SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM APPLICANTS IN GREECE

Maria Kiagia, Maria Kriona, & Eugenie Georgaca
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstract: This paper examines the social integration of refugees and asylum applicants in the city of Thessaloniki. Through semi-structured interviews with 12 refugees and asylum applicants, which were qualitatively analysed using the interpretative-phenomenological method, the refugees' living conditions and needs were explored, as well as their views on their treatment by the state and society. The participants describe the difficulties they face in work, learning Greek and the examination process of their asylum application. They also express their sense of abandonment by the Greek state, in contrast to their feeling of cultural similarity with and of acceptance by Greek citizens. The present study contributes to the trend of research which, following the principles of critical and community psychology, aims to give voice to socially excluded groups, to highlight their point of view, aiming towards their empowerment.

Key words: Asylum applicants, Giving voice, Refugees, Social integration.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Geneva Convention, signed by the UN in 1951, a refugee is every person who is found outside their country of origin and cannot return to it due to well-founded and justified fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, political convictions or participation in certain social groups (United Nations Commission on Human Rights [UNCHR], 2000). Before the presentation and discussion of the findings of the specific study, which concerns the social integration of refugees and asylum applicants, we discuss the role of research in giving voice to socially marginalised groups, the definition of social integration, as well as the

Address: Eugenie Georgaca, School of Psychology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 541 24 Thessaloniki, Greece. Phone: +30-2310-997472. Fax: +30-2310-997384. E-mail: georgaca@psy.auth.gr

legislation and systems of reception and integration of refugees and asylum applicants in Europe and in Greece.

Research as giving voice

The literature and research regarding the social integration of refugees, which will be examined in more detail in the sections dealing with the refugees in Europe and Greece respectively, tend to focus on the discussion of the political and legislative regulations with regard to refugees and asylum applicants (Black, 2003; Böcker & Havinga, 1998; European Council on Refugees and Exiles [ECRE], 2003; Gilbert, 2004; Hayter, 2004; Lavenex, 1998; Papadimitriou & Papageorgiou, 2005; Sitaropoulos, 2002; Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004; Statewatch, 2006; Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003; UNCHR, 2000; Vink & Meijerink, 2003). Despite the fact that the relevant studies usually adopt a critical stance and stress the insufficiency of existing measures, the discourse they articulate derives from the standpoint of their authors and the organisations to which the authors belong and, respectively, expresses the views of the authors and the organisations that are active in the field about the needs and conditions of living of refugees. On the other hand, during the last few years there is an increasing number of studies that attempt to highlight the perspective of refugees and asylum applicants themselves. These studies are usually based on qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with refugees (Archer, Hollingworth, Maylor, Sheibani, & Kowarzik, 2005; Βγενόπουλος, 1998; Korać, 2003b; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Papadopoulou, 2002, 2004; Puggioni, 2005; Wanche, 2004). The present study belongs to this research trend.

The main assumption of the researchers who aim to highlight the discourse of refugees is that when the needs of refugees, the way of best meeting their needs and the reality of their social integration are defined, studied and evaluated by others, the refugees themselves remain objects both of social policy and of the researcher's gaze. If, however, we accept that research is a form of action which does not simply reflect reality but produces and promotes specific systems of knowledge (Δικαίου, 2003; Parker, 2005; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002), then the issue of who the research objects and subjects are as well as the implications of the knowledge produced are rendered particularly important.

The emphasis on the experience and the views of the people immediately concerned, in this particular case of refugees and asylum applicants, is consistent with the main principles of community psychology, that is, respect for diversity, study of phenomena in their context and emphasis on emancipation (Banyard & Miller, 1998). Emancipation, which constitutes a central goal of critical approaches in

psychology and more widely in the social sciences, refers to the enhancement of the power of the less powerful and consequently the improvement of their life (Prilleltensky, 1997; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). One of the coordinates of research that aims towards emancipation is the documentation of the experiences and views of marginalized groups (Banyard & Miller, 1998). In this way, groups that in the dominant political and research practices are confined to the role of the object, are rendered subjects who can define their needs, evaluate their conditions of life and articulate their own discourse with regard to their experience (Πανταζής & Δικαίου, 2007). Qualitative methodology, which is open and flexible with regard to research design and which focuses on the experience of the participants, is appropriate for this approach. Also, treating the researcher as a social actor and the research activity as a process of interaction, which forms the background of many qualitative approaches, allows the researchers to adopt a socially aware and activist stance with regard to the research objectives and design as well as the collection of research material (Havercamp, 2005; Kidder & Fine, 1997; Parker, 2005; Ponterotto, 2002).

In the present study, through the interviews, the refugees and asylum applicants were given the opportunity to speak themselves, and not some relevant agency, about the difficulties they face and their needs in central aspects of their lives, such as their living conditions, work and education prospects as well as their interaction with the citizens of Thessaloniki. We hope that the publication of the conclusions of this study will contribute to raising awareness regarding the size of the problem and consequently to mobilising both the scientific community and wider society towards addressing the real needs of refugees.

Social integration

Clarifying the term "social integration" is not an easy undertaking, since by common admission the term is characterized by lack of consent, ambiguity and instability (Castles, Korać, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2002; Korać, 2003a). Social integration is sometimes defined as the process through which refugees become members of the society in which they are settled (Valtonen, 1998), while maintaining their national and cultural identity and culture (Valtonen, 2004). These definitions present social integration as a one-way process, which is the sole responsibility of the refugees who settle in a new country (Hollands, 2001) and not of the citizens of that country. On the other hand, other authors define social integration as a two-way change process, which includes both the refugees and the already settled community of the country that receives them and which requires reciprocal adaptation (European Communities, 2002; Hollands, 2001; Korać, 2003a).

Integration is extended to multiple sectors of social life, such as work, education, accommodation and interpersonal relations (Castles et al., 2002; European Communities, 2002; Valtonen, 1998, 2004). The level and quality of integration can differ in each one of these sectors, and it can be influenced by factors such as the conditions of exit from the country of origin, legal status, the personal characteristics of the individual and the characteristics of the society that receives them (Castles et al., 2002).

In the present study the term "social integration" refers to the way in which the refugees function in various spheres of social life in Greece, but also to the way Greek society, including the official governmental policy, treats them from the moment of their arrival up to the moment the study was conducted.

Refugees and asylum applicants in Europe

The literature on the refugees in the European space tends to focus on the European political and legislative measures with regard to asylum applicants and refugees (Black, 2003; Böcker & Havinga, 1998; ECRE, 2003; Gilbert, 2004; Hayter, 2004; Lavenex, 1998; Statewatch, 2006; Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003; UNCHR, 2000; Vink & Meijerink, 2003). It also tends to adopt a critical stance with regard to the social integration of refugees and it often expresses strong criticisms against the reception and integration systems of each country. A small part of European research investigates the mental health of refugees (Claasen, Ascoli, Berhe, & Priebe, 2005; Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005; Watters, 2001; Watters & Ingleby, 2004). Finally, a new current of European studies examines the social integration of refugees, as they experience it, via semi-structured in-depth interviews (Archer et al., 2005; Korać, 2003b; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Puggioni, 2005).

The policies with regard to refugees are internationally regulated by two main documents, the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, ratified in Geneva in 1951, and the Protocol of New York of 1967 (UNCHR, 2000). At a European level, several agreements and conventions have been ratified, in the context of harmonising policies regarding immigration and asylum between the European Union member states. The most important of these are the Schengen Agreement (1990) and the Dublin Convention (1990), as well as a series of Regulations and Directives that resulted from the decision that was taken at the meeting of the European Council in Tampere, Finland (1999) to adopt a Common European Asylum System that would be based on the Geneva Convention of 1951 (Council of the European Union, 2000, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2004, 2005; European Union, 2004). However, the effort towards European collaboration has not been successful and the policies are limited to the minimum common denominator (Vink & Meijerink, 2003).

Half a century after the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the institution of asylum appears to be in crisis in Europe and in other developed countries (UNCHR, 2000). It is evident that the goal of Europe is, on the one hand, to keep asylum applicants outside its borders (Gilbert, 2004) and, on the other, to limit the rights of those who finally enter (UNCHR, 2000). This is in contrast to the international law on the protection of refugees (Gilbert, 2004; Lavenex, 1998; UNCHR, 2000). In practice, the absence of a court that would supervise the application of the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the Protocol of New York of 1967 has allowed the member-states to interpret the international refugee law independently and according to their own policies (Gilbert, 2004). This strategy is facilitated by the ambiguity that characterises the relevant Directives and Regulations which have been ratified by the European Council (Statewatch, 2006).

