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FROM COMPASSION TO RESISTANCE: LESBOS REFUGEE CRISIS

by

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B.S. May 2016, Old Dominion University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

FROM COMPASSION TO RESISTANCE: LESBOS REFUGEE CRISIS

Luz Diaz
Old Dominion University, 2019
Director: Dr. Erika Frydenlund

“What would I do if I wasn’t given freedom? I would protest every day.” This illustrates the empathy that locals in Lesbos shared with the struggles of refugees when the European Refugee Crisis arrived on the shores of Lesbos in 2015. Locals on the island helped refugees get off boats—or saved them from the water—and offered to take them to the city center to claim asylum. But soon, with the arrival of humanitarian aid organizations, life on Lesbos changed considerably. Meanwhile, refugees continue to sit in camps that are over capacity to await asylum processing. Echoing the frustration on the island, people lament that “Nobody cares about the people [of Lesbos].”

This thesis is focused on the significance of ensuring that the needs and sentiments of the refugee host community of Lesbos is better understood by the Greek government, the European Union, and by the non-governmental organizations. Frustration and resistance continue to rise as migrants remained trapped on the island and thousands more arrive to the backlog of cases. Lesbos took in refugees from all over the world, first as a gateway to Europe and now as an asylum processing detention center. Locals felt shut out of decision-making about the crisis and from the outside are often viewed as uncompassionate or even hostile. This thesis contributes to studies of host communities by illuminating the varying sentiments towards refugees by locals as they witnessed one of the largest migrations into Europe in recent history. Integrating the perspective of host community members into migration policy is critical for ensuring that humanitarian aid agencies and governments can manage tensions between locals, non-governmental organizations, and migrants to meet the unique needs of all parties and minimize the risk for violence.

My thesis felt like traveling to the other side of the world and back. There were days I did not believe in myself and it all seemed way too complex for me to grasp. My parents, Vicenta and Serafico, motivated me to work extremely hard. Their endless love, support, and work ethic is unparalleled. I am blessed to have them and my siblings. Omar believed in my capabilities to finish this program and on anything else in life. His response is always simply, “do it, why not?” Bijan was there through the ugly moments when I would bawl in front of my laptop on a Friday night or a Sunday morning. This happened at a coffee shop a week before my defense and he calmly said, “you got this, this graduate school, we have this.” He constantly stuck it out with me. All the citizens of Lesbos and to the refugees I spoke with made this thesis what it is – authentic. I will eternally carry their stories with me. This was and will always be for them. At the very beginning of graduate school, I promised myself that I would always remember why I started. As a Mexican-American woman, I am now honored to be a voice for individuals that do not have a voice and are in desperate need of one.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	5
LESBOS HISTORY	5
LESBIAN REFUGEES	6
CAMP BUILD-UP IN LESBOS	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
CULTURAL STUDIES	10
CULTURAL THREAT THEORY	10
GLOBAL STUDIES	13
METHODOLOGY	14
DATA COLLECTION SITES	15
DATA COLLECTION	18
ETHICS	21
DATA ANALYSIS	27
“NOBODY CARES ABOUT THE PEOPLE”: THE CATALYST TO SKEPTICISM.....	28
MACRO TO MICRO LEVELS OF GLOBALIZATION	29
“EUROPE DOES NOT CONSIDER GREECE A PART OF EUROPE”	29
LESBOS AND HIGHER AUTHORITIES	31
PROLONGED ASYLUM PROCESSES	33
“WE ARE NOT RACISTS”: ECHOES OF DESPERATION.....	36
MIGRATION CRISIS AS A CULTURAL THREAT	38
LIFEJACKET GRAVEYARD	41
SYMBOLIC THREAT	42
CONCLUSION.....	45
IT’S RESISTANCE, NOT XENOPHOBIA.....	45
LESBOS AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON	47
REFERENCES	50
VITA.....	52

INTRODUCTION

“Why are the refugees still here? Why haven’t they left the island?” In Lesbos, Greece this has become a common mantra in everyday conversation. It is not simply driven by an anti-immigrant political stance; the people of Lesbos have a very complicated relationship with refugees and the humanitarian organizations that have arrived to help. As an island that wavers drastically between humanitarianism and resistance, Lesbos provides a look into how humanitarian crisis can impact the cultural fabric and identity of a community. Though often forgotten in the study of refugees and humanitarian response, the host community represents an integral piece of the ability of government and humanitarian actors to provide assistance to forced migrants.

This thesis calls attention to the importance that cultural threats have in a refugee hosting environment. Cultural threats as a construct are overlooked in Lesbos as a refugee host community in order to form a basis for understanding locals’ perspectives and managing anti-migrant sentiments. I argue that in order to find a solution that will assist a host community in providing a humanitarian response it is crucial to acknowledge the stumbling blocks that have been and continue to be ignored in the crisis and its aftermath. The host community in Lesbos receiving refugees from across the Mediterranean has been forced to endure a number of cultural threats with little to no support, which has led the community from a place of humanitarian solidarity to frustration. From a global perspective, Appadurai’s ethnoscape explains humans’ natural tendency to migrate. The island of Lesbos has welcomed demographically diverse populations, but there have been only minor efforts to address the needs and concerns of the community that is absorbing the influx.

Imagine a quiet, Mediterranean vacation island visited annually by Europeans seeking to relax on the beach and enjoy food and shopping. Lesbos, Greece is such a place—a vacation destination for people across Europe. In 2015, that image was shattered by the thousands upon thousands of forced migrants arriving each day on those same beaches. Residents on the

island (and tourists) were immediately affected by the influx of thousands of refugees arriving to the island every single day. Families were sleeping in the locals' front yards, school yards, and in front of their tourism sites such as restaurants, hotels, and souvenir shops. Garbage accumulated on the beaches and in the streets, and volunteers and local citizens struggled to keep up with the need for food and water. School yards, bars, and restaurants were functioning as temporary transit sites, with transportation across the mountain to the municipal processing center incapable of meeting the needs and forcing many to walk the approximately 37 miles. The main square was filled with tents and makeshift shelters placed nearby stores and coffee shops. The locals did not have the knowledge, resources, or other capacity to meet so great a humanitarian need on their own. Needless to say there was no place to hide from this crisis.

The community of Lesbos suffered their own form of unacknowledged trauma from the sense of helplessness of feeling they were not able to do enough. When nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) finally arrived to the island and began managing the situation, locals were relieved; however, the character of the tourist island was changed forever in the public eye. At one point, the New York Times even called Lesbos, 'the island of despair' (Magra, 2018). On top of the humanitarian crisis, the European Union's (EU) austerity measures in Greece had already caused significant challenges to the Greek economy, with many businesses on the brink of collapse. Even despite suffering from financial crisis themselves and the obvious impacts of refugees on their tourism industry, locals were determined to assist the refugees.

In March 2016, the EU/Turkey Statement promised to end the flows (European Commission, 2016; Lovett, Whelan, & Rendon, 2017), but actually made life significantly worse for Lesbians (and refugees) because now the refugees were not transiting through the island over a short period of time (days to weeks) anymore. They were stuck, often for months on end, waiting for their asylum claims to be processed for approval to move to the mainland. The refugee camps began to grow beyond capacity. Protests arising from the tensions between locals, NGOs, and migrants began to erupt both for and against refugees and migrants.

In the blink of an eye, life on Lesbos has changed, perhaps irrevocably. In 2015 alone, nearly 1 million people arrived to Greece through the Mediterranean Sea route; a large portion (about 60%) passed through Lesbos (UNHCR, 2019). With an estimated 10,000 forced migrants awaiting asylum processing on the island, approximately one in eight persons on Lesbos is a migrant. At any given time, nearly 100 agencies and organizations of varying size were operating on the island in the beginning to provide humanitarian assistance of some kind. Many more individual volunteers were crowd-sourcing funding to provide small, ad-hoc, temporary initiatives for refugee assistance. The island transitioned from one of tourism and olive oil production, to global humanitarian exemplar, to humanitarian operations area inundated with aid workers, volunteers, and forced migrants.

Prior to the influx of refugees in 2015, the communities' sentiments towards refugees were much different. Despite suffering from financial crisis themselves, locals were determined to assist the refugees any way they could. They rescued refugees from drowning, sacrificing their own safety by pulling them out of the water as they arrived on rubber boats wearing ineffective life vests. It was an act of humanitarian relief that was driven by compassion. This took a turn once the NGOs and the EU arrived and demanded that locals follow their strict regulations (Frydenlund, 2017). Locals began to feel resentment and anger towards the refugees and aid agencies because they felt they lost their agency over their lives and communities and felt inundated by so many people in need. They no longer had the power to alleviate the crisis, which they once strived very hard to do. Instead, local residents' narratives transitioned from humanitarianism and focused on the decline of tourism and the accumulation of negative social impacts of hosting so many refugees and migrants.

Understanding the impacts of refugees and humanitarian response on host communities is a critical and under-researched topic. The demands of humanitarian crisis often leave the host community neglected until governments and agencies begin thinking about durable solutions to the crisis. However, as I argue here, hosting refugees can fundamentally alter the

social fabric of the host community and this has significant repercussions that may be irreversible when the planning for long-term solutions begin. Considering the impacts of refugee hosting on the local community during the crisis stage may have positive impacts on the long-term policy options available to refugees and aid agencies in the future. While this study looks specifically at Lesbos, Greece as a case study, it has applications in other global scenarios. For instance, the Venezuelan migration crisis is now overwhelming border communities in Colombia and Brazil, as well as the recent crisis near the border states in Mexico.

My research uses ethnographic data, including interviews with local residents and refugees and participant observation in a refugee camp, to unpack the unintended consequences of ignoring the needs of the local population during the refugee crisis in Greece. I self-identify as a Mexican-American woman, and ensuring that my preconceptions about this topic was not an obstacle was significant. I begin by describing the history of Lesbos, which is critical to understanding the locals' attitudes toward and culture around refugees. Using a Cultural Studies framework, I provide an overview of the literature of cultural threats to set up the discussion about how interviews with locals and refugees reveal the tensions and opportunities for policy improvements both for host communities and refugees.

