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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSES TO CRISIS
An Analytical Framework for the Study of Social Resilience

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ABSTRACT: This article proposes a sociological approach for the study of social resilience that emphasizes interpretation and the role of networks. After discussing past contributions to the study of social resilience and proposing an alternative analytical framework that builds on Max Weber's approach to social action, the article illustrates the proposed strategy through a discussion of the acquisition of transnational skills as a strategy of social resilience. Available empirical evidence shows indeed that fluency in foreign languages works both a resilience strategy and a vehicle toward the emergence of an European demos.

KEYWORDS: Crisis, Social Resilience, Social Networks, Social Action, Languages

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1. Introduction

Economic crisis and the European Union's recent loss of legitimation are tightly coupled. This article discusses foreign language competence as a promising individual resilience strategy in times of crisis which simultaneously fosters European identification

and can thus make a modest contribution to raise the EU's average level of political legitimacy.

In the context of globalization, the neoliberal turn, and the 2008 financial and economic crisis, a new concept, *social resilience*, has entered with force the conceptual and analytical repertoire in social science research. Literature searches looking for articles or books including "social resilience" in the title produce very few citations indeed before 2007. Since then, however, the concept appears in a growing number of publications and research institutions have begun to promote research in this area. Peter Hall's and Michèle Lamont's edited volumes on the subject illustrate this growing interest, as do a recent call for proposals under the European Commission's FP7 program and the programmatic statement of prestigious institutions such as the *MaxPo Center for Coping with Instabilities in Market Societies* at SciencesPo (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Social Resilience in Contemporary Research Programs

"-The ability of citizens to develop resilience in the event of crises *– rather than opting for fatalism or rejecting any involvement in public life* -- is thus a fundamental issue for the EU*, its Member States and beyond." (**European Commission, FP7 Research Program: Citizens' Resilience in Times of Crisis**)*

" We are interested in the ways groups sustained their well-being in the face of such challenges *… We conceptualize social resilience broadly to encompass the capacities of societies to cope with many kinds of challenges. (**Hall and Lamont, Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era**).*

"Research at the Center will …focus on the strategies of individuals, organizations and the political system to cope with a more unstable world*." (**MaxPo**)*

After providing a birds-eye overview of research on social resilience in the past seven years and proposing an alternative research agenda that minimizes overlaps with previous work on similar topics, this article focuses on the acquisition of foreign languages as a strategy of social resilience that is simultaneously associated to greater levels of European identification.

