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**The Voices of Refugee Integration:
a multi-pronged exploration of refugee integration in Greek NGOs**

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In this proposal I will request funding for a trip to Greece during which I will conduct qualitative research that investigates constructions and experiences of refugee integration. During the grant period, I will visit prominent Greek NGOs and NGO sponsored refugee camps to conduct interviews with staff, volunteers, and refugees and to compile pertinent educational and institutional artifacts in order to gain a deeper understanding of the process of refugee integration in the wake of the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis. My research will engage the lived experiences and perspectives of refugees, volunteers, and NGO staff members in an attempt to introduce new voices to existing discourse surrounding refugee integration; by concomitantly investigating local integration efforts from multiple vantage points, I will generate insights on how refugee integration is conceptualized, implemented, and experienced in a thorough, localized account that is absent from existing integration scholarship. I will be working closely with Honors student Hallie Ryan, whose research will use similar methods to engage the varied approaches to refugee children's education in Greek NGOs, refugee camps, and the family unit.

Civil unrest accompanying the Syrian civil war has precipitated the death or displacement of over 11 million Syrian citizens (Carnegie Council 2016). With no choice but to flee, countless people have risked their lives trekking across borders into Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, and crossing the Mediterranean Sea into Greece and Italy, seeking safe haven from persecution and violence (Carnegie Council 2016). This mass displacement manifests a global humanitarian crisis that demands immediate help from surrounding nations and from countries across the world. As policy-makers grapple with the complexities of organizing and providing care for massive numbers of asylum seekers while attempting to facilitate their resettlement and relocation, poor executions of global support have left refugees without the help they need.

Last fall in my Theological Inquiry course, I chose to research the Syrian Refugee Crisis for my final paper, in which I proposed alternatives to existing EU policy frameworks in an attempt to confront social and cultural trends of refugee dehumanization. In conducting the preliminary research for this paper, it became clear to me that confronting the complex web of implications that circulate refugee resettlement and integration would require an interdisciplinary approach. Similarly, it became apparent that an attempt to fully understand the experiences of refugees necessitates a thorough contextualization of their circumstances. Unfortunately, due to dire humanitarian circumstances and limited financial resources, such approaches have not had ample consideration on behalf of EU commissioned and independent researchers. For the scope of this research proposal, I have identified refugee integration in Greece as a facet of the refugee crisis at large which requires further exploration.

Refugee integration scholarship is expansive historically, contextually, and methodologically. Due to its complex cross-sections of legal, social, political, cultural, and economic contexts, literature on refugee integration traces a large constellation of research focuses and disciplinary intersections. To situate my own research question within this larger body of work, I will give an overview of studies which vary in focus and scope.

In the context of ‘developed’ countries, there is no singular conceptualization or definition of refugee integration (UNHCR 2013). Rather, integration scholarship frequently aims to qualify and make sense of integration within differing social worlds, often from specific perspectives. Approaches to investigating integration include large scale quantitative analyses of refugee integration outcomes (Cheung and Phillimore 2016), localized phenomenological studies of refugees’ experiences with various aspects of integration (Dumper 2002; Iliadi 2008; Bas

2016; Casimiro 2002; Baker 2007), and generalizable theoretical work on integration (Aleinikoff 2010; Bhatia 2009). Integration is also explored through non-academic platforms, as seen in work published in local news outlets which feature refugees' voices and offer unique insights into the lived experiences of integration (Refugee Women 2016). Each of these methodologies has distinct advantages, lending unique insights into the implications of refugee integration by illuminating subtle facets which may be overlooked at first glance. Each of these approaches, which privilege singular methodologies, satisfy specific niches in the field of refugee studies; alternatively, a multi-scalar approach which draws on various methodologies, perspectives, and disciplines holds potential for drawing prescient connections between various sites of the integration process.

