

MIDDLE EAST JOURNAL OF REFUGEE STUDIES
Cilt/Volume: 2 ■ Sayı/Number: 2 ■ Yaz/Summer 2017
ISSN: 2149-4398 • eISSN: 2458-8962 • DOI: 10.12738/mejrs

Middle East Journal of Refugee Studies uluslararası ve hakemli bir dergidir. Yayımlanan makalelerin sorumluluğu yazarına/yazarlarına aittir.

Middle East Journal of Refugee Studies is the official peer-reviewed, international journal of the International Refugee Rights Association. Authors bear responsibility for the content of their published articles.

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Yayın Türü/Type of Publication
Yerel Süreli Yayın/International Periodical

Yayın Türü/Type of Publication
Türkçe ve İngilizce/Turkish and English

Yayın Periyodu/Publishing Period
Altı ayda bir Ocak ve Haziran aylarında yayımlanır/Biannual (January & June)

Baskı ve Cilt/Press
Pelikan Basım
Adres: Gümüşsuyu Cad. Odin İş Merkerzi No: 28-1 Topkapı İstanbul
Telefon: +90 (212) 613-7955 **Web:** www.pelikanbasim.com **Elektronik posta:** info@pelikanbasim.com
Basım Tarihi: Temmuz 2017



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Ali Kuşçu Mah. Büyük Karaman Cad. Taylasan Sok. Toprak Apt. K: 1 Fatih İstanbul
Telefon: +90 (212) 531-2025 **Web:** http://mejrs.com/ **Elektronik posta:** admin@mejrs.com

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Söylem Analizi Kuramını Zorunlu Göç Yönetimine Uyarlamak

Umut Korkut^a

Öz

Bu makale, komşu ülkelerden çatışmalar sebebiyle göçe zorlanmış mültecilerle karşı karşıya kalan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin siyasi tepkileri ile ilgilidir. Bu çalışmada Türkiye'nin sınırlı sığınma rejiminin ve göçmenliğe yönelik caydırıcı Türk kamu felsefesinin, siyasi otoriteleri, zorunlu göçün etkilerini yönetmek noktasında kurumsallaşmış araçlardan ziyade söylemsel araçlar kullanmaya zorladığı konusunda genel bir tartışma yürütülmektedir. Zorunlu göçlerin artması ve komşu ülkelerden mültecilerin ülkeye akın etmesi üzerine Türk siyasi makamları, anlatılara dayanan seçici politika çözümleri takip etmiştir. Bu anlatılar, stratejik söylemler yoluyla zorunlu göçe yönelik siyasi çözümlerde Suriyelileri "kabul edilebilir mülteci" olarak açık bir şekilde iliştiirmiştir. Bu durumda kabul edilebilir mülteci, kendi tarihi bakımından Türkiye için tarihi ve sosyal sorumlulukları ifade eden mülteci'dir. Bunun sonucu ise kurumsallaşmış mültecilik haklarını herkes için genişletmek yerine bazılarının kabul edilebilir olarak söylemsel inşası olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Türkiye • Zorunlu göç • Suriyeliler • Söylem yönetimi • AKP

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Applying the Theory of Discursive Analysis to Governance of Forced Migration

Umut Korkut^a

Abstract

This article deals with the political responses of the Turkish Republic when faced with incursions of refugees from its neighboring countries forced to migrate due to conflicts. It develops a general argument that the restrictive Turkish asylum regime and aversive Turkish public philosophy to immigration have enforced political authorities to continuously resort to discursive rather than institutionalized means to handle impacts of forced migration. Responding to increasing cases of forced migration and the resulting influx of refugees from the bordering countries, therefore, the Turkish political authorities have pursued selective policy responses resting on narratives. Via strategic discourses, these narratives have expressively embedded the Syrian as an “acceptable refugee” in political responses to forced migration. The acceptable refugee in this instance is the one that implies historical and social responsibilities for Turkey, given its history. The outcome is the discursive construction of some as acceptable rather than extending institutionalized refugee rights for all.

Keywords

Turkey • Forced migration • Syrians • Discursive governance • AKP

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Introduction: Context Description and the Restrictive Asylum Regime in Turkey

This article recommends that when studying forced migration, we need to take into account modes of discursive regimes that political authorities may pragmatically utilize. It assesses the application of discursive regimes vis-à-vis institutionalized responses when political authorities are faced with the forced migration of people from a foreign territory into their native one. The context selection is the Turkish case and Turkey's handling of the Syrian refugee crisis. The narrative that has influenced the governance of the migration regime in Turkey at the face of the influx of Syrian refugees is under study. To this extent, particular discourses at play will be noted inasmuch as they seek to attune the collective rationality to accept Syrians, due to the historical and religious responsibilities of the Turkish nation toward them and in a way to continue with "what has always been the case" with Turkish state traditions – even prior to the Republic. While analyzing the discursive governance of Syrian migration, the article will give references to collective memory generation by the political authorities as a means to garner political support. In that respect, the article underlines that the current discursive regime welcomes only those that have religiously, ethnically, and politically acceptable backgrounds to the political ideology in government and its voter base.

Essentially, this article deals with the political responses of the Turkish Republic when faced with incursions of refugees from its neighboring countries forced to migrate due to conflicts. It develops a general argument that the restrictive Turkish asylum regime and aversive Turkish public philosophy (Korkut, 2014) to immigration have forced political authorities to continuously resort to discursive rather than institutionalized means to handle the impact of forced migration. Responding to increasing cases of forced migration and the resulting influx of refugees from the bordering countries, therefore, the Turkish political authorities have pursued selective policy responses resting on narratives. Via strategic discourses, these narratives have expressively embedded the Syrian as an "acceptable refugee" in political responses to forced migration. The acceptable refugee in this instance is the one that implies historical and social responsibilities for Turkey, given its history. The outcome is the discursive construction of some as acceptable rather than extending institutionalized refugee rights for all. The recent Syrian crisis shows that narratives, rather than institutions, operate in Turkey's migration regime. However, the Syrian case is not a singular case considering the earlier cases of Turkish selective humanitarian assistance to refugees. In conclusion, this article shows that following a discursive methodology to examine a government's response to forced migration could be an effective method not only to understand how policies operate temporally and selectively, but also to follow the guidance of narratives rather than institutions with universal implications.

The Turkish asylum regime limits itself to accepting asylum applications only from European nationals. Other nationalities can gain temporary residence in Turkey while UNHCR deals with their cases – which can take years in many instances, but they can neither leave their places of temporary residence nor do they have any employment rights while in wait. Despite the geographical limitation however, depending on their ideologies, governments have been lenient toward certain refugee groups. The Turkish immigration and refugee policies have always been biased in favor of people of Turkish descent and culture – but only as long as such persons were of Sunni/Hanefi background. The Republic emphasized Turkish language and ethnic affiliation in respect to its immigration policies, but remained silent with respect to religion. Yet, the actual practice reveals a striking preference for admitting immigrants with a Sunni/Hanefi religious background as the religious backgrounds of the overwhelming majority of immigrants admitted to Turkey speak for themselves (Kirisci, 2000, p. 3). Therefore, an aversion of foreignness has affected Turkey’s immigration policies. As an example, in 1989, 310,000 Turks and Pomaks from Bulgaria were granted easy access to refugee status, while a similar possibility was denied to Kurdish asylum seekers who fled to Turkey from Iraq in 1988 and 1991. While the European background of the former might explain why they acquired asylum in Turkey, similarly European Gagauz nation from Moldova were not given asylum. This was despite their ethnically and linguistically Turkish background, but due to their being members of the Orthodox Church. A stark example of the practice of prioritizing people of Sunni/Hanefi backgrounds in asylum decisions was the settlement of 4,163 refugees from Afghanistan living in camps in Pakistan in an area in eastern Anatolia in 1982 on the basis of their Turkic descent, their being as Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Turkmen (Baydar Aydingün, 1998-1999; Kirisci, 2000, p. 6, 7, 10). Thereby, the Turkish refugee regime until now has precluded the immigration of people of foreign descent while facilitating the integration of those with acceptable inherent traits, such as religion and ethnic descent. Looking at the Syrian case, this article argues that recent AKP-led humanitarianism follows the earlier governments’ relaxing asylum laws when faced with forced migration of people with similar characteristics to the majority of Turkey’s population. At the same time, the article presents that the characterization of acceptability, hence the making of “acceptable refugee” vis-à-vis the “unacceptable one” also rests on the government’s operationalization of strategic discourses.

In order to explain restricted asylum and the pragmatic making of the so-called deserving refugee, this article follows the discursive governance paradigm (Korkut, Mahendran, Bucken-Knapp, & Cox, 2015). Discursive governance refers to implicit mechanisms of governance resting on narratives, leitmotifs, and strategic metaphors in political language, as well as the subsequent framing of policies using such language to interpose ideas in order to affect political and social representations within the public sphere in accordance with the wishes of political authorities (Korkut et al., 2015). In

effect, when investigating how narratives affect the governance of forced migration, I spell out discursive governance as a process in which political discourses can become normative mechanisms to influence the public sphere (Korkut et al., 2015).

Thereafter, I concentrate on illustrating how a process of “discursive governance,” which appeals to the collective memory of the Turkish state as a “charitable” polity with close personal relations with the Syrian nation, has contributed to political responses at the central and local administration since the start of the refugee crisis. It also appears that the discursive making of selective humanitarianism toward Syrians also reflects on “how things have been and always are” in Turkey and with the Turkish society. Strategic discourses have qualified what later emerges, according to Turkish officials, as an “innovative” policy making to respond to the troubles of Turkey’s “temporary guests.” These discourses have efficiently substantiated “selective opening” and “preferential treatment” narratives rather than assisting a formally institutionalized immigration system whereby the rights of immigrants and the responsibilities of the host state and nation toward the immigrants are definite. The following section outlines how I apply the discursive governance paradigm as a method to study the handling of the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey. Following that, I will present the research methodology and the empirical evidence that I gathered from interviews to discuss the uses of discursive governance theory in the study of forced migration.

Concepts of Discursive Governance

Discourse begins among people who hold different opinions and interpretations and who learn and refine their ideas as they share them with others. Viewing politics as a discursive process means that it is not a mechanical process whereby actors formulate a goal, devise a strategy to achieve the goal, and struggle with others as they employ their strategy. Instead, drawing on existing cultural and ideological symbols, actors develop a set of ideas and share them with others. The dominant method for discursive research has thus far been discursive institutionalism (Schmidt, 2008). The discursive institutionalists approach politics as a vigorous arena whereby discursive interactions prompt actors to refine, reframe, and reinterpret their ideas. Not only is this process iterative and sometimes refers to contentious discourses in play between actors, it also informs the evolution of political institutions. The ideas that define institutions, as well as the ideas shared by political actors, are in flux, often at odds, and malleable (Béland & Cox, 2011a, p. 10). To respond to this influx, discursive institutionalism foregrounds a logic of communication that permeates the discourse in which actors engage in the process of generating, deliberating, and/or legitimizing [justify] ideas about [social] political action in institutional context (Schmidt, 2008).

The discursive governance paradigm originates from discursive institutionalism. While the latter foresees deliberation, coordination, and communication in the

political sphere by political actors and the public, discursive governance instead concentrates on explaining the inculcation of ideas by political authorities to affect collective rationality in the same political sphere. Hereby, deliberation and debate remain scarce, and both historical and fictional references substantiate communication and qualify social realities. Hence, political and social actors may generate new mythical or fictional cultural and ideological symbols in order to appeal to collective memory of the nation. Thereafter, political actors pursue the references that they have fictionalized as strategic discourses in order to generate collective rationalities to which they can appeal in order to substantiate their political preferences. Below, while elaborating on how I can apply the discursive governance paradigm to study forced migration, I will spell out the uses of collective memory following Mead's (1929 as cited in [Maines, Sugrue, & Katovich, 1983](#)) and Halbwachs' ([Cosser, 1992](#)) dimensions of the theory.

For discursive institutionalism, institutions are internal to the sentient agents, serving both as structures (of thinking and acting) that are created and changed by those actors. This internal capacity to create and maintain institutions derives from agents' background ideational abilities' ([Schmidt, 2008](#)). Just as this is a generic term for what [Searle \(1995\)](#) defined as the "background abilities" that encompass human capacities, dispositions, and know-how related to how the world works and how to cope with it, so is it a generic term for what [Bourdieu \(1990a; 1990b\)](#) describes as the habitus in which human beings act following the institutions of a logic of practice. These background ideational abilities underpin agents' ability to make sense in a given meaning context, that is, to "get it right" in terms of the ideational rules or "rationality" of a given discursive institutional setting ([Schmidt, 2010, p. 55](#)). To contribute to this debate, discursive governance introduces that inasmuch as political actors can "discursively govern" such ideational abilities, be that they remain in the background and appeal to collective memory, they can affect collective rationalities and shift people in seeing what may otherwise be unacceptable as acceptable.

[Béland and Cox \(2011a, p. 11\)](#) indicate that for ideational scholars, cognition is a process of interpreting the world. Human cognition, therefore, has its own independent force, and the very ideas that our mental processes receive as we interact and communicate with significant others hold significant power and sway over our decisions and actions. In effect, how problems are defined has a substantial impact on what later becomes acceptable ([Mehta, 2011, p. 32](#)). Thereby, I propose that the power to set the agenda is a central tool for discursive governance. Once a problem definition becomes dominant, it excludes ideas that are not consistent with its way of describing the issue ([Mehta, 2011, p. 33](#)). A problem definition is similar to a frame in that it bounds a complicated situation by emphasizing some element to the neglect of another, but framing has been mostly employed as a term to describe how to

package a pre-existing set of ideas to win more adherents to one's position. Thereby, understanding (1) how political problems get defined and (2) why one problem definition prevails over another in a particular dispute (Béland & Cox, 2011b) assists us in reflecting on how, over time, "non-problem" gains acceptability.

Underlying the inculcation of ideas fundamental to discursive governance is the way skilled political actors frame a possibly "problematic issue" as a "non-problematic issue" with references to discursively constructed social realities. Appealing to collective rationality, they attach responsibilities to a fictitious world in which their followers believe and aspire to either reclaim or maintain. As these social realities gain resonance in the public sphere (Korkut et al., 2015), actors may alter their understanding of their changing world, recalculating their priorities and interests. Methodologically, discursive governance can respond to some issues that have grasped the attention of ideational scholars, such as: "If ideas create institutions, then how can institutions make ideas actionable?" and "If instead ideas are "mental modes," then what stops ideas from having an effect on the content of interests and not just on the order of interests?" (Béland & Cox, 2011b).

As I have noted above, the political authorities' involvement in and interference with collective memory generation fundamentally affects the course of discursive governance. To this extent, I believe that such works of classical scholars of collective memory such as those of Mead (1929) and Halbwachs (as cited in Coser, 1992) present us with a useful conceptual framework. Referring to Mead (1938), Maines et al. (1983, p. 162) indicate that "the specious present is grasped by individuals in a given situation, which is an inherently social process since these situations are fundamentally characterized by the relation of an organic individual to his environment or world." It is hence "the social and temporal nature of the present that allows Mead to discuss the nature of the past." In this sense, continuity from the past to present "involves both the succession of events and acting persons who recognize it as a succession and render it intelligible as continuity. The world, things, and the individuals are what they are because of this relation" (Maines et al., 1983, p. 162). The construction of this relationship requires the involvement of skilled political actors – as I have already qualified, noting the importance of inculcation of ideas above.

Coser (1992, pp. 25–27) notes that for Halbwachs, the past is a social construction mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present. Halbwachs argues that the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch. Collective historical memory has both cumulative and presentist aspects. It shows at least partial continuity as well as new readings of the past in terms of the present. While a society's current perceived needs may impel it to refashion the past, successive

epochs are being kept alive through a common code and a common symbolic canon even amidst contemporary revisions. In other words, Halbwachs' work shows how the present affects the selective perception of past history inasmuch as he stressed that our conceptions of the past are affected by the mental images we employ to solve present problems, so that collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present (Coser, 1992, p. 34). Hence, the making or revising of collective memory of the past to respond to the current problems of the present can assist the political authorities transform something problematic into something non-problematic in the collective rationality.

In effect to the making of collective memory, we also need to spell out the formulation and expression of narratives as tools of discursive governance. Briefly, narratives serve the dual purpose of providing an explanation of events while allowing individual interpretation (Bruner, 1996). It is through explanation that an individual develops an understanding not only of how the world is progressing, but also of how he or she fits within the story of progression (Bruner, 1996; Paterson & Monroe, 1998). Narratives are not neutral representations of current conditions, but can serve to suggest an interpretation of what the state of the world ought to be. The communicative function of narrative requires the narrative setting authorities to persuade a broader audience to accept the legitimacy and appropriateness of their particular version of a situation. Thereafter, discourse circumscribes the range of subject and object through which people experience the world, specifies the views that can be legitimately accepted as knowledge, and constitutes actors taken to be the agents of knowledge (Fisher & Gottweis, 2013). Essentially, political authority can have an impact on this process via setting rules that do not just regulate, but also create the possibility of the very (forthcoming) behavior and thought patterns that they regulate (Searle, 2010). I will, in the following section, delineate the uses of collective memory for discursive governance of immigration considering this conceptual debate. Following these different theoretical tools and concentrating on how the political authority feels the need to justify, permeate, and inculcate their innovative solutions in the public sphere faced with refugees, this article re-interprets the discursive institutionalization literature (Béland & Cox, 2011b) to endorse "discursive governance." Its empirical material is the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey.

In order to depict and debate first the development of narratives and thought patterns supporting a selective humanitarian approach and second the inculcation of Syrian as acceptable refugee within Turkish collective memory, I will elaborate on the following theoretical position. Ad hoc political discourses qualifying the Syrians as guests and brothers circulated in the public sphere generate a space where politicians configure, transmit, and initiate politics discursively, rather than vouchsafing substantial policy change in effect to governance toward a comprehensive policy

change in asylum regime. Hence, we have some “acceptable” refugees accessing – temporarily – protection in Turkey while others remain insecure and devoid of rights even if they also suffer from comparable humanitarian crises. The Syrian is marked as a “guest” that needs protection whereas the migrant is perceived as a threat. Hence, this discourse influences the public sphere in a way that the public accepts Syrians as temporary guests while politically Turkey does not accept non-European refugees. Refugees do not have rights; they have temporary qualifications based on their inherent characters. Reception and integration are not embedded in a policy framework, but constructed discursively. Consequently, the political narration of forced migration from Syria appeals to the collective memory of the Turkish state as a “charitable” polity. Essentially, a skilfully generated and somewhat fictitious collective memory resonates in the public sphere that Syrians are acceptable, but migration is temporal and the government’s response to forced migration is not to unsettle the social coherence of Turkey.

Methodology

In order to reflect on the validity of the conceptual framework and theoretical assumptions introduced above, I first reviewed the political metanarrative in response to forced migration from Syria. To delineate what type of strategic discourses that the political authorities set, particularly with references to the collective memory of the Turkish nation, I subsequently carried out interviews with bureaucrats as administrators of the crisis at two levels. The first level was the central level, that is, officials based in Ankara where I held interviews at Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I also interviewed officials in the Ministry of Labor in a focus group format, given the formal and informal labor in which the Syrian refugees have engaged.

The second level was the local in order for me to appropriate the divergence between the central and local bureaucracy regarding the handling of Syrian refugees. In Gaziantep, I interviewed the regional Governor in charge of the Syrian refugee crisis and the AFAD chief, and in Kilis, the Governor, given his position serving in a small border province facing swelling numbers of refugees. Gaziantep and Kilis are also the provinces where Turkish citizens often claim to have “family” links with Syrians across the border. Especially in Kilis, where the economy is mostly based on smuggling, kinship relations have remained stronger over the years due to the economic relations across the borders. The existence of relatives and business partners across the border on the Turkish side motivated many Syrians to flee to Kilis (Özden, 2013). Yet, these provinces also feel the impact of Syrian refugees on businesses, the labor market, and access to such public services as healthcare and education as well as crowding out in the housing market due to increased population.

Therefore, the empirical material of this article relies on an analysis of how politicians' discourse taken from the media on the Syrian refugee crisis has resonated with those bureaucrats who actually deal with the refugees and who serve at the central and the local levels of public administration. Following [Leudar and Nekvapil \(2004, p. 247\)](#) indicating that "media texts are addressed not to a specific person or sets of persons with known properties, relevancies and beliefs, but rather to a public at large," I take the Turkish public sphere as the social context and de-emphasize the immediate contextual factors regarding politicians' framing of the Syrian issue. This is due to my observation that the politicians, and especially President Erdoğan, formulate their discourses not for the immediate audience, but for consumption by the general public, being sure of the role that the media will play in the subsequent dissemination of such discourses in a country where media freedom is limited (for China see [Lu, Aldrich, & Shi, 2014](#)).

As the public sphere is dominated with the ruling politicians' discourse on the issue in an increasingly unfree political system, there may be concerns for researchers to account for full partiality of the bureaucrats. This could compromise reflexivity in data collection as well. However, this reflexivity problem should be understood in view of the general concerns that discursive scholars face in their work on politically unfree contexts. For us, there is value in delving deep into the context and building local knowledge around which research problems take form. Then, how can we account for impartiality in the discourses of the interviewees influenced by the general political narrative on the issue? [Fairhurst \(2009, p. 1609\)](#) argues that "without the pressure to build generalizable theory, discursive scholars feel freer to embrace the context and, especially, its historical, cultural, and political aspects." Yet, should a comprehensive elaboration of historical, cultural, political factors specific to the context preclude theoretical generalizations? While it goes beyond the remit of this article to offer comprehensive responses to these questions, it still underlines that discursive studies gain from following narratives imbued with historical, cultural, and political characteristics of the context.

During data analysis, this study approached neither the interviewee nor the interview texts with preconceived ideas or themes and categories deduced from theory. Instead, it adopts an inductive approach. My approach to frame analysis, in this respect, originates from [Goffman's \(1974\)](#) work and follows its later applications in [Tankard, Hendrickson, Siberman, Bliss, and Ghanem \(1991\)](#), and [Lau and Schlesinger \(2005\)](#). This approach allowed the interviewees to reflect on general questions relating to how the Syrian refugee crisis evolved to affect Turkey, how they are involved in the handling of the crisis, why they think Turkey should be an active party to the crisis, and whether Turkey's position is sustainable. However, as the discussion progressed, I raised relevant follow up questions. With the exception of the Ministry of Labor, all interviews were one to one, but the Head of Department in the former brought together

his team in order for us to debate and exchange ideas on what they were doing and what I would recommend them to do. Rather than giving recommendations, however, I had a chance to see how the focus group participants followed on and reacted to each other's positions. In this respect, the most pro-government response came from the last person I interviewed – a participant with family links to Gaziantep – that the religious links between the Syrian refugees and the Turkish nation were too important not to act upon even though westerners would find it hard to understand this.

In the coming sections, while reviewing the discursive constructions such as the historical and religious responsibilities of the Turkish nation toward Syrians and the bureaucrats socio-political obligation to continue with “what has always been the case” with Turkish state traditions, I will bring in direct quotations from the interviews. The interviews were held in Turkish. The translations are mine.

Given the limited formal institutionalization of the migration regime despite some policy signals by the government, I consider that the ad hoc slogans in circulation generate a discursive space where politicians configure and transmit migration politics ideationally. The Turkish position toward the forced migration of Syrians is a case of ideational politics. This is based on my theoretical assumption that inasmuch as the AKP operates migration politics merely through discourses, it avoids possible socio-political and economic conflicts that a full-scale policy change aiming at providing refugee rights for all, including the Syrians, and the integration of Syrians would imply. This is the reason why I have chosen to study the Turkish response to the forced migration of Syrians to Turkey through tracing discourses.

Discursive Making of Syrian “Guests,” the Refugee Crisis “Temporary,” and Turkey’s Responsibility “Historical”

Since the beginning, the two AKP governments led first by the then Prime Minister Erdoğan and, later, by Davutoğlu have continuously showed a keen interest in taking sides in the Syrian civil war. I have hence reviewed certain political speeches of Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and President Erdoğan while he was Prime Minister until 2014. In effect, the metanarrative that Davutoğlu (2013) set has been “humanitarian diplomacy” in order to justify Turkey’s engagement with the Syrian refugee crisis in particular and, more generally, to embellish a new character into Turkey’s role in its neighboring regions. Humanitarian diplomacy means that Turkey’s influence should be felt in a wide geographical area, not only symbolizing its power, but also symbolizing its conscience (Davutoğlu, 2013, p. 867). It is based on a critical equilibrium between conscience and power that necessitates Turkey to be a compassionate and powerful state. Davutoğlu (2014, p. 867) continues:

One will be compassionate if one's conscience dictates where one should go and to whom one should reach, as can be seen from the examples of our aid to Somalian and Syrian refugees. At the same time, one will need to have power, so that one has the ability to reach where needed.

Yet, the Turkish authorities also realized that their humanitarianism in fact turned into cushioning a possible international reaction to the Syrian regime rather than triggering action. The then Foreign Minister Davutoğlu asserted at the UN in 2012 that there was an increasing sense in Turkey that, through making such a sacrifice and tackling an enormous issue all by itself:

We are leading the international community to complacency and inaction. We feel that the open door policy of Turkey and the other neighbors of Syria is actually absorbing the potential international reaction, as the tragic consequences of the brutality by the regime in Syria are all being dealt with by the neighboring countries (Davutoğlu, 2012).

Reflecting on the Turkish protection of Syrian refugees, Davutoğlu suggested that:

[W]e do all these with a sense of high responsibility as we regard our Syrian neighbors as our brothers and sisters with whom we share a long history and often a common fate. [...] However, the scale of the tragedy in Syria has grown so out of proportion that Turkey finds it increasingly difficult to cope with the ensuing challenges all by itself (Davutoğlu, 2012).

This proposal led to two ministerial meetings among the countries bordering Syria under the UNHCR premises to draw the attention from the international community to the situation of Syrian refugees. Yet, it fell short of delivering an international intervention, for which the AKP had hoped as a solution to the Syrian crisis.

The then Prime Minister – now President – Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statement that "Syria is Turkey's internal affair" illustrates that the importance that the Syrian crisis has received in the higher echelons of the AKP. In April 2013, Erdoğan said, "Turkey showed its belief in international protection of refugees with extending temporary protection to the Syrian refugees en masse." (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2013) More recently in May 2015, during a visit to Albania, Erdoğan reminded the EU of its obligations to refugees as he indicated that Turkey had kept an open door policy to Syrian refugees and the EU should also keep a similar policy to those coming through the Mediterranean. "Are we going to stay oblivious to poor, homeless, stateless people? Isn't it the obligation of developed nations to offer solutions for these people? We say that everyone should bear their responsibilities." (t24. Bağımsız İnternet Gazetesi, 2015).

In line with this political discourse, AFAD has been the most fundamental state agency in dealing with the forced migration of Syrians. Rather than a refugee agency, it has been AFAD that has registered Syrians upon entering Turkey since the beginning. Essentially, this is an authority that deals with disasters. Amidst the Syrian refugee crisis

however, it has turned into an organization handling refugee relief operations. As AFAD operates under the Prime Minister's Office, its active engagement illustrated the attempt to centralize the refugee crisis directly under the then Prime Minister Erdoğan. In this respect, insomuch as Erdoğan has actively been engaged with the Syrian crisis, AFAD has become the main hand of central administration. Yet, as disasters, by their very essence, are temporal, retaining the handling of mass movement of people from Syria into Turkey under AFAD's remit, primarily helped the political authorities to convey to the public that Syrians' presence in Turkey was temporary. In February 2014, at an interview in Ankara, an AFAD official qualified their role in responding to refugee crisis as follows:

As the refugee crises tend to imply emergencies, the 2012 declaration [that appropriated AFAD as the main agency of coordination] restrained the legal obligations of other agencies [... while] AFAD determines the policy at the center [...] but leaves its application to governorships. While we work under the office of the prime minister, we are above the provincial governors (AFAD Ankara Interview, February 2014).

Below, I give a brief account of my interviews and present how the strategic discourses feed into narratives of "selective humanitarianism" and "pragmatism" while conveying Turkey's response to forced migration to be temporary.

AFAD runs refugee camps in collaboration with the Turkish Red Crescent, registers Syrians, and issues them with identity cards to provide them with access to services. If the governors in provinces need staff in order to attend the needs of refugees in camps, AFAD either provides them or organizes with other provincial governors to transfer personnel. AFAD is in charge of all expenses related to relief operations. During the interview at AFAD's Gaziantep office in May 2014, I witnessed that the AFAD official practically signed all requests for payment issued by the Governor's office to local hospitals and various businesses supplying daily amenities in relation to Syrians' expenses at the camps. When I asked him how long this would continue, he simply stated that until the state told the Syrians that it was time to leave.

Essentially, they are not our personal guests. They are the guests of the state. That is why we would not use any [personal] initiative when it comes to dealing with them. We act in co-ordination with Ankara. We have learned by doing, and established an informal structure without formality (Gaziantep, AFAD, May 2014).

The interviewee also complained about the increasing rents in Gaziantep as a result of the influx of Syrian refugees. When I inquired at AFAD in Ankara why they were dealing with Syrians, the interviewee indicated that they were experienced from the previous Bulgarian (1989) and Iraqi crises (during the Gulf Wars) and suggested that these experiences stimulated an "initial brainstorm." The interviewee's reflection on the crisis management framework that had been established was as follows:

Does this [AFAD's involvement] have any legal provision? AFAD considers migration as crisis and deals with it via humanitarian aid. [...] The open door policy is so extensive that you can bring it into political debate or [consider it within the frame of] humanitarian aid issues. You can even consider it as a military issue. Had it been a military crisis, this would have been delegated to security forces. However, as this is considered a humanitarian crisis since the first entry on April 29, 2011, AFAD became involved (Ankara, February 2014).

My next query to AFAD was related to the sustainability current policy, given the unremitting nature of the influx of refugees. The AFAD interviewee in Ankara put forth how the government maintains its position vis-à-vis the Syrians in public sphere as follows: "The Turkish people in terms of assistance are strangely unique [...] and people support this assistance structure individually." When I further inquired on their institutional culture reflecting on Turkey's culture, the interviewee stated:

We are a very practical country. Take the West as an example. If there were to be humanitarian assistance for somewhere, believe me, it would be very difficult. Turkey is very practical. It is so simple with us since [our advantage is that we are] under the authority of the Prime Minister's office, perhaps thanks to our public administration structure, perhaps thanks to our social structure.

It is hard to miss a reference in these claims to a collective memory of "how things have been and are" in Turkey and Turkish society when it comes to dealing with crises. Framing Turkey's responses with these narratives helps to substantiate humanitarianism. However, this does not present any indication of an inclusive and institutionalized response that may attend to providing relief to all refugees currently in the country. As we will see, when reflecting on Syrians, references to collective memory were also apparent during interviews with other officials. I consider these references as tools to narrate the Syrian refugees as "guests" in comparison to the troubling essence of having refugees in general.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) coordinates Turkish humanitarian efforts responding to forced migration from Syria with international agencies "not within the political but the legal frame of the crisis" (MFA interview 1, Ankara, February 2014). MFA personnel have been deployed in Southeastern Turkey in order to engage with the visiting international delegates. Their role implies that "they [operate] in the name of the international community; this is a problem of international community. When Turkey assumes responsibility, it is decreasing the extent of [the] burden [that the Syrian refugees pose] on the international community" (MFA interview 1, Ankara, February 2014). As I have also depicted above, the responsibility for refugees, assumed in the name of the international community, resonates in Turkey's discourse at the UN level.

Along with the much emphasized special nature of Turkish people, ample economic means of the Turkish state and its pragmatism, interviews at MFA as well

as Ministry of Labor also pointed to Turkey's responsibility for Syrians, given its imperial past in the Middle East and the collective memory of what prevails in the population concerning the generosity and charity of the Turkish polity. Whether this was successful or not, according to the interviewee at MFA, is open to speculation.

We need to consider the reasons that form the basis of these assessments. Now, if we were going to ... I will relate this to migration ... in a country that has 900 kilometers worth of borders, and especially if this country is Syria. Well, if we consider the interrelationship between the Turkish and the Syrian populations perhaps for centuries, well there can be no argument for closing the borders for Syrians (interview 2 at MFA, Ankara, February 2014).

The tone of debate at the Ministry of Labor in Ankara conveyed similar themes:

Now, consider our national values, cultural values, historical friendship, let's say brotherhood, the basic reason that we are assisting the Syrians at the moment starts from here and goes up to politics at higher levels, including the Prime Minister [then Erdoğan]. Now, we have these basic values. It is difficult to explain our alms giving institution abroad. Everyone gives money to their poor without expecting anything in return. Isn't that so? Economically, in fact, this is not rational. Now, we did something under these circumstances and they came. This is our basic justification: People should not suffer (focus group interview at ML, Ankara, February 2014).

Yet, the extension of temporary work permits to Syrians also implies practical advantages for Turkey's economy as they enter into informal labor with payments lower than the minimal salary and lack of work safety. When interviewed, ML was oblivious to these issues and reflected once more on the generosity and facilities of Turkish polity.

[I]f the question is whether our labor market needs these people or not, well no. But the occupation of these people is a type of social policy. Turkey has facilities. Well, when you look into our state traditions, from the beginning in similar situations, the state has always striven to maintain its social state role and now it tries to do the same.

The interviews with local bureaucrats presented a more realistic perspective of the implications of Turkey's engagement with Syrian refugees. Although references to collective memory of Turkey's responsibility for its neighbor were still evident, there emerged also doubts of Turkey's capabilities for continuous commitment to the crisis. The two governors interviewed in the region in May 2014 indicated the insufficient financial and administrative capacities of their offices in terms of limited number of Arabic speakers and budgets at the time of the interviews. Hence, according to Governor 1:

We feel the crisis in Syria within ourselves and the people over there are our relatives. And we will do as much as we can. However, despite this discourse, this is not how we are in the field. That is my real worry [...] Well, these are our religious brothers. [...] Now, those who do not suffer would not know the troubles of those that suffer and the people over

there have close kinship with Turkey. If this happens to you where would you go? You go to where your closest relatives are. These are fallen [people]. Now when we say this, we can convince our people. However, if at the beginning some of us oppose and some of us support, this would not work. [...] These people are entrusted to us by our ancestors (Interview, May 2014).

Despite the tone of responsibility, Governor 2 was more forthcoming to accept the absence of long-term planning beyond immediate pragmatism.

There is an end to patience. As time goes, these Syrians will organize themselves. There can be conflicts of interests. There ought to be planning, problem solving, regulating considering the long duration [of this crisis]. Integration is very important. The integration of our people is also very important. We need mutual cooperation.

Thereby, a process of “discursive governance” that appeals to the collective memory of the Turkish state as a “charitable” polity with close personal relations with the Syrian nation dominates “innovative” policy making at the central and local administration. At the same time, by putting an emphasis on “how things have been and are” in Turkey and Turkish society, the interviewees are referring to a collective memory of Turkish generosity in the region. What affects inclusion then is historical and moral responsibility rather than prevailing humanitarianism per se. In other words, those refugees that deserve responsibility are also the ones framed as Turkey’s “relatives” and “religious brothers.” Hence, Syrian refugees, possibility problematic for public philosophy regarding migration in Turkey (Korkut, 2014), are transformed into acceptable refugees with strategic discourses including widely fictional state traditions, social responses, and the collective memory of the Turkish nation.

Conclusion

This article shows that following a discursive methodology to examine forced migration could be an effective method to understand how temporal and selective responses emerge in politics guided by metanarratives rather than institutionalized policy solutions. In effect, when investigating how metanarratives affect the governance of forced migration, I have illustrated discursive governance as a process in which political discourses have become normative mechanisms used to influence the public sphere (Korkut et al., 2015). Thereby, the politicians set the agenda of their response to forced migration through metanarratives that later formulate strategic discourses expressed by public administration in handling the crisis.

To support discursive governance, political authorities appeal to the public’s collective rationality. Hence, they attach responsibilities to a fictitious world in which their followers believe and that they aspire to reclaim or maintain. As these social realities gain resonance in the public sphere (Korkut et al., 2015), they expect that

public actors alter their understanding of their changing world and recalculate both their priorities and interests.

These theoretical inferences rest on ad hoc political discourses expressed in interviews qualifying the Syrians as guests and brothers. These discourses are circulated in the public sphere to generate a space where politicians configure, transmit, and initiate politics discursively, rather than vouchsafing substantial policy change in effect to governance toward a comprehensive policy change in asylum regime. Hence, Turkey has some “acceptable” refugees accessing – temporarily – protection while others remain insecure and devoid of rights, even if they also suffer from comparable humanitarian crises. Consequently, the Syrian is marked as a “guest” that needs protection whereas the migrant, on the other hand, is a threat. Hence, this discourse influences the public sphere in a way that Syrians are accepted by the public as temporary guests while the government is trying to stop the arrival of others. What affects inclusion, then, is historical and moral responsibility rather than prevailing humanitarianism per se.

