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Inside Refugee Resettlement:

Refugees as Empowered and Capable Actors in their own Resettlement Process

Jackson Haney

Honors Thesis Seminar

BAIS 495

Fall 2022

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Abstract

This thesis engages with refugee resettlement by exploring individual refugee stories of successes and struggles. It primarily includes empirical evidence from refugees seeking safety in the U.S. and in France (who emigrated from Ukraine, Afghanistan, North Korea, El Salvador, and Cambodia, respectively). By interviewing refugees and analyzing refugee input, nuanced findings relating to the resettlement experience are presented. These findings point to the complicated nature of fulfilling seemingly basic needs, such as housing, food, and funding. Furthermore, the research found two notable examples of refugee leadership in organizations and enterprises. A pattern in this thesis of refugee empowerment calls for the restructuring of literature about refugees. It tries to prove the importance and value of direct refugee input on any academic literature that writes authoritatively about refugees. With an aim to serve those with a call to stand in solidarity with refugees, the findings also highlight examples of roles that non-expert, entry-level actors have played to foster meaningful advancements in the resettlement process. Perhaps most importantly, this thesis dives into topics relating to mental health in resettling refugee populations. The findings show that trauma plays a significant role in hindering resettlement, and that the current healthcare system meant to aid refugees actually has institutional failures that can go so far as perpetuating poverty for resettling refugees. Group healing and community resource groups are found to be alternate resources to combat trauma and aid the internal—and often overlooked—process of restarting life as a refugee in a host-state.

Keywords

Refugee, Refugee Resettlement, Refugee Regime, Mental Health, Trauma, Leadership, Global Displacement

List of Figures

Figure 1 (pg. 9): Fransen, Sonja, and Hein De Haas. "Trends and Patterns of Global Refugee Migration." *Population and Development Review* 48.1 (2022): 97-128.

Figure 2 (pg. 14): Clemens, Michael A. "The Economic and Fiscal Effects on the United States from Reduced Numbers of Refugees and Asylum Seekers." (2022).

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I. Introduction

Literature that serves refugees wields the enormous potential of uplifting the most sizable population of displaced people in the entire history of humankind. This thesis aims to stand in solidarity with refugees who have received official resettlement status in a host-state. Refugees in the U.S. are the primary focus, but certain findings are also the result of analyzing cases of resettlement in France.

Referring to recent data by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) helps to understand the gravity and the complexity of the state of global displacement, as of late 2022. Over 100 million people are forcibly displaced.¹ Of those, about 53 million are internally displaced (people fleeing danger, but not crossing international borders). 4.9 million are asylum seekers (people fleeing danger by applying for help at an international border). 5.3 million are “other people in need of international protection.” Most relevant for this thesis, 32.5 million are refugees (people fleeing danger by crossing borders and attempting to resettle abroad). In an attempt to ally with refugees in their resettlement process and to avoid trying to solve the problem of global displacement with the minds that created it, this thesis pushes beyond any trivial attempts to only draw from traditional sources of knowledge, and instead it utilizes a few of the valuable minds of the tens of millions of refugees in the world today.

With a goal of empowering refugees in the resettlement process, this research seeks to provide examples of resources that assist refugees, and others that hinder them—along with some alternate solutions. Before diving into that, the following information helps to create a framework for engaging with this topic: only 1% of refugees receive legal protection each year from a host-state and permission to resettle. *The limited pool of refugees who receive*

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “Refugee Data Finder.” *UNHCR*, The UN Refugee Agency, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

resettlement status in the U.S. and France are the focus of this thesis. For reference, the United States only resettled about 11,400 refugees last year (down from 73,000 in 2010 and 85,000 in 2016).² With the influx of refugees due to the war in Ukraine, the U.S. has granted resettlement status to over 25,000 refugees in 2022. France is also granting more refugees legal protection status, but globally the large majority of refugees remain without resettlement status each year.³ While the 1% who are resettled may be viewed as the “lucky” few, in reality they still must endure a lengthy and complex resettlement process—a process this research wants to shed light on and improve.

As it turns out, even the fulfillment of seemingly basic needs (such as housing, food and funding) for refugee resettlement is in fact not a basic task; this paper touches on a number of nuanced and overlooked details in the initial steps of the resettlement process. Luckily, the majority of people can participate in beneficial missions to play the part of an ally to resettling refugees. While convoluted government practices lead the current normative approach to refugee resettlement, this thesis addresses resettlement in a unique way by expanding the list of actors. It provides empirical ways that non-expert, everyday people contribute to refugee resettlement in the U.S. and France. For example, interns and students are rich with an untapped potential to work in solidarity with refugees, as will be discussed. A call to action to improve the resettlement process is answerable by a broader category of people than the current discourse may suggest. A teamwork-based approach to refugee resettlement can uplift refugees to take the lead in their resettlement. When this commendable approach grows into an active practice of

² RPC. "Number of Refugee Admissions in The U.S. from The Fiscal Year of 1990 to The Fiscal Year of 2022." *Statista*, Statista Inc., 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/200061/number-of-refugees-arriving-in-the-us/>

³ World Bank. "France Refugee Statistics 1960-2022." *MacroTrends*, 2022, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/FRA/france/refugee-statistics>.

engagement, refugees have more access to the tools needed to resettle (such as clothing, education and therapy). Teamwork makes the dream work.

This thesis also highlights refugee agency, leadership, and entrepreneurship as a primary focal point. Resettling refugees have made a pattern of succeeding in advanced positions in realms such as business, non-profit, and religious organizations. Numerous commendable cases of such agency exist (such as Aminullah Faqiry, an afghan refugee who opened a Halal grocery store within a year of resettling in Rhode Island).⁴ This thesis relays two prime examples of success coming directly from refugees who participated in interviews for this study. One leads an Islamic cultural center that uplifts an entire community of Afghan children by educating them and creating a safe, enjoyable environment—with ice cream. The other invites women refugees struggling with resettling to wellness retreats which foster *cura personalis*, care for the whole person. Refugees complete notable accomplishments during and after the resettlement process, accomplishments that will be further analyzed in this paper.

Unfortunately, trauma plays a disproportionately sized role in resettling refugees' lives. The experience undergone by refugees who finally reach the stage of resettlement is largely characterized by struggle, in all of its various embodiments. Trauma seeps into a refugee's life before they flee their home (pre-flight), when they seek a safe state to resettle in (flight), and once they begin resettling (post-flight). For some refugees, each flight stage can last decades, and for a vast majority of refugees, each flight stage produces trauma. While the pre-flight and flight stages are over for resettling refugees, the emotional damage from these times can still weave itself throughout a refugee's emotional state. Resettling refugees labor to start a new life while

⁴ Adeleye, Temi Tope. "Afghan Refugee Who Resettled in Rhode Island Opens Own Store." *Turonto10.Com*, WJAR, 2022, <https://turonto10.com/news/local/afghan-super-store-grand-opening-refugee-who-resettled-in-rhode-island-aminullah-faqiry-family-providence-november-19-2022>.

mental illness takes its toll. This thesis will further explore the various sources of trauma for refugees.

Achieving a healthy and prosperous resettlement can decay into a hardly feasible task when refugees suffer from unaddressed trauma—trauma that can even grow into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Therapy will be presented and analyzed in a lens that presents it as a solution capable of serving some refugees, while also falling short for others. Therapy, for the resettling refugees who must leave (hourly) work to attend appointments, can actually pull them away from sources of income, perpetuate poverty and in doing so hinder resettlement. In contrast to traditional therapy appointments, this thesis will highlight some alternate solutions to support resettling refugees' mental health, and why they may work in more effective ways.

Much of this thesis's value lies in the fact that it takes a refugee-centered approach. The entire findings section is structured around quotes and lived experiences from refugees themselves—whether it be the refugees who participated in interviews for this thesis, who wrote books, created art, composed poems, collected photographs or who shared their stories through other mediums. As a thesis created through the realm of a university, these pages contribute to a vast library of preexisting academic knowledge, but this project sheds a new light on the issue of resettlement because it presents the lived experiences of refugees as a source of knowledge in and of itself. The prioritization of this perspective came in part as a result of Peter Nyers's work. This political scientist wrote that “the capacity to speak authoritatively about populations, problems and solutions always involves a power relation.”⁵ This thesis aims to disrupt that power relation and elevate the words of refugees. It attempts to deconstruct traditional, colonial power relations between Western academics and refugees by positioning the refugee as intellectually

⁵ Nyers, Peter. *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond States of Emergency*. Routledge, 2006.
<https://www.routledge.com/Rethinking-Refugees-Beyond-State-of-Emergency/Nyers/p/book/9780415952323>

rich. Refugees survive. They know how to survive terrible atrocities, and as feminist and civil rights activist, Audre Lorde, put it, “survival is not an academic skill.”⁶ Therefore, here is a thesis largely built from refugees’ inputs. It shows the skills refugees wield and methods that empower them to not only survive, but to thrive in the resettlement process.

I took on this project out of a belief in my responsibility to harness the gift of education for the betterment of others. In the spring of 2022, my internal belief grew to a more external realization during my experience studying in Paris, France. This semester in the City of Light incidentally coincided with the darkness cast over Europe and the world when the Russian military invaded Ukraine, and created a mass movement of Ukrainian refugees. Before I knew it, the opportunity arrived to weld together past studies (of immigrants and refugees, human rights issues, multilateral state systems, international law, ethics, and a host of other topics related to global politics and societies) with a real world experience. I formed genuinely heartfelt relationships with some Ukrainian refugees when I interned for a humanitarian NGO that helped refugees resettle. I embarked on this project in an attempt to capitalize on my academic, professional and personal experiences with refugees. Their capable knowledge deserves to be thrown into the ivory tower of academia—lest they be left out and singularly shown in photographs that bond them to an identity of *speechless emissaries within a sea of humanity*.⁷

I. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to define and explain the three major players in this thesis: refugees, organizations, and donors. This section draws on literature from human

⁶ Lorde, Audre. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Ed. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press. 1984. 110- 114.

https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Lorde_The_Masters_Tools.pdf

⁷ Malkki, Liisa H. "Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization." *Cultural anthropology* 11.3 (1996): 377-404. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656300>

rights experts, ethicists, reporters, government documents, economists, behavioral scientists, statisticians and more. Together they create a portrait of the individual histories, functions, and motivations regarding the main actors in this thesis. This literature review is structured in a way that ties together each actor based on their relationships with each other. In short, donors benefit organizations with the intention of providing varying types of aid to refugees. First, the idea of a refugee must be understood, then definitions of varying types of organizations established, and finally the methods and motivations of donors explored.

Refugees

Coming to a single definition of a refugee comes with significant challenges due to the nature of circumstances surrounding refugees: they cross international borders fleeing fear and seeking refuge in a new state. The very essence of a refugee—and thus its definition—is ever changing. In each individual case, the borders they cross vary, and so too does the fear they flee from. Escaping from the Ukrainian-Russian war and seeking emergency refugee status in the EU embodies a notably different scenario compared to embarking on the years-long asylum process as an El Salvadorian escaping drug trafficking and gang violence by coming to the United States. Moreover, state policies and quotas about accepting refugees change drastically based on where and when a refugee seeks safety. The United States, for instance, completely shifted immigration policies in 2021. President Biden vowed to “not build another foot” of the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, as opposed to former-President Trump’s extreme effort to spend \$15 billion fortifying the border.⁸ An exhaustive list of variables means agreeing on a singular definition of a refugee is nearly impossible.

⁸ Miroff, Nick. “Where Trump's Border Wall Left Deep Scars and Open Gaps, Biden Plans Repair Job.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/02/19/trump-biden-border-wall/>; Barbara Sprunt, “Biden Would End Border Wall Construction, But Wouldn’t Tear Down Trump’s Additions,” NPR, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/05/899266045/biden-would-end-border-wall-construction-but-wont-tear-down-trump-s-additions>

Nonetheless, existing definitions of refugees still help to understand who refugees are and the relationships they have with those actors making the definitions. One of the most widely used definitions comes from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency. In its forming charter, the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*⁹, the UNHCR defined a refugee as someone who:

“owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

This definition puts forward five categories that are used to determine refugee status: race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. The EU provides a nearly identical definition, along with an additional clause with a stated purpose to “ensure that a minimum level of benefits is available for those persons (refugees) in all Member States.”¹⁰ The U.S. 's definition of a refugee comes from the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). It also uses the categories of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group and political opinion. Under U.S. law, someone escaping fear from one of these categories is considered a refugee.¹¹

The definitions in these operating conventions and directives give insight into the relationship multilateral organizations have with refugees. Their definitions of a refugee notably leave out people fleeing war, violence, genocide, environmental threats, economic hardship, and a host of other reasons someone may flee their country. In fact, each year only around 1% of

⁹ UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, United Nations, Treaty Series, 1951, vol. 189, p. 137, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>

¹⁰ The European Parliament and the Council of the European Parliament, “Directive 2011/95.” *Official Journal of the European Union*, 2011

¹¹ “Refugee Admissions - United States Department of State.” *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/>.

people fleeing danger and crossing international borders (the definition of a refugee) are granted resettlement status and legal refugee protection from a host country¹². The multilateral organizations that create refugee definitions, and the influential states that accept refugees, established a limited definition of a refugee. These powerful actors rarely facilitate resettlements for those people with dire and specific circumstances that fit their definition. Do not mistake the absence of more categories in official definitions as anything but intentional. Gaining legal and recognized refugee status comes with certain benefits—namely the promise of not being deported from a host state, also known as *non-refoulement*. Refugees also receive basic shelter, occasional food help, extremely limited medical care, and other general aid packages. While multilateral organizations and the individual states that comprise them give aid to refugees, they do so in extremely limited ways. Take the U.S. for example. The U.S. acts on refugee quotas each year of varying size and does in fact give accepted refugees assistance, but it is also true that “the hardest and most complicated way to enter the U.S. is by coming as a refugee.”¹³ The very nature of refugee status is intentionally exclusionary.

