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Building Career Pathways for Resettled Refugees in the United States

Katherine Callahan Neginskiy

MA in Refugee Protection and Forced Migration Studies
katieneginskiy@gmail.com

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore career pathways for refugees who have been resettled in third countries. A career pathway for a refugee means, how likely is it that one can find self-sustaining wages and/or a fulfilling profession in their country of resettlement, and how is that process supported by the third country.

This paper explores the aim of answering three questions: How is the United States currently addressing career pathways for resettled refugees? What career pathway innovations are happening in other countries? What recommendations could possibly produce better outcomes in the United States? First, it outlines what career pathways are, why they are important, and what are the barriers, through a literature review and secondary sources. Subsequently, it explores how the United States is currently addressing career pathways for resettled refugees, through a literature review and secondary sources. Next, in light of the current situation with Ukraine, it discusses a case study of career pathways of Soviet refugees in the United States during the 1990s, completed by surveying refugees who arrived during that time between the ages of 30-50. Then, it looks at career pathway innovations being employed in Canada and Sweden, through a literature review and secondary sources. Lastly, it offers recommendations that could possibly produce better outcomes in the United States, including recommendations for policies, programs, and businesses.

The objective of the paper is to provide recommendations to support third countries to address these issues in myriad ways, in order for refugees to move out of survival jobs and into careers with more sustainable wages, consistent schedules, and ample benefits; which will allow them to feel fulfilled while also contributing to their new homes, communities, and economies.

Keywords *Ukraine, Ukrainian, career pathways, Soviet refugees, immigrant integration*

Contents

1. Forward

> While every refugee's story is different and their anguish personal,
> they all share a common thread of uncommon courage:
> the courage not only to survive, but to persevere and rebuild.
>
> *- Antonio Guterres*

On February 24, 2022 - Russia invaded Ukraine. By the end of March, 10 million Ukrainians had been displaced. Over 4 million people had fled Ukraine's borders, and the remainder have been replaced within the country.[1] The decision to stay or to move with Ukraine or to flee the country is complex and nuanced. Emotions, health, transportation, family members, and many other factors play a role. For those who choose to move, especially outside of the country, they must consider the financial implications. Do they have enough money to support themselves during that transition? If they plan to stay elsewhere long term, what are their employment aspects and what is the cost of living there?

In March, I spoke with three women in Ukraine. Each of them were debating whether to stay or leave. They were weighing components, such as the fact that their husbands would not be allowed to leave the country with them currently. Career pathways in other countries were also a part of their decision making. One woman, Mariia, wondered: "People want to help now, but how long does that help last? Three months? A year? And then where will I be left financially when people move on from focusing on the war in Ukraine?"[2]

The second woman I spoke with, Svetlana, stated:

> "I speak English, so I feel like I have a big advantage in the workforce if I went to the United States. But, I do not know where to begin looking for a job. I know my nursing degree will not be recognized in the US, so I will need to find a different role. This scares me. My identity is being a nurse."[3]

A third woman, Lubov, told me:

> "I have to think about where I can make money and where I can afford to live. Of course I want to remove my children from a country that has become dangerous, but what will become of us if we move to Western Europe or the United States, and I cannot find a job that will cover housing and food? As soon as we leave Ukraine, I feel we have no support system."[4]

The United States has stated that it will welcome up to 100,000 displaced Ukrainians.[5] However, is the United States ready to support the career pathways of these displaced people, so they may land fulfilling, self-sustaining employment? This is not a new question for any countries who resettle refugees or receive large numbers of immigrants. Most recently, the United States has been grappling with this after receiving over 74,000 Afghans as of February 2022 (after the United States withdrew their military presence from Afghanistan in August 2021).[6] In light of the most recent crisis in Eastern Europe, this paper will examine a case study regarding how Soviet refugees who were resettled in the United States during the 1990s were able to navigate career pathways.

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1 "How Many Ukrainians Have Fled Their Homes and Where Have They Gone?" (BBC NewsMarch 30, 2022) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60555472> accessed April 5, 2022

2 Interview with Katherine Neginskiy and Mariia, "Ukrainian Interview #1" (March 28, 2022) personal

3 Interview with Katherine Neginskiy and Svetlana, "Ukrainian Interview #2" (March 29, 2022) personal

4 Interview with Katherine Neginskiy and Lubov, "Ukrainian Interview #3" (March 30, 2022) personal

5 Keith T, "The U.S. Will Take in up to 100,000 Ukrainian Refugees Fleeing the War" (NPRMarch 24, 2022) <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/24/1088506487/us-ukraine-refugees> accessed April 5, 2022

6 *What is next for Afghans who fled to the United States?* International Rescue Committee (IRC). (2022, February 16). Retrieved April 5, 2022, from https://www.rescue.org/article/what-next-afghans-who-fled-united-states

2. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore career pathways for refugees who have been resettled in third countries. A career pathway for a refugee means, how likely is it that one can find self-sustaining wages and/or a fulfilling profession in their country of resettlement, and how is that process supported by the third country. This applies both to refugees with limited to no formal schooling or professional experience as well as refugees who held advanced degrees and careers in their home countries. Refugees arriving in new countries face a number of barriers related to employment, which often hold refugees back from obtaining said self-sustaining wages and/or a fulfilling profession. For example, The New Immigrant Survey (this study concerned legal immigrants in general, not refugees specifically) tracked the occupation of immigrants in the United States, as compared with their last job in their home country and found that over fifty percent experienced a downgrading in employment. That percentage increases to almost 75% when looking at higher-skilled immigrants. Not only does the difficulty obtaining a self-sustaining wage and/or a fulfilling profession negatively impact refugees economically, according to Beech: "refugee professionals may struggle to manage the tensions between maintaining a coherent sense of who they are and adapting to the many barriers they face in building a new life in the destination country"[7]. However, third countries do address this issue in myriad ways, in order for refugees to move out of survival jobs and into careers with more sustainable wages, consistent schedules, benefits, and fulfilling purpose.

In the following pages, this paper will first outline the objectives for addressing this topic and the methodology of doing so. Then, it will dive deeper into what career pathways are, why they are important, and what are the barriers. Next, it will discuss a case study of career pathways of Soviet refugees in the United States during the 1990s. Subsequently, this paper aims to answer three questions:

1. How is the United States currently addressing career pathways for resettled refugees?

2. What career pathway innovations are happening in other countries?

3. What recommendations could possibly produce better outcomes in the United States?

7 Akresh IR, "Occupational Mobility among Legal Immigrants to the United States" (2006) 40 International Migration Review 854

3. Objectives

This paper holds academic importance, as there is little research and few articles which address this issue. This topic is relevant, because it can serve as a recommendation to stakeholders in UNHCR's 27 resettlement countries regarding how to best integrate refugees into their employment force. This paper will help demonstrate how third countries can better assist refugees in becoming exactly who they want to be, in their new homes. The recommendations within this paper are intended to build upon and support current work meant to bolster the economic integration of refugees and inspire innovative action and change.

This topic holds personal importance for me (the author), because I have been working in the cross-section of refugee resettlement, adult education, and workforce development in the United States for over ten years. For most of my career, I worked for a resettlement agency in Chicago. Our workforce development programs included both training large numbers of new arrivals to be able to be placed in survival jobs within ninety days of coming to the United States and working with participants individually to officially evaluate their degrees from their home countries and tailor transition plans for them to return to their careers in high-skill industries. While I will not be sharing data from my own program, anecdotally I will add that I have personally worked with countless participants who had the goal of securing self-sustaining wages and/or a fulfilling profession. Some of them were pre-literate in their native languages, while others were doctors, lawyers, and professors in their home countries. Regardless of the background, every pathway forward had unique challenges. I witnessed participants study and work and fight to obtain the job they were hoping for without success. I also witnessed participants who were able to obtain the job they had been dreaming of and/or reclaim the career they had built in their home countries, but those tales are much rarer. The common thread was that every participant was motivated to forge these pathways in order to contribute as a member of their new country, expand opportunities they could offer themselves and their families, and to define and reaffirm their own identities. I hope this paper serves to help continue to strengthen workforce development programming in the United States, in order to better support the dreams of refugees.

4. Methodology

The methodology of this paper was formed in part due to limitations posed by COVID-19. A great deal of the paper is a literature review, combined with a review of secondary sources. According to Robson (2011) and Blaikie (2009), a literature review can provide many benefits, including: ensuring that the research question you want to embark upon has not already been answered, providing background and historical information for the question to be posed, and illustrating what gaps exist in the existing research and knowledge. In the case of this paper, the literature review did help ensure that the proposed questions had not been answered previously and demonstrated that there were significant gaps in the existing literature. These gaps in the literature led to secondary sources that could provide information about current policies, programs, and practices addressing career pathways for refugees.

In planning for the paper, I knew I wanted to lend refugees' voices directly to the topic. I considered the article "*Life history and personal narrative: theoretical and methodological issues relevant to research and evaluation in refugee contexts,*" in which Powles explores the possible best practices for life history research. She lists many advantages of this practice, such as: providing a more direct avenue for refugee voices, creating an opportunity to explore the richness of experiences that numbers often do not allow for, lifting up refugees' agency by highlighting their concerns, empowering refugees, and possibly provide catharsis for the refugee (Powles, 2004). The subsequent case study based in life history research brings the refugees' voices into my literature review, with all of the above objectives in mind.

