Redefining Self-Sufficiency for Refugee Integration in the United States

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ABSTRACT

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Due to the increasing prevalence of political violence in developing countries such as Syria and Myanmar, the acceptance and integration of refugees has become a pressing issue in international discourse today. Unlike most countries, the United States resettlement programs are designed to permanently incorporate refugees to become naturalized citizens. The primary objective is to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency. Although United States refugee resettlement programs have claimed that they have helped 82% of their refugees become self-sufficient, the definition of self-sufficiency and how it is measured misrepresents the integration outcomes of refugees. I argue that a bottom-up definition of self-sufficiency that incorporates economic, psychological, and social aspects is necessary in program implementation. Using scholarly research, national and international datasets, and definitions of self-sufficiency employed in other countries, this paper both analyzes the limitations of the traditional model of self-sufficiency and offers remedies as to how a bottom-up model of self-sufficiency could improve refugee integration. By incorporating a model that acknowledges self-sufficiency as a process of interdependency, this paper supports an improved model for refugee integration as a whole.
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I. INTRODUCTION:

The Research Problem and Rationale:

By the end of my first internship with the International Institute of New England in 2016, I felt like I had personally impacted the lives of dozens of refugees arriving into the United States with my work. Many of my clients had jobs, were learning English, and were becoming integrated into the United States culture. Through personal interactions I believed that these services were providing enough basic tools and resources to help refugees gain their footing while adapting to the United States. My clients were hopeful, motivated, and ready to start anew in this large and comprehensive country.

As I was finishing my internship, many of my first clients were officially considered something refugee resettlement organizations call “self-sufficient.” Once deemed self-sufficient, refugees stop receiving monthly cash assistance as it is assumed their new jobs would provide them with the income they needed to survive. The amount of time devoted to classes dwindled as these clients spent more of time at their new paid positions. Within a few short months, familiar faces left and new ones arrived; the names and stories attached with those older faces washed away as waves of new arrivals began their orientation processes. Although I was confident that these families had gained more resources than before they arrived in the United States, I was curious why they were deemed “self-sufficient” after having been within the United States for only a few months.

I decided to investigate but only found contradictory statistics. According to a Congressional Report co-authored by the Department of State (DOS), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), 82% of refugees achieved self-sufficiency within 180 days in fiscal year (FY) 2015 in the ORR’s Matching Grant
(MG) program. In 2015 the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) made a similar evaluation that although refugees “start out by and large poor and dependent on public assistance, within five to ten years most refugees achieve self-sufficiency and near economic parity with the U.S.-born population.” This statistic is evident for refugees who have been in the United States for long periods of time, and supports the notion that refugees do not need additional services due to the fact that they already receive more programmatic assistance than most immigrants.

While these statistics suggested refugees were faring well economically, other data proclaimed the opposite. An MPI assessment published earlier in 2015 notes that recent refugees who have been in the US for five years or less had substantially lower incomes than other U.S. born and remained so “despite relatively high educational attainment and employment rates.” For some refugees, their disadvantages were worse than the refugees before them. MPI reports that either due to the economic recession of 2007-2009, the changing characteristics of the new refugees, or a combination of the two has led to the continued disadvantages experienced by recent refugees. Although refugees were coming in with high education rates, their worse incomes suggest that the system integrating them was not providing enough resources to help refugees transfer their skills into appropriately matched careers. This means that the way in which refugee integration is carried out comes with its own flaws, and puts more of the pressure of integration on the refugees themselves rather than on the host community incorporating them.

Taking these contesting statistics into account, I questioned how refugee resettlement programs were measuring and addressing self-sufficiency. As I began my research, I found

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scholars who have studied the various gaps in how self-sufficiency is achieved in humanitarian organizations. Evan Elise Easton-Calabria and Claudena Skran, researchers on sustainable development and international organizations, have noted that “current humanitarian programming approaches to refugee self-reliance are problematic as they tend to individualize self-reliance and focus on jobs as the ‘end goal.’” Their argument is that self-sufficiency needs to be measured beyond the confinements of economic self-sufficiency to include other important psychological and social values.

In 2016, the international community gathered at New York’s United Nations office to draft the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) as a four-pillar response to the increased number of refugees in the past decade. Of its four pillars, self-reliance—or self-sufficiency—is the second pillar and the only value which clearly lists integration as a goal. Self-sufficiency, is considered one of the primary factors for successful integration into a host community. It is critical to not only recognize its significance but also to understand how changes in the measurements can affect the livelihoods of international refugees and their integration into their host communities.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the construct of self-sufficiency in United States refugee integration programs as a factor that shapes successful integration. By the end of this paper, self-sufficiency will be viewed as not only a bottom-up model but also as a value of sustainable interdependency.

This paper proposes the following hypothesis: that by focusing on refugees’ employment and income levels as the primary factors for achieving self-sufficiency, refugee integration programs inadvertently limit themselves in their ability to draw out the full capabilities and

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capital newly arrived refugees bring to their host communities. Instead, these programs should focus more on a communicative approach where the refugee communities determine their motivations and goals to achieve economic, psychological, and social self-sufficiency and the programs accommodate those goals by providing socio-economic counseling as well as information and resources. Easton-Calabria and Skran’s studies support the hypothesis that refugees they had interviewed revealed the importance of “social value in livelihood programmes that are unrelated to economic outcomes.”5 Refugees may come into new labor markets, but they also come into new communities. It is important to foster community growth and interdependent self-sufficiency as a factor of successful integration.

Self-sufficiency, above all else, is the driving factor in the determination of successful integration of refugees in the United States. The way in which self-sufficiency is defined, however, provides a misleading view on the success of refugee integration. As this paper will show, the definition used does not include any psychological or social aspects but focuses on economic self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the economic definition is misleading as it allows for refugees to continue receiving welfare benefits and call it “self-sufficient.” As a result, the way self-sufficiency is measured in the United States provides a limited definition which portrays refugee-resettlement agencies as having successfully integrated refugees. Not only will this paper look at the limits in the current definition of self-sufficiency, but it will also look at the potential consequences of employing a limited definition and offer recommendations to redefine the concept.

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5 Ibid., 4.
Methodology and Parameters:

This paper analyzes refugee integration rather than immigrant integration since there is no governmental approach towards the integration of immigrants. Refugees have the privilege of receiving more state assistance in their integration processes than immigrants due to their differing rights and benefits within the United States. Taking this into account, it is worth mentioning that there is a lack of publicly available information on refugee poverty rates, as they are a small portion of the United States population. The UNHCR and the World Bank provide data on the welfare assessment of the overall refugee population, but few records publically exist of the United States refugee populations in disaggregated forms.

In order to analyze the history, theory, and application of self-sufficiency in the United States, this paper draws from scholarly sources, journalistic resources, national databases, and interview recommendations. This paper will take from scholarly research on how self-sufficiency could be defined from an economic, psychological, and social point of view and apply that knowledge to analyze how self-sufficiency is measured in United States refugee resettlement programs.

Although this paper’s primary focus is refugee resettlement in the United States from the most recent decade, this paper will look at self-sufficiency as defined by different times, nations, and agencies. Through analyzing the potential for redefining self-sufficiency, this paper will come to a better understanding of what successful integration could look like.

Chapter Overview:

Chapter one will introduce the research problem and rationale for this thesis along with the methodology and parameters for researching self-sufficiency in refugee resettlement. Chapter
two provides an overview of the history of refugee integration and what its primary goals were from its onset after World War I. Chapter three provides an extensive literature review of what a bottom-up definition of self-sufficiency should look like and how it can be applied to integration models. The fourth chapter then looks at how the United States defines self-sufficiency on a federal, state, and local level and compares it to how other nations foster self-sufficiency with their refugees. The conclusion of this paper will then address potential solutions as to how refugee resettlement in the United States can move forward with an improved definition of self-sufficiency.
II. HISTORY OF REFUGEE PROTECTION: FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS AND TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS

Although refugees existed before World Wars I and II, the criteria for which they were defined and assisted has shifted over the decades since these global wars. From analyzing the top-down approach that contemporary resettlement agencies use today, to understanding the political agendas behind categorizing refugees, this chapter aims to understand how refugee resettlement today has ultimately been shaped by the same protocols that date back to the mid 20th century. Throughout this analysis, this chapter will then explore the sustainability of the top-down approach and how it has affected the wellbeing of refugees over the decades.

The contemporary institutional approach to managing refugee problems began in the 20th century, as a response to internal displacement fueled by international wars. Historian and professor of population displacement Peter Gatrell elaborates:

During the First World War, governments and armies used force to displace entire populations in order to ‘secure’ the state against internal ‘enemies’ as well as external foes. In other words, the discourse of ‘protection’ operated to generate mass population displacement for a range of prophylactic purposes.6

Since World Wars I and II, numerous internal wars have occurred due to decolonization and shifting political regimes. Coming from Nigeria to Armenia to Central America to Vietnam, displaced peoples in dozens of countries have expanded the scope of what a refugee looks like. By the end of 2016, the UNHCR declared that approximately 67.75 million persons of concern existed in the world, of those 25.4% qualified as refugees and the rest classified as asylum-seekers, internally displaced peoples, stateless persons, and those who were returned to their

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countries without full integration. The United Nations, the European Union, the United States, and various other individual states have spent billions have been spent on the maintenance of the refugee crisis.

Sadly, the population of persons of concern—including those who qualify as refugees—continues to rise. It is therefore increasingly necessary to understand the foundations of refugee protection from its beginnings to its current management. Questions revolving around how refugee protection began, why it began, and what its structure says about the balance of power between national and international actors will help guide this paper in analyzing the blueprints of history and how it can be applied and changed today. Through its analysis this paper seeks to argue that refugee protection since its conception has maintained a limited focus on providing temporary and ultimately unsustainable solutions to refugee crises.

**The Beginnings of Contemporary Refugee Protection:**

In order to best understand the varied types of refugee protection, it is necessary to categorize protection between World War I and World War II separately from protection after World War II. Evan Elise Easton-Calabria, researcher for Oxford University’s Refugee Studies Centre, elegantly separates the two approaches as the “bottom-up” model (seen during the interwar period) and the “top-down” model (seen during the period after World War II). According to Easton-Calabria, “‘bottom-up’ assistance refers to relief and development efforts built out of and upon the self-defined needs and interests of affected populations, which thus

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directly engages them in decision-making capacities."\(^8\) Conversely, the “top-down” approach refers to “situations of encampment, forced farming, and other authoritarian practices that led refugees to have little say in deciding upon or implementing settlement structures, policies, or livelihoods programmes.”\(^9\) In other words, the bottom-up approach refers to protection practices being determined by the refugees themselves whereas top-down refers to the decision making done by the officials on higher levels in controlling protection.

**Interwar Period:**

Before contemporary refugee protection emerged, those who were trying to escape the dangers of war were often aided with various types of relief. If the civilians were unable to escape their circumstances, transnational charitable organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies came to the rescue to provide aid. This was the typical action taken during World War I, when countless peoples from various states, often in Eastern Europe, were suffering from their surrounding violence and needed relief in the forms of material assistance such as food and medicine in order to survive.

Despite their efforts, given the magnitude of World War I and the preliminary wars immediately before it, refugee protection expert Gilbert Jaeger explains, “[charitable organizations] could not extend their succour beyond material assistance.”\(^10\) Jaeger notes that during the first world war, resources were running low. Although many voluntary organizations increased in size to better assist these refugees, it became clear that the scope of humanitarian aid was insufficient to care for all those experiencing the worst calamities of war. Professor of

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International Affairs Michael Barnett elaborates: “The war and the tremendous relief effort highlighted the limitations of improvised charity and the necessity of an institutionalized philanthropic and aid sector.” In addition to private charity contributions towards the relief effort, Barnett explains that World War I called upon states to become “more actively involved in the organization of aid.” State organizations like the American Relief Administration showed a willingness to contribute towards helping those from war-torn areas by delivering humanitarian relief aid.

Due to the increasing amounts of displaced persons and the lack of coordinated efforts to address those persons, private charity organizations and state relief were not enough to provide for all the needs of those escaping the dangers of war. Migration and refugee researcher Katy Long points out that when it became apparent after World War I that there were victims of war who still needed assistance, Gustav Ador, President of the Red Cross, wrote to the League of Nations (the League) in 1921 “about the condition of 800,000 Russian refugees ‘without legal protection and living in desperate poverty,’ urging the League to intervene as ‘the only supranational political authority capable of solving a problem which is beyond the power of an exclusively humanitarian organization.’” Humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross did not have the financial capacity nor the personnel to provide immediate material assistance; nor did they have the authority to determine solutions to where the refugees should go. Ador’s request for assistance not only asked for the international community to get involved, but it also asked for the community to make a decision as to the fate of the refugee fleeing violence. At that

12 Ibid., 87.
time, the Russians had not only suffered from World War I but also from its subsequent revolution, civil war, and famine.

The League of Nations, still newly formed and learning its role in the international community, stepped up as the “first international mechanism to address mass displacement, largely through seeking opportunities for refugees to contribute to host country development.” Soon after its call to help Russian displaced peoples, the League created the High Commission for Refugees (HCR) in 1950, later to become the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to address the situation posed by globally displaced peoples. Easton-Calabria elaborates how the initial style of refugee assistance at this time was more geared towards “bottom-up methods and refugees’ capacity to contribute to independent national commissions and rehabilitation through their own expertise as well as financial means.” This was due to the fact that the League of Nations had funding constraints, little experience with managing refugee protection, and had to maneuver around various political agendas in order to reach a consensus. In order to help the displaced peoples, the League sought insight from those people it intended to assist. To incorporate the perspectives of the displaced, the League assigned positions to refugees within the HCR as delegates, hired refugee employees in settlement commissions, and sent funding directly to refugee settlements.

