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THESIS

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE LIKE A REFUGEE:
AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT
PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE COMPREHENSIVE
INTEGRATION OUTCOMES IN "FREE CASE"
REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**

by

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December 2019

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SELECTED REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE
COMPREHENSIVE INTEGRATION OUTCOMES IN "FREE CASE" REFUGEE
RESETTLEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

By law, refugees entering the United States must become self-sufficient as quickly as possible. But successful integration means more than achieving this benchmark. True integration involves social inclusion and ties to community and nation—particularly difficult for “free case” refugees who have no family in the U.S. and are wholly reliant upon resettlement organizations. This thesis asks the question: How can free case refugee resettlement practices be improved to enhance the likelihood of sociocultural integration and create stronger ties to the United States? A comparative assessment of three resettlement programs was undertaken to identify best practices. Integration success was assessed through statistical measures such as percentage of refugees who self-migrated after initial resettlement, and subjective measures of wellbeing and satisfaction as reported by refugees themselves. The analysis found refugees served by programs that lasted two years, as opposed to one year or less, reported a high degree of wellbeing and satisfaction, and less secondary migration. Moreover, refugees who were required to stay in a location for an extended period were less likely to engage in secondary migration afterward. This thesis recommends national refugee resettlement policy be updated to require local resettlement programs last a minimum of two years and that free case refugees must remain in their original resettlement location in exchange for three years of resettlement assistance.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The Act	The Refugee Act of 1980
CCS	Catholic Community Services
DKK	Danish Krone
ECM	Extended Case Management
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
HIM	Holistic Immigration Model
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPL	Immigration Policy Lab
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LDS	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
LEP	Limited English Proficient
MVRCR	Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIMBY	not-in-my-backyard
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
PRM	Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCA	Refugee Cash Assistance
RMA	Refugee Medical Assistance
U.N.	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USRAP	United States Refugee Admission Program
VOLAG	Volunteer Agency

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Refugee integration is complicated to achieve and hard to measure. Part of the difficulty in measuring the success of integration is due to the lack of an universally-accepted definition of integration by the international community. In the United States, The Refugee Act of 1980 (“the Act”) was the first significant federal effort to enumerate principles of refugee resettlement assistance.¹ Though never using the term “integration,” in discussing expectations for resettled refugees and the programs that would be provided to them, the Act noted refugees were expected to be “effectively resettled as quickly as possible,” the indicator of which was—is—economic self-sufficiency.² The Act established three programs in furtherance of those principles—employment training and placement, English-language training, and short-term, limited cash assistance.³ The expressed vision of the Act was to ensure refugees were “effectively.”⁴

Refugee integration, however, is more than just satisfactory achievement of structured economic benchmarks. To achieve true integration, refugees must achieve—and refugee resettlement programs must address—structural integration measures, such as employment and housing, *and* sociocultural integration through social inclusion and acculturation.⁵ For refugees that have family in the United States with which they will be resettled, adjustment and integration are made easier by that family’s existing community connections. However, for “free case” refugees—those refugees that have no familial ties to the United States and are wholly dependent on their local resettlement agency caseworkers for assistance—obstacles to comprehensive integration are far more likely and

¹ Refugee Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96–212, 94 Stat. 102 (March 17, 1980).

² Refugee Act of 1980.

³ Refugee Act of 1980.

⁴ Refugee Act of 1980.

⁵ “The Debate over Integration: An Explainer,” Refugees Deeply, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/06/30/the-debate-over-integration-an-explainer>.

challenging.⁶ These “free case” refugees are at a heightened risk for resettlement failure, as they lack any pre-existing familial network to assist with acclimating to the United States and will be placed in a location chosen for them by one of nine assigned volunteer agencies (VOLAGs).⁷ Identifying those resettlement programs that have shown success in refugee integration—beyond simple metrics of employment, education, and housing—will provide valuable information for policy recommendations for the United States’ Refugee Admission Program (USRAP).

All local resettlement programs must provide a baseline of local services that mirror the requirements outlined in The Refugee Act of 1980: employment assistance, English language courses, and limited cash assistance to assist refugees in their first months in the United States.⁸ Accordingly, VOLAGs and local resettlement organizations focus on ensuring refugees find employment, once they are resettled.⁹ A 2017 case study in the journal *Forced Migration Review*, however, notes refugees resettled in the U.S. identified English-language acquisition as their most important goal, while cultural preservation held varying importance, depending on the refugee population interviewed.¹⁰ This incongruity in prioritization of needs that must be met to best promote integration must be considered in establishing effective resettlement programs “that [bridge] the gap between policy and the lived experience of integration, taking distinct cultural considerations into account in the formation of new policies and practices.”¹¹

⁶ Laura P. Lunn, “Displaced and Disillusioned: ‘Free-Case’ Refugees and the Government’s Obligation to Facilitate Effective Resettlement,” *The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice; Iowa City* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 833–65.

⁷ Will Jones and Alexander Teytelboym, “The Local Refugee Match: Aligning Refugees’ Preferences with the Capacities and Priorities of Localities,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 31, no. 2 (August 16, 2017): 152–78.

⁸ Office of Refugee Resettlement, “Annual Report to Congress: Office of Refugee Resettlement Fiscal Year 2016” (report, Administration for Children and Families, June 14, 2018), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ort/resource/office-of-refugee-resettlement-annual-report-to-congress-2016>.

⁹ Refugee Act of 1980, § 412(a)(1)(A).

¹⁰ Catherine Tyson, “Towards a New Framework for Integration in the US,” *Forced Migration Review*, no. 54 (February 2017): 49.

¹¹ Tyson.

Local resettlement programs are not uniform nationwide. They are limited only by funding and resources as to what they can offer refugees. Accordingly, quality of programs that seek to go beyond the baseline provision of employment services and housing assistance vary greatly, as do their measures of success.¹² This thesis looks beyond traditional measures of success—employment, housing, and education—and conducts case studies of resettlement programs that achieved free case refugee integration success in other measures, namely reduced refugee secondary migration—the volitional movement by refugees after resettlement to another location, forsaking the resettlement program designated to assist with their resettlement—and a high percentage of refugees reporting strong satisfaction with their resettlement program and a favorable sense of wellbeing, elements of each program that contributed to those positive outcomes were identified.

Two local resettlement programs were examined, a twenty-four-month Extended Case Management (ECM) program in Salt Lake City, Utah, and a traditional program in Utica, New York. Salt Lake City recognized that six months of resettlement services was inadequate to address the needs of most refugees, so it created an extended refugee case management (ECM) system.¹³ Over the two-year duration of the program, refugees reported increasing levels of positivity towards their wellbeing and the work of the resettlement agency in each successive interview.¹⁴ Of greatest significance, perhaps, is that the majority of refugees’ assessments of their own wellbeing did not move from “very bad” or “bad” to “good” or “very good” until the 12 to 24 month range, suggesting that the integratory benefits of a robust resettlement program are not realized in the first few months after a refugee arrives in the U.S., but subsequent to the first year of arrival.¹⁵

¹² Anastasia Brown and Todd Scribner, “Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities: The Refugee Resettlement System in the United States,” *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 2, no. 2 (2014): 101–120.

¹³ Stacey A. Shaw and Patrick Poulin, “Findings from an Extended Case Management U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 16, no. 4 (November 2015): 1099–1120, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12134-014-0374-0>.

¹⁴ Shaw and Poulin.

¹⁵ Shaw and Poulin.

Utica, New York, did not have a particularly novel or lengthy resettlement program. What Utica did have—as a result of a long history of refugee migration and entrepreneurial success—was extensive, robust community support and involvement, taking up the lions’ share of work from the local resettlement organization.¹⁶ As of 2017, the percentage of Utica residents that are foreign-born was 19.4 percent. Even some refugees originally resettled in other locations in the United States have secondarily migrated to Utica, as evidenced by the MVRRCR’s notice that it offers employment and other resettlement services to secondary migration refugees.¹⁷

Beyond the United States, Denmark’s refugee resettlement program was studied, in particular the “Integration Contract” component that obligates refugees to stay in the location of initial resettlement for three years as part of acceptance for resettlement, and in furtherance of Denmark’s “spatial dispersal” policy—one component of the country’s “Nordic values” integration program.¹⁸ The program also requires satisfactory completion of mandatory Danish language and cultural integration courses, before refugees are expected to seek and obtain employment.¹⁹ As of 2019, fifteen years after initial placement in locales throughout Denmark, seventy-five percent of refugees are still in their location of original placement.²⁰ Though somewhat draconian in nature, the three-year location stay requirement appears to have largely achieved its goal.

¹⁶ Alissa Scott, “‘Town That Loves Refugees’: Is it Perception or Reality in Utica?” *Observer-Dispatch*, February 27, 2017, <https://www.uticaod.com/news/20170227/town-that-loves-refugees-is-it-perception-or-reality-in-utica>.

¹⁷ “Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees Launches New Welcome Center,” *Oneida Daily Dispatch*, September 21, 2019, https://www.oneidadispatch.com/news/local-news/mohawk-valley-resource-center-for-refugees-launches-new-welcome-center/article_8f5f5bb6-dc00-11e9-a429-6f51c13d6a2c.html.

¹⁸ Gunnar Myrberg, “Local Challenges and National Concerns: Municipal Level Responses to National Refugee Settlement Policies in Denmark and Sweden,” *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 83, no. 2 (June 1, 2017): 322–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852315586309>.

¹⁹ Henrik Thomassen, *The Integration of Refugees in Denmark* (Luxembourg: European Parliament Policy Department, August 2019), [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/638397/IPOL_STU\(2019\)638397\(ANN02\)_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/638397/IPOL_STU(2019)638397(ANN02)_EN.pdf).

²⁰ Fabian Eckert, Mads Hejlesen, and Conor Walsh, “The Return to Big City Experience: Evidence from Danish Refugees” (working paper, Opportunity and Inclusive Growth Institute, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, September, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.21034/iwp.24>.

Based on the three programs studied, two recommendations were made for inclusion in the USRAP for free case refugee resettlement. The first is a requirement that local resettlement programs be extended to a minimum two-year duration, as in Salt Lake City, Utah. Even if the programs offered are not of the highest caliber, continuing contact and assistance to refugees beyond one year has been shown to have a remarkably positive effect. The second recommendation is implementation of an obligatory three-year requirement to remain in the initial resettlement location, similar to the Danish Integration Contract model. Though enforcement would be problematic, if the agreement could be sufficiently incentivized—perhaps extending program assistance and services for the full three years—it might make secondary migration less attractive to free case refugees.

In conclusion, refugee integration continues to be a significant homeland security concern. Statutorily, the U.S. looks no further than employment and economic self-sufficiency, in assessing the integration of refugees. This is a flawed measure. A more comprehensive definition of integration, to include sociocultural integration, needs to be considered and agreed upon as an industry standard. Adopting the recommendations outlined above into U.S. refugee resettlement policies would ensure that free case refugee integration—under a new, comprehensive definition of integration—results more often and more consistently.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. DEFINING SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OUTCOMES IN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The Refugee Act of 1980 (“the Act”) was the first significant federal effort to enumerate principles of refugee resettlement assistance. The Act established three programs in furtherance of those principles—employment training and placement, English-language training, and short-term, limited cash assistance.¹ The expressed vision of the Act was to ensure refugees were “effectively resettled as quickly as possible,” the indicator of which was—is—economic self-sufficiency.² Economic self-sufficiency continues to be the guiding principle behind the United States’ refugee resettlement efforts. Economic self-sufficiency is an important aspect of refugee resettlement, of course, and its components—employment rates, home ownership versus rental, and education levels—can be measured reasonably accurately.³

Refugee integration, however, is more than just satisfactory achievement of structured economic benchmarks. The resettlement experience presents refugees with an “unique set of challenges and stresses related to acculturation into a new cultural setting ... in the course of rebuilding and recovery.”⁴ Economic self-sufficiency is an incomplete and inadequate measure of integration, as it ignores less-easily quantifiable considerations, such as a refugee’s civic engagement, social cohesion and those programs and practices designed to nurture American values and the cultivation of loyalty and patriotism towards

¹ Refugee Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96–212, 94 Stat. 102 (March 17, 1980).

² Refugee Act of 1980.

³ For example, 65% of adult refugees aged 18–45 at time of resettlement found work and entered the labor force within one year of resettlement, increasing to a high of almost 90% in the labor force fourteen years after entry, exceeding the native born labor force participation rate of 75%. William N. Evans and Daniel Fitzgerald, “The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States: Evidence from the ACS” (working paper, National Bureau of Economic Research, June 2017), <https://doi.org/10.3386/w23498>.

⁴ Kate E. Murray, Graham R. Davidson, and Robert D. Schweitzer, “Review of Refugee Mental Health Interventions Following Resettlement: Best Practices and Recommendations,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 80, no. 4 (2010): 576–85, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01062.x>, 582.

their new country.⁵ To achieve true integration, refugees must achieve – and refugee resettlement programs must address – structural integration measures, such as employment and housing, *and* sociocultural integration through social inclusion and acculturation.⁶

By virtue of the circumstances surrounding their forced migration, refugees experience a high incidence of physical and mental health concerns and often report feeling a deep sense of social isolation.⁷ Rather than addressing those potential issues immediately upon resettlement, refugees are presented with the expectation of quickly obtaining employment.⁸ Refugees feel significant pressure to accept the first available employment after resettlement, as rapid employment is in keeping with the articulated goals of the Refugee Act of 1980 and oftentimes a local resettlement organizations’ funding is conditioned on ensuring high levels of employment among the refugees served.⁹ This thesis will argue that an unwavering focus on rapid employment is ill-advised and counterproductive to ensuring full integration and adoption of American values and loyalties.

Apart from addressing immediate health issues, refugees consider English language mastery a necessary precursor to finding appropriate employment commensurate with their skills and experience.¹⁰ Half of refugees admitted through the United States Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) have no or poor English language skills at the time of entry.¹¹ As recently as 2009, the Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) Office

⁵ Catherine Tyson, “Towards a New Framework for Integration in the US,” *Forced Migration Review*, no. 54 (February 2017): 49.

⁶ “The Debate over Integration: An Explainer,” Refugees Deeply, accessed November 22, 2019, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/06/30/the-debate-over-integration-an-explainer>.

⁷ Stacey A. Shaw and Patrick Poulin, “Findings from an Extended Case Management U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 16, no. 4 (November 2015): 1099–1120, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12134-014-0374-0>.

⁸ Yvette M. Young, “Why Refugees Need More Than Just Immediate Employment,” Scholars Strategy Network, May 14, 2019, <https://scholars.org/contribution/why-refugees-need-more-just-immediate-employment>.

⁹ Shaw and Poulin, “Findings.”

¹⁰ Tyson, “Towards a New Framework,” 2.

¹¹ Hamutal Bernstein, *Bringing Evidence to the Refugee Integration Debate* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, April 2018), 38.

of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) reported that five years after resettlement, fully half (50.2 percent) of refugees still spoke little or no English.¹² Among adult refugees, sixty-one percent were rated as Limited English Proficient (LEP).¹³ These unfortunate percentages make clear that continuing with a resettlement strategy that places primary emphasis on rapid employment, rather than on developing English language mastery, ensures that refugee resettlement in the United States will continue to be an incomplete process that prevents many refugees from achieving their full integration potential.

The resettlement concerns and issues outlined above are even more problematic for those refugees that have no familial ties to the United States and are wholly dependent on their local resettlement agency caseworkers for assistance.¹⁴ These “free case” refugees are at a heightened risk for resettlement failure, as they lack any pre-existing familial network to assist with acclimating to the United States.¹⁵ Refugees are assigned to one of the nine volunteer agencies (“VOLAGs”), which arrange for resettlement services with a local resettlement organization in the location ultimately selected by the VOLAG for resettlement.¹⁶ Refugees with family ties in the U.S. are resettled with or near those family members, but, for free case refugees, the assigned VOLAG decides resettlement location and assign the case to its local partners.¹⁷ The factors the VOLAG uses to determine free case refugee resettlement locations include pre-existing contractual relationships with local

¹² Shaw and Poulin, “Findings.”

¹³ Jie Zong, Michael Fix, and Kate Hooper, *How Are Refugees Faring? Integration at U.S. and State Levels* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2017), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/how-are-refugees-faring-integration-us-and-state-levels>.

¹⁴ Laura P. Lunn, “Displaced and Disillusioned: ‘Free-Case’ Refugees and the Government’s Obligation to Facilitate Effective Resettlement,” *The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 833–65.

¹⁵ Will Jones and Alexander Teytelboym, “The Local Refugee Match: Aligning Refugees’ Preferences with the Capacities and Priorities of Localities,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 31, no. 2 (August 16, 2017): 152–78.

¹⁶ As of January 19, 2019, the nine voluntary agencies are Church World Services; Ethiopian Community Development Council; Episcopal Migration Ministries; Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society; International Rescue Committee; U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants; Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; and World Relief Corporation. “Voluntary Agencies,” Administration for Children and Families, July 17, 2012, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/voluntary-agencies>.

¹⁷ Jones and Teytelboym, “The Local Refugee Match.”

resettlement organizations, national resettlement priorities, and even to some degree serendipity.¹⁸

The lack of participation by free case refugees in the decision-making process creates the potential for additional hurdles in integration success, making all the more important the identification and incorporation into a national strategy the resettlement “best practices” that have shown success in promoting the adoption and incorporation of core American values. Unfortunately, the United States refugee resettlement model is largely self-policing.¹⁹ VOLAGs monitor the quality of care provided by those local organizations with which they maintain contractual service relationships, and all that the law requires of the VOLAGs is provision of an annual report confirming their programs comply with the statutory minimum placement and resettlement guidelines.²⁰ While all refugees are provided statutorily-mandated assistance, services beyond that minimum threshold are local program-dependent and inconsistently provided. Under such circumstances, it seems logical to conclude that the less involved the local agency is, the less well positioned are its refugees for continued integration.

There are three variables in the refugee integration equation: the refugee, the community, and the resettlement assistance program. With funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), all local resettlement programs must provide a baseline of local services that mirror the requirements outlined in the Refugee Act of 1980: employment assistance, English language courses, and limited cash assistance to assist refugees in their first months in the United States.²¹ Beyond that, local organizations are limited only by funding and resources as to what programs they can or will offer refugees.

¹⁸ Tamar Mott Forrest and Lawrence A. Brown, “Organization-Led Migration, Individual Choice, and Refugee Resettlement in the U.S.: Seeking Regularities,” *Geographical Review* 104, no. 1 (January 2014): 10–32.

¹⁹ Accreditation programs exist for refugee resettlement organizations; however, accreditation is not a statutory nor VOLAG-maintained requirement. “Standard,” Council on Accreditation, accessed November 18, 2019, <https://coanet.org/standard/rrs/>.

²⁰ Authorization for Programs for Domestic Resettlement of and Assistance to Refugees, 8 U.S.C. § 1522(b)(8) (2006).

²¹ Office of Refugee Resettlement, “Annual Report to Congress: Office of Refugee Resettlement Fiscal Year 2016” (report, Administration for Children and Families, June 14, 2018), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/office-of-refugee-resettlement-annual-report-to-congress-2016>.

Accordingly, quality of programs that seek to go beyond the baseline provision of employment services and housing assistance vary greatly.²² A refugee may still find success and adopt core American values independent of support from their community and local resettlement organization, but it is less likely.²³ Conversely, a refugee who enjoys overt support and assistance from their local resettlement agency and community is much more likely to develop strong ties to their new home and nation.²⁴ Identifying those programs and practices that provide not only the required structural integration components of employment, language and housing support, but also sociocultural efforts that facilitate the refugees' development of social connections and a sense of communal identity will be the focus of this thesis.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

How can free case refugee resettlement practices be improved to enhance comprehensive integration and better foster American values?

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Refugee Employment as the Dominant Metric in Resettlement Success

Much of the literature on the topic of refugee resettlement in the U.S. acknowledges that refugee economic self-sufficiency through rapid employment is of primary importance in the United States' policies towards refugee admission and resettlement.²⁵ The specific language used in the Refugee Act of 1980 notes a primary objective of the Act is to “provide comprehensive and uniform provisions for the effective resettlement and

²² Anastasia Brown and Todd Scribner, “Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities: The Refugee Resettlement System in the United States,” *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 2, no. 2 (2014): 101–120.

²³ Damir Utržan, Elizabeth Wieling, and Timothy Piehler, “A Needs and Readiness Assessment of the United States Refugee Resettlement Program: Focus on Syrian Asylum-Seekers and Refugees,” *International Migration* 57, no. 1 (2019): 127–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12479>.