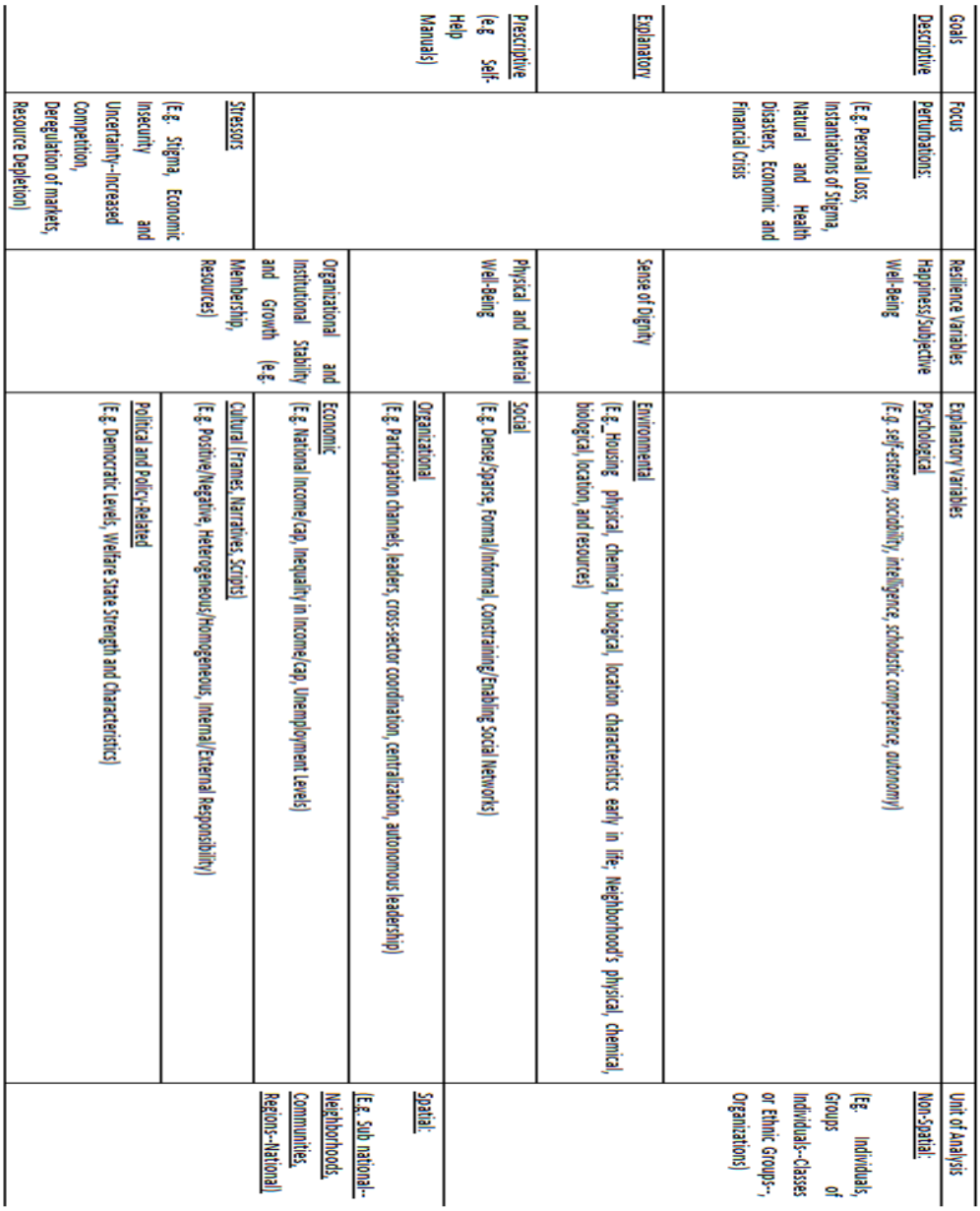
2. Social Resilience

Research on social resilience has been descriptive, explanatory, and prescriptive, the latter encompassing the abundant self-help literature on the topic (see Figure 2). It has

focused both on sudden disturbances or shocks and on long-term stressors. Among the former, one can highlight economic crises, natural disasters, and health emergencies. Among the latter, the focus has been on the impact of the growing mobility of goods, services, capital, and people, the deregulation of markets and the gradual withdrawal of the state as an investor, redistributive agent, and protector, and the gradual depletion of natural resources (for recent exemplars of these literatures see Keck and Sakdapolrak 2013; Sherrieb et al. 2010; Zautra et al. 2008; Seccombe 2002). Occasionally, the focus has also been on stigma (e.g. Lamont and Mizrachi 2012).

The concept of resilience evokes endurance and, more precisely, the capacity to bounce back. When applied to individuals, groups, or organizations, this capacity can refer to all kinds of attributes. In general, the literature has shown interest in a restricted set among them, namely physical and material conditions, subjective well-being, sense of dignity, and when applied to organizations, survival and resource endowment. Dependent on the research topic and academic discipline, authors have explored the impact of psychological, environmental, social, cultural, organizational, policy and political factors on resilience. The concept of social resilience refers to the subset of explanations that emphasizes non-psychological and non-nature related variables. Finally, research on resilience and, more specifically, social resilience, has focused on spatially and non-spatially-bounded objects of enquiry: Among the former, neighborhoods, communities, local and regional politico-administrative units, and states; among the latter, individuals, groups, such as classes, ethnic groups, and marginalized populations, and organizations. Just to give the reader an example of recent research on social resilience I will refer to Marco Ancelovici's contribution to Hall's and Lamont's book on social resilience (2013). In this well-crafted article, Ancelovici asks the question: "Why has the French trade union CFDT been more resilient than the CGT since the onset of globalization and market deregulation and privatization?" Ancelovici focuses on one specific attribute of organizational resilience, which is the unionization rate, and on two sets of explanatory variables, which are the unions' respective cultural repertoires and organizational features. He concludes that the CFDT has been more resilient than the CGT because of a more heterogeneous cultural repertoire, a greater degree of centralization, and a greater degree of leadership autonomy.

Figure 2. Thematic Overview of Work on Resilience



Notwithstanding diversity in research topics the bulk of research concerns social resilience under globalization and neoliberalism. Over the years, authors have repeatedly stressed that globalization and neoliberalism have resulted in growing inequalities and enhanced uncertainty and insecurity. It is thus not surprising that a good number of studies on social resilience have examined the impact of the degrees of market openness, market deregulation, and welfare state retreat on general and aggregate measures of resilience like subjective, physical, and material well-being. This type of research will advance our knowledge very much. It is already well-established that selective market protection, labor regulation, and strong welfare states are collectively beneficial. We do not need a new concept, social resilience, to pursue this long-standing research agenda.