With respect to reception and integration policies, there is a difference, even if not always explicit, between the northern and southern countries (Puggioni, 2005) or between the countries with a long "tradition" in refugee reception and those for which the phenomenon of refugee reception is relatively recent, as they themselves witnessed the immigration of their own citizens in previous decades (Mestheneos, Ioannidi, & Gaunt, 1999). The northern states have developed strict reception and integration systems (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002), which cover the basic needs of refugees but simultaneously render them absolutely dependent upon the state, with minimal possibilities for independent decision-making in central aspects of their lives (Ghorashi, 2005). Also, many northern countries implement a "diffusion" strategy, that is to say the uniform distribution of refugees in various regions (Wren, 2003). This policy serves the distribution of reception costs between different regions, the prevention of social tensions that are supposed to be caused by the concentration of refugees in specific regions and the dissuasion of new arrivals (Boswell, 2003). The consequences of these policies are formulated in the discourse of refugees themselves. In the study by Ghorashi (2005) in The Netherlands, asylum applicants stressed the imposed passivity, the isolation they suffer and the sense of worthlessness that they consequently have as a result of their dependence upon the state. These policies create a picture of refugees as a "problem" for the host society and make them feel like undesirable foreigners (Ghorashi, 2005).

The southern European countries, on the other hand, are characterised by lack of support from the public sector (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002) and failure to develop a well organised system of reception (Puggioni, 2005) and social integration (Korać, 2003b), resulting on the refugees facing serious problems, even regarding survival (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002). This void is filled in by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Puggioni, 2005), which cover only the refugees' urgent needs

(Korać, 2003b). Thus, the refugees mainly rely upon the self-help processes that have developed within their own networks (Korać, 2003b; Puggioni, 2005).

In a study conducted in 1999 with refugees from all the member states of the European Union (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002) the central issues that the participants pointed out included racism, difficulties in finding legal work, lack of information, lack of recognition of their educational level, and loss of the social level they had in their country of origin. The refugees stressed the unpleasant consequences of the reception systems in northern and southern countries, while according to Mestheneos et al. (1999) they also strongly criticised NGOs. Such difficulties have been reported in other studies that included or concerned Northern Europe (Cambridge & Williams, 2004; Wren, 2003). Asylum applicants also discuss problems regarding the long-lasting process of granting asylum and the bureaucracy (Dupont, Kaplan, Verbraeck, Braam, & Wijngaart, 2005) as well as not having a right to learn the language of the reception country (Ghorashi, 2005).

Refugees and asylum applicants in Greece

The literature with regard to refugees in Greece is insufficient and it tends to be limited to reports of international and European agencies (ECRE, 2003; Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2002; UNCHR, 2000) and to criticisms of the existing state support and legal frame (Papadimitriou & Papageorgiou, 2005; Sitaropoulos, 2002; Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004). Many recent studies examine the social integration of refugees and asylum applicants on the basis of qualitative analyses of interviews (Papadopoulou, 2002, 2004; Wanche, 2004). However, these studies tend to cover only one nationality (Papadopoulou, 2002, 2004; Προλεταριακή Σημαία, 2004; Wanche, 2004) or one aspect of integration, such as work (Βγενόπουλος, 1998), which implies that there is no overall picture of the community of asylum applicants in Greece.

Until the 1990s, Greece accepted very few asylum applicants and was simply a country of passage for most of them (Papadimitriou & Papageorgiou, 2005; Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004). However, due to international developments, in less than a decade the number of asylum applicants increased dramatically. From the year 2000 onwards over 5000 applications for political asylum were submitted per year, with only 2004 as an exception (Kehayioylou, 2006). The increase in the number of applications for asylum highlighted both the difficulties of the authorities in dealing with the situation and the insufficiency of the existing legal frame (Papadimitriou & Papageorgiou, 2005). Also, while the applications for asylum are on the increase, the rates of granting refugee status are decreasing (Kehayioylou, 2006). For example, the

percentage decreased from 11.2% in 2001 to 0.3% in 2002 and to 0.06% in 2003 (Papadimitriou & Papageorgiou, 2005). The low rates of granting refugee status appear to aim towards a corresponding reduction of applications (Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004). It is estimated, however, that these statistical figures do not reflect the real number of refugees, since many reside in Greece illegally, hoping they will eventually leave for another country (Papadopoulou, 2004).

In the history of Greece as a refugee reception country there have been three main currents. The first took place during the 1980s, when the country received refugees from Turkey, Poland, Iran, Ethiopia and countries of the Middle East. The second, in the 1990s, brought refugees mainly from Iran, Iraq and Turkey and towards the end of the decade from Afghanistan (Πελαγίδης, 2003), the majority of whom were Kurds (Papadopoulou, 2002, 2004). From the year 2000 onwards the main country of origin of asylum applicants is Iraq, while Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan follow, with Georgia featuring after 2004 (UNCHR, 2006). Civil wars, invasions, human rights violations, lack of justice, violence, oppression, imprisonment, torture, "disappearances" and murders compose the picture of the main countries of origin of the participants in the present study, Afghanistan (Amnesty International, 2002a, 2006a; Hayes & Brunner, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2002; Makhmalbaf, 2002), Iraq (Amnesty International, 2006c; US Department of State, 2005), Turkey (Amnesty International, 2002b, 2005, 2006b; Human Rights Watch, 2006) and the divided region of Kurdistan (Meho, 2001).

The Greek legal frame, as can be expected, was based upon and influenced by the international and European situation and developments. Greece ratified various European and international conventions, such as the Geneva Convention (1951), the Protocol of New York (1967), the Dublin Convention (1990) and the Schengen Agreement (1990) (Πελαγίδης, 2003; Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004). However, it was only in the 1990s that the processes of harmonising Greek legislation with international conventions and with the European Union legislation started (Papadimitriou & Papageorgiou, 2005). A series of presidential decrees were voted in the last few years, which regulate the employment of recognized refugees and asylum applicants (1998), the process of granting asylum, the entry permit and deportation (1999), the administration of the Reception Centre for refugees and their medical and social care (1999) and finally the process of issuing a green card (2005). Until the end of the 1990s NGOs were solely responsible for refugees (Sitaropoulos, 2002), the role of which continues to be important until today, despite the serious problems they face (Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003; UNCHR, 2000). Despite the legislative efforts that took place in the last 10 years, the Greek legal frame for refugees is judged to be insufficient (Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003) and underdeveloped (Skordas &

Sitaropoulos, 2002), while its inability to cover even basic needs is considered its main disandvantage, and it certainly gives the impression of a country that is hostile to refugees (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002; Sitaropoulos, 2002).

The application for asylum covers the individual and their family members who are legally under their protection (ECRE, 2003). The examination of the application is supposed to take place within three months from its submission, a time limit that is not observed in practice (ECRE, 2003), since the process can take up to six years (Tzilivakis, 2006). For this period asylum applicants are provided with a "pink card" (ECRE, 2003), which gives them the right to remain in the country for six months with possibility of a further six month renewal, issuing of a work permit and free of charge medical care (Πελαγίδης, 2003), while their exit from the country is prohibited (Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004). In the case of positive decision the asylum applicants are recognized as refugees and they are issued a "white card", which gives them the possibility of legal stay in Greece and is renewed every five years (UNCHR, 2000). Beyond the violation of the time frame set for the examination of asylum applications, the refugees face a series of problems throughout the process. One of the most serious ones is that some are deprived of the possibility to submit an application, either because they are not informed or because they encounter various difficulties due to the insufficiency and the inadequate education of the responsible personnel. Finally, another problem is the non-justified decisions, which cast doubts as to whether the examination of applications is substantial and objective (Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003).

Given on the one hand the time interval that is actually required for the examination of asylum applications and on the other the exceptionally small percentage of asylum applicants who achieve refugee status, the vast majority of individuals who have abandoned their country because of fear of persecution are either awaiting a decision regarding their application or they have abandoned the application for asylum. In this paper we use the term "refugees" with its essential meaning, that is to say of persons who have been persecuted or have well-founded reasons to fear prosecution in their country of origin regardless of whether they have enjoyed official recognition of their refugee status.

The social conditions of refugees and asylum applicants

As it will become apparent below, the welfare system for refugees does not facilitate their living in the country. In general, pressure has not been applied to the Greek state to move in the opposite direction, on the one hand because the refugees are proportionally few and have no voice and on the other because the NGOs and the High Commissioner of the UN in the country have kept a low profile and have not

publicised the very serious problems that the refugees face in their daily existence (Sitaropoulos, 2002).