²⁴ Utržan, Wieling, and Piehler.

²⁵ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement, Greater Consultation with Community Stakeholders Could Strengthen Program*, GAO-12-729 (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2012), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/600/592975.pdf>.

absorption of those refugees who are admitted.”²⁶ Effective resettlement and absorption were not specifically defined, but the delineation of programs that were to be established and provided to refugees made clear that employment would be viewed as the primary metric in assessing refugee resettlement.²⁷ Employment, and the other two programs—English language training and cash assistance—would be provided, in order for refugees to reach economic self-sufficiency, a term used synonymously with “effective resettlement.”²⁸ In the eyes of the federal government of 1980, effective resettlement was tied to simple measures of economic achievement and nothing more. The word “integration” never once appears in the text of the Refugee Act of 1980.²⁹

This narrow view of effective resettlement, established almost 40 years ago, continues to be the federal government’s litmus test for resettlement success. The Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement’s (HHS ORR) informational webpage notes “employability services” as its primary service focus and touts the success of its refugee employment efforts.³⁰ Catholic Charities, one of the nine VOLAGs contracted by HHS ORR, commissioned a report released in June 2018 touting the benefits of refugee resettlement to the United States. That report’s first identified measure of refugee contribution and value to this country was the percentage of refugees employed (68 percent).³¹ By comparison, the percentage of all persons in the U.S. employed in 2018 was lower (60.5 percent).³² To the federal government, refugee employment remains the single most considered metric in resettlement and the controlling consideration in resettlement location determinations.

²⁶ Refugee Act of 1980, § 101(b).

²⁷ Refugee Act of 1980, § 412(a)(1)(A).

²⁸ Refugee Act of 1980, § 412.

²⁹ Refugee Act of 1980.

³⁰ “Refugee Social Services,” Office of Refugee Resettlement, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugee-social-services>.

³¹ “New Report Demonstrates Positive Impact of Refugees in United States,” Catholic Charities USA, June 29, 2018, https://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/press_release/new-report-demonstrates-positive-impact-of-refugees-in-united-states/.

³² “Bureau of Labor Statistics Data,” accessed November 24, 2019, <https://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet>.

The United States is hardly alone, however, in this practice. A review of refugee resettlement programs in the nine countries, including the U.S., that take in the majority of the world's resettled refugees shows that all countries offer vocational training and assistance and track the employment statistics of refugees.³³ Unlike the U.S., however, other countries place less import on finding immediate employment, instead first focusing on language education and acculturation. Nonetheless, employment is an easily calculable metric, far easier to identify and assess than the subjective measurement of a refugee's sense of inclusion or progress along the continuum of integration from "outsider" to full adoption of the values of the host nation.³⁴ The importance of refugee employment as a component of integration coupled with the relative ease of measurement makes it, in many ways, the default metric for assessing success of refugee resettlement programs.

2. Refugee Perspective on Integration Differs from Federal Priorities

Studies conducted by non-governmental entities suggest refugees place less emphasis on employment as the first priority in their integration experience. A 2017 case study in the journal *Forced Migration Review* notes refugees resettled in the U.S. identified English-language acquisition as their most important goal, while cultural preservation held varying importance, depending on the refugee population interviewed.³⁵ This incongruity in prioritization of needs that must be met to best promote integration must be considered in establishing effective resettlement programs "that [bridge] the gap between policy and the lived experience of integration, taking distinct cultural considerations into account in the formation of new policies and practices."³⁶ As the Act is silent on such cultural concerns, it falls to states, communities, and even the refugees themselves to establish programs that address those issues.

³³ Uma A. Segal and Doreen Elliott, *Refugees Worldwide* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012), Table 7.7, 949.

³⁴ Segal and Elliott.

³⁵ Tyson, "Towards a New Framework."

³⁶ Tyson.

Increasingly, the discourse on refugee integration is moving beyond a simple tally of employment percentages to look at other factors. Catherine Tyson of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies notes that U.S. resettlement policy continues to rely on American values of what makes a “productive citizen”—particularly employment. This narrow focus on employment “ultimately leaves some, maybe many, refugees struggling even after the official period of resettlement is over.”³⁷ Moreover, the literature notes, as other countries evolve their policies and programs to take a more holistic view of resettlement and integration, the U.S. risks falling further behind the international community in effective integration practices.³⁸

Further, the literature suggests that employment may be difficult to obtain by refugees who come from countries and ethnicities that are physically and culturally distinct from the host community’s dominant populations. In the Immigration Policy Lab (IPL) Working Paper, “Boosting Refugee Outcomes: Evidence from Policy, Academia, and Social Innovation,” Salma Mousa notes that while refugees in the United States found work faster than their Canadian and European counterparts, Burmese, Iraqi and Somali refugees had lower rates of employment than refugees from other countries.³⁹ In a 2010 report, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that unemployment or underemployment was particularly pronounced in the Iraqi refugee community.⁴⁰ Noting that the U.S. has been engaged in ongoing military operations for over fifteen years in Iraq, and over seven years at the time of the GAO report, those employment difficulties may have far more to do with that group’s ethnicity than any other factor that might impede employment.

The literature also reveals that pressure to quickly find employment and realize self-sufficiency, to the exclusion of other considerations, results in climbing rates of suicide

³⁷ Tyson.

³⁸ Refugees Deeply, “The Debate over Integration.”

³⁹ Salma Mousa, “Boosting Refugee Outcomes: Evidence from Policy, Academia, and Social Innovation” (scholarly paper, Social Science Research Network, October 2, 2018), <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3259255>.

⁴⁰ Government Accountability Office, *Iraqi Refugees and Special Immigrant Visa Holders Face Challenges Resettling in the United States and Obtaining U.S. Government Employment*, GAO-10-274 (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, March 2010).

and pervasive feelings of frustration and isolation in certain refugee communities.⁴¹ For example, Paul Kenny and Kate Lockwood-Kenny have documented the extent to which refugees from Myanmar belonging to the Karen (or “Kariang”) Christian minority ethnic group, despite securing gainful employment shortly after arrival in the U.S., continued to struggle with isolation and depression long after initial resettlement.⁴² This lack of connection to their first home in America often resulted in secondary and tertiary migration patterns among the Karen within the United States.⁴³ Similarly, literature exploring an increase in suicides among recently arrived Bhutanese refugees, regardless of employment status, found frustrations over the lack of language training opportunities and a perceived lack of adequate involvement and assistance from local resettlement agencies led to feelings of despair.⁴⁴ Gainfully employed or not, if a refugee feels isolated, full and lasting integration is not achieved.

3. The Role of Community Is Critical in a Refugee’s Successful Integration

The literature includes studies examining community-based resettlement programs. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted that if refugees are not given a say in their placement determinations, then successful integration becomes more reliant on the local programs and resources expended for free case refugees in resettlement locations.⁴⁵ This reliance on programs over environment is not necessarily a negative, provided the resettlement program is sufficiently robust and effective. Authors Stacey Shaw and Patrick Poulin reviewed an Extended Case Management (ECM) program for refugees resettled in Salt Lake City, Utah, that created a two-year resettlement model that included significant, engaged social outreach and community interaction, as well as mandating a schedule of

⁴¹ Tyson, “Towards a New Framework.”

⁴² Paul Kenny and Kate Lockwood-Kenny, “A Mixed Blessing: Karen Resettlement to the United States,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 2 (June 2011): 217–38.

⁴³ Kenny and Lockwood-Kenny.

⁴⁴ Ashley K. Hagaman et al., “An Investigation into Suicides among Bhutanese Refugees Resettled in the United States Between 2008 and 2011,” *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 18, no. 4 (August 2016): 819–27, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-015-0326-6>.

⁴⁵ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement*.

frequent home visits by caseworkers who continuously solicited substantive feedback on the value of the program's components from the refugees served.⁴⁶

Literature regarding this and other integration-focused resettlement programs noted that such tailored efforts resulted in participating refugees experiencing substantial improvements in well-being and marked reductions in needs concerning health, employment, finances, housing education, and family/community circumstances over that two-year time frame.⁴⁷ Likewise, similar long-term successes were noted in Utica, New York, where community-based efforts engaged not only refugees but also the local citizenry to create social bridges, an essential component in comprehensive integration.⁴⁸ The findings show a pattern—when welcoming communities have sufficient resources available, whether through federal funding or other means, long-term programs can be crafted that offer free case refugees a much greater likelihood of successful integration on multiple levels, notwithstanding the refugees' lack of participation in the decision as to their resettlement destination.

Unfortunately, such successes are not universal. Relevant literature points to instances of local resettlement programs failing to adequately serve the needs of their refugee constituency, resulting in many refugees opting to resort to secondary migration to other locations. Many articles and reports referenced the problematic resettlement of free case Somali refugees in the early 2000s.⁴⁹ These refugees were initially resettled in inner-city areas of Atlanta, Chicago, and Nashville—cities that presumably had been vetted by the VOLAGs and identified as suitable for refugee resettlement, with appropriate employment and affordable housing opportunities. Soon after their resettlement, however, a significant percentage of refugees relocated to Portland and Lewiston, Maine—two communities with a small but established Somali presence. Both towns, however, were ill-

⁴⁶ Stacey A. Shaw and Patrick Poulin, "Findings."

⁴⁷ Shaw and Poulin.

⁴⁸ R. Scott Smith, "The Case of a City Where 1 in 6 Residents Is a Refugee: Ecological Factors and Host Community Adaptation in Successful Resettlement," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 42, no. 3–4 (December 2008): 328–42, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10464-008-9208-6>.

⁴⁹ Forrest and Brown, "Organization-Led Migration."

equipped and wholly unprepared to deal with the rapid influx of thousands of Somali refugees, who, by virtue of their secondary migration were no longer receiving resettlement services by their assigned resettlement agency.⁵⁰ The refugees' need for assistance from their adopted communities created conflicts between the communities and their new refugee population.⁵¹

These events spurred the literature on the study of refugee resettlement to look beyond obvious factors such as employment, housing, and even proximity to persons and groups of similar nationality and ethnicity in assessing the success of resettlement programs in integrating refugees.⁵² Where before there had been a fairly simple formula for success—resettle free case refugees in communities with available housing and jobs, and all the better if the community had pre-existing neighborhoods with residents sharing similar nationality or ethnicity—the secondary self-migration of Somali refugees away from established Somali communities and local resettlement support in Atlanta, Chicago and Nashville in the early 2000s demonstrated that successful resettlement and integration required far more than just satisfying those three conditions.⁵³

Subsequently, the literature began to more fully explore the role community plays in refugee integration. Will Jones and Alexander Teytelboym's research helped illuminate the importance of *proportionality*—identifying the number of refugees a community can responsibly host—and *suitability*—ensuring that refugees should ideally be placed in host communities that offer refugees the best opportunities for their talents and skills, as previously ignored or little-considered variables in refugee resettlement location determinations to optimize the potential for successful, comprehensive integration.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Steve Bottari, "What Portland Can Learn from Lewiston's Immigrant Surge 20 Years Ago," WMTW, July 24, 2019, <https://www.wmtw.com/article/what-portland-can-learn-from-lewiston-s-immigrant-surge-20-years-ago/28493582>.

⁵¹ Peter Blais, "The Shock of the New," *Planning* 69, no. 2 (February 2003): 14–17.

⁵² Jeffrey Bloem and Scott Loveridge, "The Secondary Migration of Refugees Resettled in the US," *Forced Migration Review*, no. 54 (February 2017): 26–28.

⁵³ Kimberly A. Huisman, "Why Maine? Secondary Migration Decisions of Somali Refugees," *Ìrìnkèrindò: A Journal of African Migration*, no. 5 (December 2011), <https://africamigration.com/archives/issue5-dec2011>.

⁵⁴ Jones and Teytelboym, "The Local Refugee Match," 152.

These are certainly not the only variables in determining best location practices or likelihood of successful integration, but they are strong factors to aid in the determination of resettlement location, particularly if local organizations lack suitably tailored resettlement programs.

Unfortunately, there is little the United States can do to prevent resettled free case refugees from engaging in secondary migration. Refugees dissatisfied with their initial U.S. resettlement location can relocate at any time, though they risk the loss of assistance from their assigned local resettlement organization. The literature exploring refugee secondary migration suggests lasting ramifications that could delay or preclude entirely comprehensive integration and the cultivation of national values.⁵⁵ Studies determined that post-resettlement migration works in opposition to national goals of a more uniform dispersal of refugees between rural and urban centers and creates a greater likelihood of homogeneous ethnic enclaves.⁵⁶ Notwithstanding the potentially negative consequences of secondary migration, the data shows conclusively that the percentage of refugees that engage in secondary migration has steadily increased over the past thirty-five years.⁵⁷ Consequently, the body of literature evaluating refugee resettlement programs must now wrestle with the question whether or not initial resettlement should be considered a true permanent placement, or more accurately a “staging area,” from which refugees will depart shortly after arrival for a location of their own choosing. Acknowledging such a new reality would fundamentally change the nature of refugee resettlement practices and practices in the United States.

The relevant literature identified certain countries in Scandinavia—most notably Denmark—that have resolved the dilemma of refugee secondary migration by requiring prospective refugees to sign an “Integration Contract” that requires refugees remain for

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Bloem and Scott Loveridge, “The Costs of Secondary Migration: Perspectives from Local Voluntary Agencies in the USA,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 19, no. 2 (May 1, 2018): 233–51.

⁵⁶ Bloem and Loveridge, “Secondary Migration.”

⁵⁷ Bloem and Loveridge, “Costs of Secondary Migration.”

three years in the location designated for them by the Danish immigration authority.⁵⁸ This requirement furthers the government’s “spatial dispersion” policy designed to prevent refugees from isolating themselves in ethnic enclaves and forcing the development of social ties with their host community. In addition, as Guilherme notes, Denmark requires refugees to sign a “declaration pledging their commitment to integrate and to be active citizens in society.”⁵⁹ She further stresses that to facilitate the development of those local cultural values, Denmark prioritizes and mandates language and Danish culture instruction for the first year of resettlement, over employment assistance.⁶⁰ The literature notes that of the Scandinavian countries, Denmark has the most restrictive resettlement program, in terms of freedom of movement by refugees. However, after their three-year contractual period had expired, the majority of refugees in Denmark remained in their initially designated location.⁶¹

The body of literature assessing refugee resettlement in Scandinavia notes those programs are rooted in the countries’ history of strong social welfare as a fundamental construct of governance.⁶² Further, the literature illustrates that these programs were developed in and tailored for countries that are relatively small in both population and geography and with native populations that were largely ethnically homogeneous. Despite the inarguable integration success of Denmark’s resettlement program, much of the literature views the program negatively, as forcibly imposing Danish culture on refugees at the expense of their own ethnic identity.⁶³

⁵⁸ Gunnar Myrberg, “Local Challenges and National Concerns: Municipal Level Responses to National Refugee Settlement Policies in Denmark and Sweden,” *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 83, no. 2 (June 1, 2017): 322–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852315586309>.

⁵⁹ Ariana Guilherme Fernandes, “(Dis)Empowering New Immigrants and Refugees through Their Participation in Introduction Programs in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway,” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 13, no. 3 (2015): 245–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2015.1045054>.

⁶⁰ Myrberg, “Local Challenges and National Concerns.”

⁶¹ Myrberg.

⁶² Guilherme Fernandes, “(Dis)Empowering New Immigrants and Refugees.”

⁶³ Guilherme Fernandes.

As the literature exploring refugee resettlement and integration challenges has developed, the more the critical importance of the third “stakeholder” in refugee resettlement, the community, is understood.⁶⁴ Research conducted by the federal government acknowledges prioritizing locations with employment opportunities ignores the importance of looking beyond a host community’s employment and housing availability and considering the community’s perceptions of refugees as a whole.⁶⁵ In sum, studies conducted by private organizations and the federal government recommend the focus in refugee resettlement shift and expand beyond simple metrics of employment and housing, and proactively seek out, develop and incorporate community involvement and engagement to create vital social bridges that will ensure refugees benefit from a more robust and comprehensive refugee integration experience.⁶⁶

To that end, in April 2015, the authors of the White House Task Force on New Americans’ “Strategic Action Plan on Immigrant and Refugee Integration,” recommended the creation of a “Toolkit for Local Communities,” to provide some measure of guidance for developing resettlement programs at the community level.⁶⁷ This action plan recognized as a central truth that communities play a critical role in fostering efforts that create social bridges and a sense of belonging by refugees—essential for the ultimate success of immigrants and refugees.⁶⁸ The report noted that far more than the basic U.S. history and civics knowledge required for immigrants to become naturalized citizens, such community engagement promotes a heightened sense of civic responsibility and participation in governance among immigrants and a readier embracement of American values.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, progress towards creation and implementation of the

⁶⁴ Jones and Teytelboym, “The Local Refugee Match.”

⁶⁵ Government Accountability Office, *Greater Consultation with Community Stakeholders Could Strengthen Program*.

⁶⁶ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement*; Jones and Teytelboym, “The Local Refugee Match.”

⁶⁷ White House Task Force on New Americans, *Strengthening Communities by Welcoming All Residents: A Federal Strategic Action Plan on Immigrant & Refugee Integration* (Washington, DC: White House, 2015), <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=764654>.

⁶⁸ White House Task Force on New Americans.

⁶⁹ White House Task Force on New Americans.

recommended toolkit was discontinued as a result of the change in administration after the 2016 election. As reported by the Department of States' Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration (PRM), the number of refugees admitted to the United States was dramatically reduced beginning in 2017.⁷⁰ Many resettlement programs were shuttered or significantly downsized as federal funding shifted away from refugee resettlement to security efforts along the southern border with Mexico.⁷¹ Unfortunately, at a time when the great weight of evidence shows the value and tangible gains possible through programs that cultivate robust community engagement and involvement, the United States has taken a deliberate step backwards from true integration practices with a renewed emphasis and single-minded focus on requiring refugees to attain swift economic self-sufficiency.

The body of literature exploring the role of the community in immigrant integration, be it government reports or private organizations' research, acknowledges that the effort must be a "two-way street," requiring the active and willing participation of a plethora of community actors.⁷² To avoid such scenarios and community disaffection, the literature noted it is critical that relationships between refugees and community members be cultivated, to address and dispel negative community attitudes towards refugees.⁷³ As part of her research into this issue, Michaela Hynie identifies a more expansive "Holistic Immigration Model" (HIM) for refugee integration that explores "the nature of the relationships between refugees and other members of their communities ... [and] general community attitudes and beliefs about refugees."⁷⁴ In her analysis, she confirms that successful integration is not based on any one factor, nor is it limited to the efforts of the

⁷⁰ In 2017, the annual refugee admissions cap was set by President Obama at 110,000 before he left office. However, in that year only 53,716 refugees were actually admitted to the United States. For 2018 and 2019, the refugee admissions caps were 45,000 and 30,000 respectively, and 18,000 for 2020. Actual refugee admission numbers were 22,491 in 2018 and 30,000 in 2019. Refugee Processing Center, accessed November 17, 2019, <http://www.wrapsnet.org>.

⁷¹ "Exclusive: Dozens of Refugee Resettlement Offices to Close as Trump Downsizes Program," Reuters, February 14, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-refugees-exclusive-idUSKCN1FY1EJ>.

⁷² White House Task Force on New Americans, *Strengthening Communities*.

⁷³ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement*.

⁷⁴ Michaela Hynie, "Refugee Integration: Research and Policy," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 24, no. 3 (August 2018): 265–76, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pac0000326>.

refugees. It is a composite of multiple factors that include not only the refugees' perceptions of their integration and the government's identified policy outcomes, but also the community's perceptions of integrating refugees.

Literature concerning free case refugee resettlement and integration practices in the United States acknowledges certain realities—first and foremost, that resettlement location determinations will be made without pre-selection input from the free case refugees themselves, and, secondly, that the determination will be weighted in favor of locations that can demonstrate a need for a low-skilled labor pool.⁷⁵ As Shaw and Poulin point out, this lack of involvement in the destination determination is not necessarily an insurmountable obstacle to positive, comprehensive integration, provided available resettlement programs are of sufficient duration and tailored to the unique needs of the refugees served, learned through frequent regular and deliberate engagement.⁷⁶ The best resettlement program will be doomed to fail, however, if it does not enjoy the support of the local community. Every resettlement program eventually ends, and communities that have established connections to their refugee populations have a greater likelihood of retaining those refugees. Secondary migration after resettlement frustrates integration and delays or prevents those refugees' transition from immigrant to integrated community member.