In contrast to this bottom-up humanitarian approach, the international community perceived refugees as an economic problem to be dealt with. To begin, the League had a limited definition of refugees confined to those who qualified based on geographic and temporal boundaries. At the time, the League supported helping those from Russia, Greece, Armenia, and

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15 Ibid., 416.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
all those who suffered from political revolution, genocide, civil war, and massacres. Although other internal wars were occurring across the world, it was western political powers that had the ability to accept or reject which refugees were deemed worthy of helping. Even when the League of Nations proposed expanding the definition of who qualified as a refugee to include citizens from different geographic areas other than European areas directly affected by World War violence, states rejected the idea and instead, proposed “a draft treaty that failed to define a refugee, refused to guarantee the right of asylum, skirted the issue of refugee rights, and neglected to deliver a categorical prohibition against returning refugees to their homeland without their consent.” This unwillingness to expand the definition of refugees was largely due to the political climates of the approached refugee-receiving states. Long elaborates:

Domestic political opinion in host communities confirmed that tolerance of refugee numbers was closely linked to attitudes towards immigration…States refused to treat refugees as a separate category with an additional moral claim for admission because of their concerns with immigration.

States at the time were less willing to accept migrants, let alone refugees in need of humanitarian assistance, due to economic crises at the time. This attitude would continue into World War II, whereby Western states would show an unwillingness to provide refuge for Jews and other people of similar persecuted backgrounds escaping Nazi Germany.

Lack of a willingness to provide humanitarian assistance on the state level and lack of a distinction between refugees and economic migrants help to explain the League’s low levels of funding. Thus, for the few that qualified as refugees under the League’s terms, the League and its subordinates—such as the HCR, the International Relief Union (IRU) and the International

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21 Ibid.
Labor Organization (ILO)—were forced to focus on the most impactful means of helping refugees given the low levels of support from its fellow states. Upon its conception and with its limited resources, the HCR was able to expand its scope and articulate the first preliminary set of refugee rights, which would later be used as a blueprint for future refugee protection. The HCR also “successfully negotiated a set of refugee rights, including travel documents (the so-called Nansen passport), education, and employment.”23 Alongside these rights, Easton-Calabria elaborates how the HCR successfully spread its assistance “through integrated rural development projects supporting refugee rehabilitation and host country economies through agricultural production.”24 Agricultural improvements such as stock breeding, artificial fertilization, and using new tools helped bolster growth and brought a new sense of agency.25 Additionally, the League through its ILO was able to expand some of its assistance to Latin American countries through agricultural employment opportunities.26 Though its capacities were limited, the League proved its ability to successfully provide to the needs of some of the refugees in need of assistance. Its mechanisms for dealing with refugee strife was used later on during and after World War II as part of the United Nations agenda.

World War II and Immediately After:

The damage caused by World War II and its aftermath led to huge changes in the structure of the international balance of power, including the management of refugee crises. Although there are conflicting numbers on the actual number of displaced peoples, most accounts agree that millions of Western Europeans, Eastern Europeans, Southeast Asians, and Middle-easterners were displaced by World War II violence. According to Long, “The size of

23 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 421.
Europe’s post-World War II refugee crisis was irrefutable and led to a decade of intense experimentation in relation to an international refugee protection regime.”

Organizations created by the League were still in operation and were attempting to provide necessary aid for these displaced peoples based on the old framework. Given the limited capacities of the League, the organizations themselves were limited in their ability to provide durable, quality assistance.

According to Michael Barnett, while these types of organizations “could assist refugees by ‘identifying them, issuing travel documents, assisting in obtaining recognition of their various legal statuses, and advocating ever more precise guidelines for handling recognized refugees,’ it could not offer material protection. ‘Protection’ became legal protection.”

The League and its organizations tried to maintain relevance all the way until its eventual downfall with the start of World War II.

At the start of World War II in 1939, refugee assistance completely halted. It was not until after the war in 1945 that a collective response to the damage begin. According to Easton-Calabria, that collective response “saw a dramatic departure from the bottom-up, no-charity philosophy that had once defined the main international institution’s response to refugees.”

Realizing the war had displaced approximately 10 to 12 million displaced people, the Allies focused their efforts on helping the refugees affected by the war. Beginning with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association (UNRRA) in 1943, the international community made a dedication to assist as many displaced persons as possible with repatriation to their countries of origin.

It must be made clear that the efforts to help refugees at the time were

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solely grounded in helping those directly affected by the war, and the goal was so that refugees could be able to return to their own countries with their own countries’ resources.

Despite the encouragement of the international community, not everyone wanted to return to their countries of origin. Even after the violence ended, restoring nations back to stable governmental systems was difficult and many displaced argued that the danger of returning was too great. Many Polish refugees, for example, did not want to return to countries that were being taken over by communist regimes. This was a similar case for various Eastern European refugees. Long points out how “by the late 1940s, mass repatriation of Eastern bloc refugees—those who refused to return—was no longer a political option.” Shortly after World War II ended in 1946, the United Nations established The International Refugee Organization (IRO), which was later succeeded by the UNHCR, in order to address the needs of the World War II refugees who were unable to repatriate. Its goal was to provide protection for repatriates and non-repatriates and a means for non-repatriated refugees to integrate into their host societies. Guy Goodwin-Gill, professor of asylum law at the University of Amsterdam and previous legal adviser in the UNHCR, explained how IRO not only extended its help to those escaping Nazi, Fascist, and Quisling regimes but also to include those who “might have ‘valid objections’ to returning to their country of origin, including ‘persecution or fear based on reasonable grounds of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, or political opinions,’ and objections ‘of a political nature judged by the [IRO] to be valid.’” Its broad nature allowed the IRO to carry out its mission to a variety of groups affected by the war. However, as it continued to broaden its

31 Ibid.
horizons, the international community felt a need to intervene and only help those in absolute need of international protection, which limited the scope of the work the community allowed.\textsuperscript{34}

Jaeger notes that although the IRO “originally meant to complete its operational activities on 30 June 1950, [it soon] became evident it was unlikely—to say the least that the problem of refugees would be solved by that date.”\textsuperscript{35} With more refugees arriving from Central and Eastern Europe, and various political crises after the war, it became apparent that the problems creating refugee movements were not ending and more were to come. IRO could not keep up with the millions of refugees and a new organization was needed to provide protection for them. Michael Barnett elaborates:

Responding to the apparent contradiction between a principled desire to help refugees in Europe and an unwillingness to extend such protections outside of Europe, the UN’s Economic and Social Council began discussing the termination of the International Relief Organization, the latest of the World War II-era refugee organizations, and the creation of a permanent refugee agency with a global reach.\textsuperscript{36}

With this came a new outlook on how to manage the refugees of the globe. That permanent refugee agency was given its authority by the 1951 Refugee Convention.

\textit{The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol:}

On July 28, 1951, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the Convention). Considering Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 recognized the right of persons to “seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution,”\textsuperscript{37} the United Nations enacted a Convention that would address the needs of all those seeking refuge from persecution and without a government to protect them.

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\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
Since that time, the United Nations has given authority to the UNHCR to be in charge of the international protection of refugees. Based on the blueprints provided from the interwar years and understanding the crises arising during and after World War II, the Convention’s first and main goal was to provide a definition of refugees and to allow those refugees international protection. That definition, which is still used today, categorizes a refugee as a person who:

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.  

However, several states had difficulties arriving at a consensus as to the means of defining the refugees and how to protect them. According to Goodwin-Gill, the United States favored a narrow definition of refugees, focusing on “a new, temporary agency, a de-emphasis of resettlement, and concentration on ‘legal protection’ pending integration in countries of refuge…[because] the main purpose was to prevent refugees becoming a liability to the international community.” Conversely, the international community had differing opinions regarding the permanent or temporary management of refugees than the United States; and so the United States found its own means to intervene in migration from 1951 to 1968 through organizations which it had more power over such as the International Committee for European Migration and the United States Escapee program, rather than the UNHCR. Although the United States focused on a more limited refugee protection approach, the international

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community continued to have a limited view on who qualified as refugees until 1967, with the Protocol.

Between 1951 and 1967, the first universal refugee protection program was created and placed an emphasis on refugees from Cold War rivalries. The United States view of refugees particularly influenced the international definition of those who qualified as refugees. According to Long, in the first three years of its Displaced Persons Act, the United States “‘regarded refugees as objects of political concern, not simply as suffering humanity, for it focused on them as anti-communist migrants.’”\(^{41}\) President Truman was able to gain support for the Displaced Persons bill through this type of reasoning, arguing that the bill was necessary in order to help provide aid to the overpopulation of refugees in Western Europe and fight communism in Eastern Europe.\(^{42}\) Using the same United States’ sentiment, those who drafted the 1951 Convention on Refugees specified that the international community would keep a temporal focus by only providing assistance to refugees affected by the events preceding 1951. States were not yet prepared to manage crises occurring after 1951, as they believed those occurring after World War II could be more or less prevented by managing those crises that came before them.\(^{43}\)

Although the definition of refugees was temporally limited by nation-states around the globe, it was during this time that the understanding of refugees shifted away from viewing them as economic migrants to viewing them as political migrants. By defining refugees as those escaping political persecution from Eastern European governmental regimes, refugees were seen as those in need of humanitarian assistance from their lives under communism. Long elaborates: “The marriage of humanitarian virtue and political self-interest meant that Eastern European


refugees were no longer being presented simply as impoverished economic migrants.” The seeds for refugee humanitarianism were therefore planted by Cold War rivalries and political agendas.

In deciding whether or not the 1951 Convention would provide a permanent or temporary solution to refugee crises, the international community favored a more permanent standpoint than the United States did. Thus integration became viewed as the most durable means of helping incoming refugees. Jeff Crisp, an expert on refugee issues and an official who held various senior positions with the UNHCR, elaborates on the initial intentions of the Convention and that it “envisaged the local integration of refugees, and in this respect drew particular attention to the role of citizenship in the search for durable solutions.” Alice Edwards, a refugee lawyer and former employee of UNHCR, elaborates that not only was local integration the preferred solution, but that repatriation was discouraged due to the refugees being from communist nations. Although integration into host communities was the initial intention of the Convention, it is also quite possible that this intention was largely due to the fact that most refugees coming in were of European descent and therefore more assimilable according to the European nations agreeing to host these refugees.

However, it became increasingly necessary over time to lift the temporal restrictions of the 1951 Refugee Convention to include all persons who were fleeing persecution within their countries of origin. According to the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Handbook, “New global

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challenges, particularly to the refugee flows resulting from decolonization, led to the adoption of the 1967 Protocol to lift these time and geographic restrictions."\(^{48}\) Decolonization and nationalist movements in Asia and Africa displaced millions after World War II, and it was clear that the international community couldn’t stop with pre-1951 refugees.\(^{49}\)

**UNHCR:**

Alongside the expansion of the definition of refugees to include all those deemed so past 1951, the role of the UNHCR in managing international refugee crises changed. Although the 1951 Convention had a means to define refugees and how to protect them, it “says nothing about procedures for determining refugee status, and leaves to States the choice of means as to implementation at the national level.”\(^{50}\) The UNHCR was given authority by the Convention to help carry out this gap through its own means. Under this authority, the UNHCR came up with three types of solutions which are still recommended to this day: voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, resettlement to another country, and integration into a host community.\(^{51}\)

During its conception, the international community declared that “the work of the UNHCR shall be of an entirely non-political character—it is to be ‘humanitarian’ and ‘social’ and to relate, as a rule, to groups and categories of refugees.”\(^{52}\) Its presumed lack of a political bias helped the UNHCR further its cause, given that it “alerted governments that the agency was ‘not guided by any political intentions or considerations,’”\(^{53}\) and therefore allowed it to extend its services to where it saw it necessary. Additionally, the UNHCR had the ability to carry out the

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Convention’s mission by referring to its own Statute in defining and justifying refugee protection. Its own definition was more broad, and chose to specify protecting those with a “lack of protection by their own government which distinguishes refugees from ordinary aliens.” It was thus possible for a refugee to be defined both by the Convention and by the UNHCR, or just by the UNHCR without the Convention. This is partially the reason refugee crises after 1951 became addressed, as the UNHCR found it necessary to expand its reaches towards more geographical areas that the Convention had not specified.

Upon its inception, the UNHCR had a major contradiction regarding how it addressed refugee populations. It was unclear whether or not the UNHCR was addressing refugees as groups or as individuals, a contradiction that has permeated throughout refugee resettlement debates until the present day. Elaborated by Goodwin-Gill, the UNHCR both “affirm[ed] that the work of the Office shall relate, as a rule, to groups and categories of refugees. On the other hand, it propose[d] a definition of the refugee which [was] essentially individualistic, seeming to require a case by case examination of subjective and objective elements.” This contradiction would later prevent the UNHCR from enabling governments to take in particular groups of refugees, often based on political biases.

**Contemporary Refugee Protection After 1967—Restriction and Top-Down Approaches:**

Since the 1967 Protocol, refugee protection has preserved the same priorities and methods of maintenance for decades. Alongside its improvements since protection of the interwar years, refugee protection has also come with its continued limitations. The refugee

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crises occurring from 1975-1995 led to the development of the definition of who qualified as a refugee as well as the setbacks in applying it to large amounts of asylum seekers.\(^57\) In this time, continued distinctions in the refugee definition led to a further restrictionist approach to the management of refugees.