BACKGROUND

LESBOS HISTORY

Forced displacement globally is at an all-time historical high. In 2015, millions of refugees fled conflict in Syria, in addition to other places around the world (UNHCR, 2016). In response to the massive influx of refugees, European countries began to close borders, particularly land borders; sea borders were much more difficult to monitor. EU border countries, such as Greece, were major transit points as refugees made the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey hoping to reach various destinations in Europe (UNHCR, 2019). While land borders were easier to manage, the Greek and Italian islands in the Mediterranean Sea were extremely difficult to monitor for border crossings. After the EU-Turkey Agreement (Migration Policy Institute, 2016), Greece no longer serves just as a transit point. Now, thousands of refugees remain on the islands awaiting processing of asylum claims. The island of Lesbos, Greece was an epicenter of the 2015 refugee crisis and still sees regular arrivals of refugees to its shores--most recently with a new surge of refugees and migrants. While the local communities responded in extraordinary ways to the refugee crisis in its early months, local sentiment has shifted dramatically. Locals whose families have lived together on this small island for generations now fight over the proper response to refugees. Some feel it is only natural to want to assist to those in need. On the other side of the debate, some locals believe that the island's hospitality toward refugees is being taken advantage of. They believe if refugees experience hospitality in Lesbos, they will tell others in their social networks, and this will only bring more refugees to their shores. Since the start of the crisis, the language used to describe refugees has shifted decidedly towards "economic migrants," marking a change in cultural and social obligations to assist the refugees.

While there is a significant amount of research that has been, and is being, conducted about refugees, particularly Syrians, there is very little that we know about host communities. One of the more critical looks at host community impacts dates back nearly thirty years and

focused on social programs and economics (Chambers 1986). Additionally, some have discussed the effects of refugee influx on the local environment (Jacobsen 1997) and local policies (Jacobsen 1996). Because of the nature of humanitarian emergency and crisis, very little research focus is on the local community, though this is changing. Increasingly, however, current research agendas center around the theme of economic impacts (Betts et al. 2014). This study is unique in that it is focused on the cultural impacts of refugee influx in a host community. The island of Lesbos is a particularly interesting site for this study in that the locals have a historical narrative of refugee response—many of the island’s inhabitants are descendants of refugees from the Ottoman Empire—and in how dramatically the response to humanitarian intervention has divided communities. In particular, how older generations tend to resonate with a migration crisis of this nature more than the younger generation.

LESBIAN REFUGEES

The locals in Lesbos often described themselves to me as compassionate, family-oriented, and religious. They often conveyed compassion for the Syrians arriving as families during the height of the crisis, reflecting on the fact that an estimated 80% of the residents of the island can trace relatives back to the “Asia Minor Catastrophe” where Greeks were expelled from Turkey in the early 1900s.



Figure 1. Asia Minor Catastrophe Mother Statue; April 29, 2018

CAMP BUILD-UP IN LESBOS

Lesbos, at the time of this study, was home to three refugee camps. The main camp, Moria, is the site at which all migrants arriving on the island must arrive and be processed. Some select families and individuals could be referred to Pikpa or Kara Tepe camps based on reported vulnerabilities, while others are provided apartment or hotel accommodations in the cities by humanitarian aid agencies. This section describes each of the refugee camp sites in Lesbos to help paint a picture of the environment in which this study takes place.

NIGHTMARE IN MORIA

According to ReliefWeb, there are currently over 8,000 people in Moria - a space meant for 3,000 (2018). When I spoke to refugees, their experiences in Moria camp were horrendous and truly inhumane. One resident in Kara Tepe described his experience at Moria as a

“nightmare.” “There was not enough place for everyone, there were five families and one small tent...sometimes we were sleeping outside because there was not enough space” (Fieldnotes, Kara Tepe, May 2018). Another resident, reflecting on his time in Moria, explained, “You don’t know what will happen, there are many nationalities...different behaviors” (Fieldnotes, Kara Tepe, May 2018). It is important to note that the conditions that refugees experience at Moria Camp impact their living situation as far as feeling safe and healthy. I interviewed a representative from the Dutch NGO, Movement on the Ground, who had been to Moria a few times. His response was vague as he commented that “people tolerate each other and you don’t really have to watch your back, but you feel that in a couple of seconds it can turn over and something can go wrong” (Interview with Movement on the Ground representative, Kara Tepe, May 2018). Locals’ and refugees’ stories about Moria camp resonated with each other. There is a serious problem in the camp and the amount of people living there is only expected to dramatically increase by the end of the year.

VULNERABILITY IN KARA TEPE

Kara Tepe hosts a selected “vulnerable” population – this is comprised of single mothers, pregnant women, individuals with disabilities, and families with small children. Refugees first arrive to Moria and, after weeks or months, those that qualify are taken to Kara Tepe as space becomes available. In contrast to Moria, which is run by the Greek government and supported by NGOs, Kara Tepe is a municipality-run refugee camp. A business owner who has been a resident of Lesbos since 2010 described Kara Tepe as a “small village.” She added, “they look very happy. They’re not aggressive, not aggressive towards me...they look like they’re having a good time” (Interview with other local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7 2008). Soon after she said that, she retracted and said, “if they’re not having a good time at least they see that it’s not such a hostile environment as it is in Moria. Women and children cannot live in Moria.” Kara Tepe provides ISO boxes (shipping containers fitted with windows and doors) for residents in the camp, whereas many Moria residents sleep in tents or have no other option

than to sleep outside in the cold winters. Kara Tepe has active NGOs that provide activities such as delivering meals to each house, yoga for women, and soccer matches (Fieldnotes, Kara Tepe, May 2018).

PIKPA

Pikpa is a local NGO-run refugee camp that provides “humanitarian support to the most vulnerable refugees including families with children, pregnant women, refugees with disabilities, refugees who suffer from serious medical conditions and victims of shipwrecks who lost loved ones in the sea” (PIKPA Lesvos Solidarity, 2015-2018). Lesvos Solidarity offers food, clothing, medical support and hygiene items. Like Kara Tepe, residents are selected to move to Pikpa based on physical and social vulnerabilities. It is a much smaller camp, and is run predominantly by volunteers. It suffers from some precocity, not being managed by the national or local government, and is frequently on the verge of being closed by the local government. This was not a site where I conducted any research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CULTURAL STUDIES

The community in Lesbos has been affected culturally, politically, economically, and psychologically. And there has been a cultural threat that openly infuriates the people that grew up in Lesbos. Lesbians witnessed how their streets and parks suddenly became flooded with refugees living out in the open. The residents in Lesbos have seen and lived through the crisis. They speak proudly about their community, but expressed heartbreaking despair as they recounted the crisis evolve and take over their small island.

CULTURAL THREAT THEORY

Cultural threat theory is relevant to the migration issue facing Lesbos, Greece. The Greek culture in Lesbos consists of a small isolated community, religious, and family oriented. Residents on the island feel threatened by the presence of so many refugees, which they interpret as people who are, in a sense, disrespecting their way of life on the island. There was a strong sense of hostility—towards both forced migrants and NGO workers who have arrived to help in Lesbos—during my fieldwork in May 2018. The threat of so many long-staying newcomers with different backgrounds and religions dramatically influences the community. The cultural threat does not come from the against migrants alone, but also from the humanitarian aid workers who come in to “help.” Compounding this threat to their relatively cultural homogenous way of life is the economic impact of refugees, a form of realistic threat in threat theory literature.

REALISTIC THREATS

Realistic threats stem from threats that occur from competition over scarce resources. This can damage a group’s status or well-being, including job competition (Newman, Hartman, and Taber, 2012). This issue is prevalent when it comes to job opportunities in areas which carry prior extreme economic debt, like Greece after its economic crisis. Lesbos was going through an economic crisis and subsequent economic austerity measures implemented by the

EU before the refugee influx occurred in 2015. This meant that there was a perceived risk that refugees would increase job competition and create more deficit in the Greek economy, as well as require investment of financial resources to receive and host a huge influx of population.

Realistic threat is very common in refugee crisis settings. In South America, there is a very similar growing dissent about refugees and the impact on the local community's culture, politics, resources, and social institutions. During fieldwork in South America in June 2018, I found that Colombian and Peruvian citizens practically feel obliged to hire only Venezuelan workers to do the work for half the pay. In this case, most of the migrants escaping the economic turmoil in Venezuela are professionals with engineering and medical field backgrounds. From my research in South America, I observed that the distance that a migrant has the capacity to travel appears to be related to their education and financial means. As of 2017-2018, the educational attainment of Venezuelan migrants with a university education that reached Peru hit over 35% (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). Now, Peruvian citizens are having to battle with Venezuelans for both informal and formal labor market jobs. This is an occurrence that has affects host communities. Not only are Lesbians fearful that the government is investing in absorbing mass influxes (or perhaps insufficiently investing), but now the citizens may face job competition threat from educated incomers.

SYMBOLIC THREATS

Symbolic threats are those elements seen as violations to a particular groups' set of beliefs, cultural norms, values, or identities (Newman, Hartman, and Taber, 2012). In the case of the United States, this is like the debates surrounding immigrants who do not speak English and whether they are doing enough to embrace 'American norms.' Newman, Hartman, and Taber discuss how individuals in the United States feel threatened by Hispanic immigrants and their lack of assimilation to the American culture and identity (2012). In their article, they discuss the seemingly trivial automated system that companies provide for the Spanish-speaking community. This system offers bilingual assistance for those who do not know English. This

simple act implies that there is a significant Spanish-speaking population that has yet to learn the English language. The article states that very often, American citizens are not happy with having to go out of their way to press 1 (Newman, Hartman, and Taber, 2012). It goes beyond having to press 1 for English; it is the realization that English language is not the only one spoken throughout the United States. Like this, a threat to cultural identity may emerge.

As I apply this theory to my experience in Greece, I noticed a clear similarity. Migrants who enter Lesbos are perceived as not putting enough effort towards respecting the Greek culture. Locals expressed how refugees do not act in ways that fit their culture in terms of clothing, mannerisms, and language (Fieldnotes, Mytilene, May 2018). This threatens the Greek culture because this leads Lesbian citizens to become fearful that their cultural values or way of life will be changed. Kara Tepe provides Greek lessons for the refugees. However, this could serve as a “camouflage” to hide the resentment that Greek people feel towards the refugees about not knowing the Greek language or the lingering lack of effort. Greek lessons provided to the refugees by Greek staff at Kara Tepe serves as an indicator that locals’ cultural identity in Lesbos is threatened. The constant thought that the ‘people keep their cultures’ screams intense symbolic threat in the community on the island (Fieldnotes, Kara Tepe, May 18). The efforts of respect towards the Greek culture by the refugees can be subjective. Locals have a perceived notion on how their way of life was compared to what it has turned into after the crisis.