In sum, the literature available identifies a number of resettlement programs that have shown success in not only getting refugees economically self-sufficient, but in cultivating strong community ties that facilitate the inculcation of American values and a deeply-rooted sense of patriotism.⁷⁷ Conversely, many resettlement programs focus their efforts principally on ensuring that refugees find employment, with little coordination with the host community or manifest concern for the struggles refugees face in adjusting to their new world. Notwithstanding the government's acknowledgment of the importance of

⁷⁵ Lunn, "Displaced and Disillusioned."

⁷⁶ Shaw and Poulin, "Findings."

⁷⁷ Jones and Teytelboym, "The Local Refugee Match."

community in immigrant integration, that effort falls largely to the local communities to craft, fund, and implement.

Additionally, largely missing from the literature are studies and evaluations of integrations of exclusively free case refugees. The few that do focus in whole or in part on free case refugees note the additional complexities of addressing issues in a population that does not have any pre-existing connection to their resettlement location. This thesis will identify those aspects of identified successful refugee resettlement programs, and craft policy recommendations based on those programs that will increase the likelihood of comprehensive refugee integration.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

First, I studied the evidence—case studies and secondary literature—documenting programs that provide direct assistance to free case refugees upon their resettlement in the United States over the past twenty-five years. Programs in the United States and abroad that showed significant success in free case refugee integration were assessed, and programmatic commonalities identified for incorporation into policy recommendations for the United States Refugee Admission Program. Successful integration was measured through evidence of economic self-sufficiency but also through free case refugees’ own impressions of their local resettlement agency’s efforts, as well as their involvement and interaction with their host community.⁷⁸ Refugee assessments of their resettlement are anecdotal and, as such, cannot be a reliable measure of success, but another measure of refugee satisfaction with resettlement and integration is the percentage of refugees who engaged in secondary migration, as compared to the percentage nationwide, which can be tracked.⁷⁹

Common linkages and parallel practices between resettlement programs were analyzed to determine essential, non-site-specific components that could be universally applied in resettlement programs in any location. These identified programmatic actions

⁷⁸ Shaw and Poulin, “Findings.”

⁷⁹ Bloem and Loveridge, “Secondary Migration.”

and practices hold value in charting the future course of refugee resettlement, via the United States Refugee Admission Program. While exploring programs currently implemented in various resettlement communities in the U.S. was critical to this study, other nations, such as the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Sweden and Denmark, have also grappled with the conundrum of finding effective state-sponsored support structures and programs that ensure refugees ultimately become citizens with strong ties of pride, loyalty and responsibility to their adopted country. Reviewing those countries' programs provided information useful to the analysis of our free case refugee integration practices.

E. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter II will outline refugee admission and resettlement law, programs, policies and practices in the United States, paying particular attention to historical private organizational responses to refugee migration that evolved into the current decisional and operational role enjoyed by volunteer agencies over resettlement programs as part of the current, codified public-private partnership. Understanding the expressed goals of our national refugee resettlement program, the component programs designed to meet those goals, and the current extent and limitations of those programs, will provide the reader with essential information in evaluating the effectiveness of free case refugee resettlement efforts in the United States.

Chapter III will identify obstacles and challenges to comprehensive free case refugee integration. From the stress of forced displacement from their native country to the expectation that refugees quickly become economically self-sufficient and no longer reliant on public assistance, the pressure put on refugees can be extraordinary and act as a barrier to effective integration. Finally, Chapter III will explore the ramifications to refugees of inadequate and insufficient resettlement programs.

Chapter IV will examine refugee resettlement programs domestically and internationally that have shown success in integrating refugees into their host communities and nations, measured not by mere employment rates, but by reductions in secondary migration and positive assessments of the programs and personal wellbeing reported by the refugees. Exploring these programs provides essential information in evaluating the

continuing viability of current resettlement programs in achieving successful integration, as that term moves further away from an emphasis on economic self-sufficiency and becomes more holistic and nuanced.

Chapter V will begin with an analysis of the programs reviewed, identifying those programmatic, community, and governmental practices that led to increased levels of personal satisfaction and wellbeing and reduced secondary migration among the participating refugees. From that analysis, policy recommendations will be developed that should be considered for incorporation into current and future United States' refugee resettlement practices to facilitate better and more comprehensive refugee integration into American society. This chapter will conclude with final observations on the benefits to the United States of incorporating those identified and recommended refugee resettlement programs and practices and areas of continuing concern, for future study and consideration.

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II. REFUGEE ADMISSION AND RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader an understanding of the structure and framework for refugee resettlement in the United States. To accomplish this objective, a brief overview of refugee admissions in the United States and the significant role volunteer agencies play in resettlement efforts is provided. From exclusively private, charitable assistance in the late nineteenth century to the current public-private partnership that oversees the world's largest refugee resettlement program, the extensive participation and key decision-making authority of volunteer agencies in refugee resettlement in the U.S. is far greater than that enjoyed by private organizations in any other refugee-hosting countries. The chain of events and influences that led to this unique partnership will be examined.

This chapter will then review the three resettlement component programs required by the Refugee Act of 1980 (“the Act”), the pivotal legislation concerning refugee resettlement programs. These programs—employment assistance and training, English-language courses, and limited cash assistance—must be made available to all arriving refugees and constitute the primary mechanism for, in the words of the Act, the “absorption” of arriving refugees into the fabric of American society.⁸⁰ Beyond those programs, this chapter will outline current resettlement assistance available to refugees, such as medical and social services. Finally, this chapter will outline the process by which the volunteer agencies assign refugees’ resettlement locations in the U.S., paying particular attention to “free case” refugees, who have no familial links to the United States.

A. REFUGEE ASSISTANCE: PAST AND PRESENT

The United States has been a beacon of hope, bastion of safety, and land of promise for the displaced of the world for longer than it has been a country. In 1776, the year the United States declared independence from Great Britain, Thomas Paine wrote, “This new

⁸⁰ The Refugee Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96–212, Sec. 101(b) (1980).

world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe.”⁸¹ For the greater part of this nation’s history, however, arriving refugees found no governmental assistance available to them. Prior to World War II, resettlement was essentially a personal matter, and refugees successfully navigated—or not—resettlement issues on their own, or found assistance from private organizations.⁸² Governmental involvement and oversight of refugee resettlement processes and programs is a relatively recent development.

Since passage of the Refugee Act of 1980—the first concerted effort by the government to pull together under one single piece of legislation the myriad, disparate threads of refugee policies and practices—the U.S. has admitted and resettled over 3 million refugees.⁸³ Fully two-thirds of the world’s refugees resettled between 1982 and 2016 were resettled in the U.S.⁸⁴ In Fiscal Year 2016, the last year of admissions maintained by President Barack Obama’s administration, the U.S. accepted 84,995 refugees from 79 countries for resettlement.⁸⁵ As part of the Trump administration’s comprehensive immigration reform strategy, however, the maximum annual number of refugee admissions allowed (refugee ceiling) decreased each year, beginning in 2017, and was set at an all-time low of 30,000 for Fiscal Year 2019.⁸⁶ As a result, refugee admissions

⁸¹ Thomas Paine, “Common Sense,” Project Gutenberg, last updated June 24, 2017, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/147/147-h/147-h.htm>.

⁸² “History, Legislative Authority, & Major Administrative Agencies,” Refugee Council USA, accessed July 12, 2019, <http://www.rcusa.org/history>.

⁸³ “America Admits Fewer Refugees as Number Displaced Grows Globally,” Pew Research Center, October 12, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2017/10/12/u-s-resettles-fewer-refugees-even-as-global-number-of-displaced-people-grows/>.

⁸⁴ Pew Research Center.

⁸⁵ Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, “Fiscal Year 2016 Refugee Admissions” (fact sheet, U.S. Department of State, January 20, 2017), <https://www.state.gov/remarks-and-releases-bureau-of-population-refugees-and-migration/fiscal-year-2016-refugee-admissions/>.

⁸⁶ Executive Office of the President, “Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2019,” Presidential Determination No. 2019-01 of October 4, 2018, *Federal Register* 83, no. 212 (November 1, 2018), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/11/01/2018-24135/presidential-determination-on-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2019>.

plummeted and resettlement has “slowed to a trickle.”⁸⁷ Figure 1 is a table prepared by the Migration Policy Institute, noting annual refugee admissions each fiscal year since implementation of the Act, in comparison to the refugee admission and resettlement ceilings established each year by the President of the United States.⁸⁸

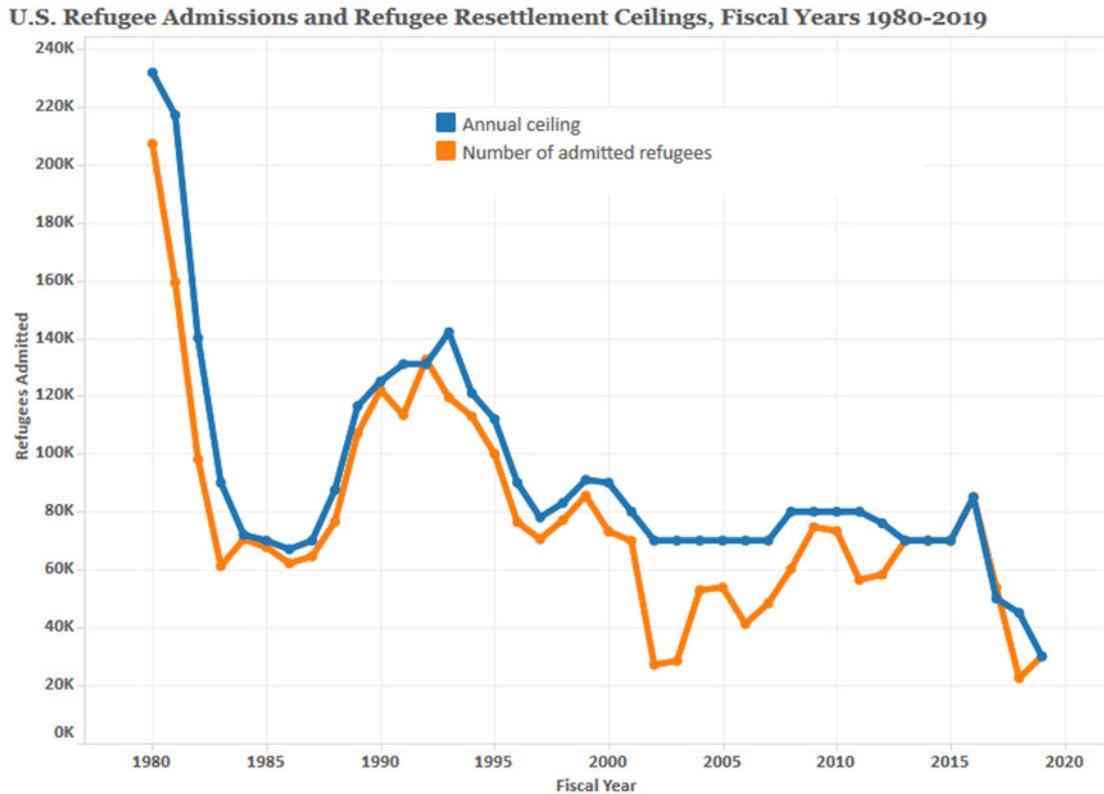


Figure 1. U.S. Refugee Ceilings and Admissions, 1980–2019⁸⁹

Despite these recent reductions, the United States’ refugee resettlement program remains the largest refugee resettlement program in the world, with over 1.65 billion dollars

⁸⁷ “The U.S. Has Accepted Only 11 Syrian Refugees This Year,” NPR, April 12, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/04/12/602022877/the-u-s-has-welcomed-only-11-syrian-refugees-this-year>.

⁸⁸ “U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980–Present,” Migration Policy Institute, accessed December 4, 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united>.

⁸⁹ Source: Migration Policy Institute.

appropriated in 2016 for the Department of State, Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), of which over 700 million dollars were earmarked for refugee resettlement efforts.⁹⁰ This level of funding illustrates how massive an enterprise is refugee resettlement in this country, requiring the combined and coordinated efforts of numerous local, state, and federal agencies, as well as private organizations, that comprise the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).⁹¹

B. THE ROLE OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN REFUGEE ADMISSION AND RESETTLEMENT

The United States has a complicated history and relationship with aid and assistance organizations. Americans have always prided themselves on an ethos of self-sufficiency, independence, and resourceful grit. The idea of needing or accepting help from others is anathema to many Americans, viewed as evidence of laziness, weakness and failure. The ability to provide for oneself and family—to be economically self-sufficient—eschewing any help or assistance, is perhaps one of our most deeply-ingrained American values. Conversely, the U.S. has always been a generous provider of assistance to those in need. This duality may have been both the impetus for the ascension of private charitable organizations in an era when governmental assistance for refugees was non-existent, and the justification for the role private organizations currently play in refugee admission and resettlement.

There are nine voluntary organizations, or “VOLAGs” involved in refugee admission and resettlement in the United States.⁹² VOLAGs coordinate and control critical aspects of every stage of these processes, from providing testimony to Congress regarding the number of refugees that should be admitted, to determining resettlement locations for

⁹⁰ Office of Refugee Resettlement, “Annual Report to Congress.”

⁹¹ “US Resettlement Partners,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, accessed March 8, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/us-resettlement-partners.html?query=u.s.%20resettlement%20agencies>.

⁹² For FY2017, the participating agencies are (1) Church World Service, (2) Episcopal Migration Ministries, (3) Ethiopian Community Development Council, (4) HIAS (formerly, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), (5) International Rescue Committee, (6) Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, (7) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (8) U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and (9) World Relief.

the majority of refugees. Considering their inextricable involvement in virtually all aspects of the nation's refugee program, it is of little surprise that the majority of VOLAG funding comes from the federal government, primarily through the Department of State's Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) "Matching Grant" program.⁹³ In many ways, the U.S. relationship with VOLAGs could be seen as similar to a private corporation's outsourcing of a project to another organization with specific expertise.

Public-private partnerships in refugee resettlement are not unique to the United States, but the legally-mandated consultation and participation of VOLAGs in resettlement location determinations certainly is.⁹⁴ While VOLAGs make resettlement location determinations in the United States, apart from Canada, which allows for private sponsorship as one component of its resettlement program, no other major refugee resettlement host country does this. In those countries, refugee resettlement location determinations are made by the state, not the private non-governmental organizations that may be involved in some capacity in post-resettlement efforts.⁹⁵ The United States' departure from this model is the result of multiple factors—the sheer size of the country, the scale and scope of the refugee program, and the pre-existing infrastructure of private organizations supporting refugee resettlement at the time of creation of the USRAP.

Historically, VOLAGs were assisting refugees well before federal interest and involvement, largely because prior to World War II, there was little need for government involvement in what were relatively small refugee migration events to the U.S. Assistance fell along religious lines. In the latter years of the 19th century and decades before post-World War II diasporas in Europe spurred the U.S. to action, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) offered assistance to Jewish refugees suffering religious persecution in Russia and Eastern Europe.⁹⁶ The American Catholic Church, the precursor to today's

⁹³ "The History of the Matching Grant Program," Administration for Children and Families, October 27, 2015, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/the-history-of-the-matching-grant-program>.

⁹⁴ The Refugee Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-212, Sec. 412(a)(2) (1980).

⁹⁵ Joanne van Selm, "Public-Private Partnerships in Refugee Resettlement: Europe and the US," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4, no. 2 (December 2003): 157-75, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1007/s12134-003-1031-1>.

⁹⁶ "History," HIAS, accessed August 1, 2019, <https://www.hias.org/history>.

Catholic Charities, provided refugees aid and assistance as far back as the late 1930s.⁹⁷ Structured, comprehensive government refugee resettlement was virtually non-existent. Potential aid available to refugees at that time (aside from their own efforts) was through VOLAGs, which operated using self-generated resources.⁹⁸

Post-World War II America, however, saw a looming crush of “displaced persons” (the term used to describe refugees at that time) migrating from Europe. By that time, the American core value of economic self-sufficiency and achievement through personal effort without reliance on the assistance of others had permeated the developing body of U.S. immigration law, rendering ineligible for acceptance any immigrant who could not show any means of support, as “likely to become a public charge.”⁹⁹ To overcome this ineligibility, the first federal-VOLAG partnership was initiated, titled the “Corporate Affidavit Program of 1946.”¹⁰⁰ Though no federal monies were [directly] involved, the program essentially qualified for admission otherwise ineligible displaced persons on the written promise of financial support from the VOLAGs.¹⁰¹

Direct federal funding to VOLAGs followed ten years later, when the government began providing “modest financial assistance ... for [refugee] health care and transportation costs.”¹⁰² Though the government notified VOLAGs that “the payments do not constitute a precedent for giving payment to the voluntary agencies for similar costs for other refugee movements,” this admonition proved false, as federal funding of VOLAGs grew significantly—through refugee crisis after crisis—over the course of the

⁹⁷ Courtney Mares, “The Catholic Church’s Long History of Resettling Refugees in the US,” Catholic News Agency, June 21, 2018, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/the-catholic-churchs-long-history-of-resettling-refugees-in-the-us-67504>.

⁹⁸ Norman L. Zucker, “Refugee Resettlement in the United States: Policy and Problems,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 467, no. 1 (May 1, 1983): 172–86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716283467001013>.

⁹⁹ Zucker.

¹⁰⁰ Zucker.

¹⁰¹ Zucker.

¹⁰² Julia Vadala Taft, David S. North, and David A. Ford, *Refugee Resettlement in the U.S.: Time for a New Focus* (Washington, DC: New TransCentury Foundation, 1979), 55.

next fifty years.¹⁰³ By the time the Refugee Act of 1980 became law, the relationship between the federal government and VOLAGs had evolved to become the cornerstone of refugee admission and resettlement programs.

Viewed in hindsight, it seems absurd to believe that once the partnership was established, it would –or even could—be at some point discontinued. The partnership between the federal government and the VOLAGs grew and solidified out of necessity. As the United States saw more and more refugee populations seeking resettlement in the desired U.S., and the U.S. accepted the mantle of world leader in refugee acceptance and resettlement, it was simply not feasible *not* to continue the relationship with the VOLAGs. VOLAGs had the organizational framework already in place or expertise in creating and expanding to the size necessary to accommodate the circumstances in which the U.S. found itself. The timing was also problematic. Any attempt to create a purely federal refugee resettlement program in 1950s post-World War II America would have been viewed as too much growth of government and federal involvement, contrary to American values of minimal government and aversion to a welfare state in a time of rapid economic growth and opportunity. For those reasons, the public-private enterprise model created out of necessity continues as the essential construct for refugee resettlement programs.

C. THE REFUGEE ACT OF 1980

On March 17, 1980, President James “Jimmy” Carter signed into law Public Law 96-212, otherwise known as the Refugee Act of 1980.¹⁰⁴ The legislative history of the Act notes that its goal was to resolve identified inadequacies in the practice of crafting programs in response to specific crises.¹⁰⁵ Prior to the Act, federal law treated refugee issues as extraordinary events rather than as an unfortunate permanent reality, and largely focused on refugees who fled Communist regimes in Asia and Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁶ The Act

¹⁰³ Zucker, “Refugee Resettlement in the United States.”

¹⁰⁴ The Refugee Act of 1980.

¹⁰⁵ Edward M. Kennedy, “Refugee Act of 1980,” *The International Migration Review* 15, no. 1/2 (1981): 141–56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2545333>.

¹⁰⁶ Kennedy.

was the result of a concerted effort by the federal government to pull together under one single piece of legislation the myriad, disparate threads of its many refugee policies and practices. It reinforced and formalized the public-private framework for the United States' refugee admission program and established the core principles and goals for the nation's refugee resettlement program. The purpose of the Refugee Act was explicit: "to provide a permanent and systematic procedure for the admission to this country of refugees of special humanitarian concern to the United States, and to provide comprehensive and uniform provisions for the effective resettlement *and absorption* of those refugees who are admitted" [emphasis added].¹⁰⁷

1. Words Matter: Absorption versus Integration

The use of the word "absorption," as opposed to "integration," in the Refugee Act is intentional and significant. In the five years preceding passage of the Act, as a result of the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Vietnam, Americans witnessed unprecedented numbers of refugees fleeing Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam by boat, thousands of whom would eventually seek and be accepted for resettlement in the United States.¹⁰⁸ In 1979, at the peak of this Indochinese diaspora, fully 200,000 refugees entered the U.S. as refugees.¹⁰⁹ The extraordinary volume of refugees arriving and in need of resettlement assistance, coupled with the fact that the bulk of this refugee population was of Asiatic ethnicity with a greater cultural divide than previous waves of European refugees, undoubtedly played a role in the determinations of language in the Act. "Absorb" is defined as "to swallow up the identity or individuality of."¹¹⁰ Conversely, "integrate," by contrast, means "to form, coordinate, or blend into a functioning or unified whole."¹¹¹ Words matter, and the verbiage in the Act underscores the tacit fear that this and future refugee

¹⁰⁷ The Refugee Act of 1980.