Evan Elise Easton-Calabria refers to the time period after World War II as the top-down approach to refugee protection. In referencing the definition used earlier in the paper, Easton-Calabria categorizes top-down the decision making process of refugee settlement carried out by those at the heads of international institutions, rather than by the efforts of the refugees themselves. Easton-Calabria elaborates that the top-down authorities lacked expertise in their respective management tasks, and this was in addition to the fact that these officials did not communicate with and suppressed the decision-making roles of refugees and locals.\(^58\)

Although both the top-down and bottom-up approaches differed in many ways, they both had the secondary goal of improving the infrastructure and economic development of the host countries.\(^59\) This was especially evident in the top-down approach. New systems were able to measure refugee needs based on methodological approaches and took into account “‘progress,’ defined by the GDP and the introduction of new populations into liberal economies.”\(^60\) As more progress was achieved, it then became part of the job of the UNHCR to help the UN achieve its “aims of assisting countries’ modernization and development.”\(^61\) With modernization and

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 13.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., 428.
\(^{60}\) Ibid., 422.
\(^{61}\) Ibid., 423.
development, however, came the notion that repatriation, rather than integration seemed the only viable solution for the world’s refugees.62

Jeff Crisp notes that this “only viable solution” has become increasingly problematic, as in recent decades, refugees such as those in Africa “find themselves confined to camps or designated zones, where they are discouraged from becoming self-reliant and under pressure to repatriate, even in situations where conditions in the country of origin remain unsafe or unstable.”63 Since the 1980s, repatriation has been the preferred method of durable resettlement as the UNHCR has come more under scrutiny from external pressures in dividing its priorities between humanitarian and political goals.64

Although states are aware that it is detrimental to their reputations to return a refugee to a community that can still enact persecution on those repatriates, many go forward with this process,65 believing that the conflicts in the countries of origin have markedly improved. Through the top-down approach, states increasingly implement more restrictive policies and instead “a disproportionate amount of energy and resources tends to be focused on determining who is a refugee,’ rather than on their treatment pre- and post- recognition.”66 Sending displaced peoples back to their home countries because they do not qualify as refugees is problematic. It is often the case that many of the refugees coming into these refugee-hosting societies are themselves from nations that go through various cycles of exploitation, which lead to more chaos and more persecution.

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Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, political scientists and economists, elaborate how exploitative governments, known as extractive institutions with little or unsustainable economic growth, cannot sustain their success and instead lead their countries into a cycle of destruction. From their perspective, the reasons many nations remain impoverished compared to developed nations is because extractive institutions have a cycle of preventing growth and creating more violence and poverty through this continued corruptive political, economic, and social exploitation. They emphasize that “Infighting and instability are thus inherent features of extractive institutions, and they not only create further inefficiencies but also often reverse any political centralization, sometimes leading to the total breakdown of law and order and descent into chaos.” The temporary nature of refugee protection, arguably, adds to the effects of political chaos caused by extractive institutions.

The concept of extractive institutions is important to keep in mind with refugee protection as it can affect how states approach sustainable development to improve the conditions in the refugees’ home countries. Many top-down approaches focus on refugee solutions that avoid addressing the long-term safety and growth of the home country. Instead refugees are either forced to return to a country which may still be in disarray or to resettle the refugee instead of incorporating them into their own communities.

Lastly, it is important to emphasize that refugee protection today still does not have an obligatory nature attached to it. The UNHCR explained the importance of refugee protection for three functions: to provide international protection to meet specific needs of refugees, to be a durable solution for large numbers of refugees, and to express international solidarity and

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responsibility in sharing the burden of refugee problems around the world.\textsuperscript{68} Even when states show the desire to integrate refugees into their host societies, as can be the case with the United States, there is a pushed promotion to achieve “economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible (limiting the need for public assistance) and encourages refugees to contribute to the diversity and enrichment of our country as have previous newcomers.”\textsuperscript{69} The concept of self-sufficiency in refugee livelihoods has only been recently promoted as an important means of encouraging sustainable refugee improvement. According to Evan Elise Easton-Calabria, the UNHCR Livelihoods Unit “focuses on ‘vocational and skills training, promoting entrepreneurship, supporting agriculture, livestock and fisheries, and strengthening access to financial services or microfinance.’\textsuperscript{70}

Thus, refugee crises are less associated with providing sustainable humanitarian assistance for refugees and instead remain “closely tied to foreign policy interests.”\textsuperscript{71} Jeremy Hein, professor of sociology at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, elaborates how in recent times, “‘refugee’ is simply a bureaucratic label applied by states for political motives, rather than a sociology category demarcating discrete groups and behaviors.”\textsuperscript{72} Rather than provide an access point for displaced peoples to achieve resources to improve their livelihoods, Hein reflects how “The increased salience of international institutions in protecting refugees is an indicator of the weakness of the nation-state system.”\textsuperscript{73} In this sense, refugees are not just a cause of failed states, environmental disasters, poor infrastructure and so on. Instead, refugees become a direct

\textsuperscript{70} Easton-Calabria, \textit{Op. Cit.}, “From Bottom-Up to Top-Down,” 413.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid.}, 44.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ibid.}, 46.
result of the failure of the international community to find sustainable solutions to global problems and, therefore, go into a cycle of exploitative destruction.

**Working Towards Sustainable Solutions:**

Although refugee protection strategies have improved in the decades following the League of Nations, it is clear that all forms of protection have had a temporary, unsustainable focus to them. With the outbreak of the Syrian refugee crisis and the various refugee crises alongside it, states are becoming increasingly restrictive in their willingness to solve the problems at hand. Alice Edwards elaborates:

“Increasingly, many western governments are implementing hard-line or restrictive asylum policies and practices in order to deter and to prevent asylum-seekers from seeking refuge on their territory, including by interception and interdiction measures, visa countries, carrier sanctions, ‘safe third country’ arrangements, administrative detention, and/or restrictive interpretations of the refugee definition.”

Although this is often the case when faced with massive influxes of refugees coming in on a global scale, it does not detract from the inherent cause that states have always been unwilling to step completely out of their comfort zones and provide durable solutions to refugee problems. Although this paper focuses primarily on refugees, there are also millions of other persons of concern who do not qualify as refugees but live in similar untenable conditions. States, however, limit their resources and will often favor the citizens living within their own borders through means of protection and sometimes through isolating the refugees from their citizens.

Although many nations continue to use their resources to protect their citizens instead of assisting refugees, the international community has come to the realization in the last few years

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that it is possible to achieve durable solutions to refugee problems while also keeping their own country’s citizens protected. Integration, self-sufficiency, sustainable livelihoods: these are the themes of modern-day refugee protection. As of recently, the UNHCR redefined integration to be “virtually synonymous with ‘sustainable’ return, that is, a harmonious relationship among returnees, civil society, and the consolidated state.” Should the international community focus on promotion of these values and even on the promotion of a bottom-up approach, there can be hope for a prosperous future for the world’s people.

III. INTEGRATION THEORY AND DEFINING SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Academic works on self-sufficiency and integration provide important points of comparison with ways in which nations outline integration policy measures. This chapter will explore the definitions of integration and self-sufficiency academic scholars use and how those definitions can apply to a practical measure of achieving “successful” integration. Examining the definitions of self-sufficiency is integral to understanding how the concept can relate to the implementation of current refugee integration models. This paper will look at how the traditional model of self-sufficiency recognized by the United States government has been narrowed to “the absence of receipt of cash assistance by a household,”76 or more simply, “not dependent on public assistance.”77 Despite its intentions, this limited definition does not encapsulate the full requirements to achieve self-sufficiency as defined by researchers on a level that is satisfactory for the refugee or for those measuring the “successful” integration of refugees.

I argue that the definition of self-sufficiency should be expanded to not only encapsulate economic self-sufficiency but also to contain measures of social and psychological self-sufficiency. Such a definition would include a refugee’s sense of agency and a level of confidence in their own potential to achieve desired goals and having the resources to do so. Additionally, a revised definition would include interdependency as a part of its definition, as becoming completely self-sufficient is near impossible in our modern global society. If one lives in a community where we benefit from each others goods and services, it’s almost infeasible to achieve complete self-sufficiency. Developing an expanded theoretical understanding of self-

sufficiency can help government programs define, utilize, and evaluate refugee integration outcomes and its priorities.

Integration is one of many strategies of how immigrants are incorporated into a society. For the purpose of this study, integration can be aptly defined using the Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) model: “a dynamic, two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities.”

Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, researchers of refugee integration and its effects on their mental health and wellbeing, expand this concept by defining successful integration as a “long-term two-way process of change, that relates both to the conditions for and the actual participation of refugees in all aspects of life of the country of durable asylum as well as to refugees’ own sense of belonging and membership of European societies.”

Both the GCIR and Ager’s and Strang’s definitions of integration highlight the importance of a reciprocal relationship between the host and arriving communities. In each case, integration inherently involves the mutual accommodation of immigrants and locals in community-building. John Berry, an expert on psychological acculturation and multiculturalism, elaborates:

“[A] mutual accommodation is required for integration to be attained, involving the acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples. This strategy requires non-dominant groups to adopt the basic values of the larger society, while at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adapt national institutions (e.g. education, health, labor) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society.”

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In addition to examining the factors that contribute to successful integration, this chapter will discuss the role which various actors play in the integration process. Scholars do not all agree on factors of successful integration. Nonetheless, through a close analysis of the various theories, it is possible to see where a new definition of “self-sufficiency” can apply. This chapter will also examine various surveys scholars have conducted on defining self-sufficiency. Although self-sufficiency in the United States is normally defined as a level of income high enough in order to separate oneself from public services, participants in these surveys have acknowledged the psychological and social gaps from the current definition. Instead of the current model, this chapter argues that a bottom-up definition of self-sufficiency is needed. This type of definition includes the resources and services necessary in order to cross various stepping-stones towards empowerment and self-sufficiency.

Self-Sufficiency

In order to understand the meaning of self-sufficiency, it is necessary to look at how it is defined and measured by the state and to examine alternative definitions. Anthropologist David W. Haines, an expert on studying refugee resettlement from a cultural anthropology perspective, explains “Self-sufficiency, or self-reliance, has been argued to be a core American value that applies to all areas of social and economic life.” The importance of comprehending self-sufficiency cannot be stressed enough as it is considered to be a central value to grasping the United States welfare perspective. In order to understand its value in civil society, interpreting the various definitions of self-sufficiency must be coupled with understanding the welfare perspectives of the United States and Europe.

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Welfare Economy:

Welfare can be understood as the provision of resources by a state to those living within its boundaries. In her analysis of the United States economic growth model, sociologist Monica Prasad—an expert on the study of the rise of neoliberalism in the United States and the persistence of poverty—compares the welfare economics of the United States and Europe to explore why European countries have lower levels of poverty and inequality than the United States. According to Prasad, the United States neoliberal welfare economy can best be described as a “consumerist” welfare economy, contrasting from Europe’s “producerist” welfare economy. Prasad describes the consumerist economy of the United States as a type of “state intervention that promotes consumption, while European state intervention restrains consumption.”

Europe focuses more on exports in order to grow economically and then provides its public with more resources. Conversely the United States, with its capitalistic drives, focuses on individual consumption within the country in order to spur economic growth for those who are not able to consume as much.

The emphasis on a consumer economy began in the late 19th century, when American agricultural products were in abundance and required more consumer demand in order for producers to earn a profit. The lack of demand continued into the 20th century. During the Great Depression, there was a need for new policies that would grant consumers more purchasing power, which “encourag[ed] citizens to borrow heavily for the purchase of homes.” The United States’ ability to produce products at a low cost and provide to a large base of American consumers created a new type of interdependency between the government, consumers, and

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83 Ibid., 3.
producers. Prasad explains that “In the United States, consumption has played a larger role than in France, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, or indeed, most other advanced industrial countries, since 1960.” By that point, European economics were already focused on promoting exports in order to increase growth, differentiating it from the consumerist approach of the United States.

The difference between the consumerist and producerist economies of the United States and Europe is particularly relevant in the study of self-sufficiency and how it is defined. In a consumerist economy, the idea is that with more consumption the wellbeing of society as a whole improves. In a producerist economy, more production and exports allows the wellbeing of a society to improve. The strategies to then help refugees progress towards self-sufficiency would differentiate on the basis on whether or not a consumerist or producerist approach is used. Haines elaborates:

“[The] two general goals of host society language competence and self-sufficiency are widely shared among resettlement countries, although the latter has a more pronounced employment emphasis in the United States (and Canada and Australia) than it does in most of the more welfare-oriented European countries (where the emphasis is more on access to services and resources in general than to employment in particular).”

By emphasizing employment, Haines suggests that self-sufficiency in the United States also implies the increased ability to consume, (ie. having an income great enough to consume goods and services without the need for government support). Conversely, European definitions of self-sufficiency focus more on the productivity of a newcomer and how access to services and resources could help bolster their ability to become a productive citizen in the European context.

84 Ibid., 4.
With employment, there is the assumption that one will then have the financial resources to support oneself and one’s household.