One such study which holds particular relevance to my research project is "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," conducted by Alastair Ager and Alison Strang in 2008. This study, which makes use of documentary analysis, fieldwork, secondary analysis of surveys, and verification, draws from various sources of information in order to craft a comprehensive framework for qualifying what 'successful' integration looks like (Ager and Strang 2008). The findings of this study are verified and replicated in other studies which examine similar themes of integration in different locations (Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002; Richmond and Shields 2005; Valtonen 2012), but none of these studies attempt to put into conversation the voices and perspectives of institutional bodies, such as NGOs, with those of refugees.

An example of a study that is informed by the perspectives of both institutions and refugees is the UNHCR's 2013 EU sponsored Refugee Integration Capacity and Evaluation project, a transnational qualitative analysis of refugee displacement, resettlement, and integration (United Nations 2013). By utilizing various methods of data collection (including interviews, quantitative data analysis, and literature reviews), the UNHCR coalesced refugees' individual understandings of integration with large-scale analyses of refugee integration in the spheres of employment, education, social inclusion, and housing (United Nations 2013). Pairing these analyses enabled the development of proposals for future refugee integration policies and practices while fleshing out the theoretical complexities of integration as "processual, individual..., two-way," and subjective (United Nations 2013). The characterization of integration provided in this study accommodates the complexity of integration as a co-creative

and carefully mediated process, complicating mainstream monolithic figurations of refugee integration (see Fakh and Marrouch 2015 for an example of a well-researched but one-dimensional study of refugee integration). In studies like those of the UNHCR, integration can be viewed as an event implicated by the perspectives and interactions of both the host and refugee.

Like the UNHCR's study, my research will explore how the perspectives of NGOs as an institution and refugees as participants in the integration process can mutually inform and create definitions of integration. More specifically, my research will fill a gap in existing integration literature by asking about how integration is conceptualized, implemented, and experienced in NGOs and refugee camps.

Using the data I generate during the grant period, I plan to engage a multi-pronged exploration of refugee integration as it is conceptualized and implemented on behalf of NGOs and experienced and interpreted by refugees. This research will complement existing integration scholarship by offering a continuous and localized account of integration which puts into conversation the voices and perspectives of both the host (NGO staff and volunteers) and refugee.

In conducting my research, I plan to employ various methods of data generation: semi-structured interviews, collection of NGO documents and artifacts, and participant observation. This combination of methods will concomitantly engage a phenomenological exploration of refugees who experience integration and a study which examines and questions the philosophies and practices of NGOs.

The primary method of data collection I will use is in-depth, qualitative interviews. The questions I have developed reflect a semi-structured style which will guide but not entirely dominate the trajectory of conversations. In order to fully understand and draw on the lived experiences of refugees, I hope to open topics of conversation in which study participants feel that they have a space to discuss openly and honestly their experiences of the integration process and the experience of being a refugee in general. I will use the same structure in my interviews with staff and volunteers. While I will primarily analyze interview transcripts from this portion of my study, I will also take notes during interviews when necessary to notate pauses, body language, and voice inflection to ensure accurate reflection of the sentiments which underpin interview comments.

My second method, NGO document and artifact collection, will include gathering and analyzing course calendars, curriculums, mission statements, and programming schedules. In addition to requesting access to such documents at NGOs during the grant period, I will survey NGO websites and Facebook pages to gather digital copies prior to the trip. By collecting these documents, I hope to understand how the underlying philosophies of NGOs regarding integration manifest in their institutional practices. To analyze these data, I will employ discourse and visual analysis.

My final method of data collection will be participant observation at Khora, Athens Solidarity Center, and Zaatar, three NGOs located in Athens, Greece. Here, Hallie Ryan and I will volunteer for multiple days, a time during which we will engage in direct contact with NGO staff and refugees. As we occupy the role of participant observers and volunteers, we will document our findings by taking field notes and photographs. This experience will offer a close look at the relationships and dynamics between NGOs and the refugees they provide services for.