¹⁰⁸ Barry Stein, "The Geneva Conferences and the Indochinese Refugee Crisis," *The International Migration Review* 13, no. 4 (1979): 716–23, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2545184>.

¹⁰⁹ Kennedy, "Refugee Act of 1980."

¹¹⁰ Dictionary.com, s.v. "Absorb," accessed July 20, 2019, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/absorb>.

¹¹¹ *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "Integrate," accessed July 29, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integrate>.

populations would be less likely to hold core values that align with traditional American beliefs. To assert the dominance and importance of these beliefs, the expectation for the resettlement programs created by the Act was not integration; it was absorption. Further, as the three major component programs mandated by Section 412(a) of the Refugee Act demonstrate, refugees were—*are*—expected to be absorbed quickly into their respective communities.¹¹²

2. Deeds Matter: Three Programs Mandated by the Refugee Act of 1980

Section 412(a) of the Refugee Act requires the Director of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to fund three specific domestic resettlement programs.¹¹³ The first is “employment training and placement in order [for resettled refugees] to achieve economic self-sufficiency among refugees as quickly as possible.”¹¹⁴ The intentional placement of this program as the first component of refugee resettlement programs underscores the importance of employment as essential prerequisite for economic self-sufficiency and an overt assertion of the adoption of that American core value by refugees. The addition of “as quickly as possible” emphasizes and reinforces the importance the United States places on refugees swiftly achieving economic self-sufficiency.

Again, this is important when viewed in context. The language of the Refugee Act of 1980 was informed by refugee crises affecting the nation at that time and designed to anticipate and manage future refugee migration events that, as had become evident, might occur with any population in any location. The Act set an annual cap of 50,000 refugee admissions—a response to the increasingly high numbers of refugees being resettled in the United States in the late 1970s.¹¹⁵ However, in an effort to encourage global uniformity, the Act also adopted the United Nation’s broad definition of “refugee.”¹¹⁶ This broad

¹¹² The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 412(a)(1).

¹¹³ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 412(a)(1).

¹¹⁴ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 412(a)(1)(A).

¹¹⁵ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 207(a)(1).

¹¹⁶ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 201(a).

definition of refugee constrained the U.S.'s ability to selectively identify refugee populations for resettlement, which prior to the Act were statutorily limited to refugees from Communist or Middle Eastern countries.¹¹⁷ The inability to ensure refugees' socio-economic values mirror those of the U.S. required the inclusion of language in the Act that essentially compels refugees to live those values. Nothing suggests "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps" quite like "achieve economic self-sufficiency ... as quickly as possible."¹¹⁸

The second program mandate requires that ORR "provide refugees with the opportunity to acquire sufficient English language training to enable them to become effectively resettled as quickly as possible."¹¹⁹ This mandate recognizes not only the importance of communicating with others in the English language as a key component in effective resettlement, but also (tacitly) that refugees should no longer be considered temporarily in the U.S.¹²⁰ Indeed, the Refugee Act of 1980 clarified refugees' legal status in the U.S. and established a specific timeline in which they must petition to adjust their status to lawful permanent resident.¹²¹ Acknowledging that increasingly diverse populations of refugees were now to be admitted with a presumption of permanence and provided a clear pathway that would ultimately lead to U.S. citizenship, it is understandable that a major component of resettlement would focus on English-language education.

Basic familiarity with the English language is a requirement for most lawful permanent residents seeking to become citizens of the United States, premised on the belief that English language ability is a necessary prerequisite for immigrants to "better assimilate and take full advantage of the economic and occupational opportunities in the United States."¹²² History had demonstrated that newly-arrived immigrants often gravitated to

¹¹⁷ Doris M. Meissner, "The Refugee Act of 1980: What Have We Learned?" *Revue Européenne Des Migrations Internationales* 6, no. 1 (1990): 129–40, <https://doi.org/10.3406/remi.1990.1231>.

¹¹⁸ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 412(a)(1)(A).

¹¹⁹ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 412(a)(1)(B).

¹²⁰ Meissner, "The Refugee Act of 1980."

¹²¹ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 209(a)(1).

¹²² The Emerson English Language Empowerment Act, H.R. 123, 105th Cong. (1997).

their own ethnic enclaves in the U.S. and communicated exclusively in their native tongue.¹²³ Doing so, however, frustrated and oftentimes even prevented the desired absorption of those populations into mainstream America. Notwithstanding frequent references to America as a diverse “melting pot” of cultures, it has long been the goal of U.S. immigration law and policies to supplant immigrant values and beliefs with those of its native population, creating a homogeneity of values, if not of cultures.¹²⁴ More than just a programmatic tool to ensure refugees do not become long-term public charges, the requirement to provide English language training is a signal to both VOLAGs and refugees of the expectation of willing participation in the process of becoming an American.

The third program required by the Refugee Act of 1980 “insure [s] that cash assistance is made available to refugees in such a manner as not to discourage their economic self-sufficiency.”¹²⁵ This unsubtle admonition that aid be limited so as “not to discourage their economic self-sufficiency” makes clear that refugees are expected to secure gainful employment and become economically self-sufficient as quickly as possible after arrival.¹²⁶ Accordingly, the sums provided to refugees are both small and time-limited. Refugees receive cash assistance in two forms: a one-time benefit of \$2,125 per refugee from the State Department upon arrival in the United States designed to cover initial housing expenses and other essentials, and a relatively small monthly stipend termed “Refugee Cash Assistance” (RCA), ranging from \$335 for able-bodied refugees, to \$685 for a refugee family of four, with an additional \$70 per family member above four members, for no more than eight months.¹²⁷

¹²³ “These communities led day-to-day internal lives quite apart from those of the broader, usually English-speaking communities around them and the other ethnic enclaves that sometimes abutted them.” “Ethnic Enclaves,” Immigration to the United States, accessed November 4, 2019, <https://immigrationtounitedstates.org/484-ethnic-enclaves.html>.

¹²⁴ See, for example, the Immigration Act of 1924, which established racial quotas for immigrants that favored northern European origin immigrants, regardless of their country of birth, over other ethnic “non-white” populations. Mae M. Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (June 1, 1999): 67.

¹²⁵ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 412(a)(1)(C).

¹²⁶ The Refugee Act of 1980, Sec. 412(a)(1)(C).

¹²⁷ Zong, Fix, and Hooper, *How Are Refugees Faring?*

It was not always this way. The monthly cash assistance provided in 1980 after passage of the Act was extended for thirty-six months.¹²⁸ Shortly thereafter, in 1982, the time frame was reduced to eighteen months, and, in 1991, further reduced to eight months.¹²⁹ The reductions were part of a broader government effort to reduce welfare program expenditures rather than any specific effort to target refugees.¹³⁰ Refugee cash assistance will be explored in greater detail in a subsequent chapter, but it is worth noting that reductions in federal cash assistance have put additional pressure on local community and state agencies and resettlement agencies—and certainly the refugees themselves—to find alternate assistance and have made the push for economic self-sufficiency more urgent.

D. CURRENT FEDERAL RESETTLEMENT MEASURES

Despite its claim to being “a nation of immigrants,” the United States has never established any nationally-administered immigrant integration system, leaving integration to the states, or more often, local community “grassroots” efforts.¹³¹ Virtually all federal regulation and oversight regarding immigration concerns immigration policy and procedures, the outward-looking focus being on which immigrants to offer entry to and how many, not inward-looking integration considerations, once admitted.¹³² Refugee resettlement, however, is different: “Refugee services are a notable outlier and the only example of the federal government playing a role in integration.”¹³³

¹²⁸ Zong, Fix, and Hooper.

¹²⁹ Zong, Fix, and Hooper.

¹³⁰ Zong, Fix, and Hooper.

¹³¹ Zong, Fix, and Hooper.

¹³² Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, “New Federal Immigrant Integration Bill Includes NSC—Recommended Workforce and Education Components,” National Skills Coalition, November 5, 2019, <https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/news/blog/new-federal-immigrant-integration-bill-includes-nsc-recommended-workforce-and-education-components>.

¹³³ Zong, Fix, and Hooper, *How Are Refugees Faring?*

Such a situation seems incongruous with immigration arrival data. The U.S. Department of State issued 533,557 immigrant visas in 2018.¹³⁴ By comparison, refugee admissions for that same year were only 22,491, barely four percent of the volume of immigrant visas issued.¹³⁵ With such a comparatively small volume entering the U.S., why do refugees merit this special federal attention? The resettlement program exists because refugees gain entry to the U.S. via a humanitarian program that essentially removes the majority of requirements that other immigrants who obtain visas must satisfy, such as family reunification, educational program or employment acceptance, a lack of criminal history, and a showing of sufficient financial resources (or sponsorship) to ensure they will not become a public charge. Essentially, by virtue of their receipt of an immigrant visa, those individuals have already been vetted and are able and expected to integrate with little or no governmental assistance. Conversely, refugee admission is a purely humanitarian effort that places no eligibility requirement on the refugee beyond meeting the definition of refugee. The stark differences between traditional immigration and refugee admission illuminates the need for a nationally-orchestrated refugee resettlement program. That federal role takes the form of statutory and fiscal oversight of three types of assistance provided to refugees: cash, medical care, and certain social services.¹³⁶ Figure 2, provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, offers a simplified graphical overview of the resettlement process and the assistance available to refugees.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ “Report of the Visa Office 2018,” U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, accessed November 8, 2019, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/visa-law0/visa-statistics/annual-reports/report-of-the-visa-office-2018.html>.

¹³⁵ Deborah Amos, “2018 Was A Year Of Drastic Cuts to U.S. Refugee Admissions,” NPR, December 27, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/27/680308538/2018-was-a-year-of-drastic-cuts-to-u-s-refugee-admissions>.

¹³⁶ “Refugees,” Office of Refugee Resettlement, last reviewed October 22, 2018, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/refugees>.

¹³⁷ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement*.

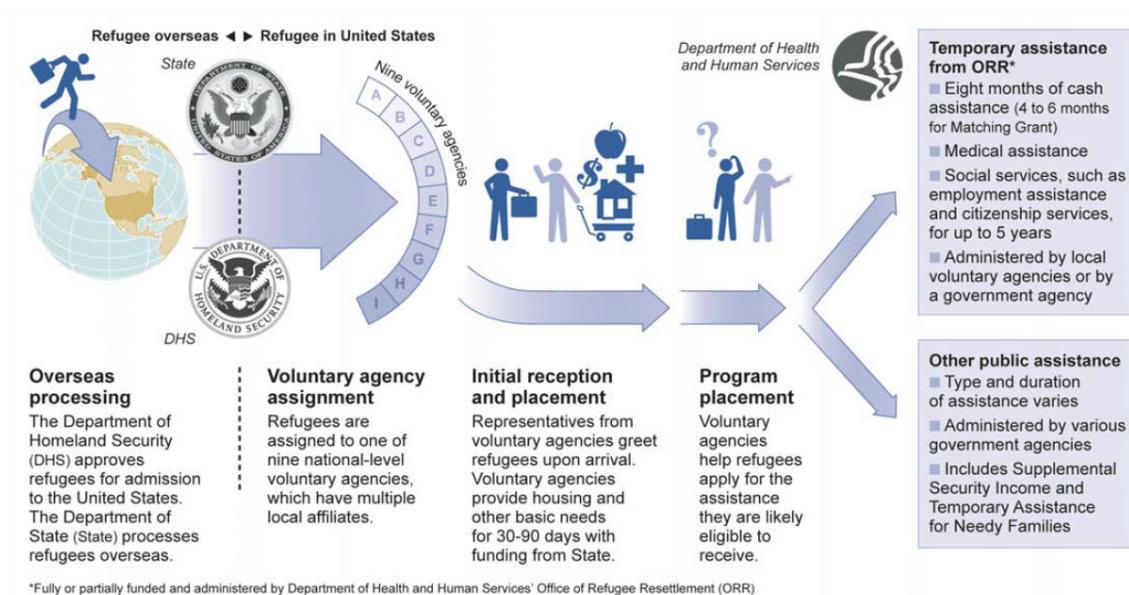


Figure 2. Refugee Resettlement Process in the U.S.¹³⁸

1. Financial Assistance

The amount of financial assistance refugees receive varies greatly and is dependent on many factors, but begins with a reception and placement grant from the Department of State of \$2,125 per refugee, to cover initial housing, food, and clothing expenses for three months upon arrival to the U.S.¹³⁹ During those three months, refugees are instructed to apply for state-administered but federally-reimbursed Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) payments.¹⁴⁰ RCA payments last no more than eight months, though there is language in the law that suggests the period can be extended, depending on determinations of need and eligibility.¹⁴¹ It should also be noted that the DOS reception and placement grant of \$2,125 per refugee is paid directly to the local resettlement agency, not the refugee, and \$725 of

¹³⁸ Source: Government Accountability Office, 8.

¹³⁹ Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, "FY 2019 Notice of Funding Opportunity for Reception and Placement Program," U.S. Department of State, March 15, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/funding-opportunities/funding-opportunity-announcements/fy-2019-notice-of-funding-opportunity-for-reception-and-placement-program/>.

¹⁴⁰ Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, "Reception and Placement," U.S. Department of State, accessed August 1, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/reception-and-placement/>.

¹⁴¹ Public Welfare, 45 C.F.R. § 400.60 (2011).

each refugee's grant can be retained by the local resettlement agency as an offset to their administrative costs.¹⁴²

Finally, some financial assistance provided to refugees is not a gift. The Refugee Travel Loan program provides funds to defray the costs to refugees of travel to the United States.¹⁴³ The average travel loan is \$1,100 per refugee, for which refugees must sign a promissory note and agree to repay over five years, beginning six months after resettlement.¹⁴⁴

2. Medical Assistance

While refugees must undergo an overseas medical examination as part of the acceptance process, refugees ultimately accepted for resettlement must also undergo a health assessment within ninety days of arrival in the country, the cost of which is borne by the federal government.¹⁴⁵ This important assessment, however, is routinely performed by agencies that do not provide ongoing or subsequent care, and the results may not be known or shared with the refugee themselves.¹⁴⁶ Consequently, important health information obtained from refugees at pre- and post-resettlement medical examinations may “fall through the cracks” and never reach primary health care professionals from which refugees seek health care and assistance.

Additionally, as part of their resettlement, refugees are provided access to free or reduced-cost medical care through one of two medical assistance programs: one specific

¹⁴² Jessica Darrow, “The (Re)Construction of the U.S. Department of State’s Reception and Placement Program by Refugee Resettlement Agencies,” *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research* 6, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 91–119, <https://doi.org/10.1086/680341>.

¹⁴³ “United States of America,” International Organization for Migration, February 4, 2015, <https://www.iom.int/countries/united-states-america>.

¹⁴⁴ Fabrice Robinet, “Welcome, Refugees. Now Pay Back Your Travel Loans,” *New York Times*, March 15, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/15/nyregion/refugees-travel-loans.html>.

¹⁴⁵ “Domestic Refugee Health: Frequently Asked Questions,” CDC, last reviewed June 8, 2016, <https://www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/guidelines/domestic-refugee-questions.html>.

¹⁴⁶ NYS Health Foundation, “Opening Doors: A Sustainable Refugee Health Care Model” (report, NYS Health Foundation, January 2016).

to refugees, the other available to all qualified residents and citizens.¹⁴⁷ Refugees who meet eligibility requirements are immediately able to receive Medicaid coverage, though as with the financial RCA, the refugee must apply for this benefit at the state level.¹⁴⁸ For refugees who aren't eligible for Medicaid coverage due to age, disability, or family composition, ORR offers the Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) program, which provides coverage generally similar to Medicaid.¹⁴⁹ However, concomitant with the shortened time frame for RCA, the eligibility period for the RMA was also reduced to eight months, viewed at the time as a welfare program that discouraged self-sufficiency rather than as a transitional aid.¹⁵⁰

Both programs suffer from a lack of adequate funding. Refugees have a higher incidence of maladies such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, and intestinal parasites, not to mention mental health challenges, as a result of the traumatic events surrounding their forced displacement.¹⁵¹ Further, most refugees must use an interpreter to discuss their medical concerns with their treating physician.¹⁵² These refugee-specific issues are not adequately contemplated by Medicaid's standard reimbursement fee schedule; consequently, many refugees find it difficult to obtain adequate health care services.¹⁵³ Eligibility for a health care program is of little value, if the refugee cannot find a suitably capable and willing provider.

3. Social Services

Refugees are provided access to state-sponsored, but federally-reimbursed social services, such as child day care, citizenship and naturalization assistance, interpretation and

¹⁴⁷ "Refugee Medical Assistance," Office of Refugee Resettlement, last reviewed May 3, 2019, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/cma/about>.

¹⁴⁸ Office of Refugee Resettlement.

¹⁴⁹ Office of Refugee Resettlement.

¹⁵⁰ Brown and Scribner, "Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities."

¹⁵¹ L.K. Ackerman, "Health Problems of Refugees," *Journal of the American Board of Family Practitioners* 10 (1997): 337-48.

¹⁵² NYS Health Foundation, "Opening Doors."

¹⁵³ NYS Health Foundation.

translator services, among other things.¹⁵⁴ However, the principal social services highlighted by ORR are employability services—job training programs, interviewing assistance, and employment retention skills training.¹⁵⁵ The focus, as outlined in the Refugee Act, remains on ensuring employment of refugees, so they become economically self-sufficient as quickly as possible.¹⁵⁶

As with any health care and financial assistance program provided by the government, detractors have asserted such assistance programs are welfare efforts that allow refugees to defer or avoid entirely their obligation to become economically self-sufficient.¹⁵⁷ As a result, programs saw reduced funding or were shuttered entirely, resulting in refugees experiencing lengthier wait times for those programs that remained open, to include language and job training programs.¹⁵⁸ The impact these reductions have on refugees is undoubtedly harmful and potentially negatively impacts the refugees' view of the values of patriotism and loyalty to the nation we are attempting to promote. The dichotomous narrative of being told that it is imperative to find employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency, while simultaneously being told the already inadequate financial and medical assistance is time limited and programs designed to help meet the goals imposed are either no longer available or delayed, as they are considered an unnecessary crutch.

E. RESETTLEMENT LOCATION DETERMINATIONS

The discussion thus far has focused on services provided to refugees *once* resettled in their new communities. Before that happens, however, the decision must be made as to *where* each refugee will be resettled. The process of refugee resettlement in the U.S. begins

¹⁵⁴ “About Refugee Social Services,” Office of Refugee Resettlement, last reviewed November 6, 2018, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugee-social-services/about>.

¹⁵⁵ Office of Refugee Resettlement.

¹⁵⁶ “Guidance on Refugee Social Services Funding,” Office of Refugee Resettlement, June 24, 2016, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/guidance-on-refugee-social-services-funding>.

¹⁵⁷ Brown and Scribner, “Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities.”

¹⁵⁸ Brown and Scribner.

with the assignment of each refugee to one of the nine VOLAGs.¹⁵⁹ Each week, at a meeting of representatives of the nine VOLAGs, information regarding refugees approved for resettlement but pending location decisions is reviewed and refugees divided into one of two groups: those who have family members already living the U.S. and those who do not.¹⁶⁰ If a refugee has noted in their application or during their interview overseas that they have family already established in the United States, this information is considered the dominant factor in determining that refugee’s prospective resettlement location.

The VOLAG with long-standing contractual relationships with the sponsoring agency or agencies in the refugee relative’s community is assigned responsibility for that particular refugee’s case.¹⁶¹ The VOLAG then assigns that local resettlement agency direct oversight of the integration process for the refugee.¹⁶² The local sponsor agency is the critical formative organization in the resettlement process, as it is responsible for directly coordinating and overseeing the specific integration programs and other assistance. This location assignment methodology is appropriate, as it ensures that newly-arrived refugees benefit from the efforts their family members have already undertaken to establish themselves in their respective communities. Research on the issue of refugee resettlement has shown the benefits of having a ready network of family and friends with experience and knowledge of the community to assist and support newly-arrived refugees as they navigate their new environment.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Zucker, “Refugee Resettlement in the United States.”

¹⁶⁰ Andorra Bruno, *Reception and Placement of Refugees in the United States*, CRS Report No. R44878 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 21, 2017).

