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# Cross-Cultural Study of the Refugee Crisis: Qualitative Inquiry in Greece and the U.S.

Haley Anderson

University of Washington Tacoma, haley3@uw.edu

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**CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS:  
QUALITATIVE INQUIRY IN GREECE AND THE U.S.**

Haley Anderson  
Psychology  
May, 2017

Faculty Adviser: Dr. Rachel M. Hershberg

Essay completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Global Honors,  
University of Washington, Tacoma

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Approved:

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Faculty Adviser

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Date

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Executive Director, Global Honors

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the attitudes of citizens towards incoming refugees in the countries of Greece and the United States. Refugees located in both countries face a lack of reception and unhealthy well-being due to a lack of social connections. From a thematic analysis of interviews with 10 US citizens and 10 Greek citizens in 2016, I identified two main themes. In Greece, participants had a humanitarian perspective towards refugees but also a concern for the economic well-being of Greek citizens; there was fear of not being able to support the needs of Greek citizens with the influx of refugees. In the United States, participants were either concerned for the well-being of refugees or concerned for the safety of US citizens with the influx of refugees. Implications for improving the climate of reception, and the attitudes of citizens towards refugees as a starting point for improving the integration process are discussed.

*Keywords:* refugee crisis, integration, cross-cultural study, United States, Greece

Cross-cultural study of the refugee crisis: Qualitative inquiry in Greece and the U.S.

One year ago I began volunteering at a local refugee resettlement agency called Lutheran Community Services Northwest. As a volunteer mentor, the program assigned me to work once a week (three to four hours per visits) with a 26-year-old Iranian woman named Ruth. When we first met my objective was to teach her English and to help her with navigating the public systems in Tacoma, Washington, where she lived. I grew to appreciate our time together because I was able to learn about Iranian culture, which I previously had not been exposed to. Our relationship began to shift when I realized I no longer considered it simply a volunteer experience, but a friendship. My understanding of the integration process grew when I saw the harsh reality of the complications Ruth had navigating a new culture. Simple tasks like getting her driver's license, going to the hospital, and finding a job were ordeals. When I witnessed Ruth sobbing, literally at her breaking point, over her broken cell phone, the reality of the difficulty she was having successfully integrating into Tacoma became apparent. Ruth has now lived in Tacoma for over a year and I am still her only American friend.

I have realized during my time with Ruth that integrating into the American society was not her sole responsibility but mine too. To foster successful integration, local community members such as myself need to be a force in creating a welcoming environment by forming social connections with refugees. My experiences led me to wonder what American citizens' attitudes are towards refugees and how such attitudes might influence integration experiences. Because the number of refugees across the globe has increased substantially over the last 20 years to 21.3 million (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017a; Goodkind & Foster-Fisherman, 2002), I was also interested in gaining information on a context of reception outside the US. Greece is one country that has received a significant influx in refugees over the

last two years, particularly from Syria (United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, 2017b). For this reason, I was interested in gaining more information on refugee experiences in Greece, and on the attitudes of Greek citizens towards incoming refugee populations.

In spring of 2016, I decided to systematically investigate US and Greek citizens' attitudes towards refugees through conducting a qualitative inquiry in both countries. In summer of 2016, I studied abroad in Greece and temporarily joined the research team of Dr. Taso Lagos. Dr. Lagos was also investigating how Greek citizens viewed newly arriving refugees. Upon returning to the US, I conducted a similar study with US citizens and then compared my results in each setting to generate a cross-cultural perspective on the refugee crisis, and particularly on how citizens' attitudes might relate to integration experiences for refugees in both settings. I also identified some ways in which integration experiences might be improved in both settings.

This investigation was guided by a general research question:

What are the attitudes of citizens towards refugees in the receiving societies of Greece and the United States?

To address this question, a brief review of the literature on refugee experiences related to integrating into receiving societies is provided, with a focus on the importance of facilitating social connections for refugees. Then, a description of each research context and the methods for this investigation is presented. To conclude, some implications regarding how citizens' attitudes and refugee integration experiences might be improved are discussed.

## **Literature Review**

### **Barriers to Integration**

The 1951 Refugee Convention (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2005) defines a refugee as any person who has a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of

race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (p. 5). Despite surviving hardships in origin countries, refugees continue to face challenges to well-being when they are resettled in different nations across the globe. Recent media reports suggest, for example, that refugees are not being warmly welcomed into American and Greek society. Routinely, media outlets report stories of barring refugees from entering Greece. Ahmad, a 36-year-old refugee who was interviewed by Eva Cosse, explained he was rejected from staying in Greece. Ahmad stated in the interview “they [Greece] said Turkey is a safe country for you, so you are rejected” (Cosse, 2017).

