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From Muhammed to The JobUp: Engaging Malemployed Immigrants Through Journalism

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Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY

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From Muhammed to The JobUp:

Engaging Malemployed Immigrants Through Journalism

Tiziana Rinaldi - Final Practicum Report - December 18, 2019



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Introduction

I focused my graduate work on the local community of malemployed immigrants. They are foreign-educated newcomers — medical doctors, pharmacists, teachers, lawyers and engineers, to name a few of their professions — who lack the resources to find skill-appropriate work in the U.S. They end up either unemployed or working at "jobs for which they're overqualified or overeducated or both," I wrote for NJSpotlight in 2017¹.

Using the social journalism method² of engaging members of a chosen group to fill important if not crucial information gaps, I developed The JobUp, a series of free, offline educational events, as my practicum. The project delivered both classes in English as a second language and specialized career-orientation instruction. It equipped³ malemployed participants with the resources they needed to navigate the U.S. job market and boost their confidence.

The choice of this community originated in my own socio-professional experiences as an Italian immigrant in New York over nearly three decades of a transplanted life.

Detailed Background and Context

Immigrant malemployment, also known as immigrant brain-waste, is neither an individual problem nor a rite of passage to greater opportunities in the U.S. It is a dysfunction of the country's economic infrastructure that reflects myopic views of our immigration framework.

¹ Is 'Brain Waste' Costing New Jersey Billions Every Year? When highly qualified newcomers work washing dishes and cleaning restrooms, everyone pays the price — immigrants, communities, and New Jersey <https://bit.ly/2ygUUYj>

² "What exactly is engagement and what difference does it make?" by Mónica Guzmán, American Press Institute, 2016.

³ "Don't Just Engage, Equip. To reimagine and repair local news, democratize the journalistic process," by Darryl Holliday, Medium, 2019.

The U.S. system is designed “to admit college-educated immigrants, but not to integrate them into the workforce after they come here,” says Jeanne Batalova, a senior policy analyst at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), and a national expert on the subject⁴.

Simply put, the U.S. lacks both the pipelines to allocate jobs efficiently among foreign-educated newcomers and the vision to address brain waste. MPI estimated in 2016 that such shortcomings affect 29 percent — more than 1 in 4 — of all U.S. immigrants with a college degree or higher. They also inflict national, annual costs of \$39 billion in missed wages and \$10 billion in foregone taxes.

Overall, nearly 2 million immigrants nationwide are routinely derailed into either unemployment or underemployment. They make a living by driving, cleaning offices, bussing tables or similar jobs.

To make matters worse, census data analyzed by The Brookings Institution⁵ in 2018, shows that educated newcomers account for 45 percent of all foreign-born arrivals in the U.S. since 2010, versus 30 percent or fewer in previous decades.

In New York State alone, the economic potential of 212,000 immigrants is being routinely overlooked, according to The State of the Workforce 2018⁶ published by the New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals.

“It’s really a talent problem,” said Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, a senior policy analyst at the National Skills Coalition, in Washington, D.C. “Our economy is not able to fully use the human capital that people bring with them.”⁷

⁴ “Brain Waste: Many Immigrants Come With Dreams—and Advanced Training—but Can’t Find Jobs,” by Tiziana Rinaldi, City Limits, March 5, 2019 <https://bit.ly/2ygUUYj>

⁵ “21st century immigration favors Asians and college grads as the US foreign-born share rises,” by William H. Frey, The Brookings Institution, 2018.

⁶ The State of the Workforce, New York State 2018, by The New York Association of Training & Employment Professionals (NYATEP).

⁷ Is ‘Brain Waste’ Costing New Jersey Billions Every Year? When highly qualified newcomers work washing dishes and cleaning restrooms, everyone pays the price — immigrants, communities, and New Jersey <https://bit.ly/2ygUUYj>

2016 she co-authored *Steps to Success*⁸, a report that used original data from six major U.S. cities to identify the roadblocks that immigrant professionals confront. Chief among them are a lack of specialized English-language courses and career-relaunch programs, as well as a need for social networks people can turn to for guidance and job referrals, [I wrote on Medium](#). I added that it's hard for American employers to assess the value of foreign educations, which contributes to the underutilization of the immigrant talent pool.⁹

Engaging these non-native communities is very important not only to close the information gap that stifles them, but also to capture the full breadth of their stories and update the national immigrant narrative.

