

**Women Refugees and Integration into U.S. Society:
The Case of Women from Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia who
Resettled in the United States**

by

Jeanette Olsson

Major paper submitted to the Faculty of
the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Arts
in
International and Public Affairs

Alnoor S. Ebrahim, Chair
Laura J. Parisi
Charles M. Good

May 24, 2002
Blacksburg, VA

Keywords: Refugee Women, Integration, Resettlement, Employment

Copyright 2002, Jeanette Olsson

Women Refugees and Integration into U.S. Society:
The Case of Women from Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia
who Resettled in the United States

Jeanette Olsson

ABSTRACT

The post-Cold War era has increased the displacement of people worldwide. The influx of refugees into the United States requires us to assess various aspects of what it means to be a refugee. This study examines the situation of women refugees who resettled and integrated into the U.S. society. Integration related to employment is studied using focus groups, with participants from the former Yugoslavia who resettled in Richmond, VA. This study explores the needs of women refugees during integration.

Comparisons are made between women who recently arrived in the U.S. and women who resettled several years ago. The particular needs of women refugees are associated with language problems, non-qualifications of previous experience, transportation, stress, and role reversal. Concepts of practical gender needs and strategic gender interests provide a basis for developing measures that can target these concerns in the short- and the long-term. In addition, this study challenges previous notions of women refugees as helpless victims of their circumstances, and finds that women refugees often adjust through their own means and innovative skills. While displacement creates challenges for most refugees, this study finds that it can also be empowering for women who take on new roles in their country of resettlement and leave their patriarchal traditions behind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author of this study wishes to express her appreciation to the following persons for their contributions to this study:

To my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Alnoor S. Ebrahim, for his dedication, continued support, and enthusiasm about my project.

To my committee member Dr. Laura J. Parisi, for her critical advice and support during my study.

To my committee member Charles M. Good, for his direction, assistance and interest in this project.

To Georgeann Schmied at the Refugee and Immigration Services in Richmond. Thank you for the time you devoted to coordinating my focus groups.

To Vera Mihaljovic for taking the time to facilitate the communication between the focus group participants and myself.

To all the participants in my focus groups, thank you for your support and willingness to help me with my project.

To all others who were involved and contributed to the success of this study, I sincerely appreciate all your efforts and support. Thank you.

Contents

Chapters	Pages
I. Literature Review.....	1
II. Methodology	24
III. Findings	30
IV. Discussion	40
V. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	47
VI. Suggestions for Further Research.....	51
Appendices	
A. Questionnaire.....	53
B. Figure 1.....	54
Tables	
Table 1.....	25
Table 2.....	46
Bibliography.....	55
Curriculum Vitae.....	61

Chapter I. Literature Review

The world currently has more than twenty million refugees, who are fleeing from political, economic and social problems in their home countries (Seufert, 1999). Approximately eighty percent of these refugees are women and their dependent children (Valdes, 1996, Anker, 1995, 203, Schmuki, 1998, 7). Eighty to ninety thousand refugees annually resettle in the United States alone (Seufert, 1999). According to Buijs (1993, 1), “population movements have become a prominent feature of contemporary society, and the large-scale movement of people who are fleeing their native countries has sometimes been referred to as ‘the global refugee crisis.’” This has brought increasing attention to the circumstances, status and particular needs of refugees.

The following research examines the situation of Bosnian women who have come to the United States as refugees. I discuss two out of the three “durable solutions” the United Nations proposes for the refugee problem, namely resettlement and integration, as they relate to refugee women in general and to Bosnian women more specifically (Malkki, 1995, 505).¹ I place special emphasis on the employment situation of this particular group of women in the United States society. While all refugees experience profound changes in their lives during the period of refuge and resettlement, the experiences of women are often different from those of men because “being a refugee is experienced differently by women and men because of their gender” (Mc Spadden and Moussa, 1993, 205). Drachman and Ryan (2001, 651) assert that little attention has been paid to women refugees’ own experiences of integration into United States society. In exploring these issues, I adapt Stubbs’ (1996)² definition of integration:

Integration refers to the attempt to facilitate a sharing of resources - economic and social, an equalizing of rights - political and territorial, and the development of cultural exchanges and new cultural forms, between forced migrants and all other members of a society. At the local level, the process of integration involves all sections of the community in minimizing social distance, and facilitating communication and co-operation, through creative negotiations which produce new social meanings.

This research primarily draws from various literatures that discuss women refugees and integration and the gender specific needs of women refugees during resettlement. Moreover,

¹ The third “durable solution” is identified as repatriation.

² This reference is taken from a webpage, and page numbers are therefore not included. The article can be found at: www.stakes.fi/gaspp/docs/paper1.doc

integration as it applies to employment is considered. To supplement previous research, I conducted focus group interviews with Bosnian women who live in and around the Richmond area, in Eastern Virginia. This paper is organized around the following questions:

- How do women refugees perceive of their own situation after they have arrived in the United States?
- What are their particular needs during the period of integration with regards to their employment situation?
- How do the situation and perceptions differ for women who have just arrived in the US versus those who have been here for several years?