The case study posed more methodological and ethical considerations than the literature review. I examined a group of refugees from the former Soviet Union who were resettled in the United States in the 1990s and were between the ages of 30-50 years old when they moved. With safety considerations in mine, I decided a remote survey would be the most effective route. I began with a few participants who I know through social contacts and through my work. Then I relied on snowball sampling to identify additional participants. The survey was executed using Google Forms, and was accompanied by a Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form for participants to complete and sign before they took the survey. The questions pertained to their level of education and career in their home country, what jobs they found after moving to the United States, what help they received in looking for work, and what would have been more helpful in the process. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the survey. It was also explained that they could cease participation at any time without repercussion and that participation is strictly voluntary. It was also noted that I have no affiliation with governments or international organisations such that non-participation will not affect participants' rights or access to other services or care. In the reverse, participants were also told that participation will not create eligibility for any special benefits or services. The data is stored on Google drive and is subject to restricted access, as a condition of consent. The participants have been in the United States for a significant amount of time, they are not newly arrived. The topic is about integration and therefore I did not ask about reasons why they fled, to avoid any risk of re-traumatization. I aimed to design the questions so that a) participants could not be identified based on the information given and b) to avoid issues that may be sensitive in nature. However, it was reiterated to participants that not only could they cease participation at any time, they also had the option to skip questions for any reason and still submit their survey. The two largest ethical considerations in regards to the case study were: the use of snowballing and the question of translating.

In this case, snowball sampling was necessary both due to a population which was geographically spread out, but also due to safety considerations borne of COVID-19. Snowball sampling occurs when a researcher asks their research participants to help recruit other participants for a survey. In this way it differs from simple random sampling, because there is no element of probability. The technical issue with this type of research design is that it may not result in a representative sample. However, some researchers argue that snowball sampling may offer a more representative and organic sample than a sample in which all the respondents are hand picked. Snowball sampling's use is possibly justified when it is difficult to find participants, either because they are very spread out or because they do not want to be found due to a possibly precarious situation. It potentially makes certain studies that would have been impossible to execute due to limited sampling size, possible, and that information could be potentially very useful for refugee policy

that could benefit the population being studied (Noy, 2008).

In considering how to approach the survey, I also needed to address the issue of a possible language barrier. I knew my participants would all be Russian speakers, and they may be more comfortable completing the survey in Russian. However, they have all been living in the United States for at least twenty years and have at least some degree of familiarity with English. I understand Russian and would be able to read responses to the survey written in Russian, but I do not have the fluency to translate the Participation Information Sheet and Consent Form into Russian. I weighed how the results would differ if the survey and the accompanying documents were provided only in English and therefore excluded certain participants. Considering the topic of the paper pertains to employment in an English speaking country, I decided to move forward with only providing the materials in English, but wanted to ensure that point was noted here, as it may have impacted who was able to or interested in responding. I did note in the survey that if they preferred to answer a specific question in Russian, they may do so. I wanted to provide that option, in case they wanted to express emotions that their English language ability would limit. Of the twenty respondents, only one chose to use Russian in their answer. I was able to read the response, but I also checked my translation with two native Russian speakers. Within this paper, both the Russian and English versions of their response will be included. At the end of the survey, I did provide an open ended space for the participants to add any notes they felt were not addressed by the questions. This method of open ended questioning provides a more participatory approach to surveying, and further widens the avenue for refugees' voices to be directly represented in research. As eloquently spoken by Khaled Hosseini: "Refugees are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children, with the same hopes and ambitions as us—except that a twist of fate has bound their lives to a global refugee crisis."

5. Introduction to Career Pathways

In order to address the questions above, it is first prudent to review what *is* a career pathway. Additionally, this paper will outline what the current barriers to career pathways are and why career pathways are important, in order to frame the value of adapting and expanding upon current best practices and innovations regarding career pathways for refugees in the United States.

The Career Ladders Project defines *career pathway* as:

> "A Career Pathway is a series of structured and connected education programs and support services that enable students, often while they are working, to advance over time to better jobs and higher levels of education and training. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare students to progress to the next level of employment and/or education. Career pathways [...] are designed to create avenues of advancement for the underemployed, the unemployed, incumbent workers, new and future labour market entrants, and to produce a steady supply of qualified workers for employers."[8]

With career pathways, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and education centres can provide students a structure of pertinent skills and stackable credentials aimed towards higher levels of education and improved job prospects. When properly planned, career pathways should: (a) include supports for diverse students with specific barriers to employment, such as English language learners, (b) span from pre-literacy courses, through "bridge" programs that prepare students for more technical classes, through vocational certification courses, all the way through academic degrees, (c) be stackable, with certificates nested inside of longer degree programs, which provided multiple entry and exit points, (d) be contextualized in order to provide instruction on life skills and cultural norms in addition technical content and academic knowledge, (e) provide a structure in which programs and resources of NGOs, community colleges, job centres, social service providers, employers and other stakeholders are working in tandem, (f) include opportunities to learn on the job, such as paid internships or credit-based work experiences, and (g) focus on careers in industries that are both in demand in the labour market and that can provide self-sustaining wages for a family as well as opportunities for advancement. Self-sustaining is defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act as meaning that an individual is able to provide for themselves and their dependents independently, without the help of state or federal aid benefits.[9]

These aims can be accomplished through: (a) strategic partnerships between NGOs, education centres, and employers; (b) active input on curriculum from employers to ensure relevance; (c) financial support for students participating in pathways; (d) innovative education in terms of flexible scheduling, contextualized instruction, and experiential learning; (e) support services, including counselling, career coaching, housing support, childcare, assistance with public benefits, and financial aid. These pathways apply to both native born students as well as refugees and immigrants. However, refugee participants have different circumstances than American students, considering that on one hand they may have expensive education and professional experience in their home countries, while on the other hand they may be struggling with a language and cultural barriers.

5.1 What are the barriers to career pathways?

Education is crucial for social and economic mobility. However, 1% of refugees worldwide have access to higher education, as compared with 35% of the general population. It is crucial to understand barriers to

8 "Defining Career Pathways - Career Ladders Project" (*Career Ladders Project*) <http://www.careerladdersproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/defining-career-pathways-ccp.pdf> accessed April 5, 2022

9 "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act" (*United States Department of Labor*) <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa> accessed April 4, 2022

education for refugees in order to address those barriers and support social and economic integration.[10] For refugees, finding self-sustaining wages and/or a fulfilling profession in their country of resettlement, can be a steep climb, and what support is provided by their new country can make or break the process. Refugees arriving in new countries face a number of challenges related to employment. Pietka-Nykaza states that the career paths of refugees are not "the result of their individual choices but instead reflect different responses to encountered barriers, opportunities and encountered dilemmas."[11] These barriers can include, but are not limited to: language and communication, restrictions due to time and money, issues with certifications, gaps in work experience, accessing training and understanding employment in the United States, misinformation or conflicting information from organisations, general well-being and mental health, racism and prejudice, discrimination due to refugee status, cultural barriers, and issues surrounding social integration.[12]

The most oft cited barrier is that many refugees arrive with limited language proficiency, which limits the number and types of jobs available to them. It also hinders their ability to learn about vocational training programs and employment processes in the United States. Additionally, many refugees have to end their official English studies once they have secured survival jobs, because they do not have the time for English language classes. This quandary creates a stagnation in the career pathway process.

Second, refugees encounter restrictions due to time and money. A commonly cited issue is that refugees are too busy with their survival jobs to commit the time and money to participating in any additional education or training or job hunting. The types of jobs that refugees tend to secure upon arrival pay minimum wage and have long, inflexible hours. With the possible added time and money constraints of caring for and providing for children or older
family members, refugees often struggle to find the time, energy and funds to invest in career mobility.[13]

Third, some refugees arrive having been professionals in their home countries, but their credentials do not transfer to their new countries. Alternatively, many refugees cannot access the documents necessary to prove they hold certain credentials. Even if a refugee's credentials do transfer and they can access the necessary documentation, they may not know how to go about this process without the aid of a social worker, adult education teacher, or transition coordinator. Consequently, newly arrived refugees might lose motivation, face systemic barriers, and show little or no interest in pursuing their post-secondary education.[14]

Fourth, refugees are more likely to have gaps in work experience. This affects refugees more than other migrants, because refugees may have spent long periods of time displaced and awaiting resettlement, usually without knowledge of where their final destination may be. Whereas many immigrants plan for and prepare their move to the United States, and may have more of an opportunity to study English and American systems. These gaps in work experience are difficult to address on resumes and in job interviews.

Fifth, due to the complex and varied nature systems in the United States, resettled refugees have challenges accessing support and training, as well as understanding employment systems. Many recently arrived refugees will obtain information about jobs from their community members, but they typically are low skilled positions without room for advancement. Additionally, many refugees may have limited digital literacy skills, depending on many factors such as: age, level of education, and how much time was spent in settlements or camps. Digital literacy is a necessary skill in order to be able to navigate systems, locate information about training opportunities, and apply for jobs. Career counselling provided by resettlement

10 Bajwa JK and others, "Examining the Intersection of Race, Gender, Class, and Age on Post-Secondary Education and Career Trajectories of Refugees" (2018) 34 Refuge 113

11 Piętka-Nykaza E, "'I Want to Do Anything Which Is Decent and Relates to My Profession': Refugee Doctors' and Teachers' Strategies of Re-Entering Their Professions in the UK" (2015) 28 Journal of Refugee Studies 523

12 Campion ED, "The Career Adaptive Refugee: Exploring the Structural and Personal Barriers to Refugee Resettlement" (2018) 105 Journal of Vocational Behavior 6

13 Satar H, "Refugees Contribute: Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S." (2017) <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RefugeesContribute_StrategiesforSkilledRefugeeIntegration.pdf> accessed April 6, 2022

14 Bajwa JK and others, "Examining the Intersection of Race, Gender, Class, and Age on Post-Secondary Education and Career Trajectories of Refugees" (2018) 34 Refuge 113

agencies, social services organizations and education providers is crucial for this reason.[15]