Currently, the US is also failing to provide a warm climate of reception for refugees, as was indicated by the chairman of Homeland Security, Representative Michael McCaul suggesting that refugees are terrorists and America should be wary of accepting them (McCausland, 2017). He applauded the president’s move to a more extreme vetting process stating, “we are a compassionate nation and a country of immigrants. But as we know, terrorists are dead set on using our immigration and refugee programs as a Trojan Horse to attack us” (McCausland, 2017).

Such comments by people in power in the US can lead refugees who are present in this country to feel isolated and discourage them from interacting with different sectors of society such as government and community organizations. Feeling so disconnected can prevent refugees from becoming integrated into society (Mulvey, 2010). Some US citizens may also have a lack of knowledge about different cultures; such comments from government officials could also influence them to focus on differences between them and refugee communities, and discourage them from interacting with refugees. Importantly, integration may be defined as mutual accommodation between a dominant group and non-dominant group (Berry, 2005). Integration

occurs when there is acceptance from these two groups to live as culturally diverse peoples (Berry, 2005). Both US citizens and refugee communities must be involved in integration processes.

To further comprehend the integration process and how it could be promoted in different societies, Ager and Strang (2008) identified specific domains of integration: markers and means (employment, housing, education, and health), social connection (social bridges, social bonds, and social links), facilitators (language, cultural knowledge, safety, and stability), and foundation (rights and citizenship). These domains generate indicators of integration and can be used by policy makers to create more inclusive environments for refugees. The information helps establish guidelines towards supportive policies in order to create a successful integration process for refugees. Of all the domains they identified, Ager and Strang point to social connections as essential to the integration process.

### **The importance of social connections.**

To promote health and well-being for refugees, facilitating their connections to other individuals in their receiving society is essential. Refugees without social connections to community members have a reduced chance of full integration with a healthy state of mind (Simich, Beiser, & Mawani, 2003). However, barriers to developing social connections persist for refugees. In some cases, refugees may encounter a lack of support from citizens in receiving societies due to being resettled in communities of predominately other refugees or immigrants. In other cases, citizens may purposefully avoid interacting with newly arriving refugees because they view them as “other” (Opatow, 1990)

Psychologist Susan Opatow (1990) has described what may happen psychologically when individuals perceive a certain group as extremely different from them. She describes

processes of moral exclusion: when an individual perceives another person as so different from him or herself, he or she may then believe that the morals, values, and rules that apply to her own life (and the group to which she belongs) need not be applied to this other. This person may then also fail to recognize this “other’s” suffering or perceive it as nonexistent.

Opatow also explains (1990) that this process of moral exclusion eliminates the possibility of others falling within one’s “scope of justice”. A vital part of understanding moral exclusion is by observing how the scope of justice, the way in which a person governs within their moral community (Deutsch, 1974; 1985; as cited by Opatow, 1990), narrowly confines the concept of community and constricts the ability to govern for justice. Deutsch explains how people who do not successfully integrate “experience adverse social circumstances and destructive forms of conflict” (p. 15).

Simich, Beiser, and Mawani (2003) also talk about the importance of social support for refugees. They note that such support can “provide not only emotional coping assistance but also a cultural bridge in adaptation through shared experience. In their research, Simich et al. (2003) found that the need for this type of support proved to be over-riding concern for refugees” (p. 886). When moving to a new community, social support also predicts many well-being outcomes. Kawachi and Berkman (2001; as cited by Simich, Beiser, & Mawani, 2003) found that social support improves self-efficacy and self-esteem, resulting in a more positive resettlement experience overall.

Research by the Canadian task force (which reviewed 1,000 psychopathology studies) also found that refugee and immigrant mental health was not determined by their pre-migration or migration experiences as much as the contingencies that followed. In addition, events happening before migration had less mental health effects during the early stages of resettlement

compared to when people have been living in their host community for some time.

Unfortunately, many refugees experience catastrophic stress, and due to the psychological effects of this their mental health is jeopardized (Beiser & Edwards, 1994).

### **Promoting well-being during refugee resettlement.**

In order for there to be government support for the integration of refugees specifically, and for promoting the well-being of refugees more generally, the US public has to be part of the discussion. Positive discussions among members of receiving societies about refugees can affect the outcome for refugees integrating into new communities. Strang and Ager (2010) stated, “it is at the local level that much of the ‘work’ of the integration process has to take place” (p. 601).

Unfortunately, media also has the ability to shape what people perceive; by observing what the press has printed, ideas can be drawn about the situations. Steimel (2010) assessed how various news stories speak to the idea of the ‘American Dream’. Generally, the information provided in the stories Steimel reviewed led readers to believe that either the refugees’ lack of fluency in English or the decrepit American economy (at the time of the recession) was to blame for insufficient integration. A shadow was cast on refugees in the articles from the study, suggesting refugees were incapable of successful integration.