When linked to processes like Globalization and Neoliberalism, the shift in focus from socially sustainable development or social exclusion to social resilience makes sense if one accepts the irreversible character of some of the institutional and policy transformations of the past thirty years and pragmatically explores ways to advance toward the attainment of the *Good Society* under the new economic and institutional paradigm. When linked to the 2008 financial and economic crisis, the focus on resilience captures the severity of the shock and the crisis' tremendous impact on the social structure of the advanced economies of North America and Europe. Sociological studies of globalization, neoliberalism, and the recent financial and economic crisis will therefore be enriched by research on social resilience if we move beyond the analysis of contrasts between closed and open economies and between liberal and more protective types of welfare state and into an exploration of variation in social resilience among open and neoliberal societies. Similarly, a significant pay-off can be obtained from broadening the scope of our research from the study of the most deprived and marginalized groups in society to encompass the middle class, hard-hit by the current crisis. Researchers should use the new concept to explore this unchartered territory. Otherwise, there is a risk that research on social resilience may not differ much in substance and conclusions from previous research on welfare state and labor relations regimes, social sustainability, and social exclusion. The study of social resilience would thus become another fad, old research dressed in new clothes. This danger is also present in research that effectively equates resilience with well-being and in research that compares levels of well-being instead of adopting a longitudinal approach, as called for by the ideas of endurance and capacity for bouncing-back that help define the concept of resilience.

The warnings above should not obscure the fact that there is a lot of exciting research out there on social resilience in the context of globalization, neoliberal politics,

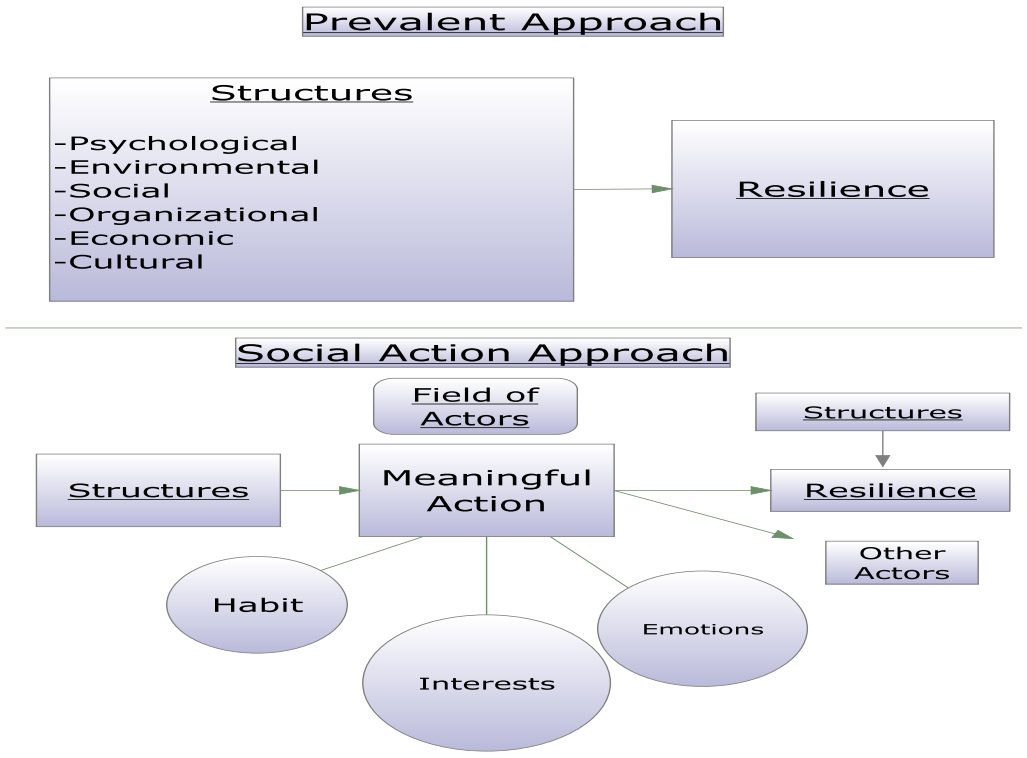
and crisis. Michèle Lamont's and Marco Ancelovici's accent on the relevance of cultural narratives for resilience is a case in point; in particular, the former's emphasis on the different degree of penetration of individualist, neoliberal strategies of resilience in different societies is an original way of tying the topic social resilience to the contemporary institutional and ideological context. It connects well, in particular, with Sennett's brilliant ethnographic account of how a group of laid-off IBM workers in the 1990s tried to come to terms with failure as they met regularly at the River Winds Café in upstate New York City (Sennett 1998).

Whether the emphasis is on resource endowment, social capital, cultural narratives, policy, organizational features, however, what meets the eye when reading the recent literature on social resilience is its structural, almost exclusively Durkheimian, character. Resilience is conceived as resulting from particular structural conditions, even when structural conditions include cultural elements. Against this background, I propose a more Weberian approach to resilience, where the focus is on social action and where resilience is a conditional consequence of specific courses of meaningful action oriented to others rather than of the characteristics of individuals or groups of individuals and of the environment surrounding them (see Figure 3). Social action is critical to social resilience because individuals and groups, in order to confront or bounce back from disturbances or stressors and to seize on the new opportunities created by them, must in the end do something. No matter how psychologically fit they are, no matter the structural features of the environment where they operate, whether they retain what they had or bounce back will depend on what they do and on the interaction between what they do and the environment within which they act. Ancelovici, for instance, demonstrates that the CFDT reacted earlier than the CGT when confronted with dwindling membership and makes an excellent case to convince us about the role of contrasts in the CFDT's and CGT's cultural repertoires and organizational features, but he does not tell us much about the rationale that pushed the CFDT toward choosing one among several alternative strategies to increase its membership, nor about why the strategy that the CFDT relied upon proved successful.