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Yunanistan Politik Söyleminde Tarihi Göç Deneyimleri: Politik Meşruiyet İncelemelerinde Eleştirel Söylem Analizi Kullanmak

Lena Karamanidou^a

Öz

Göçlerin tarihi pek çok ulusal bağlamdaki aidiyet söylemi birikimiyle ve kolektif kimliklerin gelişimiyle bağlantılıdır. Ayrıca bunlar birçok ulusal bağlamdaki göç, sığınma ve entegrasyon politikalarını meşrulaştırmak üzere sıklıkla kullanılır. İktidar ilişkileri ve dışlanma dinamikleri ile doğal olarak ilgilenen metodolojik bir yaklaşım olarak Eleştirel Söylem Analizi, parlamento tartışmalarında geçmiş göç deneyimlerine yapılan referansların göç politikalarını meşrulaştırmak ya da meşrulaştırmamak üzere nasıl kullanıldığını anlamak için çok uygundur. Bu çalışmada ülke dışındaki Yunan mültecilerin ülkeye kabulü ve ülkeye göçün tarihinin ulusal kimliğin oluşmasında merkezi olduğu Yunanistan, vaka çalışması olarak ele alınmıştır. Göç ve sığınma konusunda sekiz farklı yasayla ilgili parlamentoda yapılan 20 tartışmanın analizini yaparak eski göç deneyimlerini hatırlamanın hem araçsal hem de ikircikli olduğunu savunuyorum. Farklı siyasi yönelimlerine rağmen bütün partiler, bunları önerilen politikaları meşrulaştırmak veya eleştirmek için kullanır. Bununla birlikte buradaki analiz, tarihi göç deneyimlerinin hem Yunanistan'a göç edenlerin hem de Yunanistan'dan göç edenlerin tecrübeleri arasındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları oluşturmak için kullanıldıklarını gösteriyor. Dolayısıyla bunlar hem göçmenlerin dâhil edilmelerindeki hem de dışlanmalarındaki tartışmalarda kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca geçmiş göç deneyimlerinin hatırlanması hayali ulusal topluluğu yeniden üretir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Göç • Tarih • Politik söylem • Politika meşruiyeti • Yunanistan

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Historical Experiences of Migration in Political Discourse in Greece: Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Explore Policy Legitimation

Lena Karamanidou^a

Abstract

Histories of migration are connected to the development of collective identities and the articulation of discourses of belonging in many national contexts. They are also often employed in legitimating policies on migration, asylum and integration in many national contexts. Critical Discourse Analysis, as a methodological approach inherently concerned with relations of power and the dynamics of exclusion, is particularly suited to exploring how references to past experiences of migration are used in parliamentary debates to legitimate or delegitimize migration policies. Greece, a country where histories of emigration and reception of ethnically Greek refugees are central to constructions of national identity, is used as a case study. Drawing on the analysis of twenty parliamentary debates on eight different laws on migration and asylum, I argue that the invocation of past experiences of migration is both instrumental and ambivalent. All parties, regardless of their political orientation, employ them to either legitimate or critique proposed policies. However, the analysis shows that historical experiences of migration are used to create both narratives of similarity as well as difference between the experiences of immigrants to Greece and Greek emigrants. They are thus used to argue both for the inclusion and exclusion of migrants. In addition, invocations of past experiences of migration reproduce the imagined national community.

Keywords

Migration • History • Political discourse • Policy legitimation • Greece

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Received: November 20, 2016

Revision received: December 29, 2016

Accepted: January 18, 2017

Online First: September 15, 2017

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ISSN 2149-4398 • eISSN 2458-8962

DOI 10.12738/mejrs.2017.2.2.0114 • Summer 2017 • 2(2) • 161–181

The impact of immigration and asylum seeking on the construction of national identities, political incorporation, and cultural belonging has been a key concern of scholarship on migration (for example [Guild, Groenendijk, & Carrera, 2011](#); [Joppke, 1998](#)). Less attention has been paid not only to how histories of migration affect relations between citizens and migrants, but also to how they interrelate with the formation of identities and policies of incorporation and integration ([Glynn & Kleist, 2012](#)). However, migration histories are enmeshed in the development of collective identities and the articulation of discourses of belonging, and in the legitimation of policies on migration asylum and integration ([Glynn & Kleist, 2012](#); [Tormey, 2007](#)). In this article, I explore how past experiences of migration are used to legitimate or delegitimize asylum and migration policies in Greek parliamentary debates. Experiences of emigration, forced displacement, and resettlement of ethnically Greek populations have not only been crucial in narratives of national identity, but have also influenced discourses, attitudes, and policies toward immigrants and refugees during Greece's transformation into a country of settlement and transit.

Histories of migration, like other forms of collective memories ([Gray, 2004](#); [Glynn & Kleist, 2012](#)) have influenced formations of national identities and belonging in diverse settings. In countries such as the United States or Australia, histories of migration are part of foundational myths and nation-building processes ([Kleist, 2012](#)). In other contexts, histories of emigration feed into constructions of national identities that incorporate the diasporic identities of those who have emigrated through sharing ethnic and cultural characteristics ([Kincaid, 2009](#); [Low, 2012](#); [Núñez, 2002](#); [Roberts, 2005](#)). Past migrations can be constructed as heroic, whereby migrants voluntarily migrate in order to contribute to the economic wellbeing of their family and country, or traumatic, being involuntary in nature and triggered by economic need or dramatic events ([Glynn & Kleist, 2012](#); [Gray, 2004](#); [Kincaid, 2009](#); [Núñez, 2002](#)). Official narratives are often reproduced through commemorations of historical events or cultural productions, such as museums, public monuments, and literature ([Glynn & Kleist, 2012](#); [Roberts, 2005](#)). However, histories of migration are not only top-down, state-sponsored narratives. Research has shown that remembering and engaging with experiences of migration is crucial for dealing with traumatic events often at the root of displacement, such as the Holocaust ([Gershon & Wolf, 2009](#)), the Irish Famine ([Glynn & Kleist, 2012](#); [Gray, 2004](#)), or the Second World War ([Burrell, 2006](#); [Damoussi, 2013](#)). Remembering experiences of migration is also a process of making sense of identities transformed by movement, and creating spaces of belonging in places of settlement ([Clary-Lemon, 2010](#); [Damoussi, 2013](#); [Roberts, 2005](#)).

Narratives of past migrations equally affect the way that migrants are included or excluded in countries of settlement, especially when invoked in public discourse and policy making processes ([Glynn & Kleist, 2012](#)). They can provide social actors

with blueprints for action – for example in migration or integration policy – based on “lessons from the past” (Brandsrtom et al., 2004 as cited in Glynn & Kleist, 2012, p. 9). Consequently, historical experiences of migration are often invoked in political and media debates on migration in support or in opposition of specific policies. References to – often idealized – past experiences of displacement or refugee reception have been used to legitimate policies in settings as diverse as the UK, Australia, Austria, and Germany (Kleist, 2012; Kushner, 2006; Steiner, 2000). In the Irish context, “historical duty” arguments, where traumatic historical experiences of emigration are believed to create moral obligations for the fair and humanitarian treatment of refugees and migrants, have been widely employed in political and media discourse (Glynn & Kleist, 2012; Lentin, 2003; Tormey, 2007).

This is not to suggest that such discourses are fixed or unchangeable (Glynn & Kleist, 2012, p. 6). They change over time, in tandem with reconceptualizations of national identity and the politics of migration and belonging. They are also diverse, since different groups construct their own narratives of past migrations, which can be negotiated by gender, class and place (Glynn & Kleist, 2012; Gray, 2004). Equally, references to the past do not always support liberal migration policies or greater inclusion. While Lentin (2003) argued that addressing the trauma of histories of emigration could create the space for accepting the migrant Other, Gray noted that Lentin’s approach risked homogenizing different experiences of emigration and obscuring the existence of contradictory narratives on them. The idealization of “our” migration experiences can in fact result in the exclusion of the migrants, since “true” experiences of emigration are identified with the in-group (Glynn & Kleist, 2012; Gray, 2004) while the migrant Other is negatively associated with criminality, cultural difference, and threats to identity and security. Similarly, Tony Kushner (2006) has demonstrated that constructions of historical experiences of refugeeness in the UK tend to construct “deserving” and “undeserving” refugees. The use of historical duty arguments can also be purely rhetorical (Glynn & Kleist, 2012; Tormey, 2007; Van der Valk, 2003) and can decrease over time, as perception of moral duty decline in the face of increased migration flows (Glynn & Kleist, 2012; Steiner, 2000).

Consistently with the methodological emphasis of the issue, I use critical discourse analysis, a method well suited for the study of political discourse in general, and political argumentation in particular. Drawing on the analysis of 20 parliamentary debates on 8 different laws on migration and asylum, I demonstrate that references to collective migration experiences are not only employed to argue for greater tolerance or inclusiveness, but also for greater exclusion. They also reproduce positive representation of the Greek in-group and hegemonic discourses of national identities. While Greece is a highly specific context, the dynamics of historical migration experiences are of particular significance in the Eastern Mediterranean context. As

mentioned in the introduction to this issue, the Eastern Mediterranean context is characterized by traumatic histories of displacement and resettlement – most recently with the Syrian refugee crisis, but also by recent histories of emigration. This article hopes to illustrate how critical discourse analysis can highlight their relevance for contemporary political debates on migration.

Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis and Legitimation

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is particularly suited to the study of historical and contemporary migration and displacement, especially in what concerns the interaction between policies, politics, and discourses. CDA has its roots in the Critical, Marxist, and Foucauldian traditions, and aims at revealing how relations of hegemony, power, and dominance are articulated and legitimized in discourse (Fairclough, 2003, 2009; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). As the introduction to this issue notes, the field of forced migration is dominated by manifestations of state power, expressed both in representations of migration and migrants, and in the articulation of solutions to refugee issues. Using CDA, researchers have interrogated how refugees and migrants are problematized in political and media discourses. For example, labeling migrants as “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” or “illegal immigrants” in discourse is also an exercise of political power, an act of categorization that facilitates the exercise of control over migration, and can limit refugees’ access to refugee protection (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Karamanidou, 2007; Khosravini, 2009; Zetter, 2014). Equally, CDA-informed approaches explore the expression of inclusion and exclusion in discourse (Wodak, 2011; Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 2000).

A further strength of CDA lies in its conceptualization of discourses and context. For CDA, discourses are produced in specific social, political, and institutional contexts. Discourses on migration, from this perspective, are shaped not only by existing policy and legal frameworks, but also by institutional arrangements and both the agendas and ideologies of political actors. Social practices and discourse as dialectically interconnected, since social practices can frame and alter discourses, and discursive events can shape social practices (Fairclough, 2003; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Discourses are seen as ontologically distinct from social contexts, adopting a critical realist, rather than postmodern ontology. Therefore, CDA focuses on the examination of the dialectical relationship between discursive acts and the situations, institutions, and social structures and practices. In terms of techniques, this involves both the analysis of linguistic features of texts such as actor descriptions or representations of social processes, and discursive strategies (Fairclough, 2003; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The analysis of discourses of migration and asylum might draw, for example, on the study of actors descriptions, such as the use of pronouns or labels or strategies of positive self-presentation and negative Other-presentation

that designate and reproduce the dichotomy “us” and “them” of in-groups and out-groups (e.g. Triandafyllidou, 2000; Wodak, 2011). The task of CDA is to interpret their meaning within the contexts they are produced in relation to intertextuality and interdiscursivity – relations to other texts and discourses which extend to the past as well as the present (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak et al., 2000). Present discourses on migration are also shaped by longer-term narratives of “home,” national identity and belonging. These constitute shared social knowledge (van Dijk, 2014) and are particularly important in understanding not only histories of emigration and diasporic identities, but also the way they are used in political discourse.

Political discourse is used to argue and justify, to legitimate policy choices, to serve interests its functional qualities include coercion, manipulation, persuasion, dissimulation, legitimation and delegitimation (Chilton & Schäffner, 1997; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; van Dijk, 1997). While it can shape social and political representations and solutions to social and political issues, it is also instrumental, through argumentation, in legitimating policy responses to them (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). References to a collective migration past are an element of discursive legitimation – the process of arguing for or against courses of action because they adhere to shared norms and values (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). Legitimation by referring to history is one of the most common legitimating strategies (Fairclough, 2003; Van Leuwen & Wodak, 1999). Thus, references to a collective history of emigration act as a legitimating myth (Sibley, Liu, Duckitt, & Khan, 2008), a form of authorization that claims legitimacy for a speaker’s position through evoking the authority of traditions and values bestowed by a common past.

The research draws on the genre of parliamentary debates because they represent political discourse and because of its central features of argumentation and legitimation (Van Dijk, 1997). The debates (Table 1) were selected because they are all on key legislation introduced in the fields of asylum, immigration, and citizenship and because they allow the presence and intensity of references to a collective past over time to be examined. The first two debates correspond to the introduction of the first asylum law in 1996, while the last three debates concern the codification of migration control and immigration laws in 2014. I adopted a deductive/inductive approach to develop analytical categories. Based on the literature, I classified relevant content as legitimation or delegitimation, applying the distinction between logics of equivalence and difference (Fairclough, 2003). The first refer to strategies of building commonalities between social phenomena or groups by “subverting differences and divisions” (Fairclough, 2000) – in this case contemporary migrants to Greece and Greeks as historical migrants. Conversely, a logic of difference refers to strategies of maintaining divisions by differentiating the experiences of Greek emigrants or refugees from those of migrants to Greece. Two further analytical categories were

applied: (1) government or opposition, and (2) political party, since it was of interest to see the relation between political/ideological orientation, party position, and employment of references to historical experiences of emigration. A list of political parties and composition of Greek governments are provided in Table 2.

Exploring Constructions of an Emigrant Past in the Greek Context

Greece is often seen as a “new” country of immigration. While small numbers of migrants settled in Greece in the 1970s, immigration intensified in the 1990s following the collapse of communist regimes in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Migrants from the former Soviet Union republics and countries in the Balkans and Eastern Europe – predominantly from Albania settled in Greece (Kasimis, 2012; Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012). These flows also included ethnically Greek returning migrants, such as members of the Greek minority in Albania and Greek post-civil war refugees who had settled in Soviet Republics and Eastern European Communist states. Since the 2000s, however, trends have reflected the dynamics of armed conflict and political instability in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012), as is most recently exemplified by the Syrian refugee crisis. Because of its geographical position, Greece is both a main point of entry into the European Union and a country of settlement and transit (Kasimis, 2012; Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012).

However, complex patterns of emigration, forced migration and reception have been intrinsically linked with the history of Greece. Nearly one-sixth of the Greek population emigrated to Europe, Egypt, and the USA in the late 19th and early 20th century following the 1893 economic crisis. At the same time, Greece received a high number of refugees who were or at least were perceived as ethnically Greek – in the late 19th, and more intensely in the first half of the 20th century. Pontic populations settled in Greece after leaving Turkey during the nation-building processes there. In 1923, following the defeat of the irredentist military expedition of the Greek army, an exchange of populations was agreed between the Greek and Turkish states. As a result, approximately 1.5 million refugees from Asia Minor settled in Greek territories (Triatafilopoulos, 2003; Voutira, 2003). Between the end of the second World War and the 1970s, an estimated one million emigrated to industrialized countries – mostly to Germany, the US, Australia, and Canada (Kasimis, 2012; Mousourou, 2003). Labor migration, similarly to other countries, was encouraged by the state in order not only to alleviate pressures by unemployment, but also to aid economic development through remittances (Mousourou, 2003). In addition, being on the losing side of the Greek Civil War, around 65,000 Greeks became refugees in Eastern bloc countries, (Kasimis, 2012; Mousourou, 2003). Smaller numbers took refuge in European countries following the military dictatorship of 1967 (Kasimis, 2012; Mousourou, 2003).

Refugee and emigrant identities have become part of narratives of national identity. Despite initial difficulties and hostile attitudes, the successful settlement and integration of the Asia Minor refugees integration led to a “remarkable consensus among scholars, politicians and refugees on the post 1923 settlement as a major ‘success’ case” (Triatafilopoulos, 2003; Voutira, 2003, p. 71). Such hegemonic narrations are intrinsically linked to the construction of nationalist narratives of history, and the refugee identity has been identified with Greek historical experiences. Similarly, post war labor migration was discursively constructed both as an occasion of national trauma and as a “success story” (Laliotou, 2010; Sapountzis, Figgou, Bozatzis, Gardikiotis, & Pantazis, 2013; Vogli, 2011). It reflects nationalist politics of diaspora and the *omogeneia* – Greek populations outside the national space who both promote national interests and maintain their Greek ethnicity and culture outside the national space (Christou, 2006; Koukoutsaki-Monnier, 2012). Like in other national histories, experiences of emigration produce the figure of the heroic, entrepreneurial, and hardworking diasporic migrant, who contributed both to his country of origin and destination while still maintaining their Greek identity (Laliotou, 2010; Sapountzis et al., 2013; Vogli, 2011).

These historical events have had a significant impact on refugees and immigrants. For example, Voutira (2003) argued that since forced migration has been identified with the Greek historical experience and identity, refugees and asylum seekers without such a claim are treated with suspicion and hostility, and seen as undeserving of recognition and protection. Moreover, these perceptions influenced immigration policies. Immigrants of ethnic Greek origin were differentiated from “foreign” ones and are aided by specific policies, such as housing and language lessons, addressed specifically to them (Triandafyllidou & Veikou, 2002; Voutira, 2003). More importantly, while the state encouraged the naturalization of ethnically Greek immigrants, it made it extremely difficult for non-ethnically Greek immigrants to acquire citizenship (Konsta & Lazaridis, 2011).

At the same time, the Greek experience of emigration and of being a refugee can promote inclusive attitudes, discourses, and policies. While similar research in the Greek context is limited, there is some evidence that this approach has been used by centre leftist media and politicians (Christopoulos, 2004; Tzanelli, 2006), and that individuals use the collective experience of emigration to support a more positive stance toward immigrants (Sapountzis et al., 2013), through a critical re-examination of the diversity of Greek histories of migration (Laliotou, 2010). However, responses to such arguments, as Tzanelli (2006) shows, allude to the difference between the experiences of Greek migrants and immigrants to Greece. Overall, one’s own experiences of emigration and being a refugee have not always translated into that person developing positive attitudes toward immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers

since the emigrant experience is identified with the host community (Sapountzis et al., 2013; Triandafyllidou, 2000).

In this article, I explore to what extent these histories of migration are invoked in the process of policy-making on migration and asylum. Migration has been a highly politicized issue in Greece since the increase of migration trends in the 1990s. While migrants, especially for Balkan and Eastern European countries, provided flexible, cheap, and easily exploited labor that served the needs of the Greek economy in the 1990s and 2000s, migration itself was associated with criminality and illegality (Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012). Unauthorized migration flows into Greece in particular were constructed as threats to the cultural identity and security of the country (Karyotis, 2012; Triandafyllidou & Maroukis, 2012), in parallel with an emphasis on preventing migration flows in the context of EU migration policies. In addition, the Greek citizenship regime is underpinned by a conception of national identity based on shared culture and common descent remained largely exclusionary toward migrants. The ongoing austerity crisis intensified processes of othering as well as racist and xenophobic attitudes, associated with the rise of far right parties such as LAOS and Golden Dawn (Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2014). The SYRIZA government, elected in 2015, adopted a considerably less hostile discourse toward migrants, and at least initially, a distinctly humanitarian discourse toward Syrian refugees. However, the dynamics of the Syrian refugee crisis, the EU management of the crisis and the pressures it engenders for Greece, as well as the continuing austerity measures work to perpetuate social and political tensions around migration. These tensions provide the social and political context to the debates analyzed here.

Analysis

A first observation in relation to the data is that references to refugee and emigrant experiences are present in *all* parliamentary debates on the introduction of asylum and immigration legislation. The majority of references to historical experiences of migration were made by speakers of the center left PASOK and European left SYRIZA, represented as a governing party only in 2015. While this is partly due to the longer time that PASOK was in government, comparisons of debates suggest that this is not the only reason. For instance, PASOK MPs made 6 references in the two 2001 Immigration Law debates, while New Democracy MPs made only 2 in the four debates on the similar-in-nature 2005 Law. This relative absence is not entirely surprising; as an opposition party supporting law and order policies, they were unlikely to invoke moral obligations and argue for more inclusionary policies.

Legitimizing and delegitimizing policies: Historical duty arguments. References to a collective past of emigration and forced displacement are often employed to suggest that policies are justified because they are guided by the moral obligations dictated by these collective experiences and identities:

[1] [...] our Country is a country that, possibly because it could not feed all its population, had, from ancient times onwards, out-going migration. And this must make us show understanding towards those who, mainly for reasons of sustenance, enter our country, regardless of how serious the consequences on the economy of the country might be, especially on the problem of employment. (December 11, 1996, 1784, PASOK)

[2] As a formerly sending country, Greece must be particularly sensitive in its management of the immigration problem. (March 06, 2001, evening, p. 5639, PASOK)

[3] We Greeks have a very important reason to do so [introduce the migration law], because our compatriots in other times, during our long history, had, for different reasons, to abandon their homeland and experience similar situations to those that unfortunately, tragically, immigrants experience today in our country and other countries. (August 02, 2005, 651, New Democracy)

[4] The issue is for the country to obtain a modern [legal] framework, which will completely respect human rights, will be harmonized with European *acquis*, with Greek culture – if you want – with Greek history, since we were migrants before we gave hospitality to migrants in our country. (March 19, 2014, 8836, New Democracy)

[5] I think the long term experience of the Greek diaspora can be very useful in developing policies of integration [...] This law has greater value because, in retrospect, it provides restitution for all the injustices, the pain, and the humiliations that Greek migrants, our grandfathers, were subjected to in all latitudes and longitudes, from very distant times to the present. As a people of emigrants, we should not forget the “Except Greeks and dogs” signs outside restaurants in 1920s America, the ghettos of Greek guest workers in Germany, and the recent crisis, which has led thousands of our young people abroad. (June 24, 2015, 3708, Syriza)

In all extracts, speakers legitimate the proposed policies by alluding, explicitly or implicitly, to moral obligations dictated by collective past experiences of emigration. References to history are powerful rhetorical devices (Wodak et al., 2000; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) because they construct shared understandings and legitimate present courses of action by invoking continuity between past and present. These processes are evident in the above extracts by speakers of governing parties, who utilize historical duty arguments to support proposed laws. Experiences of migration constructed as shared through the use of collective actor descriptions (Wodak et al., 2000; Van Dijk, 1993). Speakers use of the first person plural – “we” “our,” – collective actor designations such as “we Greeks,” and metonymy and personification of the country – “Greece” “our county” – appearing as subjects of sentences. By representing experiences as shared and universal, speakers construct consensus and increase the strength of the legitimation moves (Van Dijk, 1993).

Equally, collective experiences of emigration are identified with Greek history, both ancient as in extracts 1, 3, and 4, and recent as in extracts 3 and 6. However, speakers create connections between the historical past and Greek present. Extracts [1] and [3] reflect the perception that there is an uninterrupted link between ancient and

modern Greece, which is one of the main tenets of Greek nationalism (Christopoulos, 2004; Tzanelli, 2006). In the first two extracts, speakers evoke the Greek history of emigration to suggest the values that should underpin attitudes to migrants and migration policy making; namely, “sensitivity” and “understanding.” These were invoked frequently in parliamentary debates on asylum and immigration in Greece (Karamanidou, 2010), especially in the context of strategies for representing the in-group. Extract 4 associates history with culture, and positively evaluates the proposed law as living up to both. Thus, such references both derive from and reaffirm already existing ideas that shape national Greek identity, such as the continuity of the Greek nation. Extract 5 differs insofar as it was articulated in a context when emigration had intensified because of the austerity crisis whereas at the time of the other debates, emigration was seen as a past experience. It also articulates a very strong historical duty argument in relation to the 2015 Citizenship Law regulating the naturalization and integration of second generation migrants. The experiences that Greek emigrants lived through; namely, racism and marginalization, inform us of the speaker’s desire that immigrants in Greece not be subject to the same injustices.

However, “historical duty” arguments are equally used by left wing parties to delegitimize policies by arguing that they do not live up to the moral obligations dictated by the past. This is not only true for PASOK while it was the opposition party during the 2005 Immigration law debates, but also for the Greek Communist Party (KKE), the Coalition of Radical Left (SYRIZA, 2004-), and its precursor, the Coalition of the Left and Progress (SYN, 1991 – 2003).

[6] [...] we Greeks must be especially sensitive in this matter, because in the turbulent recent history of our country, our People and especially those who fought for the ideals of democracy, of freedom, of social progress, unfortunately has the misfortune, let me put it like this, to be persecuted and to take refuge abroad, where they had the chance to taste the warmth of international solidarity. (December 11, 1996, 1785-6, KKE)

[7] You have opportunity, instead of suppressing the different, to integrate it into the social fabric. To break the racist stereotypes that poison Greek society. A society that has nearly forgotten, with all these posturing of hate speech, that our grandfathers were refugees and our fathers emigrants. (March 10, 2010, 4784, SYR)

[8] We, with every one of our families’ having relatives abroad, have been listening our parents talk about being in foreign lands [xenitia], sing about *xenitia*, ever since we were young. Shouldn’t we be a lot more generous with people who are forced to seek shelter in our country on their way to Europe? (March 20, 2014, 9097, SYR)

Although the linguistic means used to express this realization are very similar – collective actor descriptions and invocations of past experiences in a very emotive manner in extract [6]-, they serve a completely different argumentation. The speakers of these extracts all voted against the proposed legislation, and employed historical

duty arguments to argue that the proposed legislation did not live up to the moral obligations dictated by past experiences of emigration and of being a refugee. The use of references to past experiences of migration for entirely different purposes – both for legitimating and delegitimizing policy – suggests that these histories, while shared through hegemonic narratives, assume “flexible” meanings, constructed in conjunction with the political identities of the speakers. They reflect their political orientation vis-a-vis migration policies, but are also used for rhetorical, instrumental purposes. Speakers of PASOK and SYRIZA invoke, for example, histories of migration both as the governing and opposition party, to support, especially in the case of the former party, migration policies oriented toward control and deterrence.

While normally references to the past invoke a historical duty argument – how policy ought or ought not to be, this argument occasionally slips into categorical statements about qualities endowed by past experiences of migration. For instance, a speaker in the 1996 debates links the possession of a refugee identity to the “natural” superiority of Greek responses to migration.

[9] The term refugee [...] is very familiar to us, synonymous to our historical process [...] Our Eastern Mediterranean and refugee identity constituted a significant foundation for our ability to face, as a nation and in terms of Greek policy, the challenge of the most severe law, which is the right of the nations, the universal declaration of human rights and the national fights for liberation. (December 11, 1996, 1777, PASOK)

The speaker draws on discourses of national identity that have incorporated the experience of being a refugee –specifically refugees from Asia Minor. Rather than making normative claims about the proposed law, he suggests that the commonly held “refugee identity” bestows Greece with the right qualities to face challenges posed by migration. In linguistic terms, the latter is suggested by the use of categorical modalities (Fairclough 2003). Evoking past experiences of migration is also employed in conjunction to denials of racism:

[10] Greek society [...] is not a xenophobic society, is not a racist society [...] Let us not forget that millions of Greek men and women have been migrants, refugees, exiles. We know what being a refugee is, we know the immigrant’s pain. (March 11, 2010, 4918, ND)

[11] [...] our country, friends, is an open and democratic country which condemns racist views and tendencies, anywhere they might come from, a country that has long and bitter migrant experience, since until a few years ago, was a sending country of Greek emigrants. (March 11, 2010, 4816, ND)

[12] It is the responsibility of all of us to show that Greeks, a people who know very well what refugeeness and migration mean, are not, and will never be racist. (July 24, 2015, 3716, River)

[13] Archaeologists in Akrotiri in Santorini discovered a mural which, like a graphic novel, presents the following story: the number of inhabitants were more than the place could feed

and every family had to nominate a member, and all of them, after getting the necessary supplies, boarded ships and left for somewhere else [...]Such a people with all of this written in their DNA and all that they've been through therefore cannot today be racist or xenophobic. (January 12, 2011, 3473, PASOK)

As in previous extracts, speakers employ such collective actor representations as the words “our” and “country,” the latter repeated four times, to attribute such positive attributes as openness, democracy, and lack of racism to the national community. They are examples of positive-self presentation – a semantic and rhetoric strategy which permits speakers to present themselves or the group with which they identify in a positive light in terms of values, attitudes, and actions (Van Der Valk, 2003; Van Dijk, 1997). While racism is evident not only in political and media discourse, but also social practices (Dalakoglou, 2013; Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2014), denials of racism are a common rhetorical feature of discourses of migration and strategies of positive self-presentation (Triandafyllidou, 2000; Van Dijk, 1993). Here, the perceived lack of racism is attributed to historical experiences of emigration, implicitly in the first two extracts and explicitly in the third. Invoking the authority of history enhances appeals to legitimacy, and as the next section will demonstrate, sharpens the contrast between a positively represented in-group and a negatively represented out-group.

Legitimizing policy: Logics of equivalence and difference. References to historical migration experiences often entail constructing similarities and differences between Greek emigrants and refugees on the one hand, and immigrants and refugees to Greece, on the other. While parties on the left of the political spectrum have developed a logic of equivalence and emphasize similarities, parties on the political right emphasize dissimilarities, adopting a logic of difference. Parties on the left – PASOK, SYRIZA and KKE – represent the experiences of Greek emigrants and immigrants to Greece as similar. The following extracts exemplify this strategy:

[14] They [immigrants] do the jobs that our compatriots do not want to do, just like our own fellow citizens did when they emigrated to Central Europe, and more specifically [when they emigrated] to Germany, Sweden, and Belgium. (March 06, 2001, 5603, SYN)

[15] The law has a particular meaning because it highlights the sacrifices of the first generation of migrants who, dreaming of a better life for the children, put their own needs and plans, and in many cases, their human rights second. This is exactly what our grandfathers and parents did when they migrated to secure better living conditions for their children. (July 08, 2015, 4197, SYRIZA).

[16] [...] The Greek citizen is crushed by bureaucracy. Is it possible for migrants, who don't know the language, who are strangers in this place, who are afraid, to claim their rights? We have known migration to Germany and have heard descriptions by people who are today pensioners in the German public service, about the awe of the first contact and about how they would be treated by the German bureaucracy, where I can say that bureaucracy and state work much better than ours. (August 03, 2005, 717, PASOK)

In all extracts, speakers draw parallels between the experiences of Greek emigrants and immigrants in Greece. The first quotation compares the role of immigrants in the job market to that of Greek emigrants to industrialized European countries in order to refute fears that immigrants create unemployment. Similarly, the second extract draws similarities between the experiences of first generation Greek migrants and immigrants in Greece in order to support the liberalization of the citizenship regime with the 2015 Law. While both of these extracts are fairly straightforward examples of drawing on historical experiences in order to support inclusion, the third extract illustrates how such references can also discursively exclude migrants. While the speaker draws on a logic of equivalence, arguing that contacts with bureaucracy have been difficult for both Greek emigrants and immigrants to Greece, he simultaneously constructs migrants as different “strangers” who do not speak Greek, one of the main markers of belonging to the Greek ethnic group.

Despite any exclusionary undercurrents, mobilizing common experiences allows speakers to argue that migrants should be granted the rights that Greek emigrants were granted in other countries:

[17] Whatever we ask for and are proud of for Greeks abroad, we should have the courage to adopt as treatment toward strangers in Greece, foreign-origin compatriots of ours in Greece [...] we can't have demands for Greeks in Germany, Australia, or any other country and not practice them here in Greece. (March 10, 2010, 4825, PASOK)

[18] We cannot deny them [immigrants] their right to participate in social life. [...] Isn't it hypocritical to entrust them our buildings, our lands, tourism, the care of our parents and children, but to keep them strangers, in a distance and not recognize their right to obtain Greek citizenship? Most of us have relatives who left Greece in very difficult conditions, went to America in search of a better life, and despite all initial difficulties and suspicion, they were given this opportunity. American Society would be poorer, culturally and financially, without the big Greek community of *omogeneis* who live, work, and often achieve great things there. (March 10, 2010, 4768, PASOK)

The 2010 Citizenship Law attempted to facilitate the acquisition of citizenship by granting immigrants and their children legal resident status. Vehemently opposed by New Democracy and radical right LAOS parties (as extracts in the following section demonstrate), it was presented by the governing PASOK party as a law that rendered the notoriously restrictive citizenship regime fairer, while at the same time promoting integration. In the first extract, the speaker mobilizes the values of fairness by claiming that immigrants should be treated in the same manner that Greek migrants are expected to be treated abroad, alluding to the politics of the Greek state toward Greek diasporas. The second extract also invokes fairness and equality, especially by the use of the word “hypocrisy,” but also through references to the consequences of lack of inclusion, contrasted to the eventual successful integration of Greek emigrants. While the argumentation legitimates a policy of greater inclusion, it also reproduces nationalist discourses of the diaspora as a success story (Laliotou, 2010).

While the mythologies of diaspora in these extracts still serve as arguments in favor of greater inclusion, right-wing parties; namely, the conservative New Democracy and the far right LAOS and Golden Dawn parties, employ references to past experience to construct a logic of difference, presenting Greek emigrants and immigrants to Greece as two entirely different groups.

[19] I have to stress that when Greek migrants went abroad, they went legally, with papers and employment. Those who stayed were the quietest, those who had excellent conduct, and they succeeded. When we talk about illegal immigrants, we should not confuse them and make such comparisons with our own migrants, who indeed went abroad in their thousands. (January 12, 2011, 3467, ND)

[20] Were our Greek parents people who left and wanted to disrespect the principles and values of other peoples and other countries? (March 10, 2010, 4810, LAOS)

[21] [...] When I lived and worked in Germany as a trainee doctor, and worked in German universities, I was legal and paid my taxes and national insurance and resided somewhere and did not steal or assault anyone. Do you know what racism is, minister? It's going to a restaurant to eat and when the German sees you, get up and leaves in response to racial and color differences. Immigrants here have not experienced this. (March 09, 2010, 4753, LAOS)

The above extracts draw on discourses of illegality and criminalization that have dominated the Greek politics of migration over the last twenty years and tend to dominate the discourses of right wing parties, although not exclusively. Migrants are portrayed as “illegal,” as threats to employment and cultural identity, and are suspected of criminal activities. While these representations are often stated explicitly, in the above extracts they are mostly implied, expressed through juxtaposition to the positive characteristics of Greek emigrants – lawfully present, law-abiding, and hardworking. In the last extract, immigrants are not only represented in a negative manner, but the speaker denies their experiences of racism and, similarly to Sapountzis et al.'s (2013) findings, the positive representations of Greek emigrants' experiences serve to deny racism and prejudice. Equally, in all the above extracts, the idealized experiences of Greek migrants are adopted as the standard against which the experiences of immigrants are judged, reproducing nationalist perceptions of superiority.

Taking the logic of difference a step further, the overtly nationalist and anti-immigration parties LAOS and Golden Dawn claimed that any comparisons of experiences of Greek emigrants and immigrants to Greece were an “insult” to what they considered a widely shared sense of identity and history:

[22] You use everything to justify your law. The heroic Greek migrants of America, you put them on the same boat as the illegal immigrants, and our uprooted ancestors, the Aivaliots, the Smyrnians, the Pontians, the uprooted Greeks of Turkey, you equate with the illegal immigrants, those pushed by Turkey with the smugglers, earning thousands of dollars per head. (March 10, 2010, 4808, LAOS)

What is interesting in this extract is the explicit recognition of references to the past as a legitimating strategy – a move that shows the astuteness of LAOS in terms of political rhetoric. The speaker, however, is not averse to invoking past migrations himself. The ritual naming of specific populations displaced in the early 20th century and the parallel negative representation of Turkey evoke nationalist narratives of history where Greek identity is constructed in opposition to the Turkish Other. Equally, the speaker uses highly charged words to enforce the rhetorical power of his statement, such as the word “heroic” for Greek refugees, and the word uprooted [*xerizomenoi*] which signifies the trauma of displacement. On the day before, criticisms of the law’s white paper for “equating of refugees from Pontos and Asia Minor with Pakistanis and Afghans” were accompanied by MPs’ shouting “shame” and “disgrace” (March 09, 2010, 4740). Speakers of Golden Dawn, the extreme right party elected in 2012, use the same emotive words to express their rejection of logics of equivalence. The comparison – between “our fathers and our grandfathers, the Greeks” and “the Pakistanis and Afghans and illegal immigrants” is described as an “insult” by a Golden Dawn MP in a debate on the establishment of detention centers (September 27, 2012). In 2015, an MP of the same party states that

[23] It is a shame and disgrace to confuse the Greek diaspora with the illegal immigrants [in Greece]. Our grandfathers who went to work in industrialized countries were migrants, refugees [...] and they took their civilization [politismo] there. Those who come here as illegal immigrants bring no civilization. (July 24, 2015, 3747, Golden Dawn)

The word *politismos* is often translated as “culture” into English. In this extract, I opted to use the word “civilization” instead, because it reflects the connotations of racial hierarchies that are central to the ideology of Golden Dawn as a party. For them, immigrants are barbaric and “uncivilized.” Greeks, in contrast, are constructed as “civilized” – a word that invokes ultra-nationalist discourses on their position as inheritors of Ancient Greek civilization. Comparisons between the two groups are constructed as “shameful” because they do not acknowledge what is self-evident for Golden Dawn; that is, the superiority of Greek culture. The use of historical references by LAOS and Golden Dawn show the continuing significance of experiences of displacement in the reproduction of nationalism.

Conclusion

Drawing on Greek debates on migration, I demonstrated how CDA can be employed in order to explore how past experiences of migration are invoked to legitimate policies. CDA is, I believe, a strong methodological proposition for exploring discourses on forced migration, since it brings to the fore the mechanics of reproducing hegemonic identities and patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

All parties refer to past experiences of migration, albeit with varying intensity, demonstrating that historical experiences of migration constitute a form of shared knowledge on which speakers draw in the course of their argumentation. Applying a CDA approach to the Greek case has emphasized how different actors employ past experiences of migration instrumentally (Glynn & Kleist, 2012; Gray, 2004). Broadly speaking, parties left of center represent the experiences of Greek emigrants and immigrants to Greece as similar in terms of their social roles and positions, developing a discursive logic of equivalence (Fairclough, 2003) in order to argue for equal treatment and rights for migrants. Conversely, members of the parties on the right of the political spectrum – conservative New Democracy, radical right LAOS and *Chrysi Avgi* – consistently differentiate the experiences of Greek emigrants from those of migrants in Greece in order to delegitimize migration policies. This suggests that narratives of past migrations are not fixed, but whose subject can be altered to fit different political agendas (Glynn & Kleist, 2012; Gray, 2004). References to past emigration experiences serve instrumental aims of legitimating policies that might be restrictive or exclusionary, or at least present limitations to the degree that they promote the inclusion of migrants. For instance, the 2011 asylum law incorporated the returns directive, thus expanding the provisions for detention and deportation; the 2010 Citizenship Law, while being a step forward for Greek standards, limited its scope to legal immigrants only.

