

John Fernandez, Madison Ianniello, Brenna Olson, Brooke Rondeau, Robert Roseman, Karla Santillan  
Immigration and Refugee Rights  
TA Sophie Rapley  
31 October, 2019

**Project Title: An Immigrant's Story**

How can we represent the individual story in national and community discussions on  
Immigration and Refugee rights?  
Immigrants' Long Term Outcome Based off of Early Legal Classification

**Incentives**

Depending on an individual's ethnic background or rationale behind requesting asylum, they will be treated differently and have varied experiences in the United States (Schneider). Interviews with members of WOLA and the Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, provided a general background for the reasons why people leave different geographical regions, specifically those in South and Central America. These interviews also outlined the journey that many immigrants take from their countries of origin to the borders of the United States. The treatment of immigrants on the southern border combined with the limited number of refugees and immigrants being allowed into the United States has created an incredible sense of urgency to this situation. The measures of integration into United States societies can be broad and varied. Economics and cohesion, among many other categories, outline the long term effects of different treatments on individuals coming to the United States.

**Executive Summary**

Over three million refugees were accepted into the United States of America since 1975 (UNHCR). Refugees are people unable to return to their country of origin due to fear of persecution for their race, political opinion, or religion. Three principal categories exist for

refugee status: priority one which encompasses individuals referred to by the UNHCR with no other options, priority two which involves groups selected by the State Department that are deemed as “special concern”), priority three which includes relatives of refugees already settled in the United States (American Immigration Council). Under the current administration, the numerical ceiling for refugees has decreased from 85,000 in 2016 to 30,000 in 2019 (American Immigration Council). Although the United States portrays itself as a safe-haven for immigrants and refugees, this decrease in acceptances remains in character with American foreign policy. The US has excluded different types of immigrants throughout the nation's history (Schneider). In an Executive Order issued on March, 6 2019, President Donald Trump issued a temporary ban on immigrants from the following nations: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen (United States Executive Office of the President ([Donald Trump])).

Similar policies under the current administration have bred a series of issues for refugees. Bill Holstein, a refugee rights attorney in Texas, describes the challenges refugees face at the southern border: refugees are being denied the right to an attorney by border agents. Entry into the United States is not the only problem refugees are facing. In an interview with Maureen Meyer, she articulates the issues with uncruel deportations; Mexican deportees are being sent back to the same cities they fled from causing about 10,000 refugees returned to vulnerable cities per month.

Upon entry into the United States, refugees face a variety of challenges regarding integration and naturalization relating to their classification. Scholars such as Susan E. Hume, author of *African, Russian, And Ukranian Refugee Resettlement In Portland, Oregon*, study a

variety of factors that impact integration into society: social infrastructure, country of origin, and cultural organizations.

### **Policy Options Analysis**

There is one overarching concern to be noted in enacting policy: the safety of those surveyed and served. With the recent clampdown under the new presidential administration, immigration status is a sensitive topic, and many undocumented immigrants may be rightfully hesitant to share their experiences. In many cases, individual's very livelihoods are riding on their ability to remain in the United States, and the thought of divulging any information pertaining to their undocumented status is inconceivable.

In terms of fundraising for any project that comes as a result of our research, other obstacles are present as well. As an undergraduate student research project, our finances are inherently limited. Donations from students could be considered, yet would not be an adequate way to fund anything. In order to conduct a meaningful social action project, making legitimate change in the immigrant community, a sufficient form of funding would likely need to be established.

In the scope of municipal policy, some cities have referred to becoming sanctuary cities, in order to protect immigrant residents with varying documentation status. Cities like DC, Seattle, and LA are sanctuary cities, meaning the police will not comply with federal policies to detain immigrants. They will not comply with ICE unless a warrant from a judge is produced. One downfall of this policy is that some of the legal services are not available to those that have past criminal records, so it is not completely fair for all immigrants. Because it was against the

President's wishes, DC will not be funded in the making of sanctuary cities so it is being funded by the selling of federal land. As a sanctuary city, DC previously received \$3.5 billion in federal grants in 2017. These grant funds go to the DC Public Schools, Department of Human Services, and the Department of Health. With the administration restricting funds to cities who chose to remain a sanctuary city, \$1 billion of those funds are in jeopardy. Many sanctuary cities struggling to find funds have been selling off parcels of city-owned land, or paying developers to buy them. By imposing additional requirements, auctions, devaluing property, these pieces of private land are often sold off to developers at a value far cheaper than what they are actually valued at. In DC, the city government sold off a piece of land that was originally worth \$12 million for \$127, 295 in an effort to offset for funds that are being stripped away. While not a long term solution, this method allows for cities to continue funding departments, programs, and offices benefitting undocumented immigrants.