Fully executing the demands of this multi-scalar approach will involve data generation which precedes and extends beyond the grant period as I have briefly mentioned. Because I will be able to conduct skype and phone interviews with English speaking NGO staff members and volunteers, I plan to use the grant period as a tool for direct engagement with refugees through interviews and participant observation (for interviews with refugees, Hallie Ryan and I will hire translators). In a table provided before the “Schedule” section of this proposal, I will provide more specific details regarding the services provided by the NGOs I have selected. To establish contacts in Greece prior to our trip (in addition to those which Hallie and I have already identified and plan to make contact with pending an IRB confirmation), I will work through the guidance of my partner Hallie Ryan’s faculty mentor Dr. Kerstin Fisk and my mentor Dr. Rachel Washburn. In addition to these connections, Hallie and I plan to seek guidance from other professors in the Political Science, International Relations, and Theology departments who we have been notified have specific expertise and experience in studying refugee relations.

The data that Hallie and I generate during the grant period and other portions of our study will first be used independently in write-ups of our findings regarding our specific research questions. Throughout the summer following the grant period, however, we plan to work closely to coalesce our findings into a broader research paper. As we pursue this longer-term project, we plan to maintain contact with our faculty advisors, who have shown interest in continuing

mentorship as the project develops. In the following years, we plan to seek out opportunities to present and potentially publish our findings at conferences and in academic journals.

Hallie and I created the following table to give more specific information on the NGOs and camps that we have selected as sites of visitation during the grant period. Included are the organizations' names, locations, brief descriptions, and contact information. Note that while in Chios, Hallie and I will visit separate NGOs; while Hallie interviews at Refugee Education Chios to further her research of children's education, I will spend time interviewing staff and volunteers who work in Souda Camp with the NGO A Drop in the Ocean in order to explore how integration practices and ideologies are present in informal (and somewhat purgatorial) settings. Aside from this distinction, Hallie and I will visit and interview at the same NGOs to maximize our resources and to generate cohabitable data; while our studies will differ substantially in our interview questions, research participants, and artifact collection, they will be intimately related in their sites of collection. We are excited to see how lines may be traced between our individual research projects as we generate data during the grant period.

In addition to the NGOs detailed on this table, we plan to use our faculty mentors in the Political Science, International Relations, and Theology departments to expand our list of contacts in Greece as I mentioned previously. We will also employ a snowball sampling technique during the grant period in order to establish connections with local networks of NGOs which may not be accessible via internet research.

Organization Name	Location	Description	Contact Information/ Website
Athens Solidarity Center	Athens	Offers a comprehensive set of services for refugees, including legal support, psychological services, and spaces for children and families.	athens@solidaritynow.org http://www.solidaritynow.org/en/kentro-allileggiis-athinas/
Khora	Athens	The Khora Community Center provides food, medical care, legal aid, education programs for children, and a women's space.	khora.athens@gmail.com http://www.khora-athens.org
Zaatar	Athens	Camp focusing on the most vulnerable refugees, minors and single mothers, by providing education programs, childcare services, healthcare, LGBTQ services, and housing.	contact@zaatarngo.org http://zaatarngo.org
Lesvos Solidarity	Lesvos	The only open refugee camp on Lesvos, provides basic necessities along with language programs, children's classes, and social support.	info@lesvossolidarity.org http://www.lesvossolidarity.org/index.php/en/
Souda Camp: A Drop in the Ocean	Chios	Camp which aims to address the immediate needs of refugees upon arriving on Chios. Provides meals, activities for families and children, and informal education services.	https://www.drapenihavet.no/en/home/ post@drapenihavet.no
Help Refugees	Thessaloniki	Provides basic necessities, health care, education programs, job training, and housing for refugees. Primary goals: creating opportunities for anyone to join their efforts in providing quick and direct relief.	northerngreecevolunteers@gmail.com http://www.helprefugees.org.uk/about/

As a last note, I am attending a course on Qualitative Research Methods (taught by Dr. Washburn) this semester, during which I will continue to refine my research project; as the refugee crisis continues to evolve over the next few months, I hope to improve my methods and literature review in order to set up a project that will generate rigorous, prescient, and publishable data.