The research agenda proposed thus has a descriptive dimension--show what people do-- an explanatory one--why they make the choices they make--and an evaluative one--what behavioral choices turn out to be resilient and under what conditions. Whether we explain or evaluate, we need to consider the role of institutions, networks, and culture. Institutions, networks, and culture, explain what people do and whether what they do proves to be a resilient or non-resilient strategy. I depart from extant work on social resilience and stress the need to take into account the nature of disturbances and stressors that confront and destabilize individuals, groups, and organiza-

tions when developing explanations of resilience. Disturbances and stressors are complex events, situations, or process whose specific characteristics matter for the resilience capacity of different individuals and groups and which create opportunities as much as they threaten to destabilize individuals, groups, and organizations. Resilience thus results both from fending off or recovering from threats as from seizing on new opportunities. This emphasis on opportunity in the context of globalization, neoliberalism, and crisis is present in Hall's and Lamont's analytical introduction to their new book *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*, but is generally absent from empirical studies of social resilience (see Figure 4). Finally, a social action-centered approach to social resilience requires that we examine social action as unfolding in fields populated by other agents, who not only orient individual, group, or organizational behavior but also impact on the success of social action aimed at resilience.

Figure 3. Two Alternative Approaches to Social Resilience



I would now like to unpack the social-action approach to social resilience that I have just outlined through a more systematic classification of possible individual and collective responses to the current context. This allows me to introduce my current research focus on transnational skills as a resilience strategy under globalization, neoliberalism, and crisis.

Figure 4. Neoliberalism and Opportunity

Hall/Lamont:
"Developments associated with neoliberalism, **such as the opening of markets** *and new policy regimes, put important constraints on many people, usually linked to their social positions. But* ***it also offered opportunities*** *and new tools from which a response to such developments could be fashioned".*

When confronted with disturbances or stressors, individuals, groups, organizations, and polities can react in ways that fall into the following categories: adaptation, insurance against risk, mobilization, inaction, or withdrawal. Those familiar with Hirschman's work will notice the family resemblance with his famous *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* formula (Hirschman, 1970). Adaptation means action that takes stock of new conditions and attempts to do the most out of them; insurance against risk means action that takes stock of new conditions and orients action toward minimizing potential losses; mobilization means political action aimed at reverting to pre-shock conditions or at retaining what one had under the new conditions; inaction means to go on as usual, the ostrich's strategy; finally, withdrawal means action that signifies giving up in the face of disturbances and stressors.

Social action in the face of disturbances and stressors can also be individual or collective. Each form entails advantages and potential drawbacks (e.g. "free-riding" in the case of collective action) for resilience, which in turn depend on the specific characteristics of the disturbance or stressors.

3. The Acquisition of Competence in Foreign Languages as a Form of Resilience

I turn now to an illustration of how to use a social action approach to the study of social resilience. I am interested in social resilience under globalization and what has been termed the neoliberal turn; I am also interested in the social impact of the 2008

economic and financial crisis. Myriad of authors have pointed out that globalization and neo-liberalism are responsible for increases in social inequality, insecurity, and uncertainty (e.g. Piketty, 2013; Bartlett and Steele 2012; Birchfield 2009; Brady et al. 2005). When focusing on social resilience it is tempting to focus on the plight of the lower classes and other disadvantaged groups in order to see what makes their members more or less resilient. And yet, what is original about the effects of globalization, neoliberalism, and the recent financial and economic crisis is that it has hit hardest the middle class, which in many societies includes the largest chunk of the population (Gornick and Jantti 2013; Frank 2007)

What makes members of this middle class resilient? We can use a structural approach to discover the psychological, cognitive, social, and other correlates of resilience. If we use countries instead of individuals as the unit of analysis we will also discover policy and institutional correlates. Only on counted occasions, however, do these correlates increase or decrease the resilience of the middle class without the mediation of behavior.

Two forms of behavior potentially associated to social resilience among the middle classes, entrepreneurship and the acquisition of transnational skills (see Figure 5), seem particularly interesting in the context of the European Union's crisis. They are good illustration of how threats and opportunities created by specific disturbances or stressors create opportunities for social resilience just as they diminish the usefulness of behavioral alternatives. Entrepreneurship and transnational skills as such do not necessarily lead to middle class social resilience. If they do--at least this is my hypothesis--it is because under the stressors that we call globalization and neoliberalism, their potential for maintaining or increasing the well-being of individuals has increased. In fact, one can show that if we focus on a particular indicator of transnational human skills, fluency in English as a foreign language, we see that people who know English display greater purchasing capacity than those who do not know English, even after controlling for education (see Table 1).