¹⁶¹ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement*.

¹⁶² Zucker, “Refugee Resettlement in the United States.”

¹⁶³ “Settlement and integration processes are influenced by kin ... provid[ing] food, shelter, job information and contacts, information on health care and social services, recreation and emotional support.” Monica Boyd, “Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas,” *The International Migration Review* 23, no. 3 (1989): 638–70, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2546433>.

F. “FREE CASE” REFUGEES

Refugees who have no family ties to the U.S. are considered “free case” refugees.¹⁶⁴ The VOLAG assigned oversight for a free case refugee makes the determination where to resettle the refugee based on an assessment of several factors. Aside from a review of the information contained in the refugee’s file provided to the VOLAG, there is no interaction with the refugee, nor does the refugee enjoy any participation in the location selection process. The VOLAG’s network of local organizations with which it affiliates, and those organizations’ capacity for sponsorship, financial support, resource availability and employment opportunities are the key factors in making location determinations.¹⁶⁵ As a result, most free case refugees learn they are to be resettled in locations that have immediately available employment opportunities, most often in low-skilled, menial positions. Unlike refugees with family support already in the U.S., free case refugees are dependent on their local resettlement agency for support, as they seek to find their footing in the United States.

G. CONCLUSION

The Refugee Act of 1980 formalized existing refugee resettlement efforts and provides a standardized “roadmap” for future refugee migration to the United States. It was, and still is, the single most significant legislation concerning refugees ever enacted. Unfortunately, the Act’s single-minded focus on economic self-sufficiency as the sole measure of successful integration, yet undermining that goal through the erosion over time of many of the Act’s component programs through funding reductions, has worked to render the Act a hollow and largely ineffective effort in achieving true refugee integration. True integration must necessarily include the adoption of American core values and a deeply-held sense of loyalty and patriotism to the United States. These goals become elusive and perhaps even impossible to achieve in an environment where assistance of any kind—financial, medical, and social—is insufficient in quantity, quality and duration. Comprehensive integration is particularly difficult for free case refugees, who have no

¹⁶⁴ Bernstein, *Bringing Evidence to the Refugee Integration Debate*.

¹⁶⁵ Forrest and Brown, “Organization-Led Migration.”

familial connection to the United States nor any say in the selection of their resettlement location. They are the most in need of effective resettlement assistance, and current implementation of the provisions of the Refugee Act of 1980 does not provide for that needed level of assistance.

III. OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES TO REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Refugees resettled in the United States by USRAP arrive with little more than the clothes on their backs and whatever few possessions can be packed in a single suitcase.¹⁶⁶ Whatever socioeconomic status a refugee may have enjoyed prior in their native country, for the great majority, the realities of forced migration—leaving their homes often in haste—and the toll of oftentimes years of displacement living in refugee camps prior to resettlement, reduce them to poverty.¹⁶⁷ As a group, however, refugees eventually achieve levels of success in benchmark measures such as labor force participation rates exceeding those of the total U.S. population, inclusive of immigrants and native-born Americans.¹⁶⁸ By 2018, of refugees who arrived in the United States between 1987 and 1996, forty-one percent owned homes and attained a median personal income of \$28,000.¹⁶⁹ In comparison, the median personal income that same year for the total U.S. population was \$23,000 and the percentage who owned homes was thirty-seven percent.¹⁷⁰ By traditional measures of success, it would appear refugees have, by and large, expertly navigated the roadmap of resettlement to a satisfactory result.

With such apparent success, why should there be any need to consider revising the current refugee resettlement system? Because looks can be deceiving and notwithstanding these metrics, it must be understood that refugees are distinctly different from other immigrants and face unique challenges that must be overcome, in order to successfully

¹⁶⁶ Sarah Eberspacher, “What You Bring When You Run for Your Life,” *The Week*, January 19, 2015, <https://theweek.com/captured/533520/what-bring-when-run-life>.

¹⁶⁷ New American Economy, “From Struggle to Resilience: The Economic Impact of Refugees in America” (report, Immigration Research Library, June 2017), <https://www.immigrationresearch.org/report/other/struggle-resilience-economic-impact-refugees-america-0>.

¹⁶⁸ Refugees have a higher labor force participation rate (68 %) and employment rate (64 %) than is seen in the general population (63% and 60%, respectively). Donald Kerwin, “The US Refugee Resettlement Program—A Return to First Principles: How Refugees Help to Define, Strengthen, and Revitalize the United States,” *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 6, no. 3 (2018): 205–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2331502418787787>.

¹⁶⁹ Kerwin.

¹⁷⁰ Kerwin.

integrate in the U.S. Those challenges are not solely the requirements imposed upon refugees as a condition of their resettlement. They are also the product of the circumstances surrounding each refugee's journey to the United States, as well. This chapter will explore the challenges refugees face in resettling to a new country.

A. PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Living as a refugee changes a person. Some manifestations are obvious, some less so. Refugees arrive in the United States with a greater likelihood of suffering from a variety of physical issues.¹⁷¹ Living in close proximity to others in camps with limited access to adequate health care and poor sanitation puts refugees at risk for gastrointestinal parasites and a greater susceptibility to infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis and hepatitis.¹⁷² As one example, it is estimated globally 3.5 million refugees suffer from chronic or acute Hepatitis B, which compromises liver function and is potentially life-threatening.¹⁷³ Of over 6,000 Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqi refugees in the United States screened between 2006 and 2011, 20.7 percent had current or past Hepatitis B infections, and of that number, 5.7 percent had chronic, acute Hepatitis B.¹⁷⁴ Likewise, high rates of tuberculosis—a potentially fatal infectious disease if left untreated—were noted in refugees from Tibet, Burma, Ethiopia and Liberia.¹⁷⁵ Though pre- and post-resettlement health screenings address many of the physical maladies of refugees, refugees must still contend with generally poorer health than other immigrants in a new and unfamiliar network of health services, with the added impediment of language barriers.

Physical health is but one aspect of a refugee's overall health picture. Mental health is also a significant issue in refugee communities. Though refugees have applied for resettlement, it must be understood that their migration from their native country was not

¹⁷¹ Segal and Elliott, *Refugees Worldwide*.

¹⁷² Lawrence A. Palinkas et al., "The Journey to Wellness: Stages of Refugee Health Promotion and Disease Prevention," *Journal of Immigrant Health* 5, no. 1 (January 2003): 19–28.

¹⁷³ "Hepatitis B Screening and Prevalence among Resettled Refugees—United States, 2006–2011," CDC, June 5, 2015, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6421a2.htm>.

¹⁷⁴ CDC.

¹⁷⁵ Segal and Elliott, *Refugees Worldwide*.

of their choosing and often violently imposed upon the refugees. As a result of the traumatic events that led to their initial flight from their homes and countries, often exacerbated by years of marginalization spent in refugee camps or other austere environments before resettling in the United States, many refugees exhibit symptoms of psychosocial trauma, PTSD, depression and anxiety at higher levels than other immigrant populations—as high as thirty percent for refugees.¹⁷⁶ Post-resettlement stressors—language barriers, acculturative difficulties, employment pressure, weak social networks, and others—further compound the problem, making refugees more susceptible to mental health issues.¹⁷⁷

These problems are particularly prevalent in resettled free case “first wave” refugees resettled in less urban settings, in which the local resettlement organization serves as the refugees’ sole support network. Mental health treatment for these issues has been inadequate, for the most part, as it is not part of USRAP’s programmatic priority of meeting the immediate physical needs of refugees. Additionally, the “honeymoon” period of euphoria experienced by refugees in the first few weeks after resettlement can mask underlying mental health issues that manifest months or even years later.¹⁷⁸

Whether a refugee has fled their country after suffering specific and direct violence against them, or rather left upon “seeing the writing on the wall,” before harm could come to them and their family, the refugee has experienced a loss of control over their own future and fate. That is a major disruptive event and paradigm shift that informs a refugee’s actions and responses going forward in the resettlement and integration process. That simple understanding must be factored into any integration plan, in order to ensure a true and lasting successful integration.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Kelly Polcher and Susan Calloway, “Addressing the Need for Mental Health Screening of Newly Resettled Refugees: A Pilot Project,” *Journal of Primary Care & Community Health* 7, no. 3 (July 1, 2016): 199–203, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2150131916636630>.

¹⁷⁷ Diane B Mitschke et al., “Listening to Refugees: How Traditional Mental Health Interventions May Miss the Mark,” *International Social Work* 60, no. 3 (May 1, 2017): 588–600, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872816648256>.

¹⁷⁸ Mitschke et al.

¹⁷⁹ Olubukola Oduntan and Ian Ruthven, “Investigating the Information Gaps in Refugee Integration: Investigating the Information Gaps in Refugee Integration,” *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 54, no. 1 (2017): 308–17, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa2.2017.14505401034>.

B. RESETTLEMENT PROCESS PRESSURE

1. Refugee Travel Loan Repayment Obligation

Even before resettling in the United States, many refugees find themselves financially obligated to the United States. As noted in the previous chapter, once accepted for resettlement, but prior to their travel to the U.S., all refugees over the age of 18 are required to sign a promissory note acknowledging their repayment obligation to reimburse the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for the costs associated with their travel to the U.S.¹⁸⁰ For many refugees, repayment of the travel loan is yet another financial stressor, as they contend with other financial pressures to pay rent, put food on the table, and cover other living expenses for which refugees are responsible once short-term limited cash assistance is no longer provided. As one Syrian refugee struggling with meeting the obligations of her travel loan repayment observed, “When you don’t have much, it’s hard to pay for anything.”¹⁸¹

As of March 2019, eighteen percent of refugees who had received travel loans in 2016 had not made any payments toward that debt.¹⁸² Loan forgiveness is rare and unavailable in instances of inability to pay.¹⁸³ Failure to make payments towards this debt, just as with other consumer debts, results in reporting to credit agencies and aggressive collection efforts, further impeding a refugee’s ability to attain economic self-sufficiency and positive sentiment towards their resettlement experience.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ “Refugee Travel Loans Collection,” United States Conference on Catholic Bishops, accessed July 22, 2019, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/migrants-refugees-and-travelers/refugee-travel-loans-collection/index.cfm>.

¹⁸¹ Robinet, “Welcome, Refugees.”

¹⁸² Robinet.

¹⁸³ IOM can cancel outstanding travel loan balances on a case-by-case basis for the following reasons: (1) bankruptcy; (2) death; (3) repatriation; (4) permanent medical disability with no prospect of recovery or future employment (based on an SSI determination or physician’s signed statement); (5) hardship due to the need to care for a minor orphaned child; and (6) when balance is less than or equal to \$5.00. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, “Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2019,” U.S. Department of State, September 24, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/remarks-and-releases-bureau-of-population-refugees-and-migration/proposed-refugee-admissions-for-fiscal-year-2019/>.

¹⁸⁴ Robinet, “Welcome, Refugees.”

As part of IOM’s oversight of the travel loan program, local resettlement agencies involved in collecting loan repayments are allowed to retain twenty-five percent of the amount collected.¹⁸⁵ This money is separate and apart from other funding streams and is not an insignificant sum. In 2017, over \$66 million was recovered in loan repayments, with over \$14 million of that total going to the resettlement agencies.¹⁸⁶ With such a direct financial incentive, resettlement agencies have a strong vested interest in ensuring the refugees they oversee repay their travel loans. Though there is no evidence to suggest resettlement agencies place undue pressure on refugees to accept rapid employment over suitable employment, as part of ensuring repayment of travel loans, the optics of having the same agency responsible for providing resettlement assistance also responsible for collecting a debt owed by those same refugees are troubling.

If we hope to craft effective and durable resettlement strategies that facilitate comprehensive integration and, as seems evident, the refugee travel loan program will continue, it would be advisable and appropriate to provide refugees more time to begin paying off that debt, as well as a longer term of repayment to lessen the monthly financial impact. This would allow refugees to focus on what matters most—establishing a solid foothold in this country, which might, in turn, engender in refugees a stronger sense of loyalty towards this nation and their communities.

2. Inconsistencies in Local Resettlement Program Services

For refugees, in particular free case refugees who have no established familial ties in the U.S. and thus face greater integration challenges, the quality and extent of care provided by the local sponsoring agency are perhaps the most consequential factors in a refugee’s successful integration, more so even than resettlement location. Unfortunately, as a result of prioritization of the goal of economic self-sufficiency, local resettlement services “struggle to help refugees meet basic self-sufficiency goals and are inadequate in

¹⁸⁵ Lucy Westcott, “A Brief History of Refugees Paying Back the U.S. Government for Their Travel,” *Newsweek*, December 12, 2015, <https://www.newsweek.com/brief-history-refugees-paying-back-us-government-their-travel-403241>.

¹⁸⁶ Robinet, “Welcome, Refugees.”

addressing comprehensive wellbeing and service needs.”¹⁸⁷ Additionally, as noted in the previous chapter, inequities in service provision by local resettlement organizations result in some refugees receiving more and better assistance than others.¹⁸⁸

In the absence of a national standard of care, local organizations will continue to negotiate the assistance they provide, and the quality of service will largely be dictated by available community resources, as well as the local agency’s ability to marshal available resources in support of refugee integration.¹⁸⁹ Disparities in both breadth and depth of resettlement programming will likely become more pronounced as refugee resettlement continues to move away from urban centers to more rural areas.¹⁹⁰ This shift has placed more pressure on rural communities—many of whom have little experience with foreign residents and are unprepared for an influx of refugees.¹⁹¹

C. COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE

Up to this point, the discussion regarding integration has focused on the ability of refugees to become part of their communities and the nation as a whole, principally through programs and services either provided or coordinated by their resettlement agency. This is certainly the mechanism through which the process of integration is initiated, but, ultimately, integration is as much about the community’s societal reaction to its newest residents, as it is about resettlement program delivery.¹⁹² Integration is the shared responsibility of refugees and their communities, and, ultimately, how each community reacts and interacts with resettled refugees will greatly influence the refugee’s integration success.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁷ Shaw and Poulin, “Findings.”

¹⁸⁸ Lunn, “Displaced and Disillusioned”

¹⁸⁹ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement*.

¹⁹⁰ Zong, Fix, and Hooper, *How Are Refugees Faring?*

¹⁹¹ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement*.

¹⁹² Rinus Penninx, “Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State,” Migration Policy Institute, October 1, 2003, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/integration-role-communities-institutions-and-state>.

¹⁹³ Penninx.

In general, Americans remain supportive of the concept of refugee resettlement in principle.¹⁹⁴ However, that support falters when an individual's own community is identified as a potential refugee resettlement location.¹⁹⁵ This “not-in-my-backyard” (NIMBY) syndrome appears to be influenced heavily by negativity bias and media framing of refugees as potential threats to national security and drains on public assistance programs.¹⁹⁶ In 1946, as the first waves of the exodus of refugees from Eastern Europe began to reach the United States, Senator Chapman Revercomb (R-WV), noted, “it would be a tragic blunder to bring into our midst those imbued with a communistic line of thought, when one of the most important tasks of this Government today is to combat and eradicate communism from this country.”¹⁹⁷ Clearly, such fears surrounding refugees are hardly new.

The reality of refugee resettlement's impact on communities is far different from that characterization. Communities experience a plethora of benefits by accepting refugees, from an enriched cultural diversity to economic stimulation by new residents living, working, and shopping in the community.¹⁹⁸ These benefits, however, come at a cost to communities. Refugees may require additional service provisions not covered by the federal government or the local resettlement agency, such as interpreter services for schools and medical care.¹⁹⁹ Though some programs and grant money may be available to offset

¹⁹⁴ A Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey found 66% of Americans support taking in refugees fleeing violence and war, and 68% support admitting similar numbers of immigrants from previous years. Raea Rasmussen and Jacob Poushter, “People around the World Express More Support for Taking in Refugees than Immigrants,” Pew Research Center, August 9, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/09/people-around-the-world-express-more-support-for-taking-in-refugees-than-immigrants/>.

¹⁹⁵ Jeremy Ferwerda, D.J. Flynn, and Yusaku Horiuchi, “Explaining Opposition to Refugee Resettlement: The Role of NIMBYism and Perceived Threats,” *Science Advances* 3, no. 9 (September 6, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1700812>.

¹⁹⁶ Rens Vliegthart and Conny Roggeband, “Framing Immigration and Integration: Relationships between Press and Parliament in the Netherlands,” *The International Communication Gazette* 69, no. 3 (2007): 295–319.

¹⁹⁷ “Revercomb Urges Quota Retention,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1946, <https://www.nytimes.com/1946/12/31/archives/revercomb-urges-quota-retention-warns-of-communist-peril-in.html?searchResultPosition=1>.

¹⁹⁸ Government Accountability Office, *Refugee Resettlement*.

¹⁹⁹ Government Accountability Office.

these costs, communities that are ill-prepared for an influx of refugees may not be aware of this potential assistance and end up shouldering the costs themselves.²⁰⁰ In such an event, the fears that refugees will disproportionately require public assistance would be realized, and community attitudes might shift and members discontinue further interaction.²⁰¹ Any loss of existing and potential social bridges could affect negative a refugee’s integration progress.

Community acceptance is not solely a matter of the residents’ views towards refugees. As was previously discussed, suitability and proportionality are key considerations in assessing a community’s ability to accept refugees.²⁰² Suitability concerns the community’s views towards refugees and resettlement, in general; proportionality considers the community’s resources and social identity, to determine a “tipping point” figure—the number of refugees that a community can resettle without compromising service or changing the perceived cultural identity of the community.²⁰³ When either of these tolerances is exceeded, problems ensue, and refugees become unwelcome.

In 2007, Fort Wayne, Indiana, experienced a three-fold increase in its annual refugee acceptance numbers, overwhelming community resources and resulting in city officials issuing a moratorium on refugee resettlement the following year.²⁰⁴ Acknowledging that the local resettlement organizations had been diligent in their efforts in the initial months following the refugees’ arrival, city officials complained that after those first few months, the burden of care fell to the local community.²⁰⁵ More recently, in March 2017, the State of Tennessee—which withdrew from participation in the USRAP

²⁰⁰ Government Accountability Office.

²⁰¹ Penninx, “Integration.”

²⁰² Jones and Teytelboym, “The Local Refugee Match.”

²⁰³ Jones and Teytelboym.

²⁰⁴ Brown and Scribner, “Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities.”

²⁰⁵ U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Abandoned on Arrival: Implications for Refugees and Local Communities Burdened by a U.S. Refugee System That Is Not Working* (Washington, DC: U.S. Printing Office, 2010), 20.

in 2008—filed suit against the federal government, asserting federal overreach in the continuing resettlement of refugees in Tennessee, despite reductions in federal funding since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980.²⁰⁶ That lawsuit was dismissed by the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals on July 24, 2019, but a Petition for Rehearing was filed by Tennessee on September 6, 2019.²⁰⁷ Though the grounds claimed for filing the petition assert the decision is contrary to U.S. Supreme Court precedent, it is notable that the petition was filed shortly after news media reported President Trump was preparing a draft order that would authorize refugee resettlement only in cities and states that consent to the resettlement.²⁰⁸

As communities gain more ability to dictate the terms of their participation in refugee resettlement, it becomes incumbent on national and local resettlement organizations to ensure greater coordination—and conversation—with those communities. Every refugee’s resettlement programs end, and once that happens, refugees must seek out and find the assistance they require in the community-at-large. This task is more easily accomplished in a community that views refugees in a favorable light and willingly engages with their refugees.

D. SECONDARY MIGRATION

The final arbiter of the value and effectiveness of any refugee resettlement program is, of course, the refugees themselves. Extended and engaged programs may still be viewed as inadequate for their needs by certain refugees, just as a “bare bones” program with minimal assistance and interaction may be viewed as perfectly sufficient by other refugees.

²⁰⁶ Don Barnett, “Do States Have a Say in the Refugee Resettlement Program?” Center for Immigration Studies, January 24, 2018, <https://cis.org/Report/Do-States-Have-Say-Refugee-Resettlement-Program>.

²⁰⁷ Thomas More Law Center, “Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals Is Petitioned to Rehear the Federal Refugee Resettlement Opinion ‘Painfully’ at Odds with Supreme Court Precedent,” PR Newswire, September 10, 2019, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/sixth-circuit-court-of-appeals-is-petitioned-to-rehear-the-federal-refugee-resettlement-opinion-painfully-at-odds-with-supreme-court-precedent-300915172.html>.

²⁰⁸ Julia Ainsley, “Trump Admin Weighs Letting States, Cities Deny Entry to Refugees,” NBC, August 21, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/trump-admin-weighs-letting-states-cities-deny-entry-refugees-approved-n1044801>.