While the invocation of past experiences and historical duties can be seen as an inclusionary discourse (Gray, 2004; Lentini, 2003), CDA helps demonstrate that the extent of this usage should not be overestimated. Speakers discursively reproduce the status of migrants as “strangers,” and the experiences of migrants in Greece are primarily seen through Greek experiences of migration, a discursive mode which runs the risk of reproducing unequal social positions. Drawing on discourses of criminalization and illegality that have dominated Greek political debates on migration, right wing parties reproduce migrants not only as the Other to the figure of the successful, lawful, and law abiding Greek emigrant, but as inferior denizens of the country. The ambivalent uses of emigrant experiences in political discourses of migration are similar to the contradictions observed by Sapountzis et al. (2013) in their exploration of everyday discourse in Greece. This distance is widened by associating “real” emigrant and refugee experiences solely with the historical experience of the in-group, while doubting the validity of the current experiences of migrants. In this respect, CDA can demonstrate how such linguistic features as positive self-presentation strategies and the use of collective actors reinforce the boundaries between “us” and “them” (Triantafyllidou, 2000; van Dijk, 1993), reiterating narratives of identity relying on idealized experiences of displacement. References to past experiences of migration not only legitimate and delegitimize policy positions, but reproduce hegemonic narratives of national identity.

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Appendix

Table 1
List of Documents

Date	Topic
December 11, 1996	Asylum Law
December 12, 1996	Asylum Law
March 06, 2001, morning	Immigration Law (Residence and Control)
March 06, 2001, evening	Immigration Law (Residence and Control)
August 02, 2005	Immigration Law (Residence and Control)
August 03, 2005, morning	Immigration Law (Residence and Control)
August 03, 2005, evening	Immigration Law (Residence and Control)
August 04, 2005	Immigration Law (Residence and Control)
March 09, 2010	Citizenship and Naturalization
March 10, 2010	Citizenship and Naturalization
March 11, 2010	Citizenship and Naturalization
January 11, 2011	Asylum and Return
January 12, 2011	Asylum and Return
September 27, 2012	Detention
March 18, 2014	Codification of Immigration Law
March 19, 2014	Codification of Immigration Law
March 20, 2014	Codification of Immigration Law
June 24, 2015	Citizenship and Naturalization
July 07, 2015	Citizenship and Naturalization
July 08, 2015	Citizenship and Naturalization

Table 2
Greek Governments and Political Parties

Year	Government Party	Opposition Parties
1990-1993	New Democracy (conservative)	PASOK, KKE (Greek Communist Party, 'old' left);
1993-1996	PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement, centre-left)	New Democracy, KKE, Synaspismos (Coalition of Left and Progress, New Left)
1996 -2000	PASOK	New Democracy, KKE, Synaspismos (Coalition of Left and Progress, New Left)
2000 -2004	PASOK	New Democracy, KKE, Synaspismos (Coalition of Left and Progress, New Left)
2004 – 2007	New Democracy	PASOK, SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) LAOS (Popular Orthodox Rally, radical right), KKE
2007- 2009	New Democracy	PASOK, SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) LAOS (Popular Orthodox Rally, radical right)
2009 – 2011	PASOK	New Democracy, SYRIZA, LAOS, KKE
2011 (Nov)- 2012 (May)	Interim Coalition Government (PASOK, New Democracy, LAOS)	SYRIZA, KKE
2012-2015	Coalition Government (New Democracy, PASOK, Democratic Left [European left party])	SYRIZA, KKE, Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn, extreme right) Independent Greeks (ultra-nationalist)
2015 -	SYRIZA, Independent Greeks	New Democracy, PASOK, KKE, Chrysi Avgi

Source. Ministry of the Interior, Hellenic Parliament (2012).

Politika Tavsiyelerinde Adalet Konusundaki Çıkarlar: Suriye Mülteci Krizi Üzerine Felsefi Bir Yaklaşım *

Georgiana Turculet^a

Öz

Yakın tarihte yaşanan Suriye mülteci krizi, mültecilerin ve sığınmacıların statülerine ve haklarına ilişkin kuram boyutu henüz az gelişmiş göç yasası konusunda bir tartışma başlattı. UNHCR tahminlerine göre Türkiye, Suriye’de çatışmalar başladıktan sonra, bir ülkenin sınırları içerisinde dünyadaki en fazla sayıdaki mülteciyi (2,5 milyon civarında) barındırıyor. Buna mukabil, bu kimselerin hiçbirisi yasal düzlemde mülteci olarak tanınmamıştır. 1951 Cenevre Sözleşmesi’ne imza atan devletlerden biri olarak Türkiye, hâlâ “coğrafi sınırlamalar” uygulamakta, Avrupa dışından gelen sığınmacılara mülteci statüsü vermiyip onlara “geçici koruma” statüsü sağlamaktadır. Bu makale, Suriye olayının devletlerin mültecileri geldikleri bölge unsuru içinde tutmak üzere önlemler aldıkları tipik bir “tasarlanmış bölgecilik” örneği olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Bütün bu önlemler, felsefi bir okumayla, doğrudan doğruya mültecilerin yaşamları üzerinde, dolaylı olarak da vatandaşlar üzerinde olumsuz etkilere sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Mülteciler • Normatif kuram • Göç yasası • Türkiye • Koruma

* Bu çalışma Avrupa Birliği 7. Çerçeve Programı (FP7/2007-2013) kapsamında desteklenmiştir (n° 316796). Bu çalışmanın ilk versiyonu Koç Üniversitesi Göç Araştırmaları Uygulama ve Araştırma Merkezi (MiReKoc) ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümünde araştırmacı olduğum dönemde yazıldı. MiReKoc Direktörü Ahmet İçduygu’ya ve Merkez’de bana destek olan meslektaşlarıma teşekkür ederim. MiReKoc’ta “Brown Bag” seminerlerini organize eden Meriç Çağlar’a ve kendilerinden destek gördüğüm Ayşem Biriz’e, İlke Şanher Yüksel’e, Seçil Paçacı’ya, Doğu Şimşek’e ve Mina Trudeau’ya minnettarım. Özel olarak da bu metnin son hâline ulaşmasındaki katkılarından dolayı Princeton Üniversitesinden Kim Angell’a teşekkür ediyorum.

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Interests over Justice in Policy Recommendations: A Philosophical Approach on the Syrian Refugee Crisis*

Georgiana Turculet^a

Abstract

The recent Syrian refugee crisis opened up a debate on the under-theorized issue of migration law regarding the status and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. According to UNHCR estimates, Turkey has, since the conflict in Syria began, accommodated the most conspicuous number of refugees in the world (around 3 million) within its jurisdictional boundaries. Yet, none of them have been recognized legally as refugees. Turkey, one of the signatory states of the 1951 Geneva Convention, still applies “geographical limitations;” that is, it does not grant refugee status to non-European asylum seekers, but rather extends to them a status of “temporary protection.” This paper argues that the Syrian case is a typical case of “engineered regionalism,” according to which states take measures to keep refugees in their region of origin. All such measures, by a philosophical reading, have pernicious implications directly for the lives of refugees and indirectly for citizens themselves.

Keywords

Refugees • Normative theory • Migration law • Turkey • Protection

* The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union’s 7th Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement n° 316796. An earlier version of this paper was written while I was a Marie Curie Fellow at the Migration Research Center Mirekoc and the Department of International Relations at Koc University, Istanbul, Turkey. I am grateful to the Director of the Center, Ahmed İçduygu, and the colleagues from the Center for their support. I am grateful to Meriç Çağlar, organizing the Brown Bag seminars in Mirekoc, thanks to whom I received feedback, from Ayşem Biriz, İlke Şanlıer Yüksel Meriç Çağlar, Seçil Paçacı, Doğu Şimşek, Çınar Kiper, and Mina Trudeau, among others. Special gratitude goes to Kim Angell from Princeton University, whose critiques have improved the latest version of the essay.

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Reports unanimously show that the Syrian conflict has triggered the world's largest humanitarian crisis since World War II. Humanitarian needs and population displacements continue to rise, leaving an entire generation of people exposed to war and violence, deprived of basic services, education, and protection. Since 2011, when the war started in Syria, refugees fleeing to other countries are mostly confined to their region of origin; namely, to Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. Turkey currently hosts about 3 million, (UNHCR, 2017) while smaller Lebanon and Jordan have the highest ratios per capita, 26% and 9.8%, respectively. Europe,¹ however, has arranged a bilateral agreement with Turkey, which basically entails stopping the flow of refugees to Europe in return for political and financial concessions made for Turkey (Aljazeera, 2016).

The Syrians welcomed into Turkey by the generous open-doors policies were initially called “guests” (Aljazeera, 2016) by the Turkish government and the media. Turkey's law, under which the largest community of displaced individuals in 2015 is accommodated, however, calls the displaced Syrians “temporarily protected individuals” instead of “refugees” due to the “geographical limitations” that Turkey is still enacting as a policy and a practice.

Calling the Syrians in Turkey “refugees” is morally desirable. By refugee, one means a person who cannot return to his country of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution and other threats against her human rights (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951). This triggers a moral right to assistance, which has been incorporated in the international legal regime.² İçduygu (2015), however, argues that Syrians are being treated by Turkey as *de facto* refugees, even if *de jure*, they are registered under some other legal term, such as “under temporary protection.” I believe İçduygu's statement is mistaken. In what follows, I discuss the pernicious implications of attributing Syrians a temporary status in which defining them as “guests”³ both *legally* and *publicly* might prove to be harmful not only to them, but also to Turkey's own citizens.

This paper advances a normative inquiry, in which it is argued that states dealing with the humanitarian crisis ought to be persuaded that by acting against the interest of the refugees, they are also (potentially) acting against the interest of their own citizens. One example from the current Syrian refugee crisis and the law and practice enacted by states is that states have prioritized short-sighted political goals, thereby causing,

1 By “Europe” I refer to countries of the European Union (EU).

2 This point is clearer if it is distinguished between principles evaluating policymaking and policymaking *proper*.

3 With the term “guest” publicly used, I shall refer to the overwhelming presence of this term in the media, and in the political discourse from the beginning of the refugee inflow in 2012 until 2015, when this paper was drafted. Most media outlets in Turkey used this term to some extent, and it has become common knowledge.

based on the magnitude of the crisis, policies to become more disruptive solutions than *realistically* assessing the “refugee issue.” Such policies are generally based on the underlying and misguided assumption that the refugee crisis is *temporary*. This paper refers primarily to the Turkish migration law under which refugees receive protection. It is important to evaluate policymaking discourses in light of the fact that they often inform practices more than does the text of the law itself (Korkut, 2007) and further in light of the fact that the policymaking discourse has changed significantly, in different opposing trends, since the beginning of the war in Syria and the subsequent displacement of individuals (Chemin & Gokalp-Aras, 2017). However, this paper seeks to limit the scope to discussing how the policymaking should be framed in order to remain principled while also following suggestions that migration experts and commentators have rightly advanced.

Conceptualization of the Syrian Refugee Case in Turkey versus the World

According to İcduygu, since April 2011, when Syrians started arriving in Turkey, until August 2014, the Turkish state spent 4.5 billion dollars, out of which the international community had contributed only 5% (İcduygu, 2015). This suggests that other states, particularly Western states should contribute more in terms of resource-allocation to the countries in the region who take in most refugees, and re-settle refugees into their territories.⁴ By considering this unbalanced burden-sharing between Turkey and other states,⁵ as shown by the economic investment due to establishing basic services that Turkey has provided to camps and the procedural efficiency proved in registering millions of displaced individuals in such a short time (2011-2016), one might be prompted to view the legal framing of “temporary protection” redundant: that is to consider that Syrians are treated *de facto* like refugees. In light of the financial expenditure of states, with Turkey becoming the world’s biggest refugee hosting country and after having spent more than 6 billion USD on direct assistance to refugees as of 2015, it is tempting to acknowledge that displaced Syrians are receiving *the same* assistance that they would if they were to be granted the legal status of refugee (Divers & Dobbs, 2015). In December 2014, the European Commission also committed 10 million Euros worth of humanitarian

4 Meanwhile, in March 2016, in order to share the responsibility toward the refugees, the EU and Turkey signed a new deal, which has come to be known as the “EU-Turkey deal.” According to this deal, Europe would financially contribute to protect refugees, given that the larger share of refugees still resides (and has only increased since 2011) in Turkey, as of 2016. In this paper, this specific deal is not discussed because it is too soon to evaluate its effects on refugee protection. That is, it is not currently possible to evaluate whether the financial support promised by Europe to Turkey is delivered according to the deal, and whether Turkey will utilize the deal effectively for refugees’ protection. It is worth pointing out that migration experts cast doubt on whether the deal is legal, whether it will work, and finally due to the shaky political situation, whether the deal will be carried out. It depends on the relation between the EU and Turkey and the political reasons that are part of the deal (e.g. on Europe implementing a visa-free travel regime to Europe for Turkish citizens, hastening the accession of Turkey into the EU, etc.) (Collett, 2016).

5 As of 2016, most refugees still reside in their region of origin, mostly in Turkey (UNHCR, 2016).

assistance to Syrians in Turkey (Tolay, 2015), which is a very small contribution compared to Turkey while “the United States, (...) has itself so far resettled a very low number of Syrian refugees” (Tolay, 2015). Europe has also resettled less than 2% of the total number of refugees in 2015, including internally and externally displaced refugees (Tolay, 2015), resulting in repeated criticism and blame from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan against Europe for its inaction.

Tolay (2015) criticizes the “differentiated” approach that states seem to have taken with regard to the Syrian humanitarian crisis. By this, she understands that the nature of cooperation, or, more precisely, lack thereof, is itself unhealthy, as it is not based on common values, but rather upon a conjectural convergence of interests (Tolay, 2015). Both proposals, İçduygu’s and Tolay’s, are correctly based on the assumption that the humanitarian crisis affecting refugees is the responsibility of the international community as a whole. In other words, the best solutions and practices will be found in a system in which states cooperate. However, İçduygu and Tolay differ in how they frame the crisis and in the policy recommendations that they give to states. On the one hand, İçduygu claims that Syrians are treated *like* refugees in Turkey, thus overlooking the mistaken “temporariness” assumption. This strategy does not scrutinize states’ *internal* operation (in this case, Turkey’s) and mostly looks at the fact that other states do not do enough to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, Tolay analyzes states’ differentiated responses to the humanitarian crisis, advocating a convergence of values aimed at best protecting refugees’ human rights. Tolay concludes her report:

While domestic concerns tend to dominate the policymaking process, the inherently international nature of migration and asylum requires international cooperation: the EU and Turkey (as well as the United States) have to build a consensus on migration and asylum policies that goes beyond short-sighted political gains and instead favors long-term policy answers to the human and the natural phenomenon of population movement.⁶

The policy recommendations might not be persuasive enough for states to put it into practice. I argue that a clear distinction among the *moral*, *legal*, and *political* spheres is necessary to evaluate such a complex case, and may further point to more compelling policy proposals.

The distinction between the legal, moral, and political can inform us on whether the law itself is morally problematic or whether it is the political interpretation of the law that is questionable. Take, for example, the following:

⁶ Tolay (2015) criticizes the fact that some states would rather invest resources in direct assistance to refugees, that others prefer to allocate resources to states in the region, others do little, and even others prioritize intervening in the political crisis in Syria, itself being the main cause displacing refugees. All those actions should be coordinated and motivated by humanitarian concern.

If we do not differentiate between morality and legality, we cannot criticize the legally enacted norms of democratic majorities even when they refuse to admit refugees to their midst, turn away asylum seekers at the door, and shut off their borders to immigrants. If we do not differentiate between morality and functionality (the political), we cannot challenge practices of immigration, naturalization, or border control for violating our cherished moral, constitutional, and even ethical beliefs.” (Benhabib, 2011, p. 145)

Mole (2014) claimed that what matters most is not the new Turkish law, whose text relies on temporariness, but it is how it will be implemented politically; that is, whether it guarantees protection (Mole, 2014). Nevertheless, the legal definition of a person as being “temporary” or a “guest,” (Çorabatır, 2015, p. 8) itself proves no clarity on whether a person has clear prospects for return, as the term “refugee” would, on the other hand, indicate without ambiguity.⁷

Worse of all, as the (Turkish asylum) law was still in making, Turkey was subjected to an unexpected mass influx of refugees from Syria in April 2011. Turkey pursued an open border policy for Syrians, but the way it responded was not totally in line with international norms. Just as it happened in 1988, 1989, 1991, and 1992, mass influxes from Iraq, Bulgaria, Iraq again, and Bosnia, respectably, Turkey has refrained to call them refugees. (Çorabatır, 2015, p. 8)

Non-recognition is bad for refugees, because potentially they might not receive the appropriate type of assistance in their host country, e.g. they might receive temporary assistance instead of medium or long-term integration into the host country. The distinction allows us to evaluate whether the moral wrong is done at the legal or political level, or both.

In the Syrian case, it seems obvious in all humanitarian UNHCR reports that there are no clear prospects of return in the near future. In principle, migration policies following from a legal status (or political use of it), based on the assumption of *temporariness*, can be *procedurally* and *substantially*⁸ different. Mole (2015), like İçduygu (2015), claims that refugees in Turkey were called “guests” because the government genuinely miscalculated the extent of the conflict in Syria and the mass inflows of refugees it has generated. Such a benevolent intention to welcome *everyone* as a guest, inspired by what some might call “Anatolian hospitality,” carries the risk that the refugees will not have rights *proper* while in Turkey, or as I shall argue, that they will have the *wrong* type of rights. Furthermore, another general concern is that being accommodated as guests entails that the Turkish government can deal with

7 I recall the UNHCR refugee definition, underlying that a person receives refugee status precisely because his return will not take place under present circumstances, which can last for an indefinite period of time (UNHCR, 1951).

8 For the distinction, procedural versus substantial, see Miller (2013). The fact that the Turkish state welcomes the Syrians as “guests” rather than under the status as “refugees” changes the normative (i.e. theoretical) status of the Syrians: what they are owed as a matter of justice/rightness. There is a further problem: whether it is likely that they will receive in practice (as a matter of political implementation) what refugees are owed (regardless of the legal status). These are distinct issues.

refugees as a “domestic issue” and from the position of a host claim that “you stay as (long as) I like it, and on my own terms” (Miller, 2013). Thus, people whose human rights are violated in the country of origin need those rights to be restored, whereas due to the concerns I have raised, in theory and in practice, they might be left at the mercy of hospitality, rather than under the auspices of international law protection concerned with humanitarian protection and empowering individuals to live in the new hosting society.⁹ Although Mole rightly argues that what matters beyond the text of the law is proper political implementation, we cannot dismiss the fact that the legal status of individuals matters as well. The scenario that status can be only *formally*¹⁰ respected (Carens, 2008), which might mean disrespected in practice, does not yet contradict that the first milestone for rights to be realized is their procedural recognition, which ultimately ensures substantive rights.

For example, migrant rights holders are entitled to a different bundle of rights based on their legal status in a given country. Whilst all have human rights, some might benefit from unemployment benefits if they are employed without a termination date, whereas seasonal workers might not be able to claim similar rights. This is because the former have a stronger relationship with the state than the latter.

The figures mentioned indicate that Turkey has done more than any other country in terms of assistance to refugees, allocating funds for humanitarian assistance and accepting the highest number of refugees registered and residing on its territories. However, this should not prevent us from analyzing whether Turkey’s political choices of *how* it is accommodating refugees are, in fact, just. The discussion in section two of the paper shows that Turkey’s choices might not be just for refugees. I inquire whether in principle those choices are just for its citizens. I now turn to contextualizing historically the humanitarian crisis. While providing the historical context, I do not aim to clarify whether Tolay’s (2015) proposal to regard the humanitarian intervention as a cooperative enterprise taking priority in states’ agendas, or İçduygu’s (2015) proposal advocating more burden-sharing between states is the desirable moral solution. I shall argue that both proposals are morally desirable (and compatible) insofar as both are based on the assumption that the international community as a whole should find best practices for the current humanitarian crisis. Both proposals point to two moral injustices in the current refugee system that need addressing, which will be made more explicit in the next session. It is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate these proposals in depth. I will, however, point out a few shortcomings in both.

⁹ See Korkut’s (2017) article for a more in depth discussion on how discourses, rather than concrete policy making, affect the *de facto* protection offered to refugees.

¹⁰ In order for some rights to be “practically” respected or “effective” (rather than rights being formally in place), Carens (2008) comes up with the notion of a “firewall.” Rights may not be merely formal, but *really* (my emphasis) accessible to the interested individuals.

Historicity of the “Engineered Regionalism”

Tolay’s proposal consists of two normative claims. She claims that 1) Common values in the policymaking process are desirable to considerations based on conjectural convergence of states’ interests. 2) Concerns toward preserving human rights and human dignity should prevail over security or other political interests. I argue in what follows that the normative goal (2) should be guiding policy recommendations. However, this is the case only if we understand it (2) as an ideal goal toward which some other premise may best guide policymaking.

States’ policymaking can be in principle based on the common values they might share yet compatible with states also acting in their own interests. In fact, states’ policies are generally justified by the right that states have to act in their own interest (Miller, 2007). Tolay acknowledges this and claims that (1) states’ interests might be reflected in their policies, if (2) other duties and responsibilities toward the refugees are also main considerations at the basis of those policies. In this sense, she is not making a policy recommendation *proper*, but calls for normative principles in which policies might be grounded.

A further distinction between two sets of considerations might prove useful: (a) those informing policymaking, and (b) those judging the policymaking processes, which are normative principles. Consider the following illustration: one might agree at the level of normative principle with gender equality. However, when it comes to policy recommendation, one agrees with something that allows forms of gender inequalities, such as affirmative action¹¹ quotas aiming at hiring primarily women. This apparent contradiction might be read as a contradiction at the level of principles. These are, however, two separate statements, both possibly compatible, each responding to a different theoretical level; namely, normative principles and policymaking, and consistently hold both.

Going back to Tolay’s proposal, I take (2) to be the *ideal moral desideratum*,¹² but I argue that (1) does not imply (2). In fact, by presenting a historical and normative analysis of how the refugee international regime came into place and has been implemented, I make the argument that proposal (1) leads (or might lead) to enforcing the convergence of regional or states’ interests, as opposed to the prevailing humanitarian concerns toward the vulnerable populations. If my argument is correct, I then propose: (3) to look at ways in which states’ interests might converge toward the ideal (2). This means that policy recommendations should be premised on (3) rather than (2).

11 By “affirmative action” I mean such regulations and programs designed to remedy past discriminatory practices, among other things, e.g., by employing fixed quotas of minority group members, or other individuals discriminated on the basis of their race, creed, color, sex, etc.

12 I indicate with this term the normative principles grounding the policymaking process, which I consider without further argument the morally desired principles; put simply, the ideal toward which states should aspire.

The Syrian case in Turkey and in the region is best conceptualized from a historical perspective as an example of “engineered regionalism.” Matthew J. Gibney (2007) argues that there are two conceivable world trends of asylum, the “regionalization of asylum” and the “globalization of asylum,” whereby the second is morally desirable over the former. Yet historically, it is the first one that seems so far to be winning out to the second. The interplay between various factors, mostly political but also *spontaneous*,¹³ is what forecloses the ideal of a global asylum system, resulting in a division of the world’s refugees in particular countries and regions. “Regionalization” can be defined firstly as refugees not seeking asylum in countries outside of their region of origin, and not (entirely) as a choice of their own. The question is, then: “Whose choice is it?”

The spontaneous factor contributing to the regionalization of the asylum seeker is due to refugees’ first opportunity to settle elsewhere existing within *feasible* reach, which generally means neighboring countries. Recently, outflows of the largest numbers of refugees were toward the immediate geographical vicinity: Iran and Pakistan for Afghanis; Macedonia and Albania for Kosovars; and Tanzania, Uganda, and Zaire for Burundians and Rwandans (Gibney, 2007). Considering the “geographical vicinity factor” as the main factor determining regionalization is, however, imprecise, as regionalization would be looked at as the interplay between refugees’ decision and the decision of the neighboring states, which supposedly are accepting refugees because the porosity of their borders could not prevent them from entering, or because states sincerely respect the 1951 Convention. If we think of the current Syrian crisis, only some general knowledge would show that this view is a naïve one for two main reasons. Firstly, in an increasingly globalized world, geographical distance is at least virtually overcome in the sense that refugees are more informed via media about other countries in the world where they would rather settle,¹⁴ as well as because it is practically conceivable that they cross into the first country, which upon status registration could (re)settle them in wealthier states (Brubaker, 1990).¹⁵ Brubaker refers to globalization “eclipsing” the distance, meaning that with limited means, e.g. the amount of information to which everyone has access, refugees could *easily* flee elsewhere farther from their own region. Furthermore, the “location of refugees in their region of origin reflects the effort of Western states to block, discourage, and increase the costs of intercontinental movement by refugees and asylum seekers,” (Brubaker, 1990, p. 58) resulting in confining the refugee burden to the poorest states in the world (Castles & Loughna, 2003; Chimmi 2000).

13 By “spontaneous” I mean that refugees *easily* outflow into neighboring countries due to geographical proximity.

14 Media unanimously reports that refugees prefer Germany or Sweden as a destination when they undertake dangerous trips and have the technological means, such as smart phones and maps, to arrive to destination.

15 Also see Saul (2015). Syrian refugees attempting to cross the Mediterranean, and before Turkey opened fire on the refugee vessel, shouted “either to Italy or death.” This statement suggests that refugees’ preference to specific destinations is well informed and strongly held.

As the Syrian refugee crises is described (Brubaker, 1990, note 3, 4, 11, and 12) in the most recent literature and media, it seems to fulfill the above criteria of engineered regionalism, namely it seems that the relocation of most Syrians in the region of their own origins is the result of the interplay of both the domestic and foreign policy interests of various important political actors (here are mentioned most often Turkey, the EU, and the USA). One question is particularly relevant in this case, as Tolay notes: If there were common shared values among the main countries and donors to the Syrian crises to lead the policymaking process, would it change the nature of the regionalism in a morally desirable way, namely towards the ideal (2)? That is, states should prioritize preserving human rights and human dignity of refugees, a commitment that should prevail over security or other political interests.

The most straightforward response is that regionalism is bad insofar as it poses two types of problems: justice to refugees and justice between states. The model of regionalism, either “spontaneous” or “engineered” (or an interplay of both), is one of the main problems in the way of the globalized refugee regime of burden sharing. From a justice perspective, regionalist models suffer from the limitation of deterring refugees via policies (visa and other measures) from reaching states where their rights would better be protected, therefore diminishing access of refugees to a (more) just treatment.¹⁶ Besides justice to refugees, the second problem regards justice among states, in that poorer and worse equipped states in the world bear the highest costs¹⁷ of the world’s displaced. As a result, these countries, which simply happen to be in the same region, are forced to take disproportionate asylum burdens and may become even more politically unstable, commit more human rights violations (consider for example the comparison between Canada and Lebanon), or have lesser capacity to offer minimal security and protection to asylum seekers. Injustice therefore seems to be twofold, toward worse-off countries and toward refugees themselves. It is worth noting that there is a third sense in which regionalist models are bad: for the citizens of some countries (in the region) and out of the responsibility of the given states’ policies (for Turkish citizens and due to Turkish policymaking).

If the current world arrangements lead to such paradigms of injustice, other models should be considered as better candidates to substitute regional models. It is not my task here to establish all ethical considerations that are at stake to current or possible new models. However, if the conceptualization of regionalism and its problems from a justice perspective are well set, İçduygu is right in his claim that

16 The argument of what justice demands can be made in accordance with to the UNHCR interpretation of the Geneva Conventions. See article on non-refoulement when action corresponds to its breach (UNHCR, 2011).

17 The table indicates that the total refugee population is divided disproportionately among states, both in terms of countries’ GDP and of refugees per inhabitants. Even more striking is the fact that the world’s poorest states carry the heaviest burdens, whereas the world’s wealthiest states are absent (except Sweden) from the list of burden-taking countries (Gibney, 2007, p. 65). See also Bets (2013) discussion on burden sharing.

Turkey has a justice-based claim toward other states, particularly wealthier states that, comparatively, have helped little, if at all, in tackling the humanitarian crisis. In other words, other states are morally obliged to take in more refugees, or to send more financial aid to those countries that have received many refugees. This is what İçduygu calls burden sharing between states (İçduygu, 2015).

After settling the claim that Turkey has the moral right to demand support from other states, I turn to contextualizing the Syrian regionalization. Tolay suggests that “shared values” among states might account for a better coordination in assisting refugees. In what follows, I will argue that this was the case historically, but that here, suggestions might not apply to the Syrian refugee crisis.

Historically, the refugee and asylum regime arose first as a necessity to address the post WWII “European crises” during which millions were displaced, and second, to address the protection of refugees fleeing communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. This first type of regionalism that precedes and perhaps both shapes and informs the new Syrian regionalism functioned for a number of reasons. In the European context, its objective was to provide protection to the vulnerable. Among such reasons, Gibney (2007) first cites the fact that Western states were committed to common values expressed in their shared hostility to communism during the period between the late 1940s and 1960s, and second, that admitting refugees matched the foreign policy agendas of Western states, whose economies were in need of unskilled labor. Last, an important detail was the fact that the “iron curtain” between communist and Western states enacted a tight control of citizens’ exit, and therefore the number of refugees to the Western states was mostly contained. For argument sake, we can cite these reasons as contributing to the success of intra-European asylum seekers’ management as *political* reasons, as they seem to be concerned with the domestic and political goals and agenda of particular states that happened to share mutual goals. Legally, the 1951 Convention enforced this trend by limiting the responsibility of (Western and non-Western states) to events occurring *within* Europe. Morally, these political and legal aspects are questionable. In fact, in sharp contrast to the efficient intra-European assistance, the enormous number of displaced persons generated by the partition of India and Pakistan after 1947 were neglected not only by European states, but also by the UNHCR (Oberoi, 2005). One might claim that they were no less neglected than how the current Syrian refugee crisis has so far been neglected by Western states.¹⁸ The event of the partition together with new refugee *regionalisms*, characterizing in turn Asia and Africa¹⁹ throughout the decolonization period and various wars of independence, not only questions the

18 The Syrian crisis is difficult to assess, as the events continue to unfold up to and during the writing of this paper.

19 Other events producing refugees in the past half century are the Vietnam War, the Algerian War of Independence, and the struggles in Rwanda, Sudan, and Kenya during the 1970s.

assumption that the refugee issue is an intra-European issue, but it also lays ground for the moral idea that who counts as a refugee is not someone from a specific region (nonetheless *within* Europe), but *anyone* whose basic human rights are violated, and their demand for asylum goes to the international community as a whole. To this end, the 1967 Protocol added to the 1951 Refugee Convention affirmed a legal obligation on Western States to grant asylum to non-Europeans and a refugee status to whoever qualifies for it, regardless of their region of origin and place of application. The legal system to which most countries in the world subscribe, with the notable exception of Turkey and a few others, recognizes that a law protecting refugees from “within Europe” only discriminates unfairly between refugees, granting to some (i.e. those from Europe) full legal protection.

We turn to Tolay’s moral impetus urging states to embrace a cohesive plan motivated by humanitarian concerns rather than political interests (e.g. agendas related to domestic and international affairs) as the highest moral desideratum. The reason the humanitarian concern has never been the primary motivation of states is precisely because states act *politically* (Miller, 2007), and have the right to do so. In the European model, one among many predecessors of the Syrian one, we saw that the convergence of values was *de facto* a convergence of political interest, shared economic need of skilled labor, and reasons to estimate a very low number of inflows of refugees from the Eastern Block. Today, our scenario is different in all of these aspects, and that explains why states might find themselves in less agreement than ever on shared values of humanitarian assistance.

This is not to say that this should not be the highest moral goal endorsed by states. Recall the illustration on how we might deal with the affirmative action in gender equality, according to which we might advocate for inequality at the policy level in order to reach or enhance equality at the normative level. Policy recommendations might be best acted on if framed as being in the interest of states’ citizens, rather than refugees only. This will be the last point made in the conclusions of this paper, but before doing so, let us see in which relevant way Turkey and the region is dealing with the Syrian case differently or similarly when compared to the European model described above.

It seems from the outset that the model of regionalism is not much different from the European one. In the Turkish law, the refugee is:

A person who (*as a result of events occurring in European countries*) and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his citizenship, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return

to it, shall be granted refugee status upon completion of the refugee status determination process (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management, 2014, Art. 61).²⁰

Refugees seeking asylum in Turkey “as a result of events *from outside* European countries” (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management, 2014)²¹ only receive a “conditional refugee” or “temporary protection” legal status, like the status Syrians receive currently. It is unclear which criteria are used to define which of the latter two categories non-European refugees will be part of; however, the answer to this issue is beyond the scope of this paper. What we can claim about Turkey’s law is that it seems to resemble the “classical” European model of regionalization when we look at the law itself. Yet, due to its open-door policies for Syrians, unlike Europe in the immediate decades after the World Wars, for which inflows were calculated to be low and the European states were sharing the burden of refugees, Turkey (and other countries in the region) has received millions of refugees in a few years who have not been granted refugee status. To recall that the UNHCR has declared Turkey to have become the world’s largest refugee hosting country, spending 6 billion USD on direct assistance to refugees (Divers & Dobbs, 2015), out of which the international community has provided only a small percentage as of 2015 (Divers & Dobbs, 2015, note 3).

Strikingly, the main difference therefore between the European case; namely, during the period between 1940 and 1960, and the Syrian crisis, is numerical. The displacement of Syrian refugees between the 2011-2016 period is significantly larger in a much shorter period of time. Some, including İçduygu (2015), claim that Turkey had miscalculated the mass inflow it was to receive when, at the beginning of the Syrian conflict, Turkey declared its open-door policy. However, the behavior of all other important actors proves this case to be “engineered regionalism,” with the US choosing not to resettle refugees onto its territory,²² and with the EU also settling a very trivial number of refugees compared to countries in the region, including Turkey. Sufficient research has yet to be done to settle which interests Turkey has, and whether these interests are regional, domestic, or foreign policy related in addition to its seemingly benevolent open-door policies. Yet, most scholars studying the case suspect that the policies are driven primarily by interests, rather than humanitarian concern (İçduygu, 2015).

20 This text, ARTICLE 61 (1), is from the Law of Foreigners and International Protection of Turkey. The text within brackets and italic (my emphasis) shows the geographical limitations that Turkey still maintains, together with two more states in the world. All other states in the world have lifted these limitations.

21 The law also lists the two statuses.

22 Things have been changing recently, in that some tens of thousands refugees are promised to be resettled in the United States of America. However, the tens of thousands of refugees admitted is incomparably smaller to the millions that are in their region of origin, between Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, all countries that display a level of economic (and otherwise) development inferior to the former (Morello, 2016).

Returning to Tolay's question: Had the main countries played a more robust role (USA, EU, and Turkey in our case) in tackling the crises based on shared values of humanitarian concern, would that have best served the Syrian humanitarian crisis? In an ideal world it would have. However, in the non-ideal world, in which states (typically) act on humanitarian concerns (only) when it is also in their own interest to do so, her suggestion would remain a moral one, which, as a policy recommendation, it might fail to motivate a state's actions.

The same goes for the burden sharing justice-claim, which Turkey might legitimately hold against Western states: It would perhaps help worse-off states if the burden were fairly shared between states, and therefore, contingently it would have helped refugees, who would receive better assistance from better equipped countries with affluent economies. In the European case described, shared values antagonizing communism fueled a great amount of intra-European collaboration, which made that regional model efficient. But this was also the case because the number of refugees was smaller. We do not have enough evidence to show that Western countries currently have similar antagonizing attitudes toward the conflict in Syria that displaces Syrians. Even if this were the case, morally, these hypothetical shared interests are too far from the ideal of states being mobilized by the primary humanitarian concern of refugees. As argued before, states' acting on shared values is, and has historically been compatible with actually remaining indifferent to refugees' destiny (or at least to some of them, discriminating based on one's region), as the European case has proved toward refugees outside of Europe.

A Third Way

In light of the brief assessment of the Syrian refugee crisis and the main issues at stake, it seems that for states to act in the most morally desirable way, we might persuade them in doing so with other means than recommending them a policy driven primarily by moral concern toward the humanitarian crisis. In order to achieve this goal, which as stated above, I support as the ultimate *moral desideratum*, we might recommend to states those policies that are good for their own citizens, bearing in mind what it is good for the refugees. Due to space limit, I have provided a few examples to illustrate the idea.

Firstly, I criticized İçduygu's position for not distinguishing between the *legal* and *public* definition of the Syrians' temporariness on the territory of Turkey. This is a mistake because UNHCR reports declare that Syrians will not be able to return to their home country in the near future. A state genuinely operating on the mistaken premise that a few million refugees currently living in its territories are a temporary issue for its country is operating politically on an assumption that might prove

counterproductive in several ways.²³ Firstly, it carries pernicious implications for refugees, as they are themselves finding precarious solutions for living and traveling to countries where they want to settle, before those countries have even made plans to settle and accommodate them.

However, it is also bad because, due to the assumed temporariness, there will not be a plan of *integration* for the refugees in Turkey, and neither for those who make the dangerous crossings to Europe. While states hope that the *temporariness* on which they operate will reach an end, refugees will be left in a state of *limbo*, which is recognized as a human right violation. These arguments, morally compelling in their demand for better and faster humanitarian intervention, would even lead to stronger policy recommendations if they are also proven to counterproductively affect citizens. One might claim that citizens' taxes are wasted in the economically amiss planning of temporary shelters falling apart before completing their task, in useless fences built at the borders to keep refugees outside, etc. Based on the fact that they are *temporarily* residing on its territory, states might not provide Syrians the right to work, thereby adding to the demand of social welfare to support families who have no chance to work legally to support themselves.