### **The importance of the time in resettlement.**

According to Segal and Mayadas (2005), more needs to be done for refugees when entering the United States to allow for time to find out what resources are available. In creating better processes of reception, psychologists have the ability to assist in the well-being of refugees entering new countries. Considering that mental health practitioners may be the first citizens in host societies that refugees encounter, they may have an especially important responsibility when it comes to making a new individual feel welcome. Segal and Mayadas asserted that the

“Although federal and private sector programs such as the Refugee Resettlement Program must be lauded for their aims in assisting refugees, as they provide too little for too short a time. Such programs must be supplemented on a consistent basis” (p. 580). Time is a vital aspect of adjusting to life in a new country. Normally, the integration process takes a few years, however, it begins as soon as refugees arrive in their host society. Communities hosting refugees need to understand the responsibilities of accepting refugees do not end once the doors have been opened (Beiser & Edwards, 1994). And if community support continues throughout the integration process, refugee contributions to community and society will also continue. Indeed, Strang and Ager (2010) noted that “a clear message comes through that once refugees judge that they have reached their destination society, they are strongly motivated to contribute and to avoid dependence” (p. 600).

## **Method**

### **Design Overview**

I conducted a cross cultural examination of Greek and US citizens’ attitudes towards refugees in the 21st century to generate more information about these contexts, and similarities and differences in each. I also hoped to gain information about how citizens’ attitudes might relate to integration experiences for refugees. Below, some background information about these contexts are provided. Then, the procedures I followed in Greece and the US are described.

### **Research Contexts**

#### **Greece.**

Greece was chosen as a context for this investigation because, over the last two years, it has received one of the highest populations of refugees of any Mediterranean country, despite its dire economic situation. Specifically, between 2009 and 2010, Greece was almost completely

bankrupt (The New York Time, 2016). As of 2016 the unemployment rate for Greece was approximately 23% while the European Union (EU) had an average rate of 8% unemployment (Hope, 2017), and the United States had an unemployment rate of 4.5% (United States Department of Labor, 2017). Many Greeks cannot find jobs, and refugees are even less likely to be able to find work. The current bailout for Greece ends in 2018. Greece has reached out to the International Monetary Fund for support in an 86 billion euro bailout package, the third recovery arrangement in the span of the debt catastrophe (Maltezou & Papadimas, 2017).

Greece and the United states are different in the way in which each country takes in refugees. Typically, the United States resettles refugees in approximately every state. In contrast, Greece places refugees in refugee camp before those refugees are able to be relocated throughout the European Union. In addition, most refugees in Greece are living in refugee camps for numerous years until resettlement into a different country is possible. Multiple camps are set up with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee stations; the only organization which processes refugees for resettlement. The goal of the Greece government is to relocate refugees out of Greece and into other countries.

### **United States.**

In comparison to Greece, the US has been able to steadily recover from the Great Recession between 2007 and 2009. In an article written by Marilyn Geewax (2016) the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (an international organization that provides forums to record global growth) claims the US economy has been steadily improving due to fiscal policies implemented in monetary policy support. The unemployment rate of 4.5% is lower than before the recession, inflation has declined, a large majority of people are covered by health insurance, and the financial department is stable.

Although the economy has improved, governmental policies regarding refugees have become much more restrictive in the last year in the US. Specifically, President Trump produced an executive order for the current fiscal year (October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017), putting a 50,000 cap on the number of refugees admitted to the US. In contrast, President Obama called for the US to resettle 110,000 refugees (Goodenough, 2017). As of October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017 a total of 39,098 refugees have moved to the United States (Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Office of Admissions Refugee Processing Center, 2017a). The number of refugees coming into the US continues to increase, each month a few thousand refugees enter the US (Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Office of Admissions Refugee Processing Center, 2017b). Yet, in comparison to Greece, the numbers overall have been dramatically smaller. In the month of October 2015 alone, 211,663 refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Greece (United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, 2017b).

In the US, voluntary resettlement agencies provide refugees with assistance for the first 30-90 days through the aid of the State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. The US Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Refugee Resettlement fund refugee resettlement within the US. The Office of Refugee Resettlement is involved with providing temporary, money, medical assistance and social services. Each state receives funds for refugees, providing services through nonprofit organizations or direct contact with individuals (Mayorga & Morse, 2017).

### **Procedures**

As part of my study abroad in Greece, from August 24-25, 2016, I, along with a team of two peers, interviewed 40 Greek citizens in Athens about their attitudes towards refugees.

Interviews were informal; we were instructed to simply approach individuals and ask if they would be willing to share their views with us. We did not audio-record interviews but rather took detailed notes of interviewees' responses.

In addition to Dr. Lagos' four questions about migrants entering the country, I included three of my own questions about refugees in Greece. The questions focused on the Greek government's involvement with refugees and the interviewees' thoughts about resources that are (or should be) currently available to refugees. I selected the ten most detailed interview responses for analysis in this study.