Regardless of the quality of the program, if a refugee feels underserved and unsupported in their resettlement location, they may respond by leaving for a perceived better environment—traditionally to locations with large ethnically similar populations.²⁰⁹ The United States admitted a total of 128,164 refugees during Fiscal years 2012 and 2013.²¹⁰ Approximately 21,000 (16.3 percent) of those refugees relocated to other communities within a year of their arrival.²¹¹ This rate of out migration has grown steadily over the past 35 years.²¹²

It would be unfair and untrue to suggest that all 21,000 refugees left their initial resettlement location within a year of arrival as a result of negative resettlement experiences. Secondary migration occurs for a variety of reasons. Indeed, the majority of refugees who engaged in secondary migration left their original resettlement location for economic and other reasons unrelated to the quality of resettlement services—pursuing better paying jobs, more affordable housing, proximity to similar ethnic populations.²¹³ As Eleanor Ott, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) observed, “[E]conomic self-sufficiency is a key goal in the U.S. resettlement system, and, ironically, often achieved outside of the system.”²¹⁴

Regardless of a refugee’s reasons for leaving their place of original resettlement, once gone, they lose the assistance guaranteed to them by the USRAP, via their local resettlement agency.²¹⁵ Certain state-administered federal programs, such as Medicaid, can potentially be transferred to a new location, but, for the most part, refugees “fall off the radar” and must navigate by themselves their path to resettlement, without the safety

²⁰⁹ Eleanor Ott, “Get Up and Go: Refugee Resettlement and Secondary Migration in the USA,” research paper no. 219 (research paper, UNHCR, September 2019).

²¹⁰ Migration Policy Institute, “U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings.”

²¹¹ Bloem and Loveridge, “Secondary Migration.”

²¹² Bloem and Loveridge.

²¹³ Bloem and Loveridge.

²¹⁴ Ott, “Get Up and Go.”

²¹⁵ Forrest and Brown, “Organization-Led Migration.”

net of organizational oversight.²¹⁶ This is particularly troubling in instances where refugees decide to leave their resettlement location because of a negative or inadequate resettlement. The better the resettlement effort provided to refugees, the more they will feel engaged and a part of their community, presumably making secondary migration less prevalent.

²¹⁶ Forrest and Brown.

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IV. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM CASE STUDIES

As has been discussed, the nine VOLAGs hold a key function in refugee resettlement. Once approved for resettlement in the United States, VOLAGs determine where each refugee will be resettled.²¹⁷ However, once a refugee is physically placed in a resettlement location designated by their assigned VOLAG, the task of direct oversight and implementation of the resettlement process falls to a local, non-governmental resettlement organizations (NGOs), working under a contractual arrangement with the VOLAG.²¹⁸ These affiliate NGOs translate the broad resettlement program goals of the VOLAGs and USRAP into specific, implementable programs.

As might be expected, NGOs vary greatly in the level and quality of support and involvement provided.²¹⁹ The potential to be assigned to an agency with substandard resettlement programs may be of lesser concern for refugees with familial sponsors in the United States, but it is particularly problematic in free case refugee resettlement, who have no existing familial support network in their resettlement location and must rely on assistance from their local resettlement organizations.²²⁰ Considering the circumstances that have led to their displacement and eventual resettlement, it is understandable that refugees are more comfortable seeking assistance in navigating their new environments from members of their own ethnic community, over resettlement agencies and community organizations.²²¹

This chapter examines two domestic resettlement programs in engaged communities that have shown success in reducing secondary migration and improving refugees' overall satisfaction with their resettlement progress. Additionally, as a national

²¹⁷ Zucker, "Refugee Resettlement in the United States."

²¹⁸ "The Reception and Placement Program," U.S. Department of State, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/prm/ra/receptionplacement/index.htm>.

²¹⁹ Lunn, "Displaced and Disillusioned."

²²⁰ Lunn.

²²¹ Laura Simich, Morton Beiser, and Farah N. Mawani, "Social Support and the Significance of Shared Experience in Refugee Migration and Resettlement," *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 25, no. 7 (November 1, 2003): 872–91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945903256705>.

program similar to the United States that makes local resettlement location determinations for refugees, Denmark’s resettlement program will be reviewed for specific practices that could potentially be incorporated into the U.S. national resettlement program. As with the domestic programs examined, the focus will not be solely on the metric of reduced secondary migration—indeed, in the Danish model, no such secondary self-migration is even permitted for three years, so any measurement based on that metric would be of no value—but rather on the refugees’ perceptions and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their resettlement.

A. SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

1. Demographics

Utah is a state in the mountainous western United States, covering almost eighty-five thousand square miles.²²² The state is predominantly rural, with a total population in 2019 of 2.9 million.²²³ With a recorded population of 200,591 in 2019, Salt Lake City is not only the capital of Utah, but also the most populous city in the state of Utah.²²⁴ That population of Salt Lake City is dominantly White (73.68 percent), followed by Hispanic (12.82 percent), Asian (5.37 percent) and African-American (2.02 percent).²²⁵ As of the 2017 U.S. Census 5-Year Survey, 4.6 percent of residents were unemployed.²²⁶ Though Utah was established as a religious haven by settlers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), or Mormons, and Salt Lake City is the seat of that faith, by 2018, Salt Lake County’s 558,607 Mormon church-enrolled residents were in the minority (48.91

²²² “Utah: Capital, Map, Facts, & Points of Interest,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Utah>.

²²³ “Population Of Utah 2019,” U.S. Population 2019, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://uspopulation2019.com/population-of-utah-2019.html>.

²²⁴ “Salt Lake City, Utah Population 2019 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs),” World Population Review, accessed November 24, 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/salt-lake-city-population/>.

²²⁵ World Population Review.

²²⁶ World Population Review.

percent) of the county’s population of 1,142,077.²²⁷ Notwithstanding that decline, the LDS faith is still the largest religious affiliation in Utah and Salt Lake City.

2. Refugees in Salt Lake City, Utah

Utah has been a resettlement destination for refugees for over forty years.²²⁸ From 2006 to 2017, the state accepted for resettlement, on average, 1,100 refugees annually, as part of the USRAP.²²⁹ As of 2019, approximately 65,000 refugees from forty countries live in Utah, with the majority living in Salt Lake County.²³⁰ The seven largest refugee populations come from Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Iraq, Vietnam, Burma, and the former Soviet Union.²³¹ Utah’s receptiveness towards refugees is likely due in no small part to the state’s own history of settlement by Mormon pioneers, who fled New York and Illinois after suffering persecution for their religious beliefs.²³² With such a history, it is not difficult to see why providing a safe and opportune space for others suffering similarly is of such importance to the community.

3. Resettlement Programs

Refugee resettlement services in Salt Lake City, Utah, are provided by two organizations. Utah’s first refugee resettlement organization was Catholic Community Services (CCS), who, though in existence since 1945, began formally assisting refugees in 1974.²³³ In 1994, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) established a Salt Lake City

²²⁷ Matt Cunningham, “Salt Lake County Is Now Minority Mormon, and the Impacts Are Far Reaching,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 9, 2018, <https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2018/12/09/salt-lake-county-is-now/>.

²²⁸ “About Catholic Community Services of Utah,” accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.ccsutah.org/about-us/mission-history>.

²²⁹ “Fact Sheet: Refugees in Utah,” University of Utah, April 2017, <https://gardner.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/Refugee-Fact-Sheet-Final.pdf>.

²³⁰ “Learn,” Utah Refugee Connection, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://serverefugees.org/learn/>.

²³¹ University of Utah, “Refugees in Utah.”

²³² Miriam Jordan, “With Welcoming Stance, Conservative Utah Charts its Own Course on Refugees,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/with-welcoming-stance-conservative-utah-charts-its-own-course-on-refugees-1459125392>.

²³³ Catholic Community Services of Utah, “About.”

office and began providing resettlement services, assisting over 11,000 refugees in that time.²³⁴

In 2007, as part of the public-private partnership that oversaw refugee resettlement efforts, Utah state government leaders convened a Refugee Working Group to assess the state's refugee resettlement programs.²³⁵ That group recognized that the six months of resettlement services offered at the time was inadequate to address the needs of most refugees, and recommended the creation of a statewide extended refugee case management (ECM) system.²³⁶ In 2008, the IRC office in Salt Lake City secured private funding to develop and implement an extended case management program for refugees that ensured programmatic support for a full twenty-four months, well beyond the six-month period of oversight provided prior to the implementation of the extended management program.²³⁷

The total funding for Salt Lake City's refugee ECM pilot project was \$925,000, comprised of existing \$850,000 state and federal funding provided to the IRC for refugee resettlement and private donations of \$75,000.²³⁸ Though something of an oversimplification, and acknowledging that a large number of families left the ECM program and Utah over the course of the program, that breaks down to an average additional cost of \$832.58 cost per refugee or \$2,131.34 per family over the pre-ECM costs of resettlement.

Salt Lake City's ECM pilot was implemented in March 2009, serving 1,111 refugees in 434 families through July 2011, the period used for evaluation purposes.²³⁹ Refugees participating in the ECM came from Bhutan (26.3), Iraq (23.0 percent), Burma (21.7 percent), with the remaining twenty-nine percent largely from Eritrea, Somalia, Iran,

²³⁴ "Rescue Lives in Salt Lake City, UT," International Rescue Committee, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/salt-lake-city-ut>.

²³⁵ Shaw and Poulin, "Findings."

²³⁶ Shaw and Poulin.

²³⁷ Shaw and Poulin.

²³⁸ Shaw and Poulin.

²³⁹ Shaw and Poulin.

and Cuba.²⁴⁰ On average, families had been displaced from their home country for ten years before resettlement.²⁴¹ Further, seventy-six of the 434 families participating in the ECM engaged in secondary migration before the end of the two-year program in July 2011, with fully one-half of those families leaving within the first six months of the program.²⁴² Families that left cited employment opportunities or family in other locations in the U.S. as reasons for leaving.²⁴³

Beyond simply providing case management for a longer period of time, Salt Lake City's ECM was structured to provide more direct, ongoing contact with refugees in the program. Through regular home visits—weekly during the first month, monthly for the next five months, then quarterly thereafter—caseworkers met with refugees to assist with the transition to life in the U.S., as well as monitor the refugees' overall "wellbeing."²⁴⁴ The ECM also limited each caseworker to 30 cases, to ensure caseworkers were able to devote the time necessary to provide increased oversight and engagement.²⁴⁵

To assess the effectiveness of Salt Lake City's ECM, an interview was conducted each quarter and at the conclusion of the 24 months of oversight. Refugees were asked to describe and rate on a scale from 1 to five (1 being "very bad," 2 "bad," 3 "okay," 4 "good," and 5 being "very good") their overall satisfaction in seven aspects of their resettlement: overall adjustment, health, employment, finances, education/language, housing, and family/community.²⁴⁶ Moreover, refugees were asked to candidly assess the assistance provided by the resettlement agency in each of these interviews, to glean some measure of the resettlement agency's responsiveness and value to the resettlement process.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁰ Shaw and Poulin.

²⁴¹ Shaw and Poulin.

²⁴² Shaw and Poulin.

²⁴³ Shaw and Poulin.

²⁴⁴ "Wellbeing is conceptualized as encompassing employment, health, finances, education, housing, and adjustment." Shaw and Poulin.

²⁴⁵ Shaw and Poulin.

²⁴⁶ Shaw and Poulin.

²⁴⁷ Shaw and Poulin.

4. Outcomes

In their first interview, conducted within the first three months of resettlement, 36.1 percent of refugees assessed their current state of wellbeing and adjustment to the U.S. as “bad” or “very bad,” 44.9 percent were “okay,” and 19.0 percent were “good” or “very good.”²⁴⁸ However, by the last assessment in the twenty-fourth month, that percentage had risen to 91.8 percent of refugees reporting “good” or “very good” adjustment.²⁴⁹ Employment saw a similar trajectory, with over 80 percent of households initially assessing their employment situation (or lack thereof) as “bad” or “very bad,” but by the end of the two-years, fully 70.7 percent indicated their employment situation was “good” or “very good.”²⁵⁰ Finally, in assessing the quality and value of services provided by the resettlement agency, initially ambivalent rankings of “okay” by just over fifty percent of the refugees quickly rose to “good” or “very good” among ninety percent of the refugees and remained so over the last three quarters of interviews.²⁵¹

In sum, in every self-assessed measure save for health, which declined between the first and second quarter interviews, over the course of the ECM program, refugees reported increasing levels of positivity towards their wellbeing and the work of the resettlement agency in each successive interview.²⁵² Of greatest significance, perhaps, is that the majority of refugees’ assessments of their own wellbeing did not move from “very bad” or “bad” to “good” or “very good” until the 12 to 24 month range, suggesting that the

²⁴⁸ Shaw and Poulin

²⁴⁹ Shaw and Poulin

²⁵⁰ Shaw and Poulin

²⁵¹ Shaw and Poulin.

²⁵² Shaw and Poulin.

integratory benefits of a robust resettlement program are not realized in the first few months after a refugee arrives in the U.S., but subsequent to the first year of arrival.²⁵³

Finally, though it was noted that many families left the program before completion of the two years anticipated, the percentage of refugees included in the Salt Lake City ECM that engaged in secondary migration within their first twenty-four months of resettlement was far lower than the national average of sixty-five percent for refugees—only seventy-six households, or 17.5 percent, and of that number, most identified employment offers or the opportunity to be with relatives elsewhere in the U.S. as their reason for secondary migration, not dissatisfaction with the ECM program.²⁵⁴

5. Findings

Time, in terms of program duration, is essential to effective resettlement and integration. The refugee resettlement ECM program in Salt Lake City, Utah, demonstrates that refugee resettlement—and comprehensive sociocultural integration—is a process that takes years, not months. Resettlement programs that discontinue services after several months may provide sufficient assistance to meet the structural integration goals of ensuring refugees are employed, have a place to live, and gain some general familiarity with their new environment, but they likely lose the opportunity to facilitate a more nuanced and comprehensive integration. Salt Lake City’s refugee resettlement ECM identified two years as the time frame necessary to provide comprehensive resettlement and integration of the majority of refugees served.

A second aspect of time—the time a caseworker can spend working with each refugee—is also important in ensuring successful resettlement and integration. Salt Lake City’s ECM program assigned caseworkers no more than thirty cases each at any given

²⁵³ As an example, Employment was the most negative category for participants, on average, until month 15. Over 80 % of households scored employment as “bad” or “very bad” upon arrival. Scores improved through the first year as households secured employment and continued to improve during the second year. The percentage of participants reporting “bad” or “very bad” employment stayed fairly constant between months 12 to 24 (ranging between 16.6 and 13.3 %). At 12 months, 53 % of households reported that their employment situation was “good” or “very good,” and this percentage increased to 70.7 % at month 24. Shaw and Poulin.

²⁵⁴ Shaw and Poulin.

time. This allowed caseworkers to devote sufficient attention and efforts to the needs of their assigned refugees, without overloading caseworkers.²⁵⁵ Those needs were identified and addressed through regularly scheduled meetings with caseworkers who solicited feedback, impressions, and candid self-assessments from the refugees as to their resettlement experience and wellbeing. Assigning caseworkers too many cases would have made it impossible for caseworkers to maintain the volume and frequency of meetings and interviews with their assigned refugees.

Those interviews demonstrate the third important finding from the study of Salt Lake City's refugee resettlement ECM: the value of listening to the refugee. The simple act of asking a refugee their thoughts on how they think they are doing in their new environment and how that environment is treating them is incredibly empowering. More than just showing concern for the refugees continued wellbeing, it communicates the idea that their opinions matter and will inform aspects of their resettlement program going forward. The value of these interviews was not lost on the refugees, who expressed high levels of satisfaction with the resettlement agency's efforts over the second year of the program.²⁵⁶

Notwithstanding the high percentage of refugees reporting positive assessments of the ECM program and their general wellbeing and adjustment to life in the United States, not every refugee achieved comprehensive integration. Neither was the ECM program wholly responsible for every refugee success story. Refugees succeed largely on their own initiative and vision, and an ECM is not a guarantee of success; it is a tool designed to facilitate refugee access to basic assistance. Indeed, at the end of the 24-month period, even though the program found secondary migration levels in Salt Lake City were dramatically lower than nationwide, refugees held a strongly positive sense of wellbeing, and most of the refugees had largely attained economic self-sufficiency, most households were still living below the federal poverty line.²⁵⁷ Notwithstanding these concerns, it seems the

²⁵⁵ Shaw and Poulin.

²⁵⁶ 90% of refugees interviewed in the last three quarters of their ECM program rated their satisfaction with the resettlement agency efforts as "good" or "very good." Shaw and Poulin.

²⁵⁷ Shaw and Poulin.

ECM program continues to be viewed positively by both refugees and the local community. As recently as August 2016, the Mormon Church pledged an additional \$2 million to assist with Salt Lake City’s ECM program and refugee resettlement efforts in Utah.²⁵⁸

B. UTICA, NEW YORK

1. Demographics

Situated in upstate New York, halfway between Buffalo and New York City, Utica was a thriving textiles and manufacturing hub in the first half of the 20th century.²⁵⁹ Utica achieved a peak population of 100,000 for thirty years, from 1930 through 1960.²⁶⁰ However, beginning in the 1960s, Utica saw its population begin to decline as many of its key industries relocated to southern states.²⁶¹ By July 2019, Utica, New York’s population had fallen to just over 60,000 residents.²⁶² As reported in a 2017 census, a majority 63.4 percent of Utica residents were White, followed by African-Americans (15.8 percent), and Asian (11.9 percent) residents.²⁶³ In that same year, Utica’s unemployment rate was 10.8 percent.²⁶⁴ As of 2019, 37.1 percent of residents identified their religion as Catholic, followed by 3.6 percent Methodist, and 1.0 percent Muslim.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁸ “Church Donates \$2 Million in Ongoing Refugee Aid,” Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, August 31, 2016, http://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/church-donates-2-million-in-ongoing-refugee-aid?__prclt=mtl1R1MP.

²⁵⁹ “History of Utica, New York,” United States History, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h2474.html>.

²⁶⁰ “Utica, NY Population,” Population.us, accessed October 5, 2019, <https://population.us/ny/utica/>.

²⁶¹ United States History, “History of Utica, New York.”

²⁶² “Utica, New York Population 2019,” World Population Review, July 6, 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/utica-ny-population/>.

²⁶³ World Population Review.

²⁶⁴ World Population Review.

²⁶⁵ “Utica, New York Religion,” Best Places, accessed November 25, 2019, https://www.bestplaces.net/religion/city/new_york/utica.

2. Refugees in Utica, New York

The first post-Refugee Act of 1980 refugees came in the early 1980s from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, followed by refugees from the former Soviet Union in 1988.²⁶⁶ From the early 1990s through 2006, over 4,500 Bosnian refugees resettled in Utica.²⁶⁷ Since 2000, over 4,000 Burmese refugees, as well as refugees from Iraq, Nepal, Somalia, Thailand and Sudan—have resettled in Utica.²⁶⁸ In total, over 16,500 refugees have been resettled in Utica since the passage of the Act.²⁶⁹ Currently, refugees make up twelve percent of Utica’s 60,000 residents.²⁷⁰

3. Resettlement Programs

Refugee resettlement in Utica, New York, is overseen by the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (MVRRCR).²⁷¹ The MVRRCR was founded in 1979 with the support and assistance of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services.²⁷² The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees is a non-profit, privately held company that has an annual estimated revenue of \$2.5 million dollars and conducts operations with a staff of forty-five employees.²⁷³ Refugee resettlement services provided by MVRRCR include 180 days of case management (increased from 90 days in 2017), primary care referral, assistance with school enrollment and cultural orientation programs covering such topics as “Employment,” “Your new community,” “Role of the resettlement agency,” and “U.S.

²⁶⁶ “History of the Center,” The Center Utica, accessed November 25, 2019, <https://www.thecenterutica.org/about/our-history/>.

²⁶⁷ The Center Utica.

²⁶⁸ The Center Utica.

²⁶⁹ The Center Utica.

²⁷⁰ “Utica New York Welcomes Refugees,” USAHello, accessed November 25, 2019, <https://usahello.org/help-refugees/utica-new-york/>.

²⁷¹ The Center Utica, “History of the Center.”

²⁷² The Center Utica

²⁷³ “Mohawk Valley Resource Center,” Manta, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://www.manta.com/c/mmlz5zp/mohawk-valley-resource-center>.

laws.”²⁷⁴ With the limited information available, it was not possible to arrive at a cost per refugee for services provided by the MVRRCR.