The United States’ liberal welfare state model, “marked by limited social provision and a belief in the primacy of the market,”⁸⁶ has maintained the United States’s standing as a nation with the highest GDP in the world. This model has also allowed for the continuation of exacerbated and sustained inequality. This inequality is perpetuated by two economic principles: devolution and privatization. Devolution is the act of decentralizing government powers and giving those responsibilities to local governments deemed “more efficient and responsive to citizen needs.”⁸⁷ Privatization is the “shift of state services, assets, or functions to non-state sectors, especially in the market.”⁸⁸ In her article on welfare agency and redefining self-sufficiency according to welfare recipients, anthropologist Sandra Morgen explains how devolution and privatization play a role in the United States resistance to welfare services. Morgen argues that both strategies support the notion that self-sufficiency in the United States is defined as achieving an income and departing from welfare services, thus becoming an active member in the consumer economy. Although giving local agencies more abilities to provide to the needs of specific refugee populations is crucial for local integration, it often comes at the cost of ignoring social and psychological factors of integration.

Lastly, the liberal welfare economy also stems from the traditional United States emphasis on equal opportunity, and the focus on equality rather than on equity. Phillip Young P. Hong, expert on quantitative social research and psychological self-sufficiency, and his team suggest that this economic value behind the concept self-sufficiency is desirable for policy-

⁸⁷ Ibid.
⁸⁸ Ibid.
makers as it “assumes that individuals could determine their labor market outcomes given whatever the structural environment—a bootstrap approach to economic well-being.” In the United States, welfare is not viewed as an ongoing process in order to bring an individual to a standing level that allows prosperity and growth. Rather, the United States views welfare as a temporary solution to poverty and treats the problem as such: temporary. Hong et al. suggests that welfare should be measured in a different way due to the fact that “Poverty and working poverty are not only conditioned by individual characteristics, but are exacerbated by structural employment barriers and marginal positions in the labor market.” Hong’s argument highlights the systemic gaps in the United States welfare economy and how quick, decisive solutions are utilized in order to invest in the wellbeing of refugees.

The United States consumerist economy has helped the country foster a prosperous economy and has made a significant impact on the financial stability for refugees. Despite the economic success, the neoliberal welfare economy has not succeeded in removing the long-term psychological or social integration barriers for refugees. Once refugees stop receiving cash assistance or counselling, the structural exclusion in the labor market, higher learning institutions, and local community perpetuate the continued inequalities refugees experience on a daily basis.

**Empowerment and Inclusion:**

How self-sufficiency is defined in the 21st century in policy, programs, and practice in the United States mainly revolves around the idea to “define self-sufficiency as the absence of

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90 Ibid., 371.
receipt of cash assistance by a household." Hong et al. explores the top-down definition of self-sufficiency and finds that most welfare agents and government officials believe that self-sufficiency implies finding a job and leaving welfare. Through his findings, Hong et al. argues that “Having enough money to get out of poverty reflected the urgent financial need but an unrealistic financial goal.” Although United States agencies find it is relatively cost-effective and efficient to measure self-sufficiency by means of employment, this measure is not a realistic means to determine whether refugees are successfully integrating in a positive, sustainable manner.

As argued through the studies of Hong et al. and Morgen, the idea of self-sufficiency as completely breaking away from governmental support and achieving a living wage are both unrealistic and near-impossible. Hong et al. elaborates that “the impossibility of reaching this idealistic goal for the poor was emphasized, along the lines of a general assessment that economic independence cannot be realistically achieved by any individual in our society.” Although employment and getting off welfare support can prove to be stepping stones in achieving better socio-economic standing, it does not nearly qualify as having achieved “self-sufficiency.” Hong’s interview subjects developed an understanding of self-sufficiency as follows:

“There was a consensus that the definition of self-sufficiency depends on each individual’s experience because the concept can mean different things based on how the ‘self’ perceives what is considered sufficient. Therefore, SS is a concept that is related to individual needs, and the definition of SS cannot be written in absolute terms that apply to everyone in the same way.”

93 Ibid., 364.
94 Ibid., 365.
95 Ibid., 367
Although there is no clear consensus on the exact definition of self-sufficiency, it is still feasible to determine general trends as to what self-sufficiency may look like. Over the course of Hong’s interviews, some key aspects of self-sufficiency were laid out as well as the stages to achieving a positive level of self-sufficiency. As seen in table 1, self-sufficiency can be measured based on low and high labor market inclusion and acceptance of economic self-sufficiency. Categorizing the individual as discouraged, motivated, disconnected, or empowered, depends on the level of inclusion and acceptance of the host community—empowerment being the ultimate goal for economic self-sufficiency. How to achieve this level of empowerment then falls onto particular variables.

Hong’s participants regarded self-sufficiency not as a status achieved with a certain level of money, but rather as a psychological process. Parts of that process included achieving a level of economic security, which the interviewees defined as “having financial stability that is absent of worrying about not being able to pay for the necessities.” That economic security could only be achieved, however, if the welfare workers were willing and motivated to achieve it. Thus,

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96 Ibid., 370.
97 Ibid., 364.
“confidence that one can control life outcomes by conquering the obstacles at both personal and institutional levels”\textsuperscript{98} became a key part of achieving a redefined version of self-sufficiency. That confidence required two conditions: self-consciousness and hope. Emphasizing self-consciousness would encourage welfare recipients to maintain a motivated and positive outlook on financial goals as well as personal ambitions, including but not limited to community involvement or improving one’s chances to achieve a higher education. Similarly, emphasizing hope would motivate welfare recipients to pursue goals through incremental steps while maintaining a level of trust in their host environments.

In order to foster the motivation of the welfare workers and maintain their trust in their host community, Hong \textit{et al.} recommends structural changes as a solution. As previously mentioned, the United States welfare program focuses on temporary solutions to achieve self-sufficiency, thereby attempting to solve poverty and inequality. Instead of using the traditional definition, Hong \textit{et al.} argues that a redefined definition of self-sufficiency that includes fostering motivated workers and labor market inclusion will address various psychological strengths throughout a new welfare program’s various stages. Hong \textit{et al.} elaborates that these programs “will involve targeting psychological strength properties—i.e. Self-esteem, self-efficacy, and employment hope—in various stages of these programs as participants become empowered workers.”\textsuperscript{99} This level of support would have to be available on a continuous level and focus on acquiring a living wage job, rather than a minimum wage job.

There is a wide array of scholars whose studies closely align with Hong’s argument. Welfare policy researcher Andrea Hetling defines a bottom-up definition of economic self-sufficiency as a pathway to personal and economic empowerment. According to Hetling, “This

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Ibid.}, 366.
\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Ibid.}, 372.
process moves to acknowledge psychological empowerment and goal orientation as key aspects of self-sufficiency, and as precursors to the more widely acknowledged, long-term economic outcomes that are currently seen as definitive of one's level of self-sufficiency." Hetling, like Hong et al., acknowledges the importance of psychological empowerment and goal orientation as a means to achieve a satisfactory level of self-sufficiency. In both cases, psychological empowerment would encourage welfare recipients to make goals to achieve personal desires. Conversely, goal-orientation would promote taking the right steps towards realistically achieving one’s goals.

Similar to Hong’s argument, Haines acknowledges how programs encourage the traditional measurement of self-sufficiency by solely looking at income-level. Haines believes programs choose to measure self-sufficiency as dependency reduction as a choice “to simplify reality for ideological consistency with more general policy positions or for easier communication within and outside the program.” Many welfare agencies prefer specific measurements that look at dependency reduction as a quick and easy solution. It seems more cost-effective to invest in small portions of financial wellbeing under the guise that those investments will return a profit of increased consumerism for the welfare recipient.

Similar to the results from the Hong et al. study, the participants in Morgen’s study agreed that personal values are a significant component in self-sufficiency. Morgen’s interviewees found that self-sufficiency should include “enhanced client self-respect and self-esteem in their clients, more choice and hope for clients, and supporting clients to be better role

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models for their children by working.”

The process of receiving welfare and being told how to use it is often impersonal and does not require guidance or recommendations for how one can benefit psychologically or socially from the assistance. Should refugee resettlement agencies focus more on the self-esteem and self-respect of the clients, they could address both economic self-sufficiency and psychological self-sufficiency.

Hong’s participants believed “that one cannot be 100% self-sufficient in a given point in time but it has to do with the process of getting to the next level that ‘continues until death.’” Self-sufficiency must also include the psychological self-sufficiency clients wish to achieve in addition to stable employment and a living wage. Through motivation, providing resources, and higher levels of agency, a more satisfactory level of self-sufficiency can be achieved. Rethinking the components that traditionally make up self-sufficiency and expanding those components is integral to addressing the needs of refugees and immigrants as a whole. Part of integration is integrating into a community. Although there is a financial component to integration, addressing the psychological and social components are also necessary within refugee resettlement agencies as a means to support sustainable self-sufficiency.

Integration:

Integration at its core is the process of mutual cultural acculturation that involves a two-way process of cultural reception in the host and arriving communities, and at the same time a process that allows for difference to exist in peace. Yet if looked into its parts and pieces, integration can best be described as “a word used by many but understood differently by

103 Hong et al., Op. Cit., 368.
Before dissecting the factors that contribute towards a definition of “successful integration,” it is necessary to distinguish integration from other modes of immigrant incorporation and immigrant acculturation.

Berry’s model of acculturation (see table 2) shows the other alternatives to integration. In short, Berry’s model uses retention of host culture and retention of home culture as a means to measure the various models immigrants and the host community may use in the incorporation of immigrants. Although the model focuses more on the actions of the arriving community, the model persists to highlight the difference integration can have against its other options.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adoption Level of Host Culture</th>
<th>Retention Level of Home Culture</th>
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<td>High</td>
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Table 2: Berry’s Model of Acculturation

There are four modes of acculturation in Berry’s model: marginalization, separation, assimilation, and integration. The modes of acculturation the immigrant falls into depends on two factors: adoption of the host culture and retention of the home culture. According to the model, if the arriving population is unable or unwilling to adopt the host community culture but is also unable or uninterested in retaining the home culture, marginalization will be the likely outcome. If the home culture remains an integral part of the arriving communities’ lifestyle but

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the host culture is difficult to impossible to maintain, then separation is a result. This often leads to little interaction with the host community. Conversely if the arriving communities are willing and able to adapt to the host culture but are either interested in or banned from practicing the culture of the home country, then assimilation is the result along with a near erasure of the previous home culture. Which then leads to integration, defined as the ability to adopt the host culture alongside the ability to retain the culture of the home country.\(^{105}\) Although these categories broadly determine the various strategies for acculturation, it is important to note that no single strategy is guaranteed to define the entire acculturation process. Rather, not only is it possible to move from one strategy to another, but also it is possible to experience a range of outcomes from acculturation within each category.

As Berry’s model takes into account the acculturation strategies of the arriving population and their integration, it is important to understand the mechanisms the host community utilizes in integrating the new populations. The United States has various levels of integration to take into account. On the federal level, the refugee program is the only program that includes a concrete integration strategy.\(^{106}\) Sociologist Jeremy Hein, a researcher on the relationship between refugees and civic engagement, supports this claim by acknowledging that “Refugee status is a relationship to the state that takes on a number of forms during the process of uprooting, migration, and adaptation.”\(^{107}\) Throughout his article Hein argues that a modified realist perspective is critical to understanding the differences between immigrants and refugees. Refugees’ experiences in the pre-, during-, and post- migration processes are quite similar to immigrants save for the fact that the state is much more involved in refugee integration than for

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 55.
migrant integration. For this reason, it is necessary to keep in mind that the integration strategies, although many have the capability of applying to immigrant integration, is more focused on the refugee populations.

**Traditional Mechanisms of Integration:**

Most integration today takes place at the local levels. A researcher on the relationship between citizenship and immigration, political sociologist Christian Joppke’s work on contemporary immigration points out that to the broader public, integration relates only to the recently arrived migrants rather than to those individuals with a continued presence in the nation. Joppke argues that the focus on the newly arrived and the fear of their ability—or rather incapability—to adapt to the host culture is “in many ways, a skewed and alarmist perspective, because—sociologically speaking—a nonintegrated immigrant, short of being stranded like Robinson Crusoe, is impossible.”¹⁰⁸ The point Joppke makes highlights that immigrants already integrate into host communities just as host communities adapt as immigrants are taken in. How refugees are then integrated into the host community must relate to the factors of integration deemed as absolutely necessary in order to adapt to the host community and potentially thrive in it. This section will highlight the significance of integration as a two-way process of accommodation, rather than exclusively look to the host community to resolve refugees’ needs.

Founder of Carlton University’s Center for International Migration and Settlement Studies, Gertrude Neuwirth illustrates what she sees as the traditional mechanisms of integration through five key principles. Through Neuwirth’s definition of self-sufficiency—defined as the ability to communicate, support oneself financially, and understand the host community values in

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order to put those values into one’s own practice—one may be able to achieve successful integration.

The first principle states that integration is a two-way process, and acknowledges that integration can only be successful if both sides of the equation act together. This two-way process is often ignored in integration strategies, and instead the focus remains solely on the refugees’ economic standings. The second principle states that newcomers must have the ability to communicate with the host community. Neuwirth specifies that this type of communication is best achieve when the newcomer learns the official language of the host country in order to “transfer their occupational skills to the labor market.” I would expand on Neuwirth’s argument that this principle includes access to resources that would allow newcomers to communicate with the host community, even without fluency of an official language. The third principle—which will be discussed in depth later—is for newcomers to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency. In order to achieve this principle, Neuwirth stresses the need for the host community to provide opportunities to newcomers in order to achieve self-sufficiency through community gatherings and other activities. The fourth principle states that the host community must share with its newcomers “principles, traditions, and values that are inherent in Canadian society, such as freedom, equality, and participatory democracy.” The final principle stresses prioritization of those most in need of help, particularly those “facing significant barriers to integration.” The final principle faces the risk of devaluing a two-way accommodation. This risk sheds light on the necessity to continue emphasizing accommodation between both the refugees as well as the host community. 109

Neuwirth’s principles of integration, with a focus on achieving self-sufficiency, all lead towards one final outcome: obtaining citizenship. Citizenship is a primary distinction between understanding refugee integration from immigrant integration. Although not the case in every country, often the mechanisms of integration in countries like the United States and Canada have a primary focus of incorporating refugees on a pathway to citizenship once accepted into the refugee system. Joppke emphasizes the importance of citizenship as a classic mechanism of integration because it represents “shared beliefs and identities that tie the members of society into a collectivity.”\textsuperscript{110} Although there are various types of citizenship, once acquired it provides certain rights and privileges that therefore symbolize the successful integration of immigrants and natives.

