Institutional support may help refugee women to gain strength on their journey and in transit</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupation and Commitment <p>- Handcraft</p> <p>- Own resources</p>	<p>“When I first arrived to Greece, my psyche was depleted, but when a centre was opened in the island like Jafra here, where they had handcraft activities such as drawing and wool work (...) my psyche improved 50%”</p> <p>“My English was good. I started to remember all my English and that’s why I want all the children to learn and to know the languages. So it helped them...I was working there as a volunteer with them. [...] So that’s why, I didn’t have free time to sit with my self and remember all this“</p>	<p>How carrying out an activity a person loves can be psychologically beneficial for refugee women</p> <p>How the commitment to a task through activation of own resources can help a person to regain a structure and strength</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion <p>- Trust in God</p> <p>- Cultural adherence</p>	<p>“Well (...) first is I trust my God (...) then I trust myself”</p> <p>“Yes, I mean my belief helps, I mean I have no problem with that, we have to respect each others religious believes but religion is something that belongs to me, between me and my God and according to our customs”</p>	<p>Islamic coping strategies may serve as protective factor</p> <p>Religion as cultural adherence rather than a protective factor for refugee women</p>
Growth processes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed Perspectives and Priorities <p>- Change in mind-set</p> <p>- Development of new life goals</p>	<p>“I cannot be dependent neither on a brother or a father or a husband, it has to be from my own self”</p> <p>“To share my experience more than when I was in Syria ... to be more independent and to give the strength to the other people to be like me because you know I’m a girl and I am here alone without my family without anyone (...) I want the people here to be like independent that’s why we are here and that’s why I’m trying to share our experiences”</p>	<p>Growth processes can be related to a change in refugee womens’ mind-set</p> <p>Growth processes can be related to the development of new life goals</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth through Interaction and Social Support 	<p>“It is very nice here, in Iraq a girl shouldn’t mingle around with anyone she shouldn’t talk to a man, she shouldn’t go out alone (...) Here it’s different, we mixed with everyone, we had teachers (...) from all around the world (...) it’s nice to interact and mingle with people and communities, from each country you find a personal”</p>	<p>How interaction with diverse groups can be enriching and enforce equality and acceptance</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Sense of Personal Strengths <p>- Overcoming fears/ breaking with cultural rules</p> <p>- Empowerment of others</p>	<p>“For certain, I mean when I first came to Greece I was afraid to go out alone, I would wait for my son to accompany me, but little by little I got used to it”</p> <p>“To share my experience more than when I was in Syria (...) to be more independent and to give the strength to the other people to be like me because you know I’m a girl and I am here alone without my family without anyone (...) I want the people here to be like independent that’s why we are here and that’s why I’m trying to share our experiences”</p>	<p>How a new societal context can lead to overcoming fears and breaking with cultural rules</p> <p>How endurance of adversity can strengthen a person and lead to empowerment of others</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of New Abilities 	<p>“I’m learning Greek”</p>	<p>How the acquisition of new abilities can contribute to the feeling of personal growth</p>

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zu
 nicht zu
(bitte ankreuzen)

Nach Ablauf der Aufbewahrungsfrist
(3 Jahre) soll diese Bachelorarbeit
ausleihbar in die Bibliothek eingestellt
werden.

Ja
 Nein
(bitte ankreuzen)

Unterschrift StudentIn

Unterschrift HauptreferentIn