Terms such as “asylum seekers” and “displaced persons” can also apply to those that might otherwise be considered refugees.¹⁴ Variables such as *where* someone seeks safety, *how* they make their request, *why* they left their home, and many more factors create a complicated (and confusing) web of terminology.

As a result of these definitions and frameworks in the legal realm of the UN, the EU and the broad landscape of the refugee regime, modern scholars are more broad sweeping in their

¹² Parekh, Serena. “A Tale of Two Refugee Crises” *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis*, Oxford University Press, 2020,

https://www.google.com/books/edition/No_Refuge/Fpv5DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

¹³ Malkki, Liisa H. "Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization." *Cultural anthropology* 11.3 (1996): 377-404. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656300>

¹⁴ Bar-Gabai, Noa. “Refugee and UNHCR Definitions.” *Unit 1: Who is a Refugee?* Refugees: Justice and Ethics, 2022 San Francisco, USF.

definitions of refugees. In the chapter *Re-defining refugees: nations, borders and globalization*, Gemie Sharif, suggests a definition of a refugee can be simply “someone who has left their home.”¹⁵ Practically speaking, the term refugee can be used to describe someone fleeing danger (from war, violence, conflict, or otherwise) and looking for safety by crossing an international border.

Figure 1

Trends and Patterns of Global Refugee Migration

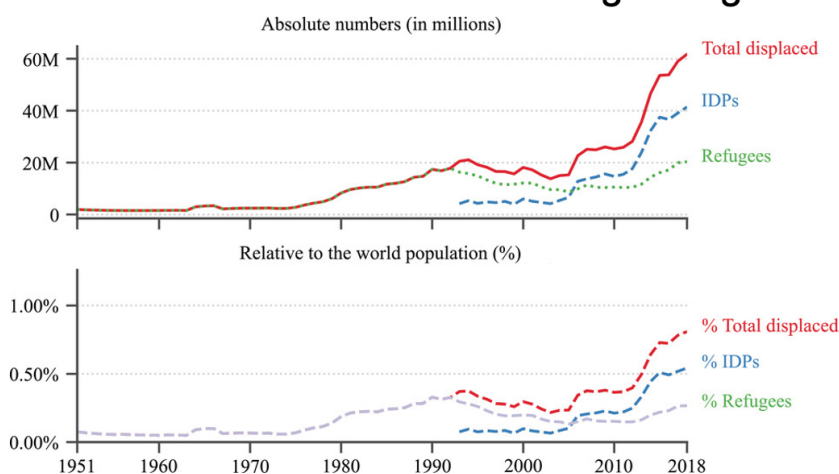


Figure 1 shows a significant increase in global migration, specifically refugee migration, in the past five decades—more than ever before, including during the aftermath of WWII, and the Vietnam war.¹⁶ Tens of millions of African and Middle Eastern refugees seeking a new life in the European Union account for the most significant refugee movement in recent years.¹⁷¹⁸ Today

¹⁵ Sharif, Gemie. "Re-defining refugees: nations, borders and globalization." *Eurolimes* 9, 2010, p. 28-37. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=216434>

¹⁶ Cutts, Mark, ed. *The state of the world's refugees, 2000: Fifty years of humanitarian action*. Geneva: UNHCR, Oxford University Press, 2000, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_State_of_the_World_s_Refugees_2000/54Oe1WTfBfAC?hl=en&gbpv=0 ; Bycel, Lee T. "Kien Ha Quach, Vietnam: The Life Before and the Life After." *Refugees in America: Stories of Courage, Resilience, and Hope in Their Own Words*, Rutgers University, S.I., 2021, pp. 141–152.

¹⁷ Daniel Byman & Sloane Speakman (2016) The Syrian Refugee Crisis: Bad and Worse Options, *The Washington Quarterly*, 39:2, 45-60, DOI: 10.1080/0163660X.2016.1204352 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0163660X.2016.1204352>

¹⁸ Carrera, Sergio and Blockmans, Steven and Gros, Daniel and Guild, Elspeth, *The EU's Response to the Refugee Crisis: Taking Stock and Setting Policy Priorities*, 2015. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2715460>

Europe and the world is coping, with varying levels of success, with the influx of Ukrainian refugees due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.¹⁹ In the immediate future, expect conflicts, economic disparities, environmental crises and more to fuel a continued and increased movement of refugees.

This literature review provides an introduction to refugees that reinforce the priority of this thesis: to understand the human experience of being a refugee and to uncover knowledge from those with this lived experience. As established, people leave home in waves of millions, including women and children. This context ought to be portrayed alongside an acknowledgment of the intensive experiences undergone by these millions. In her world famous poem *Home*, Warsan Shire, a Kenyan born refugee who is now a British citizen and award winning poet, proclaims that

*“No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark... unless home is the barrel of a gun... unless home chased you to the shore.”*²⁰

Once they leave, some refugees don't return for multiple decades.²¹ In the renowned documentary, *Human Flow*, human rights researcher, Ahmad Shuja, discusses the case of Pakistani refugees looking to return home. He explains that after being displaced for 30-40 years, most refugees still can't return home because their villages may still be unstable, and the land the refugees once owned has been taken. People leave home under only the most dire of circumstances. This literature review provides an introduction to refugees that reinforce the

¹⁹ Frontex. *EU External Borders in June: Western Balkan Route Most Active*, 2022, <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/eu-external-borders-in-june-western-balkan-route-most-active-oPV0mM.>; Tisdall, Simon. “A New Wave of Migration Is Coming – Europe Is Not Ready.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jul/24/europe-migration-new-wave>.

²⁰ Shire, Warsan. “Home.” 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gmsEsu1DaQ>

²¹ Weiwei, Ai, director. *Human Flow*. Amazon, Princeton University Press, 2017, https://www.amazon.com/Human-Flow-Chin-Chin-Yap/dp/B08J8K5SYR/ref=sr_1_1?crd=1Y1X4QIVCSYRF&keywords=human%2Bflow&qid=1663006972&s=instant-video&srefix=human%2Bflow%2Cinstant-video%2C414&sr=1-1.

priority of this thesis: to understand the human experience of being a refugee and to uncover knowledge from those with this lived experience. Reading about refugees requires the foundational information presented in this section, and a respectful perspective. As the poet Joy Harjo preaches: “The door to the mind should only be opened by the heart.”²² Refugee studies, while academic, can also produce visceral reactions felt by the mind and the heart.

States and Organizations

Individual States

States, viewed from the lens of “organizations,” are multifaceted and composed of several branches emboldening them to be the embodiment of a massive influence in the refugee regime. Their nature is binary—they have the most significant capacity to help and to harm. They support refugees, but they also hinder them. They use their resources to house refugees, but they also create dangerous foreign policy that creates a causal connection to new movements of refugees, such as the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese people forced to become refugees as a result of America’s war in Vietnam in the 1960s.²³ They make space for refugees to participate in society, but they also use false and aggressive rhetoric surrounding refugees to advance their own agendas. States, with all their power and influence, must be an organization well-defined and well-understood when reading about the refugee regime.

Starting with the negative effects of states on refugees, state actors use negative rhetoric that targets refugees. In her book, *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis*, philosopher and ethicist, Serena Parekh, writes about the fear-based framework used by anti-refugee politicians. In attempts to advance their own political agenda, some state-based actors make

²² Harjo, Joy. “This Morning I prayed for my Enemies.” 2021.

<http://integrativehealingnow.com/blog/i-pray-for-my-enemies/>

²³ Carens, Joseph. *The Ethics of Immigration*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Ethics_of_Immigration/HcXwAAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

citizens believe that refugees are a threat to society, by portraying them as terrorist, sex offenders, and burdens on the economy. While detailed evidence and literature thoroughly disputes each of these claims, politicians make these claims nonetheless to argue that they are protecting the country by strengthening the border, and by denying refuge to those seeking it.²⁴ In the UK's push to leave the EU, known colloquially as "Brexit," Former Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, used anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiments to gain votes. A large majority of his supporters and those who voted to leave the EU overwhelmingly came from right wing, anti-immigrant towns.²⁵ While states are composed of numerous actors other than anti-refugee politicians and voters, anti-refugee rhetoric and policies shows that states can use refugees for their own political agendas, and by doing so portray them in extremely negative and hurtful ways.

Furthermore, states can use borders as a weapon against refugees, as opposed to a semi-porous resource for states to aid citizens of the world. The introduction of military grade technology, weapons and border patrol methods has made borders more dangerous than ever before.²⁶ For example, the dangers put forth by the notorious Berlin Wall are now trumped by the modern day US-Mexico border's violence: more people die each year at the US-Mexico border

²⁴ Friedman, Uri. "Where America's Terrorists Actually Come From." *The Atlantic*, 2017, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/trump-immigration-ban-terrorism/514361/>; Palma, Bethania. "Crime in Sweden, Part I: Is Sweden the 'Rape Capital' of Europe?" Snopes, 2017, <http://www.snopes.com/fact-ch/crime-sweden-rape-capital-europe/>; Evans, William N., and Daneil Fitzgerald. "The Economic and Social Outcomes of Refugees in the United States: Evidence from the ACS." NBER Working Paper No. 23498, 2017, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23498.pdf>; Economist. "Confusion over Immigration and Crime Is Roiling European Politics." *The Economist*, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/06/30/confusion-over-immigration-and-crime-is-roiling-european-politics>; Parekh, Serena. "Turbulence and Fear." *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis*, Oxford University Press, 2020, https://www.google.com/books/edition/No_Refuge/Fpv5DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

²⁵ Hazeldine, Tom. "Revolt of the Rustbelt." *New Left Review* 105, 2017, : 51-79. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii105/articles/tom-hazeldine-revolt-of-the-rustbelt>

²⁶ Jones, Reece. *Violent Borders : Refugees and the Right to Move*. Verso 2016. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Violent_Borders/-BFyCwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

than in the entire existence of the Berlin Wall.²⁷ On a broader scale, data shows that more states around the world are using borders as a form of anti-refugee policy. As of 2016, 70 states built border walls; that represents an over 600% increase in global borders within the last three decades.²⁸

Conversely, states provide direct and indirect support to refugees that foster mutually beneficial relationships. On a national level, states can directly admit refugees and also create pro-immigration policies. For example, in 1986, President Ronald Reagan, a highly conservative president, signed the Immigration and Control Act of 1986, allowing “close to three million people in the U.S. to legalize their (citizenship) status.”²⁹ Within the first two years of the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis, Jordan opened its borders to 1.4 million refugees—considering the population of Jordan, this is equivalent to the U.S. letting in 60 million refugees.³⁰ Germany and Sweden also took dramatic steps to let in masses of Syrian and African refugees in the late 2010s.³¹ This state-led support of refugees yields mutually beneficial fruits: the International Monetary Fund “foresees high economic growth in the long term if refugees continue to come in high numbers.”³² The United States sees similar results. Reports by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services prove that refugees contributed around \$63 billion to the economy

²⁷ López, Eduardo. “Harvest of Empire the Untold Story of Latinos in America.” *YouTube*, 29 June 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gW84cAN2Pw&t=1502s>.

²⁸ Weiwei, Ai, director. *Human Flow*. Amazon, Princeton University Press, 2017, https://www.amazon.com/Human-Flow-Chin-Chin-Yap/dp/B08J8K5SYR/ref=sr_1_1?crd=1Y1X4QIVCSYRF&keywords=human%2Bflow&qid=1663006972&s=instant-video&sprefix=human%2Bflow%2Cinstant-video%2C414&sr=1-1.

²⁹ López, Eduardo. “Harvest of Empire the Untold Story of Latinos in America.” *YouTube*, 29 June 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gW84cAN2Pw&t=1502s>.