Community Needs

The first signal that a series of educational events might have been the most desirable way to engage underemployed immigrants came from the [Google needs assessment survey](#) I ran in partnership with a large Facebook group of more than 100,000 Russian-speakers in the U.S.

I prefaced it with an introduction to my graduate focus and invited group members to share information about their occupational experiences in the U.S. They began responding immediately, posting comments of gratitude for addressing the issue.

Within a week, 106 people had filled out the survey. The intense reaction surprised even the administrators of the online group who were not aware of either immigrant malemployment in the U.S. or its systemic nature. Here are some comments that respondents posted in the survey¹⁰.

"I am not able to make my resume, because I have never done it."

⁸ [Steps to Success: Integrating Immigrant Professionals in the United States](#), 2016.

⁹ ["The On-Ramp for Immigrant Job-Seekers That Educates, Uplifts and Builds Community,"](#) by Tiziana Rinaldi, Medium, 2019.

¹⁰ In November 2019, the Graduate Student Council awarded me a small funding that I used to hire a professional translator. The resource allowed me to access the full content of the Russian survey.

"If I knew what I would have to face in the USA, I would study the language hard back in my home country and would start looking for a well paid job in advance."

"I was naively sure that it will be easy for me to find the job with my experience, even if it would be a lower position."

" I knew that I would have to start from the bottom, after the times when I had everything. Now I have a normal job, but I would like to have much more. I miss my previous job in Russia and my status."

"I could hardly imagine it, but I didn't think that it would be this much difficult to find a well paid job."

Developing The JobUp: Turks and Italians

The insights shared by Russian-speaking immigrants spurred me to further action, albeit in collaboration with other groups of malemployed immigrants to whom I had steadier access in New York City: Turks and Italians.

The connection with the Turkish community began serendipitously when I booked a ride on Lyft in the summer of 2018. The young man who picked me up was a bio-medical engineer from Istanbul who couldn't find a job in his field, despite his Ph.D. and fairly good English, I wrote in "[The On-Ramp for Immigrant Job-Seekers That Educates, Uplifts and Builds Community](#)" on Medium.

The driver, Muhammed, was eager to share his story and introduce me to his friends. Over the course of several months, I kept in touch with about 10 Turks in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, where many of them reside. I listened to the struggles of medical doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, accountants, engineers and financial analysts who were either unemployed or barely earning a survival income in New York City by driving, delivering food, cooking and the like.

I connected with them mostly in person — often with the help of translators — to build rapport and earn trust. This issue was of particularly significant among members of this

community who fled Turkey to escape political persecution and don't feel comfortable connecting either online or with strangers.

From those conversations and the interviews I conducted, I produced news coverage that was published by [City Limits](#)¹¹ and also posted articles on [Medium](#)¹². However, while the Turks appreciated seeing themselves in the local media, the coverage didn't solve their problems. What they needed the most was tangible help in overcoming structural barriers.

Design Thinking

Bridging their information gap required a far more interactive and participatory approach than traditional journalism. That's when I decided to use [design think](#)¹³, a solution-driven method of problem-solving I had explored in the first semester, to respond to their concerns.

To do so, I asked the Turks in my engagement group to take a [needs assessment](#) survey to find out which barriers affected them and their community. They are, in order of severity:

- The need to talk and act like an American on job interviews.
- Learning how to gain U.S. work experience.
- Reducing the English-language barrier.
- Difficulty in transferring their foreign educational credentials.
- Lack of connections.

Quotes and Comments from Community Members

Here are compelling quotes I collected from both conversations and interviews with Turkish community members over the months¹⁴ ([They Found Peace in the U.S. but Good Jobs Prove Elusive](#), Medium, April 13, 2019):

¹¹ "[They Found Peace in the U.S. but Good Jobs Prove Elusive](#)," by Tiziana Rinaldi, Medium, April 13, 2019.

¹² "Brain Waste: Many Immigrants Come With Dreams—and Advanced Training—but Can't Find Jobs," by Tiziana Rinaldi, [City Limits](#).

¹³ "[5 Stages in the Design Thinking Process](#)," by Rikke Dam and Teo Siang, Interaction Design Foundation, 2019.

¹⁴ "[They Found Peace in the U.S. but Good Jobs Prove Elusive](#)," by Tiziana Rinaldi, Medium, April 13, 2019.