Refugees are automatically given certain rights and privileges before obtaining citizenship—granted through their status as a refugee—that are supposed to allow them to quickly integrate into a host society quicker than other immigrants. Ager and Strang connect the value of citizenship to incorporation of refugees in that “to develop an effective policy on integration, governments need to clearly articulate policy on nationhood and citizenship, and thus the rights accorded to refugees.”\textsuperscript{111} The rights Ager and Strang refer to are often associated with “human dignity, equality, freedom of cultural choice, justice, security and independence.”\textsuperscript{112} Through these rights refugees are then prioritized among other immigrants in achieving the path to integration and obtain citizenship.

Unlike other immigrants, refugees have easier access to certain programs and services in order to help them in their integration into a host community and eventually obtain citizenship.


\textsuperscript{111} Ager and Strang, \textit{Op. Cit.}, 175.

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}
Such programs and services normally come in the form of refugee cash assistance, vocational training, language classes, and housing assistance. Sometimes the forms of assistance are provided on a bare minimum scale. Other times, the forms of assistance are more individualized and are lengthened in funding and time in order to better help refugees in every step of their integration pathways. Of all the forms of assistance, acquiring employment is one of the most prioritized and studied aspect of refugee integration. Director of Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity Sarah Spencer notes that the main strategy for acquiring employment was necessary to help refugees “to develop their potential, moving to self-sufficiency through work and inclusion in community life, with assurance that ‘inclusion in our society does not mean that a refugee is required to assimilate.””113 Together with acquiring citizenship, employment, and housing, the refugee integration program reflects greatly on the overall goal to help refugees achieve a level of self-sufficiency.

Although many scholars would agree that citizenship demonstrates successful integration, it can also be argued that citizenship affirms the rights and privileges refugees need, regardless of whether or not they are successfully integrated. It is possible to have citizenship while still remaining generationally excluded from the host community. It is also possible to be a citizen and not be self-sufficient, as is the case with many homeless citizens or women suffering from domestic violence. In each situation, a citizen may have documentation but not have the resources necessary to achieve self-sufficiency on an economic, psychological, or social level. Rather than encouraging citizenship as a means to display self-sufficiency, it is important to emphasize psychological and social measures for becoming self-sufficient and integrated into a host community.

Limitations to the Traditional Integration Mechanisms:

Refugee integration programs come with goals that better assist refugees than if they were otherwise left to achieve integration on their own terms. It is important not only to note the limitations to the traditional mechanisms of integration but also to point out how these mechanisms can be refined with an improved definition of self-sufficiency.

As argued in the previous section, various scholars have acknowledged self-sufficiency is a process rather than an attainable goal. Haines relates the goal of self-sufficiency and its inadequacy back to the refugee program, stating that the current definition of self-sufficiency is quite problematic. Haines relates this to how self-sufficiency is actually achieved through the refugee program: by rapid employment and reduction of dependency. Even these two goals are achieved, the continued inequality that persists after a refugee has acquired programmatic “self-sufficiency” is startling.

Apart from achieving the goal of self-sufficiency, there is a gap in the ability to transfer the skills and knowledge refugees bring from their home countries, making it difficult for refugees to get careers within their industries. Ager and Strang point out the difficulty in applying qualifications and skills from previous work experiences in the home countries and how as a result, “underemployment is a common factor in the experience of refugees in the labor market.”\footnote{Ager and Strang, \textit{Op. Cit.}, 171.} Additionally, should a refugee not be able to adapt from one industry to another, their skill sets would become devalued and their ability to achieve psychological and social self-sufficiency greatly diminished.

Another setback to traditional models of integration is getting off cash assistance. Haines acknowledges that the refugee cash assistance program “is constructed as a mainstream
maintenance programme rather than as a special transition assistance programme for a unique population.”

Thus, the programs used that are deemed to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency are reflective in that they “are often not designed for the specific needs of the population, but rather are the artifact of attachments to other existing programmes.” Cash assistance programs are meant as investments to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. Despite this intention, its results do not actually help refugees become better integrated into their host communities. Resettlement programs are one of the few access points refugees have in order to become better integrated into a host community. If those programs are more focused on getting refugees off cash assistance and employed rather than better assisting them with their personal goals and aspirations, then the programs’ ability to integrate refugees is hindered.

As mentioned earlier, even achieving citizenship does not guarantee a successful integration strategy. Joppke points out one of the inherent hypocrisies of the “campaigns” of achieving citizenship and integration in that both “aim at integrating immigrants into a particular society that is different here from there, but they can do so only in a universalistic therotic that dodges the particularism they aim at.” This “particularism,” aiming to separate that which is different and to assimilate all into a similar society, occurs in the actual benefits one does and does not achieve once citizenship is obtained. Neuwirth elaborates that even when newcomers are able to achieve “the same civic, economic, and social rights as citizens, research has demonstrated that they do not have the same opportunities in the labor market.” Instead, Neuwirth argues that citizenship is “not an important determinant of access to social benefits’ but

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116 Ibid.
rather of physical presence and legality of residence and/or work.”

Rather than see citizenship as a marker of having achieved successful integration, it more simply reflects the physical presence and legal rights of refugees without granting social integration.

**Self-Sufficiency and Refined Mechanisms of Integration:**

The current political and programmatic rights and services do not actually provide successful integration of refugees because they are limited to an economic definition of self-sufficiency, citizenship acquisition, and learning English as the primary goals to achieve self-sufficiency. It is instead necessary to think about the proper paradigms that successfully integrate refugees. To do so, one must incorporate a redefined self-sufficiency with integration.

In the previous section of this chapter, self-sufficiency had broader definition: obtaining resources to achieve goals, high levels of motivation and agency, empowerment, and a level of interdependent inclusion. Rather than focusing on the economic side of self-sufficiency, which is usually limited to achieving employment and getting of public assistance, the integration strategies supported by other scholars could amplify the redefined self-sufficiency and lead to a more satisfying integration experience.

At its heart, self-sufficiency implies being confident in one’s surroundings and motivated to achieve one’s goals. It does not imply any forced means of following state-imposed orders to achieve a dead-end job or to live in poor housing conditions or to leave behind any cultural values. In her article on analyzing the role of cultural recognition in cultural integration, political scientist Melanie Kolbe argues that “the granting of formal cultural recognition and rights to immigrants does not pose an obstacle to immigrant integration, if it is accompanied by policies or structures that provide opportunities for immigrants to participate in the mainstream

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119 Ibid., 53.
society.”120 Instead of blaming cultural maintenance, Kolbe supports the views of many other scholars in that unsuccessful integration is often the result and barriers provided by “labor market, social segmentation, welfare states, and educational systems.”121 Through her article, Kolbe encourages the institutionalization of what she calls “opportunity structures,” institutions that allow for the voluntary participations of immigrants in mainstream society, “such as access to the economic system, sources of political influence, and opportunities to inter-group contact.”122 This type of spatial integration is often disregarded in the refugee integration programs and can greatly help with the feeling of satisfaction and security within a host community and towards the goal of self-sufficiency. Kolbe elaborates the benefits of opportunity structures how:

“By allowing for participation in host societies, opportunity structures serve as valves to exclusive collective identities and pressures and propel the social inclusion of immigrants by enabling a boundary blurring and boundary crossing into the host society at large.”123

Ager and Strang support the benefits of spatial integration as well. Forms of achieving spatial integration include feeling safe in one’s environment both physically and verbally, proximity to family, and feeling socially connected to other communities. Many of Ager and Strang’s participants noted that “an important factor in making them feel ‘at home’ in an area was the friendliness of the people they encountered on a daily basis.”124 The importance of the community was clear throughout Ager and Strang’s article in that where refugees were lacking in

121 Ibid., 418.
122 Ibid., 421.
123 Ibid., 422.
social inclusion and access to resources, the community would best benefit by supporting greater
efforts towards helping them.\textsuperscript{125}

The term community is not only limited to those working for the refugee integration
programs, but rather includes all actors who come to interact with refugees: “including public
bodies, community and religious leaders, the education system, voluntary organizations,
employers, and trade unions.”\textsuperscript{126} On the local labor market level, Hong \textit{et al.} argues the necessity
of community and policy interventions in order to “counter the way in which low-income
jobseekers have to be ‘dependent’ on the demand side of the labor market to achieve self-
sufficiency.”\textsuperscript{127} There is already evidence of companies supporting the right for refugees to work
with them amongst other natives. There are even vocational training programs that combine
motivated refugees with welcoming hiring managers of hospitals, hotels, banks, and so on in
order to help refugees get the experience they need in order to achieve higher levels of
employment. Although it is difficult to quantify how the quality of their work experiences help
them achieve careers that will sustain them in a fashion considered self-sufficient, it does help
refugees pursue jobs that are of interest to them rather than just the first job available.

Lastly, the role of a quality education is necessary in achieving successful integration and
self-sufficiency. Traditional mechanisms often relate education to simply fostering employability
“in general terms or through enhancement of specific language or work skills.” Despite this
assumption, many scholars support the role of education as a community-builder and as a means
to encourage empowerment essential to achieving a greater sense of self-sufficiency.\textsuperscript{128} Ager and
Strang support the importance of educational communities in that “schools are experienced as

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}, 181
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Ibid.}, 175-176.
\textsuperscript{127} Hong \textit{et al.}, \textit{Op. Cit.}, 372.
\textsuperscript{128} Ager and Strang, \textit{Op. Cit.}, 171.
the most important place of contact with members of local host communities, playing an important role in establishing relationships supportive of integration.”

Although even within the education system there are various means in which refugees are excluded from activities with natives, there is also the potential to create an inclusive environment and build a positive interdependent relationship between the newly arrived and the host community.

**Implementing Theory into Practice:**

In comparison with other immigrant groups, the traditional model of self-sufficiency has allowed many refugees to achieve a sense of financial stability. Yet this chapter has demonstrated that economic self-sufficiency ignores the importance of psychological and social self-sufficiency, necessary parts of successful integration. A refined definition of self-sufficiency is characteristic of an individual who has achieved a desired level of agency and resources to meet one’s goals, through varying degrees of the encouragement of the host environment. As a two-way process, integration requires both the host community and refugees to accommodate one another for the creation sustainable growth. Although financial self-sufficiency is important to promote consumerism amongst a community’s inhabitants, it does not promote the sense of shared values or personal growth. Most importantly, economic self-sufficiency ignores the interdependency of self-sufficiency. Members of a community will inevitably rely on one another and on the state, either directly or indirectly, in order to succeed in life. It is important to acknowledge the significance of interdependency and provide opportunities for it to grow through integration programs.

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Through understanding self-sufficiency as an economic, psychological, and social process towards successful integration, it will be possible to analyze how to implement such a definition into United States programs in the next chapter.
IV. REFUGEE INTEGRATION AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN THE UNITED STATES

Self-Sufficiency as a Goal:

Having reviewed how scholars define self-sufficiency and how a bottom-up definition would apply to integration, this chapter dives into how self-sufficiency is used in United States resettlement and integration programs. The United States resettlement agencies discussed throughout this chapter employ a definition of self-sufficiency that is not only limited to an economic definition, but also considers dependency on public cash assistance an acceptable condition for self-sufficiency. This chapter highlights the consequences of a limited definition of self-sufficiency and offers alternatives according to how other nations define and measure the term. If the minimum requirement for achieving self-sufficiency includes getting a job and getting off public cash assistance, then federal programs are limiting themselves in their ability to ensure the successful and sustainable integration of refugees into their host communities.

The United States refugee resettlement and integration agencies use a variety of measures to indicate how successful their programs have been in integrating the refugees they’ve resettled. According to these measures, they determine whether or not their programs are deemed to be “successful.” The United States refugee resettlement program is considered successful according to its ability to achieve specific goals. Upon the refugees’ arrivals, refugee resettlement agencies provide refugees with numerous resources including employment counseling, language classes, public cash assistance, and medical assistance in order to achieve one primary goal: self-sufficiency. In a recent study about the tradeoffs of refugee resettlement, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) commented how economic self-sufficiency is understood as “a proxy for successful integration and is frequently prioritized in refugee integration programs.”

130 Hanne Beirens and Susan Fratzke, “Taking Stock of Refugee Resettlement: Policy Objectives, Practical Tradeoffs, and the Evidence Base,” Migration Policy Institute, May 2017,
a particular set of measurements, refugee integration programs proudly display their success in helping 82% of refugees achieve self-sufficiency.¹³¹ A closer look into how self-sufficiency is defined and measured within the United States reveals an insufficient and misleading calculation that does not highlight the long-term challenges refugees face after their initial resettlement in the United States.