Sixth, on the other hand, refugees often receive misinformation from their social networks or conflicting information from organisations. Refugees may receive supports from several providers, based on their needs. The varying providers may offer conflicting information regarding strategy and expectations about American training systems and the job search process. This conflict of information can be very confusing and frustrating for newly arrived refugees. The most common conflict of information regarding employment strategy is that: generally resettlement agencies focus much more on securing immediate survival jobs versus education providers who focus on long term career goals. That difference is due to how their funding is structured and what type of outcomes they are expected to report on. The result is that refugees often feel pulled in different directions, versus feeling prepared to move forward with a clear and coherent employment plan.[16]

Seventh, compounding the general confusion refugees may experience when trying to navigate American systems, refugees also may be experiencing issues with general well-being and mental health. Previous negative experiences in their home country, difficulty during the displacement phase and/or challenges adjusting to a new country all contribute to possible mental health issues. Resettlement agencies in the United States are often under equipped to help address refugees' mental health issues stemming from the trauma of persecution and violence. Arriving in a new country does not necessarily reduce trauma for newly arrived refugees, but actually adds a new layer of stress, brought on by the numerous and nuanced challenges of integration. It is key for service providers to create safe, positive spaces for refugee participants in order to help them feel confident and motivated to move forward towards their goals.[17]

Eighth, many refugees in the United States will face racism and prejudice, and possibly discrimination due to their refugee status. When arriving in the United States, refugees are entering a new societal system in which they may experience prejudice based on their nationality, race, religion, or other characteristics. The prejudice may be similar to what they experienced in their home countries, but it may be a new dynamic for them. Fear of or experiences with prejudice may discourage refugees from looking for professional jobs. Additionally, refugees may face discrimination due to their refugee status. The United States is experiencing a very politically charged environment in regards to immigration. This tense environment may discourage employers from hiring refugees, and on the other hand, said discrimination may dissuade refugees from applying for certain jobs. Employers also are often unfamiliar with refugees' documents, and therefore shy away from hiring them for fear of hiring someone who is not technically work eligible.[18]

Lastly, fear of discrimination and desire for social integration may limit a refugee's job search to positions they can find within their diasporic community. In the 2018 article, "The career adaptive refugee: Exploring the structural and personal barriers to refugee resettlement," the author finds that refugees will often sacrifice a high paying career and experience downward occupational mobility, in exchange for a job that offers more of a social network within their own culture that offers support, familiarity, social legitimacy, and less threat of discrimination.[19] While integrating into a local community has benefits, such as developing a sense of support, alleviating trauma, and learning English with speakers of their native language, it also greatly limits the number of opportunities available to them. This is especially true for refugees who are arriving in smaller numbers or in smaller cities that may not have an expansive community.

Also of note, women of colour generally have worse employment outcomes, and are less likely to engage in the labour force than men. Gender stereotypes and sexism, possibly both in the refugees' native culture

15 Yakushko O and others, "Career Development Concerns of Recent Immigrants and Refugees" (2008) 34 Journal of Career Development 362

16 Satar H, "Refugees Contribute: Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S." (2017) <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RefugeesContribute_StrategiesforSkilledRefugeeIntegration.pdf> accessed April 6, 2022

17 Bajwa JK and others, "Examining the Intersection of Race, Gender, Class, and Age on Post-Secondary Education and Career Trajectories of Refugees" (2018) 34 Refuge 113

18 Wehrle K and others, "Can I Come as I Am? Refugees' Vocational Identity Threats, Coping, and Growth" (2018) 105 Journal of Vocational Behavior 83

19 Campion ED, "The Career Adaptive Refugee: Exploring the Structural and Personal Barriers to Refugee Resettlement" (2018) 105 Journal of Vocational Behavior 6

and in the United States, hinder women from accessing higher education and employment.[20] The above barriers, along with nuanced others, often hold refugees back from obtaining said self-sustaining wages and/or a fulfilling profession. This is why building robust and comprehensive career pathways for refugees is so crucial.

5.2 Why are career pathways important?

Career pathways are crucial, both for the success of the refugee on a personal level, but also for the community or society the refugee is living within. Investing initially into integrating refugees into a country's workforce reaps financial gains down the road.[21] Over the past decades, influxes of diverse refugees have served to invigorate economies and fiscal benefits.[22] According to Upwardly Global, the United States spent $582 million supporting refugees in 2014, but on average refugees generate approximately $30 billion for federal and state governments. The United States also has a high demand for workers in many fields, both skilled and unskilled. Therefore, spending the money to train or reskill refugees and prepare them to work in these under-employed fields would meet a need and stimulate the economy.[23] Businesses can benefit from hiring refugees, because in today's globalized world, it behoves businesses to increase their global knowledge.[24] The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation found that immigrants to the United States were twice as likely to open their own business as those native born in American and more than 40% of Fortune 500 companies were created by either an immigrant or a child of an immigrant.[25] The rhetoric supporting the belief that refugees take jobs from the local population is false. Influxes of refugees create jobs by spending their wages and increasing demand for certain goods and services.

Refugees also create new markets within their local communities and forge new trade connections with their home countries.[26] For example, as will be explored later, when Russians resettled in areas such as West Hollywood in Los Angeles and Brighton Beach in New York City, they created a new demand for specific businesses and products. Russian bookstores, restaurants, spas and grocery stores were opened. Trade increased with Eastern Europe, as these new residents of the United States wanted products from their native regions. The neighbourhood also contributed to the city's economy with thriving businesses and tourism appeal.

While studies have shown that refugees have the potential to create a positive economic impact on their host countries, economic integration is also crucial for the success of the refugees themselves. Professional identity is key to self-identity, and the road to professional identity includes a sense of calling and a lengthy socialisation. The perceived loss of these elements can be a struggle. Watson states: "In order to be sane and effective social actors, individuals have to achieve a degree of coherence and consistency in their conception of who they are."[27]

Davey and Jones published research in an attempt to answer: "How do refugee professionals manage the tensions between past, present and future career opportunities and experiences in their professional

20 Tastsoglou E and Preston V, "Gender, Immigration and Labour Market Integration: Where We Are and What We Still Need to Know" (Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice2012) <https://journals.msvu.ca/index.php/atlantis/article/view/858> accessed April 6, 2022

21 Davis O, "Europe's Refugee Crisis: Why Millions of Migrants Are Just What Europe Needs" (*International Business Times*December 6, 2015) <https://www.ibtimes.com/europes-refugee-crisis-why-millions-migrants-are-just-what-europe-needs-2092670> accessed April 4, 2022

22 Jenkins P, " How Should Business React to the Migrant Crisis?" (*Financial Times*2015) <https://www.ft.com/content/774d75b4-589a-11e5-9846-de406ccb37f2> accessed April 4, 2022

23 Satar H, "Refugees Contribute: Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S." (2017) <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RefugeesContribute_StrategiesforSkilledRefugeeIntegration.pdf> accessed April 6, 2022

24 Richardson J, Karam CM and Afiouni F, "The Global Refugee Crisis and the Career Ecosystem" (2019) 25 Career Development International 1

25 Mays K, "Entrepreneur and Business Leader Appointed to Board of Trustees" (*Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation* January 17, 2019) <https://www.kauffman.org/currents/entrepreneur-and-business-leader-matthew-condon-joins-board-of-trustees/> accessed April 4, 2022

26 Richardson J, Karam CM and Afiouni F, "The Global Refugee Crisis and the Career Ecosystem" (2019) 25 Career Development International 1

27 Watson TJ, "Narrative, Life Story and Manager Identity: A Case Study in Autobiographical Identity Work" (2009) 62 Human Relations 425

identity work?"[28] They studied a sample of refugees in the United Kingdom who had a background in either teaching or medicine in their home countries. They found that it was very rare for employed refugees to have found a job that is commensurable with their experience, education, or qualifications. It is more common that refugees find employment in low skilled jobs with poor conditions and little to no opportunities for advancement. Davey and Jones state: "As professional identity is both core to self-identity and vulnerable to the loss of social recognition, this situation may threaten identity coherence and self-esteem leading to conscious identity work where former professionals struggle to achieve recognition and maintain a coherent self-identity in their new social and cultural context."[29]

Davey and Jones write of the participants in their study by stating:

> "The fear of being 'nothing' was rooted in refugees' ongoing experiences of loss that continued as they encountered barriers [...] in the job market. The loss for some participants was not only of professional status, but of being a contributing member of society. Shireen, for example, described a complete reversal in her capacity to 'make a contribution' as a practicing medical professional in her field: 'You feel how useful I had been there and just not here, nothing.' For Mariama, a former medical professional, her sense of being 'worth nothing.'"

Fulfilling work can be empowering for refugees attempting to integrate and grow roots in a new country. Employment decreases feelings of isolation and contributes to creating new social networks. It also aids in cultural acclimation and language acquisition. For many refugees, building a career path in their new country is the greatest signifier of achieving success in the United States.[30]

28 Mackenzie Davey K and Jones C, "Refugees' Narratives of Career Barriers and Professional Identity" (2019) 25 Career Development International 49

29 Mackenzie Davey K and Jones C, "Refugees' Narratives of Career Barriers and Professional Identity" (2019) 25 Career Development International 49

30 Yakushko O and others, "Career Development Concerns of Recent Immigrants and Refugees" (2008) 34 Journal of Career Development 362

6. What is the approach to career pathways for refugees in the United States?

The main approaches to career pathways for refugees in the United States stem from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), federal legislation called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and community based organizations with federal, state, and/or private funding.