Grant Period Schedule: May 6th – May 22nd

Saturday, May 6th, 2016: Depart from LAX, arrive in Athens, Greece

Athens, Greece

Sunday, May 7th, 2016: Athens Solidarity Center day 1 (conduct interviews)

Monday, May 8th, 2016: Athens Solidarity Center day 2 (conduct interviews and volunteer/participant observation)

Tuesday, May 9th, 2016: Khora day 1 (conduct interviews)

Wednesday, May 10th, 2016: Khora day 2 (conduct interviews & volunteer/participant observation)

Thursday, May 11th, 2016: Khora day 3 (full volunteer/participant observation day)

Friday, May 12th, 2016: Data compilation day, snowball sampling lead interview day (and compile/analyze interview transcripts and other artifacts)

Saturday, May 13th, 2016: Zaatara day 1 (conduct interviews)

Sunday, May 14th, 2016: Zaatara day 2 (conduct interviews & volunteer/participant observation)

Monday, May 15th, 2016: Fly from Athens to Lesbos

Lesvos, Greece

Tuesday, May 16th, 2016: Lesbos Solidarity day 2 (conduct interviews)

Wednesday, May 17th, 2016: Lesbos Solidarity day 2 (conduct interviews), ferry to Chios at night

Chios, Greece

Thursday, May 18th, 2016: Souda/Drop in the Ocean day 1 (conduct interviews)

Friday, May 19th, 2016: Souda/Drop in the Ocean day 2 (conduct interviews), depart from Chios, arrive in Thessaloniki

Thessaloniki, Greece

Saturday, May 20th, 2016: Help Refugees day 1 (conduct interviews)

Sunday, May 21st, 2016: Help Refugees day 2 (conduct interviews), depart from Thessaloniki, return in Athens

Monday, May 22nd, 2016: Fly out of Athens to LAX

Post-Grant Plans: May 22nd – June 23rd

From May 22nd – June 23rd, Hallie and I plan to stay at LMU as orientation leaders. During this time, we will budget two days a week to work together as we continue skype and phone interviews with NGOs as necessary, and begin data analysis as we craft our written products. This time will allow us to work closely with one another as we attempt to map out the major connections and insights of what we hope to be a collaborative final paper that makes use of both of our data. This work will continue into the following academic year.

Budget

Travel:

- Roundtrip Flight, LAX to ATH: \$1203.77
- Transportation in Athens: \$59.19
- Flight from Athens to Lesvos: \$75
- Transportation in Lesvos: \$92
 - Includes public transit pass sub-cost of \$32 and transportation to and from Molyvos sub-cost of **\$60**
- Ferry from Lesvos to Chios: \$33
- Transportation in Chios: **\$50**
 - Includes sub-cost of **\$20** for costs associated with transportation between housing and ferry drop-off and **\$30** sub-cost of taxi fees.
- Flight from Chios to Thessaloniki: \$227.50
- Transportation in Thessaloniki (Transit Pass): \$30
- Flight from Thessaloniki to Athens: \$190

Housing:

- Athens, 9 nights: **\$339.50**
- Lesvos, 2 nights: **\$31.50**
- Chios, 2 nights: **\$68.00**
- Thessaloniki, 3 nights: **\$66.50**

Food:

- \$500.00

Translators:

- Athens: 10 hours translator costs at \$50 per hour: **\$500**
- Lesvos: 7 hours translator costs at \$50 per hour: **\$350**
- Chios: 4 hours translator costs at \$100 per hour: \$400
- Thessaloniki: 4 hours translator costs at \$50 per hour: **\$200**

Total: \$4415.96

I am requesting \$4500 for my proposal. The \$85 excess will serve as a cushion for any unexpected flux in cost of plane tickets, public transportation, and housing.

*Red numbers indicate costs which have been cut as a result of my partnership with Hallie. These have been notated to exhibit the cost benefits of our related projects.

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