“I feel like a hamster spinning in a wheel. We have a lot of worries here,” Muhammed Batmanoglu (From: "Brain Waste: Many Immigrants Come With Dreams—and Advanced Training—but Can't Find Jobs," by Tiziana Rinaldi, [City Limits](#)¹⁵).

“I was expecting to find at least ‘a’ job, but it’s been very difficult,” said a 50-year-old orthopedic surgeon who migrated to New York in 2018 with his wife, an internist, and children.

“I can see myself on a job interview being asked, ‘Did you work here?’ ” said a former international trade analyst from Istanbul, 40, who now drives for a living.

“My diploma is useless here.”

“Coming to the U.S. was a very difficult decision,” echoed a former educator from Istanbul. “I have to work harder to become a teacher again.”

“If I walked in my current shoes when I was 20, I am sure it would be easier. But now I don’t have time to complain. I need to do my best.” Said a Turkish former medical internist, 50, who took a certification course to become a phlebotomist (a technician who draws blood) in June 2019.

A Lesson Plan

The next step was to partner with a teacher of English for speakers of other languages, Joye Dawkins, who had been referred to me for her cross-cultural competency and ability to explain U.S. workplace dynamics.

We developed six three-hour-long classes based on both the needs assessment and the beginning-level proficiency in the English language of our Turkish participants. With that in place, I rolled out The JobUp as an independent study at the Turkish Cultural Center in Brooklyn. Students learned the basics of an American-style resume, the job interview process, U.S. office culture, vocabulary and expressions.

¹⁵ "Brain Waste: Many Immigrants Come With Dreams—and Advanced Training—but Can't Find Jobs," by Tiziana Rinaldi, [City Limits](#).

And they loved it¹⁶! After the course, students reported feeling more confident about both the English-language and their job prospects. Here are some of their comments, as well as one from a community leader at the Turkish Cultural Center:

Secil Kaya: "Thank you so much for everything."

Neslihan Özkemah: "We will miss you!"

Ayten Kurtar: "This was so very helpful."

Goksel Guven, vice president, Turkish Community Center: "It was a wonderful opportunity for the community."

The Italian Group

In The On-Ramp for Immigrant Job-Seekers That Educates, Uplifts and Builds Community, a Medium post I published in November, I detailed how the development process of The JobUp led me to the Italian community. Here is a pivotal excerpt:

"The validation motivated me to stay with The JobUp prototype and produce another cycle of it, this time as my full-fledged social-journalism practicum at the graduate school in Midtown Manhattan. But the location was far for the Turks who live in South Brooklyn. So the challenge became how to duplicate the success with another group of malemployed immigrants, and where to recruit them. After reaching out to nearly 20 organizations, including faith and community-based groups, without recruiting anyone, it was clear that I had to try something else.

That's when I decided to post news of The JobUp on a Facebook page for Italian women in New York, of which I am a member. To my pleasant surprise, applications began rolling in immediately. I had to close registration early to avoid recruiting too many people since I had only one volunteer teacher. I settled on a group of 15, of whom 9 attended the workshops.

When I ran the needs assessment survey among the Italians, their occupational needs yielded strikingly similar results to those of the Turks. They, too, prioritized to "talk and act like an

¹⁶ "Building Trust, Serving Community: The JobUp," by Tiziana Rinaldi, Medium, July 24, 2019.

American on job interviews," and listed "improving English-language skills" and "gaining U.S. work experience" among their main barriers.

They also responded enthusiastically to the idea of The JobUp. Here are the comments I gathered from the women who responded to my outreach on Facebook in August:¹⁷

"Tiziana, grazie mille per aver condiviso, è utilissimo! Spero di riuscire ad andare!" (Tiziana, thank you much for sharing this, [this initiative] is a very useful. I hope to be able to come!)

"Bellissima iniziativa, verrò sicuramente" (Wonderful initiative, I'll join for sure.)

"Interessa anche a me, ti invio un'email!" (I'm very interested too, I'll send you an email.)

"Ciao Tiziana! Sono molto interessata anche io, ti scrivo in privato alla email che hai fornito per qualche chiarimento. Intanto grazie per la condivisione!" (Ciao Tiziana, I'm very interested too, I'll send you an email at the address you posted to ask some clarifications. Thank you much, in the meantime, for sharing this initiative!)

¹⁷ New York Italian Women, Facebook Group's [comments](#).