ORR manages everything regarding refugee resettlement in the United States. They have a focus area called *The Refugee Career Pathways Program* (RCP), which works to assist refugees to obtain credentials, skills, education, and experience in order to find employment in skilled fields and achieve self-sufficiency. RCP provides grants to resettlement programs across the country in order to provide funding and training for agencies' staff to help refugees access information career pathways and create individualized career pathway plans for entry into employment and advancement. However, this is a new program, as it was only founded in 2018. Its creation followed the recognition that ORR's focus through the decades on securing initial survival jobs for new arrivals was not sufficient support to ensure long term success. Thus, RCP was born and adopted the career pathways approach used by community college programs and adult education centres under WIOA (explored below), which was created for native born Americans, immigrants, and refugees alike. RCP states that they are focused on: creating individualized career pathway plans, providing classroom and work-based learning opportunities, offering career coaching, recognizing credentials, and providing English language training (Refugee Career Pathways). However, RCP's infancy, lack of funding from the federal budget, and general unfamiliarity with this topic has made it largely effective over the past two years. The impact of RCP will ebb and flow as priorities and funding streams change as administrations change.

ORR also manages the Refugee Microenterprise Development program, which they describe as helping "refugees develop, expand or maintain their own businesses and become financially independent. To equip refugees with the skills they need to become successful entrepreneurs, the program provides training and technical assistance in: business plan development, management, bookkeeping, marketing [and includes] business technical assistance or short-term training, credit in the form of micro-loans up to a maximum of $15,000." In 2019, there were twenty-one grantees receiving $4.5 million in grants (About Microenterprise Development). The aim of the Refugee Microenterprise Development program is a step in the right direction to forging career pathways for refugees, but for now the scale and funding is too small to have enough impact. This program is also widely unknown, and therefore difficult for refugees to access.

WIOA was enacted in 2013 to assist individuals in obtaining and retaining high-quality employment in high-quality jobs. The legislation outlines and provides funding for specific workforce preparation undertakings, such as:

> "activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment."[31]

While this legislation was written with anyone living in the United States in mind, immigrants and refugees have benefited greatly from its inception. This legislation has created a great shift in how WIOA funded colleges and community based organizations operate. These agencies can provide free English as a second language classes, citizenship preparation classes, high school equivalency classes, workforce preparation classes, integrated education and training (which will be explored below), and individualized career counselling and transition support. There is now also funding for training and professional development to help educate instructors and support staff on how to best support individuals' within their individual career pathways. WIOA also called for the creation of job centres called "one stops," which are located throughout the country and act as a referral system. Individuals can call the job centre and provide information about

31 "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act" (*United States Department of Labor*) <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa> accessed April 4, 2022

their location, schedule, and desired courses, training, or job placement, and the job centre staff will route them to the correct provider. Seven years after its enactment, state governments, colleges, and community based programs are still learning how to implement these aims on the ground, but great strides have been made.

WIOA created Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs. IET is an approach in which adult education and literacy is offered concurrently with workforce preparation courses for specific occupation fields, with the aim of career advancement. All IET programs must contain three elements: adult education and literacy, workforce preparation (soft skills), and workforce training (hard skills), all of which should support the plans of local workforce boards. This process and funding is overseen by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE).[32]

The following is an example of an IET program in a refugee context. A refugee resettlement agency in New York can offer an Advanced Information Technology certification course, in which students finish with a certificate that would allow them to be hired in the IT Support Field. The course must offer the hard skills training required of the certificate, but it must also offer soft skills training, such as: cultural orientation to working in the United States, resume writing, and interview preparation. The course must also be accompanied by a support class that ensures participants have the knowledge and skills they need to complete the certification course. This support class is generally a content-specific English language class, but could also be a computer class if a participant needs to improve their digital literacy skills. Participants in IET courses are generally also assigned to transition coordinators who serve as career counsellors and can help with job placement, applying for university, or evaluating transcripts from countries of origin. Generally, larger community colleges offer IETs in sectors such as nursing, as those courses require an investment in more hands-on equipment. Whereas smaller community based programs and resettlement agencies tend to offer IETs in sectors where certifications can be offered through online coursework, such as information technology, early childhood education, and medical billing. These programs are growing throughout the country and successfully placing participants in self-sustaining jobs. However, IETs are only offered in a few sectors, which leaves refugees without many options. Also, the administrators, instructors, and support staff who are attempting to build these programs are flying the plane as they are building it, as the concept of IET courses is new and professional development providers are working to build training for instructors and coordinators on how to best provide these services.

Privately funded community based organizations are also helping aid refugees with their career pathways, through training, upskilling, and placement. The first and leading organization
in this field within the United States is Upwardly Global. They provide support for skilled immigrant and refugee workforce integration, by targeting those who have a bachelor's degree or higher (from any country). According to their data, 30% of refugees over the age of 25 who arrive in the United States have a university degree, which is a similar percentage to native born Americans. Upwardly Global believes that investing in this skilled refugee workforce creates great advantages for the economies and communities they are living in. They target this population in hope that they are more likely to gain employment that is commensurate with their background and fill vacancies in sectors where the United States is experiencing shortages of workers. They also focus on higher skilled jobs, as they are more likely to pay family-sustaining wages. In 2016, Upwardly Global helped place 855 into professional positions with an average salary of $47,000. Those 855 participants generated $38 million in tax revenue.[33]

Upwardly Global achieves this success by providing customized support and online training to immigrants and refugees, to help them fulfil their economic potential in the United States. They have built a diverse and vast professional network of alumni, employer partners, and volunteers. Through these partnerships, they have been able to create three initiatives, called: Upskilling, Mid-Career Internships, and Pre-Apprenticeships. The Upskilling program helps refugees gain supplemental skills to make them more hireable in

32 "Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act" (*United States Department of Labor*) <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa> accessed April 4, 2022

33 Satar H, "Refugees Contribute: Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S." (2017) <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RefugeesContribute_StrategiesforSkilledRefugeeIntegration.pdf> accessed April 6, 2022

their original field, versus reskilling or training them in a new field. For example, they have a program for refugees with a background in IT, in which they can complete a Google-sponsored, US-recognized, online IT certification course through a platform called Coursera. This program can increase their language skills, technical skills, and marketability. The Mid-Career Internship program was designed to be a hybrid between an internship and apprenticeship, and they are three-month paid positions. This allows refugees to gain professional skills and experience while continuing to provide for themselves and their families. The model is also a contract-to-hire format, in which the refugee may be hired full time at the end of their internship. that allows the job seeker to receive on-the-job training while working towards full employment. The tech travel company, TripIt, participates in this program. They provide internships and employment opportunities for refugees, and Upwardly Global provides them with cultural orientations regarding hiring refugees. The Pre-Apprenticeship program is designed for refugees who are IT job seekers, and who already have the hard skills needed but need more soft skills training to prepare them for work in the United States. These paid internships are offered in San Francisco and are funded by Accenture and JP Morgan Chase. Upwardly Global also partners with Enhanced ESL Education First (EF) to provide English language training which is entirely virtual, so that barriers such as transportation, childcare and work schedules are not an issue. They also provide sector-specific English classes in areas such as: medical, legal, business, scientific, and industrial.[34] In the following case study, the importance of career pathway assistance from similar such organizations will be illustrated.

34 Satar H, "Refugees Contribute: Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S." (2017) <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RefugeesContribute_StrategiesforSkilledRefugeeIntegration.pdf> accessed April 6, 2022

7. Case Study: Career Pathways for Soviet Refugees in the United States

The subsequent case study provides more of a voice for refugees who experienced the process of forging career pathways after being resettled in the United States, and creates an opportunity to explore the richness of their experiences. I chose to focus on Soviet refugees arriving in the United States during the 1990s as a case study for the topic of this paper, because in the history of refugee resettlement in the United States, this was the closest to an ideal situation for incoming refugees. The factors for this will be explored below. However, despite all of the elements working in favour of Soviet refugees, which have not been afforded to other groups of refugees throughout the decades, Soviet refugees still greatly struggled with securing self-sustaining wages and/or fulfilling professions in the United States. There are countless stereotypes and anecdotes in the United States about Russian immigrants who were nuclear physicists in their home country and became taxi drivers in the United States, for example. Additionally, many of those who are a part of this population are now retired or close to reaching retirement. Therefore, they could add the light of hindsight to questions about who or what helped them the most on their career pathway and what hindered them the most, versus populations who have arrived more recently and may still be in the midst of forging their career pathways.

Beginning in the late 1980s, the United States was resettling large numbers of Soviet refugees. In 1989, the New York Times wrote an article describing 1,606 refugees arriving from the Soviet Union in a single day, and showed images of Americans meeting them at the airport holding signs of welcome.[35] When President Bush attempted to instate a ceiling of 50,000 Soviet refugees to be resettled in the United States per year, many Americans expressed that they were unhappy with this decrease.[36] There was significantly more public support in the United States for resettling Soviet refugees, versus resettling refugees as a whole in the United States today. As will be explored below, Soviet Refugees who arrived in the United States had many factors working in their favour in terms of integration and employment, including: (1) high education level, (2) small number of children, (3) belonging to the majority race, (4) concentration in cities, (5) public support, and (6) strength in numbers. Soviet refugees, generally speaking, experienced reduced versions of the barriers outlined in the earlier section regarding barriers. I wondered, if the career pathway system for refugees did not function for Soviet refugees under rosier circumstances than most, then how can the United States better create a system that sets up incoming refugees for success?