The interviewees in the United States were a convenient sample of students and faculty at the University of Washington Tacoma. The questions ranged from asking about personal experiences with refugees to what resources should be provided to refugees in the United States. With permission from participants, interviews were audio-recorded. Once data were collected, thematic and matrix analyses were conducted (Braun & Clarke 2006; Buetow, 2010; and Miles & Huberman, 1994; Agnes, 2000 respectively).

### **Participants**

Ten citizens were selected from both countries for a total of 20 participants, with an age range of 20s to 50s. There were three female and seven male Greek participants. To be included in interviews, Greek participants had to be citizens and speak English.

The ten participants in the US included five males and five females. US Participants were recruited through email or text message (I already had the contact information from previous encounters). Each participant was asked if they had time to participate in a short 15 to 30 minute interview that would contribute to my undergraduate research project.

### **Data Collection**

### **Interviews in Greece.**

The interview questions were developed with the assistance of Dr. Taso Lagos and Dr. Rachel Hershberg (see Appendix A); both are experienced qualitative researchers. Professor Lagos had four questions for the ethnographic interview about migrants entering the country, and I was given permission to develop three questions to be added to the team's list. Professor Lagos did not want to exceed seven total questions due to the length of the interviews.

In Greece, I conducted 10 interviews between August 24th and 25th 2016. The interviewees were randomly selected on the street in the city's capital, Athens, and in three additional city quarters: Evangelismos, Thissio, and Syntagma. Interviews in Evangelismos and Syntagma were conducted in the morning, Thissio interviews were conducted in the evening. All interviews lasted 5 to 30 minutes.

No personal information (name or age) was collected from the participants. The Greece interviews were not audio-recorded; detailed notes were taken by hand. Interviewees' answers were paraphrased, with select quotes included where possible. Each team member took turns questioning participants and recording responses by hand during the questioning process. Together, we transcribed all of our notes. From the 40 interviews collected, 10 interviews were selected for the cross-cultural comparison. The 10 interviews that were selected were the most comprehensive and detailed and also included a range of viewpoints.

### **Interviews in United States.**

The interview questions for the US citizens were constructed with the help of Dr. Rachel Hershberg. The questions were very similar to the Greece questions, however, the wording was changed to refugees exclusively. Observing Greek citizens' attitudes from the interview, I

reformed questions (see Appendix B) for US citizens to gain more depth on how experiences with refugees shaped the citizens' attitudes.

A convenient sample was used in the United States. I recruited 10 participants from the University of Washington, Tacoma: eight students and two faculty. I knew each participant through class or student leadership positions. The interviews were collected between December 7th and 19th 2016 and conducted at different times throughout the day.

The interviews for the US were all 5 to 30 minutes long, audiotaped with the verbal permissions of the informants. After the 10 interviews were concluded each recording was transcribed to typed format. No identifying information was asked of the participants for anonymity. The US interviews were conducted by myself.

### **Data Analysis**

I conducted several forms of qualitative analysis. First, I reviewed each set of interviews and conducted some basic coding of the content of the interviews (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I then began developing themes from the coded data (see Appendix C & D), following the steps of thematic analysis described by Braune & Clarke (2006). To identify which themes were salient within and across each sample, I explored themes in a table or matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

#### **Coding and Content Analysis.**

Content Analysis is a basic approach for reviewing and analyzing text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Conventional content analysis is a method for developing codes and applying them to the text (Hsieh & Shanno, 2005). In initial stages of analysis, I developed codes and applied them to the data. For example, a response from a Greek citizen was: "provide more services for refugees, like housing/accommodation", while another participant said "provide

more services to the refugees such as housing, clothing, and provide more sanitary bathroom facilities”. Based on these responses, I developed the code of “resources needed,” and applied it throughout my analysis.

### **Thematic Analysis.**

Thematic analysis is a useful analytic method for examining data from multiple participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Buetow, 2010). The process of thematic analysis starts with the researcher taking notice of patterns in data and finding points of interest during the data collection. Thematic analysis is not linear; the process involves moving back and forth through different phases of analysis as needed. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the six phases of thematic analysis as (1) familiarizing yourself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. For the present study I used thematic analysis and an enhancement of thematic analysis; saliency analysis (Buetow, 2010), assessing themes for importance in terms of their relevance to the research questions and their recurrence in a data set. One example of salient theme was “concerns for the well-being of refugees.” This theme occurred in responses from two participants, one participant had concern for the refugees in terms of the US government not providing counseling or any similar support, later stating “my concerns are for the refugees and how they will build coping skills for what’s next”. Another participant refers to fearing for refugees’ well-being because “they come here and are ostracized and are not given the support and resources necessary to make their way”.