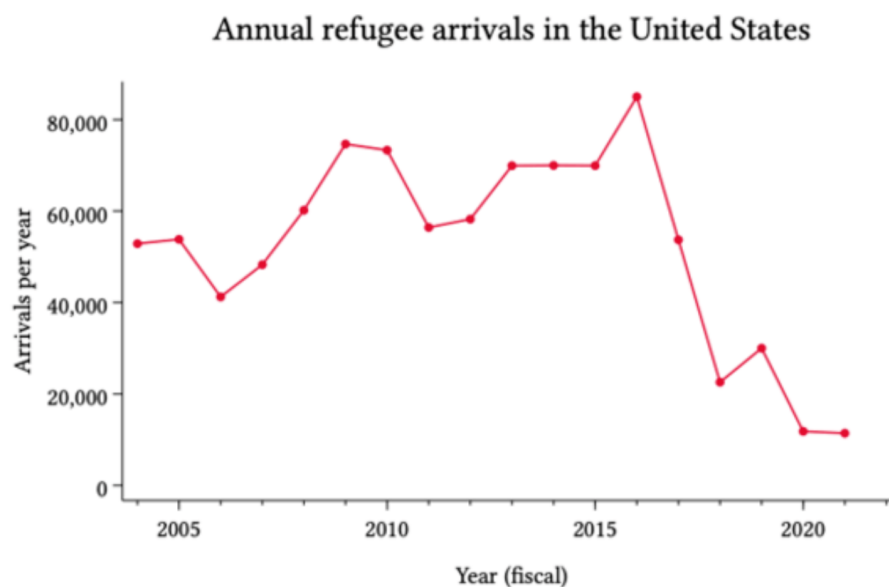
³⁰ Weiwei, Ai, director. *Human Flow*. Amazon, Princeton University Press, 2017, https://www.amazon.com/Human-Flow-Chin-Chin-Yap/dp/B08J8K5SYR/ref=sr_1_1?crd=1Y1X4QIVCSYRF&keywords=human%2Bflow&qid=1663006972&s=instant-video&sprefix=human%2Bflow%2Cinstant-video%2C414&sr=1-1.

³¹ Ostrand, Nicole. “The Syrian refugee crisis: A comparison of responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States.” *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 3.3, 2015, p. 255-279. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/233150241500300301>

³² Parekh, Serena. “Turbulence and Fear.” *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis*, Oxford University Press, 2020, https://www.google.com/books/edition/No_Refuge/Fpv5DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

from 2005-2014.³³ Admittedly, the government bears the cost for resettlement programs, but the benefits far outweigh the costs. As shown in figure 2, the U.S. has admitted significantly less refugees since 2015; a move that quantitatively hurt its economy. The government mostly closed the door on refugees. Such a mistake lowered the refugee population, and took away opportunities for the economy to thrive from refugee contributions to the workforce. In a 2022 report, the Center for Global Development found that the recent “reduction in refugee resettlement actually costs the U.S. economy over \$9 billion yearly.”³⁴ Refugees contribute. In the other global cases of state’s direct support of refugees, mutually beneficial economic outcomes arise.

Figure 2



³³ Davis, Julie Hirschfeld, and Somini Sengupta. “Trump Administration Rejects Study Showing Positive Impact of Refugees.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times. 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/us/politics/refugees-revenue-cost-report-trump.html>.

³⁴ Clemens, Michael. “The Economic and Fiscal Effects on the United States from Reduced Numbers of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.” *Cudgel.org*, Center for Global Development, 3 Mar. 2022, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/economic-and-fiscal-effects-united-states-reduced-numbers-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>.

Focusing on indirect support, when politicians make pro-refugee sentiments they can influence government and society to support refugees. While the current political stage in the U.S. is defined by bipartisanship, pro-refugee rhetoric is historically found on both sides of the aisle. In 2004, Secretary of State for President George W. Bush, Colin Powell, termed the Pottery Barn rule, stating: “You break it, you buy it.”³⁵ This acknowledgment from a senior politician helps enforce the idea that states assume responsibility for refugees when their foreign policy births new movements of refugees, in this case people fleeing from wars the US wages in the Middle East. While the Pottery Barn rule is a statement and not a legally binding policy, it can nonetheless be viewed in the light of a state’s capacity to indirectly support refugees. Whether or not states and politicians follow through with the ethical high established in the Pottery Barn rule, academics largely support this idea and refer to it as “causal connection.”³⁶ They urge states to apply causal connection to refugees as a result of war, but also more broadly to environmental refugees, whose struggles are amplified by hegemonic global powers emitting the highest levels of carbon and harmful substances.³⁷ States wield the most powerful capacity to both support and hurt refugees and their search for a safer future.

Multilateral Organizations

With around 32.5 million refugees across the world, understanding the organizations that interact with them provides the opportunity to more fully understand the context in which refugees and organizations interact. To start, multilateral organizations represent an important and influential category of organizations. The most relevant multilateral organizations for this study are the UN (and through it the UNHCR), and the EU. The UN, UNHCR, and the EU are

³⁵ Safire, William. “If You Break It...” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 2004, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/17/magazine/if-you-break-it.html>.

³⁶ Carens, Joseph. *The Ethics of Immigration*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Ethics_of_Immigration/HcXwAAAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

³⁷*Id.*

made up of member states who play several roles—none more important than sponsoring and signing conventions and declarations. These sources of international law form the legally binding laws, regulations, and general norms that establish rights for individuals or groups of people, along with codes of conduct relating to organizations' interactions with them.³⁸

Multilateral organizations establish progressive, comprehensive protections of human rights in their conventions and declarations. In the UN's primary human rights declaration, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), duly elevated human rights are officially established, including the right to equality (art. 1), the right to life (art. 3), well being (including food, clothing, housing and medical care) (art. 25), education (art 26) and many more. Other notable sources of international law from the UN relating to refugees include the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The EU also provides their own bylaws, as set forth in the European Convention on Human Rights and others. Putting together all the sources of international law in the UN and the EU provide a framework that comprehensively protects many different human rights.

However, the relationship between refugees and these multilateral organizations is the embodiment of complexity and paradox. The UN and EU set high standards for human rights, but they are yet to be fully realized. Furthermore, when a member state of a multilateral organization violates human rights, the fallibility of the UN and EU is clear: they struggle to enforce their own laws. They have no police force, nor other viable enforcement policies, with the exception of economic sanctions and political pressure. In an even more dramatic paradox, the UN and EU violate some of the most critical human rights laws themselves! Many refugee camps operated or overseen by the UNHCR fail to meet standards suitable for even the most

³⁸ Bederman, David J. *International Law Frameworks*. Foundation Press, 2010.
<https://www.worldcat.org/title/international-law-frameworks/oclc/945057420?referer=di&ht=edition>

basic of human rights.³⁹ Housing is in inadequate tents, access to medical care is dangerously limited, formal schools are rare, and violence, rape and sexual assault are regular occurrences.⁴⁰ The EU sponsored and operated border patrol program, Frontex, has been found to violate the most crucial human rights (namely letting rafts of refugees sink at sea, covering up other abuses from national border patrol agents in Greece and Italy, confiscating and destroying refugees' belongings) on many occasions in the name of "defending the borders."⁴¹

All this is not to say that the UN and EU are inherently negative forces in their dealings with refugees. In fact, the UNHCR does help refugees through its comprehensive human rights law, and in other practical ways. This includes taking the lead on refugee assistance, organizing widespread volunteer efforts, supplying basic living supplies, and more methods of humanitarian aid. The UN and the EU create multilateral goals that reach for the highest protection of human rights. Their bylaws establish the sanctity of each and every refugee—a sanctity rarely existent in cold and brutish refugee—producing environments. Esteemed and ethical goals often fail in practice. They attempt to achieve unrealistic ideals and then inevitably fall short. High goals leave plentiful room for improvement. Current atrocities and shortcomings are highlighted which in turn inspires actions to improve. The bright flame of multilateral human rights goals advances society's idea of how to care for refugees, but it also illuminates the world's failure in this

³⁹ Mazumdar, Tulip. "Lesbos Migrant Camp Children 'Say They Want to Die.'" *BBC News*. BBC, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-50814521>.; "Moria Migrants: Fire Destroys Greek Camp Leaving 13,000 without Shelter." *BBC News*. BBC, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54082201>.

⁴⁰ "Greece: Unaccompanied Children At Risk." Human Rights Watch, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/18/greece-unaccompanied-children-risk>.; Odd Einar Olsen & Kristin S. Scharffscher, "Rape in refugee camps as organisational failures." *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 2004. DOI: 10.1080/1364298042000283558.; Grant, Harriet. "Trapped on Lesbos: The Child Refugees Waiting to Start a New Life." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jan/11/lesbos-moria-refugee-camp-syrian-teenager-family-uk>

⁴¹ "EU: PROBE Frontex Complicity in Border Abuses." *Human Rights Watch*, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/09/eu-probe-frontex-complicity-border-abuses#:~:text=In%20May%202019%2C%20Frontex%20told,organizations%2C%20and%20the%20confirmation%20by>.

pursuit. To understand the relationship between global multilateral organizations and refugees is to understand that there are two sides of every coin.

Non-governmental organizations

The next category of organizations are non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Examples of large scale humanitarian NGOs include the Red Cross, Mercy Corps, Doctors Without Borders, and the International Rescue Committee. The capacity of these NGOs is well established: their budgets can be in the billions, and their presence can be felt globally and in each major crisis.⁴² Some notable medium sized humanitarian NGOs include the Jesuit Refugee Service, founded by Pedro Arrupe, and the recently formed Uniting for Ukraine.

NGOs are largely structured without the political and diplomatic restraints of the UN and EU which may give them more flexibility in operating, while they still come with their own initiatives. For instance, faith based NGOs make up a major category of charities providing humanitarian aid.⁴³ One such example is the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), an organization that “transcends geographic, faith, and ideological boundaries” in their humanitarian interventions.⁴⁴ Some NGOs are also formed from political or social ideologies, such as the wide scale increase in Latin American NGOs advocating for progressive and feminist changes.⁴⁵

⁴² International Committee of the Red Cross. *ICRC ANNUAL REPORT 2021*. 2021, <https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/icrc-annual-report-2021-1.pdf>.

⁴³ Ferris, Elizabeth. "Faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations." *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 87, no. 858, 2005, p. 311-326. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-review-of-the-red-cross/article/abs/faithbased-and-secular-humanitarian-organizations/DFB1BF71A852F8284DB0826CF2948911>

⁴⁴ Elizabeth H. Prodromou & Nathanael Symeonides “Orthodox Christianity and Humanitarianism: An Introduction to Thought and Practice, Past and Present.” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 2016, 14:1, 1-8, DOI: 10.1080/15570274.2016.1145479

⁴⁵ Sonia E. Alvarez, “Advocating feminism: The Latin American Feminist NGO 'Boom.'”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 1999, 1:2, 181-209, DOI: 10.1080/146167499359880

Small, grassroots NGOs exist in the broader realm of activism, humanitarian aid, environment protection, and countless other ventures with the ability to produce unique perspectives and specifically tailored solutions. These “small” NGOs can sometimes be composed of just a few employees, or volunteers. They often go unseen in mainstream media, and discourse. However, what they lack in publicity, they make up for in their quantity and the quality of their work. In the U.S. alone, there are around 1.5 million registered NGOs.⁴⁶ While the large majority of small NGOs do not receive mainstream media attention, ample research exists to establish small NGOs as an effective force in the refugee regime.⁴⁷ Their efficacy comes as a result of being small enough to shift priorities and methods when necessary, without the red tape and bureaucracy of large NGOs and multilateral organizations.

Donors

The third main actor in this article is of course the donor. Without donors, all organizations would become limited, and many would cease to exist at all. This section aims to define donation reasons and methods. Looking at existing literature about donors will help provide an idea of how they operate with refugees, through the middle-man of the organization.

To start, the question of “why do people donate?” must be explored. One primary applicable chapter titled “What’s in it for me?” gives two main factors affecting donor motivation. The first measures benefit to oneself (B2S), and the second measures benefit to

⁴⁶ “Non-Governmental Organizations (Ngos) in the United States - United States Department of State.” *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/non-governmental-organizations-ngos-in-the-united-states/>.