As an example of this cultural threat, there was a protest that occurred in the Main Square in Lesbos, just a couple Sundays before I arrived. I was told that the protest emerged after refugees began to practice their own prayers. They did so alongside Lesbian people who praying near the flag – a ‘tradition’ in the Main Square (Fieldnotes, May 2018). Locals in Lesbos said they had always been doing the prayer and the refugees provoked the violent protest by practicing their own set of prayers. But my key informant said it actually has not been a tradition for years (Fieldnotes, May 4 2018). This is the kind of cultural impact on the community that is

quite visible and resulted in violence. The symbolic threat here is how the local citizens felt their cultural norms and set of beliefs, Sunday prayer, were being violated before their eyes.

In this way, cultural threat theory—both realistic and symbolic threats—help to understand the broader context at the individual level for how locals' attitudes towards refugees and migrants has devolved. Cultural threats appear to serve as a scapegoat for locals' frustrations with how the Greek government and local municipality have responded to and managed the refugee crisis, with the looming humanitarian crisis in the camps just outside the municipality weighing on a public consciousness, and as a means of rationalizing the trauma and misunderstandings that have characterized the refugee crisis since 2015. Cultural threat theory alone is not enough to explain the context of Lesbos' change in public sentiments. The island is also situated within a larger global context.

GLOBAL STUDIES

ETHNOSCAPE

Much of the locals' concern on Lesbos is the refugee build-up on the island. Appadurai argues that moving groups cannot afford to let their imaginations rest as international capital shifts its needs, production and technology generate other needs, and nation-states change their policies on refugee populations. This correlates with the continuous shifts in the United States - the 'American dream.' This is the fantasy that Hispanic immigrants have essentially romanticized. There is a story that is repeated generation after generation. This story entails moving to the United States and seeking better opportunities - escaping the home country as economic migrants. This affects the economy and policies in the United States. As Appadurai states, it is an essential component of our world that has already been introduced. It is difficult to escape the constant flow. The mass movement of people is inevitable, and Lesbos is a site of this movement in its extreme form as it serves as the 'frontier' of Europe for many in the developing world. From a global perspective, what complicates the reaction of locals, and their fatigue from hosting the refugee population is that this global flow is unlikely to stop entirely.

METHODOLOGY

This study explores the cultural impact of humanitarianism in a community at the epicenter of the 2015 Syrian Refugee Crisis. I look specifically at how island residents—both locals and refugees—experience and interpret the cultural shifts that have occurred since refugees transited through the small island of Lesbos between 2015 and 2018. This study contributes to our understanding of humanitarian crises. It attempts to shed light on possible solutions to this increasingly common migration of people as it seeks to show how cultural impacts shape the environment in which humanitarian actors must engage. In other words, when the culture of the community shifts towards resentment of humanitarian aid workers, for instance, this affects aid workers' ability to administer assistance to refugees. I want to use this case study to illustrate the importance of considering local humanitarian culture as a critical aspect of effective humanitarian response, where humanitarian culture includes all of the local actors: refugees, citizens, and resident aid workers.

The principle goal of my study is to be able to understand the crisis on a holistic level by contextualizing lived experiences within the larger political context. The ripple effects of crisis are something I had the opportunity of observing through interviews and community immersion. There were things that are impossible to predict or makes sense of without these interviews, observations, and documentation. I chose qualitative methods to approach this topic because my goal is not to predict, but rather to understand how humanitarian crisis affects receiving communities socially and politically. As Bhattacharjee (2012) explains of qualitative research, "The emphasis...is 'sense making' or understanding a phenomenon, rather than predicting or explaining" (p. 113). Through interviews, observations of public demonstrations and meetings, and participant observation, I situate the changing tone of humanitarianism in Lesbos in a larger social and political context. This section describes my data collection methods and the sites I used for fieldwork. This entire process helped me gather data to understand the local culture in Lesbos from an outsider's point of view.

DATA COLLECTION SITES

I collected data—fieldnotes and interviews—in three locations: Mytilene, the capital of Lesbos, Greece; Kara Tepe refugee camp, just outside of Mytilene; and Molyvos, the town that experienced the greatest influx of refugees in 2015. I conducted 11 interviews in Lesbos. My interviewees varied from NGO workers, locals of Lesbos, and residents of Kara Tepe refugee camp. I ensured to interview diverse age groups as well. To guarantee that interviewees had been directly impacted by the 2015 crisis, I interacted with those who have lived through the crisis. This may mean that they have volunteered, lived in the camp, or in Mytilene during the height of the refugee arrivals. I also observed two political demonstrations—one pro- and one anti-refugee, observed a public forum on refugee issues in the village of Moria that hosts the largest refugee camp on the island, and volunteered in Kara Tepe refugee camp under a number of different organizations to conduct participant observation in the camp context. These data help to construct the various vantage points that make up the cultural, social, and political tensions surrounding refugee issues in Lesbos, Greece.

KARA TEPE

I spent one week volunteering in Kara Tepe refugee camp doing interviews and participant observation. The camp is comprised mainly of families, children, single older men, and boys in their late teens (Fieldnotes, Kara Tepe, May 2018). The camp accommodates approximately 700 refugees, which are classified as a vulnerable population. The populations are separated. Kara Tepe is located 7-10 minutes by car from the city center. Stavros Mirogiannis, camp manager, runs Kara Tepe. The camp is unique in that it is run by the municipality, rather than an NGO or national government body. There are other organizations who help with daily functions such as Movement on the Ground, Because We Carry, FutbolNet, Caritas, and International Rescue Committee.

A representative from Movement on the Ground said their mission at Kara Tepe was to help out the refugees; their goal was not necessarily to provide clothing but to give them their

decency back. I asked the Director of FutbolNet what their interaction was like with the locals. She said that they try to mix the teams by playing with Greek children. With hesitation, she later said, “some people are not pleased.”

I volunteered directly with the NGOs that operate in the camp that provide services such as food distribution, clothing distribution, welcome kits, and activities. One of my interactions with an NGO was with Because We Carry. I helped the organization with breakfast distribution. This involved preparing breakfast portions for each family in every ISOBOX (housing structure). The volunteer team packaged fruits, vegetables, nuts, and bread according to lists of residents and family sizes living in each house and delivered these packages to each door. This is a unique system of food delivery because the camp manager believes it is inhumane to make people stand in food distribution lines. In Kara Tepe, food is delivered door-to-door on a set schedule (fieldnotes, Kara Tepe site manager, May 2018). Additionally, the residents of Kara Tepe are given opportunities for extracurricular activities, such as soccer and Greek language lessons. I toured the different facilities in the camp such as a football pitch, a community garden, Greek lessons area, and yoga site for women that are provided for residents.

I did not sense tension while in Kara Tepe. As far as danger, the residents expressed their concerns with safety in Moria in comparison to Kara Tepe. It is important to consider that their experiences living in Moria would have drastically influenced their perspective; just because Kara Tepe is not as “crowded” or “prison-like” as Moria does not necessarily indicate that Kara Tepe provides a healthy and sustainable environment for the residents living there. Kara Tepe is meant to be a temporary facility before residents are transferred to mainland Greece.

In Kara Tepe, two residents nervously expressed their depression while having to wait for asylum at the camp. The depression derived from not feeling comfortable to interact with locals and feeling isolated as members of the community. As much as Kara Tepe provides a community-based environment, residents are still struggling with the emotional difficulties of

forced migration and are not given enough tools to deal with psychological trauma that may have been implicated during the entire process. There are psychology and music therapy programs to address the needs, but these are not enough. There has been an effort to utilize both music and sport related activities to unite the refugees and host communities. The major plan was to connect with the host community, but there was limited success as far as bridging the gap at the time of writing.

MYTILENE

Mytilene is the capital of Lesbos. I chose to conduct my data collection in this town because one of the arrival ports (and departure points to the mainland) for refugees is located in Mytilene. The people in Mytilene are mainly Orthodox Christian according to some of the residents I spoke to (Fieldnotes, May 2018). They have been very outspoken about the refugee crisis and the setbacks that it brings to the community's culture, economy, and political tension. During my visit, the community held a protest in the Main Square of Mytilene. The main square consists of several restaurants that sit right near the water; it is where you will spot locals gathering for coffee or lunch. The protest took place because the president of Greece was in town. It did not become violent; I observed that many women, men, and even children joined the protest. There is usually a large influx of mainly European tourists during the summer, therefore locals are used to accommodating some transience.

Refugees arrive to Lesbos by boat from Turkey. They are usually seeking asylum from Syria, Afghanistan, and Northern Africa, but other countries and regions are also represented in smaller numbers. One of the residents I spoke to in Kara Tepe is from Afghanistan. He admitted, "we were nervous to die, all of us, because the boat is too small for us. We were about 60 people, but the boat was for 30 people." This is the situation they face as they make their journey from their countries - only to face another journey upon their arrival to Lesbos.

My interviewees in Mytilene were made up of a family that left Afghanistan to seek refuge in Europe, a local citizen whom is obtaining his PhD, local shop owners, single older men

living in Kara Tepe, a father that has been exposed to severe PTSD, and NGO workers that strive to create fundamental programs to enrich the lives of refugees living in the camp and also those from all walks of life. It was vital to include people with diverse backgrounds for my data collection.

MOLYVOS

Molyvos was the location where I had my very first interview with someone that lived through the crisis in Lesbos. I expected to hear everything I had read in articles before my trip. I had heard much of it before, but I had never felt it. Once I spoke to a couple in Molyvos, I truly felt the complexities and secondary trauma of their stories. Their experiences were quite involved, as they assisted refugees arriving on the beach—even pulling them out of the water and providing dry clothes and transportation—in Molyvos in 2015.