Secondly, another way to phrase the humanitarian concern into policy recommendations is to say that many countries, such as the United States²⁴ or Canada have historically benefited from waves of migration and refugees, becoming some of the most flourishing countries that we know currently. The argument might be phrased in terms of *instrumentality*, by which I mean to say that it is not *bad* (understood as economically disadvantageous) for countries to receive refugees, that it has not been bad historically, and that it might be beneficial in many important ways in the long

23 The claim that Turkey may *de facto* operate on the mistaken assumption of “temporariness” may be problematic in light of the most recent developments of the discourses and policy making around the refugee crises in Turkey (see Chemin & Gokalp-Aras, 2017). The authors argue that Turkey seems to be shifting, as of 2016, its policy toward permanent integration of Syrians, by offering citizenship to those currently on the territory. If Turkey does offer, as it recently claims, citizenship to Syrian refugees currently under temporary protection, it invites serious assessment, which – in taking into account the current theoretical recommendations in this article – will have to consider the following: (1) whether such step is genuinely motivated by the *moral desideratum* – that is the primary concern of humanitarian aid; or reasons that might exacerbate the vulnerability of refugees, situations, e.g. placing them in a situation of “the tyranny of the majority over minorities,” as J.S. Mill’s (1999) quote is appreciated. Offering citizenship without *the factio* rights and protections may be the wrong instrument if it results in exacerbating conditions of life that are knowingly precarious for refugees, or change nothing in terms of their basic human rights protection; (2) whether this policy is in the interest of citizens, that is, it is not politically instrumental in benefitting a particular group of people, such as a political party (against the interest of citizens, or many of them), or a group of interest, such as an economic group by exacerbating the position of other citizens, e.g. the poorer classes who may be dispossessed of already meager conditions of employment and rights, (see Fine & Sangiovanni, 2014). The normative assessment will further have to rely on empirical knowledge of the case and its effect on both citizen and refugees’ lives. This assessment is best appreciated in full detail in a future occasion, as it surpasses the scope of this article.

24 Pope Francis’ discourse in the United States’ Congress: “As the son of an immigrant family, I am happy to be a guest in this country, which was largely built by such families” (Baker & Yardley, 2015).

term. If this argument strikes as plausible, one should advocate policy integrating the newcomers as quickly as possible, enabling them to work and properly live in the host society, to produce and flourish instead of leaving them in administrative limbos or restricting their entrance altogether.

These examples may provide good incentives²⁵ for states to act both in their own interests and toward alleviating the humanitarian crisis. We are familiar with the limitations of instrumental arguments, but this is why I have advocated maintaining the ideal moral desideratum to address the crisis more seriously while also advocating policies in the best interests of a specific country. My proposal therefore heads in the same direction of the *moral desideratum* (2), albeit with different measures.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have conceptualized the Syrian refugee crisis as a typical case of engineered regionalism, according to which most refugees seek and receive some form of asylum (often temporary) in the region of their origin. From a comparative perspective between the European regionalism (late 1940-1960) and the contemporary Syrian case, the latter case is significantly different in terms of the magnitude of the phenomenon of displacement of individuals (within few years, it had become the biggest refugee crisis after World War II [UNHCR, 2015]).²⁶ Due to the strong restrictions placed by the “iron curtain” in the European case there was little East-West migration of Geneva Convention refugees. With the European and the contemporary Syrian cases in mind, I argued that contemporary states should respond to the crisis in accordance with the following *moral desiderata*: (1) share the intake of refugees between states in a fair manner and (2) act motivated primarily by moral concern toward the humanitarian crisis. However, states might not seek morality, unless it is shown to them that acting on the moral desiderata also benefits citizens. For example, a Syrian refugee having the right to work will allow him the ability to contribute socially and economically to the society as a whole (through paying taxes and putting his skills, talents, etc to use), while also supporting his family. Finally, social scientists, being backed with empirical evidence, are better equipped than philosophers to advance with more precision descriptive claims regarding the benefits of absorbing refugees. A constructive contribution to understanding complex scenarios such as humanitarian crisis, like the Syrian case, may therefore invite pragmatic fact-dependent concerns into normative reasoning. This paper has critically assessed the underlying normative assumptions currently populating the policy debate, without which contribution it would have remained vague as to which policy path we should privilege and why.

²⁵ It is assumed that legitimate states act on their duty to serve citizens' interest.

²⁶ The main reason behind the spike in refugees (up to a current worldwide total of 60 million) is four years of brutal war in Syria.

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Akdeniz Havzasında Soykırımcı Niyetin Kanıtı Olarak Mültecilerin Dramı: Bosna, Kıbrıs, Irak, Libya ve Suriye Üzerinden Zorunlu Göçü Yorumlamak*

Hannibal Travis^a

Öz

Uluslararası toplum, 1980'lerden bu yana giderek artan bir şekilde çeşitli toplulukların evlerini terk etmeye zorlanmalarını, güvenlik riski şeklinde değerlendirdikleri için bu durumu “soykırım” olarak kınamaya başladı. İran'ın Bahailere yönelik eylemleri, BM soykırım araştırma komisyonu tarafından soykırım olarak sınıflandırılan eylemler içerdiğinden 1980'lerde kınanmıştır. Diğer kitlesel mülteci göçleri, zaman zaman soykırım olarak tanımlanmış, bazılarında filli olarak da müdahale edilmiştir. Örneğin Hindistan'ın Doğu Pakistan'daki Bengallilere ve Hindulara yapılanları soykırım ilan etmesi, Vietnam'ın komünist Kamboçya'da yaşananlar için soykırım ilan etmesi bunlar arasında sayılabilir. 1992'den itibaren, Türkiye ve diğer Doğu Akdeniz ülkeleri Bosnalı Sırp'ları ve Sırp'ların Bosnalı Müslümanlara karşı “etnik temizlik” politikalarını “bir çeşit soykırım” olarak eleştirmeye başladılar. Boşnakların Sırp'lar tarafından soykırıma uğradığı suçlaması, askeri müdahaleyi doğurmuştur. Bu makale, uluslararası hukukun zorla göç ettirilenlere yönelik muameleyi tanımladığı kavramlarla başlamaktadır. Daha sonra, savaş zamanlarında veya ulusal güvenliğe yönelik diğer tehditler söz konusuysa soykırımcı niyet hukukunu ele almaktadır. Bu makalenin temel tezi, yargı mercilerinin, Eski Yugoslavya Uluslararası Ceza Mahkemesinin içtihatlarını Doğu Akdeniz mültecilerine soykırım yapılmasını engellemek üzere uyarlanabilecekleri şeklindedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Soykırım • Mülteciler • Mahkemeler • Bosna Hersek • Irak • Suriye

* Bu çalışma 2015 yılında İstanbul İsveç Araştırma Enstitüsü tarafından İsveç Büyükelçiliğinde düzenlenen “Forced Migration & Resilience: Past & Present in the Mediterranean” başlıklı konferansta sunulmuştur.

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The Plight of Refugees in the Mediterranean Basin as Evidence of Genocidal Intent: Interpreting Forced Migration from Bosnia, Cyprus, Iraq, Libya, and Syria*

Hannibal Travis^a

Abstract

Since the 1980s, it has become increasingly common for members of the international community to condemn as “genocide” such policies as forcing communities to flee their homes because they are seen as a security risk. The treatment of the Baha’i by Iran attracted condemnation during the 1980s that included such acts to be classified as genocide by a UN-commissioned study on genocide. Other mass refugee exoduses resulted in occasional recognitions of genocide, including some resulting in action, such as India’s declaring a genocide of the Bengalis and Hindus in East Pakistan, and Vietnam’s declaring a genocide in communist Cambodia. Starting in 1992, Turkey and other Eastern Mediterranean powers began to criticize Bosnian Serb and Serbian policies of “ethnic cleansing” against Bosnian Muslims, declaring them to be a “form of genocide.” The condemnation of the Bosnian Serbs for having committed genocide led to military intervention. This paper begins with concepts defined by international law and used to address the treatment of forced migrants. It then describes the law of genocidal intent during times of war or other threats to national security. Its thesis is that courts could utilize the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to apply the proscription against genocide to the plight of refugees from the Eastern Mediterranean.

Keywords

Genocide • Refugees • Tribunals • Bosnia • Iraq • Syria

* An earlier version was presented by remote Internet link to “Forced Migration & Resilience: Past & Present in the Mediterranean,” a conference held at the Swedish Research Institute Istanbul, Consulate General of Sweden, April 2015.
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In 2015, published photographs depicting Syrian refugees dying en route to Europe “shocked the world,” especially those taken of the young boy Aylan Kurdi, who had been washed onto a beach after the boat carrying him, his brother, and his mother capsized (Açikgöz, 2015; Walsh, 2015). For some commentators, the Kurdi family’s tragic end underlined the callousness and insularity of “fortress Europe,” a secure zone for which the Mediterranean and the Eastern European countries served as a buffer against both refugees and persons fleeing poverty and disease (Açikgöz, 2015). Previously, the Channel Tunnel camps in northern France, the annual death toll due to migrants’ boats capsizing on the high seas, and similar episodes told the same tale. To others, it recalled encounters with the representation of genocide in Bosnia, Rwanda, or Sudan (Conley, 2015).

Syrian refugees are among the more recent of many waves of flight from conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean¹ basin. Prior to 2003, the Balkans, Cyprus, and the Palestine were prominent as sources of refugees. Palestinians found themselves as the most controversial refugees at the international level with Palestinian militant groups being seen as among the most threatening until the Balkan Wars of 1991-1999 (Weiner, 1997, p. 1). Cyprus represented the largest “internal displacement problem in Europe,” though it was actually a refugee crisis given the occupation of half of the island for decades (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, 2005; Sert, 2010, p. 239). The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, in pursuing a policy of “division ... along ethnic lines” (Sert, 2010, p. 250), refused to allow displaced Greek Cypriots to return to their homes. According to the Republic of Cyprus, almost 80% of privately owned land in northern Cyprus was taken from Greek Cypriots (Sert, 2010, pp. 248–252; see also, Tsilas, 1997, p. 1602).² The Balkan displacement crisis led to Security Council resolutions and military intervention aiming not only to forestall breaches of the international peace in Germany, Hungary, Macedonia, or other neighbors of Yugoslavia, but also to encourage international criminal tribunals to punish genocide (Travis, 2017). The top three source countries for asylum-seekers in the early 2000s were Iraq, Turkey, and Yugoslavia (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005, p. 11).

Countries in the Eastern Mediterranean basin also serve as reluctant host countries for refugees in many instances. The twin humanitarian crises of Darfur and Iraq took place between 2004 and 2010; the latter crisis, to which President George W. Bush and other world leaders failed to respond (Eshoo, 2007), had some 2.5 million displaced persons inside the country by 2007. At the center of the Eastern Mediterranean

1 The Eastern Mediterranean region often includes Cyprus, Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, while the Eastern Mediterranean basin extends further, including the neighbors of these countries as far east as Iran and Afghanistan, as far west as the Balkans, and as far south as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Yemen.

2 Turkey alleged that the Greek Cypriots committed genocide against the Turkish Cypriots, necessitating military intervention to protect the Turks on the island, dozens of whom had been killed in 1974. Turkey may be the only country to recognize the TRNC (Papadakis, 2014, p. 127).

region, Greece did not always treat Iraqi refugees according to the most idealistic international norms, with secret returns of migrants to Turkey and puncturing of rubber boats being among the charges leveled by [Human Rights Watch \(2008, pp. 3–4\)](#). The U.S. administration persuaded many American judges that Iraqi asylum-seekers had little to fear from being returned to Iraq, a democratic and freedom-loving state post-2003 ([Travis, 2009b, pp. 1007–1060](#)). Israel, despite its own history as a nation partially founded by refugees, faced criticism over its treatment of refugees from Darfur, whose people were suffering genocide ([Derfner, 2008](#); [Furst-Nichols & Jacobsen, 2011, pp. 55–56](#)). Meanwhile, Egypt used live ammunition to kill “several hundred migrants” ([Furst-Nichols & Jacobsen, 2011](#)).

There is an emerging nexus between refugee exoduses in the Eastern Mediterranean basin, and the pursuit of justice for atrocities by international criminal tribunals. As described below, a UN-backed tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has articulated in some detail the elements of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, which although having been on the books, were somewhat dormant since the abandonment of most trials of Nazis and their collaborators in the early 1950s. The displacement of two million or more persons from the Darfur region of Sudan led to a Security Council referral of the situation in Sudan to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the spring of 2005, and a warrant for genocide in 2010 naming the president of Sudan as a suspect ([ICC, 2010](#)). Surveying a variety of sources, Prunier estimates that at least 280,000 deaths occurred due to flight from and killing in Darfur from the summer of 2003 to January 2005 ([Prunier, 2008, pp. 135–152](#)). However, most victims of the Darfur conflict were not immediately massacred. Instead, many succeeded in surviving direct attacks on themselves and their villages, only to die as a result of exposure, hunger, or disease during their flight. Such events, then, raise questions of partial genocide ([ICC, 2010](#)). The Iraqi High Tribunal, meanwhile, convicted an aide to President Saddam Hussein for the mass killings and widespread displacement of Kurds during the late 1980s in particular.

When refugees flee their homes and homelands, questions often arise as to whether international criminal tribunals should be convened and whether outside intervention is needed to return them to their communities or to relieve their suffering in the places where they temporarily reside ([United States Department of State, 1995, pp. 9–18](#)). Sometimes, however, scholars view deportation and forced migration as being incompatible with such crimes as genocide or war crimes. Some scholars argue that allowing members of the victim group to survive, even if they must start new lives somewhere else, prevents a finding of genocidal intent ([De Waal, 2009](#)). Turkish officials and sympathetic foreign writers have claimed that late Ottoman massacres and deportations of Armenians and Assyrians were justifiable on national security grounds or due to the exigencies of war, while writers have made similar observations

about the plight of Iraqi Assyrian refugees in 1933 ([Republic of Turkey, 2014](#); [Republic of Turkey, General Staff, 2007](#); [Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007](#)).³ The British government accepted this argument in both cases. Initially, the British government defended the conduct of the Iraqi army against international condemnation in 1933 and made analogous remarks in relation to the conduct of the Ottoman army in 1915 with respect to Armenians ([Malek, 1935](#); [Robertson, 2014](#)). Although there was no standing international criminal tribunal in 1915-1920, the French proposed “exemplary punishment” of 896 figures who violated the laws and customs of war, including Field Marshal Liman von Sanders for “Armenian and Syrian massacres” ([The Trial of German Officers, 1920](#)).

Since the 1980s however, it has become more common for members of the international community to condemn as “genocide” such policies as forcing communities to flee their homes because they are seen as a security risk. The treatment of the Baha’i by Iran and the Iranian Kurds by Iraq attracted condemnation during the 1980s ([U.N. Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights, 1985](#); [United Nations Security Council, 1985](#)). Starting in 1992, Turkey and other Eastern Mediterranean powers criticized Bosnian Serb and Serbian policies of “ethnic cleansing” against Bosnian Muslims as a “form of genocide” ([United Nations Economic and Social Council-Commission on Human Rights, 1992](#); [United Nations General Assembly, 1992](#); [United Nations Security Council, 1993b](#)).

This research note begins with concepts defined by international law to address the treatment of forced migrants. It then describes the law of genocidal intent during times of war or other threats to national security. In judicial opinions arising out of prosecutions for genocide against the Bosnian Muslims, Darfurian non-Arabs, and Iraqi Kurds, judges have analyzed genocidal intent by examining evidence of massacres, rapes, forcible deportation, area bombardment, and deprivation of property. The methodology of international law is to gather evidence of such destructive and discriminatory acts, using them as a basis to infer genocidal intent, to declare an international crime, and to plan efforts to prevent or punish its commission or recurrence.

The Eastern Mediterranean illuminates not only several aspects of the various concepts of genocide, but also of genocidal intent. First, since genocidal intent does not necessarily entail total extermination, it is a legal concept that covers many instances of the refugee experience. Second, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) has regarded forced migration itself as a key marker of genocidal intent when peoples are removed from their habitual homelands. Third, the Arab Spring is bringing about a pervasive crisis of forced migration. Finally, both the politics of the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader European and western Asian

3 See also ([McCarthy, 2010, p. 111, 138–139, 172, 188, 236–242](#); [McCarthy, 2000](#)).

environment are blocking a similar response to the crisis of widespread displacement of peoples that the international community extended to Bosnia.

One aim of this article is to connect the seemingly distinct narratives of refugee flight from conflict zones, such as Syria, and of persecution by groups such as the Islamic State and *al Qaeda*. Another aim is to engage in a detailed exploration of when and under what conditions refugee flight from the Eastern Mediterranean basin may justify the United Nations or a penal tribunal to declare genocidal intent.

Literature Review

This section attempts to explain certain concepts used by international jurists to describe and redress the plight of refugees and other displaced people. The methodology of international law is to develop concepts defining a type of crime or a category of right or wrong so as to respond to transnational dangers. Some of the key concepts in this area include refugees, crimes against humanity, and genocide, with sources of international law defining these concepts. The methodology of studying problems using notions related to international law is to develop principles and practices from these concepts, such as the prohibition of forcing refugees to return to countries where they fear persecution or do not enjoy state protection, or the principle of *non-refoulement*, with which to address contemporary global issues. This article will necessarily depart from a focus on the Eastern Mediterranean, at least temporarily, in order to explore the origins and meanings of some of these concepts.

Refugees/*Muhajirs*

Protestant Calvinists and Huguenots fleeing Catholic regimes to more tolerant mixed or Protestant societies in the sixteenth century led to the popularization of the word “refugee” (Zolberg, Surhke, & Aguayo, 1989, pp. 5–9). An estimated 200,000 to 1.2 million persons fled their communities as a result of religious persecution (Norwood, 1969, p. 31, 51). Other notable refugee populations included Jewish refugees from Catholic Spain during the Age of Discovery, refugees from nineteenth-century Eastern European pogroms, Catholic refugees from Tudor England, Jewish refugees from Nazi-era Europe, Palestinian refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars with Israel, and refugees from communism (Basri, 2003, p. 656; Guilday, 1914; Kamm, 1986, p. A11; Norwood, 1969, pp. 13–25).

In the Eastern Mediterranean basin, a series of related refugee exoduses occurred at the intersection of the Russian-Ottoman and British-Ottoman spheres of influence. Since around 2004, Russian archival documents and other evidence of more than 500,000 Circassian and other Caucasian Muslims’ deaths resulting from violence or flight have led to discussions of genocide (Shenfield, 2006). According to post-

1870 censuses of the Ottoman Empire however, many of the Circassians that some scholars had assumed must have died at Russian hands may have been among the two million refugees that fled from the Caucasus to the Ottoman Empire (Karpas, 1978, p. 246; 1985, pp. 65–69; Shaw, 2008, p. 1026).

In the 1920s, the major powers created new institutions to deal with refugees from World War I and its aftermath, with the Office of the League’s High Commissioner having an initial focus on Russian and Armenian refugees that, over time, led to a mandate to aid Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean, Greek, Bulgarian, and Turkish refugees (Travis, 2009b, p. 1009, 1011). World War II caused an even larger displacement of populations, leading to the “Refugee Convention” of 1951 (United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, p. 150), which defined a refugee as a person displaced from his or her country who was either unwilling or unable to return as a result of events occurring before January 1, 1951 due to “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion...” (Feller, 2001, pp. 129–130).

International law has three principal sources: (1) state practice stemming from a sense of international obligation to create customs, (2) treaties and other international agreements, and (3) general principles of law common to civilized courts (United Nations, 1945, annex, Art. 38(1); Brownlie, 1990, p. 3; Jennings & Watts, 1992, p. 24). A refugee is identifiable with reference to the concept of “persecution.” The term “persecution” is defined broadly so as to include not only risks or dangers to a person’s life, freedom, property, or political rights due to a state’s or state-like actor’s actions against that person, but also failures to protect him or her from such risks (Kugelman, 2011). Asylum is typically a longer-term status of protection than refugee status, which is reducible in principle, if not in practice, to protection from involuntary return (*refoulement*) to the state where an individual is unprotected or fears persecution (Kugelman, 2011).

Crimes against Humanity Such as Ethnic Cleansing, Extermination, and Deportation

In the 1990s, the concept of “ethnic cleansing” gained currency as shorthand for the process by which intimidation is used to push ethnic or religious groups out of cities or regions within countries. A report to the Security Council in 1994 described the concept as “relatively new” but particularly useful to describe the plight of Bosnian refugees and internally-displaced persons (United Nations Commission of Experts to the Security Council, 1994, pp. 55–56).

In 1998, the international community moved to systematize crimes against humanity. Apartheid, slavery, and torture were included, while the use of nuclear weapons and colonial wars were not (Cassese, Gaeta, & Jones, 2002). Extermination and persecution

are particularly important war crimes from the standpoint the plight of refugees, for they have been applied by international criminal tribunals addressing mass displacement from Nazi-occupied Europe, the former Yugoslavia, and the Darfur region of Sudan (Jurdi, 2013, p. 205). The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia ruled that terrorization of the civilian population, i.e. targeting of the civilian population with acts or threats of violence accompanied by discriminatory intent and the purpose of spreading terror, constituted a crime against humanity requiring persecution, while ethnic cleansing entailed the discriminatory removal of an ethnic, racial, or religious group from a region by means of a widespread or systematic attack upon them (Jurdi, 2013, p. 43).

In the Eastern Mediterranean basin, crimes against humanity took place in several waves. In addition to the Circassian and Ottoman Muslim experience of flight from Russia and the Balkans before 1914, Britain, France, and Russia condemned “all the members of the Turkish government” for the Armenian “massacres” occurring in 1915, deeming them to be “crimes against humanity and civilization” (Bassiouni, 2008, p. 440). In 1919, Britain detained Marshal Liman von Sanders for crimes against Armenian and Assyrian Christians, later releasing him without holding a trial (Brown & Brown, 1919).

Between 1925 and 1938, Turkey’s campaigns against Kurdish separatism resulted in the death or disappearance of up to 250,000 Kurds, although European and local Kurdish estimates were much lower (van Bruinessen, 1994, pp. 166–169, 180–181). In 1933-1934, Iraq’s army and allied Kurdish forces massacred thousands of Assyrians and drove the autonomy-minded indigenous Christians out of the country and often out of the entire region (Donabed, 2015). In the 1950s and 1960s, Turkey’s persecution of Greeks living in Istanbul and northern Cyprus displaced the vast majority of Greeks from these areas, which probably included more than 200,000 people (Human Rights Watch, 1992, pp. 5–9; Skenderis, 2004, pp. 1599–1605).

Between 1960 and 1990, Iraq’s army and internal-security forces destroyed hundreds or thousands of villages located in the northern part of the country and in the vicinity of the Kurdish Democratic Party’s territory, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan insurgency, and where military operations by Kurdish forces alongside the Islamic Republic of Iran had taken place. Estimates of the dead and of those who disappeared ranged up to 200,000 Kurds and 20,000 Assyrians (van Bruinessen, 1994, pp. 180–181). Turkey’s conflict with Kurdish sympathizers of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party which included the air-bombing of villages that resulted in up to 40,000 deaths as well as two million persons from the Kurdish-dominated southeastern region being displaced from 1980 to 2010 (International Crisis Group, 2011, p. 1).⁴

⁴ Similar figures have been cited in *The Economist* (“Can Kurds and Turks Settle?” 1998, p. 44), the *Congressional Record* (Rossides, E., & American Hellenic Institute, 1998, p. H27687), the reports of Human Rights Watch (1995; 1999), and reports by the United States Department of State (1993, pp. 933–934).

The Arab Spring ushered in a somewhat smaller wave of mass displacements and killings than those which had occurred in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. In addition to one in eight Libyans fleeing either the civil war, foreign-backed opposition attacks on civilian communities, or the U.N.-backed aerial bombardment of Libya by NATO and Arab League forces in 2011, up to 50,000 Libyans were killed in the conflict (Gardane, 2011; Travis, 2013, pp. 104–106, 132; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2011, p. 21). Turkey, after having condemned its own nationalist and Kurdish rebels as “terrorists” on many occasions, was a key supporter of the Libyan rebellion (Travis, 2013, p. 105). After protests of the Syrian regime and the ensuing conflict with rebels, terrorist forces, and defecting army units, the government of Syria responded with aerial bombardment, artillery, torture, and possibly death squads, leaving millions of people displaced (Associated Press, 2012; United States Agency for International Development, 2014, p. 1). Tens of thousands were violently killed in Syria as foreign-backed Sunni Arab extremist rebels fought government and allied Lebanese and Iraqi Arab forces (Draitser, 2015; International Crisis Group, 2012, 2014; Peace Association of Turkey and Lawyers for Human Rights, 2015; Sadat, 2015).⁵

Genocidal Intent

This section addresses whether the requirement of an “intent to destroy,” rather than an “intent to displace” as per the terms of the Genocide Convention, is inconsistent with viewing the plight of refugees as evidence of genocidal intent. Raphael Lemkin and the other drafters of the Genocide Convention set the stage for the jurisprudence of the international criminal tribunals, due in part to their study of the Armenian and Assyrian refugee plight in the post-World War I era (Travis, 2010, pp. 27–31). Article II (b) and II (c) of the Genocide Convention define as genocidal acts not only the infliction of serious bodily or mental harm on members of an ethnic or religious group, but also the deliberate imposition of such conditions that will lead to the destruction of its members (Travis, 2010, 56–57).

The “intent to destroy” required by the Genocide Convention was not analyzed as carefully on its own terms prior to the 1990s as it is today. The founder of the Genocide Convention, Raphael Lemkin, tended to infer genocidal intent not only from a racial or religious animus, but also from genocidal acts themselves (Travis, 2010, pp. 27–31). He spoke of genocides during the persecution of Christian sects by the Roman Empire and by the Holy Roman Empire, even during episodes of selective killing, more similar to Ottoman-era massacres of the Tiyari tribe of Assyrians in the 1840s or the Adana massacre in 1909, than to the events of 1915 (Travis, 2010, pp. 27–31). In writing of the Native Americans, Lemkin inferred genocidal intent from

⁵ Various sources attribute a death toll of more than 150,000 in the conflict to unscientific reports by “activists” (Novosti, 2014; Surk, 2014).

the removal of natives from their lands, confining them in close quarters, taking away their children, and exposing them to disease (Docker, 2004). In speaking of genocide perpetrated by communists in the 1950s, Lemkin emphasized that selective attacks on priests and the kidnapping of non-communist children were genocidal (Gigliotti, 2015, pp. 46–47; Weiss-Wendt, 2005, pp. 551–559). Lemkin, therefore, did not limit “intent to destroy” to total destruction, such as the Jewish Holocaust.

The intent of the Nazis towards the Jews was, of course, emblematic of genocidal intent as the Genocide Convention was drafted. The German invasion and occupation of Poland killed at least three million non-Jewish Poles, including nearly 60% of Poland’s lawyers, 45% of its doctors and dentists, 40% of its professors, 30% of its technicians, and 30% of its clergy (Crowe, 2001, p. 34; Katz, 1989, p. 148), in addition to three million Jewish Poles. As the United States declared to the International Court of Justice in 1951, “the extermination of millions of Jews and Poles by the Nazis [was an] outstanding example of the crime of genocide” (International Court of Justice, 1951, p. 25). Regarded by the United States as victims of genocide, the Poles were not totally destroyed. Indeed, some of them even went on to engage in the postwar cleansing of German Poles from their own homes.

Facing more two-sided acts of violence than the events of the Holocaust, the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda defined genocidal intent using a five-factor inquiry or test. The test does not require an announcement or proclamation that a certain group has been or will be destroyed. Instead, intent may be inferred from (1) a context of other crimes against the same group, (2) large-scale killings or other abuses, (3) excluding non-members of a particular group from attack, (4) the number of group members affected, and (5) the political doctrine or derogatory rhetoric motivating the violence (Travis, 2010, p. 80). In the context of displacement to camps, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia [ICTY] has made it clear that genocidal intent could be inferred even when most detainees (and in some cases up to 90%) survived their encounter with hostile Bosnian Serb forces (ICTY, 2001, para. 75; 2005, para. 647–654; 2007, para. 104, 123). The Trial Chamber of the ICTY declared that “the *forced migration of civilians*” could manifest genocidal intent “by the Serbs [sic] to eliminate Muslim control of, and presence in, substantial parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina” (ICTY, 2005, para. 663). The Appeals Chamber clarified that although forced migration without killing would not be enough, the two together could represent the “physical destruction” of a community, thereby constituting genocide (ICTY, 2004, para. 31–33; 2007, para. 123). The “intent to displace” is therefore not incompatible as such with genocidal intent.

The UN Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide applies many of the same factors as the ICTY, leading to warnings of genocide in

situations less extreme than the establishment of hundreds of concentration camps and large death camps as occurred during the Holocaust. This office looks to past discrimination and other human rights abuses against a group, acts such as killing or abductions that divide or target people on ethnic or religious groups, ethnic cleansing, a situation of impunity due to lack of the rule of law or propaganda against a group, the existence of illegal militias, and illegal regime change or other circumstances that could trigger genocide (United Nations Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide [SAPG], 2009, 2010). The special adviser sees a “risk of genocide” in, among other factors, “elements of genocide, such as killings, abduction and disappearances, torture, rape and sexual violence, *ethnic cleansing or pogroms*, or the deliberate deprivation of food” (SAPG, 2010). In examining genocidal intent in particular, the special adviser uses, in part, pervasive or policy-based practices that cause displacement, torture, or killing; ethnic cleansing by means that reveal a plan to violate the social or economic underpinnings of a distinct group; the destruction or targeting of religious or cultural buildings or rituals of a distinct group so as to reveal a policy of decimating the continuity of the group; discriminatory killings of the group’s leaders or its military-aged members of a specific gender, or its children and youth; and other acts or omissions manifesting a strategy of excluding the group from enjoying a social or political role in a country (SAPG, 2009, pp. 15–16). In viewing ethnic cleansing or pogroms as evidence of genocide, the office of the special adviser on genocide opens the door to viewing the plight of refugees as proof of genocide.

Although there were few international genocide trials during the Cold War, it has since become more common to prosecute large-scale ethnic cleansing targeting noncombatants as well as rebel groups as episodes of genocide. Since 1992, international commissions and tribunals have turned their attention to claims of genocide in Bosnia, Kosovo, Sudan, Libya, Palestine, and Syria.⁶ The ICTY clarified that the “systematic expulsion from homes,” a key aspect of the refugee experience, may be a genocidal act and part of the calculus of genocidal intent (Human Rights Watch, 2004; ICTY, 1996, para. 93; 2001, para. 513; 2004, para. 28–57; 2005, para. 624–671). The Security Council, often citing mass displacement as well as violence in Bosnia in 1992–1993 and Kosovo in 1999, referred the situation in Yugoslavia to the ICTY and empowered it to make genocide charges among others (United Nations Security Council, 1993a, 1993c). At that time, the death toll was about 14,000, and there were Croatian Muslim and Bosnian Muslim insurgencies against the federal Yugoslav government, which had been a member State of the United Nations for more than four decades (Rehn, 1996, 1997; Reuters, 1993, p. 77; Sciolino, 1993).

6 See (Associated Press, 2011; International Criminal Court, 2010a, 2009b, 2011; Travis, 2014a; United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, 2009; United Nations Independent Fact Finding Committee on Gaza, 2009; United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 2012; United Nations Security Council, 2005).

The General Assembly emphasized that not only were displaced persons and war victims losing access to water, electricity, fuel, and communication in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but that humanitarian aid was not flowing freely, Sarajevo was under a “siege,” and refugees and displaced persons could not return to their homes (United Nations General Assembly, 1992).

More recent rulings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the ICTY have undermined aspects both of the earlier judgments of the ICTY and of the General Assembly’s 1992 genocide decree. The ICJ determined in 2007 that the intent of the Bosnian Serbs and of the government of Serbia was to partition Bosnia into Bosnian Serb and Muslim-Croat zones, not to eliminate the Bosnian Muslim or Croat groups. Thus, despite considerable displacement, conflict, and atrocities in 1992-1995, no genocidal intent was formed outside of the content of the Srebrenica massacre (ICJ, 2007, pp. 299–308). In 2013, the Appeals Chamber of the ICTY confronted the Bosnian Serb leader’s argument that the ICJ and a variety of ICTY judges had concluded that no genocide had occurred outside of Srebrenica (ICTY, 2013, p. 34). The ICTY found the ICJ ruling not to be binding, deciding that there was ample evidence on which to base a finding of genocidal intent, including evidence that the leader wanted Muslims to “disappear” by a combination of flight, killing, partition, and conversion (ICTY, 2013, pp. 35–39). The Trial Chamber of the ICTY has once again acquitted the leader of the charge of genocide outside of Srebrenica after fuller consideration of the evidence, but this too is subject to appeal (ICTY, 2016). Such rulings by the trial chambers of the ICC and ICTY have repeatedly been reversed in the past, and have been routinely excoriated by scholars (ICTY, 2013, pp. 35–39; Scheffer, 2007, pp. 125–127, 129–130; Travis, 2012). Among other things, there is a contradiction between finding a partial genocide at Srebrenica despite the survival and transportation of women and children and a refusal to find such a partial genocide in other Bosnian, Croatian, or Serbian villages where men were killed and the place was emptied of its originally predominant ethnic or religious component. The rationale for finding no genocide outside of Srebrenica was at least in part that the Bosnian Serbs desired to make peace with the Muslims who had survived the war. Yet, the same might also be said for the surviving women and children of Srebrenica (ICTY, 2016, pp. 1007–1008).

Other tribunals have echoed the ICTY in finding potential “intent to destroy” when most victims were displaced rather than immediately killed. The ICC concluded in 2010 that a warrant for genocide should be issued against the President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, because thousands had been killed and “hundreds of thousands of civilians” had suffered “acts of forcible transfer” within the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa groups (ICC, 2010, pp. 5–8). The Pre-Trial Chamber I of the ICC has explained that damaging the infrastructure needed for survival in a village, while simultaneously resettling other tribes into the homes of its forcibly displaced inhabitants, is “calculated

to bring about the physical destruction of a part of those ethnic groups” inhabiting it (Chetail, 2016; ICC, 2010). Vincent Chetail argues, based on this decision and many others, that forcible displacement “falls under the material element of the crime of genocide by causing serious bodily or mental harm,” and may be intertwined with “physical or biological destruction to such an extent that forced displacement may equally exhibit the genocidal intent” (Chetail, 2016, p. 938, 940). In addition, an Iraqi tribunal led in part by American personnel convened a trial to decide whether genocide had occurred in Iraq (Iraqi High Tribunal, 2007a, 2007b; Scharf & Newton, 2006). The tribunal used evidence of widespread displacement of Iraqi Kurds, as well as evidence of their killing by aerial bombs, chemical weapons, artillery shells, sniper rifles, and other weapons, to find that genocide had occurred (Iraqi High Tribunal, 2007a, pp. 40–43, 63–64; Iraqi High Tribunal, 2007b, pp. 24–27). Neither the ICC nor the Iraqi High Tribunal required total destruction to issue a charge of genocide.

Legal and social-scientific scholars have analyzed ethnic cleansing as evidence of genocide throughout the Eastern Mediterranean basin, arguing that one common thread between the Armenian and Greek plight during and after World War I and the forced displacement of Cypriot Greeks starting in 1974 was targeted rape and sexual assault (Pipinelli & Kalayjian, 2010, p. 310). In the context of rape for purposes of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Bassiouni and Manikas (1996, p. 587) linked this tactic to the possibility of group destruction by interference with procreation (Fournet, 2007, p. 41). Journalists widely reported on the situation in Bosnia as being a worse genocide than the “tribal” struggle in Rwanda during the same era (Macgregor, 2013, pp. 176–177). Shahrazad Mojab (2003, p. 22) argued that genocide occurred when the Iraqi armed forces’ assaults on the Kurdish region caused three million persons to flee toward the mountains and the Turkish border. Mark Levene (1998, pp. 419–421) connected this zone of genocide in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq with the impunity for the genocidal deportations of 1914–1923. According to Mojab (2003, p. 23), “gendercide” in this zone continued under the autonomous Kurdish administration after Iraq was driven out in 1991, characterized by honor killing and gender-based persecution leading to many suicides by self-immolation. Majed El Shafie, an Egyptian-Canadian activist for religious freedom, maintains that in the most recent decade, Iraq has manifested a persistent “culture of impunity” when it comes to violence against Christians, marked by assassinations, kidnappings, deprivation of wealth and property, and massacres, including the killing of more than 50 worshipers at a Chaldean church in 2010, which he visited (2012, part. 82).

This culture of impunity culminated in the attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS, on Yezidis, Christians, Shiites, and moderate Sunni Muslims in 2014–2015, leading to declarations by the European Parliament and the U.S. State Department of an ISIS genocide against Christians, Yezidis, and other ethnic and

religious minorities as persecution emptied communities, nearly destroying entire cultures and ruining cities (Cornwell, 2016; Shea, 2016). Britain, Iraq, France, Russia, Lithuania, and the Vatican also recognized the religious-minority genocide by ISIS (Cornwell, 2016).⁷ In 2015, the Minority Rights Group reported that “executions, forced conversion, rape, sexual enslavement, the destruction of places of worship, the abduction of children, the looting of property, and other severe human rights abuses” were “part of a systematic strategy to remove these [minority religious] communities permanently from areas where they have lived for centuries” (Minority Rights Group, 2015; see also, Recede, 2015; Tony Blair Faith Foundation, 2015).

The Christian population of Syria fell by two-thirds by 2015 and possibly by 80-90% by late 2016 (Knights of Columbus and In Defense of Christians, 2016; Williams, 2016). In 2016, the European Parliament, the Russian Foreign Ministry, the U.S. Congress, and the U.S. State Department declared that Christians and Yezidis suffered genocide in Iraq and/or Syria between 2014 and 2016 (Bacon, 2016; Paraszczuk, 2016; Plis, 2016). Had Assyrian, Mandaean, and Yezidi communities not been targeted on religious grounds, there could have been nearly 2.8 million of their members in Iraq today, rather than the current 700,000 (Travis, 2009a, p. 439, 442–443, 463–464, 466–467; Travis, 2017).⁸ The recognition of this mass exodus as another genocide serves as diplomatic confirmation of the ICTY’s jurisprudence, and of scholarly accounts of genocidal intent.