### **Matrix Analysis.**

Matrix analysis is also a tool used for qualitative data analysis, which also aids in examining data from multiple participants, and along multiple dimensions (Miles & Huberman,

1984; 1994). A matrix is terms or numbers set up in columns and rows, through which thoughts and ideas form (Averill, 2002). For example, gender and age were recorded in two columns for Greece and US participants. Examples of terms are the themes found in the data from Greece respondents: nationalism tie, resources needed, and empathy/sympathy (see Appendix E). Within the US data, themes identified were concerns for refugees, personal beliefs, and past experience (see Appendix F).

A matrix allows for a visual representation of the data to offer diverse responses (Averill, 2002). The cross-cultural examination of Greece and the US offered a comparison of the relationship between citizens of each nation. Through placing terms (or themes) in matrices, I was able to visually see which themes were salient within the Greece and US samples and across samples (e.g. “Greece cannot sustain so many people, we’re the only country with open borders, we have the worst borders in the world. There’s no control”).

## **Results**

I identified two main themes that described Greek citizens’ attitudes towards refugees, and two main themes that described US citizens’ attitudes towards refugees. Interviewees in both countries provided responses in favor of and against refugees entering either country. Below, each of these themes are presented along with illustrative quotes and/or summaries of responses from interviewees. Interviewees are referred to by IDs of individual letters from the alphabet.

### **Greece Theme 1: The Economic Concern**

Many citizens expressed concerns for the well-being of their country as a whole, perhaps related to the lack of financial stability in Greece. Respondent G discussed, for example, how the government was not doing enough to keep undocumented migrants from entering Greece, but

also noted that other countries needed to provide some financial support. Participant G stated that the situation, as difficult as it was, was “not the government's fault, it should have financial support”. Later, in the same discussion, participant G stated that “Greece cannot sustain so many people”.

Similar to participant G, participant E mentioned that Greece has no infrastructure to support the crisis. However, participant E did not believe the Greek government should provide more services to refugees. He explained his reasoning for this: he talked about how other countries, such as the US and Germany, that have the money and resources available, should do something to help Greece.

Interestingly, participants seemed to be torn about almost every answer they provided. Participant G mentioned that, if caught, undocumented migrants should be allowed to stay based on humane terms, however, later in the interview he stated that undocumented migrants should be immediately deported and that this would be in the best interest of his country. Even though this participant expressed a sense of humanitarianism at one point, his fear related to the economic conditions of the country seemed to override his concern for refugees' well-being.

However, for different participants, it was supposedly because of the economic state of Greece that they took it upon themselves to help refugees. Participant E mentioned that local people are helping in allowing refugees into their homes and giving them food. Although some people were providing small amounts of items to refugees, others described the “solution” to the crisis as relocating refugees within Greece for the time-being so that the economic burden was not based in one area of Greece. Participant A talked about how refugees should be spread evenly across Greece so as to not stress the resources available to refugees in one location. Participant F responded similarly, describing spreading refugees out more evenly in Greece. He

was particularly interested in widely dispersing refugees so that the small villages on the islands would not be too strained, and so that the cultures of those islands would be maintained.

### **Greece Theme 2: The Humanitarian Perspective**

The humanitarian perspective theme was developed to highlight participants' descriptions of references to their connections to other human beings. Numerous Greek citizens advocated for the refugees entering Greece; participants aspired to promote human welfare. The humanitarian perspective theme was applied to the data when citizens described feeling that everyone should be welcomed, because as two participants explain, human rights should be the top priority (participant D) and refugees are fleeing war with nowhere else to go (participant J). An example of this was a quote from participant J who stated, "we feel all Syrians' pain". Participant D also stated that human rights should be top priority. Participant G said that undocumented migrants should be treated in human terms if caught in Greece.

Even though Greece is in a bad spot economically, citizens still seemed to have feelings towards what should be done to help refugees. For example, respondent D mentioned that the Greek government is not doing enough to accommodate people and getting them integrated into the Greek system.

Greek citizens seem to have compassion towards refugees. One participant (F) even mentioned personally trying to help by giving refugees food and clothing. Most citizens appeared to feel that refugees needed more resources in Greece, despite the current financial situation in Greece. The services that were mentioned frequently were housing and accommodations, healthcare, and clothing. Participant F also went as far as mentioning the importance of providing sanitary bathroom facilities within the camps. Yet, even with the desire to be

humanitarians, most residents seemed to feel the Greek economy could not withstand the influx of additional people.

### **United States Theme 1: Concern for Refugee Well-being**

The first main theme I identified in the US sample was concern for the well-being of refugees. Throughout the interviews, people described feeling concerned for refugees because of the negative climate they would find in the US. For example, participant P stated “I am concerned about the problems they [refugees] will face when they get here, because it is not good right now as far as people in the US being accepting and tolerant”, she then went on to say “my concern is for them [refugees], not the country [United States]”. Stressing the same concern was participant P, explaining “what makes refugees potentially dangerous is they come here [US] and are ostracized and are not given the support and resources necessary to make their way.” He continued by discussing putting refugees in the situation of ostracism and not giving them anything: “that is the worst thing you can do, part of welcoming means integrating and making an effort to integrate these people”.