It was a tranquil day in the small, picturesque town of Molyvos when I was there. The couple explained their effort in helping the refugees and how that created tension with their neighbors and other locals of Molyvos. They shared that others did not appreciate them being so welcoming. Their assistance towards the refugees, according to some, consequently created a wave of refugees to arrive—motivated by the perception of Greeks' hospitality. This then damaged tourism in Molyvos because “people do not want to step over refugees on their way to restaurants” (interview, May 2019). Although it was nearly the beginning of the tourism season, I did not see anyone in the restaurants or souvenir shops. We were told that the hotel rooms remained mostly empty.

DATA COLLECTION

Subjects were chosen for the study based on snowball sampling. My thesis advisor, Dr. Frydenlund, connected me with key informants she met during prior research experiences in Lesbos and those connections facilitated identification of the first participants. I specifically looked for people who have lived on Lesbos for more than 5 years and consider themselves as permanent residents of the island to represent the local citizens. Due to limited interpreter

availability, I selected participants who spoke at least conversational English. Refugees who spoke English were solicited through connections at Kara Tepe refugee camp and the aid workers there. Their interviews are mainly to nuance the data from locals, specifically by trying to understand how refugees experience the cultural narratives of humanitarianism that locals claim to maintain. For instance, prior fieldwork on Lesbos by Dr. Frydenlund has found that there is a strong local sense of humanitarianism, though refugees who do not have money to spend in town do not agree that ‘humanitarianism’ characterizes the island. For this, I selected participants who spoke English and left the camp—since many do not — to engage with the local community.

My interviews were not composed of specific interview questions; instead, I used two separate interview guides. These guides provided a list of the type of questions I ensured to ask in order to explore further. It was useful to instill ethnographic research as I asked about general domains of interest; this lead me to find more specific questions (Hesse-Biber, 2007). To conduct these interviews, I obtained IRB approval (1197874-3). I separated the guides according to the type of participant: an interview guide for locals and one for refugees. When I conducted my interviews, I did not state the questions word for word as they are written on the guides. Rather, my intent was to conduct my interviews with locals and refugees more like conversations that were shaped and led largely by what the participant wanted to and was willing to share with me. This falls in the semi-structured interview methodology where the interview guide provides some structure so I can compare responses between interviewees—allowing me to control the broad topic area of the conversation—but allows for flexibility and spontaneity (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

While my research is not specifically feminist, I relied on some feminist research practices as guiding principles of my fieldwork and data collection. Specifically, I practiced *reflexivity*, where I tried to be mindful and critical of my research process (Fonow & Cook, 1991). Feminist research methods use reflexivity to look at gender in social science research, but I

predominantly reflected on the privilege and power I brought to each interview as an outsider. Hesse-Biber explains, “true listeners who are non judgmental and open to hearing a great many things requires reflexivity and may involve the questioning and disavowing of previously held concepts and categories that frame our understanding of social reality” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 160). This means that previously held beliefs should not prevent the researcher to gain new information and truly listen to the participant’s story. For my interviews, I tried to be aware that my job in the situation was to listen and avoid assumptions about the interviewees’ situation, values, and worldview. When the interviewee spoke about a controversial topic that I had my own outlook on prior to the interview—such as comments that I considered to be xenophobic or racist—I tried simply to listen and be aware of maintaining neutral body language. I reflected regularly on the way that I asked questions to ensure they were not leading or conveying my own values. This practice dramatically shaped my thesis direction, allowing me to see the perspective of locals with more clarity to understand how their perspectives are often overlooked in this type of work. I also did not restrict the amount of time available to each participant so they could share everything they wanted without feeling rushed, manipulated, or judged. I tried to keep in mind how my own gender, race, age, and nationality might affect their answers to my questions. I was self conscious about how I approached a question or how I immediately reacted to an answer because of my Hispanic/Latina background. I felt that my appearance as a Mexican-American woman might suggest that I am in complete solidarity with refugees as the history of Hispanic/Latino background is quite delicate in the United States.

For my data collection, I used a recording device to record interviews. At the start of each interview, I provided a description of the study and obtained consent to use the recording device, as described in my IRB protocol. Additionally, I carried a notebook and a pen with me for my observations and interviews in Lesbos. I generated fieldnotes during the day, which I typed each night while the information was still fresh. I jotted down memorable moments throughout the day. My fieldnotes are composed of any moment that caught my attention; this may include

my observations in the community as I was riding in a taxi or a one-on-one conversation I had with a local at the refugee camp. Upon my arrival back to the US, I transcribed my recorded interviews and stored them in a secure file. These written notes and interview transcripts form the basis of my qualitative research on the cultural, social, and political changes and tensions that have arisen between local citizens, refugees, and NGO workers in Lesbos, Greece since the onset of the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe.

ETHICS

Ethics is essential to discuss when conducting human subject research because it allows the researcher to implement the study with fidelity and integrity. Pittaway, Bartolomei & Hugman argue of research with refugees that “the ethical challenge is for researchers to add value to the lives of the people they are researching, recognizing them as subjects in the process and not simply as sources of data” (2010, p. 231). I believe that if subjects feel that their story is just another part of a study, they may be reluctant to express their story authentically.

These ethical concerns are particularly heightened in work with forcibly displaced persons and other marginalized groups (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Hugman, 2010). Ethical issues related to research on displaced populations include consideration of “power and consent, confidentiality and trust, risks to researchers and potential harm to participants, as well as the broader cross-cutting issues of gender, culture, human rights and social justice” (Pittaway, Bartolomei & Hugman, 2010, p. 231-232). These risks vary in forms. For instance, when conducting research, participants may trust the researcher or lose themselves in the recounting of their stories and allow private information to be recorded - names or things that the interviewee did not realize would hold him/her at risk if the recording were to ever land in the wrong hands. This thesis is centered on the marginalized voices of both refugees and host community members and thus the discussion of ethics warrants added discussion. The following sections break down the ethical considerations of my research using Pittaway,

Bartolomei, and Hugman's (2010) notions of issues specifically related to research on forcibly displaced populations.

POWER AND CONSENT

For my interviews I had the power to direct the conversation along different routes, but I ultimately wanted to ensure that I was listening to an authentic response from the participants. Therefore, I opened the floor to allow them to express themselves freely. The recruited participants for my interviews were mainly introduced to me by the NGO connections I had made in the camp. This, in a sense, created a comfortable environment for both parties that were interviewed on camp grounds. They led the way when it came to what corner or section of the camp they preferred the interview to be conducted in. This was important for the refugees being interviewed because they did not want to be seen talking more than they should. Perhaps, this paranoia comes from being fearful that speaking to aid workers would affect their asylum process or cause commotion amongst the other refugees.

Consent means something different for locals versus refugees based on vulnerability and precarity of residency status, so locals were asked to sign an informed consent form. I used a notification statement with the refugees that allowed them to verbally consent without signing their name. For each interview, I made sure that we met in a place that felt comfortable and safe to them by letting them choose the location. I will include both notification statements/consent forms in my appendix.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRUST

I maintained confidentiality by keeping all audio files and transcripts of the interviews locked and secured in an off-line location. I removed any identifiers from the information, I erased audio recordings, and stored completed transcripts in a locked filing cabinet. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the participants will not be identified. Of course, the records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with oversight authority. Despite the idea of connecting with the participant

during interviews by calling them by name, I did not mention names during interviews when I asked questions.

Participants were chosen based on snowball sampling techniques through known contacts on the island of Lesbos through my faculty mentor. Most participants were limited to those who speak English due to the lack of interpreters, particularly for refugee participants. We attempted to interview a wide variety of long-term local residents and refugee residents of the island, but were limited to those who speak at least a conversational level of English.

Snowball sampling builds inherent trust into the interview format. Often, I earned their trust because I was referred by one of their friends or a trusted NGO worker in the camp that had built a strong connection with residents. This 'trust' was enforced by the camp manager who sanctioned my visit and told them to talk to me and allow me to follow them. The initial trust built from the mutual connection allowed the door to open, but it was important to earn a higher level of trust by participating and genuinely wanting to help their efforts.

POTENTIAL FOR HARM

As an external check on the ethics of my research methodology, I obtained ODU Institutional Review Board (IRB) (1197874-1) approval. This process does not protect the subjects or me from potential harm, but served as a critique and advice to externally evaluate my intended methods. When working with displaced populations and the communities that receive them, post-traumatic stress disorder makes the expectation of potential harm more difficult to predict. Researchers examining parenting during conflict by interviewing Syrian refugees in Turkey aptly noted, "Beyond numbers, there is also an emotional burden. Being away from home and facing uncertainty about the future affects Syrian refugees psychologically, socially, and physically" (El-Khani, Ulph, Redmond & Calam, 2013, p. 764). Their observations extend to other situations of forced migration, and, I would argue, the trauma experienced and expressed by the locals I interviewed. The authors argue that ethical review boards should consider allowing phrases such as "as far as possible" in their description of procedures,

because of rapid changes and difficulties in collecting data in such climate. In addition, they propose that primary components of procedures should be identified so they are maintained unaltered and identify those secondary components that could be modified, but still protect the participant and researcher (El-Khani., 2013). One example of this is during our meeting with the IRB committee before the trip. They asked how my faculty mentor and I were going to select refugees – were we just going to walk up to anyone and bombard them with questions? How would we tell the difference between locals and refugees? We answered awkwardly that the difference is obvious. Greek people are white and the current wave of refugees are not. The IRB process is not designed to accommodate the cultural nuances of some situations, so we clarified the point, but this illustrates some of the balance of doing refugee-related research to manage the potential for harm and the objectives of the research.

To the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) point specifically, I tried to maintain sensitivity to the potential for emotional distress when participants recounted their stories. PTSD is often recognized by the refugees, especially those who have access to mental healthcare inside the refugee camp, but in my observation, many of the locals have or are experiencing emotional distress and trauma related to the refugee influx as well. One local resident participant at one point nearly cried during our interview as she recounted seeing mothers with children live in her front yard and feeling there was nothing she could do to help. This type of secondary trauma appears to go largely unaddressed. I was speechless. Her desperation, the tears in her eyes, and there was nothing I could do. I then felt the struggle and hopelessness that she felt, only I had not just witnessed the crisis unfold before my eyes. It was the most challenging component in conducting interviews with refugees and locals in Lesbos, because you have to prepare yourself for participants to convey their own traumas even though the specific questions were not intended to reveal any stress or trauma. It is easy to sit there, but it is difficult to wrap your head around the entire complexity that occurred on the island and be a compassionate human while also doing research.