The formal resettlement programs provided by MVRRCR are not particularly unique or innovative, nor of greater duration than other resettlement programs nationwide.²⁷⁵ In truth, MVRRCR offers services that are similar to those offered by other resettlement agencies and mandated by the federal government.²⁷⁶ What MVRRCR enjoys—and has enjoyed for the past thirty years—that other programs lack, however, is an extremely robust level of support, financial and social, for refugee resettlement from the residents, business community, and government of Utica, Oneida County, and the state of New York. As examples, when the federal government moved to reduce funding for refugee resettlement organizations as part of the suspension of the refugee resettlement program in 2017, \$2 million in funding was secured from the state of New York for the MVRRCR and other upstate New York refugee resettlement organizations.²⁷⁷ In July 2018, Oneida County received \$538,893 from the Central New York Care Collaborative to improve healthcare services for the local refugee population.²⁷⁸ And in September 2019, despite significant decreases in refugee admissions nationwide and a commensurate loss of federal funding, MVRRCR was able to secure public and private funding to open a new “state-of-the-art community space and training center” for refugees.²⁷⁹ This prevailing positive view

²⁷⁴ “Refugee Resettlement Services for Utica Refugees,” The Center Utica, accessed October 14, 2019, <https://www.thecenterutica.org/our-services/refugee-resettlement/>.

²⁷⁵ See, for example, a listing of entrepreneurial programs available to refugees in locations such as Buffalo, NY, and Seattle, WA. Silva Mathema, “What Works,” Center for American Progress, February 28, 2018, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2018/02/28/447283/what-works/>.

²⁷⁶ “The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program—An Overview,” Office of Refugee Resettlement, September 14, 2015, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/the-us-refugee-resettlement-program-an-overview>.

²⁷⁷ Cara Thomas, “Refugee Centers to Receive State Funding,” Spectrum News, April 12, 2017, <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/central-ny/news/2017/04/12/refugee-centers-to-receive-state-funding>.

²⁷⁸ “Oneida County Announces Funding to Improve Healthcare for At-Risk Population,” Oneida County New York, July 2, 2018, <https://www.ocgov.net/content/oneida-county-announces-funding-improve-healthcare-risk-population>.

²⁷⁹ “Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees Launches New Welcome Center,” *Oneida Daily Dispatch*, September 21, 2019, https://www.oneidadispatch.com/news/local-news/mohawk-valley-resource-center-for-refugees-launches-new-welcome-center/article_8f5f5bb6-dc00-11e9-a429-6f51c13d6a2c.html.

creates a climate in which refugees can flourish and the community willingly assumes responsibility for the care, support, and integration of those refugees.

4. Outcomes

The city of Utica has certainly benefited from its willingness to participate in the resettlement of refugees. Unlike other upstate New York communities that continue to lose population, Utica has seen modest population increases over the past decade, and refugees have revitalized the local economy and reestablished neighborhoods that were previously in states of decay.²⁸⁰ What began with the Bosnian refugee migration in the late 1990s continued, even as the refugee groups resettling in Utica changed. In the past fifteen years, Somali Bantus, Burmese, and refugees from Pakistan and Iraq have changed significantly the demography of Utica, but the positive impact made by earlier refugees carried over to these newer refugee populations.²⁸¹

Judging by the numbers, it seems that refugees are coming to and remaining in Utica. As of 2017, the percentage of Utica residents that are foreign-born was 19.4 percent.²⁸² Even some refugees originally resettled in other locations in the United States have secondarily migrated to Utica, as evidenced by the MVRRCR's notice that it offers employment and other resettlement services to secondary migration refugees.²⁸³ The overt support shown for refugees by the community at large has engendered in resettled refugees a strong sense of community and loyalty towards Utica. When asked to evaluate their views of Utica, in light of the current political climate, fully seventy-one percent of refugees in

²⁸⁰ "What Happened When This Struggling City Opened its Arms to Refugees," PBS, July 6, 2017, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/happened-struggling-city-opened-arms-refugees>.

²⁸¹ Alissa Scott, "'Town That Loves Refugees': Is it Perception or Reality in Utica?" *Observer-Dispatch*, February 27, 2017, <https://www.uticaod.com/news/20170227/town-that-loves-refugees-is-it-perception-or-reality-in-utica>.

²⁸² "QuickFacts: Utica City, New York," U.S. Census, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/uticacitynewyork/LND110210>.

²⁸³ The Center Utica, "Refugee Resettlement Services."

Utica indicated, “it’s encouraged them to like Utica better ... [as] [t]hey realize that they’re in a pretty good situation here.”²⁸⁴

The outcomes are not completely positive. The influx of refugees has somewhat negatively impacted Utica’s school system. Refugee students require interpreters, incurring an average additional cost per refugee student of \$2,500.²⁸⁵ Additionally, Utica schools attributed a lowering of standardized test scores overall to the fact that refugee students with poor English language skills comprise fifteen percent of the student population.²⁸⁶ These concerns, however, have not dampened the city administration’s support for refugee resettlement, as it was noted that refugees provide far more of an economic benefit than cost to Utica.²⁸⁷

Finally, recalling Jones and Teytelboym’s concerns regarding the importance of proportionality in identifying the number of refugees a community can responsibly host, even as Utica continues to welcome (and identifies itself as “The Town that Loves Refugees”), there are signs that Utica is reaching something of a tipping point.²⁸⁸ Overt anti-immigrant sentiment has increased, particularly towards more recent arrivals from Iraq.²⁸⁹ Further, the volume of refugees admitted in the past decade has been insufficient to counter the loss of other residents, leading to a continuing net decrease in population.²⁹⁰ As the number of foreign-born residents increases amid an overall population decrease, Utica may be perceived less as an integrated community and more a community of immigrants that is replacing the native-born population. Such a result would risk

²⁸⁴ Bob Woods, “Despite Trump’s Draconian Policies, Refugees Continue Boosting New York’s Rust Belt Economy,” CNBC, July 10, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/07/02/how-refugees-continue-boosting-new-yorks-rust-belt-economy.html>.

²⁸⁵ “Refugee Students Add Much to Learning Environment, but Cost to Educate Them More Expensive,” *Observer-Dispatch*, March 9, 2014, <https://www.uticaod.com/article/20140309/NEWS/140309402>.

²⁸⁶ Scott, “Town That Loves Refugees.”

²⁸⁷ Tanvi Misra, “What Happens to Cities That Welcome Refugees,” CityLab, January 31, 2019, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2019/01/refugee-admissions-resettlement-trump-immigration/580318/>.

²⁸⁸ Jones and Teytelboym, “The Local Refugee Match.”

²⁸⁹ Scott, “Town That Loves Refugees.”

²⁹⁰ “Utica, NY,” Data USA, accessed October 13, 2019, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/utica-ny/>.

undermining the goal of successful refugee integration and potentially result in a backlash against refugees and other immigrants.²⁹¹ This becomes particularly significant as the current administration considers giving states and local municipalities the ability to approve or veto any plan to resettle refugees.²⁹²

5. Findings

Refugee resettlement in Utica, New York, has largely been successful as a result of three factors: timing, opportunity, and community support. The first two factors, timing and opportunity, arose out of Utica's industry exodus, which began in the 1960s, and resulted in a steady out-migration of youth and a large segment of the workforce.²⁹³ This decline in population resulted in much of the town's residential areas suffering as well, as the inventory of apartments and homes outweighed demand and property values plummeted.²⁹⁴ By 1990, Utica was in desperate need of additional residents to reverse Utica's decline and revitalize the town, which coincided perfectly with the first wave of Bosnian refugees.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, homes were being sold for as low as \$2000 to Bosnian refugees who were quickly able to find work in local factories and businesses.²⁹⁵ With ample affordable housing and ready employment available, Utica was the perfect environment for a group of refugees that mirrored the work ethics and values of the existing population, who also had strong family histories tied to economic migration from Europe. These refugees assimilated well into the fabric of Utica, and their success provided the platform upon which subsequent waves of refugee migrations—from Burma, Somalia and

²⁹¹ Pablo S. Bose, "Welcome and Hope, Fear, and Loathing: The Politics of Refugee Resettlement in Vermont," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 24, no. 3 (August 2018): 320–29, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1037/pac0000302>.

²⁹² Ainsley, "Trump Admin."

²⁹³ John Bacheller, "The Decline of Manufacturing in New York and the Rust Belt," Policy by Numbers New York, updated October 26, 2017, <https://policybynumbers.com/the-decline-of-manufacturing-in-new-york-and-the-rust-belt>.

²⁹⁴ Scott, "Town That Loves Refugees."

²⁹⁵ William Fulton, "Refugee Renewal," *Governing*, May 2005, <https://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/Refugee-Renewal.html>.

Pakistan, among others—built their own success in Utica.²⁹⁶ The ability to find adequate employment and affordable housing with relative ease in Utica, New York, perhaps overestimates the worth of the MVRCCR’s refugee resettlement programs. It could simply be that abundant employment and inexpensive housing allows the MVRCCR to focus more resources on those other aspects of integration, such as English-language education and navigating the health care system.

The third factor responsible for successful refugee resettlement and integration in Utica, New York, is the significant level of community support and involvement with the resettled refugees. This receptivity and interest may, in part, be attributed to Utica’s immigrant history. Utica experienced multiple waves of immigrants—German and Irish immigrants in the latter half of the 19th century and Italian and Polish immigrants in the early decades of the 20th century. Or it could just be a pragmatic desire to seek an expedient means to improve the city’s flagging fortunes.²⁹⁷ Regardless, Utica benefited from some luck—if an ethnic group’s misfortune can be considered lucky—as well as shrewd organizational planning, to capitalize on successive waves of refugee migration to the United States, beginning in the 1990s.

The first wave of refugees resettled in Utica were Bosnians fleeing the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, and though Muslim, were generally similar in a perceived strong work ethic—and in appearance—to the largely white, working class majority population of Utica in the 1990s.²⁹⁸ This roughly similar social identity was significant, as “[t]o the extent that a host community sees accommodating to the presence of refugees as consistent with its group identity, there will be greater motivation to welcome refugees by assisting with their resettlement.”²⁹⁹ The availability of relatively well-paying employment options in trades similar to those performed in their native country, coupled with an almost immediate ability to find easily affordable quality housing to rent or purchase, became the

²⁹⁶ Scott, “Town That Loves Refugees.”

²⁹⁷ Smith, “The Case of a City Where 1 in 6 Residents Is a Refugee.”

²⁹⁸ Fulton, “Refugee Renewal.”

²⁹⁹ Smith, “The Case of a City Where 1 in 6 Residents Is a Refugee.”

siren song that brought the refugees to Utica. The refugees themselves then organically created a community support network that was able to effectively assist newly arriving refugees, without the need for significant social service and community-at-large assistance.³⁰⁰

In sum, operating a resettlement program in a receptive community environment in which two major needs, employment and housing, were readily obtainable and affordable, the MVRRCR was able to focus services on other refugee concerns, such as language and health services. The heavy lift of sociocultural integration was, for the most part, embraced by the citizens, businesses and government of Utica as their responsibility, not the resettlement agency's—and one that continues indefinitely. In such a positive, community-wide environment, refugees are far more likely to feel welcome, protected, and cared for—and thus will achieve a greater level of integration more quickly than other refugees in less-conducive environments.

C. DENMARK

Though obviously not a participant in United States' refugee resettlement process, I felt it important as part my analysis of potential resettlement program best practices to include in this thesis a review and discussion of Denmark's refugee acceptance and integration process, paying particular attention to its use of pre-resettlement integration contracts.³⁰¹ The contract includes the requirement that refugees remain in the resettlement location selected for them for three years, to promote Denmark's "spatial dispersal" refugee integration strategy, which prevents refugees from clustering in select areas and forming isolated ethnic enclaves.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Fulton, "Refugee Renewal."

³⁰¹ Michala Clante Bendixen, "The Asylum Procedure in Denmark," Refugees.dk, accessed June 2, 2019, <http://refugees.dk/en/facts/the-asylum-procedure-in-denmark/>.

³⁰² Birgitte Romme Larsen, "Becoming Part of Welfare Scandinavia: Integration through the Spatial Dispersal of Newly Arrived Refugees in Denmark," *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 37, no. 2 (February 2011): 333–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2011.521337>.

1. Demographics

The southernmost Scandinavian country in northern Europe, Denmark covers 16,577 square miles, and is comprised of the Jutland Peninsula and over 400 small islands, of which only seventy-four are inhabited.³⁰³ In 2019, the population of Denmark was 5.8 million, with the largest concentration, 1.2 million residents, in Denmark’s capital city of Copenhagen.³⁰⁴ Almost ninety percent of the population is of Nordic descent and have at least one parent born in Denmark and holding Danish citizenship.³⁰⁵ The other ten percent are immigrants or children of immigrants from Turkey, Southeast Asia, Eastern European countries, and the Middle East.³⁰⁶ Lutheranism is the official state religion and The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark the state church, though only 71.1 percent of the population identify as Christian, with a substantial number (25.7 percent) of residents identifying as Atheist or Agnostic, and an additional 2.6 percent practicing religions other than Christianity.³⁰⁷ Notably, based on a variety of assessed measures and indicators, in 2019, Denmark ranked as the second “happiest” country in the World Happiness Report.³⁰⁸

2. Refugees in Denmark

Refugee migration to Denmark is a fairly recent phenomenon. Denmark introduced its first refugee introduction program in 1999, as part of the Danish Integration Act.³⁰⁹ Since 1995, Denmark has issued residence permits to 105,000 refugees.³¹⁰ Asylum applications—the mechanism by which refugees gain entry and residence in Denmark—

³⁰³ “Denmark Population 2019 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs),” World Population Review, accessed November 26, 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/denmark-population/>.

³⁰⁴ World Population Review.

³⁰⁵ World Population Review.

³⁰⁶ World Population Review.

³⁰⁷ World Population Review.

³⁰⁸ World Happiness Report, accessed November 26, 2019, <http://worldhappiness.report/>.

³⁰⁹ Guilherme Fernandes, “(Dis)Empowering New Immigrants and Refugees.”

³¹⁰ Michala Clante Bendixen, “Refugees in Denmark Historically,” Refugees.dk, accessed November 26, 2019, <http://refugees.dk/en/facts/numbers-and-statistics/how-many-refugees-have-denmark-received-over-the-years-and-where-did-they-come-from/>.

reached a high of 21,000 in 2015, but fell to 2,600 in 2018 and in 2019 are holding at approximately fifty new applications per week.³¹¹ Demographically, since 2013, the majority of refugees seeking resettlement in Denmark have come predominantly from Syria (almost forty percent of all asylum applicants in 2015, down to fifteen percent by 2019), Afghanistan, Eritrea, Morocco, Georgia, Somalia, Iran, and Iraq.³¹²

3. Resettlement Programs

Denmark's refugee resettlement program is managed by the government, though at the local levels, the government contracts with private and charitable organizations for the provision of some ancillary services.³¹³ Administration of refugee admission and resettlement in Denmark falls under the *Udlændingestyrelsen*, the Danish Immigration Service, a directorate within the Danish Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs.³¹⁴ Prospective refugees to Denmark undergo coordinated interviews and are assessed by the UNHCR, based on criteria for consideration provided by Denmark.³¹⁵ Refugees that meet the established criteria are referred to the Danish Immigration Service, but acceptance is not assured, as in addition to eligibility criteria, Denmark imposes an annual refugee admission cap.³¹⁶ Further, in 2016, Denmark ceased accepting five-hundred UNHCR "quota refugees" and has yet to resume acceptance under this specific program, asserting "it would not take in any refugees under the U.N.'s quota system in 2018, focusing instead on integrating those recently arrived in the country."³¹⁷

³¹¹ Michala Clante Bendixen, "How Many Refugees Are Coming to Denmark," Refugees.dk, accessed November 26, 2019, <http://refugees.dk/en/facts/numbers-and-statistics/how-many-are-coming-and-from-where/>.

³¹² Bendixen.

³¹³ Elin Hofverberg, "Refugee Law and Policy: Denmark," Library of Congress, March 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/refugee-law/denmark.php>.

³¹⁴ New to Denmark, accessed May 2, 2019, https://nyidanmark.dk/en_GB/ContactUs/contact_immigration_service.

³¹⁵ Hofverberg, "Refugee Law and Policy."

³¹⁶ Hofverberg.

³¹⁷ "Denmark Refuses to Take in U.N. Quota Refugees in 2018," The Local, October 4, 2018, <https://www.thelocal.dk/20181004/denmark-refuses-to-take-in-un-quota-refugees-in-2018>.

In 2016, 2017, and 2018, Denmark reportedly spent approximately 6.4 billion Danish Krone (DKK) - about \$944 million dollars—each year on integration efforts.³¹⁸ Those funds went to municipalities to assist with the costs of housing and feeding refugees, private companies and non-governmental private organizations that the state contracted with for service provision. Thus, as in the U.S., Denmark has begun to shift certain programmatic functions to private organizations.³¹⁹ As of 2019, the Danish Immigration Service provides a basic cash allowance of 52.35 DKK (\$7.72) per adult per day.³²⁰ Supplementary cash assistance can be provided to refugees with minor children, from 82.86 DKK (\$12.22) per child per day, up to two children, to a maximum daily assistance amount of 252.98 DKK (\$37.31). Additionally, refugees are eligible to receive annual clothing and hygiene packages, valued at 1488.61 DKK (\$219.57) and 119.99 DKK (\$17.70).³²¹

The cornerstone of Denmark’s refugee introduction and resettlement program is engagement with refugees before acceptance, to ensure full understanding of the expectations and requirements the refugee will be held to in Denmark.³²² This understanding is memorialized in a binding “Integration Contract” signed by the refugee and the host country’s immigration agency representative prior to acceptance for resettlement.³²³ As part of their contractual agreement, refugees understand they will have no say in the selection of the location of their resettlement.

As part of the Danish Integration Act, Denmark implemented a mandatory spatial dispersal policy that legally binds refugees to live for three years in an assigned community, or risk forfeiting their state-provided and administered financial compensation package and

³¹⁸ “Governance of Migrant Integration in Denmark,” European Commission, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/governance/denmark>.

³¹⁹ European Commission.

³²⁰ “Conditions for Asylum Seekers,” New to Denmark, accessed November 26, 2019, [http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Waiting/Asylum/Conditions for asylum seekers](http://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Waiting/Asylum/Conditions%20for%20asylum%20seekers).

³²¹ New to Denmark.

³²² Guilherme Fernandes, “(Dis)Empowering New Immigrants and Refugees.”

³²³ Myrberg, “Local Challenges and National Concerns.”

loss of resident status, resulting in possible removal from Denmark.³²⁴ Exceptions to the policy can be requested in certain circumstances, such as employment offers in other locations that would provide sufficient income to the refugee and obviate the need for the refugee stipend or other forms of financial assistance, or if the desired municipality agrees to assume financial responsibility for the requesting refugee.³²⁵ This formulaic refugee distribution policy has a two-fold purpose: First, it ensures that refugees do not concentrate in one single locus in Denmark (which could overload community services) and, second, it places refugees in communities in which they will be required to regularly interact with ethnically Nordic citizens, with the hope of leading to a more rapid and complete integration.³²⁶

Refugees admitted to Denmark are given temporary resident status, which can be made permanent after three years and successful integration—defined as completion of all conditions outlined in a jointly-signed “Integration Contract.” Those conditions include demonstration of long-term employment, satisfactory completion of mandatory Danish language and cultural integration “Nordic values” courses, mastery of the Danish language, and good moral character, evidenced by a lack of negative contacts with law enforcement.³²⁷ Refugees admitted to Denmark through this process can petition for permanent resident status after five years and be “fast-tracked” for citizenship by the Danish Parliament, after eight years of residency.³²⁸

Denmark’s governance model, similar to all other Scandinavian countries, is deeply rooted in social welfare.³²⁹ From monthly stipends, liberal maternity and paternity leave and subsistence payments, education at all levels, retirement, and free health services,

³²⁴ Larsen, “Becoming Part of Welfare Scandinavia.”

³²⁵ “Denmark,” European Resettlement Network, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://www.resettlement.eu/country/denmark>.

³²⁶ Larsen, “Becoming Part of Welfare Scandinavia.”

³²⁷ Bendixen, “The Asylum Procedure in Denmark.”

³²⁸ Hofverberg, “Refugee Law and Policy.”

³²⁹ “A Welfare Society,” Copenhagen Capacity, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://www.copcap.com/living-and-working/a-welfare-society>.