Social scientists and psychologists/psychiatrists have begun to quantify the mental harm suffered by refugees and displaced-persons, which may be crucial as prosecutors and courts attempt to grapple with charges of genocide by the infliction of serious bodily or mental harm upon group members. In 2007, a study appeared on persons largely displaced from rural northern Iraq to the metropolitan Dohuk area. The authors reported that the population experienced emotional “problems” and post-traumatic stress disorder, which they attributed to the continuing effects of the violence in the early 1990s (Ahmad et al., 2007, p. 6, 21). In 2008, a study of Iraqi refugees in Syria by the UN Refugee Agency indicated that all those surveyed had undergone a traumatic event,

7 See also (Associated Free Press, 2015; BosNewsLife Americas Service, 2016; Geller, 2014; Hall, 2015; Hollande Raises Issue of Christians of Middle East and Armenians, 2015; Paraszczuk, 2016; Republic of France, 2015; Tass Russian News Agency, 2015; Tumenaite, 2015; U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2014 p. 3, para. 6; Yakovenko, 2014)

8 There were an estimated 1.4 million Christians in Iraq in 1984, when the Iraqi population was 50% smaller than it is today (or 15 million versus more than 30 million) (Maddison, 2008). A conservative estimate of the increase in the Christian population absent the targeted persecution that took place would be an additional 600,000, leaving two million today. In fact, there are about 200,000 to 300,000 left in Iraq (Batchelor, 2015; Eshoo et al., 2010). The Yezidi population declined from 500,000 or 600,000 in 2006 to as few as 300,000 in 2014 (Leibovitz, 2014; Travis, 2009a, pp. 463–467; Travis in press). Had this population increased along with the rest of Iraq’s population until 2016, or by about 20%, it would be 100,000 larger today, or about 700,000 strong, leaving a deficit of about 300,000. Iraq’s Mandaean population used to number about 60,000, but has dwindled to less than 6,000. It should have increased 20% to 70,000, leaving a deficit of 60,000.

with 75% knowing a murder or war victim, 72-80% having seen another person be shot or car-bombed, and 77% having experienced aerial bombardment or artillery/rocket fire (Chon, 2008). Another 2008 study tested for violence to family members, finding that one in five Iraqis in Jordan and one in three in Lebanon reported being “subject to, before or while fleeing, direct experiences of potentially highly traumatizing events, including witnessing the assassination of relatives and friends, kidnapping, torture, and rape” (Schinina, Bartoloni, & Nuri, 2008, p. 16). Panic attacks and thoughts of death happened between 40% and 80% of families, depending on whether trauma had been directly confronted by the family (Schinina et al., 2008, p. 84). In a 2010 survey of Iraqis who returned to Baghdad after having fled before 2008, 60% lived in fear of bombings, war, kidnapping, or persecution (Associated Press, 2010). The U.N. Secretary-General observed in 2012 that food, medicine, and fuel for heating homes were in short supply, that more than 40% of hospitals and health centers had been damaged or converted to other uses, and that 2.5 million Syrians were in need of aid (U.N. Secretary-General, 2012). In 2013-2014, the U.N. reported that among Syrian refugees in northern Iraq, patterns of “extensive sexual harassment, intimidation, and threat (perceived or actual) of sexual violence compounded women’s feelings of vulnerability and fear” (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, 2014, p. 6). Many Iraqis and Syrians may eventually die of preventative child or maternal mortality, based on the experience of other countries suffering civil and sectarian wars (United Nations Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs, 2007).

A potentially even more important field of study, which has direct implications for the determination of genocidal intent by judges, involves death tolls from conflict and mass displacement. Crude mortality rates, infant mortality rates, and under-five mortality rates, when combined with population estimates, give rise to excess-death calculations. Research into a variety of instances of conflict-related displacement has recorded crude mortality rates of up to 80 times normal rates (Kelley, 2009, p. 22). In 2004-2005, the journals *Criminology* and *The Lancet* published estimates of hundreds of thousands of deaths in Iraq and Darfur, Sudan, that would not have occurred absent ethnic/religious cleansing and mass displacement (Hagan, Raymond-Richmond, & Parker, 2005; Travis, 2014b, pp. 131–132, 147–148). A variety of other studies have attempted to extrapolate elevated crude-mortality rates, acute malnutrition rates, and child mortality rates in IDP camps in Darfur to the entire Darfuri IDP population, generating estimates of tens of thousands of deaths due to displacement every month (Prunier, 2008, pp. 135–152). By 2008-2010, studies prepared in part for the ICTY estimated up to 305,000 deaths in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the greater region due to elevated mortality rates due to the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, more than three times the count derived by counting victims of violence (Travis, 2014b, pp. 131–132). Similar studies have been done with respect to displacement in/from Kosovo and the Congo (Kinshasa) (Travis, 2014b, pp. 131–132). Such work may aid jurists in

assessing whether government and rebel forces have engaged in killing, the deliberate infliction of substandard conditions of life, and the infliction of serious harm within the meaning of the Genocide Convention.

Directions for Future Research

Four types of juridical methodologies are used today to respond to instances of forced migration both in the Eastern Mediterranean basin and other regions: international criminal law, early warning systems for genocide, refugee and asylum law, and socio-legal approaches to empirical problems in the field. Too often, these methodologies do not refer to one another, causing refugees' plight not to be reflected from the standpoint of survey evidence or asylum law in the work of international criminal tribunals. Future research within these methodologies must improve our understanding of the Eastern Mediterranean region's experience of mass refugee flight. Priorities for research include: establishing thresholds or indicators to assess when ethnic cleansing or forced migration qualifies as genocide, mapping the empirical research dealing with refugee and IDP mortality and trauma onto Article II (b)-(e) of the Genocide Convention, and studying the interconnections among genocides, mass exoduses, and the rise and diffusion of groups like ISIS and *al Qaeda*. Genocidal intent may emerge at the juncture of civil war, deportations, extreme and exclusionary ideologies, and refugee and IDP mortality.

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İstanbul'da Süryani-Suriyeli Mültecilerin Psikososyal, Manevi ve Beden Sağlığı Durumları: Zorluğun Ortasında Direnç Geliştirmek*

Önver A. Çetrez^a, Valerie DeMarinis^b

Öz

Bu çalışma, İstanbul'daki Süryani-Suriyeli mültecilerin ($n = 171$, %70,2 erkek, ortalama yaş 31,08) iki ayrı zaman dilimindeki genel sağlık durumlarını tanımlamayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışmada “Hasta Sağlığı Ölçeği (PHQ)”, “R-COPE Kısa Formu”, “Genel Özyeterlilik Ölçeği (GSE)”, “Connor-Davidson Psikolojik Dayanıklılık Ölçeği (CD-RISC)”, “Birinci Basamak Post Travmatik Bozukluk Ölçeği (PC-PTSD)” gibi ölçme araçları yanında bazı sağlık maddeleri de kullanılmıştır. Daha önce bir çeşit travma geçirmiş katılımcıların %52,4'ünün %23,4'ünde “Travma Sonrası Stres Bozukluğu (TSSB)” kriterleri görülmüştür. Kişinin kendi bedensel sağlık düzeyi ($p < .001$), kendi psikolojik sağlığı ($p < .05$) ve PHQ puanları TSSB ile istatistiksel olarak anlamlıdır. Kadınlar, kendi bedensel sağlıklarını ($p < .01$) ve kendi psikolojik sağlıklarını ($p < .01$) erkeklerden daha kötü olarak değerlendirmişlerdir. Eşleştirilmiş Örneklemeler t -Testi neticesinde, Zaman 1'den Zaman 2'ye Pozitif R-COPE ($p < .08$) için manidar bir artış, Negatif R-COPE için bir azalma ($p < .05$) ve GSE için bir de bir artış ($p < .08$) görülmüştür. Eşleştirilmiş örneklemeler t -Testi, PHQ ($p < .01$) ve GSE ($p < .01$) için anlamlı bir cinsiyet farkı göstermiştir. Sobel Testi kullanan bir arabulucu rolü, pozitif dinî başa çıkma stratejilerinin erkek katılımcıların kendi psikolojik iyi oluşlarına yönelik değerlendirmelerini geliştirerek erkeklerde semptomları azalttığını göstermiştir ($p < .001$).

Anahtar Kelimeler

Süryani-Suriyeli mülteciler • Beden sağlığı • Psikolojik sağlık • Dinî başa çıkma • Travma • İstanbul • Toplum çalışması

* Bu çalışma Uppsala Üniversitesi “The Impact of Religion” Araştırma Programı tarafından kısmen desteklenmiştir.

Bu çalışma 20-23 Ağustos 2015 tarihinde İstanbul'da gerçekleştirilen “International Association for the Psychology of Religion (IAPR)” konferansında sunulmuştur.

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Başvuru: 19 Kasım 2016

Revizyon Gönderimi: 28 Aralık 2016

Kabul: 12 Şubat 2017

Online First: 15 Eylül 2017

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ISSN 2149-4398 • eISSN 2458-8962

DOI 10.12738/mejrs.2017.2.2.0103 • Yaz 2017 • 2(2) • 227–255

A Psychosocial, Spiritual, and Physical Health Study among Assyrian-Syrian Refugees in Istanbul: Cultivating Resilience in the Midst of Hardship*

Önver A. Çetrez^a, Valerie DeMarinis^b

Abstract

This study aimed at describing the general health situation among Assyrian-Syrian refugees (n = 171, 70.2% males, mean age 31.08) in Istanbul, during two separate time periods. Measures included The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ), The Brief R-COPE, The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), The Primary Care Post Traumatic Disorder Scale (PC-PTSD), together with a number of additional health items. The results showed that among the 52.4% of those who were found to have experienced some kind of trauma, 23.4% met the criteria for PTSD. Ratings of one's own physical health ($p < .001$), one's own psychological health ($p < .05$), and PHQ were statistically significant with PTSD. Females rated their own physical health ($p < .01$) and own psychological health ($p < .01$) worse than men. A paired-samples *t*-Test showed a significant increase from Time 1 to Time 2 for Positive R-COPE ($p < .08$), a decrease for Negative R-COPE ($p < .05$), and an increase for the GSE ($p < .05$). A paired-samples *t*-Test showed a significant gender difference for the PHQ ($p < .01$) and GSE ($p < .01$). A mediation model, using a Sobel Test, showed that positive religious coping strategies reduced symptoms in male participants by improving their evaluations toward their own psychological well-being ($p < .001$).

Keywords

Assyrian-Syrian refugees • Psychological health • Physical health • Religious coping • Trauma • Istanbul • Community work

* The preparation of this paper was supported in part by The Impact of Religion research program, Well-being and Health research area at Uppsala University.

An earlier version was presented at "International Association for the Psychology of Religion (IAPR)," a conference held in Istanbul, Turkey, August 20-23, 2015.

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Received: November 19, 2016

Revision received: December 28, 2016

Accepted: January 12, 2017

Online First: September 15, 2017

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ISSN 2149-4398 • eISSN 2458-8962

DOI 10.12738/mejrs.2017.2.2.0103 • Summer 2017 • 2(2) • 227–255

Background

Forced migration places people in terrible situations, often with severe consequences that are felt over several generations. One of the current countries experiencing a devastating war, internal displacement, and forced migration is Syria. At the end of 2015, almost 4.9 million individuals had left Syria (50.3% females), mainly to the neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2016). Another 7.6 million people were internally displaced (IDPs) within the country. Unemployment in Syria is estimated at 54.3% and the consumer price index has increased by 179% since the beginning of the crisis in 2011 (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees & United Nations Development Programme [UNRWA & UNDP], 2014).

Turkey, the main receiving country focused upon in this article, hosts, as of August, 10th 2017, according to the estimates by Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), 3,128,074 Syrian refugees. Another 255,106 Syrian refugees (9.5%) are living in one of the 26 established camps (DGMM, 2017). The majority of refugees live in Istanbul (500,084), Sanliurfa (438,132), Hatay (401,473), and Gaziantep (338,872), the last three cities being in south along the Syrian border. Based on Article 91 of the new asylum law of Turkey, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection adopted in April 2013 and enforced one year later, Turkey officially uses “persons under temporary protection” when referring to Syrian refugees (Ahmadzadeh, Corabatir, Hussein, Hashem, & Wahby, 2014).

Turkey has signed the 1951 Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, ratified in 1962, as well as Protocol 1967, however, with a geographical limitation, officially assuming full legal responsibility for refugees originating in European countries (Çorabatir, 2016). Thus, Syrians can only receive temporary protection in Turkey (Çorabatir, 2016) and are considered as guests and not refugees, which has led to a lack of administrative clarity and a poorly developed integration policy (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2014). AFAD (the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey) initially coordinated all relief efforts in camps. In 2015, although the chief advisor of the prime minister assumed a coordinating role, today the leading role is unclear again (Çorabatir, 2016). According to the new Temporary Protection regulation of 2014, Syrians have a right to receive care, education, seek work, and social support, on condition that they register. However, negative coping methods have increased as their own resources decrease. Such negative coping methods include survival prostitution, informal housing, informal employment, debt, exploitation, abuse, child marriage, and child labor (Ahmadzadeh et al., 2014, Hassan et al., 2015).

Due to the collapse of internal production, increased needs, and security instability (UNRWA & UNDP, 2014), the health concerns for Syrians within the country are large. The health situation of the Syrian refugees in Turkey in particular is a multi-level area of concern, not to mention their educational, work, and settlement needs in their host countries. According to a report by UNICEF, the Regional, Refugee and Resilience Plan for 2015-2016 (2015), the Syrian refugees in Turkish camps have free access to all health-care, while refugees outside the camps have access to primary care, and non-registered refugees can receive acute care, but have to register if they want to continue receiving care. The same report highlights that their mental health and psychosocial issues require increasing attention in view of the fact that these services were already insufficient for the host populations.

In a larger public health perspective, there are many challenges, including gender-based violence, maternal and newborn morbidity, unwanted pregnancies, unprevented or not-treated sexually transmitted diseases, malnutrition among newly arriving refugees, weak mental health, and psychological problems, among others (UNRWA & UNDP, 2014).

Another major public health concern for the refugees relates to work conditions, according to the Regional, Refugee and Resilience Plan for 2015-2016 (UNICEF, 2015). Southeastern Turkey has been for a long time an economically deprived area, and with the new Syrian refugees, a competitive situation has arisen concerning low-paid jobs. Syrians are forced into bad working conditions, without any formal labor rights, earning very low salaries that are often way below the national minimum wage. It is common that salaries are a fifth of what they should be while living costs have doubled. Even child labor exists. Salaries as low as 2.50 USD per day or 250 USD per month are paid to the Syrian refugees, if and when they receive remuneration at all.

Lack of education is of great concern. While more than 576,000 Syrian children (age 6-17) needed to attend school by 2015, only 30% of these children enrolled in some sort of education (UNICEF, 2015).

Naturally, these public health concerns take prominence. However, the public health and public mental health framework used makes a fundamental difference in how initiatives are planned. The framework of public health and public mental health promotion not only investigates problem (risk) areas, but also the areas of potential (protective) areas, especially resilience, understood as self-empowerment, among vulnerable populations (Campion, Bhui, & Bhugra, 2012; DeMarinis, 2014). A public health and public mental health promotion framework incorporates a person-centered approach that understands that resilience is present and can be nurtured in the face of difficult and persistent traumatic experiences on the one hand, and that a holistic approach, including cultural and spiritual assessment, is needed, on the other

(DeMarinis, 2014; Silove, 2013). With this background to the refugee situation in Turkey and neighboring countries, we will now move on to the aims of this study.

Aims

The primary aim of this public health and public mental health promotion study was to understand the self-rated psychosocial, spiritual, and physical health situation of Assyrian-Syrian refugees in Istanbul, at two time periods. The time periods were pre- and post participation, generally spanning two months, in a refugee activity center. The study did not test a hypothesis, but was rather descriptive in nature, as there was and is very limited research on Syrian refugees in Turkey in general, and non-existent with respect to the specific sub-population studied here. The study also aimed to problematize some of the ethical and methodological challenges in conducting this kind of study with such a vulnerable population.

Previous Research

Aziz, Hutchinson, and Malby (2014) studied perceived quality of life of Syrian refugees ($n = 270$) residing in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq using the WHOQOL-BREF, which measures Quality of Life within four dimensions: physical, psychological, social relationships, and environment. A comparison between the Syrian refugees and overall norm data for the WHOQOL-BREF, where the former scored was significantly lower on physical health ($M = 13.26$ against $M = 16.2$), psychological ($M = 12.62$ against $M = 15.0$), and environment ($M = 11.66$ against $M = 13.5$), but significantly higher on social relationships ($M = 15.23$ against $M = 14.7$).

Alpak et al. (2015) studied the prevalence of PTSD and its relation with various socioeconomic variables among Syrian refugees ($n = 352$, 49.1% females, Mean age 37.58, time period in asylum 6.52 months, married 86.4%, high school and university education 18.2%), who have sought asylum in a tent city in Gaziantep, Turkey. Among the participants, 33.5% were diagnosed with PTSD. There were statistically significant correlations between a PTSD diagnosis and gender (46.2% females and 21.2% males), occupation (housewife), previous diagnosis with a psychiatric disorder, having a family history of psychiatric disorder, and the number of traumatic events experienced. However, there were no statistically significant correlations between a PTSD diagnosis and education level, asylum, or time period in the new location.

For the psychological well-being of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, El Chammy, Kheir, and Alaouie (2014) refer to a report by WHO-UNHCR Assessment Schedule of Serious Symptoms in Humanitarian Settings, where 58% had feelings of fear and 56% of hopelessness, whereas 62% were uninterested in things, and 65% were unable to perform essential activities for daily living. The authors also refer to another

study by IMC (2011) showing that refugees report anxiety, feelings of depression, lethargy, eating and sleeping problems, anger, and fatigue, all of which affect family relationships, daily functioning, and health. They also expressed positive coping mechanisms, such as going out, exercising, and playing with one's children.

A review of earlier studies on Syrian refugees (Hassan et al., 2015) highlights mental health disorders and psychosocial distress, such as emotional disorders or problems (including depression, prolonged grief disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder, sadness, fear, frustration, anger, and despair), cognitive problems (loss of control, helplessness), physical symptoms (fatigue, sleeping problems, loss of appetite), and social and behavioral problems (withdrawal, aggression, and interpersonal difficulties). Coping with psychological distress among Syrians occurs primarily in one's circle of family and friends, but may also include strategies such as praying, listening to music, watching TV, drawing, social activities, community activities, talking with trusted individuals, and distraction by keeping oneself busy. Even passive or negative coping strategies are used, such as sleeping, crying, seeking time alone, denial, behavioral withdrawal, smoking, obsessively watching the news, worrying about others in Syria, and becoming angry.

A study by Tufan, Alkin, and Bosgelmez (2013) focused on post-traumatic stress disorder among a mixed asylum and refugee population (though not Syrians) receiving psychiatric and psychological support from a refugee support program in Istanbul between 2005 and 2007. The results revealed that 55.2% scored for PTSD. The authors concluded that uncertainty about the future, periods of detention, extended periods of waiting for processing of their refugee application, and hopelessness increased psychopathology among refugees.

An overview analysis of articles on religious coping during 2005-2010 by Pargament, Feuille, and Burdzy (2011) showed that among the 30 studies reviewed, no studies had been conducted with refugees. Referring to one of these studies (Bradley, Schwarts, & Kaslow, 2005, as cited in Pargament et al., 2011) among 134 African American women with a history of intimate partner violence and suicidal behaviors showed that self-esteem was positively associated with positive religious coping ($r = .21^*$).

The CD-RISC, in its different versions (25, 10, and 2-items), has been used with different populations, though sparingly with refugee populations. The 25-item version was used with adolescent refugees originating from Bosnia, Serbia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Liberia residing in Australia at the time of the study (Ziaian, Anstiss, Antoniou, Baghurst, & Sawyer, 2012) and with Chinese refugees in Hong Kong. Although CD-RISC 2 has not been used with a refugee population, results of other samples reveal a mean ranging from 4.53 to 6.91 with the lower range being

found among PTSD subjects exposed to severe trauma and the highest range being found in a national random sample (CD-RISC, User Guide).

One important notation concerning the studies cited here is that very little information has been included related to methodological and ethical challenges when conducting research among refugees, including research participation problems and ethical responsibilities. This is also one of the aims in this paper, and one means of contributing to the topic of this book on how we approach and work with cases involving migrants and refugees, and especially in forced migration circumstances.

Population

Modern Syria emerged from foreign rule, passing from Ottoman to French rule after World War I and then gaining independence from France in 1946. After a period of political infighting, Hafez al-Assad gained power in 1971. His son Bashar al-Assad succeeded him in 2000. The country consists of many ethnic and religious groups; the main ones being Sunnis, Alawites, Kurds, Assyrians, and Druze. Anti-government protests began in March 2011, and with a violent response by the army, the first refugees began fleeing Syria soon after. Today, many parties are involved in the civil war, including government forces, external countries, Kurdish forces, IS (Islamic State), and other secular and Islamist rebel groups (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015; Thomas Reuters Foundations, 2014).

The Assyrians, who are the study population in focus here, including all linguistic and denominational branches, comprise an indigenous population of north Mesopotamia, around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, scattered between southeast Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Today, they use the Modern Assyrian (Neo-Syriac) language, with dialectical differences in their respective countries. While Ashurism was the old religion of Assyrians, they adopted Christianity early on, today consisting of the Syriac-Orthodox Church, Church of the East, Chaldean Church, Syriac Catholic, and Syriac Protestant. During the latter centuries, the Assyrians have witnessed several genocides, the most severe occurring in 1915 during the fall of the Ottoman Empire. From the 19th century, but mainly in the mid 20th century, a massive emigration by Assyrians to most continents of the world has taken place. The population finds itself in a struggle for survival, facing challenges related to denominationalism, fragmentation, Arabization, and the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, all of which consolidate in a mass migration to the West, and assimilation. Today, more Assyrians live in the diaspora than in their native area. The majority of the Assyrian population is found in Iraq, followed by Syria, United States, Sweden, Lebanon, Germany, Russia, and Iran. Assyrian culture, being formed in the Middle East, was characterized by a collectivistic and patriarchal family structure. However, this is changing rapidly through encounters with Western societies. Endogamy, religious and linguistic

identification, entrepreneurship, and holding a high value on education are among the characteristics of Assyrians (BetBasoo, 2013; Cetrez, 2005; Countries and their Cultures, 2015).

Christian Syrian Refugees have an Infected Historical Relation to Turkey

Even though the refugee camps in southeast Turkey are open for people of different religious backgrounds and despite the fact that a specific part of the camp in Midyat was designated for Christian refugees, the Christian refugees prefer to live outside the camps. The majority of the Christian refugees prefer not to be registered, which limits their possibilities for support in different ways. Two reasons for not registering appear through our interview contacts. First, they have an infected historical relation with Turkey, from which their grandparents fled the 1915 massacres and its consequences. The stories of the genocide and the feeling of distrust and fear are today still vivid among the Christians from Syria (Cetrez, 2017). The Turkish involvement in the Syrian war and the fact that it may be supporting a number of violent groups adds to this suspicion. Second, the Christian refugees have their mind set on Europe or some other western countries, with no vision of returning to Syria, and therefore see Turkey only as a transit country. Many have relatives in Europe and thereby feel a connection to Europeans, whom they identify as also having a Christian cultural background. The number of Christian refugees in Turkey is difficult to calculate, as they do not register and are very transitory.

Initiation of an Activity Center

As researchers working through a public health and public mental health promotion framework including an ethical guideline of benevolence, i.e., giving back to the research participants, we initiated the creation of a multi-function activity center with the refugees. Inspiration for this initiative came from the center component of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Program of UNHCR in Syria (Quosh, 2014). In conversation with community members, mostly Assyrian-Turkish individuals, as well as with the refugees themselves, the idea of finding a way to involve people became an abiding vision. The aim was two-fold: (1) to create a space and provide a support center where the refugees could gather socially and (2) to structure their own activities, such as kindergarten, sports, sewing, school lessons for the children, language courses, cooking, yoga, and art therapy for women groups. Activities were held seven days a week, with some days offering up to three classes. The adult refugees taught the majority of the children's classes, while qualified international student volunteers taught the adult language courses. The refugees named the centre "Qnushyo," meaning gathering or collecting in Syriac (see more in www.qnushyo.com). We anticipated that these activities might have a positive effect on the participants' health and foster resilience in the midst of their hardships. The center

was initially financed by a help organization based in Sweden (Assyrians Without Borders) as well as private donors and all activities were free of charge. Since its inauguration in August of 2014, more than 500 people have passed through the center. Currently, although changing continuously as the refugee situation changes, approximately 150 persons (20 children, 60 youth, and 70 adults) are active to different degrees at the center. By creating an environment where the refugees have become more self-sufficient, organized and engaged, the center has allowed them not only to continue to use their skills, talents, and professions, but also to develop new ones. They have been able to support each other and create both a routine and structure while in a 'transit' period of living.

Method

During 2013 and 2014, we conducted a mixed-method multi-stage design, incorporating qualitative and quantitative techniques, thus increasing the validity and generalizability of the results. Stage 1 included 20 individual (equally divided by gender and age, ranging from 18 to 70 years) and three focus group semi-structured interviews, biographical network maps, and closed-ended instruments. Additionally, we had one interview with a key person providing practical support to the refugees. Based on the selection in Stage 1, the instruments for Stage 2 were decided and a survey was conducted. In Stage 2, a convenience sample was used among the 171 participants attending the center. The survey was distributed among participants at the center before they started activities and again after a two-month period. The validated instruments included have been used in earlier migration research projects. All interviews were conducted at the center in Arabic, Syriac, Turkish, or English, depending on the preference of the participants. As the research team had competency in the relevant languages as well as included well-trained Arabic speaking colleagues, the use of translators was not needed (also recommended by [Hassan et al., 2015](#)). It took an average of 30 minutes to complete the survey. The internal board at the center, consisting of Syrians themselves, was able to assist in organizing the interview hours, informing newly arrived participants about the research project, as well as inform the research team of any specific issues or problems of relevance. The participants at the center lived either in one of the two collective houses for the male youth or in the apartments for families and females. In this article, only the quantitative results are presented. Results from the semi-structured interviewed were deductively analyzed using a software program, while the survey study data was analyzed via SPSS.

Ethical Concerns with Refugee Populations and Ethical Approval

In research where human beings are involved, ethical considerations are important, and perhaps even more so when the population consists of a refugee group with war

trauma experiences. Having used the instruments among other refugee populations in Sweden, the researchers involved in this study have had previous experiences working with similar groups. However, what was new for all of us was the location; here, refugees lived in a transitional space. This challenge required finding a safe environment where the research participants felt unthreatened and comfortable. Another challenge was access to psychosocial counseling support in Arabic when needed. The documentation of material and how it is safely kept were two specific challenges in this kind of fieldwork context. Information about the study and consent were also important aspects before starting the study. As researchers, we needed to be aware of possible risks that the participants might be in or were being exposed to, be they psychological or physical, short or long term.

As in other studies, we formed a written information letter, both in Arabic and English that we shared with each participant before conducting an interview. This was also read aloud for them before the interview. They were informed about the purpose of the study, how the interview was to be structured, the benefits and possible risks of the study, and that the participants could at any moment withdraw from the study without any question or hindrance. The internal board had an important role in safeguarding the participants, informing the researchers in case someone was not feeling well to take part in an interview. The participants were also informed about the level of confidentiality of the study and how the data material was kept, who had access to the material, and how it would be analyzed and presented.

In many studies, it is standard to create a coding list with a name and number that is kept in a special repository. Not feeling comfortable with this however, the research participants in this study did not want a code list to be constructed and kept by the research team outside of their own environment. Instead, a coding list was kept with the refugee center coordinator, who was the only person they felt that they could trust. Thus, as researchers, we had to rely on the coordinator to keep the code list when we had to contact the participants anew. As a result, we only asked for oral consent, which was recorded, before starting the interview. The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed by researchers in the team and kept in a lockable memory stick.

The possible risks identified in this study were the fact that our interview questions may awaken difficult memories among the participants. Such memories could be those of the war or memories of fleeing Syria, which they had tried to forget. With our questions of trauma experiences in the past and challenges during their present vulnerable conditions, it was possible that we might expose them to short term risks. Though we tried to decrease our questions about previous difficulties, we needed to have questions pertaining to experiences of trauma as well as physical

and psychological conditions of themselves and of their children. In order to meet participants' need, one of the local researchers identified a psychiatrist whom the participants could consult after the interview. An interpreter was available for them if needed. Though none of the participants consulted the psychiatrist, it was a service provided without any cost. There were also anticipated benefits for the research participants. Among these was the knowledge gained from the results, which could be shared among the participants as well as used to form specific group and cultural support activities at the refugee center. These activities helped the participants to cope with their daily life as refugees. An ethical application was sent to the Regional Ethical Board in Uppsala, Sweden, and as the study was conducted outside Sweden, the board didn't have any objections to the Swedish led part of the study.

Application Related Instruments and Information in This Study

For the purpose of this study, five validated questionnaires were used to measure the Syrian refugees' health conditions. Included in a single survey to be completed by respondents were the following instruments: The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-15), The Brief Religious Coping Instrument (R-COPE), The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), and The Primary Care Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Scale (PC-PTSD).

The PHQ-15 is a 15-item scale (with item d only for females, thus 14 items for males), ranging from 0: Not bothered at all, 1: Bothered a little, to 2: Bothered a lot, providing a total severity score ranging from 0 to 30. The PHQ-15 is used to assess somatic symptom severity and the potential presence of somatization and somatoform disorder (Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2002). Two of the items assess depression (sleep and tired). Cutpoints 5, 10, and 15 represent mild, moderate, and severe levels of somatic symptoms, respectively. Cronbach's α , a well-known statistic of internal consistency used especially for Likert type rating scales, was calculated to investigate the reliability of PHQ-15. An alpha above .70 is a desired level of reliability, as it is regarded as an indicator of to what extent the items in the scale measure the same construct (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2009). To calculate Cronbach's α in this study, item d was discarded for males. Thus, α was calculated separately for males (14 items) and females (15 items). Note: The internal consistency of the PHQ-15 in this study was acceptable for both gender groups ($\alpha = .87$ for females [$n = 41$] and $\alpha = .85$ for males [$n = 98$], respectively).

The Brief R-COPE instrument consists of seven items, comprising two subscales that measure two patterns of religious coping methods, positive, and negative coping. Additionally, one item measures general religious coping. There is empirical evidence that religious/spiritual methods of coping can affect people's psychological, social, physical, and spiritual adjustment to crisis either positively or negatively

(Fetzer Institute, National Institute on Aging Working Group, 2003). The same report indicates that in times of crisis, people translate their general religious orientation into specific methods of religious/spiritual coping. The items in the Brief R-COPE range from 1: A great deal, 2: Quite a bit, 3: Somewhat, to 4: Not at all. Pargament et al. (2011) describe positive religious coping methods as reflecting a secure relationship with a transcendent force, a sense of spiritual connectedness with others, and a benevolent understanding and dealing with life stressors. They describe negative religious coping methods as reflecting underlying spiritual tensions and struggles within oneself, with others, and with the divine. In this study, the three items of Positive R-COPE scale reflected an acceptable level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$, $n = 143$) Note: For the three item-Negative R-COPE scale, Cronbach's α was much lower than the accepted level of .70 ($\alpha = .30$, $n = 143$). The correlations among the items in the Negative R-COPE ranged between $-.044$ and $.337$, most probably because many participants showed exceptionally strong disagreement with the statements in the Negative R-COPE (4: Not at all).

The GSE instrument assesses a general sense of perceived self-efficacy, with the aim to predict coping with daily hassles as well as adaptation after experiencing all kinds of stressful life events. GSE consists of 10 items, and responses are given on a 4-point scale (from 1: Not at all true to 4: Exactly true), resulting in a final score ranging from 10 to 40. The construct of Perceived Self-Efficacy reflects an optimistic self-belief; i.e., that one can perform a difficult task or cope with adversity in various life situations. Perceived self-efficacy facilitates goal-setting, effort investment, persistence in the face of barriers, and recovery from setbacks (<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~health/engscal.htm>). Note: The internal consistency of the GSE in this study was exceptionally high ($\alpha = .90$, $n = 143$), indicating that the scale reliably measures GSE.

For the CD-RISC 2-item version, each item was scored from 0: Not true at all to 4: True nearly all the time, resulting in a total score ranging from 0 to 8. The scale measures adaptability and the ability to "bounce back." Since the scale contains only two items, Cronbach's α was not an appropriate measure of reliability. One way to assess this particular scale's reliability is to calculate Pearson's r . This approach is akin to a split-half reliability technique. However, this technique underestimates the "true" reliability of the scale, which requires a well-known correction, i.e. Spearman Brown (S-B) correction (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2009). For this reason, both Pearson's r and split-half reliability (with S-B correction) were calculated for the scale.¹ Note: Findings indicated that the correlation between the two items was exceptionally high ($r(141) = .55$, $p < .001$) and that its internal reliability was acceptable (S-B = .71).

¹ See Eisinga, Grotenhuis, and Pelzer (2013) for a comparison of various internal consistency coefficients for two-item scales.

The PC-PTSD (Prins et al., 2003) is a five-item screen designed for use in primary care setting. Items are scored dichotomously (yes or no). Each item links one symptom factor that underlines the construct of PTSD. The items ask about symptoms experienced in the past month that were related to a traumatic event occurring anytime in one's life. The PC-PTSD was adapted and validated by the Unit for Transcultural Psychiatry, Uppsala Academic Hospital, starting with one additional item about the experience of a very difficult situation. A response to PTSD is considered positive only if the participant answers yes to the first item and yes to three of any of the additional four items.

Additionally, participants were asked to respond to two questions on how they viewed their children's physical and psychological health as well as two questions on how they viewed their own physical and psychological health. The scale ranged from 1: Excellent to 5: Poor. One item asked whether they felt safe in their current neighborhood, with answers ranging from 1: Not at all to 4: Much. One item asked what option best described their daily physical activities while another item asked which option helps them to cope with the day-by-day living in Turkey.

Results

The results of this study are presented in tables, using different forms of analyses, frequency, percentages, correlations, *t*-Tests, and regression analyses.

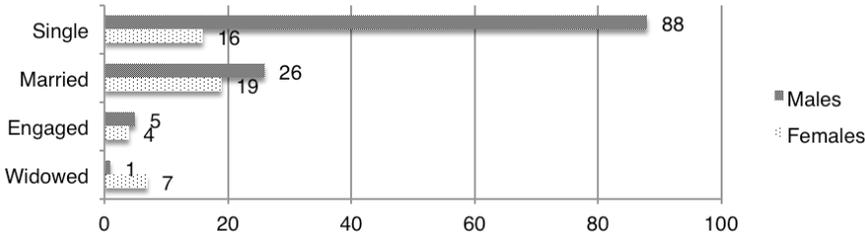
Descriptive Analyses

Table 1
Gender, Age, and Residence Time in Turkey

Variables	n (%)	Mean (SD)	<i>p</i>
Gender			
Female	47 (27.5)		
Male	120 (70.2)		
Age		31.08 (12.99)	< .01
Female		37.21 (16.55)	
Male		28.67 (10.58)	
Residence time in Turkey (months)		3.9 (4.34)	> .05
Female		3.39 (3.62)	
Male		4.10 (4.59)	

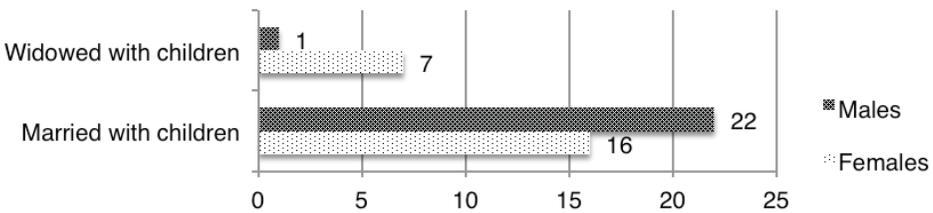
The sample of the study was composed of 171 participants (120 males (70.2%) and 47 females (27.5%). Only four individuals chose not to report their gender (2.3%). Age distribution of the sample indicated that females ($\bar{x} = 37.21$, $SD = 16.55$) were significantly older than males ($\bar{x} = 28.67$, $SD = 10.58$; $U = 3613$, $z = 2.93$, $p < .01$, $r = .23$). Participants' average time of residence in Turkey was 3.9 months ($SD = 4.34$). Both males ($\bar{x} = 4.10$, $SD = 4.59$) and females ($\bar{x} = 3.39$, $SD = 3.62$) were found to have resided in Turkey for a similar period of time ($U = 2655$, $z = -.836$, $p > .05$, $r = .06$).

Table 2
Relationship Status by Gender and Frequency (N = 166)



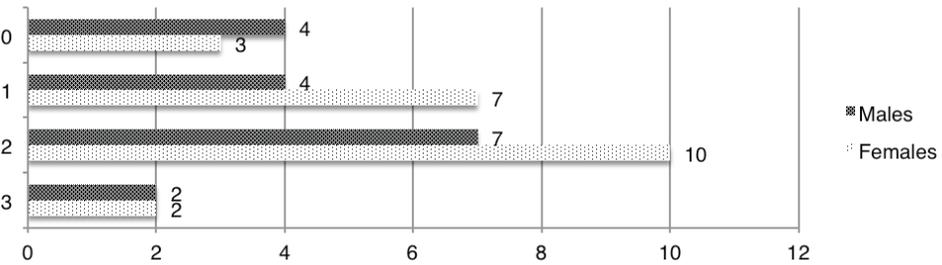
The distribution of relationship status revealed that most of the participants (62.7%) were single. Married individuals were the second most frequently observed category (27.1%), followed by engaged (5.4%), and widowed (4.8%) individuals.

Table 3
Children Status, by Gender and Frequency (N = 46)



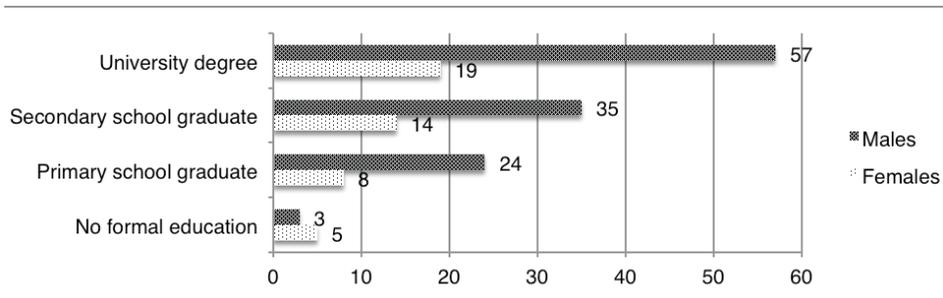
Most of the married participants reported having children (84.4%). All widowed participants reported having children.