⁴⁷ Awio, Godwin, Deryl Northcott, and Stewart Lawrence. "Social capital and accountability in grassroots NGOs: The case of the Ugandan community-led HIV/AIDS initiative." *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 2011, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/0951357111098063/full/html>.; Hanne Haaland & Hege Wallevik Beyond crisis management? The role of Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity in humanitarian aid: the case of Lesvos, *Third World Quarterly*, 40:10, 1869-1883, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2019.1656060.; Bakewell, Oliver. “Uncovering Local Perspectives on Humanitarian Assistance and Its Outcomes.” *Disasters*, vol. 24, no. 2, 16. 2002, pp. 103–116., <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7717.00136>.; Kalogeraki, Stefania. "Volunteering for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece." *Solidarity in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018. 169-194.

others (B2O).⁴⁸ In collective cultures and contexts (such as in China), people are more willing to donate when the B2O is clear, and in individualistic cultures (such as the U.S.) the B2S influences more strongly.⁴⁹ Furthermore, people may be brought to make a donation to charity by personal reasons, such as their religious, political, moral, familial, and cultural stances. Financial incentives and tax breaks exist for donors in some countries, including the U.S..⁵⁰ Finally, generational factors have been shown to impact donation trends. Millennials are the most populated generation in the U.S., have a high percentage of dual income homes, and are equipped with apt technology and virtual charity skills. They have “the highest intent to donate” than any other generation.⁵¹ Behind all these reasons of “why” to donate lies one common denominator: trust. The literature is clear; people donate when they trust their donations make a difference, and that the organization will use their money in an effective way.⁵²

Organizations compete for this trust with varying methods and success rates. Large organizations such as the UNHCR and the Red Cross claim that their worthiness of trust and donations stems from decades of experience and contributions to charitable causes. Yet, some donors see large organizations—with their prime time advertisements, corporate skyscraper headquarters, and complicated bureaucratic red tape—and feel that their donation will be quickly slimmed down with high administrative costs and overhead expenses. Donors demand financial reports and clarity about administrative costs more than any other form of information from

⁴⁸ Nan Ye, Lefa Teng, Ying Yu, Yingyuan Wang; “What's in it for me?": The effect of donation outcomes on donation behavior, *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 68, Issue 3, 2015, Pages 480-486, ISSN 0148-2963, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.09.015>.

⁴⁹ *ID*.

⁵⁰ Peter, Henry, and Giedre Lideikyte-Huber. *The Routledge Handbook of Taxation and Philanthropy*. Routledge, 2022, <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/52010>

⁵¹ Matthew Gorczyca & Rosanne L. Hartman, “The New Face of Philanthropy: The Role of Intrinsic Motivation in Millennials’ Attitudes and Intent to Donate to Charitable Organizations.” *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 29:4, 415-433, 2017, DOI: 10.1080/10495142.2017.1326349

⁵² C.-K Cheung, C.-M Chan, Social-cognitive factors of donating money to charity, with special attention to an international relief organization, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, Volume 23, Issue 2, 2000, Pages 241-253, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149718900000033>

NGOs.⁵³ This hesitation is natural; how far does a \$20 donation really go in the \$2.1 billion budget of the Red Cross? ⁵⁴ Yet, the UNHCR, Red Cross, and other large organizations assume a foundational role in the relationships between organizations and donors. They are well known, provide aid to people throughout the entire world, have specific offices that tailor to a plethora of ventures, and make donating quick and easy through streamlined websites and operating procedures. Relating back to the issue of trust, donors can trust that large organizations have the capability (based on funds and expertise) to make positive differences in the world. A donor's time or money can easily be given to them for the forward movement of their philanthropic agendas.

Small NGOs come with strengths and weaknesses that both warrant a donor's trust while nonetheless showing its own unique fallibilities. To start, the intentions of small NGOs are clearly portrayed through words and deeds. These NGOs do not pay high salaries, and many participants are volunteers who work based on their intrinsic motivations. A grassroots NGO of eight volunteers can be largely trusted to receive a donor's aid and use it to support its mission. People who participate in small NGOs have clear intentions: to help. Even in cases when a small NGO presents reasons to question its trustworthiness, the founders and board members in these organizations are much quicker and more willing to consult with individual donors. The intentions of small, community based NGOs shine clearly. Donors may move past questions of intentions, and rather see problems relating to capabilities of small NGOs. On first appearance, an NGO with a limited number of staff and an even more limited budget raises questions about what work it can actually achieve. While numerous studies and scholars dispute this reasoning

⁵³ Laura Metzger, Isabel Günther, Making an impact? The relevance of information on aid effectiveness for charitable giving. A laboratory experiment, *Journal of Development Economics*, Volume 136, 2019, Pages 18-33, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2018.08.015>.

⁵⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross. *ICRC ANNUAL REPORT 2021*. 2021, <https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/icrc-annual-report-2021-1.pdf>.

with arguments in favor of small scale community engaged service, grassroots movements, and citizen-led projects, the efficacy of underfunded and understaffed small NGOs nonetheless remains an important topic to consider in the scope of relationships between small NGOs and donors.⁵⁵

Assuming the “why” factor for a potential donor is met, the next necessary insight becomes the “how” factor, specifically; what types of donation methods exist? Obviously financial donations are helpful and widespread. A Philanthropy Panel Study found that about half of American households made a charitable donation in 2018.⁵⁶ While that is down 15% since 2008 and more broadly represents the 10 year, post-recession decline in the amount of donors, Americans as a whole actually donated \$484.85 billion in 2021, more than any other year.⁵⁷

However, studies also point to the fact that donations can come in many forms, not just financial. Organizations are evolving to shape their relationship with donors to include more opportunities for donating one’s time, as opposed to money. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) manage 14 million volunteers worldwide.⁵⁸ The rapidly growing voluntourism industry, for example, facilitates “vacations” in which participants become tourists for part of the time, and community volunteers for others.⁵⁹ In the modern era of

⁵⁵Hanne Haaland & Hege Wallevik, “Beyond crisis management? The role of Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity in humanitarian aid: the case of Lesbos.” *Third World Quarterly*, 40:10, 1869-1883, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2019.1656060.; Bakewell, Oliver. “Uncovering Local Perspectives on Humanitarian Assistance and Its Outcomes.” *Disasters*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2002, pp. 103–116., <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7717.00136>.; Maria Besiou, Luk N. Van Wassenhove “Humanitarian Operations: A World of Opportunity for Relevant and Impactful Research.” *Manufacturing & Service Operations Management*, 2020, 22 (1):135-145. <https://doi.org/10.1287/msom.2019.0799>

⁵⁶ Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, *The Giving Environment: Understanding Pre-Pandemic Trends in Charitable Giving*, 2021, <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/handle/1805/26290>

⁵⁷ Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, “Giving USA 2021: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2020,” [https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/giving-usa-2021:-in-a-year-of-unprecedented-events-and-challenges,-charitable-giving-reached-a-record-\\$471.44-billion-in-2020.html?id=361](https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/giving-usa-2021:-in-a-year-of-unprecedented-events-and-challenges,-charitable-giving-reached-a-record-$471.44-billion-in-2020.html?id=361)

⁵⁸ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). “Our Volunteers.” *IFRC.org*, <https://www.ifrc.org/our-volunteers>.

⁵⁹ McGloin C, Georgeou N. ‘Looks good on your CV’: The sociology of voluntourism recruitment in higher education. *Journal of Sociology*. 2016 ; 52(2):403-417. doi:10.1177/1440783314562416

social media, virtual volunteering and online charitable crowdfunding has cemented itself as a multi-billion dollar marketplace.⁶⁰ A simple social media post or other form of online interaction can now be considered a form of charity in some cases. The field of donation methods is as diverse and creative as ever before, leaving ample opportunities for humanitarian aid ventures.

However, the media's portrayal of the refugee as a voiceless "other" figure forms a dangerous image of refugees from the eyes of donors, and harms donors' relationships to refugees. For instance, people who turned on the news in August of 2021 saw that the Taliban took over the country and that Afghans were trying to escape the turmoil as refugees in mass. The famous image of a completely packed C-17 U.S. military plane with 823 Afghan citizens (183 of them children) made global circulation, yet donors received no quotes from those refugees. Refugee voices were left unheard and unvalidated.⁶¹ A CNN article, titled "How to Help Afghan refugees", gives the dire fact that 550,000 Afghans became refugees from January to August 2021—yet it didn't include an interview or at least a single word from any refugee.⁶² As what seems like a concession, only an image of a homeless refugee family sitting under a makeshift tent waiting for aid is given. The media gives no forum for their voice, therefore the relationship donors and refugees share is limited to carefully (and at worst artificially) curated images. While this media portrayal does not create a meaningful donor-refugee relationship, nor give a voice to the refugees living through the situation, media outlets do not necessarily act in poor faith. The point is not about CNN's coverage of Afghanistan in 2021; rather the focus is on the relationship donors have with refugees. Most relationships between donors and refugees are

⁶⁰ Li, Boying; Hou, Fangfang; Guan, Zhengzhi; and Chong, Alain, "How Social Experience Encourages Donation Intention to Charitable Crowdfunding Projects on Social Media: Empathy and Personal Impulsiveness." PACIS 2019 Proceedings. 195. <https://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2019/195>

⁶¹ "C-17: The US Military Plane Carrying Afghans to Safety." *BBC News*, BBC, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58297899>.

⁶² Chillag, Amy. "How to Help Afghan Refugees." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/17/world/iyw-how-to-help-afghan-refugees/index.html>.

created through media influence. Donors see refugees, but don't hear them. This creates a dangerous gap in the relationship that fabricates a limited relationship.

Even the UNHCR-produced video covering the Ukrainian-Moldovan border in February 2022 only includes images of refugees, while the voice is from a reporter from the outside looking in on the “others,” on the voiceless refugees fleeing Vladimir Putin's war.⁶³ The title of the video itself (*This Situation is Absolutely Heartbreaking*) is a quote from the reporter, not from those with the actual broken hearts. While the aforementioned examples from Afghanistan and Ukraine are just two stories, they represent a broader trend of image-only media portrayals that takes away refugees' voices.⁶⁴ This creates a narrow framework for the relationship between donors and refugees: donors primarily see sorrowful images of refugees. They do not hear empowering quotes. Individual refugee stories do not get the chance to show their impactfulness. In her widely accepted and influential article, *Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization*, renowned anthropologist, Liisa H. Malkki, elaborates on the dangers of this portrayal:

*“These humanitarian representation practices... have the effect, as they currently stand, of producing anonymous corporeality and speechlessness. That is, these practices tend actively to displace, muffle and pulverize history.”*⁶⁵

This raises the question: how can a donor create a relationship with a refugee if that relationship is singularly substantiated in the media with sorrowful images, void of refugee voices?

Donors who choose to give their time, as opposed to money, may form relationships with refugees based on in-person dialogue. One such example of this comes from some volunteers in

⁶³ UNHCR, UN Refugee Agency. *“The Situation Is Absolutely Heartbreaking,” - UNHCR in Moldova, at the Border with Ukraine.* YouTube, United Nations, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9Qu3Q0vybU>.

⁶⁴ Malkki, Liisa H. “Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization.” *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1996, pp. 377–404. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/656300>.

⁶⁵ *Id.*

the UNHCR refugee camp on Lesbos Island in Greece who took the initiative to ask refugees for their voice, for their individual and specific needs.⁶⁶ They did not prioritize certain lacking humanitarian aid methods from external leaders, but rather they gave a voice to the refugees. They used their stories, opinions, and voices to create content for a virtual crowdfunding campaign supporting specific needs for those refugees. By giving a voice to the refugees, the relationship between the refugees and the donors was horizontally structured, on an equal stage.

II. Methodology

Reflecting this thesis's teamwork-based approach, I invited a diverse pool of participants to engage in the study. Each person provided unique information, a valid voice, and helpful insights. Inevitable gaps exist in an individual's knowledge, but when assembled together, they wield the answers. This methodology pieces together a more complete approach to refugee resettlement. It involves as many voices as possible, particularly those of a diverse pool of refugees. It takes those voices, and analyzes their recurring, but traditionally overlooked themes to draw conclusions and then ultimately present their intellectual importance in the findings section.

Interviews

I used interviews as the primary method to conduct this research because stories from refugees and refugee allies consist of tribulations, triumphs and everything in between. Their interviews form the backbone of this thesis.

A total of seven interviews took place, each lasting around thirty minutes. Some of the interviewees were scholars and leading figures in refugee resettlement, but the majority of

⁶⁶ Hanne Haaland & Hege Wallevik Beyond crisis management? The role of Citizen Initiatives for Global Solidarity in humanitarian aid: the case of Lesbos, *Third World Quarterly*, 40:10, 1869-1883, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2019.1656060

interviews were with refugees themselves. I received the honor of conversing with refugees from El Salvador, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Cambodia who eventually resettled in the United States and France. There was also special input from one interviewee who drew on her experiences as a scholar in Critical Refugee Studies, and as a daughter of a North Korean refugee. Building on the theme of participant diversity, the interviewees also resettled at different times over the course of decades: from the 1980s to 2022. Acknowledging that migration, its causal factors, and the resettlement process exist within the larger framework of multifaceted societies throughout the world, the methodology intentionally aimed to include diverse data from different times, and places.