Accommodation. The accommodation of refugees is not considered an important issue for the Greek state (Sitaropoulos, 2002). In the centres of detainment, wherever these exist at points of entry in the country, the conditions are characterized as squalid (UNCHR, 2000), something of which Greece has been accused by the Court of Human Rights of Strasbourg and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003). For the accommodation of refugees during their initial period of stay in the country there are three government-run Reception Centres and a Hostel for unaccompanied minors and underage refugees (Πελαγίδης, 2003; Tsovili & Voutira, 2004). The rest of the Reception Centres, seven in number, function under the responsibility of NGOs (Δικαίου, Γκαϊνταρτζή, & Πάντα, 2003; Πελαγίδης, 2003). These Centres do not suffice for the accommodation of refugees (Sitaropoulos, 2002; Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004), resulting in many of them remaining homeless for significant periods (Sitaropoulos, 2002). All the Reception Centres face problems, the most important of which is the lack of continuous and sufficient funding. Mental health care is not provided by any Centre, while the medical services and the educational and cross-cultural seminars provided are not satisfactory. The geographic isolation, characteristic of most Reception Centres, is also an obstacle to accessing work and education (Tsovili & Voutira, 2004).

Work. Recognized refugees have the right to work (Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004). Asylum applicants are also entitled to a provisional work permit throughout the duration of the examination of their application. However, in practice finding legal work is for both groups exceptionally difficult (ECRE, 2003). They often face exploitation from employers, racism and xenophobia, and difficulties in communication due to lack of knowledge of the Greek language (Βουλγαράκη, 2002). Moreover, the lack of work deprives them of the role they had assumed with regard to themselves and their family on the basis of their own cultural models (Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003). Finally, it should be pointed out that there are no provisions for financial support by the Greek state (Sitaropoulos, 2002).

Learning of the Greek language, medical care, legal support. Asylum applicants, after the acquisition of a pink card, are entitled to free education (Πελαγίδης, 2003). However, the Greek state does not provide any type of financial support or scholarship (Sitaropoulos, 2002). An additional problem is the difficulty in getting the degrees that the refugees acquired in their countries of origin recognised (Πελαγίδης, 2003). Courses for learning the Greek language are provided by various NGOs, by Greek universities (ECRE, 2003) and by the Program of Education of Immigrants in the Greek Language of the Institute of Continuous Adult Education (Ινστιτούτο

Διαρκούς Εκπαίδευσης Ενηλίκων, 2008). Finally, free medical care is provided in the public hospitals of the country, while legal help is only provided by NGOs (Sitaropoulos, 2002; Skordas & Sitaropoulos, 2004).

The present study

The present study examined the social integration of refugees and asylum applicants in the city of Thessaloniki. Via semi-structured interviews with twelve refugees and asylum applicants, which were analyzed with the interpretive-phenomenological method, we attempted to highlight their personal experience as well as to record the needs and aspects of their social integration in Greek society from their own perspective.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were found via informal personal networks of the first two authors. Two refugees were initially approached, who then brought the researchers in contact with other members of their respective communities. The first two key individuals were debriefed in detail regarding the objectives and the process of the study, as well as regarding ethical issues. They then informed each time the candidate participants and, if they expressed interest, they were debriefed further by the researchers. The interview was arranged at a place and time that was convenient for the participants.

Participants in the study were 12 individuals[1] (eleven men and one woman[2]). Five of the participants came from Afghanistan, one was Iraqi Kurd and six had Turkish nationality, three of whom were of Kurdish origin.[3] The main criteria for inclusion were that the participants reside in Thessaloniki and they have submitted an

---

[1] For the study, 17 individuals were approached, 12 of whom agreed to participate.

[2] The initial intention was that the men exceed the women, as it seems that this proportion is characteristic of the wider refugee population. In practice, however, approaching women proved to be exceptionally difficult, due to cultural patterns regarding the role of women or to objective difficulties, such as lack of knowledge of the Greek language.

[3] The initial intention was also to include individuals from the five main countries of origin of refugees during the last 15 years. In practice, however, approaching the Pakistani, the Iraqi and the Iranian communities proved impossible and, consequently, most participants come from Afghanistan and Turkey.

application for asylum during their stay in Greece, regardless of the final result. Three of the participants were illiterate, three had not completed secondary education, while the remainder had studied or completed their studies in a Higher Education institution. Only two of them were granted refugee status. From the rest, three were awaiting a decision regarding their application for asylum, while seven of them had abandoned the attempt and had turned their efforts to acquiring a green card. The individuals with a formal refugee status had resided in Greece for over 15 years, while the rest had resided in Greece between 2.5 and 7.5 years.

Research planning – Data collection

Interviews were preferred for the collection of data, as they allow the study of complex phenomena (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994), facilitate the development of a relationship (Smith & Osborne, 2003) and can trace ideas, motives and emotions (Bell, 1993). The interviews were semi-structured, so that important subject areas are covered while the participants have the opportunity to develop issues that are important to them (Bell, 1993; Smith & Osborne, 2003; Willig, 2004).

The interviews took place in Greek[4] in order to allow for personal contact between the researchers and the participants, despite the possibility of using a translator, which is usual in the relevant studies (Briant & Kennedy, 2004; Castles et al., 2002; Hsu, Davies, & Hansen, 2004; Tribe, 2007). The interviews took place either in the participants' personal spaces or in other available spaces and lasted on average one hour. The researchers tried to maintain a friendly and informal atmosphere, to use simple and comprehensible language, given the difficulty many participants had in the use of Greek language, and to focus on the personal experience of participants, avoiding general aphorisms. All the interviews were recorded with the participants' consent.

The interviews began with obtaining certain demographic data, as an introduction to the topic, but also because it appears that these factors can influence life in the new country (Castles et al., 2002). Subsequently, the participants were asked to describe and comment on the benefits they received from the Greek state and the institutions for refugees. The main part of the interview covered the aspects of social integration, such as work, education and relation with natives, which are usually reported in the literature (Castles et al., 2002; European Communities, 2002; Valtonen, 1998, 2004). Finally, information was obtained regarding the participants' sources of support and the way they see the future.

---

[4] For this reason, a criterion for inclusion in the study was residence in Greece for at least 10 months. However, the level of use of Greek language of some participants was low.

The study was designed and carried out in such a way that contact with the refugees was characterised by sensitivity and respect, beyond the fulfilment of the usual ethical issues, that is to say, anonymity, secrecy, possibility of withdrawal from the study etc. (Davis, 1996; Stark, 1998). Attention was paid, for example, to designing the process of approaching participants in a way that ensures that likely participants would not be subjected to any pressure regarding their participation. Also, it became evident to participants that the expression of their personal needs during the interview does not involve them being attended to, in order to avoid cultivating expectations that a study cannot fulfil (Briant & Kennedy, 2004).

Data analysis

The interviews were analyzed using the interpretive-phenomenological method. This method combines the systematic analysis of grounded theory with an emphasis on experience. Also, it adopts an explanatory epistemological stance and recognizes the active role of the researcher in the research process, contrary to the positivist epistemology of certain currents of grounded theory (Smith, 1999; Smith, Jarman, & Osborne, 1999; Smith & Osborne, 2003; Willig, 2004). The above render the interpretive-phenomenological analysis a suitable analytic method for the particular study, which aims to highlight the refugees' and asylum applicants' experiences, while it simultaneously treats research as a social practice.

Following the recommended practices in the interpretive-phenomenological analysis (Smith, 1999; Smith & Osborne, 2003), the first interview was transcribed and analyzed in full, before the analysis of the other interviews. The text of the interview was divided in units of meaning, which were given short thematic titles that describe them. Via a process of regrouping of the list of thematic titles that resulted, a centralized list of categories was created. The rest of the interviews were then analysed using the centralized list as a guide but simultaneously paying particular attention to the emergence of new thematic titles and modifying the centralized list on the basis of emerging thematic titles in each new interview. After the completion of the analysis of all interviews, an additional regrouping of the categories of the centralized list was applied that produced three central thematic units.

Reliability and validity

In qualitative research reliability concerns the precision and systematisation of the research process, both in the phase of collecting data and in the phase of data analysis and interpretation (Ιωσηφίδης, 2003; Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000; Mason, 1996).

Validity respectively is related to the degree to which the research conclusions consistently derive from the research objectives and the research process, as well as to the degree to which the conclusions correspond to social reality, produce new knowledge and initiate further action (Stiles, 1993; Willig, 2004; Yardley, 2000). In the present study, for every phase of the process, the first two authors analysed the interviews separately and then established common categories through consensual processes, while the third author overviewed the analysis. Both the process of collective participative analysis and the monitoring of the analysis by other researchers constitute forms of triangulation and are advisable as practices which increase reliability and validity in qualitative studies (Banister et al., 1994; Ιωσηφίδης, 2003; Madill et al., 2000; Stiles, 1993).