Figure 5. Dimensions of Transnational Skills

Ability to:
1. Process Information from Different National Environments
2. Communicate in Different National Environments
3. Mediate/Broker between National Environments
4. Adapt to Different National Environments
5. Exploit Resources from Different National Environments

Table 1. The Economic Returns to Fluency in English as a Foreign Language across the European Union (Regression Coefficients)

Country	Regression Coefficient for Number of Owned Appliances on Proficiency in English as a Second Language		Regression Coefficient for Number of Owned Appliances on Proficiency in English as a Second Language (Poisson Regression)		Regression Coefficient for Number of Owned Appliances/Household Size on Proficiency in English as a Second Language	
Belgium	0.543	***	0.132	***	0.256	***
Denmark	0.457	***	0.110	*	0.223	*
Germany West	0.881	***	0.230	***	0.485	***
Germany East	0.347	*	0.100		0.359	**
Greece	0.575	***	0.158	***	0.295	***
Spain	0.479	***	0.117	*	0.336	***
Finland	0.728	***	0.176	***	0.182	*
France	0.202	*	0.045		0.042	
Italy	0.548	***	0.172	***	0.657	***
Luxembourg	0.432	***	0.109	*	0.300	**
Netherlands	0.210	**	0.052		0.208	*
Austria	0.505	***	0.153	***	0.590	***
Portugal	0.867	***	0.224	***	0.432	***
Sweden	0.478	***	0.124	*	0.269	*
Cyprus	0.699	***	0.181	**	0.158	**
Czech Republic	0.332	**	0.082		0.207	*
Estonia	0.542	***	0.134	**	0.281	***
Hungary	0.344	*	0.079		0.094	
Latvia	0.840	***	0.301	***	0.440	***
Lithuania	0.456	***	0.157	**	0.219	**
Malta	0.480	**	0.183	*	0.239	**
Poland	0.403	**	0.120	*	0.194	*
Slovakia	0.401	**	0.102	*	0.159	**
Slovenia	0.286	**	0.055		0.136	
Bulgaria	0.834	***	0.268	***	0.358	***
Romania	0.609	***	0.162	**	0.207	**

Note 1: The household items that used to compute the index with Eurobarometer data are: DVD, access to Internet, a car, CD player, and computer.

Note 2: Descriptive statistics for linear regression coefficient for the variable "Fluency in English as a foreign language", across countries: First Quartile = 0.388; Third Quartile = 0.632; Mean = 0.518; SD = 0.194

The estimated model controls for gender, age, age square, household size, university education, friends abroad, study abroad, residence in a midsized town, and residence in a large town/city.

***: Sig. at 0.001 level, two-tailed

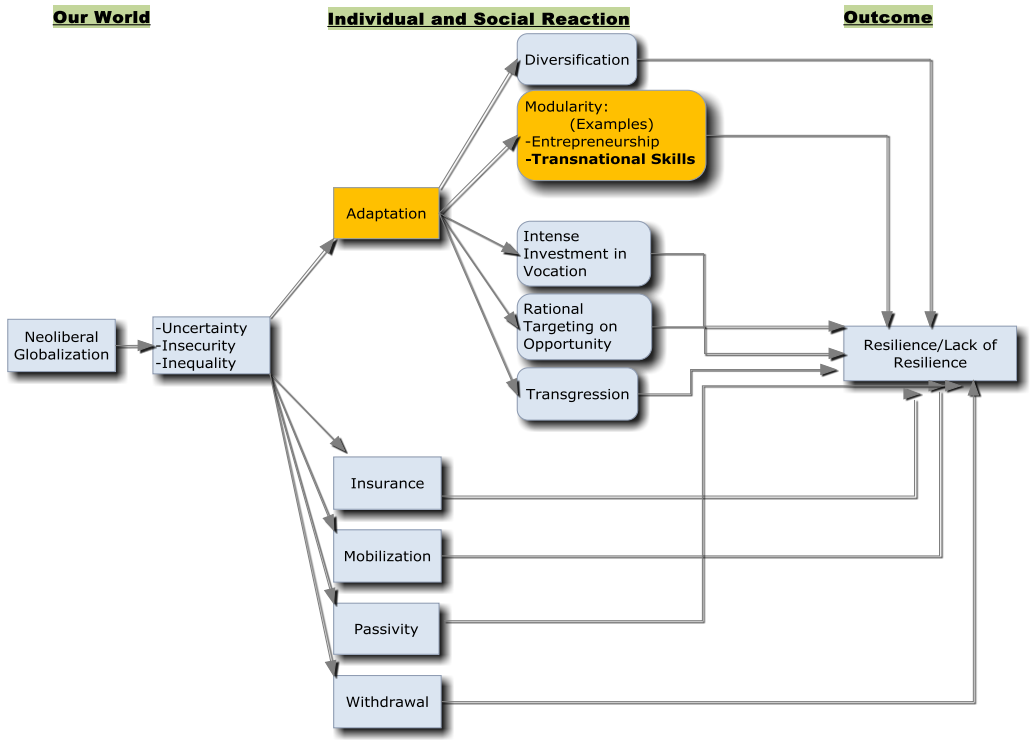
**: Sig. at 0.01 level, two-tailed

*: Sig. at 0.05 level, two-tailed

Source: Models estimated using data from Eurobarometer Study 73.3 (2010)