When conducting my literature review, I did not find much information regarding career pathways for this population during this time. There were two somewhat similar studies that I did come across. The earliest study I found was Chiswick's *"Soviet Jews in the United States: An Analysis of Their Linguistic and Economic Adjustment"* from 1993. Chiswick notes that there was a lack of research or general information on Soviet refugees, as compared with other refugee groups at the time. He recognizes that the majority of refugee research at the time concerned Cuban and Indo-Chinese refugees. He uses the information on Cuban and Indo-Chinese refugees as a comparative point. He used 1980s census information to analyse the earnings and English language level of Jewish Soviet refugees. He also conducted a literature review. He found that statistically, Soviet refugees were highly educated and were disproportionately professionals in their home country. They also tended to be older than is the average for migrants to the United States, with the majority falling between 18-45 years old. He notes that the majority of Soviet refugees were families with 1-2 children, which is a smaller number of children on average than many other populations of resettled refugees. He reports that Soviet refugees also had higher rates of intermarriage with Americans than other groups of refugees in the United States. The majority of them were resettled with federal funds and a smaller percentage were resettled with private funds from Jewish organizations. However, he found that Soviet refugees had a difficult initial adjustment, due to the economic importance of English language acquisition.[37]

Chiswick notes four common themes he found from his research. The first was that, culturally, Soviet refu-

35 Goldman A, "Russian Jews Come to U.S. In Big Group" *New York Times* (September 29, 1989) <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A175758790/AONE?u=ull_ttdaandsid=AONEandxid=847279bc> accessed April 6, 2022

36 Pear, R, "Why the U.S. Closed the Door Halfway on Soviet Jews" *New York Times* (September 24, 1989) <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A175755350/AONE?u=ull_ttdaandsid=AONEandxid=158c9 c02> accessed 6 Apr. 2019

37 Chiswick BR, "Soviet Jews in the United States: An Analysis of Their Linguistic and Economic Adjustment" (1993) 27 International Migration Review 260

gees tied their self-esteem to their occupational status in their home country, and experienced a crisis of self upon migration when that status changed. They also reported that because they did not understand that the American labour market was more fluid than the rigid system in the Soviet Union, they believed that they would forever remain in their first job in the United States and would not be provided opportunities for growth or upward mobility. The second theme was that Soviet refugees experienced difficulty adjusting to American life due to the plurality of choices. In the American environment, people have endless choices in regards to everything, ranging from breakfast cereal and clothing all the way to housing and employment. This was a stark and uncomfortable contrast to the highly controlled environment of the Soviet Union, and many Soviet refugees felt paralysed by the availability of the volume of options. A third theme was the difficulty due to the great linguistic difference between English and Russian. Most Soviet refugees cited this as the more difficult part of acculturation, and yet it was the key to a higher occupational status. The fourth theme was the pattern of Soviet refugees accepting less skilled jobs instead of returning to their chosen professions, as a long-term solution. Chiswick notes that approximately 66% of Soviet refugees were in technical and managerial jobs pre-emigration, only 33% obtained similar jobs in the United States.[38]

A more recent article, by Vinokurov and Birman in 2000, is *"Psychological and Acculturation Correlates of Work Status among Soviet Jewish Refugees in the United States."* Vinokurov and Birman conducted a study of 206 Soviet refugees in regards to their work status, acculturation and psychological adaptation. The researchers employed the snowball method in order to maximize response rates, after finding that participation rates increased when participants were introduced to the survey by their social networks versus by the researchers. They found a strong correlation among work status, acculturation and psychological adaptation. Refugees who were able to obtain employment in the same field they occupied pre-migration reported higher earnings, higher acculturation, higher English fluency, and ultimately higher life satisfaction. The participants who were unemployed or who experienced occupational downgrading reported lower scores in these areas. Vinokurov and Birman reported similar demographic findings to Chiswick, which helped differentiate Soviet refugees from other groups. They found that the average age of arrival was approximately 39 years, which is 10-14 years older than the average age of other refugee groups. They also found that the average family size was small, with most families having two children or less, unlike other refugee groups. They found that the majority of Soviet refugees, both male and female, were highly educated, with more than 2/3 of adults having a minimum of a college education. They also found that 70% of Soviet refugees held a "white collar" job pre-migration, as compared with Southeast Asian refugees at the time, who on average only 20% had more than a 12th grade education.[39]

I surveyed refugees from the former Soviet Union who were resettled in the United States in the 1990s and were between the ages of 30-50 years old (mid-career) when they moved. The questions pertained to their level of education and career in their home country, and then what jobs they found after moving to the United States, what help they received in looking for work, and what would have been more helpful in the process. I interviewed refugees from the former Soviet Union who were resettled in the United States in the 1990s and were between the ages of 30-50 years old (mid-career) when they moved. The questions pertained to their level of education and career in their home country, and then what jobs they found after moving to the United States, what help they received in looking for work, and what would have been more helpful in the process. Of the 20 respondents, all of them worked in professional fields pre-migration and eleven held a graduate degree. Most of them mentioned the difficulty of learning English and/or navigating the American labor market as their most significant challenges. The majority mentioned receiving some help from their resettlement agencies and a few mentioned using friends as connections to employment. Some of them mentioned issues of time and money due to the responsibility of having a family to care for. Of the 20 respondents, six were able to return to what they considered their chosen field of work, but none of them returned to the same level they previously held within their respective fields. It is clear from the responses that this change was generally felt to be a considerable loss. Below are a few sample

38 Chiswick BR, "Soviet Jews in the United States: An Analysis of Their Linguistic and Economic Adjustment" (1993) 27 International Migration Review 260

39 Vinokurov A, Birman D and Trickett E, "Psychological and Acculturation Correlates of Work Status among Soviet Jewish Refugees in the United States" (2000) 34 International Migration Review 538

cases that reflect this loss:[40]

- SR03 was 27 when she came from Ukraine to the United States in 1990. She has a BA in Structural Engineering (Design of Bridges and tunnels), and worked as a Junior Engineering Technician in Ukraine. She was able to return to a similar job in the United States, but only after years of English classes prepared her to return to school and earn her Master's degree. She said the other key element was individualized employment coaching and interview preparation provided by an NGO. She states that it is crucial to "have reasonable expectations, prepare to work long hours and be sure of yourself."

- SR05 was 34 when she came from Russia to the United States in 1993. She has two MA degrees in Spanish and English. She worked as English professor in Russia, and eventually found work as a teaching assistant in the United States. She states that it was helpful that she already knew english. "I had a poor idea of the education system in the United States as a whole and did not understand at all how schools were organized. It is necessary to spend time studying the country, the system, in order to understand what needs to be done and how to achieve it as soon as possible."

- SR09 was 36 when she left Belarus for the United States in 1990. She has an MA in Architecture. In Belarus, she worked as an Architect. In the United States, she said she worked multiple positions but none related to her specialty. She said she did not have the required English, but even more so the "processes were completely different" and she was not sure how to navigate a path back to architecture.

- SR11 was 39 when she left Russia for the United States in 1990. She has a BA in Mechanical Engineering, and she had a job as an engineer in Russia. Once in the United States, she studied English and then the Jewish Federation offered her a job where she solicited donation pledges. The Jewish Federation helped her return to school and she ended up working as a computer programmer. She states: "It was tough to find a job in the United States. There were several things that were needed: good English, a car and experience in America. Also, the resume was something new for us, leave alone a cover letter. We did not understand the culture: for example when we were told 'Do not call us, we will call you' then we were full of hope expecting a call soon."

- SR13 was 48 when he left Russia for the United States in 1996. He has an MA in Engineering, and he worked as project manager in a factory in Russia. In the United States the Jewish Federation helped him find work as a factory operator. He stated that "certifications from American university and connections within [the] field here would have helped." He also notes: "I took the first job I could find to support my family. It was very hard."

- SR17 was 30 when she left Uzbekistan for the United States in 1993. She has a BA in Computer science, and she worked as a computer science teacher in Uzbekistan. In the United States, she found work as a medical biller. She states: "In my situation, I would say, I was overqualified for the job position that I have applied, but I had minimum knowledge of English. I feel disappointed, that I haven't got a job in Computer Science field."

- SR20 was 44 when she left Russia for the United States in 1996. She has an MA in Spanish, and she worked as a Spanish professor in Russia. In the United States she found work in a financial call center. She said that the Jewish Federation helped her create a resume and prepare for interviews. She notes that the prospect of changing jobs after immigrating was "very hard." She says: "I had to give up my teaching career because of the difficulty of getting recertified."[41]

As gleaned from Chiswick, Vinokurov and Birman's work, as well as affirmed by this survey, many themes are evident regarding Soviet Refugees who arrived in the United States, including: (1) education level, (2) number of children, (3) race, (4) concentration in cities, (5) public support, and (6) strength in numbers. Soviet refugees, generally speaking, experienced reduced versions of the barriers outlined in the earlier

40 Interviews with Katherine Neginskiy, "Career Pathway Survey" (August 13, 2021) personal

41 Interviews with Katherine Neginskiy, "Career Pathway Survey" (August 13, 2021) personal

section regarding barriers. First, because the group possessed a disproportionately high education level, they already had the study skills needed to learn English, they would have been less intimidated by the prospect of attending training programs or community college courses, they had the prospect of possibly transferring their credits, certifications or degrees, and they would have been more comfortable navigating systems. This, as opposed to other refugee populations who may arrive with lower education levels and feel unprepared for English classes, formal vocational training programs, and workforce preparation assistance. Second, because the group on average had 1-2 children per family, they incurred a smaller expense for food, rent, and childcare. This, as opposed to other refugee populations who averaged higher numbers of children and then incurred greater financial burdens, therefore limiting their choices regarding how much time and money they could spend on additional education and training. Third, this group overwhelmingly consisted of white people, which aided in their integration. Other groups of refugees experience significant barriers to employment due to issues in the United States with racism. Fourth, Soviet refugees were mostly concentrated together in cities. This provides the benefit of both building community with other Soviets as well as having more social services and educational opportunities available to them. This, as opposed to other refugee populations throughout United States history who have been grouped in more rural areas, such as Virginia, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and therefore have less access to services. Fifth, as mentioned above, the resettling of Soviet refugees enjoyed much more public support than the resettlement program has since, notably since 2016. That is not to say Soviet refugees did not experience prejudice, but the prevalence was less of an issue than it has been with other populations of refugees and under other federal administrations. Lastly, they had strength in numbers. Soviet refugees were arriving in such large numbers, that NGOs and education centres ensured they had Russian speaking staff to help with new arrivals, large community centres with helpful resources were established in every urban centre, and Russian speaking neighbourhoods swelled, offering social services, Russian language newspapers and bookstores, and Eastern European grocery stores. So again I ask, if the career pathway system for refugees did not function for Soviet refugees under rosier circumstances than most, then how can the United States better create a system that sets up incoming refugees for success? The remainder of the paper will explore what innovations are happening in other resettlement countries and recommendations for how to strengthen career pathways in the United States.[42]