Referencing humanitarian concerns, two participants mentioned similar thoughts. One noted: “we should treat them like people who want to be here and live here.” The other participant, in response to the question of if the US has an obligation to help refugees, said: “they [refugees] are humans and you [US citizens] should help other humans”. Similar to these two participants, Participant S described wanting to make sure refugees are living healthfully and thoughtfully (safely) and are not on edge. The main concern for refugees’ well-being can be summed up by the statement participant Q made, “provide more stability to help get them [refugees] back on their feet”. Citizens had an understanding that refugees need help on many

basic levels, and that such help would eventually allow them to be self-sufficient and to give back to the US. Participant O stated, “if we have the means to help people, we should on just a very primitive level help our brothers and sisters”.

Even if citizens did not know how exactly to help refugees, individuals still had suggestions for helping refugees and promoting their well-being. When answering the last question about concerns for refugees entering the US, participant T stressed his concerns to be “knowing how to help support refugees better, I think for schools are not well funded, resource wise it can be very challenging for a community to know how to help”. The overarching theme for supporting refugees was stated by participant O, who explained “for more advanced levels, helping them [refugees] become better adapted to our nation and finding a place here and contributing to society”.

Despite the prevalence of the humanitarian theme, as with Greek participants, several of these US citizens also seemed to think that the well-being of US-citizens might be threatened by newly arriving refugees.

### **United States Theme 2: Concern for United States Citizens**

Americans’ were concerned for their well-being in terms of security or in regard to what refugees could give back to the country as a thank you for resettling them. The best depiction of a citizen wanting the protection of America was Participant L, who mentioned that “first and foremost the US has an obligation to herself”. People described having different feelings towards what exactly would cause a sense of fear. Participant R mentioned that when people come here and they are put into similar situations of persecution as to where they are coming from, then that is when there is a problem: “that is when it dangerous for us [US citizens]”. Another participant had concerns about making sure the US was okay first before spreading out resources. His

concerns were for security, he stated “not to over express concern, but the thing I think we should consider is security”. US citizens were not sure how they would be affected by the new refugees entering the country.

Participant T mentioned “we need to balance being inclusive with also making sure we [US citizens] are protecting our communities”. Even though he cares about welcoming refugees he still is concerned for his own people. He followed by discussing “how deeply do we get involved and at what cost, are very big political questions”. To satisfy some of these concerns, participant K had the suggestion of having refugees volunteer. She described this trade off as necessary; she did not want to just grant them these things simply because they deserved them, she believed they needed to also give something back to the community. Her response reflected more of a concern about the US being taken advantage of through the refugees’ use of services. Overall, US citizens were concerned about protecting resources for their fellow citizens before providing them to refugees.

### **Cross Cultural Examination**

Although I identified different themes in the Greece and the US samples, there were commonalities between the two. Participants in both nations are concerned about how incoming refugees will affect their respective countries. Yet, Greece is concerned because of strained financials and not being able to support refugees. This makes sense due to Greece experiencing bankruptcy since the Great Recession. Participant G explains that Greece does not have sufficient funds to support refugees and that must be understood by all. Similarly, another Greek citizen discussed how Greece did not have the money to feed all the people located in the nation.

In contrast, the US concern lies with how citizens’ safety will be affected by incoming refugees. Participant S described the media as affecting the people's perception of refugees: “you

hear the newspapers being afraid of terrorist attacks and that kind of stuff”. Other citizens felt more strongly simply stating “the strict process is there for a reason”, indicating vetting refugees is important for national security. In addition, not only for the citizens’ concern of safety, but as participant T questions “how deeply do we [the US] get involved and at what cost, are very big political questions”.

Another commonality was that citizens from Greece and the US thought other countries needed to help out, and take some of the burden off. When participant K was asked if US has an obligation to help refugees she stated “I think everyone has an obligation to be held at standards worldwide”. A second US citizens claims “I know some countries have their borders open now, but more should be doing it to help out”. The statements allude to the citizens’ beliefs that other countries need to be taking in refugees. This was clear when the Greek participant E explained that the Greek government should not have to provide more services to refugees, rather other countries like the US and Germany that have money and resources should do something. Nations all across the globe believe the responsibility of receiving refugees should be someone else’s job, which appears to result in multiple countries closing their border in order to move refugees to other locations.