Also, the study is founded on the existing literature and research, provides extracts from the interviews in order to support its findings and relates the research findings to the interpersonal context of the relation between the researchers and the participants and to the wider social and cultural context of the lives of refugees. Finally, reliability and validity are strengthened by systematic and reflexive research practices and are documented via the careful representation of all stages of the research process and of its context (Mason, 1996; Yardley, 2000).

In what follows, we will present the categories that emerged from the analysis with indicative representative extracts of the participants' discourse organised in three central thematic units. In the first unit participants discuss the reasons for leaving their country of origin and the choice of Greece as either intermediary station or final destination. The second unit contains issues of accommodation, learning the Greek language and work, the process of examination of the application for asylum, their treatment by the Greek state and their relations with the natives. The last unit includes the participants' views on their psychological and emotional state, the comparison of Greece to their country of origin, their sources of support and their plans for the future.

RESULTS

From the country of origin to Greece as the reception country

Seven participants left their country of origin because of their political action, to which they were forced by social conditions and which put their life in danger. Thus, the abandonment of the country of origin is presented as a solution which was necessary for their survival. For example, the participants reported:

I had a problem and...I had a court case, there was five of us, four took 36 years in prison, all their lives...I wrote in the newspaper, the state does not like it...afterwards they told me don't write this way...they told me to write lies...I said no...I wrote again...afterwards the police took me four, five times and I was tortured two times...there was a court case...they gather us all...we were given execution and it was postponed...with a final decision of life sentence.

But no one, not a fighter, no people want to leave their country...leave their country for tourism, yes, for holidays, yes, but not chased from their country, leaving their country to go to another country, no one wants that.

Two participants were arrested by the police, without however this being related to political action from their part. The remaining three reported having left their country for other reasons, such as health problems, familial problems and seeking a better life. This finding seems to confirm the arguments of other researchers that a minority of asylum applicants do not fulfil the conditions for asylum, as these have been defined by the Geneva Convention (Ghorashi, 2005; Neumayer, 2005; Papadopoulou, 2004; Tzilivakis, 2006). In general, the reasons for leaving the country of origin that the participants report are in agreement with the literature (Neumayer, 2005; Wanche, 2004).

The majority of participants saw Greece as an intermediary station in their route to other European countries (see also Papadopoulou, 2002, 2004; Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003; Wanche, 2004). Some of them finally chose to settle in Greece.

I didn't, at first I did not want...I came and I liked it, I wanted to stay, to stay here...I did not leave here because I like Greece.

Others continue to reside in Greece due to the issuing of a pink card, which prohibits their stay in other countries.

They tell me you have application for asylum and you cannot go nowhere...Wherever you go they will send you back...and I had to stay here until today.

Those who intentionally chose Greece as their destination country, who come mainly from Turkey, report as reasons for their choice the geographic proximity and the cultural resemblance. These reasons for the choice of a destination country have

been also pointed out in other studies (Böcker & Havinga, 1998; Korać, 2003b; Neumayer, 2005). A participant characteristically says:

> We had the same culture, very close, I wanted to come here, I had no other
> reason.

Aspects of life in Greece

The discourse of the participants, when they discuss the various aspects of their life in Greece, is dominated by reports of difficulties and is permeated by a sense of uncertainty.

Accommodation. During the initial phase of their settlement in Greece, some of the participants were homeless, something usual in south European countries (de Freitas, 2005; Korać, 2003b; Sitaropoulos, 2002). A characteristic example is that of Kurds in Rome, who, because they were homeless and did not receive any state support, took initiative and self-organised (Puggioni, 2005). The majority of participants resided for shorter or longer periods in some Reception Centre for Refugees. In the present phase all participants resided in private places, either on their own or with other people from their country of origin.

Learning the Greek language. The use of Greek language was considered an essential means of social integration, a necessary tool for survival.

> I had to learn it...because without language I cannot do anything...we
> learned the language and we can work, in order not to have a problem with
> our work, in order to go to the police, to the hospital.

The participants learned the Greek language through their own personal effort, through attending courses and through interactions with locals, in different combinations for each one of them.

> I went to the class at the Reception Centre that we had each day at 2 o'
> clock...that is to say with one hour effort, from the 1st hour to 2nd hour, I
> learned to read Greek...that is to say I needed it...during the day I watched
> television, often in Greek channels they have films that have Greek letters
> underneath...and I wrote...speaking with the people, with the Greeks...this
> way, slowly I learned the Greek language.

Some participants pointed out that their conditions of employment, the

requirement of fees and the low quality of the courses provided pose difficulties in learning the Greek language. According to one participant:

> If you work like here, you cannot learn the language, it is difficult, because
> you work up to the evening and you are tired and you cannot leave in order
> to learn the language...and if you go to the University to learn the language,
> you cannot work...and the University of Thessaloniki wants money, they
> want a lot of money.

Work. Work was considered by the participants as necessary for their survival, especially due to the lack of state support. The importance of work was stressed by the refugees in other studies (Mestheneos et al., 1999; Valtonen, 2004), in which work was linked not so directly with their survival, but more generally with their social integration. A few, having faced unemployment, stressed that they worked non selectively, accepting whatever work was available.

> I worked as a cook, we gathered olives, I decorated...different and many
> jobs...a lot of jobs.

The fact that the refugees and asylum applicants are forced to non selective work and mainly to work which is below their qualifications is common place in the European literature (Archer et al., 2005; Valtonen, 2004; Wanche, 2004). All the participants were forced to work illegally.

> I don't like it, but I can't...do another job and I do this, this job...If you have
> a white paper you cannot work, because you do not have work permit and
> it is difficult.

The delayed granting of the right to work combined with the lack of state support are the main factors that force refugees to do illegal work (Sitaropoulos, 2002).

Many of the participants spoke of the discrimination against them, which they consider characteristic of the discrimination against foreigners more generally. They observe that discrimination concerns various aspects, such as the work schedule, wages, safety and hiring procedures. Discrimination against foreigners in the workplace is commonly found in other studies (Archer et al., 2005; de Freitas, 2005; Mestheneos et al., 1999). In the participants' own words:

> For the foreigners it's difficult, we do the dirty work...fancy that they give

you insurance...for example, you work 8 months, they pay insurance for 2-3 months. Where can you go? First of all, who will hear you out? Will they listen to me or to a Greek?

When you know you are foreigners and...when you work, they do not pay insurance and if they like they drop you quickly...and they give you very little money...and you might be working for a week for 150 Euros...you work just for bread.

Finally, the participants commented that the lack of recognition of their educational level and of their other qualifications poses an important obstacle both to the continuation of their education and to finding work (see also Mestheneos & Ioannidi 2002; Valtonen, 1998, 2004; Wren, 2003).

Process of examination of asylum application. The process of examination of the application for asylum was an important and integral part of the participants' life. The two participants who submitted their application for asylum fifteen years ago thought of it as relatively easy, while the rest who submitted their application in the last decade experienced the process as long-lasting and difficult. The process of examination of asylum applications has been characterized as long-lasting both in Greece (Tzilivakis, 2006) and in other European countries (Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003). The participants' words are permeated by a strong sense of discomfort as well as by a sense that they lose their life waiting, since due to the pending application for asylum they cannot plan their life. According to one of the participants:

I just waited, I am tired...it is difficult in life to wait...every hour you wait for your life, what happened, what didn't happen, this is a difficult thing.

Some speak of the non-existence of a legal frame, the lack of differential examination of applications for asylum, the arbitrariness in granting asylum and the policy of not granting asylum by the Greek state.

The overwhelming majority of the participants abandoned the process of application for asylum and submitted an application for a green card, through which they are recognised as economic immigrants, so that they can guarantee their residence in Greece and basic rights.

Because I understood that they will not give me a warm answer, they will not give us political asylum...I made green, because only this way I can buy my life, until I can.

Two of the participants, despite the difficulties with granting asylum, did not accept to follow the process of acquisition of a green card, on the grounds that this would mean the renunciation of the political persecutions they have suffered and of their status as refugees.

Treatment by the Greek state. The more general sense the participants have of the Greek state is one of abandonment, mockery and indifference. They estimate that essentially they received no benefit and they stress the lack of information and of support from the day of their arrival until today. The following extract is indicative:

> He didn't have anything to say about where we should go, I didn't know what to do from there, it was difficult...I had lots of problems and I didn't know where to go, who to talk to...and in one month I did not know what to do. Where to go. Nowhere did I find...no one was there to help me.