The JobUp: Practicum

At its core The JobUp is a free educational series. While it doesn't engage employers, it does offer in-person English-language instruction and career guidance to teach foreign-educated immigrants how to succeed in the U.S. job market.

I intentionally chose a dual-track model to combine language training with professional orientation, favoring an English-immersion style to increase the exposure of newcomers and their new tongue.

From Sept. 20 to Oct. 25, I held six three-hour-long workshops with a pre-practicum meeting on Sept. 6 to assess the English skill level of the 10 Italians I admitted into the program. Their American-English proficiency was advanced.

To welcome the class on the first day, I distributed a welcome kit containing the syllabus, a description of The JobUp, short biographies of Joye Dawkins and me and reading materials about immigrant malemployment in the U.S.

Its Content

Given the higher language proficiency of the new recruits, I expanded on the foundational concepts I had tested during the summer to deliver more nuanced and interactive lessons. These covered:

- Knowledge of malemployment in the U.S. to help participants place their personal experience within both the local and national context.
- A presentation of both internet resources such as job boards that cater to skilled-immigrants (e.g., careeronestop.org, JobVersity), and referrals to local organizations that specialize in connecting work-authorized newcomers who are proficient in English to employers (e.g., [New Women New Yorkers](#), [Upwardly Global](#) or [The New Americans Initiative at the YMCA](#)).

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- Instruction in how to write an American-style resume, prepare for a job interview and write a cover letter during classes that delivered the vocabulary and conversational skills necessary to perform those tasks.
 - A series of guest speakers that included: Gyuzel Zaripova, from New Women New Yorkers; Nick Gulotta, director of outreach and organizing for the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA); Jill Casner-Lotto, director of the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education, at Westchester Community College (CCCIE); and Pinaki Dasgupta, founder and CEO of Hindsait.
 - Connecting each participant to one or two of my personal contacts to spur networking and help them rebuild their depleted social capital.
 - Reading, writing, pronunciation and grammar skills.

Keep It Small, Make It Fun

The summer in Brooklyn taught me¹⁸ that a small class would give participants more individualized attention. Once I had 15 Italians, I closed the registration and further screened recruits with one-on-one phone interviews to make sure that applicants's interests aligned with practicum's intent.

I made sure to clarify, for example, that The JobUp was not a job referral program, but rather a career-relaunch program in the context of a journalistic effort to understand the information needs of malemployed immigrants. I admitted 10 people, and nine participated steadily. (One eventually dropped out because of conflicts with her work schedule.)

To create a lighthearted atmosphere and stimulate learning, Joye Dawkins performed skits with participants and practiced mock-networking. We also watched videos and invited students to speak up to encourage a more direct communication style typical of the U.S. We assigned individual presentations to boost public speaking skills and constantly reminded students not to be afraid of making mistakes; they are a natural part of learning a new language.

¹⁸ "Building Trust, Serving Community: The JobUp," by Tiziana Rinaldi, Medium, July 24, 2019.

It worked. Participants frequently expressed enjoyment and appreciation in the class WhatsApp group I created.¹⁹ These are some of their comments:

Tommaso Filippi: "Thank you Tiziana and Joye, I'll never forget this experience!"

Roberta Tarsitano: "Every Friday is a thrill to follow the workshop."

Donatella Santillo: "Thank you for the English lessons! I'm so sorry that all this will end in a couple of weeks!"

Maica Buiani: "I cannot begin to tell you how much this workshop has helped me reflect and better understand myself from a professional point of view in New York."

Piera Tonini: "Thank you not just for what you taught me, but above all thank you because I never felt out of place in your class even if my English is not perfect."

I See You, I Hear You

Earning people's trust takes time and hard work, as [I wrote this summer on Medium](#).²⁰ Starting with the Turkish community, Dawkins and I decided to integrate cultural symbols like flags into our classroom to acknowledge students' provenance and encourage a sense of belonging. Here's a pivotal excerpt:

"Joye and I pondered an important question: What could we do to make our students feel welcomed and appreciated? After all, they have busy lives, and we want them to keep coming. Being a good teacher, she suggested acknowledging their native culture with visual references.

I liked the idea, and we started taping a small image of the Turkish flag on the upper right-hand corner of the whiteboard at every class. We also decided to write, "Mehrab!" -- "hello!" in Turkish. Both visuals stayed until we left.