### **Discussion**

This study reveals some common attitudes towards refugees entering Greece and the United States from citizens of both nations. After I conducted this study and my work at Lutheran Community Services Northwest, I found that there remain significant barriers for integration to refugees entering both countries This was mainly due to lack of community support services, lack of knowledge about refugees and the current crisis, and cultural and language barriers. Many participants from both countries expressed that they believed there was

a lack of resources available to refugees for successful integration. In my experience at Lutheran Community Services Northwest refugees needed assistance longer than the first 90 days of entering the US. The US interviews alluded to many individuals, especially participants who had no experience with refugees, did not understand the current climate of the refugee crisis. Cultural and language barriers were more apparent in the US. As a volunteer, I witnessed refugees in Tacoma struggling to find jobs because they did not speak fluent English.

The goal of my investigation was to find better options to promote a healthy integration transition for refugees. By observing themes, several interesting examples of citizens' attitudes towards integration can be related back to a lack of reception and a concern for well-being: concern for US citizens, concerns of refugee well-being, humanitarian perspective, and Greek economic concerns. Namely, although citizens in both places had humanitarian concerns; these were tempered by their concerns about how the arrival of refugees would affect the well-being of their fellow citizens and the flourishing of their country as a whole. This suggests that, at least for some participants, their citizens take precedence in terms of who is in their "scope of justice". Knowing the citizens' attitudes and concerns allows for the possibility of creating successful integration by addressing the concerns, for example making US citizens more aware of the refugee crisis and the vetting process to enter the US. An example for Greece would be other countries helping out financially so citizens would not have to worry about how Greece will support the influx of refugees and its citizens.

Understanding the complex relationship of integration can be complicated due to the varying attitudes of citizens in Greece and the United States. In order to improve the integration process, and thereby, promote the well-being of refugees, the factors of attitudes, time consideration, and social connections need to have the highest priority among receiving societies.

It is vitally important to improve local connections and foster an inclusive society for refugees; if they feel welcome they will contribute to their communities in many ways (Ager & Strang, 2010). Looking towards the future, improving citizens' perceptions of immigrants and refugees could be shifted to become more positive. Guerra, Gaertner, Antonio, and Deegan (2015) state immigrants will be perceived more positively if their presence is perceived as being indispensable to the functioning of the host country, and to the national identity. With the Guerra et al. study in mind, movements can be made to shape people's perception about integration.

The multiple themes expressed by Greece and US citizens provide a starting point for addressing issues with integrating refugees into communities. Many US participants mentioned they wanted to be more informed about the vetting process and what steps the government is taking towards integration for incoming refugees. If the concerns of both nations could be acknowledged on a global scale, there is a possibility for more successful integration. For Greece specifically, if other countries contributed financially or opened their borders to accept more refugees, economic concerns would be minimized. In the United States, making sure enough resources are provided for refugees (basic necessities and consoling), and that citizens have enough information about incoming refugee communities, would lessen their concerns and fears.

Future studies should involve a larger number of participants to gain a better perspective about other parts of both Greece and the United States and to see if findings here could be replicated in other parts of these countries. To shed more light on the global refugee crisis, other countries with high involvement in the refugee crisis over the last two years, such as Italy, Turkey, and Germany, should be included in future research. The refugee crisis is a global issue; to create global solutions future research should dig deeper into governing policies affecting the integration process.

### **Conclusion**

Although more research in other parts of the globe is needed to further understand how integration and well-being of refugees can be better promoted, this investigation contributed to the knowledge base about these topics as they apply to the US and Greece. Ultimately, this research generated important information about citizens' attitudes toward incoming refugees in both countries, and suggested ways that these attitudes might discourage integration processes. Better understanding of the reasons for such a lack of reception in these countries would provide even more information about how to promote psychosocial well-being among refugees.

Successful integration is a complex process; with the assistance of positive social connections, refugees can begin life in a new community. Citizens' attitudes could influence the integration experiences for refugees especially if the attitudes are negative and intolerant. With negative attitudes there is less chance citizens will form positive social connections with incoming refugees. Other parts of the world have already seen the benefits of admitting refugees and immigrants into their borders. Citizens may worry about strangers from all different countries entering the host nation, yet refugees and immigrants do contribute to their local communities. Worries of financial strain in Greece or security issues in the United State should not stop members of other nations from being accepted into these societies. If attitudes can be shifted to be more positive than refugees might be treated more positively as well.

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## Appendix A

### Greece Interview Questions:

1. Are you for or against undocumented migrants entering Greece?
2. Do you believe the Greek government is doing enough or is not doing enough to prevent undocumented migrants entering the country?
3. Do you believe Greece has been affected by countries such as Bulgaria closing their borders to migrants?
4. Are you for or against new Greek laws to restrict the inflow of undocumented migrants into the country?
5. Has your family been personally affected by the current situation, if so how has it personally affected you?
6. Do you believe the Greek government should provide more services to help refugees?
7. If caught, should undocumented migrants be immediately returned to their country of origin, or should they be allowed to remain in Greece until their status is resolved by law?

## Appendix B

### United States Interview Questions:

#### Section 1.

What are your feelings about refugees entering the United States right now?