When people got angry or upset during interviews, I tried to place myself in their shoes. And whenever I did, I felt bumps on the road that challenged me to move forward and ignore the biases that were just created by placing myself in their position for just 10 minutes. Both the locals and the refugees on the island have suffered a great amount of emotional distress. I was also conscious of the fact that interviewing refugees could affect their long-term trajectory and wellbeing. As mentioned, the refugees put themselves on the line if they are seen complaining about the situation at the camp or about their living situation on the island. Local residents have fostered resentment over the fact that refugees complain about how poorly Greece has welcomed them. The locals like to continue to believe that the Greeks have been very accommodating, despite how the sentiment has changed from compassion to resistance. The local community seems to have created a sense of consensus—perhaps a constructed imaginary—on how well they responded to the crisis in 2015. To them, it is only reasonable to feel desperate and tired of the situation now. The two sides of these feelings—from refugees and locals—complicates the tensions experienced on the island.

REFLEXIVITY

For my research in Lesbos, I had to adapt to speaking with people that were dealing with some form of emotional trauma from the crisis. My background in Human Services served as an asset in moments in which I had to listen and observe prior to approaching a topic that the individual was not ready for. I had to do so because it was difficult to predict how and to what extent emotional distress might influence the local's or refugee's narrative. Hesse-Biber argues, "researchers need to listen to the form in which the content is told. Different people talk in different ways, so listening to the way a respondent frames her story can also reveal important information" (2007, p. 164). Reflecting on my own biases, body language, and interview technique, I attempted to embody a non-judgmental, open-minded listener who was providing conversation prompts only to facilitate their own recounting of experiences and feelings and not to push their answers in a particular way (Hesse-Biber, 2007). In this way, I tried with every

interview to consider both the participant's and my mental state, positionality, and power dynamic during the conversation. However, there were moments which were moments which I, too, felt compassion for the refugees' suffering. When speaking with the local residents in Lesbos, I felt their pain as some of them cried and expressed themselves with hand gestures. It was shocking to witness how both parties were so affected.

In my research, I found that many local citizens had distinct perceptions about the term 'refugee.' Many locals categorized Syrians as refugees and all others as migrants. This narrative was a major theme found on the island of Lesbos. When a local alluded to this, I asked for clarity. Those were the moments that made me feel uneasy with the ethics of my research, because my goal was to ensure that I had a nonjudgmental approach when I clearly felt taken back by the negative stereotypes they created about forced migrants arriving on the island who were not Syrian. But, my intent was to allow participants to express themselves freely, because ultimately it is their truth. I listened to Afghan refugees expressing their feelings and experiences seeking asylum and fleeing from the violence happening in their country in one setting, and then listened to stories from locals that did not echo what I had heard from non-Syrian residents at the camp. I reminded myself that all stories have multiple vantage points, and listened openly to both valid sets of experiences. In fact, this ethical tension—framed by my own perspective about who the migrants are and our global humanitarian obligations to them—is the source of my interest in this topic. I used my interviews and open listening techniques to give a safe space for local citizens to air their grievances so that I could better understand their perspective and why they have become so hostile towards migration and refugees.

This practice was not without its challenges, however, since I had to prevent my own perspectives from affecting the way I asked questions and how I responded to some of the rumors, xenophobic sentiments, and political viewpoints that they shared with me. I continued to confront these ethical issues as I analyzed the data, trying to keep my own biases out of the

analysis of the interview data so I could explore the intersections of local citizens', NGO workers', and refugees' ideas, experiences, and political objectives.

DATA ANALYSIS

Two main themes are emerging from my ethnographic data—perceptions of racism among locals and that no one really cares about the locals—illustrate the dynamics of the growing resentment between locals on the one hand and refugees and aid workers on the other. The stories I collected during my interviews conveyed frustration and desperation from locals and refugees on the island, but for different reasons and from different vantage points. The locals are frustrated that refugees have disrupted their community as new-incomers of the island. More than anything, they are desperate to live in a community where refugees no longer take a place in their society—particularly for such long periods of time—and where locals can live as they did before. This appears to be the sentiment, even though this might not have even been the case prior to the influx. Each theme consists of several sub-themes derived from qualitatively coding my interview transcripts and fieldnotes. These sub-themes were organized to support the two main themes and form the basis of the data chapters in this thesis.

“NOBODY CARES ABOUT THE PEOPLE:” THE CATALYST TO SKEPTICISM

At the start of the mass migration to the shores of the Greek Islands in 2015, the locals of Lesbos answered the humanitarian call to save, feed, clothe, and transport the hundreds—and then thousands—of migrants arriving each day. Lesbian locals managed the frontlines of humanitarian response before the aid agencies ever arrived. For their heroic and altruistic efforts, the people of Lesbos were nominated for and received a number of international humanitarian awards including the Nobel Peace Prize (UNHCR, 2016) and the Nansen Refugee Award (UN, 2016). Their immense efforts to assist the refugees the first few months of the crisis in 2015 gained international attention; however, it was quickly forgotten.

While the island of Lesbos has its own cultural history of forced migration during the Asia Minor Catastrophe of the early 1920s, with stories of flight from Turkey and rebuilding their lives on Lesbos passed down between family members and friends, no one was prepared for the startling number of migrants who would arrive on their shores for months (and years) to come. Even as I write this thesis, the number of migrants arriving to Lesbos is again surging to unprecedented levels - with more than 600 refugees that arrived by boat a few months ago (The Telegraph, August 2019). Slowly, the island that was once lauded as a humanitarian exemplar has experienced more and more anti-migration riots and political movements due to the tension that has evolved throughout the years of taking in refugees from all over the world. This tension has led to resistance towards outsiders from the local community of Lesbos.

My interviews with locals of Lesbos, humanitarian aid workers, and refugees in Lesbos paints a complicated picture of the locals' deep compassion and empathy towards refugees that goes largely unnoticed in the broader refugee studies literature. A focus on the locals' of Lesbos' perceptions of their own experiences presented in this chapter will help advance our understanding of—and compassion for—those communities who find themselves at the frontiers of mass migration. In this case, the Lesbian community has empathized and assisted in

alleviating the crisis, but they are outraged with the lack of resources and information provided to them as the host community.

MACRO TO MICRO LEVELS OF GLOBALIZATION

In this chapter, I consider the point-of-view of refugees, humanitarian aid workers, and locals of Lesbos in hopes of illustrating how global processes of mass migration have intimately affected the lives of the people in Lesbos as they struggle to reconcile their desire to be humanitarian while maintaining their distinct cultures. This chapter will address the challenges of human movement on a greater global scale than the world has previously witnessed, and Lesbos is one microcosm of that massive global human migration. I will look at what that macro level movement looks like at the local, individual level. Citizens of Lesbos experienced globalization in concrete ways where lives and communities were affected by cultural forces that operate worldwide (Torgonik, 1990). Locals of Lesbos welcomed refugees from different parts of the world, bringing globalization to their very doorsteps. The multiple layers that came after absorbing incomers affected the island of Lesbos, and still speaks to what continues to occur. On top of absorbing the massive influx of refugees, locals of Lesbos did not have a choice as to how long this refugee crisis would continue on their island. Lesbian locals were left to deal with the aftermaths of a refugee crisis, including both visible impacts as well as more intangible cultural and emotional effects.

“EUROPE DOES NOT CONSIDER GREECE A PART OF EUROPE”

Many Lesbian locals would likely agree that, “Nobody cares about the people” (Fieldnotes with local shop owner, May 2018), meaning that they harbor deep suspicions about the motivations of those people--humanitarian and government agencies--in charge of their welfare and that of the refugees. They would refer to how their lives were put in the backburner of the crisis. After serving as humanitarian actors at the beginning of the crisis, the locals of Lesbos started to feel alienated by other European states and humanitarian organizations. As evidence of the locals’ sentiments towards government bodies such as the European Union and

the Greek government, one local said, “Europe does not consider Greece a part of Europe” (Fieldnotes with Kara Tepe staff, May 2018). The European Union and the Greek government failed to provide locals with the opportunity for input upon the arrival of the NGOs, however, locals were expected to perform as humanitarian actors and then expected to stop most humanitarian activities and defer to external authorities.

Locals of Lesbos were excluded from what occurred on the island once the NGOs arrived. The lack of communication from outsiders struck the community of Lesbos in what may be described as a sense of betrayal. The crisis that fell right on their front steps was theirs to handle – from sentiments of compassion to resistance. Lesbian locals were left to endure living in the midst of a refugee crisis, from pulling families out of the sea, to having people sleeping on their lawns, to burying the dead. Speculations were formed by the locals as to why the crisis continued - these speculations revolved around higher authorities such as government officials. Some rumors including the idea that if locals were hospitable to refugees, those refugees would send messages home that it was a nice place and result in even more refugees arriving to the island. Locals felt they no longer had a voice in the affairs of their island, leading them to question their value as citizens of the island and the EU more broadly. As an example on the locals’ sentiment toward government officials, one local citizen expressed,

Somebody from the outside came here...told us what to do, when to do that, and how do that. They (EU) don't believe in border states, they're trying to impose beliefs in us. The government does not tell us if people will stay here or for how long (Interview with staff, Kara Tepe, May 2018).

This is but one interviewee who expressed the sense that locals were excluded from the narrative once refugees, NGOs, and external government intervention arrived. In the wake of the crisis (and now resurgence), locals seem desperate to restore their political voice. One local citizen illustrated her frustration by explaining to me that refugees are not held accountable for breaking the law in Mytilene, the city of Lesbos. “They can do whatever they want, nobody

cares. The law is you can steal as many times as you want” (Interview with local shop owner, Mytilene, May 8 2018). This sentiment of feeling frustration with a disruption of what they perceive to be the natural order of life, and the expectation of law authorities, derives from miscommunication from higher authorities and a long-term sense that their voices no longer matter in the governance of the island.