Denmark’s “Nordic model” does much to provide for the needs of their citizenry and residents, including admitted refugees.³³⁰ Over the initial three-year integration period, refugees receive full health, education, and housing benefits, though the refugee monthly stipend is approximately sixty percent of public social welfare benefits.³³¹ The rationale behind providing refugees a smaller stipend than is given to other residents and citizens is to motivate refugees to seek work, rather than rely exclusively on social welfare payments.³³²

With Denmark’s relatively small number of annual refugee admissions—only 844 in 2018—it would seem the billions of krone budgeted each year for refugee integration are sufficient to cover the costs of providing for refugees.³³³ However, in 2016, Denmark’s parliament passed a controversial bill that permits police to seize valuables worth more than 10,000 DKK (\$1,475), claiming it was a necessary action to help defray the costs of housing and feeding the 20,000 refugees that were seeking admission to Denmark in that year.³³⁴ It is unclear if or how often the government has exercised this right of seizure.

4. Outcomes

Employment rates of refugees still within the three-year period of Denmark’s formal integration process rose from twenty-one percent in the first half of 2015 to over thirty-six percent by the third quarter of 2017.³³⁵ Considering that the initial focus of Denmark’s refugee resettlement effort is not employment, but rather Danish language acquisition and participation in acculturation programs designed to facilitate refugee adoption of Nordic values, it is not surprising or of particular concern that employment

³³⁰ Razi Iqbal and Padma Todi, “The Nordic Model: Existence, Emergence and Sustainability,” *Procedia Economics and Finance* 30 (January 1, 2015): 336–51, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(15\)01301-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)01301-5).

³³¹ Larsen, “Becoming Part of Welfare Scandinavia.”

³³² Larsen.

³³³ European Commission, “Governance of Migrant Integration in Denmark.”

³³⁴ “Denmark Approves Controversial Migrant Assets Bill,” BBC, January 26, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35406436>.

³³⁵ European Commission, “Governance of Migrant Integration in Denmark.”

rates for refugees are roughly half that of refugees resettled in the United States. After three years in the country, Denmark's refugee employment rate increased to forty-five percent, overall.³³⁶ Municipalities in which refugee women were placed, however, reported some difficulty in getting refugee women to pursue employment opportunities.³³⁷

Measuring integration success by a lack of secondary migration would be of little value, as the Danish Integration Act requires refugees to remain in their designated location for three years. However, the Danish government maintains a national "Integration Barometer" that tracks refugee participation in nine different parameters that are partial indicators of integration—work, education, Danish language knowledge, civic inclusion, discrimination, public assistance, crime, "ghetto" area creation and exposure (essentially, tracking the number and rise of urban refugee neighborhoods that had become insular "ghettos," as well as identifying neighborhoods at risk of becoming refugee "ghettos"), and self-determination—and further national objectives for refugee integration.³³⁸ As would be expected, mandatory programs enjoy a high success rate in their respective parameter. Danish language fluency is high among refugees (fifty-six percent) after three years, and only twenty-eight percent of refugees were still on some form of public assistance, three years after resettlement.³³⁹ Moreover, a large percentage of refugees (sixty-seven percent) are politically active, in some manner—primarily voting.³⁴⁰ Refugees who have lived in Denmark over three years, though still temporary residents, are able to vote, but this measure also includes local association membership and persons recognized for their community efforts, for which there is no minimum residency requirement.³⁴¹

³³⁶ Thomassen, *The Integration of Refugees in Denmark*.

³³⁷ European Commission, "Governance of Migrant Integration in Denmark."

³³⁸ Integrations Barometer, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://integrationsbarometer.dk/>.

³³⁹ Integrations Barometer.

³⁴⁰ Integrations Barometer.

³⁴¹ Michael Barrett, "Here's How Foreigners Can Vote in Denmark's Municipal and Regional Elections," *The Local*, November 6, 2017, <https://www.thelocal.dk/20171106/heres-how-foreigners-can-vote-in-denmarks-municipal-and-regional-elections>.

5. Findings

Refugee resettlement in Denmark is guided by a simple premise: The needs of Denmark come first. This tenet guides Denmark's process for selecting and resettling a very small number of eligible refugees, and that philosophy informs every aspect of their resettlement—from mandating three-year placement in locations determined by the government, to requiring refugees, to the greatest extent possible, to adopt Nordic values and gain fluency in the Danish language as a necessary prerequisite to transitioning from a temporary to permanent resident and, ultimately, citizen of Denmark.³⁴² Refugee integration in Denmark is less a matter of accepting cultural differences, and more a deliberate strategy to fit and mold refugees into Danish culture. This concern—even fear—of the impact of immigration on Danish culture can be seen in increasingly overt anti-immigrant sentiment in Denmark, in the government and among the populace.³⁴³

Controlling where refugees live after their resettlement for a fixed length of time is key to Denmark's refugee integration goals (at least integration as envisioned by Denmark). Resettling refugees strategically and intentionally in a way that places refugees in communities in which there are few residents of similar background and history is more disruptive and daunting, certainly, than resettling refugees in communities with large, established same origin refugee communities, but it forces refugees to engage directly with native Danes. Without the agreement to remain in that location for three years, many refugees would quickly gravitate to more culturally familiar environs, creating clusters and enclaves that work against Denmark's integration expectations.³⁴⁴ Taking away a refugee's ability to freely move within a country seems draconian and even unfair as a condition precedent to acceptance for resettlement, but for Denmark, it has proven to be a valuable component to the integration program's success.

³⁴² Myrberg, "Local Challenges and National Concerns."

³⁴³ As an example, on December 20, 2018, in a move deliberately targeting Muslim residents, Denmark passed a law requiring new citizens to shake hands with the officiant at their naturalization ceremony. Martin Selsoe Sorensen, "Denmark, with an Eye on Muslims, Requires New Citizens to Shake Hands," *New York Times*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/world/europe/denmark-muslims-handshake-law.html>.

³⁴⁴ Integrations Barometer.

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V. ANALYSIS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

A. ANALYSIS

In the first chapter of this thesis, I noted there are three variables in the refugee integration equation: the refugee, the community, and the resettlement program. Each of the three programs studied demonstrated to varying degrees the importance of one or more of those entities in refugee integration. In Salt Lake City, Utah, the resettlement program was highlighted. The IRC looked beyond simplistic structural integration measures and developed a multi-faceted and extended integration program that regularly reached out to the refugee in assessing the program's quality. That shifts the focus from structural integration to sociocultural integration and the intentional measuring of success through the refugee's assessments over other traditional metrics of employment, education, and secondary migration.

Though Utica, New York, also showed successful integration of refugees, the resettlement program itself was largely unremarkable, in terms of innovation and duration. Utica's successes with its immigrant and refugee population are the result of acute awareness by the community that refugees were and continue to be key to the survival of the town. Moreover, the community *is* refugees. One out of every six residents in Utica is a refugee.³⁴⁵ The visibility and voice of refugees in Utica is evident everywhere. It is understandable that refugees would feel a stronger sense of belonging and overt support in such an environment.

For Denmark, the resettlement program is far longer and focuses most heavily, at least immediately after initial resettlement, on ensuring refugees acquire Danish language skills or at least awareness of traditional Nordic cultural values. Though Denmark's resettlement program is certainly robust, simply put, it focuses on molding refugees into Danes, not on celebrating and incorporating into the local community a refugee's native cultural heritage. For that reason, the acculturation program required by law and

³⁴⁵ Smith, "The Case of a City Where 1 in 6 Residents Is a Refugee."

incorporated into Denmark’s resettlement program is not appropriate for consideration in the United States.

The one component of Denmark’s refugee resettlement program that merits consideration in the U.S. is the mandatory three-year resettlement requirement in a location of the government’s choosing, in furtherance of Denmark’s spatial dispersal policy. As of 2019, fifteen years after initial placement in locales throughout Denmark, seventy-five percent of refugees are still in their location of original placement.³⁴⁶ This lack of secondary migration by refugees in Denmark once their movement is no longer restricted suggests that strong social bonds and community ties are created over the course of that time period. This is something that would benefit the United States and the free case refugees resettled here.

The review of Utica’s refugee integration efforts illustrates the value of a supportive and engaged community. Refugees feel safer and more welcomed in Utica, than in other locations.³⁴⁷ Utica’s reputation as a welcoming community for refugees and, unlike many urban centers in which refugees were initially resettled, with low crime, ample employment opportunities and good, affordable housing, resulted in a secondary migration flow, which, though officially discouraged, is also an indicator of successful integration strategies.³⁴⁸ Likewise, Salt Lake City provided strong community support for refugees, as evidenced by private donations for that city’s ECM pilot program, and the Governor Gary Herbert’s 2016 open pledge to “keep the door open” for refugees.³⁴⁹ In Denmark, community support is essentially assured, as part of the calculus that drives refugee resettlement location determinations is the community’s ability to provide the necessary support

³⁴⁶ Fabian Eckert, Mads Hejlesen, and Conor Walsh, “The Return to Big City Experience: Evidence from Danish Refugees” (working paper, Opportunity and Inclusive Growth Institute, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, September, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.21034/iwp.24>.

³⁴⁷ “Utica, N.Y., Which Welcomes Refugees, Monitors Trump’s Muslim Comments,” NPR, November 22, 2016, <https://www.npr.org/2016/11/22/502980034/utica-n-y-which-welcomes-refugees-monitors-trumps-muslim-comments>.

³⁴⁸ Paul Hagstrom, Javier Pereira, and Stephen Wu, “The Happiness of Refugees in the United States: Evidence from Utica, NY,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* (January 2019).

³⁴⁹ Miriam Clifford, “With Welcoming Stance, Conservative Utah Charts its Own Course on Refugees,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/with-welcoming-stance-conservative-utah-charts-its-own-course-on-refugees-1459125392>.

services, further assured through Danish Social Services funding for that purpose.³⁵⁰ Private and charitable organizations also provide support to refugees in Denmark, but unlike the United States' program, they are not as influential and not involved in the resettlement location determination.³⁵¹

The analysis of the third reviewed program, Denmark's, focuses primarily on the refugee's role in the integration equation. This may seem strange, considering prospective refugees must essentially sign away their ability to live in any location in Denmark other than that chosen for them by the government, and they must agree to remain in that location chosen for them for three years, if they hope to secure permanent residency and citizenship. But it is precisely for those reasons that the refugee becomes the key factor in successful resettlement and integration. Selection for resettlement in Denmark is very hard, and refugees offered the opportunity understand the value of securing a foothold in Denmark. Nevertheless, the necessity of living in a community wholly different from their known world is a daunting prospect. Refugees who accept that challenge have to be strong, not weak. For all of its mandated acculturation and Danish language requirement, the program can succeed only if refugees set their minds to succeeding in those endeavors.

This understanding informed the ECM program in Salt Lake City. The regular engagement and quarterly interviews at which the participating refugees assessed their own wellbeing and efforts, in addition to the quality of care received by the program, communicated to the refugees their value as not just participants, but in many ways masters of their own destinies, regardless of the circumstances that brought them to the United States. In Utica, New York, the entrepreneurial nature of refugees, evidenced through the establishment of many local business and revitalization of older neighborhoods, provides newly-arrived refugees tangible evidence of truly successful refugee integration.³⁵² The analysis of refugee engagement in these three programs makes one thing quite clear: though

³⁵⁰ European Resettlement Network, "Denmark."

³⁵¹ European Commission, "Governance of Migrant Integration in Denmark."

³⁵² Sara Tracey, "More Refugee-Owned Businesses Part of County's Growth Strategy," *Observer-Dispatch*, October 28, 2013, <https://www.uticaod.com/article/20131028/NEWS/310289850>.

there are three entities that must work together for integration to result, it is ultimately the refugee that makes the difference.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend two component practices identified in the review of domestic and international refugee resettlement programs for inclusion in current and future resettlement practices in the United States.

1. Implement a Three-Year Contractual Relocation Bar for Free Case Refugees

Third-party selection of resettlement location is already in use in the United States for free case refugees. Implementing a contractual component in which free case refugees agree to remain in their designated resettlement location for a defined length of time would benefit both the free case refugee and the nation, as such an agreement would eliminate the problems associated with refugee secondary migration. Secondary migration is often detrimental to the refugee. Refugees stand to lose the assistance earmarked for them in their original resettlement location, and they risk falling through the cracks once away from their original support network. Secondary migration is also problematic for the communities and agencies impacted. Unanticipated refugee migration to a second location puts an additional, sometimes untenable, strain on community services and resources in the new community.

Further, secondary migration disrupts and delays the goal of integration. Leaving an original resettlement location, with or without continued resettlement support and cash assistance, represents the abandonment of whatever progress the refugee has already made towards integration. Adopting this element of the Danish resettlement model would promote greater stability in the refugee community, which would, in turn, facilitate comprehensive integration. By adding such an element to free case refugee resettlement—beginning with full disclosure to the free case refugee of a requirement to remain in the location selected for them for a period of three years as a specific condition of acceptance for resettlement—the United States takes an important step in addressing an issue in refugee resettlement that frustrates the nation’s refugee integration goals. Moreover,

implementing this procedure would significantly reduce the risk refugees face when secondary destinations fail to live up to the promises that lured the refugee to them in the first place.³⁵³

I am mindful of the reality that enforcement of this condition would be, to say the least, extremely difficult. When free case refugees are presented with the choice of accepting a mandatory term of stay in a place or not being offered resettlement at all, their choice is clear – free case refugees will overwhelmingly agree to those conditions. Whether or not they truly understand this requirement (or understand but have no intention of honoring the agreement), how will we respond to failures to adhere to the agreement? Do we refuse further assistance and services to those refugees? Do we repatriate them to their native country or location of last refuge prior to resettlement? Both responses seem severe and in conflict with our American values. Perhaps the answer is not the stick, but the carrot. Create sufficient incentives for free case refugees to remain in their original resettlement location, such that secondary migration becomes an unattractive last option. If that is one way we can encourage refugees to stay, we should look more closely at the Danish resettlement model and the services that country provides its citizens and refugees.³⁵⁴

Certainly, placing movement restrictions on refugees, even if the restriction was understood and agreed to prior to resettlement, would be viewed by many as in direct conflict with the freedom of movement and association enjoyed by all persons in the United States. That may be to some degree true. It is, however, also true that many resettlement programs already require refugees to sign resettlement agreements that, if not mandate, strongly encourage refugees to remain in that location for at least ninety days and ensures the agency and refugee receive the benefit of Reception and Placement funds provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement.³⁵⁵ Adoption of this recommendation would increase the terms of existing agreements to a timeframe that would better ensure comprehensive integration. Adding this additional requirement in free case refugee resettlement would add

³⁵³ Bloem and Loveridge, “Secondary Migration.”

³⁵⁴ Copenhagen Capacity. “A Welfare Society.”

³⁵⁵ Bloem and Loveridge, “Costs of Secondary Migration.”

virtually no additional cost, just the addition of a page to the documents refugees already are required to sign prior to resettlement. It should also be noted that on September 26, 2019, President Trump signed an Executive Order that requires the written consent of state and local governments before any refugee will be resettled in that designated locale.³⁵⁶ These efforts incrementally work to reduce a refugee’s ability to move within the United States and continue to receive resettlement assistance. Implementing a contractually-agreed upon duration of stay requirement is no different, just more obvious.

2. Extend Resettlement Assistance and Services to Twenty-Four Months

As noted in previous chapters, most current refugee resettlement assistance programs provide services and assistance for a period of no longer than nine months. This is wholly inadequate to ensure refugees achieve more than just minimal structural integration. In order to facilitate the goal of comprehensive integration—a goal that promotes the safety, security, and prosperity of the nation—local resettlement organization programs should increase the duration resettlement services to refugees from current standards. The Extended Case Management program developed in 2009 by the IRC in Salt Lake City, Utah, achieved consistently high levels of success—measured by decreased secondary migration rates and refugee self-assessments of “good” or “very good” wellbeing and satisfaction with the resettlement process.³⁵⁷ The benefits of ECM were most pronounced in the second year of the program. Steady improvement in virtually all measures was seen in the first year, but the second year saw the greatest increases in refugee overall wellbeing and adjustment to the community.³⁵⁸

In addition to extending resettlement programs for twenty-four months, the monthly cash assistance currently provided to refugees for their first eight months of resettlement and healthcare program eligibility should also be extended to twenty-four months. The costs associated with the monthly cash assistance would triple, of course, but

³⁵⁶ “Executive Order on Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement,” White House, September 26, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-enhancing-state-local-involvement-refugee-resettlement/>.

³⁵⁷ Shaw and Poulin, “Findings.”

³⁵⁸ Shaw and Poulin.

it should be noted that at the time of implementation of the Act, cash assistance was available for up to thirty-six months.³⁵⁹ That timeframe was reduced shortly after implementation of the Act to eighteen months and further reduced in 1991 to eight months.³⁶⁰ Even in 1980, with the focus of the Act firmly establishing the requirement that resettled refugees achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible, it seems it was understood that limited cash assistance would be necessary and appropriate for a period longer than a mere eight months.

Now is an opportune time to mandate the extension of resettlement programs and assistance to twenty-four months. Decreasing refugee admission caps and annual admissions has resulted in many programs no longer having sufficient work to perform, resulting in the shuttering of many local resettlement organizations and the downsizing of many others.³⁶¹ Should the administration change or the political winds shift and refugee admissions ramp up again, it would be difficult for agencies that lost experienced staff or closed entirely to quickly establish satisfactory operations.³⁶²

By extending the duration of current programs, organizations can retain skilled staff. This addresses more than an economic incentive; it also provides a homeland security incentive. Refugees who are satisfied with their resettlement experience are less likely to engage in secondary migration. Refugees who leave their original resettlement location risk the loss of resettlement services and social networks that facilitate integration. Refugees who do not seek integration in their local communities become isolated from the American experience. Considering the effort and expense incurred in bringing these refugees to the United States, it is important that we pursue effective integration strategies for them.

³⁵⁹ Bruno, *U.S. Refugee Resettlement Assistance*.

³⁶⁰ Bruno.

³⁶¹ Tania Karas, "US Refugee Agencies Wither as Trump Administration Cuts Numbers to Historic Lows," Public Radio International, September 27, 2019, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-09-27/us-refugee-agencies-wither-trump-administration-cuts-numbers-historic-lows>.

³⁶² Karas.

C. CONCLUSION

This study reviewed a small sampling of refugee resettlement programs in the United States and abroad to determine ways in which refugee resettlement in the United States could improve the integration of free case refugees into the fabric of American society. Integration is more than just economic self-sufficiency or the ability to navigate in a new space. Integration—true, comprehensive integration—is achieved when a refugee develops ties of loyalty and a sense of responsibility and ownership towards their community, and the community, in turn, feels that the refugee is an integral part of the community. To that end, this study identified two actions that should be considered for implementation in the United States’ refugee resettlement program: extend the provision of resettlement services and assistance to all refugees for twenty-four months, and, for free case refugees, implement a contractual agreement that requires the refugee to remain in the location designated for resettlement for a period of three years.

This study was necessarily limited by two factors: the lack of an accepted definition of integration and the lack of uniform data collection for all refugee resettlement organizations. How can one claim success in integration when there isn’t even an industry-accepted definition of integration? Without a uniform definition of integration, determinations of the success or failure of integration are, in the end, inherently subjective. That subjectivity permeates the data collected by resettlement organizations. One organization may assess its efforts as successful if over half of the refugees served obtained employment. Another organization might look beyond similar statistics and assess themselves unsuccessful if the employed refugees were in positions not at levels commensurate with their education. Refugee employment percentages are the most common measure, simply because it is something that can be measured. Measuring a refugee’s levels of happiness and satisfaction, however, are far more difficult. Unfortunately, the difficulties inherent in crafting accurate and uniform measures of a refugee’s emotional state ensures that such efforts are abandoned in favor of simpler metrics, such as the achievement of economic self-sufficiency.

Unfortunately, limiting an analysis of refugee integration to simple measures of employment and economic self-sufficiency ignores the most critical component of

integration: the development of a sense of responsibility towards the future of the community and the state. Developing that sense of responsibility must be the goal and measure of success of any resettlement program. Consequently, to ensure the U.S. refugee resettlement program incorporates that goal into future efforts at the local, state, and federal level, a uniform definition of integration must be formulated and agreed upon. Once that task is accomplished, standardized measurements of a refugee's progress towards that accepted definition of integration must be developed, so that every resettlement organization can work with greater clarity of purpose and goal, and results of those efforts can be seen with greater transparency and universality.

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