Before outlining how self-sufficiency is defined in the United States, it is necessary to take a brief look into the process of refugee resettlement in the United States. As figure 1 illustrates, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has a comprehensive vetting process that often takes years for immigrants to apply for and gain refugee status. According to the DHS website, the UNHCR normally refers a refugee applicant to a United States Resettlement Support Center (RSC).¹³² The RSC processes the backgrounds of the applicants and prepares them for an adjudication interview and security screening. The DHS and the Department of State (DOS) conduct an enhanced security screening along with the participation of multiple United States security agencies. Once the information is collected, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reviews the information and conducts an in-person interview with each refugee applicant and either approves or disapproves them for resettlement. If approved, the refugees receive a health screening and requests a sponsorship assurance from a resettlement agency based in the United States. The Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) coordinates with nine voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) and their affiliates across the United States.

for sponsorships, to determine where the refugees should be allocated, and to determine what resources they will need once they arrive in the United States.\textsuperscript{133}

\textbf{Figure 1: United States Refugee Resettlement Process}

Upon arrival into the United States, refugees are immediately paired with their appropriate VOLAGs throughout the states to become integrated into the mainstream culture. As a part of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) is assigned the responsibility of supporting and overseeing the integration progress of refugees within the United States in collaboration with the nine VOLAGs. As seen in figure 1, this process includes providing cash assistance, English classes, employment services, medical services, and in certain cases placement into specialized programs (i.e. Victims of Human Trafficking, Unaccompanied Minors Program, Special Immigrant Visa [SIV] holders.).\textsuperscript{134} Having an understanding of the hierarchy of organizations will help this chapter explore the limitations of how each level of program implementation addresses achieving self-sufficiency and instead how they could employ a bottom-up approach.


\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
The Office of Refugee Resettlement:

The United States Congress passed the Refugee Act of 1980 in response to the hundreds of Indochinese refugees in need of resettlement following the fall of Vietnam in April of 1975.\textsuperscript{135} As mentioned in the previous chapter, the United States had previously instituted temporary processes of refugee resettlement, favoring repatriation rather than integration.\textsuperscript{136} Additionally, the United States had previously focused on refugees coming from communist nations rather than forcibly displaced migrants as a whole, supporting the repatriation method of resettlement as its main solution. It was not until after the Vietnam War that the United States realized the necessity of providing longer-term solutions to displaced people around the world.\textsuperscript{137}

The Refugee Act of 1980 provided a longer-term solution to refugee integration, as well as the initial legal structure of the ORR. Today, the ORR offers five divisions of services to help integrate refugees and immigrants in refugee-like situations. These divisions are refugee assistance, refugee health, resettlement services, children’s services, and the office of the director division (which includes keeping records of the Budget/Data Analysis Unit, Policy and Repatriation information).\textsuperscript{138} Through these five divisions, the ORR provides numerous benefits and services from refugee resettlement, including but not limited to cash assistance, language resources, employment counseling.

The purpose of providing these programs all boils down to one main priority: achieving self-sufficiency. According to its website, the ORR makes clear that their primary goal in

providing social services is to “help refugees become self-sufficient as quickly as possible after their arrival in the United States.”

In 2010, the ORR improved their integration program and laid out six principles and initiatives in order to help achieve this goal of achieving rapid self-sufficiency. These principles include appropriate placement and services, client-centered case management, newly arriving refugees, health and mental services, outreach, and data informed decision-making. Although the principles provide a broad basis for VOLAGs and states to work with, the question of how self-sufficiency is defined and measured brings questions as to how these principles actually have an impactful, sustainable effect.

The ORR defines self-sufficiency as “total household income from employment that enables a family unit to support itself without receipt of public cash assistance.” In other words, refugees as a family unit are considered self-sufficient if they are able to pass an income threshold that make them ineligible for cash assistance programs such as Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). This process is estimated to take approximately 90 days. Should the refugees need more time, the Matching Grant (MG) program is an option for states and VOLAGs in order to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency within 180 days instead of 90 days. In an interview with Peggy Halpern, a DHHS representative in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, describes the MG program as “working within a culture of cooperation that allows the local and national VOLAGs to be creative rather than compliance-focused.”

Funding is provided to states and

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139 Ibid.
VOLAGs who are able to effectively foster self-sufficiency for as many refugees as possible within the program by the 180 day mark.

After the ORR lists its requirements for achieving economic self-sufficiency, states then have the option to further expand what is deemed self-sufficient if necessary. Despite this option, the majority of states use this ORR definition of self-sufficiency as a primary basis for determining how much funding and resources will be necessary to help refugees achieve this goal.\textsuperscript{142} The ORR reimburses resettlement programs that directly benefit refugees in the forms of cash and medical assistance as well as social services in order to support the ORR’s mission to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible.\textsuperscript{143} In order to receive funding, each service provided and each program carried out must directly relate back to getting refugees employed and off cash assistance as quickly as possible. The ORR reports that most its refugees are self-sufficient within five years.\textsuperscript{144} According to a Center for Immigration Studies report, the ORR uses the term “entirely self-sufficient” at one point to refer to someone supporting oneself with “earnings only.” Despite this, the report explains that the definition the ORR uses is contrary to the common understanding of the word.\textsuperscript{145}

There are two main problems inherent in the ORR’s definition of self-sufficiency. The first is the pace of acquiring self-sufficiency. As stated in the previous chapter, self-sufficiency takes time to foster and it is not possible to become fully self-sufficient as a part of an interdependent community. If self-sufficiency is a process and not an end-goal, then it would be

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
feasible to achieve it within just a few years, let alone 180 days. This would require achieving a job within a short period of time, regardless of the fact that the refugee may be coming in with low English or non-transferable job skills. This would also require basic financial literacy within the 180 day period that would allow the refugee to not only take care of themselves, but also of the rest of the refugee household.

The second setback to the definition is withdrawing from public cash assistance. According to this definition, it is possible to achieve self-sufficiency while also continuing to receiving various other welfare benefits, such as food stamps (SNAP) or Medicaid. Although refugee integration programs may advertise success rates of 82% refugees achieving self-sufficiency, many of those refugees still earn an income that requires the use of different types of welfare in order to continue integrating into the United States. According to a Migration Policy Institute (MPI) study, “refugees were more likely to receive food stamps, cash welfare, or public health insurance benefits than either nonrefugee immigrants or the U.S. born.” Although there is no publicly-available data on the wages of refugees in the United States, research shows that many refugees continue to rely on welfare even after completion of their integration programs and getting categorized as self-sufficient. As mentioned in the previous chapter, self-sufficiency should not be defined solely through economic means, as defined by welfare programs. The ORR’s definition is limited by its focus on economic self-sufficiency.

147 Ibid.
Furthermore, the ORR’s definition does not adhere to the full definition of economic self-sufficiency: to get off welfare completely.

The ORR continues to provide funding to states, refugee resettlement agencies, and integration programs based on the narrow definition of self-sufficiency and its criteria. In their most recent annual funding opportunity for reception and placement (R&P) programs, the PRM promises funding to refugee resettlement programs that achieve the following goals: to ensure the ability to promptly receive refugees approved for admissions; to ensure all refugees approved are provided with proper R&P services; to maintain the national capacity for R&P according to the annually-determined admissions ceiling; and to assist refugees in achieving economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. This means that resettlement programs who provide employment counselling, language classes, and cultural orientation workshops can receiving funding for their programs so long as their refugees meet the minimum standards of economic self-sufficiency provided by the ORR. Although the R&P programs can expand to include more individualized program strategies to improve self-sufficiency, programs are not required to integrate refugees further than getting them employed with the first position available.

In another recent funding opportunity for Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), defined as matched savings accounts to help refugees save income for specific purposes, the ORR offers grants for refugees through programs that abide by the ORR goals and objectives. The programs awarded would receive funding based on achieving the following indicators: recruitment and enrollment; training and technical assistance; asset purchases; economic self-

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sufficiency; and logic model progress. The economic self-sufficiency indicator had to follow the same assessment priorities as provided by the ORR in order to determine the success of the program. Similar to the previous funding example, so long as the program provided the minimum services necessary to get refugees off public cash assistance, then the program was considered successful in having refugees become self-sufficient.

As indicated by both funding opportunities, one of the primary objectives was foster economic self-sufficiency in order to receive any sort of federal funding or reimbursement. The ORR’s definition is a guideline for all refugee resettlement programs across the states, the VOLAGs, and the local programs. Although possible to expand the goals of economic self-sufficiency, by establishing a low baseline for achieving economic self-sufficiency the federal programs limit themselves and their constituents in the quality and efficiency of achieving their goals.

There are several dangers in the ORR’s limited definition of self-sufficiency. First, refugees are expected to achieve a level of financial stability which allows the continued reliance on welfare; refugees with low incomes and high welfare dependency are considered stable and financially secure. There are numerous examples of refugee households that would still live in poverty under this limited definition of self-sufficiency. The ORR’s main responsibility is to define and enforce their vision of self-sufficiency for resettlement agencies to follow. Without a holistic definition economic self-sufficiency and a complete lack of considering psychological and social self-sufficiency, the ORR sets up resettlement agencies to provide downgraded services to refugees. Nonetheless, even with downgraded services the programs are still evaluated as successful in achieving self-sufficiency.

Secondly, if programs are encouraged to use a basic definition of self-sufficiency to receive funding, then the priorities have the propensity to maintain a low threshold for what is considered successfully self-sufficient and therefore successfully integrated. MPI notes how many analysts have “highlighted the risk of overemphasizing economic integration at the expense of investments in social integration, such as building personal connections with neighbors and community members or learning the host-country language.”\textsuperscript{152}

Thirdly and arguably most concerning, the definition of self-sufficiency used by the ORR is contrary to the common understanding of the term.\textsuperscript{153} If United States government officials review the evaluation forms for these programs and deem the programs as successful, one of two reactions could occur: choosing to maintain the programmatic goals as is believing that the programs are creating a real change and a real difference; or resenting the program success for not providing similar funding to programs that are deemed more in need of help—such as those affecting the homeless populations or expats.

The ORR has provided many crucial programs in order to better help refugees become integrated into host communities in the United States. Despite this it is necessary to look at their definition of economic self-sufficiency from an objective point of view and understand that its limits negatively affect the outcomes for refugees, for programs, and for the overall reception within host communities.

State and Voluntary Agency Implementation and Prioritization:

Through the ORR’s guidance and funding, state offices have the option to implement the basic necessities the ORR requires or to even expand their programs and activities. Each state

\textsuperscript{153} Camarota, \textit{Op. Cit.}
has unique priorities, funding, and programs geared towards integrating refugees and helping them achieve self-sufficiency. Although their priorities are diverse, it is easier to look at them through three types of refugee resettlement models used: the Wilson Fish Alternative Program (WF); the Public Private Partnership Program (PPP); and the traditional state-administered programs. The distribution of which states employs which model can be seen in figure 2.

**Figure 2: State Refugee Resettlement Systems**

Most states receive funding through the traditional state-administered model. Elaborated in a report to congress in 2010, the ORR’s funding would go directly to the states, which then “provide transitional cash and medical assistance and social services, as well as maintain legal responsibility for the care of unaccompanied refugee children.”  

The states who follow the traditional state administered model have more control over both the allocation of funds as well as the monitoring of outcomes within the refugee resettlement and integration agencies. These states oversee programs such as TANF, the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, RCA,

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Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), Targeted Assistance programs (TAG), Unaccompanied Refugee Minors (URM), and various social services to “obtain employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency and social adjustment as quickly as possible.”\textsuperscript{155} States that utilize the state-administered type of model are able to use the same definition of self-sufficiency as does the ORR, having the choice to expand it. Although their affiliate VOLAGs and local integration programs could expand on the definition of self-sufficiency, the states themselves are still able to provide funding based on meeting the minimum requirements of how the ORR defines self-sufficiency.

Two examples of states that utilize this traditional model of providing assistance are California and Arkansas. The California Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB), acting within the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), aims to “provide state-level leadership and coordination of refugee programs and services to achieve successful refugee resettlement and self-sufficiency in California.”\textsuperscript{156} California’s definition of self-sufficiency, however, is more expanded than that of the ORR. According to a publication in the Self Sufficiency Standard—a localized measurement of self-sufficiency in 39 states and created by Dr. Diana Pearce, director of the Center for Women’s Welfare—the self-sufficiency measurement in each county is encouraged to be based on the total income needed for a family to afford housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, taxes, emergency savings funds, and miscellaneous items such as hygiene items or clothing.\textsuperscript{157} The California State legislature has encouraged its federal agencies to utilize the self-sufficiency standard as a basis for measuring the success of federal agencies.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 7.
programs in California. This definition extends far beyond that of the ORR definition, yet still focuses mainly on economic self-sufficiency rather than psychological and social. California’s refugee resettlement programs must abide by this definition of economic self-sufficiency as a goal in order to receive funding.

Arkansas contrasts with California in that it receives funding for its resettlement programs by striving to achieve the ORR minimum definition of economic self-sufficiency. Unlike California, Arkansas receives very few refugees—13 in fiscal year 2015 compared to California’s 5,718. The Arkansas Division of County Operations, under the Arkansas Department of Human Services, offers funding to its Refugee Resettlement Program which then offers applications online for refugees to receive SNAP and Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA). There are some refugee organizations that also assist with refugee integration, such as Canopy Northwest Arkansas. Yet to receive funding Arkansas does not specify how self-sufficiency is defined, and so it defaults to the minimal definition the ORR provides.