42 Chiswick BR, "Soviet Jews in the United States: An Analysis of Their Linguistic and Economic Adjustment" (1993) 27 International Migration Review 260

8. What career pathway innovations are happening in other countries?

This portion of the paper will explore career programming in Canada and Sweden, in order to glean if there are best practices and approaches that could be harnessed by the United States as well. Canada and Sweden accept significantly higher ratios of refugees compared with their native-born population than the United States does. In 2018, there were 92,000 refugees who were accepted for third country resettlement. This number was down from 189,000 in 2016 and 103,000 in 2017, despite a record increase in the number of refugees worldwide, which reached 20.4 million. In 2017, The United States resettled more refugees than all others who provide third country resettlement combined, but this number has sharply decreased due to Trump's setting of a much lower cap on the number of refugees to be accepted. In 2018, Canada resettled more refugees than any other third country, by accepting 28,000 as compared with 23,000 in the United States. Canada also resettles the most refugees in the world if you compare the number of resettled refugees to the number of native-born citizens. In 2018, Canada resettled 756 refugees per every one million residents, as compared with the United States who resettled only 70 refugees per every one million residents. Australia comes in second with 510 refugees per one million residents and Sweden comes in third with 493 refugees resettled per one million residents.[43]

8.1 Canada

In many ways, the career pathways system in Canada looks quite similar to that in the United States. The overall funding and planning happens within the federal government, and the implementation is handled mostly by colleges and non-profit organizations. However, career pathways programming in the United States is generally created with all adults in mind, versus creating specific pathways for refugees or immigrants. Canada has taken some unique steps to recognize the unique circumstances that refugees encounter when attempting to forge career paths.

In early 2021, Canada announced they intend to accept 401,000 immigrants this year. They have created an "Express Entry" program that targets skilled migrants in specific fields where Canada is experiencing a lack of workers. To begin with, the following ten areas will be targeted: banking managers, advertising and marketing managers, public relations managers, corporate sales managers, financial auditors and accountants, financial and investment analysts, human resources professionals, business management consultants, registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses, and marketing researchers and consultants.[44] Generally, unlike the United States, Canada recognizes foreign-born workers as an asset and a possible solution to the issue of labour shortages. Canada is quick to pivot in order to address both their own labour market needs and the needs of refugees, relative to the United States. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Canada recognized the urgent need for more professionals in the healthcare field, and created a program which allowed refugees with backgrounds in nursing or medicine to work as Personal Support Workers (PSWs). This applied to refugees who had already been resettled, but also included an expedited visa program for refugees to come to Canada quicker. Canada worked together with an NGO, Talent Beyond Boundaries, which helps connect displaced people to jobs in safe countries.[45]

Canada also has a robust private sponsorship program which offers many alternative routes for refugee resettlement. This program allows for individual families, churches, universities, previously resettled refugees, and other entities to sponsor and manage the resettlement and integration process for a newly arrived refugee. This program offers additional flexibility and more personalized pathways for new arrivals. The resettlement program in the United States does not officially allow for this, as resettlement is subject

43 Radford J and Connor P, "Canada Now Leads the World in Refugee Resettlement, Surpassing the U.S." (*Pew Research Center*August 20, 2020) <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/19/canada-now-leads-the-world-in-refugee-resettlement-surpassing-the-u-s/> accessed April 4, 2022

44 Thevenot S, "Why Start the Express Entry Process in 2021?: Canada Immigration News" (*CIC News*February 22, 2021) <https://www.cicnews.com/2021/02/why-start-the-express-entry-process-in-2021-0217172.html#g s.u6epx5> accessed April 4, 2022

45 Alhmidi M, "Admitted to Canada under Pilot Program, Refugee Nurses Ready for Work as PSWs" (*CityNews*2020) <https://www.citynews1130.com/2020/09/18/admitted-to-canada-under-pilot-program-refugee-nurses-ready-for-work-as-psws/> accessed April 4, 2022

to federal oversight. This means that some irregular movements into the United States do occur, when displaced people do not fit into the set refugee pipeline in the United States. In Canada, these private sponsorships are accounted for by Canada's resettlement programming and private sponsors sign sponsorship agreements with the government. This helps create a variety of pathways for displaced people while still allowing the government to ensure that a minimum level of support and protection is afforded to new arrivals. Private sponsorship also reduces the aforementioned barriers, because refugees receive more individualized informational, emotional, and monetary support[46]

The 2018 article, "*Examining the Intersection of Race, Gender, Class, and Age on Post-Secondary Education and Career Trajectories of Refugees*" studies the intersection of gender, race, age and other factors influences career trajectories of refugees in Canada, and also outlines an innovative curriculum model that has shown to help refugees forge career pathways. The researchers studied two cohorts of participants who took part in courses which used an "anti-oppressive principles" (AOP) curriculum, which was designed to support refugees as they bridge between educational programming and their career paths. The AOP framework was designed in Canada as a way to counteract power dynamics in education that are connected to social and historical injustices. The framework is also meant to boost self-esteem and help participants learn how to find and access the supports they need. The AOC framework includes activities confronting racism and discrimination, which take the form of role playing and case studies. The premise is that:

> Oppression is the use of power to disempower, marginalize, silence, or subordinate one social group or category, often to further empower and/or privilege the oppressor. [The AOC program] seeks to recognize oppression in our society, mitigate its effects, and equalize the power imbalance in our communities. The program's content and method of instruction considered the structural, economic, racial, social, and gendered disadvantages faced by refugees, and addressed their loneliness, loss of social support, lack of access, and sense of exclusion. Program facilitators and researchers adjusted to the content and methods of instruction used in the classroom to cater to the needs of the most marginalized participants, often the older women of colour. Efforts were made to create a safe space for participants who had difficulty speaking up or engaging in a classroom.[47]

After completing courses which employed AOC principles, the participants were surveyed. They were asked if they observed breakdowns in their personal barriers to a career path, and 39 out of 41 responded "yes." They were also asked if they better understood how to pursue their career goals, 38 out of 41 responded "yes." One participant noted: "I started communicating with people and smiling to strangers *(laughs*). My networking has improved. Before I had only three friends, but now I have many. I learnt more about myself, that I am more interactive. My self-esteem is higher now, and I can confidently ask for what I need, though I still get nervous sometimes with people and situations, but I now know what I need to do." The AOC framework is also designed to help participants understand and navigate the Canadian education and employment systems, as well as learn to handle challenges. Another participant noted: "I am able to see my place in the larger Canadian context and understand what I am going through." The program also includes the use of counsellors with an understanding of how refugees' traumatic experiences have an effect on their learning and hopefulness. The AOC framework is meant to design a classroom to be a safe space where participants can redefine their identity and increase hopefulness. The researchers conclude: "the findings suggest that a supportive educational model that promotes self-esteem and a sense of belonging is critical to combat the structural, financial, and intersectional factors that restrict access to higher education and the pursuit of educational-career goals."[48]

8.2 Sweden

Most research on employment patterns of Swedish immigrants concerns their employment only after

46 Rush N, "Is Canada Number One in Refugee Resettlement?" (*CIS.org* 2021) <https://cis.org/Rush/Canada-Number-One-Refugee-Resettlement> accessed April 4, 2022

47 Bajwa JK and others, "Examining the Intersection of Race, Gender, Class, and Age on Post-Secondary Education and Career Trajectories of Refugees" (2018) 34 Refuge 113

48 Bajwa JK and others, "Examining the Intersection of Race, Gender, Class, and Age on Post-Secondary Education and Career Trajectories of Refugees" (2018) 34 Refuge 113

they immigrated, and generally the focus is on comparing immigrant employment patterns with those of native-born Swedes. Until the 1970s, the unemployment rate amongst immigrants was similar to that of native-born Swedes. This began to change in subsequent decades, as the unemployment rate amongst immigrants slowly rose higher than that of native-born Swedes. Additionally, immigrants to Sweden tend to have lower employment mobility than native-born Swedes. In 2005, The Swedish Integration Board reported that 64% of immigrants in Sweden (40% of which are refugees) were employed, working towards a goal of 80% employment. Both percentages are high as compared with other resettlement countries. The Swedish Integration Board stated having an open labour market that immigrants can access, as well as breaking down segregation in cites, are the keys to helping immigrant employment rates remain relatively high. During an economic crisis in the 1990s, the employment rate for immigrants fell from 76% to 55% but has since been increasing as Sweden rebuilt. Sweden also took a specific interest in ensuring women were employed, as they generally experience a lower employment rate worldwide. Employment rates for immigrant women in Sweden have doubled since 1997.[49]

Upon seeing that research regarding employment mobility in relation to country of origin and destination country was lacking across Europe, Rooth and Ekberg published "Occupational Mobility for Immigrants in Sweden."[50] They studied skilled refugees from four ethnic groups (Chileans, Ethiopians/Eritreans, Iranians, and Romanians/Hungarians) and their employment mobility during their first 15 years living in Sweden.