The lack of information to refugees and asylum applicants that was reported by the participants seems to be a problem in many European countries, both north (Archer et al., 2005) and south (de Freitas, 2005; Korać, 2003b; Puggioni, 2005). Some participants report the free medical care as the only state support, commenting, however, on its low or declining quality. Special mention was made of the levels of bureaucracy, a problem which has also been pointed out at European level (de Freitas, 2005; Dupont et al., 2005; Puggioni, 2005).

To the question regarding their expectations from the reception country, the participants answered that the existence of a system of information and support that would facilitate their acclimatization in the Greek society would be important for them. More specifically, medical care, possibilities for education and accommodation at the initial phase of residence in the country were also mentioned. The following extract is characteristic:

> But for refugees, the state should help them, because they are foreigners...it will be difficult for them to find work, they do not know the language...in order to acclimatize in Greece...that is to say there is language in schools, there could be a second course, how it is in Greece, how one can live in Greece...and they can learn a job ...

Most participants compared the lack of benefits from the Greek state to the benefits provided to asylum applicants in other European countries, presenting a very positive picture of the latter. For example, a participant commented:

> In other countries of Europe...we hear things...and we do not believe
> them...they have to learn the language, they have to learn a craft...they give
> them a house...with everything...so that they are calm...they also take some
> pocket money...but here, pink card and off you go.

Comparisons between countries are made by refugees in other studies
(Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Korać, 2003b) without however considering as better
the countries with favourable reception and integration systems (Korać, 2003b). An
equivalent comparison is made between the policy of not granting asylum in Greece
and countries with policies which are more favourable to asylum applicants. Intense
criticism and dissatisfaction were also expressed for NGOs, which are considered to
play a central role in filling in state gaps (Mestheneos et al., 1999; Πελαγίδης, 2003).

Relations with natives. The majority of the participants reported good relations
with Greeks.

> I have good relations with Greeks. I have a lot of Greek friends...that is to
> say I have like a friendship, I go to their house, they come to my house.

The Greeks are generally portrayed as open-minded and tolerant, but with a
tendency towards racism, especially on religious grounds. The same views were
expressed regarding relations with the Greeks in a study that was conducted with the
Iraqi refugee community in Greece. The majority of Greeks were described as
charitable and tolerant, but with elements of racist behaviour when issues of religious
difference are concerned (Wanche, 2004). A participant characteristically said:

> In the beginning he is very warm towards you, they talk to you. As soon as
> they understand that you are foreigner and you are Muslim and you are
> from this country, they change, they become a little cold.

Some participants draw a distinction between the state and the people, attributing
the xenophobia to governmental mechanisms and aims.

> It is not the people in general who are racist, those who are racist are few
> and the government politics is not the same as the people's politics...when
> they make politics they begin...from the police force...they begin putting
> forward fear for foreigners...this is the government's politics, not the
> people's.

Personal assessment of participants

Most of the participants did not want to or could not proceed to more personal emotional expression. The very few who did confirm the literature findings, that the psychological and emotional state of refugees is negative (Dupont et al., 2005; Ghazinour, 2003), due to a series of factors that function as stressors, such as the long period of waiting and uncertainty (Ghazinour, 2003), the complicated and bureaucratic process of granting of asylum (Dupont et al., 2005), unemployment (Beiser & Hou, 2001) and social isolation (Archer et al., 2005). The main emotions expressed were fear, disappointment and despair, and there were references to the burdened mental health of refugees.

> I am now in a situation that I have suffered psychologically, because I cannot bear...I was afraid I would have a stroke...because now that I speak half my head aches.

Many participants stress the difficult living conditions in Greece, although they recognize as positive points of their stay in Greece the lack of fear and their sense of safety (see also Mestheneos et al., 1999).

> Yes, it changed, this did not happen very well, but I live. What can I do? This life is difficult...when you walk in the streets you are not afraid that much, like in (country of origin).

It is remarkable that, while the refugees tend to experience cultural conflict in the countries of reception (Hsu et al., 2004; Szczepanikova, 2005), not only did the participants in this study not report such experiences, but some stressed the cultural resemblance between Greece and their country of origin.

The majority of the participants reported that the people from their country of origin are the most important source of support, especially during their initial phase of settlement in Greece (see also Archer et al., 2005; Korać, 2003a; Mestheneos et al., 1999; Papadopoulou, 2004; Wren, 2003). Contrary to our own expectations, given the Muslim traditions in the participants' countries of origin and the literature (Goździak, 2002), religion did not feature as a source of support for almost anyone, with the majority of those expelled because of their political action declaring themselves as atheists.

Some participants express a wish to return to their country of origin, sometimes more intensely and at other times as an elusive dream (see also Mestheneos et al., 1999; Valtonen, 2004; Wanche, 2004), although some point out the fact that their

return to their country of origin under the present political conditions would place their life in danger. On the contrary, other participants do not appear to wish to return.

DISCUSSION

On the basis of the literature review, it seems that the European Union decisions violate to a significant degree the international refugee law (Gilbert, 2004; Lavenex, 1998; UNCHR, 2000). Although the European legislation provides certain elementary regulations that member states should apply to refugees and asylum applicants, it often contains ambiguities, which allow each state, including Greece, to interpret them in the way they see fit, thus legitimating practices that are to the detriment of asylum applicants. The provision of information to refugees, which is regulated by a Directive of the European Council (2004/83/EC) and by Greek legislation, with the issuing of an information booklet (Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003) was not reported by any of the participants. Also, Greek legislation provides for the examination of applications for asylum within a period of three months, a time frame that is never observed, both according to the literature (ECRE, 2003) and according to the experiences of the participants in our study. These and other examples that result from the comparison between what the legislation provides for asylum applicants and the reports of the participants in the specific study, lead naturally to the conclusion that there is a discrepancy between law and reality. Also, both the participants' reports of difficulties regarding specific aspects of their social integration and the general sense of indifference that they receive from the Greek state are telling of the essential lack of support to refugees in Greece. We can suppose that the above are part and parcel of the more general practice that Greece has adopted, to become unattractive to asylum applicants through making their life here difficult (Sitaropoulos, 2002).

This attitude of lack of information, support and benefits that the refugees and asylum applicants report from the first day of their arrival in the country confirms the inclusion of Greece to the group of southern European countries (Korać 2003b; Mestheneos et al., 1999; Puggioni, 2005). It is remarkable that the participants, without being asked, compared Greece mainly with northern European countries, giving the sense that they idealise the reception systems and the benefits of these countries, without being aware of or recognizing the curtailments of rights in which northern countries have proceeded in the last years. Also, the practices that are applied in northern countries, like the diffusion that leads to the creation of ghettos

and the excessive government benefits, contribute to an anti-refugee climate, since the refugees are considered to be recipients of positive discrimination (Wren, 2003), living on the local taxpayers' contributions (Ghorashi, 2005). On the contrary, in southern countries, like Italy, the fact that foreigners have to survive financially on their own resources and that they live together with the local population appears to have functioned favourably for the development of relations with the natives (Korać, 2003b).

These might also be the factors that contributed to the development of good relations between the participants in the study and Greeks, as well as to the decreased report of xenophobia on their part. Another factor, to which the good relations could be attributed, is probably also the often reported by the participants cultural similarity. Greece has been historically close to the people of the Middle East and has included in its culture elements from them, something that does not hold for the northern and western European countries. In the latter, the encounter between two different cultures generally appears to impede the social integration of refugees (Hsu et al., 2004).

A very important observation was that of a participant, who emphasised that the state has a duty to provide acclimatization processes that would include language, professional and cultural education, but also to encourage actions of engagement by the refugees with the society they live in, putting an end, thus, to the state of isolation that especially some experience. These are also the aspects that are recommended for inclusion in the refugee integration programs (Ager, Malcolm, Sadollah, & O' May, 2002; Korać, 2003a; Mestheneos & Charapi, 1999; Salinas & Muller, 1999). Perhaps a middle way between the practices of northern and southern European countries would be the best route for the social integration of refugees and asylum applicants in the country where they finally reside. This middle way should include on the one hand the necessary state support, particularly during the first period of arrival in the country, when the asylum applicants face the greatest difficulties, as well as the objective granting of political asylum. On the other hand, however, it should allow the new residents of the country to undertake initiatives and to take responsibility of their life.