Entrepreneurship and the Acquisition of Transnational Skills belong to the category of behavioral responses that described above as "adaptive". They are also modular, to the extent that they can benefit individuals in all kinds of career paths. Other forms of behavioral adaptation that one can distinguish are diversification, concentration, targeting, and transgression (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Possible Individual Reactions to Crisis



There is growing evidence that the middle classes are relying on the acquisition of transnational skills as a strategy of resilience under globalization and neoliberalism and that the 2008 financial and economic crisis has increased their relevance (Süssmuth 2007; Grosse 1998; Clark and Hammer 1995). What is interesting about transnational skills, especially fluency in foreign languages, is that they can be studied as both family and individual strategies, since people generally acquire this fluency at a young age, when it is their parents, not they, who decide what to learn and what not to learn.

Here is an example of what I mean: it is an excerpt from an interview I conducted recently in Spain as part of the FP7 project *Eucross*. The respondent is a man in his 50s, who used to work as an employee for Catalonia's biggest bank and who, like many in his age group and social class, has lost his job. He is talking about how the crisis has affected him and his close ones and, in passing he discusses his children's foreign language skills: (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Learning Foreign Languages as an Individual Resilience Strategy

Q: Does he know English [R's son]?
A: Yes, he already knew English [Before moving to Ireland]. Yes, because my wife and I took the trouble and when he was four, we already brought him to the British Institute.
Q: Ahhh! Yes, yes.
A: Then he had a private English teacher. Then, we took him to an academy, there in Poble Nou [a low middle class neighborhood in Barcelona] so that he would take English lessons. My daughter already had, already has traveled to Ireland and so on to enroll in summer courses and learn English; because we have taken interest in their learning English, in **their learning what we did not learn**.
Q: Yes, Yes…

There are other examples of the relevance of transnational skills in today's societies. For instance, the popularity of the Erasmus program among European students or growing lines in front of German language institutes in countries most affected by the 2008 financial crisis, and growing emphasis on the teaching of foreign languages in schools. Furthermore, the relevance of transnational skills in global and neoliberal times is not circumscribed to advanced economies. There is also evidence from emerging economies as well. Thus, an article on middle class Indian IT workers who move temporarily to the US under the H1B scheme reveals that many among them, especially those from more humble background, do so in order to become more competitive in the Indian labor market (Chakravarity 2007). Other articles discuss the advantages in the Chinese labor market that accrue from having a foreign higher education diploma (Zweig et al. 2004). For their part, Saiz and Zoigo show that in the US labor market, fluency in foreign languages can mean up to 2% higher annual earnings (Saiz and Zoigo 2005). As stated above, my own research confirms these findings for the European Union. This reflects greater demand for fluency in foreign languages and the fact that these skills are still not so widespread that their market value would decrease. A recent article in Spain's daily *El Mundo* pointed out that foreign language requirements in job ads for university graduates is on the rise and reaches 32% in job ads addressed to

graduates of five-year programs and 29% in those addressed to graduates of three year programs. It is worth noting that transnational skills do not necessarily matter for their actual contribution to a person's professional activity. They can simply function as signals of competence. Furthermore, they are not always acquired to improve one's chances in the labor market. They often are part of family and class strategies aimed at legitimizing, "naturalizing" Bourdieu would say, social privilege, as a forthcoming book on urban professionals by Le Galès and others suggests (Andreotti et al. 2013).

In his path-breaking study, Jürgen Gerhards has demonstrated that education is the main predictor of fluency in foreign languages. But a very large proportion of the variance remains unexplained, even when one adds other relevant opportunity factors such as a country's level of development or the world prevalence of one's main language (Gerhards, 2010). Part of a research agenda focused on social resilience would consist in moving from an analysis of the role of structural and opportunity factors into an examination of the role of interpretive processes. More precisely, I would propose to analyze, in Weberian fashion, the meaning that people attach to transnational skills, especially to the learning of foreign languages, as a factor that guides their decision to invest or not in them. This analysis would be the point of departure for an inquiry into the role of social networks and institutions in promoting the development of the interpretive frames that underlie the decision to invest or not to invest into the learning of foreign languages. For instance, looking at the problem from my own field of expertise, the study of frames, it would be interesting to know how people's positive or negative views of the United States and its cultural hegemony impact on people's investment in the learning of English as a foreign language and then to examine in comparative fashion the role of social networks, institutions, both formal and informal, in promoting such views. The prevalence of the rejection of "US imperialism" in in a given national culture, for instance, and the extent to which its relative presence overlaps with left-right cleavages in this national culture, may explain the extent and distribution of an "English resistance" frame, inimical to investment in acquiring English as a foreign language, among this national culture's population.