Table 4
Number of Accompanying Children, by Gender and Frequency (N = 39)



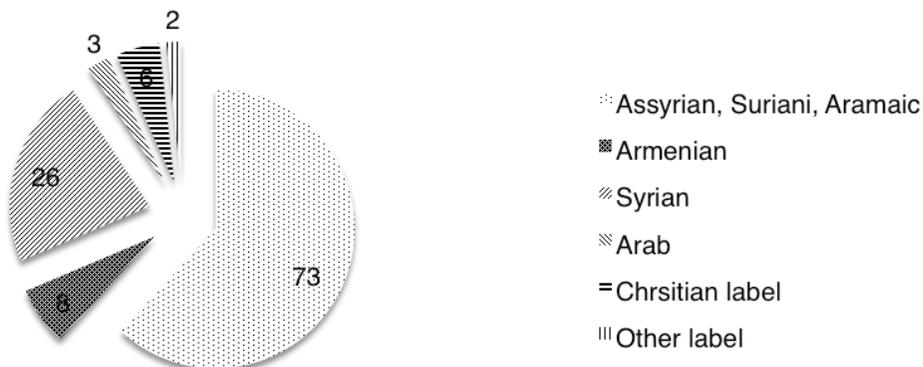
Of the participants who reported having children, 17.1% stated that none of their children were with them, 26.8% were with one child, 41.5% were with two children, 9.8% were with three children, and 4.9% were with four children. More importantly, only 39% of participants reported that they did not have any children living elsewhere. Thus, most of the participants (60.9%; 62% females and 60.9% males) stated that at least one of their children had been separated from them.

Table 5
Level of Education, by Gender and Frequency (N = 165)



The distribution of education revealed that most of participants had earned a university degree (46.1%). The second most frequent group was secondary school graduates (29.7), followed by primary school graduates (19.4). Only 4.3% of participants had received no formal education. The vast majority had completed their education in Syria (98.1%; females 100% and males 97.3%).

Table 6
Classification of Ethnicity, by Frequency (N = 118)



Distribution of ethnicity revealed that the most predominately used label was Assyrian (61.9%, including the closely linked labels) and Syrian (22%). It is most probable to think that the two do not necessarily reflect two different identities, but rather different way of expressing one’s identity. Almost all participants (98%) answered they had a Christian belonging.

Table 7
Daily Physical Activities and Coping (n = 171)

Variables	N (%)	χ^2	<i>p</i>
Daily physical activities			
No job or other work and mainly sleep and stay close to where I live	67 (40.1)	4.65	< .05
Female	25 (53.2)		
Male	42 (35.0)		
No job or other work, but I try to keep fit by walking or other physical activity	65 (38.9)	6.65	< .05
Female	11 (23.4)		
Male	54 (45.0)		
I have responsibility for others	28 (16.8)	3.60	.07
Female	12 (25.5)		
Male	16 (13.3)		
I work or volunteer my time and this keeps me busy	21 (12.6)	3.60	.07
Female	3 (6.4)		
Male	18 (15.0)		
What helps one to cope with the day by day living in Turkey			
Hope	113 (67.7)	.09	> .10
Female	31 (66.0)		
Male	82 (68.3)		
Social activities	39 (23.4)	.65	> .10
Female	9 (19.1)		
Male	30 (25.0)		
Religious activities	24 (14.4)	.01	> .10
Female	7 (14.9)		
Male	17 (14.2)		
Physical activities	19 (11.4)	3.29	> .10
Female	2 (4.3)		
Male	17 (14.2)		

The responses regarding daily activities showed that 40.1% of the participants reported not having any job or other work, and that they mainly slept and stayed close to where they lived. Chi square statistics showed that gender and staying home unemployed are significantly correlated ($\chi^2(1) = 4.65, p < .05$), and odd ratios revealed that the number of unemployed females staying home was 2.11 times higher than their male counterparts. Similarly, 38.9% of the participants stated that they had no job or other work, but that they tried to keep fit by walking or doing some other form of physical activity. Gender and physical activity were also significantly correlated ($\chi^2(1) = 6.65, p < .05$); however, this time the number of unemployed males who engaged in physical activities was 2.68 times higher than their female counterparts. Only 16.8% of the participants confirmed that they had responsibility for others (children, elderly or sick relatives, friends) and were kept busy with these activities. However, gender and responsibilities for others were not significantly correlated ($\chi^2(1) = 3.60, p = .07$), indicating that males and females were similar in terms of their responsibility to others. Finally, 12.6% of the participants reported that they worked or volunteered their time and thus kept themselves busy, with no gender correlation here.

Participants' responses regarding questions about those activities or thoughts that helped them cope with daily life in Turkey revealed that hope for the future was the most frequently reported way of coping (67.7%). It was followed by social activities (23.4%), religious activities (14.4%), and physical activities (11.4%). A Chi square test revealed that none of these responses were correlated with gender ($\chi^2 < 3.29, p > .10$).

Table 8
Trauma Experience, in Percentage (n = 171)

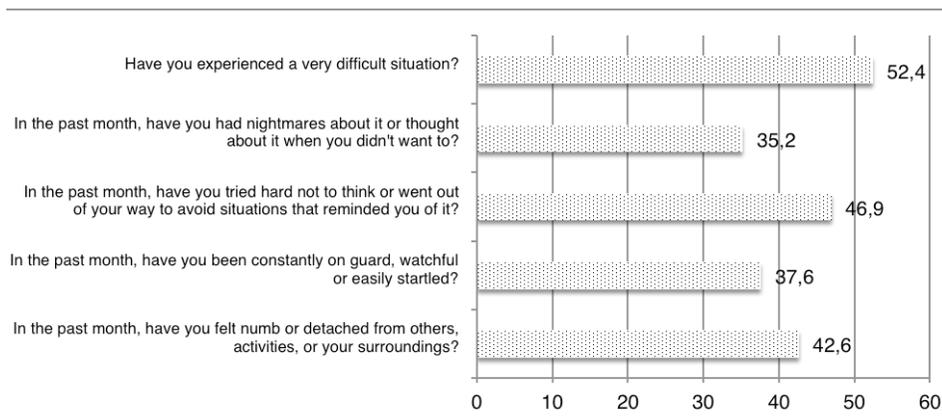


Table 9
PTSD by Gender, Rating of own and Children's Physical and Mental Health (n = 171)

Variables	N (%)	Mean (SD)	χ^2	p
PTSD by Gender			2.28	= .097
PTSD: Yes	40 (23.4)			
Female	15 (9.0)			
Male	25 (15.0)			
PTSD: No	127 (74.3)			
Female	32 (19.2)			
Male	95 (56.9)			
Rating of children's physical health				> .05
PTSD: Yes	10 (20.8)	3.20 (.92)		
PTSD: No	38 (79.2)	3.60 (.95)		
Rating of children's psychological health				> .05
PTSD: Yes	10 (21.7)	2.40 (1.35)		
PTSD: No	36 (78.3)	3.14 (1.17)		
Rating of own physical health				< .001
PTSD: Yes	40 (23.4)	2.77 (.95)		
PTSD: No	131 (76.6)	3.45 (1.07)		
Rating of own psychological health				< .05
PTSD: Yes	40 (23.4)	1.85 (.80)		
PTSD: No	131 (76.6)	2.94 (1.27)		
PHQ-15				< .001
PTSD: Yes	34 (23.8)	10.2 (5.85)		
PTSD: No	109 (76.2)	5.25 (4.8)		

40 participants (23.4%) met the criterion for PTSD. To analyze whether the number of females in the PTSD group differed significantly from the number of males in the same group, a Chi square test was conducted. Thus, it was calculated whether the frequencies of females and males in each PTSD group differed from expected, as such a case would indicate chance. The Chi square test statistics revealed a marginally significant relation between PTSD and gender ($\chi^2(1) = 2.28, p = .097$). To investigate the source of the effect, an odds ratio was calculated. An odds ratio is a proportion of the ratio of females with PTSD (to without PTSD) to that of males with PTSD (to without PTSD). The odds ratio indicated that the risk of females developing PTSD was 1.81 times higher than that of males.

Independent sample comparisons, in which mean scores of two different groups are compared, were conducted to investigate the relations between Participants' health ratings and their PTSD state. Participants' health ratings toward their child(ren) were not related to their PTSD state ($t(46) = -1.21, p > .05$ and $t(44) = -1.70, p > .05$ for physical and psychological health, respectively (two-tailed). However, their PTSD state had a significant impact on their ratings of their own physical health ($M = 2.77, SD = .95$ and $M = 3.45, SD = 1.07$ for participants with and without PTSD, respectively) and own-psychological health ($M = 1.85, SD = .80$ and $M = 2.94, SD = 1.27$ for participants with and without PTSD, respectively). Overall, the findings showed that participants with PTSD rated their own health, but not that of their child(ren), worse than those without PTSD ($t(169) = -3.57, p < .001, r = .26$ and $U = 3500, z = -2.16, p < .05, r = .16$ for their own physical and their own psychological health, respectively). A similar pattern was observed in participants' PHQ-15 levels. The findings show that participants with PTSD ($M = 10.2, SD = 5.85$) exhibited more symptoms than those without PTSD ($M = 5.25, SD = 4.8; t(141) = 4.90, p < .001, r = .38$).

Participants were asked to rate physical and psychological health for themselves and their children on a 5-point Likert type scale (1: Poor; 3: Good; 5: Excellent). Similarly, they rated to what extent they felt secure in their neighborhood on a 4-point Likert type scale (1: Not at all, 4: Much). The findings indicated that males and females were similar in terms of how they rated not only their children's physical and psychological health, but also their feeling secure ($U < 2687, z < 1.35, p > .05, r < .20$). When they rated their own health however, females rated both their physical ($\bar{x} = 3.08, SD = 1.00$) and psychological ($\bar{x} = 3.85, SD = 1.02$) health worse than did males ($\bar{x} = 2.58, SD = 1.09$ and $\bar{x} = 3.12, SD = 1.28; U = 3535, z = 2.64, p < .01, r = .20$ and $U = 3728, z = 3.32, p < .001, r = .26$, respectively).

Table 10
Cross Tabulation by Gender for Children's and their own Physical and Mental Health as well as Feeling Secure in their Neighborhood

	Man				Woman				Total				p
	n	%	M	SD	n	%	M	SD	n	%	M	SD	
How would you say your child(ren)'s physical health is?	24		2.29	1.00	23		2.65	.88	47		2.47	.95	> .05
Good – Excellent	21	87.5			20	87.0			41	87.2			
Fair - Poor	3	12.5			3	13.0			6	12.8			
How would you say your child(ren)'s psychological health is?	24		2.92	1.25	21		3.10	1.26	45		3.00	1.24	> .05
Good – Excellent	18	75.0			13	61.9			31	68.9			
Fair - Poor	6	25.0			8	38.1			14	31.1			
How would you say your physical health is?	120		2.57	1.09	47		3.09	1.00	167		2.72	1.09	< .01
Good – Excellent	94	78.3			33	70.2			127	76.0			
Fair - Poor	26	21.7			14	29.8			40	24.0			
How would you say your psychological health is?	120		3.12	1.28	47		3.85	1.02	167		3.32	1.25	< .01
Good – Excellent	69	57.5			17	36.2			86	51.5			
Fair - Poor	51	42.5			30	63.8			81	48.5			
Do you feel safe and secure in your neighborhood?	120		2.81	.83	47		2.74	.71	167		2.79	.80	> .05
Somewhat - Much	83	69.2			34	72.3			117	70.1			
Not at all - Little	37	30.8			13	27.7			50	29.9			

To further examine participants' self-evaluations, their responses were re-coded into two categories (1: Excellent, Very good and Good, and 2: Fair and Poor). Frequencies indicated that the majority of participants tended to rate their children's physical and psychological health in a positive way. A total of 87.2% (87.5% of males and 87.0% of females) rated their children's physical health positively, and a total of 68.9% (75.0% of males and 61.9% of females) rated their children's psychological health positively. When they rated their own physical health, the majority of participants stated that they were good or better. A total of 76.0% (78.3% of males and 70.2% of females) rated their own physical health positively. However, when they rated their psychological state, only half of the participants rated themselves as good or better. A total of 51.5% (57.5% of males and 36.7% of females) rated their psychological state as positive. A similar analysis was run by re-categorizing the security ratings into two categories (1: not at all or little, and 2: somewhat or much). Frequencies indicated that the majority of participants felt safe in their neighborhood. A total of 70.1% (69.2% of males and 72.3% of females) stated that they felt secure in their neighborhood.

Correlation Analysis

Correlations between pre-test variables. To examine the relations between study variables, Pearson's r was calculated for the correlations among age, residence in Turkey, evaluations regarding health status of the participant and his/her child(ren),

PHQ-15, feeling secure in their neighborhood, positive and negative R-COPE, a general evaluation of religious coping strategies, GSE, and CD-RISC. Possible scores for the health related questions ranged from 1: Poor to 5: Excellent. For R-COPE subscales and the general evaluation of religious coping, lower scores reflected a higher tendency of using religious coping strategies.

Table 11
Pearson Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	-	.00	.11	-.14	-.14	-.27***	-.04	-.02	-.16	-.01	-.31***	.11
2. Safety in neighborhood		-	-.07	-.17*	.09	-.04	.03	.01	.29	.31*	.10	.28***
3. PHQ-80%			-	.16	-.02	.03	-.24**	-.11	-.47***	-.40**	-.44***	-.58***
4. Positive R-COPE				-	-.06	.49***	-.16	-.11	-.23	.06	-.07	-.26***
5. Negative R-COPE					-	-.09	-.05	-.03	-.02	-.01	-.04	.10
6. R-COPE general						-	-.04	-.10	-.09	.01	-.05	-.11
7. GSE							-	.64***	.40**	.29	.31***	.24**
8. CD-RISC								-	.37*	.18	.35***	.26**
9. Children's physical health									-	.60***	.53***	.58***
10. Children's psychological health										-	.37*	.54***
11. Own physical health											-	.51***
12. Own psychological health												-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The findings related to age indicated that older participants had a higher tendency to rate their physical health in a negative way ($r(142) = -.31, p < .001$), and vice versa. Age was also related with the general evaluation of religious coping ($r(142) = -.27, p < .001$), revealing that older participants tended to use religious coping strategies more often. Evaluations regarding children's physical health was strongly correlated with children's psychological health ($r(42) = .60, p < .001$), personal physical health ($r(44) = .53, p < .001$), personal psychological health ($r(44) = .58, p < .001$), and more importantly, with PHQ-15 ($r(44) = -.47, p < .001$). All these correlations indicated that participants tended to rate both their children's and their own health in the same direction. Moreover, children's physical health ratings were positively correlated with GSE ($r(42) = .40, p < .01$) and CD-RISC ($r(43) = .37, p < .05$), indicating that participants who evaluated their child's(ren's) physical health in a negative way also rated their own psychological and physical health in a similar way, and vice versa. There was also a positive trend between children's physical health and feeling secure, but the correlation was not significant ($r(44) = .29, p = .059$).

Evaluations regarding children's psychological health reflected a similar pattern, revealing a positive correlation between itself and one's own health ratings ($r(42) = .37, p < .05$ for physical health, $r(142) = .54, p < .001$ for psychological health, and $r(142) = -.40, p < .01$ for PHQ-15). However, children's psychological health was not significantly correlated with participants' evaluations toward themselves (i.e. GSE and CD-RISC). Finally, children's psychological health ratings were positively correlated with feeling secure ($r(42) = -.31, p < .05$).

Participants' rating of their own physical health was positively and strongly correlated with their own psychological health rating ($r(143) = .51, p < .001$) and negatively correlated with PHQ-15 ($r(143) = -.44, p < .001$), showing that as their rating regarding their own physical health increased, they rated their own psychological health as better and reported less symptoms, and vice versa. Similarly, ratings of their own physical health were positively correlated with GSE ($r(141) = .31, p < .001$) and CD-RISC ($r(141) = .35, p < .001$), showing that the better they perceived their own physical health to be, the more their self-esteem and resilience improved, and vice versa. Ratings of their own psychological health was negatively and strongly correlated with PHQ-15 ($r(143) = -.58, p < .001$) and positively correlated with GSE ($r(141) = -.24, p < .01$) and CD-RISC ($r(141) = -.26, p < .01$), showing that as ratings of their own psychological health improved, they not only reported less symptoms, but also higher levels of self-esteem and resilience, and vice versa. More interestingly, one's own psychological health was positively correlated with feeling secure ($r(141) = -.28, p < .001$), and negatively correlated with positive-RCOPE ($r(141) = -.22, p < .01$).² These findings indicate that feeling secure and one's own psychological health improved or declined together and that positive R-COPE might be a protective factor for one's own psychological health. Partly supporting the present argument, ratings of feeling secure were negatively correlated with positive-R-COPE ($r(143) = -.17, p < .05$), indicating that as participants increasingly used positive religious strategies, they felt more secure, and vice versa.

Ratings on the PHQ-15 were negatively correlated with GSE ($r(141) = -.24, p < .01$), indicating that as somatization increased, self-esteem decreased, and vice versa. The relation between PHQ-15 and positive-R-COPE reflected a positive trend; however, the correlation was not significant ($r(141) = .16, p = .057$). Although Positive-R-COPE was neither correlated with Negative-R-COPE nor with CD-RISC ($r_s < -.11, p > .209$), it showed a negative tendency with GSE, indicating that positive-R-COPE contributed to participants' self-esteem, albeit not at a significance level ($r(141) = -.26, p = .062$). Positive R-COPE was also correlated with the general evaluations of religious coping strategies ($r(143) = .49, p < .001$). In contrast to Positive-R-COPE, Negative-R-COPE was not correlated with any of the study variables. Finally, GSE was positively and strongly correlated with CD-RISC ($r(139) = .64, p < .001$), indicating that participants' ratings toward themselves were in the same direction.

The overall correlations between the study variables seemed to reflect one important pattern: positive religious coping strategies might be more strongly related to psychological functioning, but not physical functioning.

2 As responses for the Positive R-COPE are given in reverse order, higher scores indicate LESS use of positive coping. Take one's rating of own psychological health, for example, a better assessment of one's own psychological health correlates with greater positive coping.

***t*-Test.**

Table 12
t-Test for Intervention from Time 1 to Time 2

	Time 1		Time 2		<i>n</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			
PHQ-15	.42	.30	.51	.30	31	-.66	< .55
Positive R-COPE	1.99	1.01	2.17	1.01	32	-1.83	< .08
Negative R-COPE	3.29	.54	3.11	.63	32	-2.02	< .05
GSE	2.72	.68	2.94	.65	31	-2.05	< .05
CD-RISC	2.87	.85	2.65	1.02	31	1.12	< .27

A paired-samples *t*-Test was conducted to evaluate the change of psychosocial health from Time1 to Time 2 on participants' PHQ-15, Positive R-COPE, Negative R-COPE, GSE, and CD-RISC following a two-month long participation period at the center. A paired sample *t*-Test is a statistical procedure to test the hypothesis concerning the difference between two related sample means (in the case of the present study, pre and post test means) in terms of whether the apparent difference between sample means can be explained by chance. We were hoping that the center's activities would contribute to participants' psychological functioning, such that the difference between the means of pre and post tests would be significant, instead of stemming from chance. This was confirmed for all psychosocial levels, except for one dimension.

There was a statistically significant increase in Positive R-COPE from Time 1 ($M = 1.99, SD = 1.01$) to Time 2 ($M = 2.17, SD = 1.01$), $t(32) = -1.83, p < .08$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in Positive R-COPE scores was -.18 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.38 to -.02, indicating that if the study was replicated one hundred times, 95 of the studies would find a mean difference ranging from -.38 to .02. The eta squared statistics (.01), i.e. a measure of how strong the impact of the treatment is, indicated a small effect size.

There was a statistically significant decrease in Negative R-COPE from Time 1 ($M = 3.29, SD = .54$) to Time 2 ($M = 3.11, SD = .63$), $t(32) = -2.02, p < .05$ (two-tailed). The mean decrease in Negative R-COPE scores was -.18 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.001 to .36. The eta squared statistics (.12) indicated a large effect size.

There was a statistically significant increase in GSE from Time 1 ($M = 2.72, SD = .68$) to Time 2 ($M = 2.94, SD = .65$), $t(31) = -2.05, p < .05$ (two-tailed). The mean decrease in GSE scores was -.22 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -.44 to -.001. The eta squared statistics (.13) indicated a large effect size.

An independent-samples *t*-Test was conducted to evaluate whether there was a difference based on gender for participants' total scores on the General R-COPE, PHQ-15, Positive R-COPE, Negative R-COPE, GSE, and CD-RISC.

There was a statistically significant difference in the PHQ-15 between males ($M = .42, SD = .33$) and females ($M = .57, SD = .38$), $t(165) = -2.65, p < .01$ (two-tailed) in which females scored higher. The mean difference in the PHQ-15 scores was $-.16$ with a 95% confidence interval ranging from $-.28$ to $-.41$. The eta squared statistics (.20) indicated a small effect size.

There was a statistically significant difference in the GSE between males ($M = 3.04, SD = .52$) and females ($M = 2.68, SD = .64$), $t(161) = 3.62, p < .01$ (two-tailed) in which males scored higher. The mean difference in GSE scores was 3.51 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from $.16$ to $.54$. The eta squared statistics (.27) indicated a medium effect size.

A mediation model. The previous findings seem to indicate that participants' ratings regarding their physical health is shaped mainly by how they evaluated their psychological health. This trend might be responsible for the relatively low correlation between positive-R-COPE and PHQ-15. Furthermore, gender seems to have an important impact on the study's variables, which requires further investigation. In light of these findings, it was expected that the relation between the PHQ-15 and positive R-COPE would be mediated by how participants rated their psychological health. It was also expected that the proposed correlations might be stronger for one gender than the other.

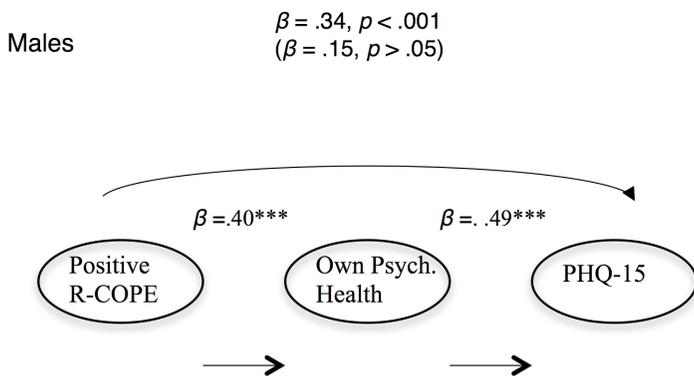


Figure 1. A Regression Model for PHQ-15, Positive R-COPE and One's Own Psychological Health. Note. Sobel's $z' = 3.36, p < .001$.

To test this model, a series of regression analyses were run for males and females separately.³ For this reason, hierarchical regression is a preferred regression procedure to analyze mediation models. It was investigated whether the impact of a predictor (e.g. Positive R-COPE) in the first step (order) would diminish when a

3 Regression is a general name for a set of statistical procedures aimed to predict the outcome variable based on its correlation with a (set of) predictor variable(s). Hierarchical regression is a regression procedure in which researchers can add each predictor to the regression model in a preferred order.

mediator variable (e.g. own psychological health) was introduced in the second step (see [Baron and Kenny \[1986\]](#) for the steps of the regression analysis). In the first regression model, a hierarchical regression of the PHQ-15, positive R-COPE was introduced as the predictor in the first step and evaluation of one's own psychological health was entered as the mediator in the second step. The findings related to males showed that a positive R-COPE significantly predicted PHQ-15 scores ($R^2 = .11$, $F(1,96) = 12.84$, $p < .001$), revealing that as males' tendency to use positive religious coping methods increased, their symptoms decreased ($\beta = .343$, $t(97) = 3.58$, $p < .001$). The contribution of the second step was significant ($\Delta R^2 = .20$, $\Delta F(1,95) = 28.12$, $p < .001$). The impact of positive-R-COPE in the second step was not significant ($\beta = .145$, $t(97) = 1.57$, $p = .12$), while self-evaluation toward one's own psychological health contributed significantly ($\beta = -.491$, $t(97) = -5.30$, $p < .001$), showing that as male participants' rated their psychological health well, they reported less symptoms. To reveal the relation between the predictor and mediator variables, a second regression analysis was conducted in which positive-R-COPE was the predictor and one's own psychological health was the outcome. The findings showed that positive-R-COPE significantly contributed to how one evaluated his own psychological health ($R^2 = .16$, $F(1,96) = 18.67$, $p < .001$), revealing that male participants rated their psychological health better when they used positive religious coping strategies ($\beta = -.40$, $t(97) = -4.32$, $p < .001$).⁴ To test whether the link between the predictor (positive-R-COPE) and the outcome (PHQ-15) were significantly reduced after controlling for the mediator (one's own psychological health), the Sobel test was run. The Sobel test is aimed to test whether the difference between two beta coefficients (i.e. a measure of the strength of the relation between the predictor and outcome variables) is significant (not occurred by chance). The Sobel test supported the mediation model ($z' = 3.36$, $p < .001$), revealing that for male participants, positive religious coping strategies reduced symptoms by improving how they evaluated their own psychological well-being.

To analyze female participants' ratings, the same strategy was followed. The hierarchical regression revealed that the contribution of positive R-COPE in the first step was not significant. However, the model explained a significant amount of variance in the second step ($\Delta R^2 = .35$, $\Delta F(1,38) = 20.08$, $p < .001$), showing that evaluations of one's own psychological health reduced the number of reported symptoms ($\beta = .59$, $t(97) = 4.59$, $p < .001$). However, positive R-COPE's contribution was not significant. Since the first criterion of [Baron and Kenny \(1986\)](#) was not established, no further mediation analyses were run.

4 All these findings are in line with [Baron and Kenny's \(1986\)](#) criteria for mediation establishing that (1) the predictor variable must significantly predict the outcome variable, (2) the predictor variable must be correlated with the mediator variable, and (3) the link between the predictor and outcome must become weaker (and preferably non-significant) when the impact of the mediator is controlled.

Discussion

Compared to the overview analysis on religious coping (Pargament et al., 2011), our study also showed a positive association between self-esteem, physical well-being, and positive religious coping, albeit neither strong nor statistically significant.

Compared to the study among Syrian refugees in Gaziantep, Turkey (Alpak et al., 2015), where 33.5% of the participants scored positively for PTSD, with a statistical significant difference for gender that was higher for women, our results showed that 23.4% scored positively for PTSD, without a significant difference for gender. However, the risk of females developing PTSD was 1.81 times higher than that of males. Our results are also lower than the scores by Tufan, Alkin, and Bosgelmez (2013), whose study included non-Syrian refugees in Istanbul, finding 55.2% to score positively for PTSD.

Similar to other studies of CD-RISC (CD-RISC, User Guide) ($M = 4.53$ to 6.91) our study indicates a mid level of resiliency ($M = 5.74$).

Though the qualitative material from this study is not presented in this paper, similarities to the previous studies by El Chammy et al. (2014) express feelings of disinterest and hopelessness. The qualitative material also reveals coping mechanisms comparable to the study by Hassan et al. (2015), such as social and community activities. Being active at the center also helped both adults and children to be active in other areas of daily functioning.

Considering the large and increasing number of Syrian refugees that Turkey has received during the last six years, it is puzzling that so little health research has been done. Some reasons are probably the difficulties to gain access and build trust among the refugees. It is today difficult to obtain permission to do any research in the refugee camps. It is also very challenging to build up trust, a necessary aspect for the gathering of data, among people who have been hurt and traumatized in such multiple, negative ways as is the case with the Syrians. Still, the need to conduct further research is extremely acute. Firstly, the refugee situation continues as no end to the Syrian war is in sight, and secondly, as Turkey is undertaking a huge burden and will continue to do so, the importance of meeting the needs of the Syrians is very important. In this respect, a focus on health, perceived discrimination, and acculturation – including motivations, culture learning, and changes – are very central. Some critical points in Turkish society affecting Syrian refugees are that Syrians are not given refugee status, but only temporary protection. Two other aspects are their limited access to work permits and their need for education. All these, we assume, have implications for their acculturation of both physical and mental health consequences.

The findings in this study have shown that the Assyrian-Syrian refugees living in a transit reality in Istanbul are in a very delicate situation. They have lost much and for various reasons, are in a very vulnerable situation in Turkey. They had very little meaningful activities available to them or a safe space to work with their own activities when coming to Istanbul. Many had experienced traumas before leaving Syria in addition to their current PTSD scores. However, they generally rate both their own and their children's health in a positive way. One's own psychological health seems to be the most effective factor shaping one's physical health, with gender also having an important impact. The Time 1 and Time 2 results show that engagement in the center's activities appears to have had some impact on participants' health, though a control group had not been used. However, according to [Gerring and McDermott \(2007\)](#), a longitudinal study from Time 1 and Time 2 provides more reliable evidence of a treatments true effect rather than using a control group. Since a control group must be similar to the treatment group in all relevant aspects, we argue that in studies with refugees, it would be near impossible to determine similarity between treatment group and control group, in all relevant aspects. However, the participants themselves evaluated the center's activities as being in a safe space that was very important for their lives. Their positive religious coping strategies, as well as general self-efficiency improved during this two-month period, while neither physical health nor resiliency deteriorated significantly during the same period.

Conclusions

Our conclusions are based on research through a public health and public mental health promotion framework. In this framework, a person-centered and holistic model for investigation is essential in psychosocial and physical health research, which includes a spiritual dimension. This framework, when applied to vulnerable populations such as the refugee group here, needs to give particular attention to certain methodological aspects of refugee studies, specifically the ethical aspects, but also to the challenges relating to data collection and analysis procedures. Conducting research with highly vulnerable groups, researchers need to clarify for themselves and for the population being studied just how their research can benefit the refugees themselves. In this respect, we recommend that researchers also involve themselves in improving the social and living conditions for the refugees in a parallel process or as a result of longer-term planning. This can be done even in our study's context where only limited intervention was possible. In this case, through the center's activities for children as well as adults. Without jeopardizing the methodological stringency of the research, volunteer help and scientific work can be combined in a constructive way. The researchers naturally need to calculate any possible negative risks for the participants. The activities at the refugee center had all been carefully planned for in order not to cause any negative consequences. Dialogue, respect, and community-based-problem-solving processes were all guiding principles at the center. This, together with the internal board that the refugees formed at the center where all activities at the center would be discussed before implementation following specific rules and policies,

limited the negative risks. As the results show, the changes from Time 1 to Time 2 were mainly positive. Yet, sometimes even good intentions are not enough. What may be seen as positive for us as outsiders may turn out differently for the participants. The center has certainly created specific group dynamics and sometimes tensions and concerns among the participants sprung up. However, these were addressed and resolved with the support of the internal board. Sometimes the participants felt objectified by the media wanting to report on their situation. Therefore, knowing about the culture and history of the participants, knowing their language, and understanding their past and current circumstances proved to be important factors aiding in conducting this research.

Acknowledgement

We want to direct our gratitude to all the Syrian participants and volunteers at *Qnushyo* (www.qnushyo.com), the refugee activity center in Istanbul, where we conducted our study. This article has been presented and discussed at two research seminars, The Psychology of Religion, Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University, and Journal Club Skaraborgsinstitutet (The Skaraborg Institute).

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Zorunlu Göç Araştırmalarında Metodolojik Sorunlar: Türkiye'deki Suriye Diasporası Bağlamında Travma, Yılmazlık, Din ve Güven Sorunu*

J. Eduardo Chemin^a

Öz

Doğu Akdeniz Bölgesi Suriyelilerinin başlıca istikameti olan Mersin'de ve Adana'da yaşayan ve çalışan bir araştırmacı olarak yerinden edilmiş Suriyelilerin zorunlu göçe maruz kalmış olmanın yol açtığı travma ile nasıl baş ettiklerini ve nasıl yılmazlık tutumu geliştirdiklerini araştırmak istedim. Suriyelilerin dindarlık düzeylerinin yüksek olduğu bilindiğinden dolayı yerinden edilmiş insanların pozitif başa çıkma stratejisi geliştirmelerinde dinin rolünü de anlamak istemiştım. Kendisi ile görüşme yaptığım mültecilerin çoğu, travmatik bir olay yaşama esnasında kendisini dindar şekilde tanımlamaktaydı. Çalışma neticesinde, dini bir gruba bağlanma ile olumlu başa çıkma stratejileri oluşturma arasında yalın fakat pozitif bir ilişki buldum. Bununla birlikte, görüşme yaptığım Suriyelilerin az bir kısmı çevrelerindeki ev sahibi topluluğun yaşamına dâhil olmuştu. Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgulara dayanarak bu durumun bize metodolojik bir sorun gösterdiğini ileri sürdüm. Bu sorunun kaynağında Türkiye'de yaşayan Suriyeli mültecilerin kendilerini gömülü buldukları sosyal ve psikolojik bağlamın verileri çarpıtması yer alıyor olabilir. Bu araştırmanın bağlamını tanımlarken zorunlu göç çalışmalarındaki bazı metodolojik zorluklara daha geniş değindim; bunu yaparken de istikrarsız siyasi ve sosyal çevrelerde yaşayan savunmasız kitleler üzerinde araştırma yapmanın etik boyutlarını sorunsallaştırdım.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Suriyeliler • Zorunlu göç • Travma • Din • Yılmazlık • Metotlar

* Bu çalışma 2015 yılında İstanbul İsveç Araştırma Enstitüsü tarafından İsveç Büyükelçiliğinde düzenlenen "Forced Migration & Resilience: Past & Present in the Mediterranean" başlıklı konferansta sunulmuştur.

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Methodological Challenges in the Study of Forced Migration: Trauma, Resilience, Religion and the Problem of Trust in the Context of the Syrian Diaspora in Turkey*

J. Eduardo Chemin^a

Abstract

As a researcher living and working in the Turkish cities of Mersin and Adana – major destinations for Syrians in the East Mediterranean – I wanted to learn how displaced Syrians cope with the trauma of being forced to emigrate and how they build resilience. Given the reported high-levels of religiosity amongst Syrians, I also wanted to understand the possible role of religion in helping displaced people develop positive coping strategies. My findings revealed that the majority of the refugees I interviewed considered themselves to be religious whilst most experienced a traumatic event. I also found a modest but positive correlation between attachment to a religious community and the building of positive coping strategies. However, only a small number of Syrians interviewed took part in the life of the host communities around them. Based on these findings, I argue that, perhaps, this presents us with a methodological problem, one that originates in a distortion of the data by the social and psychological contexts in which displaced Syrians living in Turkey find themselves embedded. In the process of describing this research context, I discuss some of the methodological challenges in the study of forced migration more broadly, whilst problematizing the ethics of researching vulnerable populations living in unstable political and social environments.

Keywords

Syrians • Forced migration • Trauma • Religion • Resilience • Methods

* An earlier version was presented at the “Forced Migration & Resilience: Past & Present in the Mediterranean,” conference held at the Swedish Research Institute Istanbul, Consulate General of Sweden in April 2015.

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In September 2013, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that the number of Syrians forced abroad since March 2011 had surpassed the 2 million mark. According to the same agency, as of February 2017, approximately 6,1 million people are internally displaced in Syria with another 4,900,741 becoming refugees in five main countries within the region: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (UNHCR, 2017b). Only 1.7% of Syrian refugees have been offered sanctuary in countries outside of the region. Still, a growing number of Syrians are finding their way into European countries with the costly help of human traffickers. This picture becomes more dramatic when we consider that "over a short period of time, Syria went from the third largest refugee hosting country primarily for Iraqi refugees...[but also Palestinians] to the largest refugee producing country, with more than 1.9 million Syrians escaping its borders in less than two years" (Quosh, Eloul, & Ajlani, 2013, p. 276). According to a January 2015 UN estimate, the number of fatal casualties amongst Syrian Government forces, opposition groups, and civilians had reached 220,000. At the time of writing, the conflict has displaced approximately 12 million people, including 7.6 million people internally, making the situation in Syria the largest humanitarian crisis worldwide and one of the most violent since WWII. Yet the role of religion in both humanitarian aid and as causes of conflict, as well as the relationship between religion and displacement, needs to be expanded. For instance, David Hollenbach, the University Chair in Human Rights and International Justice, Theology Department, Boston College, acknowledges that "while much is known about these matters, further investigation and research is needed, for this area has received less academic and practitioner reflection than its importance warrants" (2015, p. 457).

As a researcher working and living in the East Mediterranean region of Turkey, I have witnessed the growth in refugee numbers in the cities of Adana and Mersin: from an estimated 10,000 in 2011 to anything between 75,000 and 150,000 – perhaps more.¹ However, these two cities are not unique. Great numbers of incoming migrants are spreading throughout Turkey's urban areas as far west as Istanbul. This represents a sharp growth in the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey: from 9,500 in January 2012 to over 3 million (perhaps more as statistics vary according to different sources) as of February 2017 (DGMM, 2017; UNHCR, 2017b).

My objective is to look into the methodological premise of my study and thus to turn the focus away from participants to the research itself. I argue that the so-called "refugee crisis" – an endemic long-standing problem in the Eastern Mediterranean that although not having started with the 2011 Syrian wars, has a much longer and complicated trajectory – by its very nature, forces us academics to rethink the way in which we approach the subject of forced displacement more broadly.

¹ There are no reliable official records available in Turkey. This figure is according to various official and unofficial sources.

In this instance, I have paid particular attention to resilience and coping mechanisms found amongst Syrian refugees living in Turkey. Primarily, I sought to investigate how displaced people cope with the traumas that may follow forced migration and how they build positive coping mechanisms in order to achieve resilience. Given the explicit nature of religious beliefs and practices amongst displaced Syrians, I became particularly interested in the potential role of religion in helping people cope with traumatic events. This can be all summarized in view of the following research questions: “Does religion act as a buffer or helping mechanism in the development of coping strategies for people who have experienced trauma as a result of forced migration?” and: “If religion does operate as a coping mechanism, why do those who are displaced not seem keen on engaging with religious communities and, in turn, why do religious communities not seem to provide clear opportunities for engagement and support?” As I hope to show, the methodology used in an attempt to answer these questions may in fact detract us from learning anything useful about the situation in which displaced Syrians living in Turkey find themselves.