More specifically, proposals for both state and non-state interventions which result from the views of the participants in the specific study, the international literature (Archer et al., 2005; Dupont et al., 2005; de Freitas, 2005; Gilbert, 2004; Kehayioylou, 2006; Korać, 2003b; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Papadimitriou & Papageorgiou, 2005; Puggioni, 2005; Sitaropoulos, 2002; Σώτου & Τοπαλίδου, 2003; Tzilivakis, 2006; UNCHR, 2000) and the relevant proposals of the UN for refugees (Ύπατη Αρμοστεία του Ο.Η.Ε. για τους Πρόσφυγες. Αντιπροσωπεία στην Ελλάδα, 2006), concern effectively the totality of human needs, from the day of arrival of

refugees and asylum applicants in Greece and throughout the duration of their effort to integrate in it. Firstly, border control mechanisms should be designed in a way that they respect the right to safety and to life of those who are in need of international protection and that they ensure the provision of information to asylum applicants regarding the process of applying for asylum as well as their rights and obligations, according to the relevant legislation. It is also essential that the living conditions in the Reception Centres are improved and access to health and education services is provided. There is a need to immediately record applications for asylum and to issue the appropriate documents that would ensure protection and access to social services and to legal employment. In the initial period of stay in Greece and up to the point of finding legal employment state financial assistance should be provided. The Greek state should re-examine and align the relevant legislation with the International Refugee Law, increasing the percentage of granting political asylum and decreasing the duration of examination of applications for asylum. The NGOs, which play a decisive role in filling in state omissions (Mestheneos et al., 1999; Πελαγίδης, 2003), can contribute further to the increase of the capacity of Reception Centres, as well as to the improvement of living conditions in them. However, their most important contribution should be publicising the neglect of refugees by the Greek state and exercising more intense pressure to the state in order to assume its responsibilities and obligations towards those who are eligible for international protection (Sitaropoulos, 2002).

Like every study with socially marginalized groups, the specific study had certain particularities (Δικαίου, 1999; Μάρκου, 2006; Πετράκου, 2006). On the one hand, the social conditions of asylum applicants influenced the research process in various ways (see also Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Voutira & Doná, 2007). The difficulty in accessing the refugee networks, because of their social isolation, posed limits to the size and the representativity of the sample. The reservations on the side of the participants, which related both to the asymmetry of the research relation and to the cultural and social distance between researchers and participants, combined with the limited use of Greek language, restricted the expression of the participants' needs and difficulties during the interview. Other components were added to the already asymmetrical relation between researchers and participants. In the encounter between the researchers (young women, social scientists) and the participants, who were mainly older men, socially marginalized and coming from traditional Islamic societies, the factors of sex, age, culture and social status assumed a particularly complex form (Finlay, 2000). These factors affected the research process and the findings of the study in various ways. On the other hand, the fact that the study regarded individuals who belong to a marginalized social group intensified the need

to adopt a respectful stance towards the participants, which extends beyond the simple observance of the rules of research ethics. In any case, in a socially and politically sensitive approach of socially vulnerable populations, which aims not to record reality but to highlight the voice and experience of these groups, ethics moves along the line not of the simple protection of participants from any detrimental effects of their participation, but of their emancipation. The present study aims not so much to the emancipation of the specific participants, but, via bringing to light the voice of refugees, to indirect emancipation of the refugee community (Brown, 1997; Ιωσηφίδης, 2003; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002).

We already discussed in the methodology section how we dealt with ethical issues concerning access to the population, approaching the participants and conducting the interviews. We could add more to the above, like, for example, the conscious choice of spaces for the interviews that would be familiar to the participants (e.g., no University spaces), so that the effect of the factor of social distance is minimised in the encounter between researchers and participants, the choice for the transcribed text to reflect as closely as possible the participants' speech, without corrective interventions, paying attention during the analysis so that the categories remain as faithful as possible to the meaning of the participants' words. Designing and conducting studies in this frame requires particular sensitivity and reflexivity, and raises issues with regard to the role both of the research process and of the researcher, issues that can potentially lead to more socially aware research practices which have something to offer to the populations they study.

The aim of the study was to highlight the difficulties that asylum applicants and refugees face in Greece, as they themselves experience and formulate them. We hope that this contributes to wider awareness of the issue of social integration of refugees and further to the mobilisation of both professionals and the wider public towards lifting the obstacles for their smooth integration in Greek society. Of course, both the small number of participants and the specific refugee communities they come from limit the validity and generalisability of the conclusions. Such restrictions, however, inevitably characterize qualitative studies generally, as well as studies of groups, the access to which is difficult due to various social conditions (Emmel, Hughes, Greenhalgh, & Sales, 2007; Everatt, 2000; Μάρκου, 2006; Πετράκου, 2006). It would indeed be very useful for other studies to highlight the experiences and views of other populations of refugees in Greece, so that a more complete picture of the life conditions and needs of the refugee population is formed. We consider, however, that at least bringing to light the voice of refugees and asylum applicants and treating them as subjects who articulate their own discourse with regard to their life should be extended as research practices. In this way research could contribute to the reversal of

the course of objectification of socially vulnerable groups and consequently to the facilitation of their social integration.

REFERENCES

Ager, A., Malcolm, M., Sadollah, A., & O' May, F. (2002). Community contact and mental health amongst socially isolated refugees in Edinburgh. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 15*(1), 71-80.

Amnesty International. (2002a). *Afghanistan*. Retrieved July 15, 2006 from http://www.amnesty.org

Amnesty International. (2002b). *Turkey*. Retrieved July 15, 2006 from http://www.amnesty.org

Amnesty International. (2005). *Europe and Central Asia: Summary of Amnesty International concerns in the Region, January-June 2005: Turkey*. Retrieved July 15, 2006 from http://www.amnesty.org

Amnesty International. (2006a). *Afghanistan human rights concerns*. Retrieved July 15, 2006 from http://www.amnesty.org

Amnesty International. (2006b). *Amnesty International Report 2006: Turkey*. Retrieved July 15, 2006 from http://www.amnesty.org

Amnesty International. (2006c). *Iraq: People come first*. Retrieved July 15, 2006 from http://www.amnesty.org

Archer, L., Hollingworth, S., Maylor, U., Sheibani, A., & Kowarzik, U. (2005). *Challenging barriers to employment for refugees and asylum seekers in London*. London: London Metropolitan University.

Baldwin-Edwards, M. (2002). Semi-reluctant hosts: Southern Europe's ambivalent response to immigration. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs, 8*(2), 211-229.

Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M., & Tindall, C. (1994). *Qualitative methods in psychology: A research guide*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Banyard, V. L., & Miller, K. E. (1998). The powerful potential of qualitative research for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 26*(4), 485-505.

Βγενόπουλος, Κ. (1998). *Πρόσφυγες και μετανάστες στην ελληνική αγορά εργασίας* [Refugees and immigrants in the Greek job-market]. Αθήνα: ΕΚΕΜ.

Beiser, M., & Hou, F. (2001). Language acquisition, unemployment and depressive disorder among Southeast Asian refugees: A 10-year study. *Social Science & Medicine, 53*, 1321-1334.

Bell, J. (1993). *Doing your research project*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Black, R. (2003). Breaking the convention: Researching the 'illegal' migration of refugees to Europe. *Antipode, 35*(1), 53-54.

Böcker, A., & Havinga, T. (1998). Asylum applications in the European Union: Patterns and trends and the effects of policy measures. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 11*(3), 245-266.

Boswell, C. (2003). Burden-sharing in the European Union: Lessons from the Germany and UK experience. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 16*(3), 316-335.

Βουλγαράκη, Μ. (2002). Πρόσφυγες, εργασία και κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός [Refugees, employment and social exclusion]. *Τετράδια Ψυχιατρικής, 78,* 24-25.

Briant, N., & Kennedy A. (2004). An investigation of the perceived needs and priorities held by African refugees in an urban setting in a first country of asylum. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 17*(4), 437-458.

Brown, L. S. (1997). Ethics in psychology: Cui bono? In D. Fox & I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Critical psychology: An introduction* (pp. 51-67). London: Sage.

Cambridge, P., & Williams, L. (2004). Approaches to advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers: A development case study for a local support and advice service. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 17*(1), 106-113.

Castles, S., Korać, M., Vasta, E., & Vertovec, S. (2002). *Integration: Mapping the field.* London: Home Office, UK.

Claasen, D., Ascoli, M., Berhe, T., & Priebe, S. (2005). Research on mental disorders and their care in immigrant populations: A review of publications from Germany, Italy and UK. *European Psychiatry, 20,* 540-549.