(For example, do you support opening our borders to refugees?)

(For example, are you for or against refugees entering the United States?)

#### Section 2.

What services or resources do you think we currently offer to refugees in the United States?

Do you think we should do more to help refugees who enter the United States?

What resources or services should we offer to refugees?

#### Section 3.

Have you had any personal interactions with someone who identifies as a refugee?

Can you tell me about that experience?

Would you say that it was positive? How so?

#### Section 4.

Has your family been personally affected by the refugee crisis?

How has it affected you?

#### Section 5.

Are you for or against new US laws to restrict the inflow of refugees into the country?

#### Section 6.

Does the United States have an obligation to help refugees?

What causes you to express the feelings towards refugees?

#### Section 7.

What concerns do you have about refugees entering the United States?

What could be done to overcome your concerns?

**Appendix C****Greece Codebook**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Prejudice towards others	Showing discrimination against other people or groups. Discussing specific cultures negatively.
Devotion to others (outside of family)	Thinking about others who a person knows or may not know. Donating goods to others.
Empathy/sympathy	Showing compassions towards other. Values. Being able to understand others and show concern.
Nationalism tie	Feelings or actions towards the national group of people a person identifies with.
Resources needed	The resources or public services needed to help refugees. Start to offer services, offer more, different services.

**Appendix D****United States Codebook**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Past experience	Any previous experience to the interview with someone who identifies as a refugee
Basic needs	Indicates refugees are in need should be provided basic necessities
Personal Beliefs	Feelings or beliefs expressed towards the crisis
Concerns for US	States concerns for US, US citizens
Concerns for refugees	States concern of refugees entering the US
Solutions for US	Provides ideas to help crisis, either refugees or US citizens

## Appendix E

## Greece Sample Matrix Analysis:

Person	Age	Gender	prejudice towards others	devotion to others (outside of family)	empathy /sympathy	nationalism tie	resources needed
A	40s	female	depends on Origin for deportation		if theres war refugees allowed to stay		improved housing, spreading of refugees to not stress available resources
B	20s	male		syrian refugee friend	syrian friend taught him lessons about crisis		not aware of current services
C	20s late/30s early	female	Greek government needs to keep track of undocumented migrants, us vs them, policitcal refugees allowed in (can't be just	friend living on island took refugees into home	"for, unfortunately" new greek laws		more services needed, housing/ accomodations
D	40s	male	compares syrians to afghans, network to keep track of refugees		human rights should be top priority		lack of integration, accomodations, healthcare,
E	early 40s	male			for undocumented migrants because they maybe refugees, "only empathetically"	greek government doing more than enough, against turkeys lack of infrasture, local greeks letting refugees into home and providing food	US and Germany should do more
F	20s	male		donated food and clothing	doesn't want for refugees exploitation or lost documents	Greece suffocating, doesn't want strain on small Greek villages or islands because of potential to erase that culture	housing, clothing, adequate bathrrom facilities/sanitati on
G	50s	female			"in human terms"	best interest of country people should be deported immediately	more services should be provided

Appendix F

United States Sample Matrix Analysis:

Observations	past experience	basic necessities	Person Beliefs	Concerns for US	Concerns for Refugees	Solutions for US
Gender / age F/50s person K	Cubans in Miami in 80s; no recent interaction			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to become productive members of society and for refugees to follow the law</li> <li>give something back to the community</li> </ul>		
M/34 L	GH student/friend (Dillmon)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"first and foremost the US has an obligation to herself, I am torn by this because as a veteran I see +20% of the homeless population are veterans"</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"the vetting process to be explained and not just say we have one" and have INS, homeland security explain the vetting process.</li> </ul>
F/20 M	N/A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"They are humans and you should help other humans"</li> <li>"I am not quite sure why we don't want to help"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"however I can see how it would be hard because we do not have enough to already help people here already".</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I know some countries have their borders open now, but more should be doing it to help out".</li> </ul>
M/20s N	Family members in Ukraine are refugees			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"not to over express concern, but thing I think we should consider is security".</li> </ul>		
F/20s O	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"food and shelter on the most basic of levels"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"if we have the means to help people, we should on just a very primitive level help our brothers and"</li> </ul>			
F/20s P	ESL classes with refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Her concern shifts to the government not providing consoling or any similar support.</li> <li>"giving them the minimum basic needs, consoling, and education because they (refugees) will contribute back to the country".</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"as human beings we should be compassionate towards"</li> <li>"it shouldn't be an obligation and I don't want it to be an obligation, it should come from the heart, but rich people aren't like that, especially our new president" each other but that doesn't happen often".</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>her concerns are for the refugees and how they will build coping skills for what's next,</li> <li>"my concern is for them not the country (US)".</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"the government should invest in them so they can contribute to the economy".</li> </ul>