The second stage of the research agenda that I propose consist in explaining why investment in transnational skills translates into higher returns in some places than in others. Here again, cognition, networks, and institutions are relevant, since they are key variables in the power struggles that take place in the field of social and economic rewards between competitors that mobilize frames, economic resources, social capital, and institutional resources to further their respective and conflictive interests. This mobilization can be directed in many directions, from affecting the supply and affordability of opportunities for acquiring those skills to determining the value of these skills.

The academic field is a case in point. For more than a decade, national academic communities have witnessed a struggle about the value of transnational skills, such as foreign degrees and foreign publications, in academic markets. The logic of competition of global academic markets in advanced economies, where comparative advantage lies in high value-added skills and products, has led many universities to start rewarding the publication in top academic journals, which are generally written in English. This, in turn, has provided incentives to attract English-speaking scholars, to offer courses or entire degrees in the English-language, and even to shift to English as the language of communication at or within campuses. This, of course, has not been well received by people attached to their national language and by members of academia who can lose because of this shift to English.

A recent debate at a prominent Spanish university illustrates academic conflict over language quite nicely: with the endorsement of the university authorities, a recently created department, keen on enhancing its international visibility and prestige, recently decided to publicly advertise several tenure-track positions at the international level, and they did so in English, using the university web portal and other well-known distribution lists. Some months later, just as the interviews were taking place, members of the department were taken by surprise as the university's trade unions issued a public statement in which it expressed strong misgivings about the hiring process. Lack of space prevents me from fully discussing the conflict. From this article's standpoint, however, it is worth quoting one of the trade unions' claims, which unequivocally speaks to the topic of the academic wars around the English language that have erupted in many international campuses:

> Although the advertising of these assistant professor positions, which in theory does not require an official public call, aims at attracting the best international candidates, the information available to this trade union's section is a source of concern and reveals anomalies and procedural breaches as outlined below:
>
> [….]
>
> 3. The advertising of the call is in English, despite the fact that it comes from a public Spanish university where the ability to teach in Castilian is a requirement.[1]

The emphasis of the trade union's statement on the language used to advertising the academic positions, not to mention the absence of logic in juxtaposing a criticism regarding the language in which the call was advertised to university norms concerning

[1] For confidentiality reasons, I leave out the name of the university and that of the trade union that issued the statement. I am happy to provide them on request.

the ability to teach in Castilian, is telling of how sensitive the issue of the penetration of English in university life around the world has become. The fact that the issue is raised by a trade union also reflects fears that English diffusion may open the door to new forms of social inequality.

The example above is certainly not an isolated case of conflict over English. It has been part and parcel of academic life in Spain and other non-English speaking European Union countries in the last decade. The main point I am trying to make, however, is that the provisional outcome of this sort of struggle determines at any point in time the relative status and economic position of holders of these transnational skills, thus constituting a more or less propitious environment for the acquisition of transnational skills as a resilience strategy.

4. From resilience to European identification

Greater promotion of the citizens' foreign language skills by the EU might contribute to simultaneously help some individuals out of the crisis and their levels of European identification, with implications for the European Union's legitimacy. The literature on European identification has stressed education as an important variable, but never quite unpacked the association to show whether it is cognition, utilitarian considerations, or what that mediates it. Similarly, the recent literature on the role of transnational factors in promoting European identification has emphasized international travel and friendships but overlooked transnational skills, such as competence in foreign languages. Evidence from a recent European Science Foundation's sponsored project that I coordinated, *Eumarr*, demonstrates quite convincingly that competence in foreign languages is a key variable underlying European identification. Table 2 illustrates this (see Table 2). In models that control for many theoretically relevant variables discussed in the literature, competence in foreign languages is seen to mediate the effect of education and to impact on European identification in a direct way, unmediated by international travel and interpersonal networks. More research is certainly needed that would determine whether utilitarian reasons (e.g. people with competence in foreign languages feels more confident about their chances in the European single market), performance reasons (e.g. the ability to "become" a citizen from another or other European nationalities than one's own through communication in foreign languages), or other reasons intervene in this relationship. What is important here, however, is that competence in foreign languages and European identification are strongly related.