The researchers conducted interviews with 559 men who came to Sweden as refugees in 1987-1989, from Ethiopia/Eritrea, Chile, Iran, or Romania, and were 20-40 years old upon arrival. When they were interviewed, they had been in Sweden for at least 14 years. The interviews consisted of questions about education level and work experience in their country of origin and then questions about their employment mobility once in Sweden. Their findings show "U-shaped" employment mobility over time. For the majority of the refugees studied, their first job in Sweden was at a lower level than the job they held in their country of origin. This was owed mostly to issues with transferring documentation of skills between countries and issues of discrimination. However, with time, most of the refugees were able to return to a position at a similar level to that which they held in their country of origin. The researchers note that the "U-shape" was deeper for refugees the higher the employment status they held pre-immigration. They also note that the speed of upward mobility was directly correlated with the speed of Swedish language acquisition. Rooth and Ekberg recommend that more studies should be conducted to learn about the education and employment patterns of foreign-born workers in various countries, as they note that little research has been done in regards to understanding how to best ensure these workers find employment better in line with their knowledge and skills.[51]

Unlike in the United States, governmental agencies in Sweden are responsible for all elements of resettlement, with NGOs only providing a small supporting role. This allows for a very streamlined process for new arrivals. The Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) is in charge of coordinating refugee integration programming. PES provides individualized introduction programs for every refugee, which varies in length and content depending on the needs of the refugee identified by their personal caseworkers. The introduction programs are free and are generally 40 hours per week, and can include language classes, social orientation courses, rapid labour market integration and professional training. Refugees may be assigned an individual guide or coordinator to support their education, training activities, and job searches. Those taking part in the introduction program are compensated with stipends of around 27 euros per day and are also allowed an allowance to purchase anything needed for their homes. In this case, refugees have less pressure to decide between furthering their education and integration in hopes of finding better work at a later date versus needed to secure an immediate survival job in order to provide for themselves and their families.

PES has created "step in" jobs to help refugees gain immediate work experience in Sweden. PES offers subsidies to employers, like IKEA and H&M, to offer positions to refugees that include on-the-job training,

49 Ekberg J, "Immigration and the Public Sector: Income Effects for the Native Population in Sweden" (1999) 12 Journal of Population Economics 411

50 Rooth D-O and Ekberg J, "Occupational Mobility for Immigrants in Sweden" (2006) 44 International Migration 57

51 Rooth D-O and Ekberg J, "Occupational Mobility for Immigrants in Sweden" (2006) 44 International Migration 57

language learning opportunities, additional skills training. Refugees are paid and receive documentation which validates their experience and skills. IKEA also expanded similar programming to Canada in 2018.[52] Sweden also considers how to place refugees without Swedish language skills into employment, with creative programming. One such example is an employment initiative formed between PES and the Swedish Trotting Association in which refugees work with horses. The Swedish horse industry provides 30,000 jobs which are mostly manual, and therefore provide a suitable entry position for those beginning to learn Swedish.[53]

PES has also created a more long term program called *Snabbspåret* ("Fast Track" in English), in which refugees with relevant skills are placed into employment in fields that are experiencing a shortage of workers. They have established a series of career tracks, like healthcare or teaching, and then provide Swedish language instruction, on-the-job training, mentoring and career counselling. The medical track has created systems to quickly verify and recognize medical industry credentials from other countries. The chef track allows participants to take the workplace examination in their native language, in order to expedite an employment start date. The teaching track is being offered at five universities throughout Sweden and consists of a 26-week program which includes Swedish language, pedagogy, and European standards. The teaching track is even offered partially in Arabic, for participants who speak Arabic. Before the creation of this program, it would take participants four years to receive the necessary training to be hired as a teacher. The tracks are successful because they are a confluence of interests between policy makers, employers, social service agents, and the refugees themselves. Instead of providing one-off vocational training courses and varying opportunities which create isolation and confusion, the tracks provide a structured career pathway that benefits refugees, employers, and the Swedish community as a whole.[54]

Based on the above exploration of career programming in Canada and Sweden, this paper proposes that the US could adapt some of these best practices and approaches. Canada has: created quick track systems for immigrants who hold certifications from other countries, allows for a supportive and individualized private sponsorship program, and has piloted a curriculum framework based on anti-oppressive principles to ensure that education programming provides the emotional support refugees need to reach their employment goals. Sweden has: created a more streamlined system that reduces confusion for refugees navigating services, provides extensive orientation to new arrivals including individualized career counselling, built 'step-in' jobs for refugees to obtain employment quickly and learn the Swedish language on the job, and designed 'fast-tracks' that place refugees with relevant skills into fields with labour shortages. This paper cannot attest to the success of these programs on the ground, however, on paper these are innovative and promising programs that could complement and expand current programming in the United States. The next section of this paper will explore recommendations to support American career pathways, based on the current programming in the United States, Canada, and Sweden.

52 "IKEA Canada Launches Refugee Employment Program" (*IKEA CA*2018) <https://www.ikea.com/ca/en/this-is-ikea/newsroom/ikea-canada-launches-refugee-employment-p rogram-coast-to-coast-pub29159cd1> accessed April 4, 2022

53 "SWEDEN" (*European Resettlement Network*) <https://resettlement.eu/country/sweden> accessed April 6, 2022

54 "SWEDEN" (*European Resettlement Network*) <https://resettlement.eu/country/sweden> accessed April 6, 2022

9. Recommendations For Strengthening Career Pathways For Refugees In The United States

The following are recommendations to support American career pathways. Federal and state governments, NGOs and education centres, as well as businesses, all have roles to play in aiding to create career pathways for refugees and reduce barriers. Therefore the recommendations have been divided into those three categories. It is worth noting here that the overwhelming majority of these recommendations would also greatly benefit native-born Americans. Recommendations for changes to education and childcare and workforce are also changes that are needed by the general public, because many of the barriers listed earlier in the paper are not unique to refugees, but can be experienced by adults in any country.

9.1 Recommendations for Policy Change

This first section addresses recommendations for policy change. American governmental policies write the rules for how NGOs and education centres are funded and operated, so the change must begin with policy. The first recommendation is to increase funding for NGOs and education centres. The increase in funding could be used for providing stipends for refugees taking part in vocational training or certification programs. A stipend would alleviate the pressure for participants to work, so that they do not need to choose between earning money in a survival job or taking part in a training that could benefit their future. Additionally, increased funding for NGOs and education centres, so that they have the necessary funds to implement the recommendations to follow.

Second, the federal government could widen the Refugee Resettlement Program's focus in order to include not only early employment and basic self-sufficiency, but to create a model that also focuses on evaluating each refugee's long term employment needs in order to better develop the additional skills, credentials, and human capital that will increase their career prospects.[55] This expanded focus would help combat the issue of refugees receiving conflicting information about pathways, when their resettlement agency is pushing for survival jobs and their education centres are pushing for long term career plans. This is similar to Sweden's 'step-in' jobs which serve the purpose of a survival job but also are intended to build language skills and add experience to resumes so that employees can advance in their careers. An elongated model would help refugees visualize how it is possible to secure the necessary, survival employment upon arrival, but eventually begin to plot a path through additional training or education and career advancement.

Third, state governments and professional associations could create simplified and expedited procedures for recognizing foreign skills, credentials, and degrees. This would be especially helpful in professional areas in which the United States experiences a shortage of workers, such as in teaching and nursing.[56] The US Department of Education and US Department of Labour could also work with states to build additional credentialing programs to enable refugees to transition into employment in their chosen fields, simultaneously addressing labour shortages in specific states.[57] There is a great need for a shared approach to the recognition of prior learning, skills, and qualifications, whether formal or informal, as well as an understanding of the transferability of these skills. In Scotland, work is being done to create a toolkit for stakeholders and employers, which would map out ways to assess and document previous learning, skills, and certifications, internationally.[58] As mentioned above, Canada is experiencing success with targeting areas in which they are experiencing labour shortages and then creating express pathways to employment for

55 Kerwin D, "The US Refugee Resettlement Program — a Return to First Principles: How Refugees Help to Define, Strengthen, and Revitalize the United States"

56 Mackenzie Davey K and Jones C, "Refugees' Narratives of Career Barriers and Professional Identity" (2019) 25 Career Development International 49

57 Kerwin D, "The US Refugee Resettlement Program — a Return to First Principles: How Refugees Help to Define, Strengthen, and Revitalize the United States"

58 Guest and Vecchia, "Scoping Study on Support Mechanisms for the Recognition of the Skills, Learning and Qualifications of Migrant Workers and Refugees" (*Migration Scotland* 2010) <http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/guest-and-vecchia-2010-scoping-study-support-mechanisms-recognition-skills-learning-and> accessed April 6, 2022

those who hold foreign credentials in those fields.

Fourth, federal and state governments need to find avenues to provide more affordable (or free) childcare. Childcare services in the United States are very expensive, averaging $790 per month, per child (much more in urban areas, where refugees tend to be located) (Procare, 2021). With many refugees working survival jobs at minimum wage ($15 per hour in the United States), the cost of childcare often limits their choices in regards to time and money being spent on additional vocational training and certification programs.[59] This issue also disproportionately affects women who have children, but are interested in joining the workforce.

Fifth, the federal government could expand the Refugee Microenterprise Development program, which as mentioned earlier, gives microloans and entrepreneurial technical assistance to assist refugees with creating their own businesses.[60] If funding was available to refugees to build their own businesses, then NGOs and education centres could assist with creating training for how to do so. This recommendation will be explored further in the following section.