¹⁹ See the section on "Metrics and Impact," at p. 13.

²⁰ "[Building Trust, Serving Community: The JobUp](#)," by Tiziana Rinaldi, Medium, July 24, 2019.

It wasn't until recently, though, after I read Measuring Your Member's Sense of Community,²¹ an article published by CMX and featured by the engagement newsletter Gather,²² that I realized how spot-on our methods were!

"Symbols and rituals matter when building community," writes Elijah van der Geissen in the article. "Fly your flag! Celebrate your jargon! Take what's unique about your community and lean into it. What are the natural symbols for your community?"

We repeated the technique with the Italians at the Newmark School in the fall and, sure enough, students noticed the flags and thanked us for the thought. Based on my experience, such visual references signal that we, as journalists, *see* the community we are working with -- that we have spent time educating ourselves about its history and value its members. It helps bridge emotional distances.

Finally, I collected "exit slips" after each workshop to invite questions from participants and establish a feedback loop to make sure they were answered. Depending on the question, I replied privately, on the WhatsApp group thread or in class the following week.

Metrics and Impact

The impact of The JobUp on both groups was very positive. I measured it qualitatively among the Turkish students by asking them to share their feedback as best they could in English at the end of their series. They reported feeling more confident about both the English-language and their job prospects. Here are some additional comments, including one from a representative of the Turkish Cultural Center:

Secil Kaya: "Thank you so much for everything."

Neslihan Özkemah: "We will miss you!"

Ayten Kurtar: "This was so very helpful."

Goksel Guven, vice president, Turkish Community Center: "It was a wonderful opportunity for the community."

²¹ "Measuring Your Member's Sense of Community," by Elijah van der Geissen, CMX 2019.

²² Gather, archive 2019.

The nine Italians who regularly attended The JobUp responded even more enthusiastically as an anonymous Google survey²³ they took at the end of the program clearly demonstrates. On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), here are three of the most salient measures of impact:

- 8 out of 9 strongly agreed that they understood much better how to look for a job in the U.S.
- 7 out of 9 strongly agreed they felt more self-confident.
- 8 out of 9 strongly agreed they would recommend The JobUp to others.

The following comments are additional information the Italians posted anonymously about The JobUp:

"That is one of the best experiences a new comer can do for self. Not only for the great networking, but also for achieving stronger self reliance and self secureness in speaking and expressing."

"I am very grateful to Tiziana Rinaldi for organizing it and putting so many efforts to solving the immigrants' problems. She really helps to feel not alone when facing a new culture. Thanks to the workshop I've got acquainted to a lot of interesting people and feel much more confident now."

"I learned to believe more in myself."

"I have learned the importance of having someone's support in these transitions. It is essential to have someone here in the US with whom we can talk and support each other. For this reason, I think the most important thing I learned is the huge value to be attributed to an intangible asset such as the relationships we built up during The JobUp."

Social Media Channels

²³ The JobUp anonymous Google survey.

WhatsApp: the most successful online engagement I had with The JobUp was with the Italian group on WhatsApp.²⁴ I used it as our official class forum, which helped us communicate and, now, stay connected to continue the engagement.

The same channel with the Turkish group²⁵ served as a functional link during The JobUp in Brooklyn but did not drive engagement.

Twitter: I created @TheJobUpUSA²⁶ and developed lists to engage organizations that serve malemployed immigrants, which I was trying to recruit for the fall The JobUp. It didn't work, however. As to members of both the Turkish and the Italian group, very few use Twitter. It didn't help to drive engagement.

Facebook: Same for TheJobUp Facebook group²⁷ that I created to centralize the communication with the Turkish group back in 2018. The language barrier, however, along with the Turks' own wariness of social media didn't make the effort pay off.

Outcomes: Trust and Self-Reliance

The success of The JobUp spells out the effectiveness of social journalism's method of listening to a community's needs to build trust with reporters -- a high note in my final presentation²⁸.

They also validated the crucial importance of a program like The JobUp, which I specifically designed to ground newcomers in their new land and give them the tools to face the demands of the U.S. job market.

²⁴ TheJobUp Manhattan WhatsApp group.

²⁵ TheJobUp Brooklyn WhatsApp group.

²⁶ TheJobUpUSA.

²⁷ TheJobUp Facebook group.