The main question asked in interviews was “what methods of aid empower refugees, organizations and donors to work together towards creating meaningful and active progress in the resettlement process?” I also asked “what tools and resources allow refugees to play an active role in their own resettlement process and how can these tools and resources become easily accessible and known to refugees?”

Limitations

Regarding limitations, formal interviews conducted for published documents do not suit many refugees well, and can actually present threats to some. A refugee’s legal status (citizenship, residency, work permits, social benefits, and more) in their host country may be put at risk as a result of engaging in interviews. Interviewing refugees who may have vulnerable legal status in interviews is not ethical, and therefore the interviews conducted with refugees occurred only under strict rules; this includes singularly involving participants who have been resettled for many years, or have strong legal protections.

A further limitation in this methodology comes from the sheer amount of refugees. With around 32.5 million refugees globally who speak hundreds of different languages, most voices will go unheard—hence why the methodology attempts to collect a diverse and high quality sample of interviews from resettling refugees in the U.S. with different backgrounds.

Even this attempt to bring in diversity and better represent the many refugees left out of this study also exists in a realm with its own limitations. The entire construction of this thesis needed to fit within the span of a four-month semester. The opportunity to conduct interviews over an extended amount of time was not afforded. That said, this limitation is nearly negated thanks to online video calls which allowed me to interview people across the world.

Process of Analysis

To arrive at conclusions, I analyzed the feedback presented in interviews to find common and recurring themes. A number of repeated and notable topics arose, but were not integrated into the findings section either because they lacked a close connection to the resettlement focus of this thesis, or because they were already sufficiently researched. Some of these topics included: the colonial nature of humanitarian aid, downfalls of degree transfer programs, refugees seeking to return to their country of origin, and the value of informed cultural competencies (both for those who work with refugees, and for refugees themselves entering a new culture).

Closer analysis of interviews and the direct refugee feedback in them formed my determination to focus on less mainstream resettlement topics in the findings section. The interviews maintained a theme of refugee agency, widespread trauma, and institutional failures relating to mental health care and education for resettling refugees. The analysis of interviews helped lead to the conclusion that the practical steps of resettling (such as the process of finding

housing) can often receive a disproportionate amount of attention when compared to the more personal and emotional aspects of the resettlement experience. While resettlement embodies the very definition of a multilayered challenge, refugee leadership and emotional health are the layers that were consistently elevated to the top of the conversation by refugees.

I arrived at the conclusion that the analysis of these topics in the findings section would lead to intellectual discoveries because (1) they came from the highest quality source (refugees with first hand knowledge of resettlement), (2) they are under represented topics in the current literature and (3) they were presented as acutely relevant topics during different conversations with different refugees who have different backgrounds.

III. Findings

'Basic' needs: full of complexities

The findings section will first focus on a set of needs categorized here as 'basic.' These basic needs form the foundation for a successful resettlement. Such needs include safe housing, suitable clothing, adequate nutrition, and initial funding and stipends during the first few months of resettlement. Fulfilling these needs allows refugees to take the first steps towards stabilizing and recovering after fleeing their country of origin, embarking on long journeys, and arriving in their new host country. Moving onto a successful resettlement process demands the fulfillment of basic needs, necessary for everyone. Once these needs are addressed on a wide scale, then an opportunity to provide strategized aid to the unique needs of individual refugees is possible. The main section of the findings will focus more on aid tailored towards specific mental health issues, but this initial section is based primarily on "cookie cutter" aid that is applied more broadly to generalized populations. Cookie cutter aid actually has its place in the refugee

resettlement process because everyone needs clothes, food, housing, and money to achieve more complex tasks, such as beginning the resettlement process in a new country as a refugee.

The U.S. government (at the federal, state and local levels) both operates and collaborates with a massive cohort of refugee resettlement bodies. The focus of this research does not attempt to breakdown nor summarize how the U.S. government, or other governments, handle refugee resettlement. Rather, this research found and presents some key ways the government can lead the way to fulfill the basic needs of refugees when they initially arrive and embark on the resettlement process. This research aims to center the refugee as an active participant in resettlement, but basic needs first have to be met so that the refugee's participation is equipped and empowered.

The Department of State and the Department of Health and Human Services gives 90 days worth of aid to refugees selected for resettlement. This aid primarily includes a one time payment for housing, food, clothing and other basic necessities. The government also contracts NGOs to sponsor and look after newly arrived refugees. Within and at the end of the first 90 days, the Department of State and Resettlement Agencies (RAs) and the Office of Refugee Resettlement works to provide supplementary grants and funding for refugees' basic needs.

The refugee Reception and Replacement program, through the Department of State, is a prime example of the power of the government's connections to a variety of non-state actors. This program operates a network of 250 affiliates throughout every state (except Wyoming), plus the District of Columbia. Each refugee receives a connection to and sponsorship by a nonprofit agency.⁶⁷ For example, when the U.S. admitted some 4,000 children refugees (nicknamed the "Lost Boys") orphaned by civil war in Sudan during the 1990s and 2000s, the YMCA in

⁶⁷ "Reception and Placement - United States Department of State." *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/reception-and-placement/>.

Houston, Texas worked with the government to pick up some refugees from the airport, take them grocery shopping, and show them how to use appliances in their apartments.⁶⁸ These organizations work with the government to help refugees find the best community to resettle in, along with other resources, such as children’s enrollment in school, English language assistance for all ages and cultural integration courses.

Education: trauma and nuances

In the chapter, “The Parent Who Stays,” economic migrant and award-winning Mexican author, Reyna Grande, writes that assimilation and acculturation into schools can actually add to post-traumatic stress when the children are quickly forced into new environments.⁶⁹ This issue particularly threatens children—making up almost half of the global refugee population. Refugee children enroll in new schools in a new country, with a new language, new educational practices, and new classmates. All these new factors can overwhelm. Grande, who enrolled in a U.S. school in 5th grade after being separated from her family during the journey to America, writes that “my education in U.S. schools was almost as traumatic as being abandoned by my parents.”⁷⁰ The government takes the lead in helping refugee children build their future by getting an education, but looking at details seen from the actual enrollment into a school can show threatening flaws in existing systems to educate refugee children.

More evidence of this comes from findings contributed to this research by the Masjid Noor Islamic and Cultural Community Center in Concord, California. This Community Center assists Afghan refugee families during their resettlement process. In an effort to help children succeed in cultural integration and in school, leaders of the Community Center meet with

⁶⁸ Mylan, Megan and Jon Shenk., *Lost Boys of Sudan*. 2003. <https://www.lostboysfilm.com>

⁶⁹ Nguyen, Viet Thanh, and Reyna Grande. “The Parent Who Stays.” *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, Abrams Press, 2019, pp. 73–81.

⁷⁰ *Id.*

teachers and administrators to identify issues preventing the Afghan childrens' academic success. Language presents a sizable barrier to success in education. American public schools almost exclusively teach in English. Fortunately for some non-English speakers, schools that operate in highly diverse regions (such as the Bay Area) come equipped with after school tutoring in foreign languages. Unfortunately, for the Farsi-speaking Afghan refugee children, the Community Center leaders only identified after school programs that offer services in Spanish. The Community Center reports that most Afghan refugee children can't write their name in English, let alone survive in English-speaking classes from 8 am to 3 pm.

As a response to language barriers in schools that the government puts refugees in, the Community Center and other organizations such as the Lao Family Community Development in Oakland, California, and the nationwide Jewish Family and Community Services provide supplemental resources to refugee children and families. One traditionally overlooked resource is the implementation of two-way cultural integration efforts. Formal cultural integration classes for refugees to integrate into American society are commonplace practices. However, this practice only addresses half of the issue. One interviewee made sure to highlight the point that cultural orientation is a two-way street. For example, singularly orientating refugee students will only allow the children to better understand American schools. Providing orientations to American teachers and administrators will give them the tools to better understand and educate their refugee students. Both parties will be well equipped. Regarding the practical application of refugee communities' efforts to implement wide spread two-way cultural integration courses, difficulties arise once again in the details.

Programs exist in education for teachers and administrators to receive cultural information on different groups of students, but these programs take time to establish and

resources to operate. Therefore, they generally exist in districts with particularly diverse and specific populations—hence why schools in California primarily only offer services to Latino and Asian populations. This system is to the detriment of refugees because refugee flows can spike in short periods of time as direct results to concentrated global conflicts. For example, around 20,000 Ukrainian refugees gained legally protected admission into the U.S. after presenting themselves at the U.S.-Mexico border in March and April of 2022.⁷¹ Government-run schools do not operate with the capacities to provide meaningful education to Ukrainian refugees through two-way cultural integration classes because the inflow of these refugees occurred rapidly and unexpectedly for school districts.

Donors: technology students and unpaid interns

Despite the government’s power to provide housing and initial resources, and to put children in schools, no single entity wields the structural capacity needed to address the needs of all newly arrived refugees. It takes a village. The government, its 250 contracted resettlement affiliates, and established cultural organizations are not the only houses in that village. In an attempt to contribute to the existing literature and also to the practical application of research, this section will present findings about computer science students and unpaid interns contributing (and donating their time and skills) to refugee resettlement.

This project reconsidered the concept of ‘donor’ and used it in a wider sense of the word. Of course, fiscal donations can make quantifiable differences. Yet, ignoring the value of other types of donations—such as time, expertise and materials—will result in lost opportunity. In March, 2022, two Harvard students contributed their donation of expertise to the resettlement effort of refugees fleeing Russia’s invasion and persecution of Ukraine. They launched a website

⁷¹ Batalova, Jeanne. “Ukrainian Immigrants in the United States.” *Migrationpolicy.org*, 2022, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/ukrainian-immigrants-united-states>.

called “Ukraine Take Shelter.” This website provides people a platform to post advertisements for openings in their homes available to Ukrainian refugees—always free of charge. Within the first month since the platform launched, thousands of users posted openings from almost every country in the world.⁷²

The start of my experience conducting research for this study occurred when I interned for a small NGO in Paris, France during the spring of 2022. The NGO, named Her Economic Rights and Autonomy (HERA), gives grants of €500 to €1000 to small, women-owned businesses in Eastern Europe. When Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine created a mass exodus of Ukrainian refugees in March, HERA shifted their focus and worked to assist Ukrainians with resettlement in France. As the coordinator of Ukrainian resettlement, I led a number of efforts to help move through the steps of resettling. I assisted the refugees in finding housing, filling out government paperwork to certify their protected status, and making it to a variety of appointments to buy SIM cards, metro passes, clothing and more necessary supplies. These seemingly simple needs often grow more complicated when looking into the details of their fulfillment. I will now present the need of clothing as one example of the complicated ‘basic’ needs.

My time at HERA provided notable findings with regards to clothing. Millions of Ukrainians fled in March and April, left a cold winter environment, and arrived in much warmer spring weather in France. The refugees were only capable of bringing the clothing they could carry in limited pieces of luggage, and therefore many of them were poorly equipped to handle the temperature change.

⁷² Sharp, Rachel. “A Harvard 19-Year-Old Stayed up Three Days and Saved Hundreds of Ukrainian Refugees.” *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 2022, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/ukraine-take-shelter-website-harvard-student-b2051557.html>.

In fact, this example reflects the widespread lack of appropriate clothing for refugees across the world. This research found that resettling refugees especially need clothing for four main reasons. Firstly, as stated, refugees travel with minimal amounts of supplies—no more than they can carry. Secondly, they travel with this minimal amount of clothing to a new geographic location with new climates and temperatures. Thirdly, in a new climate with limited old clothes, refugees usually can not afford to buy the necessary clothing. Lastly, around 40% of refugees are children, growing out of their clothes, needing appropriately sized clothing.⁷³ Simply put, refugees need clothing. One leader at the Masjid Noor Islamic and Cultural Community Center highlighted the benefits of fulfilling this need: “providing children with clothing gives them a new sense of identity, pride, and confidence.”

In my experience at HERA working through the complicated details of fulfilling clothing needs for refugees, I discovered a primary barrier in systems that hinder refugees ability to gain appropriate clothing. Resources are often left unadvertised and undiscovered. Churches, community centers and other local resources often have clothing donation services, but their aid is poorly advertised. Refugees arrive in a new community and are hardly equipped to know the variety of resources available to them. Churches rarely have the infrastructure to present their aid to non-parishioners. As it stands now, one of the most common ways refugees come to know about clothing resources is by word of mouth recommendations—hardly a suitable strategy when refugees work with limited connections in their new communities. Interning at HERA, I found a small Catholic church in a suburb on the outskirts of Paris only after speaking to a local who lived there for 5 years. The clothing was free and given with a smile, but it was also tucked away in an attic in a church with no signs or advertisements of their clothing services. Donating

⁷³ “Child Displacement and Refugees.” *UNICEF DATA*, 2022, <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/>.

clothing is an action of kindness that supplements the government and other organizations in helping refugees resettle and fulfill basic needs. This action deserves and needs better support to apply to more refugees.