9.2 Recommendations for Non-Governmental Organizations and Education Centres

NGOs and adult education centres are already a crucial, vital source of information for refugees regarding vocational training and job placement. This practice should be continued, but it must be strengthened (Mackenzie Davey & Jones, 2020). First, adult education classes through NGOs and community colleges need to embed workforce preparation skills into their English as a second language and high school equivalency courses (Upwardly Global, 2017). Workforce preparation skills are the competencies that can help prepare individuals to obtain/ retain employment or advance in their career. Adult education also needs to embed critical life skills into their courses and training programs. These skills include: critical thinking, communication, processing and analysing information, self-awareness, problem-solving, navigating systems, adaptability and willingness to learn, respecting differences and diversity, and interpersonal skills. This is occurring more and more, through programs such as the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) and American Institute for Research's (AIR) development of a professional development program for adult education instructors, called Teaching the Skills that Matter, in which instructors are trained on how to embed workforce preparation skills, financial literacy and other life skills into their existing curriculum.[61]

Second, workforce development programs could offer more virtual or hybrid courses in order to benefit refugees who experience barriers to attending in-person class sessions, such as childcare, current work schedule, and/or cumbersome commutes. One silver lining of the COVID-19 pandemic was that, while the challenges were great, a wealth of benefits was also clearly revealed over the past year. In Adult learning and education as a tool to contain pandemics: the COVID-19 experience, Lopes and McKay state that "during this time of crisis, adult education is even more invaluable to the socioeconomic wellbeing and social mobility of communities worldwide. It can contribute to equipping citizens with life skills that are critical for improving and maintaining adults' health and well-being during such challenging times."[62] As the adult education field looks towards the future of distance education, they can build upon the following benefits. To begin with, distance learning is an opportunity to build digital literacy. Digital literacy is much more than proficiency with foundational computer skills, but also the ability to use those skills creatively and fluently to better navigate their lives, learning, and the world.[63] Furthermore, distance learning sched-

59 Satar H, "Refugees Contribute: Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S." (2017) <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RefugeesContribute_StrategiesforSkilledRefugeeIntegration.pdf> accessed April 6, 2022

60 Kerwin D, "The US Refugee Resettlement Program — a Return to First Principles: How Refugees Help to Define, Strengthen, and Revitalize the United States"

61 Hamilton K, "The Skills That Matter in Adult Education" (*professional development catalog*) <https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/LINCSOfferings01_2011.pdf> accessed April 5, 2022

62 Lopes H and McKay V, "Adult Learning and Education as a Tool to Contain Pandemics: The Covid-19 Experience" (2020) 66 International Review of Education 575

63 Jacobs GE and Castek J, "Digital Problem Solving: The Literacies of Navigating Life in the Digital Age" (2018) 61 Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 681

ules are more flexible. In many ways, the flexibility of distance learning can help broaden the reach of adult learning. Learners can choose a synchronous or asynchronous schedule and pace that is compatible with their work and family obligations, without the added time and expense of a commute.[64] Also, distance learning is more flexible in terms of location. For example, students living in rural areas may have access to education that was previously geographically out of reach. Lastly, distance education requires a smaller investment in infrastructure for school, potentially making it more cost-effective, and ideally those savings could be passed along to the students by way of lower tuition rates.[65]

Third, as mentioned above, in addition to vocational training and certification courses, NGOs and adult education centres should also help to develop entrepreneurial pathways for refugees and build skill sets for self-employment. Due to a myriad of considerations, such as cultural and religious reasons, being self-employed may be a better option for some refugees. In addition to expanding microloan programs, as mentioned above, refugees need assistance learning how to navigate the process of opening their own business in the United States, for example, obtaining all of the correct permits. They may also need financial literacy education in order to calculate the costs and the profits of a potential business. Currently, NGOs mostly focus on child care, handicrafts, and food preparation as avenues for refugees in microenterprise, but these fields should be expanded. Entrepreneurship should be viewed as an avenue to increase independence and self-efficacy for refugees.[66]

Fourth, education and training programs should increase supportive services such as counselling. Research demonstrates that psychological and psychosocial health is critical for refugees to successfully transition into employment. Resettlement agencies in the United States generally provide initial trauma counselling upon arrival, but it would better serve refugees if counselling continued to be provided even after the refugee has secured employment.[67] Ideally, mental health supports should also be built into the classroom setting as well, as they are in the Canadian curriculum discussed above.

Lastly, NGOs and education centres need to continue to build partnerships with businesses and professional organizations that could hire or assist refugees in their job search. Sweden has set an example of how this can be accomplished in multiple ways. The NGOs and education centres could also function as ambassadors and help educate businesses and professional organizations regarding foreign degrees, refugee documentation in the United States, and international cultural differences in the workplace, in order to smooth the possible hiring process.[68] This recommendation will be explored further in the following section.

9.3 Recommendations for Businesses

Businesses also have a role to play in aiding to create career pathways for refugees and reduce barriers. Ideally the federal government would create tax incentives for businesses to train and/ hire refugees, but the following recommendations could be mutually beneficial to both the business and the refugee regardless of outside incentives. The United States could glean ideas from Sweden's use of paid apprenticeships and employer-provided, onsite language classes. If refugees can learn vocational skills and build language fluency, while being paid, then many of the barriers surrounding language acquisition, the time away from a survival job and cost of trainings are dutifully addressed. Additionally, employers benefit by having a dedicated workforce.

Aside from helping include refugees in the talent pipeline, as mentioned above, employers can also assist refugees with their transition into American employment by matching refugees with American employ-

64 Belzer A and others (Proliteracy 2020) rep <https://www.proliteracy.org/Portals/0/pdf/Research/COVID-19/COVID-19-Report.pdf >

65 Xu D and Jaggars SS, "The Impact of Online Learning on Students' Course Outcomes: Evidence from a Large Community and Technical College System" (2013) 37 Economics of Education Review 46

66 Yunus M and Weber K, *Creating a World without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism* (PublicAffairs 2011)

67 Iversen VC, Sveaass N and Morken G, "The Role of Trauma and Psychological Distress on Motivation for Foreign Language Acquisition among Refugees" (2012) 7 International Journal of Culture and Mental Health 59

68 Satar H, "Refugees Contribute: Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S." (2017) <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RefugeesContribute_StrategiesforSkilledRefugeeIntegration.pdf> accessed April 6, 2022

ees who can serve as mentors. Research has illustrated that when refugees are provided mentors who are local workers, they acquire better cultural orientation, life skills education, and job skill development, and therefore perform better at work in the long-term. Mentoring can also provide psychosocial support and career advising, as well as help identify a refugee's talent and skill set. These elements can contribute to job satisfaction and career growth.[69]

Currently, the NGOs and education centres in the United States are doing the heavy lifting in regards to creating career pathways for refugees. This is very challenging for the organizations and frustrating for the refugees, because there is little employer buy-in at the end of all the provided career counselling and vocational training. In order to truly create streamlined, efficient career pathways that work for both refugees and the country they are living in, there must be synergy between policy, programming and business.

69 Garavan TN, Carbery R and Rock A, "Mapping Talent Development: Definition, Scope and Architecture" (2012) 36 European Journal of Training and Development 5

10. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to explore career pathways for refugees who have been resettled in third countries. Upwardly Global eloquently states:

> "All refugees who bring their professional talent and skill sets to the United States should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. As a nation, we have an ethical responsibility to support those fleeing violence and persecution, as well as an economic incentive to facilitate refugees moving back into their careers. We all should have an interest in the full economic integration of refugees"[70]

This paper aimed to address three research questions. The first was: How is the United States addressing career pathways for resettled refugees? The barriers were identified as: language and communication, restrictions due to time and money, issues with certifications, gaps in work experience, accessing training and understanding employment in the United States, misinformation or conflicting information from organisations, general well-being and mental health, racism and prejudice, discrimination due to refugee status, cultural barriers, and issues surrounding social integration. Then, the main approaches to career pathways for refugees in the United States were addressed and identified as stemming from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a piece of federal legislation called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and community based organizations with private funding. Next, a case study provided a voice for refugees who experienced the process of forging career pathways, through surveying Soviet refugees arriving in the United States during the 1990s. In the United States, there may have been no more of an ideal situation for incoming refugees. However, despite all of the elements working in favour of Soviet refugees, which have not been afforded to other groups of refugees throughout the decades, Soviet refugees still greatly struggled with securing self-sustaining wages and/or fulfilling professions in the United States.

The case study addressed the need to look elsewhere for solutions, which brings up the second question: What career pathway innovations are happening in other countries? Canada and Sweden were chosen as examples as they accept significantly higher ratios of refugees compared with their native-born population than the United States does, and both states employ innovative programming to address career pathways. Canada's quick track systems for immigrants who hold certifications from other countries, private sponsorship programs, and curriculum framework based on anti-oppressive principles were explored. Sweden's streamlined system that reduces confusion for refugees navigating services, extensive orientation to new arrivals including individualized career counselling, 'step-in' jobs with onsite language classes, and 'fast-tracks' that place refugees with relevant skills into fields with labour shortages were also explored. Once these innovations were outlined, the third question remained: What recommendations could possibly produce better outcomes in the United States? A multitude of ideas for policies, programs, and businesses were provided in the proceeding section, based on gaps in the current American systems and innovations found in the Canadian and Swedish systems. These recommendations for career pathways contribute to the wider field of refugee resettlement, because if we are to resettle refugees, we must also set them up for success in their new countries. These recommendations underscore the foundational truth that "[refugees] should not be viewed as a burden or threat, but as people teeming with possibility and potential who — if given the chance — will continue to strengthen and revitalize our nation."[71]

70 Satar H, "Refugees Contribute: Strategies for Skilled Refugee Integration in the U.S." (2017) <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RefugeesContribute_StrategiesforSkilledRefugeeIntegration.pdf> accessed April 6, 2022

71 Kerwin D, "The US Refugee Resettlement Program — a Return to First Principles: How Refugees Help to Define, Strengthen, and Revitalize the United States"