In times of trouble, people may turn to their beliefs to find comfort (Gunn, 2007). In such cases, many will seek out support from the wider (religious) community. The structures of religious traditions, their texts, leaders and councilors, religious buildings, such as churches, mosques, and synagogues, are used for psychological appeasing as well as shelter (Koenig, 2007). Because of this, there is a growing awareness of the importance of religious understandings of the world for people in need of building positive coping mechanisms, in particular for those who have been exposed to high levels of stress, such as that often caused by forced displacement.

Indeed, a recent report by the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies \(2014\)](#) tells us that religion helps people cope with the immediate and longer-term consequences of disasters and is also an important psychological and social element for individual and community recovery.

Religion can provide a reserve of social capital that can be tapped to facilitate recovery, including support, information and resource sharing such as donations [and it can also provide] ...a platform, framework and social grouping that can be useful for educating about risk reduction (p. 55).

Despite this, religion is often left out of policy-level decisions on how to approach the causes and consequences of forced displacement. The findings of the current study showed that 1) the majority of the refugees I interviewed were practicing Muslims. 2) Most refugees I interviewed experienced a traumatic event. 3) More importantly, I also found a positive correlation between attachment to a religious community and the building of positive coping strategies. 4) However, only a small number of Syrians interviewed actively engaged in the life of the communities around them.

Hence, if participation in the religious community seems to help the building of positive coping strategies, yet there is a resistance to engage with the religious community of the receiving country, by what means and strategies do displaced Syrians living in Turkey use to build resilience and overcome the difficulties and traumas commonly associated with forced migration following brutal armed conflict? Why are they not engaging with the religious life of communities in order to help others and themselves overcome some of the hardships they face? In my view, this question presented me not with a theoretical problem, but a very real methodological shortcoming, one that required me to look at the context in which the empirical data was collected and consider the social and psychological contexts in which displaced Syrians find themselves embedded. In particular, I point to what I call the “PFF” effect (Persecution Fear Factor), which I believe, at least in this specific case, helped cause a warping of the meanings associated with words such as “community” and “religion”.

I begin by offering a brief literature review only to establish the importance of the conceptual link between religion, psychology, and forced migration. I then move on to a discussion of the methodology and the basic demographics of my sample. This is followed by the analysis of preliminary results from my fieldwork, which then leads me to reflect on methodological aspects of the study. In particular, I focus on issues such as the suitability of quantitative research for cross-cultural research in fluid, transitory, social contexts as well as the problem of terminology and how the latter may severely impact on results. I also discuss the aforementioned “PFF effect” vis-à-vis the politics of governance in Turkey that in combination, render data collection on psychology and religion particularly challenging. I conclude by summarizing the most important results of this study whilst being self-critical toward my work as a researcher working with people in highly vulnerable situations.

The Impact of Permanent Transitions: The Role of Religion in Coping with Traumatic Life Events

For reasons that will be made clear in the remainder, I believe the suspended status of “permanent transition” of Syrian refugees living in Turkey may offer fertile ground for such conditions as PTSD, depression, and other trauma-related mental disorders that may affect the refugees’ adaptation to transit and receiving countries. The latter no longer seems to be a contentious claim as I found evidence of this in other studies in the field of forced migration (see Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005; Kirmayer et al., 2011; Noh & Kaspar, 2003; Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou, & Rummens, 1999; Silove, Austin, & Steel, 2007; Steel et al., 2009). For example, Kirmayer et al. (2011) observes that:

During migration, immigrants can experience prolonged uncertainty about their citizenship status as well as situations that expose them to violence. Those seeking asylum, in particular, sometimes spend extended periods in refugee camps with poor resources and endemic violence.

In some countries, asylum seekers are kept in detention centers with harsh conditions, which lead to a sense of powerlessness. This sense can provoke or aggravate depression and other mental health problems (p. E961).

“Traumatic events” in one form or another (I give concrete examples of these in the results section), are nearly universally experienced by refugees (as shown by Frazier, 2012) and are often defined with regard to the outlined criteria in the DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V* - 5th. Ed. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) for post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). In accordance with the diagnostic criteria for PTSD in the DSM V, potentially traumatic events can be defined as exposure to death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence.

My work aimed at investigating the relationship between potentially traumatic life events as defined by the DSM V, religious belief and practice, and the development of coping strategies among Syrian refugees in Turkey. As a host and/or transit country, Turkey, like the other neighboring countries to Syria, such as Lebanon and Jordan, received millions of refugees as survivors of (sometimes extreme) torture and other forms of organized systemic violence. In addition, survivors have often experienced dramatic and potentially traumatic escapes. To be a forced migrant or displaced person under these conditions, therefore, implies an exposure to a series of unpredictable life events that they must *learn to cope* with. One way (amongst others) in which coping is achieved is through one’s religious beliefs and the support of faith communities and the structures contained in them. According to a review of the services provided to Syrians in 2012, a year or so after the Syrian conflict began, we find that:

There is general evidence that exposure to continuous, distressing, and potentially traumatic events, the depletion of resources, forced displacement, and lack of security can all negatively impact mental health and the increase risk of maladaptation. There is, however, a lack of research regarding the impact of prolonged uncertainty and the instability of protracted displacement settings, as well as of renewed violence and insecurity, on the mental health and resilience of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria (Quosh et al., 2013, p. 277).

My aim was to contribute to the literature on forced migration and to help close this research gap by designing a study about the health effects of prolonged uncertainty and instability and how refugees cope with these circumstances. Based on my preliminary findings, I have learned about the decay of social ties that Syrian forced migrants experience in Turkey. Although I believe my research is limited in its scope and validity (I discuss this in length in the last section), this aspect is supported by other previous research. For instance the OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) has reported that Syrians “...have exhausted their resources and coping mechanisms...” and that “Traditional community support mechanisms are failing due to displacement and *distrust*” (OCHA, 2013, p. 13 – italics added).

I emphasize the word “distrust” as I believe it has great impact on empirical research of the type I have attempted to conduct.

In particular, I believe that the distrust found amongst Syrians in Turkey is partly responsible for the low level of attachment that I have found between individuals and the “communities” around them. Here, I place inverted commas in the word *community* because, in my view, Syrians living in Turkey would be better described as individuals living parallel or isolated lives rather than as members of a “community.” This, I theorize, is potentially a side-effect of the “PFF effect,” which I think is caused by two aspects of the Syrian conflict: 1) the long range quality of the threat of persecution cast by different groups in Syria and in Turkey, and 2) the confusion in establishing who the enemy is. That is, for Syrians living in Turkey, any other Syrian could be a potential threat. In my view, this probably causes the effects we see in the data. Although religious community is correlated with the development of positive coping strategies, only a low number of people interviewed took part in the life of what they understood as “community.” Naturally, one must question the meanings associated with the word “community” in this context. I will do so in the following sections.

Religious coping refers to religious behavior or thoughts occurring in response to a specific situation that is usually defined as stressful or traumatic. There is a growing body of literature that explores the role of religious coping in the trauma recovery process (Bryant-Davis & Wong, 2013; Chen & Koenig, 2006). Studies have investigated the relationship between religious involvement and mental health. In most cases, they have found that higher levels of religious involvement are associated with greater psychological well-being. In a number of studies, Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, and Hahn (2001) have identified positive and negative religious coping strategies. Their work offers the possibility of understanding how religiosity can apparently function in ways that support, as well as undermine, trauma recovery.

Drawing from these and other findings, it is important that psychologists (and social scientists more broadly) understand the potential role of religious coping in trauma recovery. For example, the American Psychological Association (2010) asserts that psychologists are ethically mandated to consider their clients’ religion as an aspect of diversity when formulating treatment plans for them. As a result, religious coping can become instrumental in directing the pathway for post-traumatic growth and the potential coping and adaptations of those forced to flee their country due to conflict. I argue that this should be extended to policy making and aid agencies as the evidence suggests that strengthening religious community ties can help refugees to find better tools and therefore develop more positive coping strategies more quickly.

I now turn to a discussion of my preliminary findings before tackling the issue of methodology.

Methodology & Demographics

The research I discuss in this paper is part of an inductive study that laid the ground for further enquiry and theorizing and, more importantly in this instance, some reflection on methodology. It is important to note that this is an on-going study whose results should therefore be seen as preliminary. Here, I discuss the potential relationship between forced migration as a source of trauma and the coping strategies used by people in the context of forced migration.

Research Aims

This study is a multidisciplinary effort involving the conceptual and methodological tools often deployed in the disciplines of sociology, social and clinical psychology. My methodology was chosen on the basis of the initial research question: “does religion act as a buffer or helping mechanism in the development of coping strategies for people who have experienced trauma as a result of forced migration?”

I divided my task into a few basic preliminary steps. First, I had to assess if my sample had experienced traumatic events as a result of the conflicts taking place in Syria and their subsequent relocation to Turkey or at any time during their journey. The second step was to investigate any potential correlations between religious belief and practice and the level of trauma experienced by each participant. Only then did I attempt to understand how people coped with trauma and whether religion played any role in copying.

Participants

The preliminary sample was composed of 128² adults of which 60.7% were men and 39.3% women.

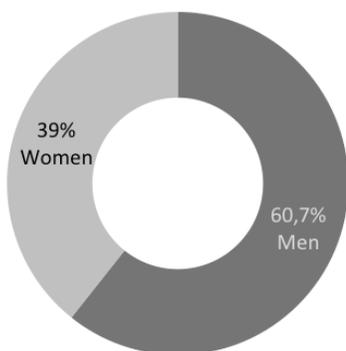


Figure 1. Gender distribution.

² My aim is to collect a more representative sample as I further develop and retune the instruments and overcome some of the problems and issues I raise in this instance.

The sample was composed of relatively young Syrians aging between 18 and 67 with a mean age of 35. In terms of education, I found that 28.9% were either attending university at the time they left Syria or had finished a higher education program. Most reported disruption in their education caused by the conflict and the need to leave Syria. 21.9% of those interviewed had attended (or were attending) high school, 21.9% attended secondary school, and 21% were primary school students before leaving Syria.

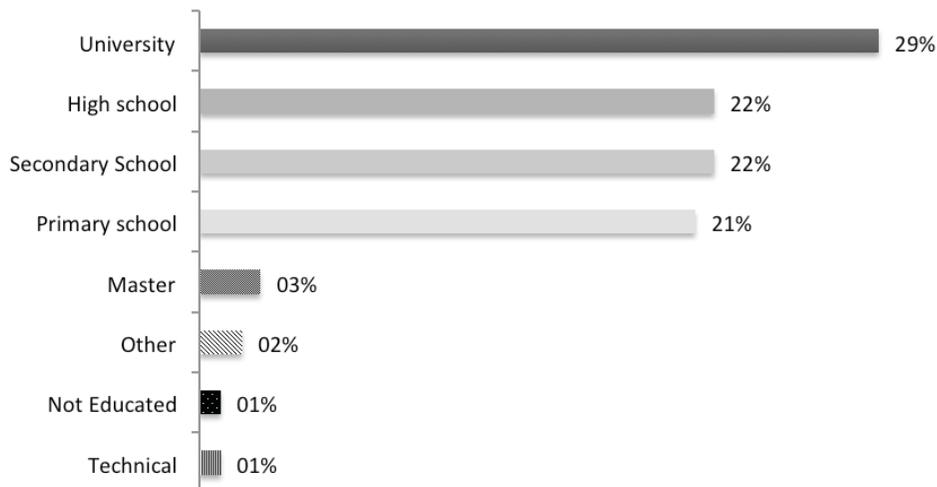


Figure 2. Education.

It is worth to point out that not everyone can easily continue to study once they are in Turkey. Many are the factors involved, but the language barrier is one great obstacle for Syrians who want to continue with their education. In Turkey, those education institutions whose languages of education are English are in fact private and costly. All state schools offering courses lower than high-school offer courses in Turkish only. Therefore, most educational opportunities found by Syrians in Turkey are in fact provided by the Syrian community itself, whom through volunteers and private donors and with the limited help of some international organizations, are able to group students and offer courses at various levels in different arrangements, such as in the form of charities or privately-paid schools. Depending on the resources available to families, some Syrians do have good prospects and higher living standards and in such cases, can access education opportunities more easily. Yet, even in such cases, language is often still a barrier preventing Syrians from attending university even when their material circumstances is better than average.

More important for the purposes of this study was the religious dimension. 83.1% of the people I was able to interview considered themselves to be “religious.” 57.1%

were “very religious” and 26% reported they were “moderately religious.” 8% acknowledged being “not really religious”.

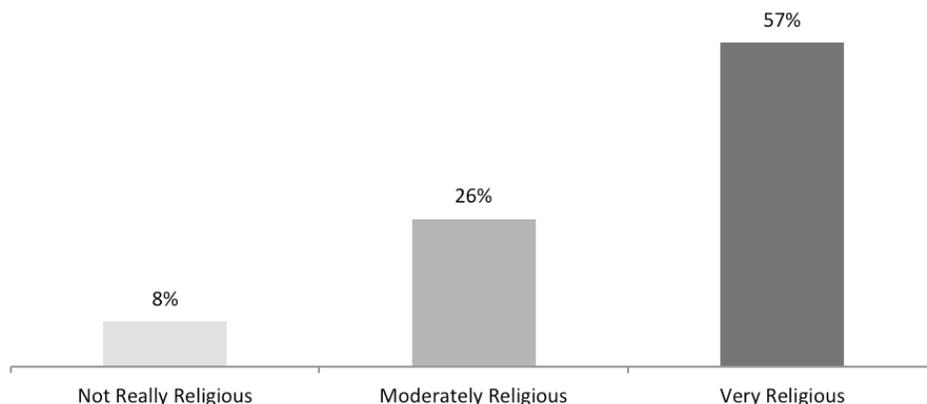


Figure 3. Levels of religiosity.

When asked whether any of them were members of a religious community in either of the two cities from which I collected my data (Adana and Mersin), 77% of interviewees said "no" whilst 23% said they were actively engaged in a religious community in their host neighborhood.

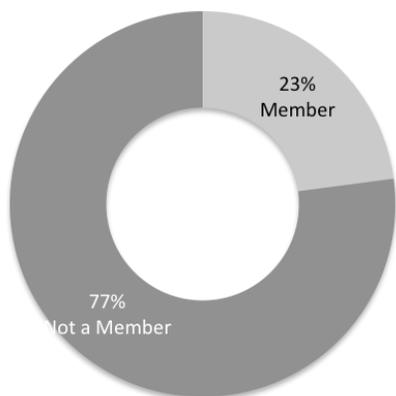


Figure 4. Member of religious community.

54.9% stated they had never visited their religious community center or meeting place. Of those who visited it, only 18.9% said they did so on a weekly basis and 13.3% said they visited it daily. Only 4.4% said they visited it once a month.

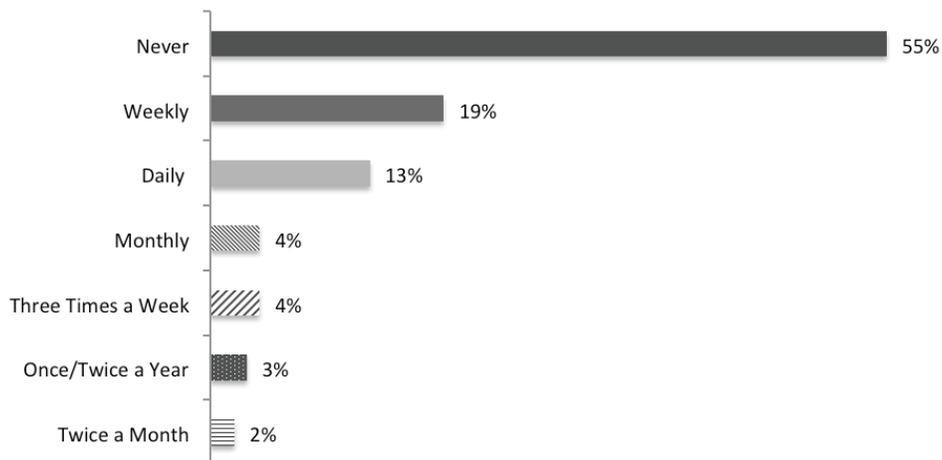


Figure 5. Attendance of community meetings and/or community activities.

Given these numbers, my conclusion is that although the majority of Syrians in the sample described themselves as being either moderately or very religious, they did not seem to engage in outward religious practice involving community activities. This shows a gap between their personal religious beliefs and the lack of a sense of belonging to their new environment.

Instruments

For the purposes of measuring traumatic events people may have experienced, I used an instrument known as the LEC-5 (Life Events Check List – see Gray, Litz, Hsu, & Lombardo, 2004; Weathers et al. 2013). The LEC-5 was developed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V (DSM V) of the American Psychological Association (APA). That is, a self-report scale used to assess whether participants have indeed suffered trauma and if so, what kind of trauma they experienced.

The LEC-5 commences with a statement directing the participant to be open about their history of traumatic events. The questionnaire itself is simply a list of a number of difficult or stressful experiences that may sometimes happen to an individual. For each event, participants are asked to check one or more of the boxes to the right of the page to indicate that: (a) it happened to the participant personally; (b) the participant has observed it happening to someone else; (c) the participant learned about how this has happened to a close family member or close friend; (d) the participant was exposed to it as part of his/her job (for example, paramedic, police, military, or other first aid responder); (e) the participant is not sure if it fits; or (f) it doesn't apply to the participant. Participants are then asked to be sure to consider their entire lives (as they are growing up as well as adulthood) as they go through the list of events.

Events questioned in the scale include natural disasters (for example, flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake), fire or explosions, transportation accidents (for example, car accident, boat accident, train wreck, plane crash), serious accidents at work, home, or during recreational activity, exposure to toxic substance (for example, dangerous chemicals, radiation), physical assault (for example, being attacked, hit, slapped, kicked, beaten up), assault with a weapon (for example, being shot, stabbed, threatened with a knife, gun, bomb), sexual assault (rape, attempted rape, made to perform any type of sexual act through force or threat of harm), and other unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experience. It also includes combat or exposure to a war-zone (in the military or as a civilian), captivity (for example, being kidnapped, abducted, held hostage, prisoner of war) as well as life-threatening illness or injury and severe human suffering. In addition, I asked about the experience, or the witnessing of sudden violent death (for example, homicide or suicide) and sudden accidental death or serious injury. I also asked about harm or death the participant may have caused to someone else or any other very stressful event or experience.

For the purposes of this study only, I attempted to couple the LEC-5 with another instrument called the RCOPE (Religious Coping Strategies Scale). The latter helps to measure how much religion is responsible for the development of coping mechanisms. The RCOPE was developed by Kenneth Pargament (1997) and refers to a fourteen-item Likert-type scale with four response alternatives ranging from 1 (meaning “not at all”) to 4 (meaning “a great deal”). Half of the items measure positive religious coping strategies (PRCs), whilst the other half assesses negative religious coping strategies (NRCs). In their review study, [Pargament, Feuille, and Burdzy \(2011\)](#) argued that the RCOPE has a well-established concurrent validity indicating that PRCs are consistently related with better psychological functioning (e.g. post traumatic growth and optimism), while NRCs are linked to negative psychological constructs (e.g. anxiety and depression). The internal consistency of the RCOPE was also acceptable in various samples (median alpha for example was .92 for PRCs and .81 for NRCs; see [Pargament et al. 2011](#), for further discussion).

The RCOPE scale refers to three possible avenues for coping with stress: (1) Collaborative: people co-operate with God to deal with stressful events, (2) Deferring: people leave everything to God, and (3) Self-Directed: people do not rely on God and try exclusively to solve problems by their own efforts ([Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2000](#)).

Without wanting to make the survey neither long nor too intrusive, I planted – between the LEC-5 and RCOPE – a self-developed ten-point Likert-type instrument to measure attachment to one or more communities. Finally, I also asked participants to provide me with some basic demographic data, such as gender, educational background, and religious affiliation.

Preliminary Results: Religion, Coping, and Trauma

According to the assessment of the results provided by the LEC-5, most of the participants reported one or more incidents that could be comfortably established as “traumatic events”. The following summary identifies the most important trends. 63.9% of my respondents either witnessed or experienced “fire and explosions”. 57.1% were involved in some capacity in a “war zone”. 66.6% were involved directly or witnessed grave “transport accidents”. 58.0% witnessed or experienced “severe human suffering” and 46.8% witnessed “sudden accidental death” (see Figure 6).

I could not measure *exactly* how much each and every experience may add to notions of trauma or even how traumatic events can influence people in their daily lives, especially when they are trying to adapt to a foreign culture, language, job market, and/or geography as they attempt to create a new life for themselves in the host country.

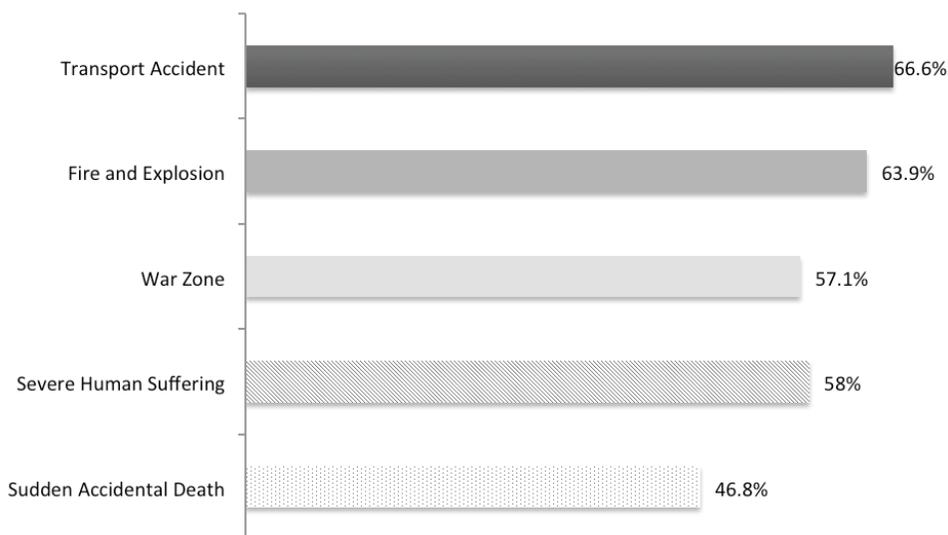


Figure 6. Traumatic events – LEC-5.

The more technically challenging part of this work relates to my attempt to investigate a possible relationship between the two scales (LEC-5 and RCOPE). This was necessary as an attempt to ascertain whether traumatized participants used religious coping strategies and if so, of what kind. Through the use of the LEC-5 questionnaire, I was able to establish that most of the respondents either witnessed or suffered directly as a result of the incidents aforementioned. I ran various analyses on the responses given to the subscales of the RCOPE whilst comparing the results with those from the LEC-5 as well as the basic descriptive statistics collected on age,

education, gender, and religious affiliation. My findings suggest that PRC (Positive Religious Coping) was positively correlated with attachment to religion ($r(106) = .26, p < .01$), indicating that participants who reported being either moderately or very religious also tended to use positive religious coping.

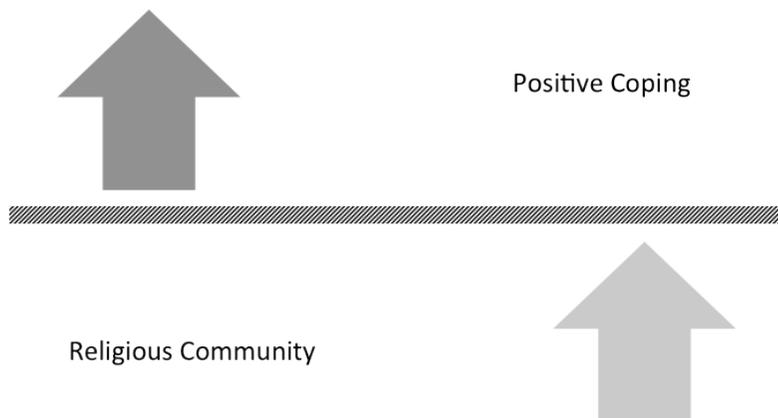


Figure 7. PRC and attachment to religion.

However, the LEC-5 ratings and attachment to religion were negatively correlated ($r(110) = -.19, p = .05$), showing that as participants had more traumatic experiences, they tended to report less attachment to religion.

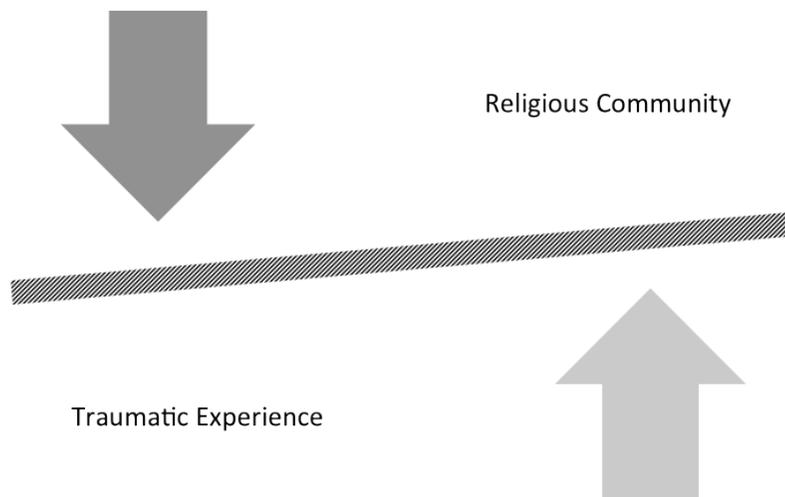


Figure 8. Level of traumatic experiences negatively correlates to participation in religious community.

Similarly, as participants' age increased, their reporting of traumatic experiences decreased ($r(108) = -.25, p < .05$).

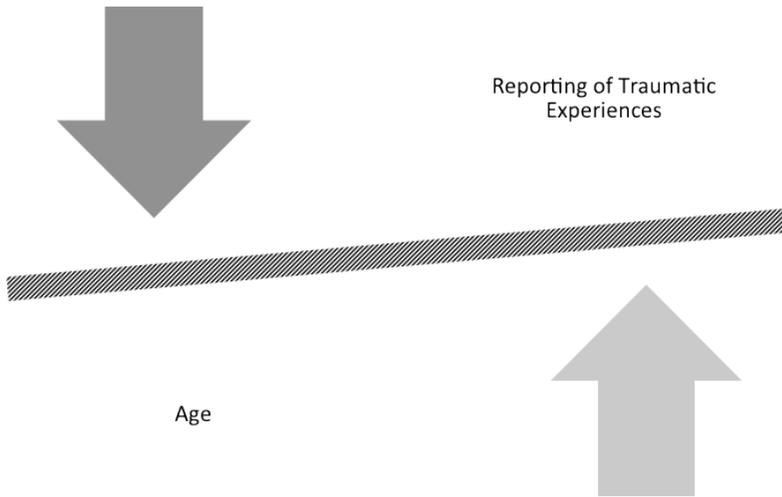


Figure 9. As age increases, self-reporting of traumatic experiences decreases.

Age was positively correlated with religious attachment ($r(110) = .33, p < .001$), showing that older participants tended to rate themselves as more religious than younger ones.

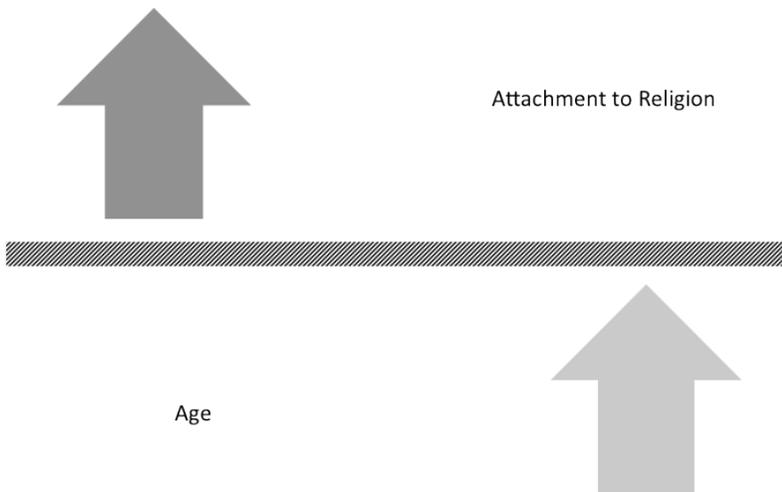


Figure 10. Attachment to religion was positively correlated to age.

These results reveal an important “time” element that seems to be implicit in these findings. By that, I mean that traumatic experiences occur, logically, with reference to the *past* whilst the assessment of religious belief and practice occurs in the *present*. As traumatic experiences increase in number and power, one way of coping with them seems to be to blame it on the lack of response from God. However, I cannot reliably affirm the latter with certainty because the correlations between negative RCOPE (NRC or Negative Religious Coping) and other variables were not significant. Furthermore, in another similar study (though with a modified version of these same instruments - see [Cetrez & DeMarinis, 2017](#)), the authors perceived NRC to be the least reliable scale. That led the authors to conclude that in this specific population, blaming God might be considered a step too far (a sin), something participants tried to avoid affirming.

For that reason, I found that participants overwhelmingly gave the same answer to each of the NRC scale items; that is, “not at all”. What this indicates is that perhaps participants begin to rely less on God for the relief of distress stemming from traumatic experiences. This can result in the person no longer attending rituals or religious and/or community-based activities whilst withdrawing from shared experiences. Another interesting finding relates to age as for when age increases, the level of traumatic experiences decreases. There are many ways to interpret this finding. For example, as age increases, what was previously perceived as “traumatic” does not appear to be worth reporting later on in life. In common terms, it could be said that, with time, the person develops a “thick skin” or to use our preferred jargon, *mechanisms of coping that result in resilience*. The uptake on this is that as age increases, so does attachment to religious views.

Perhaps more interesting was the finding that the more traumatic experiences respondents reported, the less prone they were to take an active part in community life. 77.2% of those who reported to have either witnessed or experienced a traumatic event reported never attending community-related activities after the events in their new country of residence (in this case, Turkey).

Two further findings help us elucidate the context of the research. The first, refers to the fact that those who reported taking part in the life of a religious community also tended to display more positive religious coping strategies ($\bar{x} = 24.96$, $SD = 2.35$) and less negative religious coping strategies ($\bar{x} = 13.08$, $SD = 4.36$) than the ones who did not participate in religious community life ($\bar{x} = 23.72$, $SD = 3.43$ for positive RCOPE and $\bar{x} = 14.78$, $SD = 3.88$ for negative RCOPE; $t(60) = 2.09$, $p < .05$ and $t(108) = 1.89$, $p = .06$, respectively). That is to say, Syrians who reported not participating in, say, religious community meetings or activities were also less positive in terms of finding coping strategies. The second finding in this cluster refers to a negative correlation suggesting that the less community activity was acknowledged, the more traumatic experiences were reported ($r(106) = -.25$, $p < .05$).

In the next sections, I will attempt to describe what these findings might potentially mean whilst describing the psychological, social, and political contexts in which the data was gathered.

Reflections on Methodology: Cross-Cultural Research, Ethics, the Fear Factor, and the Politics of Migration

Cross-cultural research: The problem of terminology and how it may impact results. One important determining factor for the correct interpretation of these findings relates to the translation of some words that, depending on the context, can make a great difference vis-à-vis the reliability of findings. The best example is the pivotal word “community” that, in this case, underpins the notion of religion. Most of the quantitative scales I found available for the study of religion, trauma, and coping are standardized forms first written in English and developed by either European or American scholars and are therefore primarily designed within Christian cultural contexts. When translating sentences such as “how many times do you go to church on a given week, month, year?” or “how many times you meet with your religious community any given week, month, year?” I came across the problem of cultural understandings of the word “church” and “community.” Here, I must underline the differences in meaning. Mosque is not equal to church in the Islamic context, since it is associated with a religious place and not necessarily implies a direct connection with god or the religious community. However, if by the word “community” it is understood “religious community” (TR: *cemaat*/AR: *جَمَاعَات*) then this meaning can change with each locality. For example, in Turkey, the term *cemaat* is often associated with radical groups or sects. This perhaps partly explains why some Syrians, if aware of such difference in terminology (I could not establish if they were), would not want to engage with religious “communities” of that kind once in Turkey. More important perhaps, is that Turkish is used for most part instead of Arabic as the main language in Islamic religious communities in Turkey. Syrians are largely non-Turkish speakers and the language barrier alone can go a long way in explaining why my respondents did not seem to be keen on attending religious rituals or affirming belonging to a community in their new host country. To add to the problem, studying Syrians living in Turkey brings the burden of having to read a very fluid, dynamic social and cultural context full of inferences and difficult understandings about religion and community that must be understood within the context of Turkish nationalism and ways of practicing and understanding religion. I found evidence of such problem in other research concerned with refugees and migrants. For example, in [Kirmayer et al. \(2011\)](#) we find that:

Many studies report the toll of mental disorders resultant from the traumas associated with forced migration and most make us aware that recognizing and appropriately treating mental health problems among new immigrants and refugees in primary care poses a challenge

because of differences in language and culture and because of specific stressors associated with migration and re-settlement (p. E959).

Even though I consulted with Syrians about what they understood for the word “*cemaat*” (community), for example, it was hard to establish whether the meaning associated with the word in Turkish are not quickly absorbed into the way Syrians end up viewing membership to a religious community in Turkey – even when all participants involved in my research were Syrians. If we disregard this potentially cross-cultural knowledge of certain linguistic expressions, we risk building hypotheses based on a misinformed idea of why participants hold certain attitudes and why they behave in certain ways.

The ethics of researching people in extreme and/or vulnerable conditions. It is worth engaging in a discussion about the ethics of researching people in such vulnerable situation. Although the level of vulnerability varies between people, it is neither a science nor guess work to estimate that once we establish that one in two people have either witnessed or experienced some kind of potentially traumatic event, questions which may bring memories back to the front can be utterly discomfoting for someone trying to do precisely the opposite, that is, to forget and overcome such memories and episodes.

Another important consideration is that the very act of asking people to report on their religious beliefs in a time when many consider their religious beliefs to be responsible or partly responsible for the conflicts back at home, can spark a sudden reaction that is never easy to predict or control. Many of my requests for interviews were turned down simply because we were seen as “asking too many personal questions”. In fact, I was told that in Syria, it is considered “rude” to ask about religious beliefs. In similar previous research endeavors, I did not encounter this kind of resistance. The main difference this time was the addition of questions asking about religious affiliation, belief, and practice. This in turn led me to, once again, reflect on the meanings of the word “community”. Considering the surprising resistance I encountered in the data collection process, I found that although they are often referred to as “the Syrian community,” displaced Syrians living in Turkey are not at all a community as such, but a large number of *individuals* that are often very skeptical of one other. This situation has been witnessed by the junior researchers who helped me collect the data and reported to me informally so it is not visible in the data set just presented. What I learned from this was that there is a palpable fear of further persecution amongst the Syrian diaspora in Turkey that may be influencing the way Syrians view their own communities and therefore try to avoid being in contact with religious groups, or any kind of group or association at all, choosing instead to practice religion in their own private space without further engagement with the outside world. Considering that engagement with communal religious practices is said to improve the conditions in

which positive coping mechanisms are developed, it would be not farfetched to assume that Syrian refugees in Turkey are trapped in a situation where lack of trust between individuals (also between guests and hosts) may prevent them from strengthening their coping strategies, something that *may* enhance the risk and/or duration of mental conditions such as depression, PTSD, and other mental ailments.

The “Persecution Fear Factor” (PFF). During my research, I was confronted with many challenges. The greatest of these was related to the recruitment of potential interviewees. This not only prevented me from achieving a greater number of participants, but also distorted the dataset and therefore effect results: the “persecution fear factor” (or PFF for short), which can be broken down into two other elements: *trust* and *identification*.

The lack of trust between participants themselves was evident during the data-collection process. This is not a result of guest (Syrian)/host (Turks) relations, but rather the impossibility of trust building between Syrians themselves. Sectarian conflict and the possibility of government-backed spies in Turkey, as well as the militias in Syria tormenting the families and friends of people who have already fled abroad, all play heavily in the consciousness of Syrians living in Turkey. One example of the effects of the persecution fear factor is that interviewees often answered questions in a way that made them appear “neutral” to all political, religious, or conflict-related matters.

The main preoccupation was not necessarily about one’s own personal safety, but with the safety and protection of one’s friends, immediate family, and relatives still in Syria and with the possibility that by giving information about who they were and what they thought about their own condition, might somehow hinder their efforts to potentially reach Europe. Those interviewed were keen that I vehemently promised not to disclose any of my data to the Turkish government or with any European institution. The idea was that this could perhaps curtail the chances of some of my participants of going to Europe and being accepted as asylum seekers there. Many of those interviewed mentioned that Turkey was only a transitory, temporary shelter and that the real aim was to reach Europe, most likely by paying to “take the boat”. These dimensions are by no means evidenced in the quantitative data. Except for evidence from a previous study that shows willingness from the part of Syrians to appear grateful for being in Turkey (most answers from Syrians in one of my previous studies paint a suspiciously rosy picture of life as a refugee in Turkey), the fear factor and its impact on the data can only be accessed therefore by qualitative observation of the context and “off the record” type of comments I received before and after each interview. That said, on the quantitative data itself, one sees potential correlations that may give some validity to those qualitative observations. As mentioned, this points to a picture of fragmentation based on distrust amongst Syrian refugees themselves and between guests and hosts.

My findings seem to resonate with that of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2013, p. 13) when they reported that:

The effected populations [referring to Syrians in Turkey] have exhausted their resources and coping mechanisms [...]. Traditional community support mechanisms are failing due to displacement and distrust. This has had a significant impact on the psychological wellbeing of the population and may lead to increased protection risks

Politics of governance and how it impacts on academic work. As my study was being conducted, a document issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and submitted to my university (it was also published in a Turkish newspaper by a journalist – see [Odatv, 2015](#)). The document, stamped and signed by YÖK (the Turkish Higher Education Authority) was sent to university rectors all over the country. It contained direct instructions to universities and research institutions conducting fieldwork on Syrian refugees in Turkey that they stop doing so. The document solicited that research permissions must be acquired from the Ministry of Internal Affairs via a written application form. I believe that the intention was not simply to regulate and control the ethics of research, but to stop data collection altogether. This measure was not to be of any genuine concern concerning the well being of research participants, as any ethics committee would have highlighted. In any case, I would have fully complied with the exigencies of an ethics committee. The reason to curtail research on the needs of Syrian refugees in Turkey seemed to be, in this case, a political maneuver to contain information about Syrians within national borders. The Turkish press, which is closely watched by the government, rarely speaks in any significant depth about the Syrian diaspora in Turkish cities, or other issues related to other minorities. Although this prohibition has now been lifted, the situation of Syrians in Turkey has not become any better with the German led EU-Turkey agreement on the so-called “refugee crisis”.