The second model for funding and implementation is that of the WF states. Currently there are 13 WF programs operating in twelve states as well as San Diego County, California. The WF program is considered an alternative to traditional state-administered refugee resettlement programs in that it has a higher emphasis on “increasing refugee prospects for early employment and self-sufficiency; promoting coordination among voluntary resettlement

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agencies and service providers; and ensuring that refugee assistance programs exist in every state where refugees are settled.”162 One of the benefits of becoming a WF state is that a VOLAG or other type of refugee resettlement agency has the opportunity to become the primary leader in determining the refugee program of the state, rather than having the state determine the provision of cash assistance, case management, and employment services.163 States can still maintain involvement in the programs by providing RCA or other types of cash assistance. Yet in this model a VOLAG or local agency has the opportunity to provide more culturally relevant opinions on the provision of refugee resettlement and integration. Although the definition of self-sufficiency still abides by the same terms as provided by the ORR, WF states have the opportunity to provide funding based on an expanded definition of self-sufficiency if desired.

One example of a WF state is Massachusetts. Massachusetts runs its statewide refugee resettlement program through its Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI). The ORI’s mission is to not only to promote the self-sufficiency of refugees and immigrants but also to promote their full participation in the economic, social and civic life of Massachusetts.164 Although the ORI receives some of its funding through the ORR, it is the other VOLAGs and resettlement agencies that have the opportunity to directly connect with the ORR to discuss funding and provision of their services.

The ORI’s definition self-sufficiency is still useful in that it correlates well with how other Massachusetts VOLAGs define and prioritize self-sufficiency. According to the ORI’s 2017 Annual Report, “the hallmark of self-sufficiency is the capacity to make informed financial

162 Ibid.
decisions.” The ORI also values social self-sufficiency, as demonstrated in its goals for its URM program. Lastly, the ORI values not only the ORR defined self-sufficiency, but also “durable self-sufficiency,” which means an income level which “exceeds 450% of the federal poverty level.” Apart from the ORI definition of self-sufficiency and durable self-sufficiency, the Massachusetts self-sufficiency standard is similar to that of the California self-sufficiency standard in that self-sufficiency is defined as having enough income for housing, child care, food, public and private transportation, health care, taxes and tax credits, and miscellaneous items. Unlike California, however, there is no clear indication that Massachusetts federal programs are encouraging the implementation of the self-sufficiency standard in their federal programs.

The third model for funding and implementation is that of the PPP states. PPP states have a unique partnership with local VOLAG affiliates to receive cash assistance. PPP states maintain state responsibility in refugee resettlement and integration while acknowledging the benefits of partnering with VOLAGs in the decision-making processes of program implementation and monitoring. The benefits to this is “to enable or foster a more effective and better quality resettlement while maintaining state responsibility for policy and administrative oversight.” Through this model, states continue to have the ability to receive funding from the ORR to allocate to VOLAGs and local integration programs while also giving their constituents

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166 Ibid., 15.
170 Ibid.
more authority in the decision-making process regarding resource allocation and implementation of the refugee resettlement and integration programs. There are five states that have been approved by the ORR to operate as PPP states.

Oregon is an interesting example of a PPP state in that its partnership with Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) provides an expanded program to deliver self-sufficiency needs to refugees in Oregon. Within their first 12 months in the United States, refugees are referred to agencies focused in employment services, pre-employment training, and post-employment counselling; these agencies then provide housing, medical services, language classes, and cultural orientation. After living in Oregon for 12 months, the state proves employment assistance for up to 5 years in order to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

IRCO’s priority to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency beyond the economic requirements in its mission statement. IRCO’s mission is to “promote the integration of refugees, immigrants and the community at large into a self-sufficient, healthy, and inclusive multi-ethnic society.” IRCO strives to empower refugees through programs that assist with employment, legal services, language services provide family resources, children and youth empowerment, senior resources, and community development. These services are provided in a means that is culturally and linguistically adjusted based on the refugee populations arriving in order to assist the refugees and the host community with the integration process. Currently, IRCO provides its services in more than 150 culturally and linguistically specific practices. Although there were no statistics on the percentage of clients who were positively affected by Oregon’s programs,

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IRCO’s reach extends to approximately 30,000 community members including refugees, immigrants, children, youths, seniors, and minorities each year.\textsuperscript{175}

While states play an integral role in how they define self-sufficiency, VOLAGs are equally important in their definition of self-sufficiency as they are the ones who are responsible for program implementation. VOLAGs are often the main organizations in charge of providing employment counselling, translation services, cultural orientation, medical services, and cash assistance to the refugees. As seen in Table 3, there are nine VOLAGs that have dominion over the implementation of resettlement and integration programs. Although each VOLAG has a specific type of focus—religious, ethnic-based, secular—they all have the same goal of receiving new refugees and helping them on their way towards self-sufficiency. VOLAGs receive most their funding from federal and state services, depending on the model of resettlement the state employs. In addition to government funding, many VOLAGs receive funding from philanthropy with 501(c)(3) statuses. This is important to note because not only do VOLAGs provide services to refugees such as employment counseling or cultural orientation workshops through government funding, but also many of them have the ability to lobby political offices and create advocacy programs to promote the wellbeing of refugees around the world through philanthropic dollars.\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
Similar to states, VOLAGs and their affiliates have the option to expand their definition of self-sufficiency. For instance, the Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM) in Los Angeles defines achieving self-sufficiency as something that can be achieved through “adjusting and adapting to the American Workplace [and] learn English.”177 Although the EMM still defines self-sufficiency as ending one’s dependence on public assistance, their methods towards achieving this end is clarified through its programmatic goals. Conversely, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) defines self-sufficiency as something that entails “that refugees can cover basic expenses, are placed in a safe and stable environment, can navigate appropriate and relevant systems, understand their surroundings and situation and can manage daily tasks on their own.”178 Although HIAS provides similar services as its other fellow VOLAGs, their definition of self-sufficiency expands on some social aspects of integration such as feeling safe and resourceful. Each affiliate may have its own agendas for self-sufficiency apart from its

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177 Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service and Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, “IRIS Services,” 2018, /1programs.html.
central office. Affiliates have various local connections with schools, police, employment offices, and religious institutions that allow VOLAGs the flexibility to further their integration and self-sufficiency goals for refugees.

Since VOLAGs receive most their funding for R&P programs from the federal and state levels to provide to refugees’ basic needs, the option to expand the definition of self-sufficiency is not always an option. Despite intentions to expand their definition for self-sufficiency and provide more individualized services for their clients, VOLAGs ultimately rely on federal funding to provide services necessary for integration in the United States. So long as VOLAGs encourage their refugees to achieve employment and reduce their dependence on public cash assistance, no further funding is necessary to further integrate the refugees. Overall, most VOLAGs solely focus on self-sufficiency in economic terms, as defined by the ORR. Even with goals of promoting social or psychological self-sufficiency, funding is provided towards achieving economic self-sufficiency.

VOLAGs and their affiliates are the primary agencies in direct contact with refugees and have the ability to take into account the individual needs and goals of the refugees. Despite this, VOLAGs do not often have the opportunity or to expand their definition of self-sufficiency for improved integration because their funding is derived mainly from state and federal sources.

**Alternative Approaches:**

In considering solutions for how the United States refugee programs can improve their goals and measurements, it is beneficial to compare self-sufficiency goals to how other resettlement nations implement their integration programs. The global leader for refugee
resettlement, the UNHCR, provides a framework for all resettlement countries to follow as a means to promote sustainable development for the protection of refugees.

The UNHCR provides a refugee resettlement handbook that illustrates the legal framework of refugee resettlement, defines the persons of concerns, and describes the three solutions countries may opt towards in order to help refugees: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. In the handbook, the UNHCR highlights self-sufficiency, referred to as self-reliance, as “an important precursor to all three durable solutions.” With all of its programs, the UNHCR encourages refugee self-reliance in order for refugees themselves to act as agents of development. According to the handbook, the UNHCR defines self-reliance as the “social and economic ability of an individual, a household, or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health, and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity.” This definition addresses self-reliance as not only an economic goal, but also social and psychological ones. Self-reliance and local integration is an important relationship according to the UNHCR as it is believed to create a sustainable and positive balance of power between the refugees and the host community. Despite these goals, the UNHCR emphasize states are not obligated to accept refugees through resettlement and even if they do, it is up to the state to determine how it will resettle the refugees. Given this constraint, it is necessary to look at how countries themselves resettle refugees, rather than how the UNHCR encourages them.

According to the UNHCR, there are 37 countries that offer resettlement programs for refugees. Although the United States receives the most refugees through the UNHCR resettlement program, the handbook emphasizes that all countries have the responsibility to ensure refugees have the opportunity to integrate into their new communities.

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180 Ibid., 416.
resettlement program, it is important to note that less than 1% of refugees are resettled through the UNHCR’s program.\textsuperscript{182} Besides the United States, the countries of Canada, Australia, and Nordic Countries take on most of the resettlement cases through the UNHCR. In other countries, self-sufficiency is defined differently than in the United States.

In Canada, the definition is similar to the United States in that it is more economically focused and expected to be achieved at a fast pace. According to the Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Training Program report, Canadians expect refugees to become “self-supporting” within six to twelve months. Self-supporting would imply that the refugees have “sufficient financial resources to support themselves and their dependents from the time they arrive in Canada until they have gained continuing employment.”\textsuperscript{183} Once obtained, the refugee would no longer receive government assistance or a sponsor to help with integration. Refugee sponsors receive funding for assisting refugees financially, but is made clear that the social and psychological elements of refugee integration and self-sufficiency are voluntary and not enforced. Other services provided to refugees include reception services, providing temporary housing, helping find permanent housing, cultural orientation, and assessing basic needs such as school registration or medical supplies.\textsuperscript{184} Apart from the personal sponsorship, refugees in Canada are resettled in a similar manner to refugee resettlement in the United States.

European countries take on a different meaning of self-sufficiency within their communities. According to Hanne Beirens and Susan Fratzke, two researchers at MPI who specialize in European Union policies related to migration, the European resettlement priorities

are much more focused on qualitative services that are individualized and last for up to five years. In their study, they argue:

For example, both the United States and Canada set self-sufficiency as a top priority for resettled refugees and have, in a spirit of policy and program coherence, incorporated this objective into different phases of the resettlement programme. Sweden and other European resettlement countries take a much different approach, giving refugees significantly longer to settle in to their new homes before requiring them to be self-supporting.\(^{185}\)

This difference is clear throughout the resettlement programs in countries like Sweden and Germany. In these countries, self-sufficiency is more associated with access to labor market integration, access to basic fundamental rights, access to resources than to employment.

Sweden is ranked first in 2014 for the most favorable integration policies according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX).\(^{186}\) Their resettlement program is run primarily by its municipalities and county councils, with funding coming from the state-run Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket).\(^{187}\) In recent years with the increased labor market focus, the Swedish Public Employment Services (PES) has also had a hand in the integration of refugees.

Sweden is not only economically focused, but also has a social focus in integrating their refugees. The focus on self-sufficiency in integration is the idea that self-sufficiency is not so attainable as self-sustainability is. The key distinction is that self-sufficiency, with a focus on getting off welfare, is not a desired goal in a welfare-focused economy such as Sweden. Instead, the Swedish integration programs focus more on how refugees can become more self-sustainable through job acquisition, language classes, public transportation assistance, resource access, and

social integration into neighborhoods with housing for refugees.\textsuperscript{188} Karin Borevi, associate professor of multiculturalism and integration at Södertörn University, notes that the expectation to become self-sufficient follows along the lines of achieving access to welfare services and employment in order to grow economically. In this model, welfare services and employment together are a means for refugees to become self-sustainable. Professor Roger Andersson, a researcher of economic and social integration of immigrants and interviewee for this thesis paper, describes the Swedish integration programs as individually focused and that it provides ample time—two to five years—for integration agencies to help refugees achieve their personal aspirations and goals in order to succeed in the Swedish community.\textsuperscript{189}

Like many refugee resettlement programs around the world, the Swedish resettlement program continues to place employment and economic sustainability as the primary priorities for integration. In an interview discussing the municipal level responses to national refugee resettlement in Sweden, a Swedish civil servant notes:

M1: I think that the employment line receives too much attention. An employment focus we shall have, as it is a main goal. But the labor market orientation has been pushed too far. Another goal of integration policies I judge as important is community participation. But nowadays people don’t speak about it as much as they do about self-sufficiency and the work orientation.\textsuperscript{190}

Understanding the goals of the integration programs, Swedish integration programs come with its own disadvantages. According to Andersson, the Swedish welfare system was not designed to deal with a large influx of refugees. Although Sweden set limits to the amount of refugees accepted in 2015, its previously open policies for asylees created an influx so large that

\textsuperscript{189} Roger Andersson, Interviewed by Brittany Finney, January 2018.
it accepted more refugees per capita than any European country. Everyone in the Swedish welfare system needs to be working in order for the system to provide enough resources for its inhabitants. One of the setbacks from their model is their programs’ impact on the unemployment gap. Even with its lengthened integration programs, refugees are not employed as quickly as in other programs. In a 2017 report, Sweden has a 15% unemployment gap between immigrants and nonimmigrants. Andersson points out in his studies that the differences in unemployment for refugees is mainly due to the type of job market they enter into. In bigger cities like Stockholm, there may be more entry jobs into the labor market but less affordable housing to accommodate the refugees. Conversely in rural areas there may be more housing but fewer jobs except for in agriculture and forestry, which are struggling industries in Sweden. Another disadvantage regards Sweden’s housing of refugees. Although Sweden encourages social integration, Andersson points out that segregation is still a reality. When refugees are separated into different residential areas, those areas are often stigmatized as unsafe which can make integration difficult.