LESBOS AND HIGHER AUTHORITIES

There is a clear divide among the locals and refugees, but even more so, between the locals and higher authorities. As one local mentioned, there is “misinformation on both sides” (Interview with local staff, Kara Tepe, May 6 2018). This is how Greek people feel on the island. Without being provided information about how long the process will take, the locals of Lesbos are abandoned to mistrust the EU, nongovernmental organizations, and the Greek government. Locals of Lesbos suspect that the Greek governments’ and the European Union’s ulterior motive is “for the money” (Interview with local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7 2018). *Ethnoscape* calls attention to how moving groups, in this case refugees and NGOs, affect political nations (Appadurai, 1996). In the case of Lesbos, we can see political tension arising in response to the massive influx of migrants, not just from the change in demographics and infusion of new cultural norms, but also from the inability of local, national, and regional governance structures to be able to adapt effectively to the new needs of the EU’s “frontier” states. The global processes of migration and complex local, national, and regional governance structures collide in a very real sense for the locals of Lesbos. This erodes trust for government, breeds resentment towards humanitarian aid agencies, and mistrust towards the migrants arriving in droves. These resentments manifest in complex ways as the host community adapts to moving groups that arrive to their community. One local citizen explained how Lesbos, as the gateway to Europe, has been used by the European Union and the Greek government. She implied that the NGOs that arrive to alleviate the constant inflow of refugees is an orchestration created by political actors. The narrative on the island is that government officials are intentionally

prolonging the refugee asylum processes to delay NGOs from leaving the island, and even as a corrupt means of getting money from the EU for the refugee crisis that never actually reaches the Greek islands in need. As an example of the growing frustration and skepticism, one local explained the growing resentment towards NGOs remaining on the island,

If we don't have problems, they have to go right? The Greek government takes money from them, they ask for money from the European Union - for the refugees' problems. They give them food; they have to organize a problem in Moria - if they don't have a problem here, they will not profit from the situation. (Interview with local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7 2018)

NGOs abound in Mytilene to help refugees. A further explanation on the sentiment that locals have about NGOs is their skepticism as to what their roles are in the island. One local said, "I don't think they're absolutely humanitarian" (Interview with other local citizens, Mytilene, May 2018). While another local said (referring to the NGOs), "They think they own the place" (Interview with staff, Kara Tepe, May 2018). Locals do not understand why so many NGOs are there and what they are doing on the island. This lack of transparency and knowledge fuels further resentment and conspiracy theories that outsiders are capitalizing on the refugee crisis at the locals' expense. Resentment and misinformation driven by the consequences of their role in receiving a global migration crisis has led to fatigue of hosting refugees and outwardly expressing humanitarian and altruistic values that they, as a culture, hold so dear. It is not solely due to refugees staying too long, it is also about the political and economic implications of humanitarian aid agencies and government officials that appear to profit from the crisis.

Mediascape plays a part in this frustration as locals of Lesbos speculate about the ways the media portrays the crisis. One local expressed her skeptical notions about the media by stating that, "It's political. In the news they cannot say much, they're scared they could lose their jobs. I don't watch the news because I don't believe anything from the news" (Interview with local citizen, Mytilene, May 2018). Locals are angered about the false hope and lies that are

being told on television. As an example, a local resident expressed his frustration by explaining to me that Europe is falsely advertised. He said, “They present Europe as the Garden of Eden. They trade hope and dreams” (Interview with other local citizen, Mytilene, May 2018). It is as if there is a “poster of a free pass to Europe,” another local citizen said, supporting the idea of false hope that refugees are given about Lesbos (Fieldnotes with Kara Tepe staff, May 2018). Locals insist that refugees are provided with lies about the expectations of Greece as a gateway to Europe, leading them to make the journey across the Mediterranean only to find that the conditions are nothing like they expected.

PROLONGED ASYLUM PROCESSES

Instead of a perfect gateway to Europe, upon arrival, refugees find a detention center for asylum processing that some have described as a “concentration camp” (Magra, March 2018) where conditions have led to a severe mental health crisis (Kingsley, October 2018) and has recently swelled to an estimated 12,000 people in a space meant to hold around 2,000 (Reuters, Sep. 2019). The main problem in Lesbos is that refugees are basically ‘stuck’ on the island. The island has been forced to absorb a disproportionate number of refugees as a frontier of Europe. In 2015, millions of refugees fled conflict in Syria. EU border countries, such as Greece, were major transit points as refugees made the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey, hoping to reach various destinations in Europe. Due to the EU-Turkey Agreement, Greece serves as a transit point – however people now transit through very slowly compared to the months before the agreement. This is an issue because thousands of refugees remain on the island awaiting processing of asylum claims. Asylum processes can take up to years for many of these refugees. The locals of Lesbos realized that the prolonged crisis that hit their island was going to last more than a couple of months. Locals lived their own melancholic journeys and no one paid attention. Everyone assumed that the end of the refugee crisis was in sight. At the beginning of the refugee crisis, refugees resided in tents right in the city center for everyone to see. Everything that Lesbian citizens once imagined Lesbos to be--a

tourist destination for Europe--had vanished before they had a chance to ask 'why here.' The misinformation between the locals and outside forces such as the Greek government, the European Union and the NGOs was a key point of contention that led the locals to become desperate and bond over their melancholic trauma. Ultimately, the locals of Lesbos were left to resist the changes that the Greek government and the European Union had waiting for them. All of this was exacerbated by the refugees' increasingly prolonged stay on the island before moving on farther into Europe or back to Turkey.

A resident in Kara Tepe shared his experience about the prolonged asylum process, "It's been 10 months in waiting and no decision yet. They say 'next month,' 'next week,' 'you should wait.'" (Interview with Kara Tepe resident, May 2018). The long asylum process frustrates locals and refugees alike. A refugee who first arrived to Moria explained to me that, "People are sometimes hanging themselves in Moria" (Interview with Kara Tepe resident, May 2018). The refugee I interviewed described how the camps can feel like 'prison' and "so many people want to end their lives" (Interview with Kara Tepe resident, May 2018). But this is not what refugees thought they were getting into by arriving to the ports of Lesbos. "At first I was thinking that people who passed the borders went to Europe" (Interview with Kara Tepe resident, May 2018). An example of the sentiment that 'false hope' brought refugees to Lesbos, one refugee described to me that, "When you start your journey you have a lot of big ideas and big dreams and when you come here...it's different than what you dreamed or imagined before" (Interview with other Kara Tepe resident, May 2018).

It is important to realize that refugees staying on the island for an extensive amount of time also affects the local community. The prolonged asylum process in unsustainable living conditions adds to the catalyst of the growing tension on the island. "They want to leave, we want them to leave," explained a local citizen (Fieldnotes with Kara Tepe staff, May 2018). The locals are fed up with false images conveyed by the media that they feel continues to cause high arrivals of refugees. Given that the culture of Lesbos is to assist refugees, they also detest

that migrants are held in those conditions just a short distance from their capital city. They share the compassion that no one should be treated that way, and further resent the government and NGOs for not adequately addressing the ongoing humanitarian crisis brewing in nearby Moria camp.

Globalizing forces have brought hundreds of thousands of migrants to Lesbos with dreams of making a new life in other European countries. Most have no intention of making a life on Lesbos, like those Asia Minor Catastrophe refugees of Lesbians' historical memories. Political processes attempting to adapt to the massive flow of global migrants has restructured Lesbos and other Greek islands as detention centers, prolonging the process of asylum and forcing island locals to adapt to a new way of life. Cultural forces, from *ethnoscapes* to *mediascapes* have left Lesbians grappling with the implications of their 'visitors' who cause distress through the attraction of aid organizations and government interventions while enduring their own humanitarian crisis as they wait in Moria. The people of Lesbos share a history and identity as a compassionate, humanitarian community, but these values have been pushed to their limits by misinformation, lack of financial and political transparency, and a feeling that they have lost their political voice. In the next chapter, I discuss how the locals of Lesbos have experienced a threat to their culture in numerous dimensions that has forced them to resist in order to keep their cultural norms and values.

“WE ARE NOT RACISTS:” ECHOES OF DESPERATION

So vividly, a local shop owner explained the catastrophic feeling that she had while watching the inflow of refugees from her front yard that summer as she visualized it: Thousands of people coming out of the sea with their babies and their families, of course, I was worried. (Interview with local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7 2018). On a daily basis, from 2015 onwards, the locals of Lesbos witnessed the aftermath of the migration crisis as refugees were constantly arriving. It was a broken record of cries for help all over the island; the locals and some tourists lounging on the beaches were the first and only people who witnessed the influx when it started. One local I interviewed explained how important it was for the locals to assist the migrant families and the children in any way they could. The locals donated children’s books and toys to help them find a sense of happiness; as she put it, “a toy for a smile” (Interview with other local shop owner, Mytilene, May 2018). Local citizens physically put their lives at risk by jumping in the water to help refugees from drowning. They also assisted from the beach with everything from dry clothing and food to transportation to the capital city for asylum processing. Especially in the early months, there was a significant level of compassion and humanitarian response from the island’s local population.

As I sat with a local shop owner, she echoed a common sentiment of concern over the refugees’ ongoing situation on the island: “Women and children cannot live in Moria” (Interview with other local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7 2008). At the beginning of our interview, the local shop owner was as compassionate as any decent human being could be towards another persons’ struggles. She slowly became angered at how the situation has worsened for the refugees’ overtime. We talked about what she imagined a refugee in Lesbos goes through. I wouldn’t live without freedom; I think I would be protesting everyday too. The difference is the matter of freedom – how I can leave somewhere else whenever I want (Interview with other local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7 2018). They share a cultural history of migration and a shared trauma with the refugees who they helped to pull from the water, but these feelings of

compassion are often masked by the resentment and sense that they have lost control of their home. The locals once welcomed refugees and their journeys towards a better life as they responded to a crisis they were not ready for--that perhaps no one could have been ready for.