While refugees' resettlement efforts may be hindered by the difficulty of finding community resources, already resettled refugees and specific refugee community groups can foster a space for newly arrived refugees to access sources of aid, and overall comradery. One prime example of this is Ministerio Latino, a United Church of Christ parish founded in 2012 in Oakland, California. Ministerio Latino is made up of and led by immigrants and refugees. Its efforts include raising funds for the basic needs of refugees (and immigrants more generally speaking), and also contributing by creating a tight knit community for refugees to come as they are, and receive what they need. Refugee communities provide useful connections, advice and even inspiration for achieving a higher quality of life in the future. For the fulfillment of the broad, and initial needs refugees encounter in the early stages of resettling, refugee communities provide a comprehensive and flexible resource.

Employment: barriers and entrepreneurship

Financial and employment needs, upon initial consideration, can be categorized in the 'basic needs' section. Refugees need funding immediately during the basic needs stage of resettlement. However, this study takes a more nuanced examination of financial and employment needs because of a key finding discovered during my time interning at HERA.

Some of the Ukrainians I worked with in Paris recently started an entrepreneurship project named "A Way to Healing." This organization is an example of refugee entrepreneurship and the potential resettling refugees have to contribute their professional skills. A Way to Healing facilitates mental health retreat weekends specifically for women refugees in the

resettlement process. This work is by resettling refugees, for resettling refugees. A Way to Healing provides a communal space for women refugees to share their experiences and emotions, learn coping mechanisms, and acquire hope to work towards an improved future in the face of uncertainty and adversity. This therapeutic, refugee-led project allows refugees to address trauma, to become empowered to voice their individual struggles, and to find solace in community healing.

A Way to Healing provides a concrete example of the benefits derived from refugees taking entrepreneurial experience from previous careers and employing these skills in new pursuits in their host country. This transition of existing skills into a new career and life gives notable benefits felt by the refugee employees. One refugee interviewee expressed that she receives “bad news all the time,” but her leadership of A Way to Healing gives her a part of life to be proud about. Past scholars have described the life of a refugee as “a life in waiting” because refugees often must wait for state sanctioned authorizations and aid, potentially troublesome news about family and friends still in conflict zones, and unpredictable wars and sources of fear to resolve.⁷⁴ These factors externally press onto a refugee’s life, and can result in feelings of disempowerment and paralysis for refugees. A Way to Healing shows an example of refugee empowerment through entrepreneurial initiative based on professional skills honed from previous careers. This evidence is one more solution to refugee empowerment during the resettlement stage.

The flexible and malleable nature of a project started by refugees in the resettlement process also allows refugees to engage in meaningful work without needing to fulfill the stringent roles demanded of formal employees. Certain types of projects—even if

⁷⁴ Bjertrup, Pia Juul, et al. "A life in waiting: Refugees' mental health and narratives of social suffering after European Union border closures in March 2016." *Social Science & Medicine* 215, 2018. p. 53-60.

unmonetized—empower the subgroup of resettling refugees who are not in a position to work a formal job, or to continue their past careers.

For a resettling refugee, working jobs and establishing careers come with acutely high barriers to entry. A recent study by Refugee International reports that 55% of refugees live in countries that “significantly restrict their right to work.”⁷⁵ These restrictions often come as a result of formal and legal barriers, such as laws dictating that refugees will be deported if they work and heavy penalties will be levied against businesses that hire refugees. Looking past institutions blocking refugees’ ability to gain employment, employers may act on stigmas against newly arrived refugees. Language barriers, and a low cultural aptitude to workplace norms may hinder a refugee's ability to gain formal employment. However, laws and cultural barriers only represent external factors, and refugees must also overcome internal factors. As will be discussed in detail later, depression and anxiety rates among refugees are around three times higher than non-refugees.⁷⁶ A healthy mental state completes one of the many qualifications to succeed as an employee and unfortunately this is a qualification that refugees regularly struggle to meet.

At the time of this writing in the fall of 2022, A Way to Healing has garnered community support and received a host of small grants from crowdfunding campaigns that amount to around €3,000. This empirical data leads to two important findings. First, some refugees are capable business people who can lead thriving projects coexisting in the resettlement process. Second, the fallacious assumption that newly arrived resettling refugees fit best into low-skill, entry-level positions risks ignoring serious talent that can contribute to a country’s labor pool in significant ways. A Way to Healing is growing at an increasing rate—it will soon host 20 pre-registered Ukrainian refugees at its fourth group healing seminar in the past 6 months. As shown, limited

⁷⁵ Ginn, Thomas, et al. “2022 Global Refugee Work Rights Report.” *Center for Global Development*, 2022.

⁷⁶ “Working for Change.” *Humanitycrew.org*, Humanity Crew, 2022, <https://humanitycrew.org/what-we-do>.

pathways exist for refugees to contribute to the workforce, and fewer foster the chance to capitalize on refugees' existing employable talents. The primary leader of A Way to Healing founded a private English school in Kiev, and is now transitioning her leadership skills as a refugee-entrepreneur. A Way to Healing may foreshadow future refugee entrepreneurial and project-based successes, especially considering that the global refugee population is expected to continue growing.

So if a refugee, for whatever reason, can't gain or keep employment, my experience interacting with A Way to Healing shows that entrepreneurship affords them an avenue to start a project and gain benefits also achievable in more traditional professions. Projects empower refugees to be leaders, help others, and achieve quantifiable success—actions that benefit many people, including resettling refugees.

Sources of Trauma: pre-flight, flight, and post-flight

Trauma, defined here as “damage to the psyche after living through an extremely frightening or distressing event that may result in challenges in functioning or coping normally,” occurs in refugee populations as a result of lived experiences.⁷⁷ These lived experiences occur before fleeing persecution (pre-flight), while fleeing to a new country (flight), and after arriving at a country of refuge (post-flight). While the following paragraphs provide examples of trauma and its sources, the examples are not comprehensive—even more sources of trauma exist. This section highlights primary traumas, and proves that trauma is chronically endured in refugee populations.

As established, the global refugee regime defines refugees as a group of people fleeing their country because of a well founded fear of persecution. Furthermore, much evidence proves

⁷⁷ “Signs & Symptoms of Psychological & Emotional Trauma: Cascade Behavioral Health.” *Cascade Behavioral Health Hospital*, 15 Apr. 2019, <https://www.cascadebh.com/behavioral/trauma/signs-symptoms-effects/>.

that this persecution fosters trauma in the pre-flight stage. A 2015 study from the Center for Victims of Torture sheds light on the gravity of fear and persecution refugees face: around 44% of refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers living in the U.S. experienced torture in the pre-flight or flight stages.⁷⁸ There may be as many as 1.3 million refugees in the U.S. who have experienced torture.⁷⁹ This astonishing statistic sheds light on the gravity of the situation: the multitude of refugees who are torture survivors need significant mental health care. More generally speaking, refugees flee personal persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a social group. These categories, and the harsh punishments refugees fear they may receive because of these categories, creates trauma to people on the brink of beginning their journey to a host country.

Moving past trauma in the pre-flight stage, and turning the focus to the flight stage shows the various forms refugee flights take, and the trauma born from them. In August of 2021, Afghan refugees coming to the U.S. only endured the flight stage for a limited amount of time because their flight was conducted in U.S. military planes taking them to safety.⁸⁰ However, even a flight stage lasting a matter of hours or days causes trauma when the planes are filled using the technique of “floor loading”—completely filling cargo planes with people and using straps spread across the ground as makeshift seatbelts.⁸¹ Salim, an Afghan aboard the famous C-17 cargo plane taking Afghans away from Taliban persecution, spoke about trauma-inducing moments from his experience escaping fear and becoming a refugee. In an interview, Salim talked about sprinting barefoot across the tarmac at the airport alongside his wife and toddler

⁷⁸ Higson-Smith, Craig. "Updating the estimate of refugees resettled in the United States who have suffered torture." *Center for Victims of Torture* (2015).

⁷⁹ *Id.*

⁸⁰ Copp, Tara, and Marcus Weisgerber. "Inside Reach 871, a US C-17 Packed with 640 Afghans Trying to Escape the Taliban." *Defense One*, Defense One, 2021, <https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2021/08/inside-reach-871-us-c-17-packed-640-people-trying-escape-taliban/184563/>.

⁸¹ *Id.*

son.⁸² With injured feet, they climbed on board with nothing but the clothes on their back and a bag with baby supplies. The flight experience out of the country produced its own trauma for Salim, but he reported that he was “the lucky person.”

Salim reflects on his fortunate flight accurately because the flight stage for Salim was completed in a hurry. Conversely, around two-thirds of refugees embark on flight stages lasting ten years.⁸³ A third even live in exile for two or more decades. This last cohort of refugees often live in underfunded and under protected UNHCR refugee camps, or other informal settlements, where violations of human rights run rampant. Take for instance, the Moria refugee camp on the Greek island called Lesbos. While refugees currently attempt to live life in this “temporary” camp and await admission into a refugee accepting country, the right to life, health, education and a host of other rights are violated.⁸⁴ The camp is built with short term and hastily constructed infrastructure by the Greek government and the UNHCR. It offers tents for housing, dangerously limited health care, and almost non-existent educational systems. Rape, violence and alcoholism runs rampant in refugee camps, threatening the large children populations. Unaccompanied children are often put in the same shelter encampments with stranger adults.⁸⁵ Habib H., age 16 from Afghanistan, says that children take bathroom trips at nighttime in groups of three to four people due to the threatening nature of life in the Moria camp. Even though the term ‘flight stage’ hints at a period of movement and progress to refuge, these camps often hold entire communities of refugees in an oxymoronic state of immobile transit for decades. Established in

⁸² Seddiq, Oma. “An Afghan Refugee Who Lifted His Wife and Toddler onto a C-17 Military Plane to Flee Kabul Tells the Harrowing Story of How They Arrived Safely in the US.” *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 23 Aug. 2021,

<https://www.businessinsider.com/afghan-refugee-recounts-how-he-fled-kabul-on-a-c-17-military-plane-2021-8>.

⁸³ Devictor, Xavier, and Quy-Toan Do. "How many years have refugees been in exile?." *Population and Development Review*, 2017, p. 355-369.

⁸⁴ Haney, Jackson. “Using International Law to Analyze Greece’s Violation of Children’s Rights.” University of San Francisco, 2021, pp. 3–15.

⁸⁵ “Greece: Unaccompanied Children At Risk.” Human Rights Watch, December 18, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/18/greece-unaccompanied-children-risk>.

1992 in northwest Kenya, the refugee camp Kakuma (meaning “nowhere” in the Swahili language) is now the largest refugee camp in the world with 150,000 refugees, 30 years after it opened as a site for Sudanese refugees to await transportation to a country of refuge.⁸⁶ Upon initial consideration, refugee camps may serve as a solution because they provide temporary accommodation for refugees fleeing fear and not yet accepted to a country of refuge, but in reality they create spaces for trauma over extended periods of time. A Greek proverb starkly reflects the situation: *nothing lasts longer than a temporary solution*.

For the “lucky” 1% of refugees, the pre-flight and flight stages ultimately culminate in the post-flight stage and resettlement into a country of refuge. This research found that for this limited pool of refugees active sources of trauma continue during resettlement. For example, interviewees expressed that refugees undergo an identity change while resettling. The foundational cornerstones of their identity (such as career, family, homeland, financial position) exist in different ways in their new life. Imagine being one of the 7.6 million Ukrainian refugees who now have a home country—a major piece of someone’s identity—that has suffered an infrastructural handicapping after Russian bombing campaigns across major civilian-populated territories.⁸⁷ The world of a refugee changes when they resettle as a new person in a new place, void of many of their identifying characteristics. As one interviewed refugee put it, “you feel like a baby bird. You have to learn how to fly again.”

This post-flight trauma also occurs in part because it is not uncommon for refugees in the resettlement process to have friends and family who are currently enduring the pre-flight and flight stage. Maintaining contact with these loved ones can mean maintaining a stream of

⁸⁶ “Inside the World's Five Largest Refugee Camps.” *How to Help Refugees - Aid, Relief and Donations*, 1 Apr. 2021, <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/inside-the-world-s-five-largest-refugee-camps/>.

⁸⁷ Karasapan, Omer. “Ukrainian Refugees: Challenges in a Welcoming Europe.” *Brookings*, Brookings, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2022/10/14/ukrainian-refugees-challenges-in-a-welcoming-europe/>.

traumatic reports of experiences in the pre-resettlement stages. Stories of trauma can create a negative ripple effect to resettling refugees. When asked how life was going, one interviewed refugee responded with “it’s bad news all the time.” Post-flight refugees hear stories of close friends and family suffering as a refugee in the flight stage, which compounds traumatic memories the resettling refugee lives with.