In a related study ([Chemin, 2016](#)), I have perceived a gap between public opinion of Syrians in Turkey and the way the government has implemented their immigration policies. Most Turkish people we have interviewed are rather forthcoming in denouncing the government for, until recently, allowing so many Syrians across the borders, largely unchecked. The local populations of Adana, Mersin, and Tarsus have exhibited indifference, even hostility, toward Syrians. Most important, I detected a good amount of mistrust and suspicion from the part of Turks toward Syrians, but not the other way around. As it occurred in Lebanon and Jordan, Syrians are also discriminated in the labor market by having to submit to low wages if and when they do find work, mainly in construction, catering or, indeed, for some women, prostitution. Often they are not paid on time or not paid at all.

However, the problem in researching the Syrian diaspora in Turkey goes beyond the bureaucratic rigidity of the government and whatever ulterior motives it may have. Some of the researchers whom helped collected the data were Syrians

themselves and therefore spoke fluent Arabic. Yet, that only increased the fear of potential participants. If there is one finding I can report on with great accuracy is the relentless fear displayed by those I have approached to serve as participants in my research. Given that all research protocols are followed and that the research is guided by a strong sense of ethics and the right approvals, asking participants a few simple questions about their religious beliefs under other circumstances should present no real discomfort to participants. However, given the environment in which they are embedded, I was quickly made aware that there was no such thing as a “simple” question for displaced Syrians living in Turkey. Religion has become a hypersensitive topic as well as anything to do with what people have witnessed or experienced whilst in Syria or on the way to Turkey. This forced me to re-think my data-collection approach. In fact, I considered whether conducting research of this type under these conditions is something that should be done at all.

Conclusion

In this research, I wanted to learn how displaced Syrians cope with the trauma of being forced to emigrate, how they build resilience, and given the reported high-levels of religiosity amongst them, whether religion plays a role in helping displaced Syrians living in Turkey develop positive coping strategies. My findings seem to bring to the surface some interesting problems. One is the apparent negative correlation between traumatic events and community belonging. The other is the important role of adhesion to a religious community not only in building positive coping strategies to overcome potential traumatic events, but also in building resilience. I found a somewhat revealing correlation between age and the reporting of traumatic events that puts forward the notion that perhaps resilience increases with age. The latter implies that children and young adults would be particularly at risk in these situations.

Yet, despite the potential ontological implications of these findings, I find that there are epistemological problems that need to be addressed. As such, I attempted to build a skeptical picture of my own research based on the complexity involved in gathering data in hyper fluid and unstable political and social contexts. The transitioning forms of social life and organization that I found in my study of Syrians living in Mersin and Adana made me reflect more deeply on the methodological challenges that research on vulnerable participants, their traumas, fears, and futures can bring. Good intentions are not enough in this case. My aim has never been less than conducting objective research that informs and helps researchers, policy makers, and aid workers to better understand the field and make better decisions based on accurate and reliable information. However, the complexity of the human condition, especially when under the pressures and traumas imposed by forced migration, are enough to put in doubt whether this aim can ever be achieved without a certain degree of self-deception. My respondents were kind enough to comply with my request to

be interviewed, despite thinking that they could be potentially risking their security by doing so. Here, some questions become pertinent: Is there a limit to research after all? How much we can ask, given the nature and vulnerability of forced migrants?

When we encounter a displaced person, it is most likely that they will have already been through events that none of us would be willing to consider a pleasant memory. Their past is often haunting, their present fraught with difficulties, and their future altogether uncertain. For them, researchers like us may be just another man or woman holding a clipboard. We may be able to convince ourselves that our intentions are good and selfless and that our concern is true or that our methods are sound. However, we cannot deny the delicacy of the human psyche under these conditions and how much of an impact we may be causing when we try to conduct what we consider to be “our” work. We must be careful not to transform displaced and highly vulnerable people into statistics. For behind such data – and despite the incredible resilience displayed by forced migrants – we find suffering human beings. Our methods must reflect that and our aims must go beyond the reporting of findings if we are to achieve a true understanding of research outcomes.

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Türkiye’de Zorunlu Yerinden Edilme ve Akıl Sağlığı Çalışmalarında Metodolojik Sorunlar

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Öz

Türk akıl sağlığı uzmanları, son yirmi yılda uzun vadeli iki büyük zorunlu yerinden edilme olayının yönetimi konusunda pratik ve metodolojik zorluklarla karşılaştılar. Bu olaylardan birincisi dâhiliydi ve kendi ülkesinde yerinden edilenlerle (internally displaced persons ([IDPs]) yani Türkiye’deki Kürt nüfusla ilişkiliydi. İkincisi ise hariciydi ve 2011 yılından bu yana Suriye’den gelen mülteci hareketiyle ilişkiliydi. Zorunlu yerinden edilmenin sadece politik, hukuki ve sosyoekonomik sonuçları olmadığını, bunun yanında beden sağlığı ve psikolojik sağlık üzerinde olumsuz etkileri de bulunduğu dikkate alındığında zorunlu göçe maruz kalanların akıl sağlıkları üzerine araştırma yapmanın ne kadar hayati bir konu olduğu ve teşvik edilmesi gerektiği görülür. Bununla birlikte yerinden edilmiş kitlenin akıl sağlığı durumunu değerlendirmek, tartışmasız bir iş değildir. Sözü edilen her iki yerinden edilme olayının yönetiminin, araştırmacılara ve doğrudan müdahale alanında çalışan uzmanlara yönelik zorlukları ve karmaşık boyutları bulunmaktadır. Bu makalede, Türk akıl sağlığı uzmanlarının hem Türkiye’de yerinden edilmiş Kürt nüfusla hem de Suriyeli mültecilerle çalışırken karşılaştıkları metodolojik zorluklar ve güçlükler tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Akıl sağlığı • Zorunlu yerinden edilme • Suriyeliler • Türkiye • Metodoloji

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Received: 14 Kasım 2016

Revizyon Gönderimi: 22 Aralık 2016

Kabul: 10 Şubat 2017

Online First: 15 Eylül 2017

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ISSN 2149-4398 • eISSN 2458-8962

DOI 10.12738/mejrs.2017.2.2.0111 • Yaz 2017 • 2(2) • 281–297

Methodological Challenges in the Study of Forced Displacement and Mental Health in Turkey

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Abstract

Turkish mental health professionals have faced practical and methodological challenges regarding two major long-term forced displacement management issues over the past two decades. The first one of these issues is internal and relates to internally displaced persons (IDPs), which, in this case, refers to the Kurdish population in Turkey. The second is external and refers to the incoming movement of refugees from Syria since 2011. Considering how forced displacement carries not only political, legal, and socio-economic ramifications, but also negative physical and psychological health effects, research on the mental health of forced migrants is a vital issue that needs to be addressed. Yet, assessing the mental health condition of displaced populations is not an unequivocal task. Both of the aforementioned displacement management issues have their own complexities that present difficulties to researchers and to those working on direct intervention. In this paper, we discuss these complexities and the methodological challenges that Turkish mental health professionals have faced regarding both the Kurdish IDPs in Turkey and the incoming Syrian refugees.

Keywords

Mental health • Forced displacement • Syrians • Turkey • Methodology

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Received: November 14, 2016

Revision received: December 22, 2016

Accepted: January 10, 2017

Online First: September 15, 2017

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ISSN 2149-4398 • eISSN 2458-8962

DOI 10.12738/mejrs.2017.2.2.0111 • Summer 2017 • 2(2) • 281–297

Turkish mental health professionals have faced practical and methodological challenges regarding two major long-term forced displacement management issues within the past two decades. The first of these is *internal* and relates to internal displaced persons (IDPs), which, in this case, refers to the Kurdish population in Turkey. The second is *external* and refers to the incoming movement of refugees from Syria since 2011. For mental health professionals (MHPs), both movements present their own difficulties leading to peculiar research and intervention problems.

Forced migration or displacement is often composed of complex systems of migratory movements characterized by an escape from persecution, conflict, or repression, as well as from environmental, chemical, or nuclear disasters (see Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Loescher, Long, & Sigona, 2014; Triandafyllidou, 2015). The concept of forced displacement is often classified based on whether the displacement involves border crossings or whether it is contained within a single country's sovereign borders. Accordingly, while forced migrants crossing international borders are called asylum seekers or refugees, those who do not are called internal displaced persons (IDPs). However, forced migrants who have crossed international borders may not always be called refugees, since the word "refugee" implies a specific legal status. The Turkish authorities, for example, do not acknowledge Syrians as "refugees," refer to them instead as "temporary guests." The reason for this is because Turkey is one of the few signatories of the United Nations Convention referring to the Status of Refugees also known as the Geneva Convention, that still maintains a geographical limitation where only refugees coming from Europe can be given legal asylum status. Still, it is important to distinguish that an asylum seeker is a person who seeks status as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been assessed (Philips, 2013).

According to a 2014 UN estimate, almost 60 million people in the world are displaced. Amongst them are 38.2 million IDPs, 19.5 million refugees, and 1.8 million asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2015a). Because of its location, Turkey plays a crucial role in this refugee regime. Its territory forms an integral body over which interlocking migratory routes between Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa traverse. For this very reason, Turkey has a complex and multifaceted history of both immigration and emigration (Chemin & Gokalp-Aras, 2017). Since the Ottoman Empire (Chatty, 2010), Turkey has been a country of immigration. In the aftermath of the establishment of the new Republic in 1923, Turkey witnessed the mass forced emigration of hundreds of thousands of individuals particularly between the 1960s and the 1970s when Turkish citizens migrated to Western European countries, particularly West Germany. As a result of the Gulf Wars, Turkey has also come to be known as a transit country to the European Union for irregular migrants from such Asian countries as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan throughout the 1990s (Chemin & Gokalp-Aras, 2017; Sahin-Mencutek & Gokalp-Aras, 2015).

According to the data from the Directorate General of Migration Management of Turkey ([Türkiye Cumhuriyet İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü \[DGMM\], 2016](#)), from 1923 to 2002, more than 1.6 million people immigrated to Turkey, mostly from countries of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and from Iraq.

More recently, Turkey has faced two major and different types of displacement challenges. The first one relates to the internal displacement of mainly the Kurdish people from the east and southeast regions of Turkey. The second refers to the external displacement, that is to say, the cross-border migration of Syrians into Turkey following the beginning of the Syrian War in April 2011. Since then, the sheer scale and violence of the Syrian conflict has forced 2,728,986 Syrians to migrate ([UNHCR, 2016](#)) – “more than any other nation in the world and all European countries combined” ([Chemin & Gokalp-Aras, 2017, p. 1](#)).

These two displacement movements have their own specific characteristics that engender particular methodological challenges, especially for scholars concerned with mental health issues. Not only does forced displacement carry political, legal, and socio-economic ramifications, but it also affects the physical and psychological well-being of individuals. Both internal and cross-border displacement will thus be discussed in light of these methodological challenges as well as physical and mental health issues.

Studies of IDPs and Forced Migration in Turkey Concerning Mental Health Issues

As early as the 1990s, we find that several studies have concentrated on the mental health of IDPs in Turkey, in particular the provinces of Van, Diyarbakır, and Istanbul. One of these studies ([Kara, 1997](#)) dealt with the prevalence of mental illnesses among the individuals forced to migrate for security reasons from the villages and hamlets of Van to the provincial center. Of those who participated in the study, 30% were diagnosed with depression, 15% with panic disorders, and 19% with somatization disorders. The study relates the number of these findings to various factors, such as that the IDPs were living in an environment where their lives are under constant threat. Most of them had lost their jobs, their economic conditions had deteriorated, their community life had disintegrated, and they were living in inadequate conditions whilst losing their community support system. It was observed that the IDPs living in an environment of doubt, despair, and repressed anger had developed distrustful, reticent, and introverted behavioral patterns against a background of depression ([Kara, 1997](#)).

Another study by [Karali and Yuksel \(1997\)](#) looked at forced migration and torture. It studied 31 respondents, which the authors divided into two groups: 1) those who

had been forced to migrate from southeastern Anatolia, and 2) those who had been politically active and based in Istanbul. Their findings showed that those IDPs having been subjected to torture were more prone to develop psychological problems. Such symptoms as lack of concentration, feelings of uneasiness, irritation and continuous, albeit involuntary, painful flashbacks were observed in 70% of the participants.

A larger study by [Sir, Bayram, and Özkan \(1998\)](#) was conducted in Diyarbakır. Interviews were held with 100 people who had been forced to migrate from the districts of Diyarbakır to the provincial center. The study also interviewed 80 people who were not migrants. Following these interviews, 66% of those studied were diagnosed with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (see also [Cetrez & DeMarinis, 2017](#); [Chemin, 2017](#)).

[Aker, Ayata, Özeren, Buran, and Bay \(2002\)](#) carried out another study in Istanbul where they compared groups of people who had been subjected to torture, people who had been subjected both to torture and internal displacement, people who had only suffered internal displacement, and others who had not been subjected to either of these events. The purpose of this study was to better understand the psychiatric consequences of internal displacement and the potential degrees of traumatization. The majority of participants in this study consisted of young, single Kurdish men with low levels of education and income. According to Aker et al.'s findings, depression and PTSD were the most commonly observed disorders among participants. However, the most crucial aspect of their findings was the fact that those subject to internal displacement had a higher tendency of developing mental illness, and if people subjected to torture had also suffered internal displacement, the rate of psychopathology increased accordingly. Moreover, traumatic events suffered during displacement increased the frequency of psychopathology. To examine these findings more comprehensively, it will be useful to mention reactions to personal loss and the resultant mourning behavior. The loss of a place of settlement, as much as the loss of a loved one, can shape psychopathology and cause depressive symptoms. However, in the case of IDPs, it is difficult to observe the stages of shock, denial, negotiation, and acceptance clearly, all of which constitute the processes of mourning. People generally undergo a stage of intense denial shaped by anger. What is noteworthy is that in the case of IDPs, the anger is generally directed at the state, the government, and the authorities.

There are also gender-related and cultural aspects to this, as traumatic stress can be expressed in different ways by men and women. Somatization, for example, is a particularly evident phenomenon among “eastern” cultures in Turkey and it is particularly common among women. Many women have difficulty expressing the problems they encounter, leading them to somatize them, such as by developing neck

pain, headaches, backaches, gastrointestinal complaints, and thus expressing stress through their bodies (Aker, Çelik, Kurban, Ünalán, & Yüksek, 2005).

At times, people may have developed somatization symptoms prior to internal displacement. In such cases, internal displacement may aggravate their antecedent problems. Moreover, internal displacement can cause despair and a serious loss of control. Given this evidence, it is clear that there is a need for diagnostic approaches other than PTSD in the conceptualization of psychiatric problems related to internal displacement (Aker et al., 2005).

Zübeyit and Bayraktar (2008) compared the life satisfaction, self-esteem, and social support networks of adolescents that had migrated to those that had not. They divided the sample into the following groups: adolescents who had not migrated and were living in an urban area (in this case İzmir, a city located in the southwest region of Turkey), adolescents from two small towns, adolescents living in villages in the region of Mardin (an ancient city located in the southeast region of Turkey), adolescents who had migrated to İzmir from villages around Mardin, and adolescents who had migrated to the towns from nearby villages. The sample included 305 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 15 years, 152 men and 153 women.

The life satisfaction and self-esteem scores of the adolescents who had migrated to İzmir were lower than those of the adolescents who had not migrated. Differing from the other groups, adolescents living in İzmir had more friends in their social support networks. There were no age or gender differences between life satisfaction, self-esteem, and social support network scores. Nor were there any differences of acculturation levels of the adolescents who had migrated. While life satisfaction scores of the adolescents who had attended school were higher, the acculturation level of those adolescents working full-time was lower than their other counterparts. In addition, the acculturation level of those adolescents who had migrated but also wanted to return to where they had come from was lower. The acculturation level of those adolescents who had migrated to nearby towns was higher than that of those who had migrated to a remote city. The authors hence concluded that migration to a remote settlement appears to have a negative impact on the psychological well-being of the adolescents who migrate.

A study by Ataman (2008) aimed to investigate the prevalence of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among adults who were living in the Diyarbakir (the largest city in the southeast region of Turkey) city center. 708 participants were included in the study, of which 47.9% were found to have experienced a traumatic life experience. The most prevalent of these cases consisted of forced displacement and having witnessed murder or injury. The prevalence of lifelong and current PTSD was found to be 34.9% and 15.1%, respectively. It was concluded that the prevalence of traumatic experiences

and the subsequent development of PTSD was high among people living in areas of conflict and that treatment opportunities were inadequate. An important finding of this study was the association between the range of prevalence rates of traumatic experiences and risk factors for PTSD in an armed conflict region in Turkey.

Still, despite all these studies, we have only a limited experience in studying, gathering data, and researching IDPs in Turkey. More importantly, this happens at a time when mental health professionals face an ever-increasing number of displaced people in Turkey. This is a great struggle considering that Turkey is the largest refugee hosting country in the world (Aker et al., 2005). For this reason, we now turn to some of the methodological issues regarding the study and treatment of IDPs in Turkey.

The Neglected Problem of IDPs in Turkey: Methodological Challenges

Although much attention has been placed on refugees, especially on those fleeing to Europe, the issue of IDPs has received much less attention in both the wider media as well as in academic literature. We can define internally displaced persons (IDPs) as people who are forced to leave their homes but who remain within their country's borders (UNHCR, 2016). During the armed conflict in the eastern and southeastern Anatolian regions of Turkey between 1985 and 1999, a large wave of internal displacement took place. During that period, the number of IDPs rose from 2.8 million to 4.8 million (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu [TÜİK], 2005). However, for many years, this displacement did not draw any attention from governmental and non-governmental organizations, universities, media, or public opinion.

Mental health professionals also overlooked this important fact. The displacement process included many human rights violations and traumatic incidents. IDPs in Turkey, therefore, represent a highly complex humanitarian emergency case that differs from other internal displacement incidents in the world because of its unique characteristics and long duration (Aker et al., 2005). Over one million people in Turkey became IDPs in the 1990s (TÜİK, 2005). Since then, IDP resettlement took place all over Turkey, though it concentrated in the east and southeast regions of the country, deeply affecting the community life in those localities whilst creating a negative impact on the mental health of those displaced. As a matter of course, community mental health problems became common and were observed as a result of this man-made disaster (Aker et al., 2005).

Indeed, internal displacement is a psychologically traumatic process for those who are displaced, and is determined by the pre- and post-displacement characteristics, as well as the displacement history of the individuals in question (Siriwardhana & Stewart, 2012). More importantly, forced migration cannot be regarded as a single traumatic event, even if this presumption is widespread. This assumption has in fact

become one of the greatest challenges for those working with displaced people or forced migrants. Victims of forced migration are subject to many kinds of traumatic events that may occur repeatedly over a long period of time, such as the continuous day to day experience of war, loss, witnessing of violent deaths, torture, physical or sexual assault, as well as rape and death threats (Phillips, 2013).

Therefore, the ongoing nature of the displacement process includes many risk factors that can easily later develop into mental health problems. In this case, it is necessary to evaluate the pre- and post-displacement characteristics based on a psychosocial perspective. Unfortunately, this gives rise to another methodological challenge. Here, access to health care and negative parameters of public health as well as ethnic, religious, and cultural differences are factors to be considered. Additionally, the educational, political, and social problems, as well as problems in employment and sheltering, that manifest post-migration create a conflict zone. Various forms of discrimination, including xenophobia, further aggravate this situation. All of these factors, when added to acculturative stress, are directly related to the mental health status of displaced persons (Phillips, 2013). Despite the large IDP population in Turkey, a variety of problems such as neglect, ongoing conflicts, unsafe environments, and discrimination have made it very difficult to conduct studies on the individuals who constitute the IDP population. Both the methodology of the studies as well as community-based interventions were affected by these aforementioned problems (Aker et al., 2005).

No systematic or structured intervention program exists in Turkey that targets IDPs specifically. There are also no adequate or reliable research or data sets on the mental health problems of IDPs (Aker et al., 2005). This may be due to various reasons, summarized as follows.

First, since IDPs do not cross borders as international asylum seekers do, they have been afforded no defined legal status in Turkey. Hence, they are destitute of customized policies and rights. Second, internal displacement mostly arises from political conflicts in the region, the most notorious of which is the ongoing, armed, conflict between the Turkish Military Forces and the PKK (the Kurdish Worker's Party). Therefore, it is a complicated task to work on the causes and consequences of these ongoing and extremely politically sensitive incidents, for most mental health professionals do not wish to study this topic. Yet, this is no simple lack of interest. It happens because scientific studies are prone to incur the wrath of both sides of the conflict, not to mention misinterpretations and generalizations of research findings in the media that can easily morph into direct antagonism from the Turkish government and Turkish society more broadly. More concerning even, unfortunately, is that too often in Turkey, scientific studies tend to be viewed as materials for political debates rather than the work of scientifically minded scholars (Aker et al., 2005).

Third, there is a temporal problem that we must keep in mind. Over the years, the number of IDPs has soared to approximately one million people, rendering it a visible phenomenon. However, although the IDP population in Turkey has increased steadfastly, the process of migration caused by forced displacement has been spread out over a long period of time. That is because IDPs do not migrate jointly or simultaneously. As conflict arises, people migrate in small groups at different points in time. Because the process of displacement is in this case extended over the years, it has been often overlooked.

Fourth, since the conditions which cause forced migration are often traumatic, the unsafe nature of the process presents obstacles for health professionals with regards to establishing vital trusting relationship with IDPs. Without trust between healthcare professionals and the victims of forced migration, very little can be achieved. Since IDPs had experienced many traumatic events, including the witnessing of or engagement in armed conflicts, the witnessing of or subjection to torture or even the loss of a loved one, their basic trust in human relations and notions of security, autonomy, and self-worth are usually severely damaged. For that reason, key professionals, some of whom work for NGOs, have been of enormous value as they reach out to IDPs whilst establishing trusting relationships (Aker et al., 2005).

Fifth, another very important issue relates to language. A language barrier forms an important obstacle for some IDPs, especially for women. Since mental health professionals have extreme difficulty in finding professional translators, another mental health worker who speaks Kurdish or a relative are usually allocated as translators. This implies a lack of accuracy and bias in translation work. Lack of professional translators can undermine the quality of the community-based psychosocial studies that are supposed to produce accurate assessments of the situation on the ground.

Sixth, poverty acts as a substantial obstacle for IDPs seeking help. Without the most basic resources, reaching treatment centers and participating in a research program, for example, become limited options to IDPs. Indeed, lack of resources like shelter, food, and transportation has prevented many people from receiving appropriate professional help. Even in larger metropolitan areas, IDPs have faced transportation difficulties while attempting to reach health centers set up and run by NGOs or designated state-funded hospitals. Unfortunately, these are non-exhaustive examples of only some of the obstacles that prevent a better assessment of IDPs in Turkey. We could add many more issues of no less importance to this list.

Another important fact is that most (if not all) surveys conducted with IDPs in Turkey have been cross sectional, and samples are not representative (Aker et al., 2005). Most of the time, the snowball method and convenient sampling from populations at risk were employed in order to establish a trusting relationship and

to encourage the participants to join the survey interviews (Aker et al., 2002). Yet, snowballing can, of course, present its own challenges—not least the obvious problem of sample bias. Nevertheless, and despite the aforementioned shortcomings, we cannot ignore the recurring nature of findings indicating persistent traumatic stress, depression, and somatization as common symptoms found amongst the IDP population in Turkey. Major Depression was the most common comorbid disorder for trauma related disorders. This is important because medically unexplained symptoms or somatizations are the most challenging ones in the context of psychosocial interventions (Aker et al., 2005).

As a result of this brief analysis, we can conclude that most studies carried out in Turkey to assess the mental health of IDPs have been largely inadequate in terms of both quality and quantity (Aker et al., 2005). We now turn to a discussion of cross-border forced displacement with a particular focus on Syrian refugees in Turkey, as well as the methodological issues regarding the study of this vulnerable population.

Displacement from Syria to Turkey: Methodological Issues

From now on, we will be using the terms “refugee” and “displaced persons” interchangeably. At this juncture, we do well to underline that according to Turkish law, Syrian asylum seekers are not accepted as *de facto* refugees in Turkey. As it was mentioned in the introduction, Turkey adopted the 1951 Refugee Convention securing the rights of refugees although it kept the “geographical-limitation” by not signing the subsequent 1967 protocol. This means that the recognition of one’s refugee status in Turkey is still restricted to Europeans, while non-Europeans receive temporary status (conditional refugee status humanitarian residence permit, or temporary protection) and are expected to resettle in a third country at some point. Accordingly, Syrians in Turkey have received “temporary protection” status. Nevertheless, to facilitate our analysis and because of the difficulty in nomenclature, Syrian migrants in Turkey will be referred henceforth as “refugees” even though they are not legally defined as such.

The Syrian uprising began in the early spring of 2011 and according to The United Nations, the death toll resultant from conflicts in Syria has surpassed 250,000. At least one million people have been injured and nearly 11 million have been displaced with approximately 6 million Syrians having fled to other countries (UNHCR, 2016). Besides acute casualties and displacement, human right violations such as the use of indiscriminate torture and prohibited (including chemical) weapons, sieges, denial, or blockage of humanitarian aid, attacks on medical facilities and workers, unlawful killings, deaths in custody, unfair trials, summary executions, and abductions as well as disappearances, all have been reported by Amnesty International (2015), to mention only one of the dozens of NGOs and Human Rights organizations who have reported similar episodes. Many minority groups and sects such as Christians and

Shia Muslims have been repeatedly threatened, attacked, and persecuted during this war. While the conflict in Syria has no end in sight, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey continues to rise.

The forced migration from Syria to Turkey officially begun with 250 Syrians crossing the Hatay border in April 2011. Soon afterwards, Turkey declared an “open door policy” regarding Syrians crossing into the country. Six years later this policy has resulted in the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey reaching 3 million (UNHCR, 2017) – though this number is likely to be larger once we consider those refugees not registered with the UNHCR. As a consequence of the Syrian Civil War, the Turkish Republic has thus become the largest refugee-hosting country worldwide for the first time in modern history.

As with the situation of IDPs in Turkey, war and displacement has led to traumatic events that refugees more often than not have no choice but to face without much support, events that may result in significant mental health problems. An assessment of the mental health of international forced migrants in Turkey endorsed this claim when it indicated that most Syrian refugees in Turkey have a need for psychological support (Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Başkanlığı [AFAD], 2013). This fact strongly suggests that there is a critical need for developing valid research methods and convenient psychosocial interventions with respect to Syrian refugees in Turkey. In order to achieve these objectives, Turkish Mental Health Professionals (MHPs) are forced to deal with some difficulties within the field, some of which mirror those we find in the study and treatment of IDPs, such as lack of language skills, sharp cultural differences, the sheer size of the target population, availability of only very limited resources, the ongoing and unstable nature of Turkish internal and external politics, and the threat of the Syrian conflict itself.

One of the most crucial starting points would be to collect epidemiological data. Since epidemiological studies form the base for further studies, including interventions, they should provide as much information as possible. The prevalence of mental health issues gives us a clue as to what to do next. These studies should include not only the prevalence of mental illnesses caused by forced movement, but also the examination of the causes that are associated with these mental health problems. To guarantee the success of future studies involving Syrian populations in Turkey, it is vital to address pre-migration experiences, the migration process, post-migration living conditions and, as is the case with IDPs, acculturative stress. The basic material needs and availability of social services to refugees should also be carefully assessed.

Given the complexity of the issue, using quantitative methods alone may not provide sufficient data to understand the problem. Therefore, for best results, epidemiological

surveys should be combined with qualitative enquiries, such as in depth interviews, so that researchers and medical health professionals (MHPs) can draw a more complete and elaborate picture of the situation on the ground. While conducting studies on the mental health of refugees in Turkey, researchers should be aware of the methodological challenges ahead. For example, there are some characteristics of the Syrian refugee population that might make the studies vulnerable to confounders. For instance, a group of Turkish mental health professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, and public health specialists) from different universities and NGOs in Turkey, including the two authors of this paper, recently conducted an epidemiological study with displaced Syrian people supported by the World Health Organization (WHO). As we did in the case with IDPs, we identified some important methodological challenges. Some of the following issues parallel those regarding IDPs, albeit in different degrees. More importantly, perhaps, we also found different concerns that we think are worth listing.

First and foremost, there is a chronological component that needs to be taken into consideration. Displaced Syrians have arrived in Turkey at different points in time. This is important to examine because the time of arrival indicates differences in socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, as well as differences in the severity of the experienced traumatic life experiences. For instance, people who came as soon as the war in Syria started are called “first refugee communities.” They are mostly Arab Sunnis and have less war experiences compared to the latecomers. Ezidis, Shia Muslims, and Christians, on the other hand, have come as part of what we describe as “second” and “third communities.” They have experienced not only the war between revolutionaries and the regime more intensely, but have also witnessed more intense violence and received more overall threats to their lives.

The second issue relates to how the refugees themselves see their own future. Syrian displaced persons have different motivations and needs. For example, some may want to remain in Turkey after fleeing Syria, whilst some may desire to return to their homeland once the conflict ends. Others may want to move abroad and use Turkey as a transit country, mainly to reach various European countries. These motivations and needs all come with different social and mental health effects, and given such context, new questions about research methodologies as well as psychosocial services must then be considered.

A third concern considers the issue of reliable information and documentation. That is to say, because of poor record keeping, it is very difficult to determine where refugees are residing. Hence, it is almost impossible to perform household surveys with refugees under these circumstances. Although it may create some bias in the data collection process, snowballing and convenient sampling methods can be used for the refugees living outside of the camps. However, these are far from ideal. Since it is hard to assess the number of refugees in Turkey as a result of the rapid movement

of some refugees, there is the difficulty in establishing a representative sample size. Hence, most of the time, researchers are unable to generalize their findings. These difficulties are made worse by governmental restrictions on research in this area. The conducting of such studies in Turkey depends on authorization from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with many being denied permission. Yet, this is not surprising given the current political situation in Turkey and the sensitivity of the issue vis-à-vis Turkish nationalists.

Fifth, another concern involves language barriers, more so in this case than with IDPs, who tend to speak better Turkish, if they are not perfectly fluent. Although many Syrian refugees have been living in Turkey for at least two years, most of them cannot speak Turkish to satisfy even the most basic level of conversation. The assessment questionnaires must therefore be adapted to Arabic. As such, a researcher who is fluent in Arabic must also be present to conduct the interviews. Face-to-face interview techniques seem more appropriate, though they still require fluency in Arabic, which is a requirement that often cannot be met because of the lack of such professionals in Turkey.

Sixth, many Syrian refugees who were asked to join the study have refused out of the fear that the information that they provide might be shared with the regime in Syria and the Turkish government, or that their participation in these studies would impede them from reaching Europe in some way or other.

Seventh, it is a challenge to find scales and interviews in Arabic that are compatible, or have been tested previously through application in other studies. There are almost no standardized measures for Syrian Arabic that can be used in psychosocial research of this kind. Again, this brings about the aforementioned, recurring problem of language. In this case, the researchers need to rely on (preferably Syrian) Arabic-speaking mental health workers involved in the study to administer the interviews. However, their qualifications for such a task, as we have already mentioned, are often limited. Extensive training sessions then have to be conducted, which result in extra financial costs and delays. In some regions in which we conducted our studies, there were no Arabic-speaking mental health workers at all. Instead, Turkish professionals administered the scales via translators. This is by no means ideal, because although they are bilingual, these people are neither professional translators, nor do they have familiarity with the academic setting. Even if the costs of professional translators were to be met, the actual number of professional Arabic-Turkish translators would not be sufficient to complete any enquiry in a timely manner.

Eighth, there are no defined ethical principles for refugee mental health studies. Ninth, and finally, there are no referral centers to which refugees in need of psychological support in Turkey can be sent.

Now that we have laid out some of the most common obstacles to the study of both IDPs and cross-border, in this case Syrian, refugees in Turkey, we move on to a discussion of possible solutions to these problems.

Discussion: How to Overcome Some of the Challenges Posed by Mass Displacement in Turkey?

To overcome the difficulties we have highlighted, we recommend that perhaps scholars, policy makers, and those professionals on the front line of intervention should base their approaches on a more holistic perspective. For instance, it is important that community mental health programs and outreach models be integrated while conducting mental health research regarding refugees, as well as actual case interventions. That is to say, these interventions should be community-based and culturally sensitive. Also, a multi-sectorial approach to mental health and social care seems important since the refugees are faced with different socioeconomic, cultural, and psychological problems. In order to deal with the problems arising in disasters and humanitarian emergencies more effectively, MHPs should give preference to a thoroughly multidisciplinary approach whilst working closely with scholars and frontline professionals of fields as varied as economics, sociology, and medicine, as well as with professionals working for both national and international organizations (government-based or otherwise).

In order to establish sustainable mental health services and enable the refugees to use their own resources, it is crucial to involve Syrian mental health workers in both epidemiological and intervention studies. Therefore, capacity-building activities, such as mental health training, should be carried out. Turkish MHPs have substantial experience related to mass traumatic events like internal displacement caused by earthquakes, mine disasters, or mass murders caused by suicide bombers. This experience is a great advantage for capacity building efforts and we should take advantage of this.

Given the nature and size of the Syrian population now in Turkey, mental health professionals have to stress the role of community intervention and participation. In that, studies addressing any kind of disrupting events (e.g. gender-related violence) should be conducted and necessary interventions should be carried out. The integration of mental health care with culture and traditions, the empowerment of refugees, and the building of a relationship between mental and physical health must be underlined.

Mental health care programs should be practical, culturally appropriate, and inexpensive. This also means that refugee mental health programs should have clear short-term and long-term treatment goals, cost effective evaluation and a clear program of intervention, added to well-designed prevention methods in terms of both time and expenditures. Psychiatrists and mental health workers in Turkey should be

trained to deal with these problems. There is a need to develop a realistic “package” of mental health care for refugees in Turkey (both for IDPs and those coming from Syria) that not only caters to the particular needs of specific ethnic and cultural sensitivities, but that also involves assistance in the training of staff. Continuity of services and multi-agency linkages must form an indispensable aspect of these programs. All these actions must be supported by government policies, as well as non-governmental organizations with either national or international outreach.

According to the basic principles of psychosocial intervention programs, the research targets should focus not only on the assessment of needs and on psychopathology, but also on the duration of the war/conflict and its effects on the populations involved.

Given the failure of the most recent peace talks and the impossibility of even a temporary ceasefire, it seems that the Syrian conflict must be forecast as a long-duration conflict that has no end in sight. For this reason, the majority of Syrian people live in a protracted state of asylum without being able to return to their homeland. It is also possible that Syrians living in Turkey will soon become a recognized ethnic minority group (Chemin & Gokalp-Aras, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial that acculturation issues must form a necessary part of the intervention and research agenda from now on. It is important to assess the magnitude of acculturative stress and how it affects the mental health of Syrian refugees. This is because the encounter between the two cultures may reveal adaptation and acculturation problems, such as negative attitudes (prejudice or discrimination) toward each other, discrepancies in acculturation expectations of the host society, and acculturation orientations of the refugees, to cite a few (see Cetrez & De Marinis, 2017; Chemin, 2016, 2017).

The main objective in studies and interventions involving Syrian refugees should be the development of different solutions for different socio-demographic groups. This should be done whilst Syrians go through the transition from “temporary guests” to recognized citizens. We recommend some further and urgent considerations aimed at local mental health workers in different parts of the country and for NGOs working in the field.

For instance, psychosocial services should be carried out in the form of community-based treatment or at care facilities whilst community based mental health facilities must be supported by the government, NGOs, and other potential stakeholders. In the first five years, these facilities can be organized as the equivalents of current mental health facilities in Turkey and integration can be provided sooner. Also of importance, training and capacity building activities should be carried out for Syrian professionals, including mental health workers, teachers, and other key persons. Training programs should be supported by governmental policies. This should include having the necessary informational resources available in Arabic. In turn, and also of great importance, psychosocial support should be provided for the professionals

in contact with refugees on a regular basis – that is, those frontline professionals who may come to suffer from mental health conditions as a result of their not only strenuous, but also psychologically and emotionally demanding work. Although Turkish and Syrian mental health professionals have faced such difficulties in their research methodologies, they have enough experience to overcome these challenges if the appropriate resources are in place. For this to happen, suitable policies must be established. These should be based on information from appropriate scholarly research and other professionally conducted evidence-based, rigorous assessments.

Conclusion

The two cases of displacement presented in this paper, the Kurdish internal displacement and the Syrian refugee cross-border inflow, are amongst the greatest and most challenging incidents that Turkish mental health professionals and scholars attempting to learn more about the affected populations face in Turkey today. Although both movements have their own unique characteristics, they also share a number of common problems that have been identified. Based on the assessment of this diversity of obstacles faced by both scholars and mental health professionals in Turkey, we advocate a community-based approach to deal with some of the most pressing problems that prevent Turkey from better adapting and helping people suffering the dire consequences of forced displacement, be they IDPs or international refugees. In this case, proper assessment of the status and of the needs of displaced people seems to be the crucial factor, one that must be followed by the implementation of capacity-building efforts as well as the substantial improvement of psychosocial services available to vulnerable populations. All of these steps present their own methodological challenges. However, we emphasize that these challenges are of a practical order and can be overcome through multi-sectorial, culturally sensitive, multi-disciplinary, and sustainable approaches to both research and intervention that count on the support of government and non-governmental stakeholders alike.

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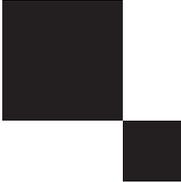
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