The team could explore making a documentary with the information that we have learned. This would raise awareness about the situation of immigrants and refugee rights in the United States, which directly pertains to the research question and theme of the issue group. Some costs of this would be the time it takes to edit a documentary, as well as finding footage. Some people we interview may not want to be filmed with the intent of publishing, or share much personal information when it comes to their immigration status. The benefits of making a documentary would be revealing the actual situation of those in the United States who are going through the immigration/naturalization process. A documentary is a good resource that people can come back to, records history as it is happening, and it would spread awareness. It would also directly answer our research question, which asks about how different classifications of

immigrant affect people's lives. This would show exactly what happens to people after entering the US.

## **Probability**

The likelihood of a major change in US Immigration policy is likely given the timestamp on each head executive. Given that each Fall the President sets a new refugee ceiling, the conditions which we are evaluating now are almost certain to change year by year, and presidency by presidency. For example, since President Trump has taken office, our ceiling has been significantly lowered (Krogstad). Given the impending election, the chance of major immigration policy change is dependent on the results of who takes office in 2020.

On the individual's side, the immigration crisis is constantly changing and demand for resettlement is likely to change in the face of new intra or inter-state conflict or even a natural disaster. These events could cause short or long term change in US immigration patterns("Naturalization and United States Citizenship"). In the event of a new global landscape, different groups would need resources and the overall path of all immigrants would be affected by new policy directed towards the then current crisis.

Any action taken which publishes a permanent product, such as a documentary or article, will be subject to these continuous changes. For example, a shift in immigration patterns might render a publication irrelevant or inaccurate. Additionally, given the slow bureaucratic and legislative processes, new immigration policy may not be timely enough to confront the constantly evolving "now" of immigration and refugee issues.

## Conclusion

While the incentives for addressing the US Immigration crisis are compelling, the pace of its evolution requires decisive action. Factors such as social, economic, and legal effects on a received refugee/immigrant can be addressed, but the goals of any one initiative should be narrow enough that broader forces do not sway its effectiveness and so it can be accomplished in a timely window. We urge actors to uphold the privacy of the individuals who are being studied and that they consider the grave consequences of neglecting the researcher and respondents responsibility to the safety of those that they serve.

## Works Cited

- “An Overview of U.S. Refugee Law and Policy.” *American Immigration Council*, 27 Sept. 2019, [www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/overview-us-refugee-law-and-policy](http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/overview-us-refugee-law-and-policy).
- Cortes, Kalena E. “Are Refugees Different from Economic Immigrants? Some Empirical Evidence on the Heterogeneity of Immigrant Groups in the United States.” *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, vol. 86, no. 2, 2004, pp. 465–480. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3211641](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3211641).
- Hamilton, Michael, and EMyrt. “How To Finance A Sanctuary City.” *Market Urbanism, Market Urbanism*, 29 Jan. 2017, <https://marketurbanism.com/2017/01/30/how-to-finance-a-sanctuary-city/>.
- Holland, Madeline. “Stories for Asylum: Narrative and Credibility in the United States’ Political Asylum Application.” *Refuge* (0229-5113), vol. 34, no. 2, May 2018, pp. 85-93. EBSCOhost, doi: 10.7202/1055579ar.
- Hume, Susan E.. “African, Russian, And Ukranian Refugee Resettlement In Portland, Oregon.” *Geographical Review*, vol. 95 iss. 2, 2005, pp. 189-209. *Academic Search Premier*, <https://search.proquest.com/central/docview/748394465/D0F5DC1938244E1APQ/100?accountid=8285>.
- Krogstad, Jens Manuel. “Key Facts about Refugees to the U.S.” *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 7 Oct. 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/07/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>.

Lægaard, Sune. "Immigration, Social Cohesion, and Naturalization." *Ethnicities*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2010, pp. 452–469. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/23890262](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23890262).

Mossaad, Nadwa, et al. "Determinants of Refugee Naturalization in the United States." *PNAS*, National Academy of Sciences, 11 Sept. 2018, <https://www.pnas.org/content/115/37/9175>.

This article by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States "Naturalization and United States Citizenship in Two Periods of Mass Migration: 1894-1930, 1965-2000" Author(s): Dorothee Schneider Source: *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Fall, 2001), pp. 50-82 Published by: University of Illinois Press on behalf of the Immigration & Ethnic History Society Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27502779> Accessed: 19-09-2019 19:08 UTC

NBC4. "DC Could Lose \$1B Under Trump Sanctuary City Crackdown." *NBC4 Washington*, NBC4 Washington, 27 Jan. 2017, <https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/DC-Could-Lose-at-Least-1-Billion-Under-Trump-Sanctuary-City-Crackdown-411905595.html>.

United States, Executive Office of the President Donald Trump. Executive order 13780: Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States. 6 March 2017. *Federal Register*, vol. xx, no. xx, Day Month Year, pp. xx-xx, URL.