Since Angela Merkel’s announcement of welcoming refugees into Germany, there has been a rise in the international conversation about its refugee resettlement program. In Germany there is a focus on the social acceptance of refugees and their ability to find work. Germany’s integration program is considerably more difficult to become a citizen than in Sweden. Despite this challenge, Germany’s focus on self-sufficiency as a goal is similar to that of Sweden’s: access to resources in order to become a productive member of the German community. In

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Germany, the federal government bears the majority of the responsibility of setting the legal framework for integration and funding integration programs. Municipalities are the main implementers of integration programs, who offer services funded by the federal and regional legislations along with their own individualized services based on the refugee populations coming in. Lastly, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF) plays an integral role in processing asylum applications and encouraging integration through language and employment courses.\(^\text{194}\)

Although the majority of the integration programs focus on labor market access for asylum seekers, there is also a social focus of making sure refugees are integrated socially into the German communities. In an effort to avoid “parallel societies” and refugee segregation, which occurs in France, Germany provides a 9-month integration course to accelerate employment and socially integrate refugees.\(^\text{195}\) Germany provides subsidized housing, language courses, medical support, employment training, and an individualized integration plan that combines the goals of the refugees along with the goals of the local labor market.\(^\text{196}\) After a period of 5 years, resettled refugees can apply for permanent residency.

One difference between the United States and Germany is that German self-sufficiency is more focused as a long-term process to help refugee achieve improved economic and social wellbeing. For Germany, the goal is not just to employ refugees but rather to employ them with a


job that would eventually lead them to sustainable careers.\textsuperscript{197} Germany’s population is aging and one of their primary goals is to find a means to fill jobs left vacant by aging German citizens.\textsuperscript{198} In an MPI report by Germany policy specialist Victoria Rietig, Germany’s policy regarding achieving self-sufficiency can best be described as something that takes time, resources, and patience.\textsuperscript{199} Despite the motivations for the host community to become involved in the integration process, the focus on integration is mainly on the refugees and their long-term development in the German community. Regardless, the local communities and local resettlement agencies have taken upon themselves the task of providing ample employment opportunities and resources in order to fully incorporate refugees into the German society.

Although each country prioritizes economic self-sufficiency, there is also an emphasized social integration approach within Sweden, Germany, and Canada compared to the United States. In regards to self-sufficiency, because Germany and Sweden have a much more welfare-dependent market, their system views self-sufficiency as something that is a process and must be strived towards. The European countries focus on access to resources and labor market integration as a key measurement of success and achievement of self-sustainability. This greatly contrasts with Canada and the United States in that the North American countries view self-sufficiency as the ability to support oneself financially without the use of welfare. The United States, as argued in the previous section, defines self-sufficiency as getting off cash assistance, rather than off of welfare as a whole. Although the United States would not be able to employ a


\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.

European model of self-sufficiency that would presume refugees’ dependency on welfare, it would greatly improve the outcomes of integration if refugees were able to continue their interdependent relationships with state programs and focus on long-term goals.

**Turning Gaps into Opportunities:**

The United States has a comprehensive refugee resettlement and integration program that involves various actors on the federal, state, and local levels. Through these programs, the United States has employed the majority of its refugees within a six month period and in some cases, has helped its refugees grow even more independent from welfare reliance. The United States refugee resettlement system’s definition of self-sufficiency, however, does not allow refugees to achieve what is commonly understood as self-sufficient. Rather than include social integration, access to resources, or long-term career growth as measurements of self-sufficiency as demonstrated by other countries, the United States employs a “sink or swim” approach.\(^{200}\) Once refugees stop receiving cash assistance after 180 days, agencies are already moving onto the next set of refugees without having a means to track the integration success of previous refugees. The concluding chapter of this paper will provide recommendations that would improve the current United States refugee resettlement system.

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V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Self-sufficiency is a term many individuals strive towards each day. As a primary goal in refugee resettlement, it is important to utilize a definition of self-sufficiency that encompasses economic, social, and psychological factors. A more holistic view of self-sufficiency can help policymakers and stakeholders devise new means to evaluate sustainable refugee integration in the United States. Improved program guidelines can determine if funds are used appropriately and how best to benefit the lives of refugees in the United States. How self-sufficiency is defined has varied greatly depending on the time period, country, or agency. Between World War I and World War II, international organizations employed a bottom-up definition of self-sufficiency in which refugees defined their own needs and what they needed to become self-sustaining. As international agencies became more involved in the resettlement process, self-sufficiency became more economically focused, with psychological and social self-sufficiency becoming secondary goals.

When resettlement countries began their own refugee integration programs, measuring self-sufficiency was dependent on how one could become self-sufficient within a host country’s community. Where some countries like Sweden and Germany defined self-sufficiency with more emphasis on welfare and one’s role in the labor market, countries like the United States and Canada defined self-sufficiency as having an income high enough to get off welfare assistance. The differences between the European and North American countries are understandable based on the dependency on a producer-focused or a consumer-focused economy when defining self-sufficiency. The United States relies on a consumer-focused strategy in order to develop economic growth. Encouraging refugees to become active consumers in a capitalist economy is seen as successful economic integration. Yet after taking a closer look into how the United States
defines self-sufficiency, it is evident agencies such as the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) employ a definition that allows refugees to continue depending on the state for basic needs. So long as the refugee is off cash assistance, the refugee is considered self-sufficient.

By having too narrow of a definition of self-sufficiency, United States refugee resettlement programs misguide evaluators when analyzing the integration progress of refugees. As refugee resettlement programs receive their funding based on how many of their refugees become self-sufficient, it is important to employ a guideline of self-sufficiency that includes a more holistic approach. Expanding the definition of self-sufficiency to a bottom-up approach would allow programs to focus on long-term success in economic, social, and psychological integration. Otherwise, there is the danger that policymakers would see integration programs as successes and do little else to improve them. This may result in stagnant funding or future funding cuts.

Due to the recent political climate from the Trump administration, United States policymakers have been unable to devote as much time and resources towards refugee integration as towards the debate regarding refugee admissions. The International Rescue Committee has reported that this debate has drastically slowed refugee admissions for the fiscal year of 2018 to just over 10,000 refugees halfway through the fiscal year. Comparatively, in April of 2017 refugee admissions were at just under 40,000, even with the various refugee bans occurring during that time. With the debate narrowly focused on refugee admissions, refugee resettlement and integration programs have taken on an active role to publicize how refugees can benefit host communities. There is a wealth of research highlighting the need not only to

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202 Ibid.
continue programs but to improve the means in which services are provided. For instance, the Urban Institute recently released a report in April of 2018 providing evidence to how refugees have positively impacted the United States economic, social, and political wellbeing. The efforts of these reports have helped to shift the national conversation away from deciding who deserves enter the country as a refugee and towards how to best integrate refugees coming into the United States. By redefining self-sufficiency, this paper offers one means refugee integration can greatly improve.

In the figure below, I have constructed a diagram of what a definition of self-sufficiency could look like:

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The triangle on the left represents the current United States government’s definition of self-sufficiency. In this model, the ORR is the primary authority which state offices, VOLAGs, and other local programs use for guidance on how to achieve self-sufficiency. If the ORR’s definition is limited to regarding refugees as self-sufficient so long as they are employed and off refugee cash assistance, then other actors of integration will receiving funding so long as they abide by those terms. States, VOLAGs, and local organizations have the opportunity to expand those definitions but face the cost of lacking the funds to implement an expanded self-sufficiency that would include psychological and social dimensions.

The tree on the right represents a bottom-up definition of self-sufficiency. To begin with, a bottom-up definition of self-sufficiency would include individual, family, and community reports as to what self-sufficiency should look like within those organizations. The ORR would then support the expansion of self-sufficiency through how it frames its funding opportunities. Rather than define self-sufficiency and expect states to follow that minimum definition, it should allow states the funding and encouragement to have a definition that includes economic, social, and psychological aspects of self-sufficiency and measurements for how individual communities will achieve those goals. These versions of self-sufficiency could advocate for solutions including but not limited to providing more individualized employment counselling, longer-term orientation services, community engagement opportunities, and psychological empowerment workshops. Self-sufficiency, as previously discussed, is a process that is rooted in interdependency between refugees and their host communities.

It is important to acknowledge and encourage the host community’s involvement in achieving successful integration. Refugees can only be self-sufficient if they work with the host community and if the host community allows the refugees to become agents of change. The
output in the diagram would also represent the flexibility for that definition to grow. Communities are constantly evolving and so should the definition of what self-sufficiency looks like in that community. It is important to keep in mind the evolution of those communities when funding refugee resettlement programs and how they progress towards self-sufficiency.

It is also important to show where refugee resettlement agencies are succeeding and where they need improvements. An advertised success rate that states 82% of refugees are self-sufficient will not only mislead key stakeholders but will also have the potential to cause tension in how the refugee resettlement programs are prioritized compared to other assistance programs.204 It is therefore important to not only focus on how self-sufficiency is defined but also to support levels of measurements that account for long-term sustainability. The current refugee integration programs will often spend most of their time focused on achieving the first job placement for refugees and neglect to check in with how the refugees fare in achieving long-term success. An emphasis on long-term economic, social, and psychological development is critical for refugees to thrive in the United States.

These recommendations will require systemic changes in the ways in which refugee resettlement operates in the United States. Although these changes may require more time to re-strategize, they will lead to a more sustainable and profitable refugee resettlement outcome that will reward both the refugees and the host communities involved.

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VI. APPENDIX

Table 1: Hong’s Bottom-Up Empowerment Pathway to Economic Self-Sufficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Labor Market Inclusion</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance Level of Economic Self-Sufficiency</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Discouraged</td>
<td>Motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Disconnected</td>
<td>Empowered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Top-down Self-Sufficiency Outcome) (Ideal Self-Sufficiency Outcome)

Source: Hong, 2009

Table 2: Berry’s Model of Acculturation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adoption Level of Host Culture</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention Level of Home Culture</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Separation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Marginalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Berry, 1997
Table 3: Refugee Resettlement Agency Classifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church World Service (CWS)</td>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC)</td>
<td>Ethnic-Based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM)</td>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)</td>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Rescue Committee (IRC)</td>
<td>Secular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)</td>
<td>Secular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS)</td>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)</td>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Relief Corporation</td>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Finney, 2018

Figure 1: United States Refugee Resettlement Process

Source: ORR, 2015

Figure 2: State Refugee Resettlement Systems

Source: ORR, 2018
Figure 3: Self-Sufficiency Models

An Unbalanced Pyramid: The Traditional Model

A- ORR Support  
B- State Office Support  
C- VOLAG Implementation  
D- Local Program Implementation

A Maturing Sapling: The Bottom-Up Model

A- ORR Support  
B- Recipient Input  
C- Branches of Self-sufficiency (psychological, social, economic)  
D- Opportunities to grow

Source: Finney, 2018
VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY


Interview Schedule:

Introductory Questions:

- How did you become involved in the study/practice of integration of refugees?
- What does your organization/department do?
- What would you say is your organization’s/department’s primary goal?
- What do you do as a part of your organization/department?
- How does your organization/department communicate with other refugee resettlement/integration organizations? (If at all?)
- How would you define the current circumstances in your country regarding attitudes towards refugees and how they are integrated?

Integration Criteria:

- How would you define integration?
- How would your country’s institutions define integration?
- How would you define self-sufficiency?
- How would your country’s institutions define self-sufficiency?
- Who defines terms like integration or self-sufficiency?
  (federal/state/local/institutional/etc.)
- How is integration measured and what are the outcomes?
- What type of data is used to measure it?
- How is integration translated into policy?
- Who are the actors involved in the integration of refugees? How does self-sufficiency play into their integration?
- What programs or policies are in place now to help/prevent refugees achieve self-sufficiency?
- Does integration of refugee vary throughout the country? If so, how?
- Are there any inconsistencies? What do you believe can be improved? (If anything?)
Informed Consent Form
Master's in Global Studies Program
Brandeis

Principal Interviewer Name: Brittany Finney
Graduate Student, Global Studies
Brandeis University
Tel: 310-614-2056
Email: bfinney@brandeis.edu

This research interview is conducted as part of my thesis research for the Master's in Global Studies at Brandeis. Students are required to utilize national and international resources to explore the theoretical and practical applications of their thesis topics. This thesis will be published through the Brandeis University Library. Your participation is voluntary and will include a short, personal interview and may also include a questionnaire.

This interview session will take approximately one hour and will consist of questions relating to your professional experience related to refugee integration in your country.

Throughout the session, questions pertaining to your professional experiences, opinions, and thoughts will be asked. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If at any time you experience emotional discomfort as a result of this interview, you have the right to not answer questions or to terminate the interview at any time. You may withdraw your participation in this research project without penalty. There are no anticipated physical, psychological, legal, or economic risks associated with this project. You will not be compensated financially for your participation in this research project. In addition, participants irrevocably assign to interviewer all copyright, title and interest in this project to the interviewer.

Any reports resulting from this study will not identify you by your name or initials unless explicit permission is given in order to protect your confidentiality. Your name will not be attached to any notes or digital audio files. All data and correspondence will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed unless required by law. These reports will not be published.

If you have any questions regarding the research or your participation in it, either now or any time in the future, please feel free to ask. My name and contact information is located at the top of this page, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Kristen Lucken at (617) 470-0016, should you have any questions or concerns about this research. If any problems arise as a result of this study, please call me immediately.
I will provide you with a copy of this consent form to keep.

Name of Study Participant:____________________________________________________

If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

Signed__________________________________________ Date____________________

If you are willing to have your interview(s) recorded, please sign below

Signed__________________________________________ Date____________________

If you are willing to have your real name, photographs, or other materials that reveal your identity used in this study, please sign below

Signed__________________________________________ Date____________________

Researcher:

Signed__________________________________________ Date____________________