²⁸ "From Muhammed to The JobUp: Engaging Malemployed Immigrants Through Journalism," the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY, Dec. 10, 2019.

For that reason, the work laid the foundation of an enduring collaboration with the Italian community with which I continue to connect offline and develop the relationships we launched during the practicum.

Conclusions and Best Practices

My [final Medium post](#)²⁹ for the StartUp Sprint course in November, gave me an opportunity to reflect on the last year and what I have learned from working with my community. Here are some edited excerpts, my main takeaways about the practicum and the best practices I recommend:

- I learned that to recruit successfully within an immigrant community I needed either to be part of it — the Italians — or partner with an organization trusted by the newcomers' group I wanted to reach as in the case of the Turkish Cultural Center in Brooklyn.
- Since I structured an educational program that included English-language classes to lay the groundwork for my community engagement, it is paramount to create an environment where participants feel accepted unconditionally. The message ought to be "You are valuable, just as you are."
- Give regular and clear feedback. If course participants ask questions, and especially if they are encouraged to do so, they should always receive specific and helpful answers. It helps establish expertise and reliability. I used exit slips to collect questions after each class and keep a record of them to make sure I replied.
- Understand the needs of your community and create an experience (in my case classes) that address them specifically. Immigrants need and thrive on practical knowledge. Equipping them with it will give them a sense of agency.
- Bear in mind, however, that providing participants with an uplifting experience that dims self-doubt and encourages self-development is a great deal of work. Make sure you build what you value.

²⁹ "[The On-Ramp for Immigrant Job-Seekers That Educates, Uplifts and Builds Community](#)," by Tiziana Rinaldi, Medium, 2019.

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- Still, you can't rush readiness. For newcomers who, even under the best of circumstances, have to make their way in a new language and culture, their plates may be full. Growing into their new lives takes time and a mental, psychological metamorphosis.
 - In the end, one of the greatest assets in building trust is patience. I like being available, open, reliable and transparent about the work I do with my community and giving newcomers the time to adapt to a new cultural environment at the pace they can afford.
 - Finally, The JobUp as a service prototype has both strengths and weaknesses³⁰. On the positive side, its dual-track structure is original, engaging and effective. The method inspires confidence and the curriculum is comprehensive and interactive. It also offers a roster of accomplished guest speakers. On the other hand, its people-centric character requires both teachers of English for speakers of other languages and human resources experts who understand what immigrant malemployment is. Only a few organizations in New York City possess that knowledge. In addition, sustaining The JobUp would require funding in a local environment where similar programs are offered to immigrants at no charge.

How I Answered My Questions About Immigrant Malemployment

Q: Why does the U.S. have immigrant malemployment? Why isn't it fixing the problem and what needs to be done to end it? Which organizations, states or people are working to resolve immigrant malemployment?

How I answered: I wrote a reported piece that included a list of resources in a sample of states, "Brain Waste: Many Immigrants Come With Dreams—and Advanced Training—but Can't Find Jobs," and published it in City Limits.

Q: Which human-interest stories are we not telling that either relate to or are caused by immigrant malemployment?

How I answered: I am developing a feature story in collaboration with both Italian community members and experts on loss of professional identity, a psychological toll often inflicted by immigrant malemployment.

³⁰ "The On-Ramp for Immigrant Job-Seekers That Educates, Uplifts and Builds Community," by Tiziana Rinaldi, Medium, 2019.

In addition, I am collaborating with a young Italian immigrant woman from Treviso in northern Italy who is interested in being profiled. I am envisioning an "as-told-to" article to portray the deep sense of displacement she felt after arriving in New York and realizing that she would have to rebuild her career from scratch with no one to turn to.

Other Things I Know About My Community

Malemployed immigrants are resilient people who sometimes can't fully grasp how "*what they don't know that they don't know*" may be what is holding them back. Curiosity and self-inquiry are among the strengths they need to lean on to challenge their assumptions when things don't go as hoped or expected. It's easy to take things personally when they don't.

This is an arduous journey, however. It can feel like being in a dark room looking for the light switch. It's scary. Thus, aside from the external, structural barriers immigrants face, it may be helpful to explore and cover internal, psychological dynamics that may be increasing their exposure to brain-waste.