From the locals' perspective, government officials and NGOs were not clear about what they were doing on the island. Clarity was not provided as to when refugees would leave. Locals were compassionate even after physically providing assistance and witnessing the crisis as a part of their everyday lives. They were caught in the middle of having to deal with the repercussions of the crisis first-hand. Among conversations between locals, one admitted, "People are suffering in front of us and we close our eyes" (Fieldnotes, May 2018). The emotion conveyed in this statement indicated a deep regret that locals have been put in a situation of humanitarian crisis that they feel incapable of responding to, despite their intentions to be compassionate and altruistic. Even after the trauma they have witnessed and seeing their island transform into a "hotspot" for detaining refugees, they have mostly remained compassionate. NGOs and refugees took over their island; meanwhile, higher authorities did little to assist the locals of Lesbos as they had to also adapt to a new way of living. Ultimately, enough was enough. The locals of Lesbos realized that they had traded their livelihoods in tourism and agriculture to become humanitarian responders. According to the locals, tourism declined due to the refugee crisis, their livelihoods fell into shambles, and their cultural norms and way of life were threatened. What was once a Greek tourist island with a tight-knit community is now a refugee crisis zone.

Locals of Lesbos expressed feelings of cultural threat and symbolic threat during my interviews. Cultural threat is defined as "the perceived harm caused by immigrants with distinct morals, norms, and values" (Zárate, et. al., 2004, p. 100). In this chapter, I use the cultural threat theories to identify issues that revolve around absorbing different cultures as a host community. This describes repeated sentiments of how the locals have seen their community change over time and have grown to resent and mistrust higher authorities such as the EU, the

Greek government, and NGOs. Symbolic threat is violations to a particular groups' identity or cultural norms (Newman, Hartman, and Taber, 2012). The people I interviewed expressed a sense that the refugees--and subsequent NGO and government interventions--had begun to culturally and symbolically threaten their way of life.

In my interviews, people often described a picture-perfect image of what life on the island was like before the refugees; a life that the locals desperately want back. The way of living in Lesbos consisted mainly of tourism and agriculture. The locals feel that they are being taken advantage of as refugee hosts, with their hospitality stretched far beyond its limits, and insinuate that they no longer have a word about who comes and goes in their community. Thus, locals have scapegoated refugees for tourism decline on their island. A local shop owner shared her outlook about the level of tourism decline in Mytilene, the municipal center of Lesbos, which she described as a tourist spot. "We used to get cruise boats - three to four times a week. After 2015, we see no cruise boats here" (Interview with local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7 2018). She blamed the refugees for the decrease in tourism as a whole on the island.

MIGRATION CRISIS AS A CULTURAL THREAT

The locals in my interviews conveyed a constructed vision of this ideal summer tourism/winter olive oil production island paradise, and they accept no other way of living. The increase in hotel bookings by the aid workers has been overlooked. In fact, it has been hard for the locals to adapt to it as a source of income. In this section of my thesis, I will rely on my interview data in order to understand the contrast between how locals perceive what the island should be, and how refugees have imposed a cultural threat on that idealism.

The way of living in Lesbos before the crisis was the complete opposite to how it is now. As an example of this dramatic shift, one local described the island as, "very calm...we were like a neighborhood, we didn't have criminality before" (Interview with local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7 2018). The significance of this transition for host community members is that they are not prepared to accept that their lifestyles and their community will inevitably change. They are also

not provided with the resources to cope with cultural changes, as indicated by other interviewees expressing disappointment in the police's ability and reliability when responding to crimes committed by migrants.

When asked how life in Lesbos was before the economic and the refugee crisis, one business owner joyfully recalled, "We were very happy. It's not that we had much money. We always worked." This is an example of how living on the island was like before the crises. This was her narrative, and even after the economic crisis, locals of Lesbos had hope in their economy improving. However, the fast inflow of refugees arriving from different parts of the world shifted this entire dynamic. She hinted at different incidents that occurred in the community, such as criminality after the refugees arrived, indicating a distinct *fear* that has come as a result of the refugees' arrival. She explained how that affects the Greek culture, "We're afraid because things happen every day." Stories around fear and changing social dynamics in Lesbos were common among my interviewees. This is particularly why the locals are outraged and ready for refugees to leave the island. Their way of living is threatened by the perception of migrants and NGO workers taking over their island.

These fears are not unwarranted. Violence has become a regular occurrence in the overcrowded Moria camp where the vast majority of migrants on the island reside. An NGO representative explained how Moria camp can simply go from everything being ok to complete chaos. "You feel that in a couple of seconds it can turn over and something can go wrong" (Interview with Movement on the Ground representative, May 2018). Reports of violence from within the camp may fuel a public perception that refugees are dangerous. This is particularly true when locals have distinct, perhaps even traumatic, memories of the refugees before the arrival of NGOs where, according to one local citizen of Lesbos, refugees were "sleeping in the streets" and there were "ugly smells" all over the island. These past events witnessed by locals, compounded by the reports of violence in Moria and even political protests of refugees, provides

further evidence for some of my interviewees that migrants have contributed to insecurity in their once safe community.

A local shop owner explained that the lives of local citizens of Lesbos are interrupted on a daily basis. As an example of her desperation, she stated, “You don’t go to a coffee shop with a friend anymore, you go somewhere calm and nice.” She implied that refugees are everywhere and are something necessary to avoid in order to maintain some semblance of their old way of life. This has also fostered a sense of resentment towards migrants, and even the aid workers who locals generally detest. The locals of Lesbos are surrounded by refugees and aid workers on a daily basis, whether they elect to go near the camps or not. Outsiders have become a year-round feature of their lives; this is in direct contrast to the European tourists who used to stay only for a few months and leave the island during the winter. Hosting fatigue in this instance may be driven by cultural threat that is compounded by a constant presence, rather than the ebb and flow of tourists they were used to.

Locals now generally tend to separate themselves from the crisis. If it is not in their backyard, they do not want to be a part of the ramifications. In many cases, it seemed that they cared so deeply, their empathy led to a traumatic experience for them. In some of my interviews, for instance, locals cried when they shared their memories of the refugee crisis from the beginning. The ‘hardening’ they seem to have towards refugees now, and the cultural threat they appear to be perceiving, could be a result of the unaddressed trauma of witnessing the refugee crisis since its beginning. They do not want to continue to be a part of the effects of a crisis that has only created “extra burden” and “brought issues and problems” to their island any longer (Interview with local staff, Kara Tepe, May 6 2018). It is apparent that the locals were and continue to be tremendously impacted by the crisis, both emotionally and in their everyday life experiences.

LIFEJACKET GRAVEYARD

The small town of Molyvos, on the other side of the island from Mytilene, demonstrates a perfect example of let's 'sweep it under the rug' scenario that exemplifies locals' desire to rid themselves of the entire crisis experience. A place called "Lifejacket Graveyard" is located in Molyvos. This area is a dumping site for the locals, but it symbolizes the ongoing crisis that continues to occur in the frontier of Europe today, and the direct, physical impact that has had on life in Lesbos. On the one hand, the lifejacket graveyard symbolizes the dangerous journey that refugees had to endure to arrive to the island. Lifejackets from the shores that get discarded as refugees disembark from their boats have been collected and put in the local landfill, just a few miles from the town center. During my visit in May, I noticed that the life jackets left at the dumpster site were filled with foam. Smugglers provide these life jackets to refugees. In the case that the boat flips over, they would be of no function. The massive piles of lifejackets there symbolizes the precarious journey of migrants risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean and really emphasizes how many people have passed through that part of Lesbos.

On the other hand, the lifejacket graveyard also signifies the way that locals have been disregarded in the broader humanitarian response. Before they were deposited at the landfill site, hundreds of thousands of lifejackets have littered the shores of Lesbos' pristine beaches--the source of their touristic livelihoods. Like the discarded jackets and trash accumulated from the crisis that only the locals stepped up to manage, the locals seem to want to discard the memories of the refugee crisis all together. The interesting thing about this site is that if you ask a local in Molyvos about where the Lifejacket Graveyard is located, chances are they will deny this place even exists. Instead of a site of remembrance for their heroic and altruistic acts, the lifejacket graveyard is an example of the considerable amount of tension caused by the migration crisis and locals' desperation to return to their previous way of life.

Locals now generally tend to separate themselves from the crisis. If it is not in their backyard, they do not want to be a part of the ramifications. For many of my interviewees, they cared so deeply in the beginning that their empathy led to a traumatic experience for them. They do not want to continue to be a part of the effects of a crisis that has only created “extra burden” and “brought issues and problems” to their island any longer (Interview with staff, Kara Tepe, May 6 2018). It is apparent that the locals were and continue to be tremendously impacted by the crisis, an impact that has generated fear and scapegoating of the outsiders inundating their island and threatening their way of life. This location and how locals react to it is an example of how locals are resisting accepting that their lives have ultimately changed due to the massive influx that has transformed their island. The Lifejacket Graveyard is more than a dump site for lifejackets, it is a constant reminder for locals that refugees are now a part of their everyday lives. While locals expressed to me that they do not believe their culture has changed, they clearly resist the notion that life is as it was or that they have adapted to the many ramifications of the crisis on their shores.

SYMBOLIC THREAT

“We are not racists” (Interview with other local citizen, May 2018). Locals of Lesbos constantly feel that they need to justify their sentiments of desperation. They are desperate to be heard and they fear that refugees are not grateful for the contributions of compassion that locals have provided as the host community or empathetic for the locals’ own struggles. As an example of this sentiment, one local said, “Refugees are ungrateful, they would use the restroom everywhere then tell you to pick it up” (Interview with local staff, Kara Tepe, May 2018). Locals do not feel that refugees respect their island or their religious views. As an example, one of the locals expressed her frustration about a refugee praying at the city center at the same time as the Greeks pray to their flag, saying:

The Muslims prayed at the same time as when we were singing the Greek song, we do it every Sunday - every single Sunday that I've lived here. They can do it before or after,

not at the same time. When you are in a country - you have to respect the people (Interview with local shop owner, Mytilene, May 2018).

Locals I interviewed felt that their set of beliefs were violated by the norms and practices of refugees. They are not accustomed to different cultures and religions on their island. “We’ve never seen black men, we don’t know how to react with people from all over the world” (Interview with local staff, Kara Tepe, May 2018). Locals I interviewed said things such as, “The Syrians are peaceful and quiet just like us” and will insinuate that the only legitimate refugees on the island are Syrians. The rest, in their minds, are economic migrants taking advantage of them and their hospitality. This notion originates from the lack of information that the locals have been provided about who the different waves of migrants are and why they are there. From an outsider viewpoint, these sentiments can be interpreted as racism, but my impression from my observations and interviews is that the perspective is far more nuanced. Locals are resisting from having their culture mixed with cultures that are unknown to them. This unfamiliarity causes symbolic threat because locals do not want to see other cultures mix with the others’.