Table 2. Regression of Identification with Europe on Socio-demographic Variables and Transnational Background, Bonds, Skills, and Experiences (Respondents with Country of Residence Nationality Only)

	Id. With Europe[1]	Id. With Europe	Id With Europe	Id With Europe	Id With Europe	Id With Europe	Id With Europe	Id. With Europe	Id With Europe	Id With Europe
R Born Abroad	0.61	0.44	0.50	0.49	0.51	0.63	0.72*	0.76*	0.72*	0.76*
Age	0.04*	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.04*	0.04*	0.04*	0.04**	0.04*	0.03
Gender	0.08	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.10	0.13	0.16	0.16	0.19	0.20
Binational Parents	0.18	0.14	0.18	0.17	0.09	0.12	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.14
Average Parental Degree	0.10**	0.08	0.02	0.02	0.00	-0.01	-0.03	-0.04	-0.03	-0.02
Lived Abroad for at least 3 Months before 17		0.46*	0.42	0.43	0.39	0.35	0.31	0.28	0.32	0.30
Number of Countries visited before 17		0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02
Respondent's Highest Degree			0.21**		0.16**	0.14**	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.06
Ln (Respondent's Higherst Degree)				1.20**						
Number of Languages Known before Meeting Partner					0.35**	0.32**	0.28**	0.27**	0.27**	0.27**
Respondent's Age when Couple first met					0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.00	-0.02	-0.01
Number of Countries visited between age 17 and Living with Partner						0.06**	0.05**	0.05**	0.05**	0.04**
Binational Couples							0.54**	1.74**	0.54**	0.54**
National Couples with at least one partner having more than one nationality							0.65**	-0.45	0.65**	0.65**
Partner's Highest Degree							0.15**	0.16**	0.15**	0.13**
One of R's Best Friends is a Foreigner							0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18
Age First Met* Binational								-0.04		
Age First Met* National Couples with at least one Partner having more than one Nationality								0.04		
R's Income									0.02	0.01
R Work for Multinational									0.05	0.02
Number of Countries Visited since with Partner										0.04*
Madrid[2]	1.35**	1.40**	1.44**	1.43**	1.75**	1.93**	2.02**	2.04**	1.98**	2.06**
Barcelona	1.07**	1.12**	1.16**	1.15**	1.02**	1.24**	1.40**	1.40**	1.36**	1.42**
Brussels	1.38**	1.27**	1.22**	1.22**	1.13**	1.23**	1.12**	1.13**	1.12**	1.15**
Antwerp	0.67**	0.56*	0.67**	0.67**	0.38	0.49	0.50**	0.48	0.49	0.51
Amsterdam	1.15**	1.11**	1.06**	1.06**	0.90**	0.92**	0.86**	0.85**	0.85**	0.82**
The Hague	0.79**	0.73**	0.73**	0.74**	0.58*	0.62**	0.63**	0.62**	0.62	0.59**
Constant	1.16	1.05	-0.19	-1.00	-0.59	-0.36	-1.11	-1.57	-1.09	-1.06
R-Square %	11.8	12.1	12.9	12.9	14.4	15.1	16.7	17.0	16.7	17.0
N	1660	1660	1660	1660	1660	1660	1660	1660	1660	1660

Source: Eumarr project. Details on the project and the survey available upon request.

Note: The study was conducted as an online survey to married or cohabiting European citizens in Madrid, Barcelona, Brussels, Antwerp, Amsterdam, The Hague, Zürich.All models control for identification with city, identification with region, and identification with the country with which R identifies the most.

**: Significant at 0.01 level, two-tailed; *: Significant at 0.05 level, two-tailed

1. Identification with Europe is based on a scale from 1 to 10 that measures the respondents' agreement with the statement "I feel European". 2. Reference Category: Zürich

5. Conclusions

The European Union recently launched its Erasmus + program. The Program's Guide states that …

> Multilingualism is one of the cornerstones of the European project and a powerful symbol of the EU's aspiration to be united in diversity. Foreign languages have a prominent role among the skills that will help equip people better for the labour market and make the most of available opportunities. The EU has set the goal that every citizen should have the opportunity to acquire at least two foreign languages, from an early age. (European Commission 2014)

This article has discussed foreign language acquisition within a more general analytical discussion of social resilience in the contemporary world. The 2008 financial and economic crisis has destroyed the lives of many European citizens and directed attention to growing life uncertainty, greater economic inequality, and the decline of the middle class in this period of neoliberal globalization. This article proposes a Weberian analytical strategy to study individual and social resilience and illustrates it by focusing on the relevance of competence in foreign languages in the global economy. While one should not lose sight of the role that institutions and policies can play in securing a better life for the majority of European citizens, the focus on competence in foreign languages stresses that individual and social resilience results from both mobilizing against the darkest aspects of neoliberal globalization and seizing on its opportunities. Furthermore, it argues that investment in foreign languages will prove a resilience strategy more in some institutional contexts than in others and that institutional contexts themselves are the outcome of power struggles across society, as the example of the academic wars on English above makes clear.

Erasmus + both provides resources for the acquisition of foreign languages and legitimizes these foreign language skills, thus increasing their market value. Erasmus, however, has always been more than a policy aimed at making the workforce fit for the European single market. Underlying its economic logic, there is the cultural and political goal of bringing the peoples of Europe closer to one another. This article suggests that it in fact contribute to this goal, not only by facilitating international interpersonal contact, but also by providing the European citizens with cognitive skills—fluency in foreign languages—which, per se, instill in them a stronger sense of "being European". In this sense, foreign languages work both a resilience strategy and a vehicle toward the emergence of a European demos.

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