On that note, on Oct. 11, 2019, I was invited to attend the VIII Congress, Migration and Mental Health: Gender, Place & Identity, in New Paltz, N.Y., where I also presented the issue of immigrant malemployment. The conference was all about "migratory mourning," a term I had never heard before. There I met Joseba Achotegui, the author of the Ulysses Syndrome³¹ and a foremost expert on migratory mourning.

I am planning to interview him, which takes me to the next and final set of questions I had -- what can journalists do to:

1. Build empathy and raise awareness of immigrant malemployment.
2. Help newcomers cope with the daunting experience of socio-professional adaptation and lessen their struggle.
3. Help Americans understand what is at stake for the economy and our society at large when it doesn't help immigrants integrate.

³¹ "Ulysses Syndrome. The immigrant syndrome of chronic and multiple stress," Joseba Achotegui Loizate, 2009.

My answer to those challenges is that we need to learn a lot more about immigrant communities and develop deeper connections. We need to report on new and profoundly impactful aspects of their life that have not yet entered public awareness, continuing to create disenfranchised personal experiences for newcomers in the United States.

Links To Degree Highlights

Here are the links to multimedia articles, videos, Medium posts and other work I have developed during the social journalism graduate program, followed by a brief summary. Here is the link to the Medium post connected to this report: "[The Grounding Power of Welcoming and Inclusion: A Social Journalism Practicum.](#)"

1. Published Articles: Writing

- A. City Limits, March 5, 2019: [Brain Waste: Many Immigrants Come With Dreams—and Advanced Training—but Can't Find Jobs.](#) The story of the Turkish biomedical engineer who became an Uber driver in New York.
- B. [Rubic, May 15: An immigrant pharmacist earned U.S. degrees, but no full-time job yet. Back home she thrived on her skills, despite her disabilities.](#) This is an "as-told-to" article about Clara Sofia Ochoa, a former pharmacist from Colombia who worked as an office cleaner offices in New Jersey despite earning new university degrees, a bachelor's and a master's, from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

2. Unpublished Multimedia Pieces

- A. Video on [Clara Sofia Ochoa](#) the Colombian pharmacist who cleans offices for a living.
- B. Video on [Jorge Niveló: The Art of Shoe-Repair.](#) Niveló is a young Ecuadorian cobbler who moved to the U.S. in 2006. He learned the shoe-repair craft from his father and works in Riverdale, the Bronx.
- C. Video on [Muhammed Batmanoglu](#), the biomedical engineer from Turkey who became an Uber driver in New York. (This is a rough cut.)

3. Data article

Medium, April 13, 2019: [They Found Peace in the U.S. but Good Jobs Prove Elusive](#), published on Medium for my data class. This is the financial estimate of the brain-waste struggle endured in New York by the Turkish nationals I met and interacted in a narrative form.

4. Social platforms

The most successful engagement has been with the Italian community on WhatsApp. By and large, WhatsApp has proven to be the most popular social media platform to connect with the two immigrant groups I worked with, the Turks and the Italians.

The Turks, however, fled their country to escape political persecution and tend to feel less comfortable online.

The JobUp Manhattan: the Italian group.

The JobUp Brooklyn: the Turkish group.

I primarily used the above platforms to communicate with group members, foster a sense of belonging and develop a group identity. Given the goals of The JobUp, my practicum, we communicated in English. This is an intentional choice I made to:

- Increase members' interaction with the English language.
- Encourage identification with the English language not as our second language, but as our language in our adoptive country, the United States of America.

As a corollary, I tried to use both Twitter, where for my practicum I opened up the account @TheJobUpUSA, and Facebook. When I met the Turks, I started a Facebook group thinking that it would help us to centralize the communication, but only a few people signed up. It just didn't seem the place to drive engagement with the Turks.

5. Ethical guidelines for my community

"Journalistic Guidelines: Coverage of Malemployed Immigrants," Tiziana Rinaldi - May 14, 2019.

6. Link to product or service that informed my community

The JobUp was a series of free, offline educational workshops. That said, here are links to:

- "From Muhammed to The JobUp: Engaging Malemployed Immigrants Through Journalism," my final Power Point presentation.
- The JobUp Medium Publication.

7. StartUp Spint Links

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- A. "The On-Ramp for Immigrant Job-Seekers That Educates, Uplifts and Builds Community," final Medium post about The JobUp as a prototype and the development trajectory associated with it.
 - B. "Making the Case for The JobUp," first Medium Post about the relevance of The JobUp for the community of malemployed immigrants.