Furthermore, the flight stage may be over for refugees in their host country, but the trauma from this stage lives on in refugees’ minds while they go through the post-flight resettlement process. As one refugee put it, “the trauma does not end with a successful border crossing... you carry that border inside of you.”⁸⁸ For refugees carrying the trauma of crossing borders and looking for refuge, additional trauma becomes piled on in the post-flight stage when politicians, and society weaponize rhetoric about refugees being terrorists, sex offenders, and burdens on the economy.

Take for instance the extremist and anti-immigrant politicians that wield their platform in ways that traumatize resettling refugees—refugees who are supposedly under their protection as legally protected individuals. Throwing out baseless claims at a Florida rally in February of 2017, former President Donald Trump alluded to a terrorist attack that never actually happened. He incited anti-immigrant cheers from his crowd when he implied immigrants and refugees are violent criminals and said “look what’s happening last night in Sweden.”⁸⁹ No major crime, nor terrorist attack happened that night in Sweden, nor anytime near Trump’s comments. Moreso, just days later, former British politician Nigel Farage capitalized on Trump’s speech by saying that “Sweden is the rape capital of Europe due to EU migrant policies. Anyone who says there

⁸⁸ Nguyen, Viet Thanh, and Reyna Grande. “The Parent Who Stays.” *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, Abrams Press, 2019, pp. 73–81.

⁸⁹ “Former Swedish Prime Minister Asks: What Has Trump Been Smoking?” *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/donald-trump-former-swedish-prime-minister-carl-bildt-a7588476.html>.

isn't a problem is lying to you."⁹⁰ In reality, Sweden's laws use a much broader definition of rape than is used in other European countries (it counts *every* case of rape and attempt rape, unlike other countries that only count certain violations or count by person, not by incident).⁹¹ Sweden's accepting culture does not validate a fear of retaliation for rape survivors reporting their experience. Shame does not fall upon the victim of rape, so victims are more likely to report. In short, politicians use refugees to weaponize fear and gain support for the "protection" they'll provide against their own fabricated fear. Refugees—an already emotionally vulnerable population—suffer trauma even from the leaders in their host governments, and in a broader way from the very society legally granting them protection and refuge from their well founded fears of persecution!

In sharp contrast to the above sentiments, the U.S. government does not hastily admit refugees, instead it vets refugees closer than any other group. Procedures for acceptance into the country involve numerous appointments and questionings with government agencies, including the FBI and Immigration Customs Enforcement. To gain admission as a refugee to the U.S. is almost an insurmountable task, even for those fleeing well-known sources of fear. For the refugees who have "valid" sources of fear to flee from and who actually receive resettlement permission, they (on average) wade through two years of background checks, interviews, and health screenings before being admitted to the U.S..⁹² So not only are refugees not hastily let into

⁹⁰ Lusher, Adam. "Nigel Farage Claims Sweden Is the 'Rape Capital' of Europe. He's Wrong." *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nigel-farage-sweden-donald-trump-rape-capital-of-europe-refugees-malmo-why-wrong-debunked-claim-factcheck-true-or-false-eu-immigrants-syrian-refugee-crisis-ukip-lies-trump-lies-myth-fox-news-distortion-fake-a7591636.html>.

⁹¹ Parekh, Serena. "Turbulence and Fear." *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis*, Oxford University Press, 2020.; Batha, Emma. "Rape Conviction Rates Rise 75% in Sweden after Change in the Law." *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sweden-crime-rape-law-trfn/rape-conviction-rates-rise-75-in-sweden-after-change-in-the-law-idUSKBN23T2R3>.

⁹² Clore, Jenn. "The Application Process and Resettlement Assistance for Refugees in the United States." *Stump & Associates*, 2022, <https://usvisagroup.com/the-application-process-and-resettlement-assistance-for-refugees-in-the-united-states/>.

the country and breaking laws, but existing laws and procedures to vet refugees can actually be so intense, detailed and harsh that they give refugees trauma. In these questionings, refugees have been asked “Can you remember how many stars were on the jacket of the man who raped you?” and “What kind of knife was the man that killed your father using?”⁹³ Formal government procedures for resettling give refugees trauma in the post-flight stage.

Once refugees are accepted and legally protected in the U.S., stories still exist of the government violating refugees’ rights. The 2019 film, *The Infiltrators*, includes the true story of a Congolese refugee being detained for three years in the Broward Transitional Center immigrant detention center in Florida after calling the police because her husband beat her.⁹⁴ She was unlawfully detained as a non-criminal. Refugees, despite legal papers, sometimes have reason to be wary of law enforcement and the Immigration Customs Enforcement—yet another source of post-flight trauma.

To summarize, refugee trauma exists on a wide scale, even when refugees are trying to resettle. The sources of trauma creep into a refugee’s life from memories of their former identities, stories from loved ones experiencing trauma in other circumstances, hurtful rhetoric from politicians, insensitive questioning from the government, and unpredictable actions from law enforcement.

Existing sources of mental health care and emotional well being for resettling refugees

This study, after highlighting trauma, now takes the step to present certain insights on the efficacy related to mental health options available to two subsets of refugee populations. Starting with the acutely traumatized refugees who require elevated attention, counseling with a licensed or certified therapist represents a potentially opportunistic avenue. Not all refugees need

⁹³ Parekh, Serena. “Turbulence and Fear.” *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis*, Oxford University Press, 2020.

⁹⁴ Velasco, Aldo, and Cristina Ibarra. *The Infiltrators*, 2019, <http://www.infiltratorsfilm.com/stream-the-infiltrators/>.

professional therapy options, but the above section on trauma shows that trauma in refugee populations runs deep.

Specifically looking at therapy through the lens of its application to individual resettling refugees, therapy can address the specific issues within a given person because the conditions and struggles of each and every resettling refugee vary. While it's well established that trauma exists in widespread and consistent ways across the 100 million refugees globally, each individual underwent a unique experience to reach the post-flight stage and may hold onto unique forms of trauma. Consider the case of Amin Nawabi, a gay man who fled Afghanistan as a child after his father and family was targeted for their political stances against the tumultuous government in the late 1980s (Amin Nawabi is a pseudonym).⁹⁵ Amin incurred trauma as a refugee that compounds with the trauma experienced from being labeled a sexual deviant in the highly non-accepting familial, societal, and religious environment he grew up in. The gay Iranian leader of the National Immigrant Youth Alliance, Mohammad Abdollahi, highlights the gravity of Amin's trauma by saying that being sent back to the Middle East is a "death sentence."⁹⁶ Amin and Mohammad— both from high refugee producing countries, but both unique cases within these populations— represent the special efficacy of one-on-one therapy for traumatized refugees that addresses the complexities of individuals. Addressing mental health can not take a cookie-cutter approach. Therefore, individual therapy for resettling refugees can be reasonably seen as effective.

Even though therapy as a solution for traumatized refugees initially seems practical, numerous roadblocks appear when analyzing the actual execution of this method to aid refugees, stand in solidarity with them and to treat their mental illnesses. Primarily, this study found that

⁹⁵ Ahmed, Riz, et al. *FLEE*, 2019, <https://www.fleemovie.com/synopsis/>.

⁹⁶ Velasco, Aldo, and Cristina Ibarra. *The Infiltrators*, 2019, <http://www.infiltratorsfilm.com/stream-the-infiltrators/>.

cultural norms and an overrun public healthcare system primarily hinder therapy as an effective option for resettling refugees.

Regarding cultural norms, refugees may arrive trauma-stricken in the U.S. from societies that do not utilize therapy nor welcome attempts to address mental health issues. Jean Elomba, a Congolese refugee who resettled in Pittsburgh, illustrates this by reflecting on his experience coping with trauma during his resettlement:

“back home if you start talking of things like that [trauma], people see you like you are crazy... so you try to withhold some information and think, well, maybe I’ll overcome this and maybe someday I’ll feel better.”⁹⁷

Using “maybe someday I’ll feel better” as a mental health care plan for trauma does not work. Influence from cultures that do not invite struggling people to use therapy mean that refugees forfeit potential healing opportunities that can be essential for a successful resettlement. One interviewee for this study summarized the stigmatized nature of therapy by saying that “primary cares receive attention, and mental health needs to be seen as a primary care.”

The previous obstructions show serious flaws in therapy as a treatment to trauma within refugees’ cultures and that these flaws can discourage refugees from seeking help. However, for the refugees who preserve through these cultural fallacies and who pursue professional therapy, more issues manifest. Simply put, refugees in the U.S. do not have adequate access to mental health care and therapy. Therapy, obtained through a healthcare provider, is an option that for many refugees comes from government issued health care coverage (federally run Medicaid, generally managed by states).⁹⁸ If a refugee wants to go to therapy, they will use their minimal

⁹⁷ Beras, Erika. “A Refugee Story: Trauma Haunted a Woman Who Saw Too Much.” *Center for Health Journalism*, University of Southern California, 2014,

<https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/immigrant-health/refugee-story-trauma-haunted-woman-who-saw-too-much>.

⁹⁸ “Health Care Coverage for Refugees and Immigrants.” *The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*, <https://www.acog.org/practice-management/payment-resources/health-care-coverage-for-refugees-and-immigrants>.

governmental health care coverage to join a line of 90 million other eligible recipients of Medicaid.⁹⁹ Even higher funded and more equipped private health insurance companies can not keep up with demands for therapy. For example, the health care conglomerate, Kaiser Permanente, and its mental health department is currently the subject of lawsuits in California because the wait times to see a therapist are so long they violate state law.¹⁰⁰ Privately-insured Kaiser Permanente members can wait months to see a therapist—a detrimental amount of time for someone needing care. Kaiser Permanente’s struggles reflect the current terrain of mental health care in America: the system is overrun and underequipped. For refugees using Medicaid, this issue is only exacerbated. If a refugee comes to the U.S., pushes through cultural sentiments that attempt to void validity of therapy, and then tries to secure a therapist by utilizing their health care given to them by the government pledging to protect them, they will uncover the reality that therapy is an already limited commodity, and refugees are not endowed with plans comprehensive enough to treat them in a timely manner.

Unavailable therapy causes delayed care and will allow trauma to further develop and root itself in a refugee’s damaged psyche. Addressing trauma, even with capable therapists, becomes increasingly more difficult the longer it is left untouched. Humanity Crew, an organization that works to provide therapy to refugees still in conflict zones, reports that trauma can have long term, adverse effects on physical health, emotional well-being, education, job

⁹⁹ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, “July 2022 Medicaid & CHIP Enrollment Data Highlights.” 2022. <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/program-information/medicaid-and-chip-enrollment-data/report-highlights/index.html>

¹⁰⁰ Johnson, Sydney. “Long Mental Health Wait Times at Kaiser May Violate State Law, Says Sen. Wiener.” *San Francisco Examiner*, 2022, https://www.sfexaminer.com/news/long-mental-health-wait-times-at-kaiser-may-violate-state-law-says-sen-wiener/article_a86d2c34-19d1-11ed-9b2a-5798b7b30eae.html.

prospects, and life opportunities.¹⁰¹ Compounding on these effects, trauma boosts the rate of chronic health issues, and “the likelihood of... experiencing sex trafficking and addiction.”¹⁰²

All these barriers established, therapy does not embody a single perfect solution to resettling refugees in the U.S. struggling with trauma, once again because of cultural differences. While the U.S. operates on a largely individualistic culture, refugees often come from more collectivist societies. Past reviews of therapy and its effectiveness on resettling refugees show that traditionally Western models of one-on-one therapy are significantly less effective on non-Western populations.¹⁰³ In order to aid a refugee’s resettlement, culturally appropriate therapeutic practices work best, while arbitrarily throwing therapy at a refugee yields minimal effective results and hardly addresses trauma in a meaningful way.

Besides being potentially ineffective due to cultural barriers, this research found a nuanced perspective highlighting how therapy can actually harm a refugee during their resettlement efforts. An interviewee who runs an NGO working to provide resettlement resources to refugees in San Francisco pointed out that therapy can actually perpetuate poverty. For resettling refugees, time is an especially limited resource. The government helps refugees resettle, but only for a matter of months. Integration into the U.S. is a journey that takes longer than the government is willing to accompany refugees on. Therapy, usually conducted during normal working hours, takes up valuable time that can otherwise be spent working and financially resettling. This perspective on therapy becomes more influential when presented alongside the reality that therapy does not always meet the cultural needs of a refugee.

¹⁰¹ “Working for Change.” *Humanitycrew.org*, Humanity Crew, 2022, <https://humanitycrew.org/what-we-do>.

¹⁰² *Id.*

¹⁰³ Murray, Kate E., Graham R. Davidson, and Robert D. Schweitzer. "Review of refugee mental health interventions following resettlement: best practices and recommendations." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 80.4, 2010, p. 576.; Bracken, Patrick. *Trauma: culture, meaning and philosophy*. Whurr Publishers, 2002. ; Summerfield, Derek. "A critique of seven assumptions behind psychological trauma programmes in war-affected areas." *Social science & medicine*, 1999..