The local community in Lesbos is susceptible to perceiving refugees and NGO workers as a symbolic threat to their way of life as they are caught in the middle of a financial crisis, misinformation, and a feeling of desperation as they confront a massive humanitarian crisis both upon arrival and during prolonged asylum processing. Some citizens have had enough of the constant changes to their norms and everyday practices (like going to the coffee shop) that they no longer want to deal with refugees or aid workers. This is a symptom of refugee hosting fatigue--even fatigue towards humanitarianism in general--that has moved citizens’ attitudes towards the negative. Locals now not only resent the refugees and outside aid workers, but also other locals who want to continue to help. There is a divide in the humanitarianism of the island between those who support and those who do not; this causes those locals who help to become ostracized from the community. A resident in Molyvos expressed her concerns with how people react when you want to help refugees. “The Greeks will start turning against us

because they know we help. How can you not help?” (Interview with local citizen, Molyvos, April 30 2018). At the beginning of the crisis, she was one of the leading volunteers that helped when the refugees arrived at the port in Molyvos. Now she has lost friends that she grew up with and neighbors refuse to talk to her for her continued role in the humanitarian response. They now believe that by helping, she has become part of the problem. The problem is not solely targeted at the refugees, but the entire humanitarian response that arrived to the island. However, one of the shop owners I spoke with clarified that it was there is a misconception about the Greeks and it’s the fascists who are make all Greeks look bad. “The media doesn’t show solidarity” (Interview with other local shop owner, May 2018). Even among those who do not outwardly help the refugees, my interviewees revealed that they still attempt in small ways to show their humanitarian spirit. It is not simply a matter of being “for” or “against” refugees. The locals sense the threat to their way of life, both culturally and symbolically, and thus resist the image of Lesbos as a refugee island; but this is at odds with their identity as refugee descendants and humanitarians, leading them to still express compassion, empathy, and small acts of kindness towards the migrants stuck on the island for longer and longer periods of time.

CONCLUSION

I was thinking how parents were coping with children being awake for 10 hours, even seeing people drowning. It's not a matter of what I want or what you want, it's a matter of how the situation is now. They haven't done anything wrong.

(Interview with other local shop owner, Mytilene, May 2018)

IT'S RESISTANCE, NOT XENOPHOBIA

The history in Lesbos might have had a huge influence on how residents on the island initially reacted when they saw thousands of refugees landing at the ports. One of the residents I interviewed recalled a statue located in Mytilene—the statue of the Asia Minor Mother. She recalled the island's history, “all the great people left from there, they left their houses they came here as refugees – even the Lesbian people, they are refugees” (Interview with local shop owner, May 2018). Her tenderness when asked about the statue seemed formed by the stories that have been passed on about these refugees. In this case, reminiscing about refugee ancestors when asked about the significance of the statue might have sparked a connection between the locals and the refugees. As they resonated with the refugees' stories, the locals persisted to respond with everything they had in 2015, before anyone from outside arrived to help.

Their compassion is reflected in different forms. One local stated that she donated a lot of English books and over 10,000 toys were donated by the local people (Interview with another local shop owner, Mytilene, May 7, 2018). Yet, locals are seen to have a bad relationship with the refugees according to NGO workers on the island or in media coverage of the island's political protests. In the beginning, the locals of Lesbos were standing at the shore offering refugees food and dry clothing. Even though many Greeks are financially insecure and struggling to feed their own families due to the EU economic austerity measures, they gave everything they could in a gesture of compassion and empathy. Even now, despite the perception that locals are no longer as hospitable towards refugees, they express compassion

and empathy towards the migrants themselves; for most, it is their collective situation of misinformation, ongoing humanitarian crisis, and perceptions of government and NGO corruption that drive their political protests and the perception of being anti-migrant.

From the outside looking in--including the perspective of some aid workers I spoke to--the locals of Lesbos appear to have grown callus to the plight of refugees arriving to the island. However, my interviews with locals revealed a much different story. Though the locals are no longer allowed to stand at the shores and pull refugees from the water or drive the refugees to Moria for asylum processing, and many have long abandoned prominent gestures of humanitarian aid, they still strongly empathize with the plight of migrants seeking a better life. The political, economic, and media pressures contribute to a growing sense among locals that the crisis is being mismanaged at the expense of their own livelihoods that rely on tourism and agriculture. Their negative sentiments seem to be a reaction to their own struggles--for economic well-being, mental and physical health, and the public perception of their island that feeds the tourism they rely on.

When NGO and government bodies involved in humanitarian response fail to acknowledge that a particular community culture exists, they may forget that the citizens are free to create their own ideas to fill in the blanks. The community of Lesbos did just that, filling in rumors about migrants, NGO workers, and government corruption to answer the questions they had about the unfolding crisis and its management. Some of these rumors may sound xenophobic, but when taken in context of the full crisis and the often-ignored experiences of the locals, their feelings and perceptions can be understood much differently. After all, their way of life was completely shattered, and no one paid attention. NGOs intruded in the culture of Lesbos. It is fundamental to acknowledge that before the dramatic shift from compassion to resistance, locals felt very empathic towards the arriving refugees. In my interviews, the locals of Lesbos repeated how genuinely concerned they felt about the refugees' struggles to arrive to Greece and navigate the system to move on to other European countries. Locals expressed to

me how they wanted to help, but they assumed it was a temporary situation and life would eventually go back to normal. At that point, Lesbos was mainly a transit point where migrants were processed and quickly moved to mainland Greece and then on to other destination countries.

During my interviews, the locals would often caveat their accounts of the migration crisis and the current migration situation with statements that asserted their empathy for the migrants. They were not prepared for the inundation and long stay of refugees and aid workers on the island. These life-changing components have changed their way of life, leading to perceptions of cultural and symbolic threats that derive directly from the pressures of globalization and mass migration bearing down on this intensely local, tight-knit, culturally homogenous island community. The traumatic experiences of being at the forefront of Europe's migration crisis has forced them to confront the politics, economics, and social change that comes with being a refugee hosting community. The intense situation on the island reflects a complex reality of altruistic spirit mixed with the threat of a changing way of life.

LESBOS AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Lesbos' situation connects to other circumstances in the world. In particular, the Venezuelan refugee crisis and the massive influx of migrants into border communities of Colombia share similar features of the migrant crisis in Greece. I had the opportunity to conduct fieldwork in Lima, Peru and Cucuta, Colombia in June 2019 to observe the impacts of Venezuelan mass migration into neighboring South American countries. The problems of host community relations and hosting fatigue are not limited to Greece; they affect countries and communities all over the world as they bear witness to the largest movement of people the world has ever seen. In this scenario, it has been a hosting fatigue that the locals have had to deal with for far too long. In Peru and Colombia, I witnessed a very similar growing dissent about refugees and the impact on the local community's culture, politics, resources, and social institutions, particularly among the poorest community members who are the most economically

precarious. Like Lesbos, what was once—and is currently for the most part—a humanitarian response is beginning to show fissures that may lead to resentment and xenophobia from hosting fatigue. However, there are indicators that prove themselves as noteworthy when comparing the refugee crisis in Lesbos and the host communities receiving the Venezuelan migrants. The host community in Colombia and Peru have vital roles when it comes to assisting the refugees of Venezuela because the church is so involved in the assistance of the incomers. Religion, culture, and language is significant when researching how host communities will react to a refugee influx in their community. In the case of the Venezuelans, they share a language with their host communities, as well as some religious and cultural similarities. In Lesbos, however, the diverse languages and cultures represented in the migrants is very different and unknown to the Greek host community. This results in differing migration discourses in these two separate cases, and yet we can observe similar indications of hosting fatigue in both places.

Exploring Lesbos as a case study contributes to broader knowledge about host communities and hosting fatigue that could have an impact in other places, such as those now hosting the Venezuelan migrants. There are some direct policy implications that can come from the case study of Lesbos that may apply to other host communities experiencing a similar crisis. The most prominent finding from this study is that misinformation and information transparency and efficient asylum processes are fundamental to managing host and migrant relations. Each community may consume information differently and trust different sources of information, but local groundwork and cultural knowledge could allow tailored information campaigns that ensure host community members' questions and concerns are adequately addressed before they begin to fill in their own gaps in knowledge. Perhaps, transmitting information from bottom up through newspapers and flyers and facilitating different methods to transfer information could help avoid misinformation that leads to anti-migrant sentiments. Second, as discussed with one of my interviewees, a policy should be implicated that focuses on learning where refugees are coming from and about their crisis zone tribulations. This would prepare the NGOs and the host

community with knowledge of the culture and violence that the refugees are leaving behind. In a sense, refugees who make their way to Lesbos, or any other host community, bring their problems and cultural norms with them. This policy would ensure that the host community and government officials are educated about who they are receiving in their community, which may facilitate both empathy and tolerance of difference. Third, I propose that a policy should be implemented that indicates that refugee camps should be strictly transit points. Therefore, asylum seeking individuals should not be held in camps or detention centers for more than three months. Refugee camps do not provide sustainable living conditions. This should be defined as inhuman as it is a violation to human rights. Host community fatigue in refugee crisis scenarios will continue to repeat if the host community is alienated from a crisis that affects them the most, including keeping refugees contained in camps away from the public. The locals of Lesbos have a desperate desire to regain their community culture. While locals demand to be heard from higher authorities, they have shown significant humanitarian gestures towards refugees in humanitarian crises. These actions and sentiments have been falsely identified as xenophobic tendencies. However, host communities, specifically Lesbos as a case study, have proven that the outcome of their compassion and hosting fatigue leads to resistance.

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Roundtable discussion. "Humanities Unbound Conference; Refugee Crisis Research" April 2018

Media & Other Work

Frydenlund, Erika and Luz Diaz. (2018, June 8). "This is Moria..." [Guest blog post]. The Migrationist. Retrieved from: <https://themigrationist.net/2018/06/08/this-is-moria/>

Languages

Spanish – fluent in verbal and written communication