Council of the European Union. (2000). *Council Regulation of 11 December 2000 concerning the establishment of 'Eurodac' for the comparison of fingerprints for the effective application of the Dublin Convention (2725/2000/EC).* Brussels: Author.

Council of the European Union. (2003a). *Council Directive of 27 January 2003 laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers (2003/9/EC).* Brussels: Author.

Council of the European Union. (2003b). *Council Directive of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification (2003/86/EC).* Brussels: Author.

Council of the European Union. (2003c). *Council Regulation of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-party national (343/2003/EC).* Brussels: Author.

Council of the European Union. (2004). *Council Directive of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted (2004/83/EC).* Brussels: Author.

Council of the European Union. (2005). *Council Directive of 1 December 2005 on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status (2005/85/EC).* Brussels: Author.

Davis, N. (1996). Ethics. In B. P. Michrina & C. Richards (Eds.), *Person to person: Fieldwork, dialogue and the hermeneutic method* (pp. 97-108). New York: State University of New York Press.

De Freitas, C. (2005). *Good practice in mental health and social care for refugees and asylum seekers* (Identification study report on Portugal: Part A). University of Kent at Canterbury, UK & Utrecht University, The Netherlands.

Δικαίου, Μ. (1999). Μειονοτικές ομάδες: Έρευνα και παρέμβαση στη σύγχρονη ελληνική πραγματικότητα [Minority groups: Research and intervention in contemporary Greece]. *Ψυχολογία: Το Περιοδικό της Ελληνικής Ψυχολογικής Εταιρείας, 6*(2), 247-253.

Δικαίου, Μ. (2003). Κοινωνικοψυχολογική έρευνα και ιδεολογία: Το παράδειγμα των διομαδικών σχέσεων [Psychosocial research and ideology: The example of intergroup relations]. Στο Α. Ευκλείδη, Α. Στογιαννίδου, & Ε. Αυδή (Επιμ. Σύντ. και Έκδ.), *Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής, Τμήμα Ψυχολογίας Αριστοτέλειου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης: Τόμος 5. Στη μνήμη της Μαίρης Μάνιου-Βακάλη* (σ. 131-144). Θεσσαλονίκη: Υπηρεσία Δημοσιευμάτων ΑΠΘ/Art of Text.

Δικαίου, Μ., Γκαϊνταρτζή, Χ., & Πάντα, Κ. (2003). Κέντρο Υποδοχής Προσφύγων και Αιτούντων Άσυλο στη Θεσσαλονίκη: Οργάνωση και λειτουργία σύμφωνα με τις απόψεις των εργαζομένων. Μία προ-έρευνα [Refugee Reception Centre in Thessaloniki: Employees' views on organization and function. A pilot study]. Στο Α. Ευκλείδη, Α. Στογιαννίδου, & Ε. Αυδή (Επιμ. Σύντ. και Έκδ.), *Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής, Τμήμα Ψυχολογίας Αριστοτέλειου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης: Τόμος 5. Στη μνήμη της Μαίρης Μάνιου-Βακάλη* (σ. 257-286). Θεσσαλονίκη: Υπηρεσία Δημοσιευμάτων ΑΠΘ/Art of Text.

Dupont, H. G. B. H. M., Kaplan, C. D., Verbraeck, H. T., Braam, R. V., & Wijngaart, G. F. (2005). Killing time: Drug and alcohol problems among asylum seekers in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Drug Policy, 16,* 27-36.

Emmel, N., Hughes, K., Greenhalgh, J., & Sales, A. (2007). Accessing socially excluded people? Trust and the gatekeeper in the research participant relationship. *Sociological Research Online, 12*(2). Retrieved October 10, 2006, from http://socresonline.org.uk/12/2/emmel.html

European Communities. (2002). *Immigration, asylum and social integration.* Luxemburg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2003). *Legal and social conditions for asylum seekers and refugees in Europe: Greece.* Retrieved April 4, 2006, from http://www.ecre.org

European Union. (2004). *Freedom, security and justice for all: Justice and home affairs in the European Union.* Brussels: European Commission.

Everatt, J. (2000). Research with special groups. In G. M. Breakwell, S. Hammond, & C. Fife-Schaw (Eds.), *Research methods in psychology* (pp. 120-133). London: Sage.

Fazel, M., Wheeler, J., & Danesh, J. (2005). Prevalence of serious mental disorder in 7000 refugees in western countries: A systematic review. *Lancet, 365,* 1309-1314.

Finlay, L. (2000). The reflexive journey: Mapping multiple routes. In L. Finlay & B. Gough (Eds.), *Reflexivity: A practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences* (pp. 3-20). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Ghazinour, M. (2003). *Trauma and resiliency. A study of refugees from Iran resettled in Sweden.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Umea University, Sweden.

Ghorashi, H. (2005). Agents of change or passive victims: The impact of welfare states (the case of the Netherlands) on refugees. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 18*(2), 181-198.

Gilbert, G. (2004). Is Europe living up to its obligations to refugees? *The European Journal of International Law, 15*(5), 963-987.

Goździak, E. M. (2002). Spiritual emergency room: The role of spirituality and religion in the resettlement of Kossovar Albanians. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 15*(2), 136-152.

Harrell-Bond, B., & Voutira, E. (2007). In search of 'invisible' actors: Barriers to access in refugee research. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 20*(2), 281-298.

Havercamp, B. E. (2005). Ethical perspectives on qualitative research in applied psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 146-155.

Hayes, L., & Brunner, B. (2006). *Who are the Taliban? Afghanistan's ruling faction, 1996-2001.* Retrieved July 18, 2006, from http://www.infoplease.com

Hayter, T. (2004). *Open borders: The case against immigration controls.* London: Pluto.

Hollands, M. (2001). Upon closer acquaintance: The impact of direct contact with refugees on Dutch hosts. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 14*(3), 295-314.

Hsu, E., Davies, C. A., & Hansen, D. J. (2004). Understanding mental health needs of Southeast Asian refugees: Historical, cultural and contextual challenges. *Clinical Psychology Review, 24,* 193-213.

Human Rights Watch. (2002). *Afghanistan unsafe for refugees returns.* Retrieved July 22, 2006, from http://www.hrw.org

Human Rights Watch. (2006). *Refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and internally displaced persons.* Retrieved July 22, 2006, from http://www.hrw.org

Ινστιτούτο Διαρκούς Εκπαίδευσης Ενηλίκων. (2008). *Αυτόνομα προγράμματα: Εκπαίδευση των Μεταναστών στην Ελληνική Γλώσσα* [Autonomous Programs: Education of immigrants in the Greek language]. Ανάσυρση στις 4 Ιουλίου 2008 από http://www.ideke.edu.gr/programs.asp

Ιωσηφίδης, Θ. (2003). *Ανάλυση ποιοτικών δεδομένων στις κοινωνικές επιστήμες* [Qualitative data analysis in the social sciences]. Αθήνα: Κριτική.

Kehayioylou, K. (2006). *New campaign highlights the difficulties of being an asylum-seeker in Greece.* Retrieved July 22, 2006, from http://www.UNCHR.gr

Kidder, L. H., & Fine, M. (1997). Qualitative inquiry in psychology: A radical tradition. In D. Fox & I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Critical psychology: An introduction* (pp. 34-50). London: Sage.

Korać, M. (2003a). Integration and how we facilitate it: A comparative study of the settlement experiences of refugees in Italy and the Netherlands. *Sociology, 37*(1), 51-68.

Korać, M. (2003b). The lack of integration policy and experiences of settlement: A case study of refugees in Rome. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 16*(4), 398-421.

Lavenex, S. (1998). 'Passing the buck': European Union refugees policies towards Central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 11*(2), 126-145.

Madill, A., Jordan, A., & Shirley, C. (2000). Objectivity and reliability in qualitative analysis: Realist, contextualist and radical constructionist epistemologies. *British Journal of Psychology, 91,* 1-20.

Makhmalbaf, M. (2002). *Αφγανιστάν* [Afghanistan] (Z. Σιαπάντα, Μεταφ.). Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.

Μάρκου, Κ. (2006). Πομάκοι και επιτόπια έρευνα στην Ελληνική Θράκη: Πολιτικές συνιστώσες και βιωματική εμπειρία [Pomaks and field research in the Greek Thrace: Political dimensions and experience]. Στο Θ. Ιωσηφίδης & Μ. Σπυριδάκης (Επιμ. Εκδ.), *Ποιοτική κοινωνική έρευνα: Μεθοδολογικές προσεγγίσεις και ανάλυση δεδομένων* (σ. 51-74). Αθήνα: Κριτική.

Mason, J. (1996). *Qualitative researching*. London: Sage.