Alternate resources

Since refugees need options to treat mental health, and since therapy represents only one option with its own flaws, findings relating to a group healing approach to therapy will now be presented as alternate resources for resettling refugees to address mental health.

While already mentioned in the employment section, the refugee-led organization “A Way To Healing” will again be presented, now with similar organizations leading group healing efforts. A Way to Healing takes a “training” approach to mental health issues within the resettling refugee population in Paris, France by creating a safe space for people to speak their struggles and successes, and by bringing in mental health specialists to aid and work in solidarity with refugees during the sessions. The founder aims to bring in hurt refugees and hold workshops to give them the tools for resettlement:

“If you feel pain, loneliness, homesickness, or fear of the future, we invite you to our training.”

Culturally, certain refugee populations may turn their back on the reality of mental health issues and the benefits addressing it can provide, but A Way To Healing shines light on the fact that mental health is growing less stigmatized with time. As opposed to cultures telling someone they are crazy if they feel trauma, self help groups take an alternate perspective by inviting refugees to take care of themselves.

Another example of group healing comes from the organization Hospitality House, in San Francisco, California. While not directly tailoring its services to a refugee population, this self-help center offers “peer-based support groups [that] provide an avenue for stability and connection to the community.”¹⁰⁴ Enhanced stability and community relationships can aid

¹⁰⁴ Central City Hospitality House. “What We Do.” *Hospitalityhouse.org*, <https://www.hospitalityhouse.org/what-we-do.html>.

refugees by empowering them to move past trauma and onto further steps in the resettlement process.

Lastly, the psychologist-led organization, Humanity Crew (previously mentioned on page 47), works with children refugees to reframe traumatic events as quickly as possible after they occur. Humanity Crew's work takes place before the resettlement stage, but their use of group therapy sessions provides further findings to prove communal healing's effectiveness with traumatized refugees. Before employing other therapy methods, the first two steps Humanity Crew employs in their "emergency mental health support" are 1) larger community based activities and then 2) more focussed and smaller group sessions.¹⁰⁵

In analysis of group healing, this method's benefits lie in the fact that its flexibility allows it to more directly adapt to the unique needs of refugees. Resettling refugees are a unique population and they can benefit from similarly unique therapeutic methods. Resettling refugees in America and France are not only unique because they represent a fraction of global refugees, nor just because they are collectivist peoples living in individualistic societies, but also because they may also be coping with shared and specific types of trauma, such as rape, torture, and the loss of their culture, identity, homelands, and loved ones. Unique therapy works well to address the nuances of mental health issues for resettling refugees. Sharing this trauma in a safe space with other refugees can move past therapy and onto peer-based solidarity. Peer-to-peer group counseling is an already proven and applied model (consider the size and success of Alcoholics Anonymous, which employs a similar model). Since refugees are a population with high levels of trauma, they need aid that they can be confident in, a type that already operates and creates prosperous results within other populations.

IV. Conclusion

¹⁰⁵ "Working for Change." *Humanitycrew.org*, Humanity Crew, 2022, <https://humanitycrew.org/what-we-do>.

Refugee resettlement is a topic generally understood as a political issue. Turn on the news and watch politicians categorize refugees either as a deserving population or as an immoral entity, as a real piece of the fabric of society or as some “other” group. They labor to debate refugee quotas, procedures, and law. Yet, this thesis hardly approached these weaponized conversations. These pages instead exist as a force to change perspectives on refugees. They are not political puppets. They are not even abstract subjects within the exclusivity of academic research. No, they are the very cornerstone of key findings produced and shared. To see refugees as an active actor in their resettlement is to reposition this country’s societal lens towards an optic with more inclusion, progress, and humanity. This thesis hopes to refocus the minds pondering refugees by positioning refugees as capable of greatness, with some support in the resettlement process.

The primary task of this research was to present a number of resources and practices that show the U.S. 's and France’s current capacity to resettle refugees if a broad pool of actors participate in the process. However, this project furthermore seeks to inspire. A successful completion is one that inspires further contributions to resettling refugees. That inspiration can manifest in a variety of ways—whether it be creative, academic, professional, financial, or otherwise.

This study’s final form somewhat reflects the initial goals that inspired it, but a few words to explain if this study successfully answered its original questions is warranted. This thesis was birthed out of an effort to create a handbook of best practices for refugees and refugee allies to embark on the resettlement process. A form of this handbook evolved to a preliminary stage, but it was inadequate in practice. To share a suggestion (or to more rigidly formulate an approvable direction) requires hyper-focussed context of a situation. How can some thesis urge a refugee to

seek therapy without knowing which healthcare plan they have, where they live, what trauma torments them, what time constraints their job gives them, and how ready they are to put themselves face-to-face with intensities known only in the depth of their hearts?

Therefore, this paper approached a limited number of topics I have familiarity with through my time interning, interviewing, and reading. In the end however, I believe this work actually reached its original end, even if the means were different. Any implied suggestions in the findings come as a result of a more empirical approach to refugees resettling. The findings can provide examples for others to act on and learn from—which is a rough definition of the aforementioned handbook. While the research process was messy, it nonetheless supports the application of certain refugee resettlement strategies. Linear lines of logic (that I initially hypothesized as feasible for this project) have little place in academia and refugee resettlement. The journey of resettlement takes many twists and turns, and so too did this research experience.

While some findings within this thesis may apply to other parts of the world, and to a broader audience, other parts do not. For example, much of this thesis focussed on evidence and participants coming from the San Francisco Bay Area and Paris, France. These regions (while they have their differences) both represent examples of large cities with mostly progressive and liberal political tendencies—variables that can hardly be applied to much of the world. San Francisco and Paris also situate themselves within the context of rich, Christian, militarized, powerful, and democratic countries. Most of the world's 32.5 million refugees do not live in the U.S., France, and other Global North countries. Turkey (3.8 million), Colombia (1.8 million), Uganda (1.5 million), and Pakistan (1.5 million) have all resettled more refugees than Germany (1.3 million), the country taking in the most refugees in the EU and Global North.¹⁰⁶ In fact, 83%

¹⁰⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Figures at a Glance. Global Trends Report." *UNHCR USA*, UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html>.

of globally displaced people—including refugees—live in low and middle income countries. 1 in 6 people in Lebanon is a refugee, 1 in 16 in Jordan.¹⁰⁷ While some politicians of hegemonic superpower countries have called refugees rapists, the Jordanian princess, Dana Firas, shared an example of a Global South leader expressing support for them, and saying that: “You must always hold onto humanity. The more immune you are to other people’s suffering—that’s very dangerous.”¹⁰⁸ Therefore, even though this thesis uses input directly from refugees, to assume that its findings apply to most of the 32.5 million refugees world wide would be a gross exaggeration. It would ignore contributions from other actors, such as Princess Firas. Instead, the scope of this research sought to push the boat in the right direction for those trying to stay afloat in the San Francisco Bay Area and Paris—not to captain the entire fleet of refugees across the world.

With that concession stated, it is also appropriate to take the stance that some parts of this thesis can actually impact audiences across the world. The most sizable and significant part of the findings section added to the conversation about refugee trauma and mental health treatments. Even though many aspects of refugee and immigration study more broadly focuses on people living on a certain side of a border or trying to cross heavily armed and dangerous borders, trauma permeates through borders and across widespread refugee populations. This thesis’s support of methods to address mental health is relevant to refugees living outside the U.S. and France. The metrics used to discuss the efficacy of successful therapy (cultural barriers, inadequate resources, limited therapists, time constraints, etc.) are not exclusive to the scope of

¹⁰⁷ Wood, Johnny. “These Countries Are Home to the Highest Proportion of Refugees in the World.” *World Economic Forum*, 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/03/mena-countries-in-the-middle-east-have-the-highest-proportion-of-refugees-in-the-world/>.

¹⁰⁸ Weiwei, Ai, director. *Human Flow*. Amazon, Princeton University Press, 2017, https://www.amazon.com/Human-Flow-Chin-Chin-Yap/dp/B08J8K5SYR/ref=sr_1_1?crd=1Y1X4QIVCSYRF&keywords=human%2Bflow&qid=1663006972&s=instant-video&srefix=human%2Bflow%2Cinstant-video%2C414&sr=1-1.

this study. Rather, the analyses of these factors can be useful for understanding the current atmosphere of mental health care in other circumstances too.

Suggestions for further research naturally pertain to mental health topics as they relate to refugees. This thesis focussed on trauma, but not all refugee experiences produce adverse mental effects so intense they can be categorized as trauma. Research that explores other mental health issues within refugee populations could help contribute to an understanding of refugees' unseen, internal maladies, and therefore to the advancement of methods to aid refugees.

Additionally, this thesis originated within a social climate that is coming to accept the reality of mental health issues. As a university student during the Covid-19 Pandemic, I was immersed in the wave of mental health support that made its way across American society. The pandemic caused mental health issues to grow, but therapy became more acceptable, generally speaking. Now, more than ever, is an opportune time to capitalize on this wave by researching mental health treatments administered to a wider variety of refugee populations—whether they live in formal UNHCR refugee camps, informal communities outside the realms of the traditional refugee regime, or in the resettlement process in other countries not discussed in this thesis. How common are conversations about refugees' mental health? Who is having them? Do they occur mostly in the private realm (between refugees, families and friends) or mostly in the public realm (in different levels of government structures). How stigmatized are the nature of these conversations when compared to past examples? Research now may indirectly support refugees suffering internally in the future. This research can not reasonably be expected to change the world, but it can change the world for one refugee who is struggling.

Since I anticipate that these words will be read mostly by non-refugees (who are blessed with a bit more time to read since they're not trying to resettle), and because I have never

undergone the journey of a refugee, it is fitting and right to end this thesis not with my words and suggestions, but rather with those of an interviewee who is a former refugee and has now dedicated her life to being an ally for refugees. She calls us to “see people as people.”

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V. Appendices

Interview questions used:

What methods of aid empower refugees, organizations, and donors to work together towards creating meaningful and active progress in the resettlement process?

- 1) **Topic: refugees:** What tools/resources allow refugees to play an active role in their resettlement process and how can these tools/resources become easily accessible to refugees?
 - a) *Potential tools:* language classes, legal assistance, life coaching/leadership classes, therapy, community and cultural events, church locations (with languages)
 - b) *Potential resources:* **jobs**, housing, public and private grants, food/groceries, living supplies, resources tailored specifically to women/children,
 - c) *Easily accessible:* guidebook with comprehensive list where to access the tools/resources, personal assistant volunteers (representatives and teachers of life in the new location who can give community-based tips and instructions. Help with public transportation, for example)
 - d) For parts *a, b and c*, emphasis on information tailoring to the aid of women, children, queer populations, the elderly, and any other “vulnerable” group
- 2) **Topic: Organizations:** How can organizations become equipped to know the most effective and efficient methods of aid to refugees in the resettlement process? How can organizations give horizontally structured aid, not top-down. How can they use the voices, and opinions of refugees to direct the actions the organizations take?

- a) *For public entities (federal, state, local):* Assuming they work with the best intentions, how can they get straight to the refugee, without “red tape” or other unproductive bureaucratic blocks? How can they use their wealth of resources to make widespread, “ripple effect” changes. (ie: more school buses because they educate the future generations, and also give parents more time to work on their own resettlement process).
- b) *For large NGOs and multilateral state-based organizations:* how can the needs of refugees be quickly, authentically, and clearly transmitted to the executives and operators of the organization (also applicable to part a)? How can grassroots information and ideas be implemented on a large (and therefore potentially less flexible) scale? How can they use their worldwide influence to indirectly support refugees, through media, positive rhetoric, academic/studies and more?
- c) *Small NGOs:* How can they partner with a small quantity of refugees to provide high quality, individualized support? How can they gain publicity? How do they reach refugees and make themselves known to those who need them? How can small NGOs use their well meaning intentions to energize their capacities? How can they raise money and get volunteers?
- 3) **Topic Donors:** How can donors support refugees in meaningful ways?
- a) *Donation reasons:* Why do people donate? Why do they help? What motivations exist? How do benefits to self vs benefits to others influence donations?
- b) *Types of donations:* How do they donate? Time, money, items, expertise, knowledge, services, etc. Which type of donation is most popular among given groups, who likes to donate in which ways?

- c) *Donor demographics*: Who donates? Details relating to age, race, economic class, past or shared experiences (ie: former-refugees). How can understanding these demographics help connect donors to organizations and refugees (ie: social media advertisements for the young, church announcements for the elderly)?
- d) *Efficacy and efficiency*: Which makes a bigger difference, lots of individual donors, or a few highly generous donors? How much of a donor's help gets to the refugee? How do donors give direct aid, undeviated by blocks in the middle man organizations?