Meho, L. I. (2001). The Kurds and Kurdistan: A general background. In L. I. Meho, & K. L. Maglaughlin (Eds.), *Kurdish culture and society: An annotated bibliography* (pp. 3-26). Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Mestheneos, E., & Charapi, A. (1999). *Good practice guide on refugee integration: Cultural and community integration. ECRE Task Force on Integration*. Brussels: OCIV. Retrieved August 8, 2006, from http://www.refugeenet.org

Mestheneos, E., & Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to refugee integration in the European Union Member States. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 15*(3), 304-320.

Mestheneos, E., Ioannidi, E., & Gaunt, S. (1999). *Bridges and fences: Refugee perception of integration in the European Union*. Brussels: OCIV. Retrieved August 8, 2006, from http://www.refugeenet.org

Neumayer, E. (2005). Bogus refugees? The determinants of asylum migration to Western Europe. *International Studies Quarterly, 49,* 389-409.

Πανταζής, Π., & Δικαίου, M. (2007). Μετανάστευση και μετανάστες [Migration and immigrants]. *Κοινωνία και Ψυχική Υγεία, 4,* 4-5.

Papadimitriou, P. N., & Papageorgiou, I. F. (2005). The new "Dubliners": Implementation of European Council regulation 343/2003 (Dublin - II) by the Greek authorities. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 18*(3), 299-318.

Papadopoulou, A. (2002, September). *Kurdish asylum seekers in Greece: The role of networks in the migration process*. Paper presented at the Conference on Poverty, International Migration and Asylum, Helsinki.

Papadopoulou, A. (2004). Smuggling into Europe: Transit migrants in Greece. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 17*(2), 167-184.

Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative psychology: Introducing radical research*. New York: Open University Press.

Πελαγίδης, Σ. (2003). *Η Ελλάδα των πολιτισμών: Ομογενείς παλιννοστούντες και αλλογενείς πρόσφυγες (τέλη 20ου και αρχές 21ου αιώνα)* [Greece of cultures: Returnees of Greek origin and alien refugees (end of 20th and beginning of 21st century)]. Θεσσαλονίκη: Αφοι Κυριακίδη.

Πετράκου, Η. (2006). Διερεύνηση της κοινωνικής κατασκευής της μετανάστευσης στην Ελλάδα μέσα από συνεντεύξεις σε βάθος [Investigating the social construction of migration in Greece through in-depth interviews]. Στο Θ. Ιωσηφίδης, & Μ. Σπυριδάκης (Επιμ. Έκδ.), *Ποιοτική κοινωνική έρευνα: Μεθοδολογικές προσεγγίσεις και ανάλυση δεδομένων* (σ. 321-335). Αθήνα: Κριτική.

Ponterotto, J. G. (2002). Qualitative research methods: The fifth force in psychology. *The Counseling Psychologist, 30*(3), 394-406.

Prilleltensky, I. (1997). Values, assumptions and practices: Assessing the moral implications of psychological discourse and action. *American Psychologist, 52*(5), 517-535.

Prilleltensky, I., & Nelson, G. (2002). *Doing psychology critically: Making a difference in diverse settings*. New York: Macmillan.

Προλεταριακή Σημαία. (2004). *Πού είναι ο Προμηθέας; Επιλεγμένα κείμενα ενός πολιτικού πρόσφυγα από το Αφγανιστάν από τα 2 ½ χρόνια στην Ελλάδα* [Where is Prometheus? Selected texts of a political refugee from Afghanistan from his 2 ½ years stay in Greece]. Αθήνα: Αυτοέκδοση.

Puggioni, R. (2005). Refugees, institutional invisibility and self-help strategies: Evaluating Kurdish experience in Rome. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 18*(3), 319-339.

Salinas, C., & Muller, G. (1999). *Good practice guide on refugee integration: Education. ECRE Task Force on Integration.* Brussels: WUS. Retrieved August 8, 2006, from http://www.refugeenet.org

Sitaropoulos, N. (2002). Refugee welfare in Greece: Towards a remodeling of the responsibility-shifting paradigm? *Critical Social Policy, 22*(3), 436-455.

Skordas, A., & Sitaropoulos, N. (2002). Study on the asylum single procedure. National Report: Greece. In K. Haillbronner (Ed.), *Study on the asylum single procedure ("one-stop shop") against the background of the common European asylum system and the goal of a common asylum procedure.* University of Konstanz, Germany: European Commission. Retrieved March 15, 2006, from http://www.ecre.org

Skordas, A., & Sitaropoulos, N. (2004). Why Greece is not a safe host country for refugees. *International Journal of Refugee Law, 16*(1), 25-52.

Smith, J. A. (1999). Towards a relational self: Social engagement during pregnancy and psychological preparation for motherhood. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 38,* 409-426.

Smith, J. A., Jarman, M., & Osborne, M. (1999). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. In M. Murray & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), *Qualitative health psychology: Theories and methods* (pp. 218-240). London: Sage.

Smith, J. A., & Osborne, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 51-80). London: Sage.

Stark, C. (1998). Ethics in the research context: Misinterpretations and misplaced misgivings. *Canadian Psychology, 39*(3), 202-211.

Statewatch (2006). EU agrees refugee and subsidiary protection. *Online Bulletin, 14*(2). Retrieved July 25, 2006, from http://www.statewatch.org

Stiles, W. B. (1993). Quality control in qualitative research. *Clinical Psychology Review, 13,* 593-618.

Szczepanikova, A. (2005). Gender relations in a refugee camp: A case of Chechens seeking asylum in the Czech Republic. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 18*(3), 281-297.

Σώτου, Μ., & Τοπαλίδου, Α. (2003). Μεταναστευτική πολιτική και αίτηση ασύλου [Migration policy and application for asylum]. Στο Κ. Κασιμάτη (Επιμ. Έκδ.), *Πολιτικές μετανάστευσης και στρατηγικές ένταξης: Η περίπτωση των Αλβανών και Πολωνών μεταναστών* (σ. 307-364). Αθήνα: Gutenberg.

Tribe, R. (2007). Working with interpreters. *The Psychologist, 20*(3), 159-161.

Tsovili, T. D., & Voutira, E. (2004). *Asylum seeking single women, women head of families and separated children: Reception practices in Greece.* Retrieved September 20, 2006, from http://www.unchr.gr

Tzilivakis, K. (2006). *The truth about asylum: Greece is under mounting pressure to abandon its sledgehammer approach to asylum-seekers.* Retrieved August 8, 2006, from http://www.athensnews.gr

United Nations Commission on Human Rights. (2000). *Reception standards for asylum seekers in the European Union.* Geneva: Author.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights. (2006). *General charts.* Retrieved July 10, 2006, from http://www.unchr.gr

US Department of State. (2005). *Country reports on human rights practices: Iraq.* Retrieved July 14, 2006, from http://www.state.gov

Valtonen, K. (1998). Resettlement of Middle Eastern refugees in Finland: The elusiveness of integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 11*(1), 38-59.

Valtonen, K. (2004). From the margin to the mainstream: Conceptualizing refugee settlement processes. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 17*(1), 70-94.

Vink, M., & Meijerink, F. (2003) Asylum applications and recognition rates in EU Member States, 1982-2001. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 16*(3), 297-315.

Voutira, E., & Doná, G. (2007). Refugee research methodologies: Consolidation and transformation of a field. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 20*(2), 163-171.

Wanche, S. A. (2004). An assessment of the Iraqi community in Greece. Retrieved August 20, 2005, from http://www.unchr.gr

Watters, C. (2001). Emerging paradigms in the mental health care of refugees. *Social Science & Medicine, 52,* 1709-1718.

Watters, C., & Ingleby, D. (2004). Locations of care: Meeting the mental health and social care needs of refugees in Europe. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, 27,* 549-570.

Willig, C. (2004). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method.* New York: Open University Press.

Wren, K. (2003). Refugee dispersal in Denmark: From macro- to micro-scale analysis. *International Journal of Population Geography, 9,* 57-75.

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology & Health, 15,* 215-228.

´Υπατη Αρμοστεία του Ο.Η.Ε. για τους Πρόσφυγες. Αντιπροσωπεία στην Ελλάδα. (2006). *Θέσεις της ´Υπατης Αρμοστείας του Ο.Η.Ε. για τους Πρόσφυγες για καίρια θέματα της προστασίας των προσφύγων στην Ελλάδα* [Positions of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on essential matters concerning the protection of refugees in Greece]. Ανάσυρση στις 10 Απριλίου 2008 από http://www.antigone.gr/listpage/important_announcements/