With this study, I hope to document the resettlement and acculturation experiences of women from the former Yugoslavia who came to the United States as refugees. The distinct needs specific to women refugees during resettlement and integration is the primary focus. In the next section, I review the special situation of refugees in general and explore the unique needs of women refugees during the period of integration. I then briefly discuss the crisis that led to the large-scale emigration of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, with an emphasis on the effects this had on women who emigrated. I explore resettlement and integration more broadly, with an emphasis on the employment situation of refugee women. Lastly, I examine how feminist theory can guide our understanding of refugee identity and help us develop the concept of what it means to be a refugee.

The Special Needs of Refugees

A refugee is defined by the United Nations as a person who “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 to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...” (UNHCR, 2002)³. Refugees are therefore different from other migrants because they commonly do not choose to leave their home country, but do so out of necessity (Ocasí, 1996). Moreover, as involuntary migrants, refugees are often not able to, or are prevented from, maintaining any contact with their home country and are unable to return for many years, if they are at all able to do so (Fredriksson, 2001).

³ This quote is taken from UNHCR’s webpage “Basic Facts” which can be found at: <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+DwwBm7ewAbdwwwnwwwwwwwhFqoUfIfRZ2ItFqtxw5oq5zFqtFEIfgIAFqoUfIfRZ2IDzmxwwwwww1FqtFEIfgI/opendoc.htm>. Page numbers are therefore not used.

Refugees have been characterized as people with special needs by the United Nations Special Agency for Refugees or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2001). Kirch (1996, 223) argues that all refugees “regardless of the circumstances of their migration or resettlement,” are faced with “numerous limitations on their ability to speak for themselves.” During the time of resettlement, most refugees go through an acculturation process where they have to adjust to living in a different culture. In addition, the status held by refugees can create uncertainties, due to its non-established or transitory character, and can often leave refugees with a feeling of not being in control of their own situation. These are some, but not all of the challenges experienced by refugees from the time they leave their countries to the time of their resettlement.

John Fredriksson (2001) of the National Integration Office in Sweden writes that the refugee experience can be very traumatic. Individuals who have had to flee their homelands are often left with emotional and physical scars. The stress that refugees commonly experience is a result of a various factors, including “the death of family members, separation from a safe and secure social environment, and the destruction of social and ethical parameters that guide the individual’s interaction with society at large” (Fredriksson, 2001).⁴ Moreover, refugees generally experience stress due to “cultural disruption and separation, physical stressors of flight, deprivation of shelter and exposure to the elements, and malnutrition” (Fredriksson, 2001). A large part of all refugees are subjected to one or several of these experiences.

Furthermore, Fredriksson makes a distinction between refugees with common needs and refugees with special needs. This differentiation, he argues, can be helpful in preparing the receiving community in providing the most useful assistance and services to the individual refugees (Fredriksson, 2001). Other scholars of refugee studies have also recognized during the recent years that women refugees constitute a particularly vulnerable part of our population, and they are therefore considered to be a group with special needs (Anker, 1995; UNHCR “Note on Resettlement”). While women also need food, clothing, and shelter, they experience a whole range of additional stressors. Some of these include legal and physical protection, their general

⁴ This and the following quotes by Fredriksson, are found at the webpage below: “Refugees with Special Needs or Special Refugees: Creating New Hope out of Shattered Lives.” Page numbers are therefore not used.
www.integrationsverket.se/internatconf/pdf/Track3Plenary.pdf

health and well-being, as well as that of their families. In addition, women may require special considerations with regards to their health-care.

The Refugee Experience of Women from the Former Yugoslavia

The fact that women and their dependent children make up the largest parts of refugees and migrant people in the world today requires increased knowledge about the situation and specific concerns of women refugees. During the last few years, refugees from the former Yugoslavia have become the largest ethnic group of refugees to resettle in the United States. The United States admitted more than 22, 000 Bosnian refugees in fiscal year 1999 (IRSA⁵). The large influx of refugees from Bosnia was a result of the war that broke out in the former Yugoslavia soon after the end of Communist rule in the early 1990s (Fabri and Boskailo).⁶ This war had its roots in conflicts that arose between the various ethnicities in the area when Slobodan Milosevic, the elected president of Serbia, attempted to divide Bosnia in two. The main ethnicities that lived in Yugoslavia include the Serbs, the Croats, and the Bosnians. The Bosnians resisted Milosevic's attempt to divide the country, and armed conflicts broke out in 1991, first in Croatia, then in Bosnia in 1992, which resulted in Bosnia declaring independence after a national vote (Fabri and Boskailo, 71-72). The Bosnians suffered huge human losses during these armed conflicts, and the killings of Bosnian Muslims by Serbian forces have later been referred to as genocide or "ethnic cleansing" (Copelon, 1995, 198).

In addition, there is no single refugee experience for people from Bosnia, and it is therefore "important not to generalize the Bosnian refugee experience...just as Bosnia has been regionally a diverse country historically, the war generated a vastly diverse set of experiences" (Fabri and Boskailo, 74). While some refugees stayed in the country during a large part of the war and then fled, others left at an earlier stage. Many Bosnians witnessed the loss or separation of their families, and some experienced being taken to concentration camps and tortured physically or mentally. Based on these facts, one can still not make any generalizations as to how much pain and trauma each refugee experienced or how the war has long-term effects on those who resettled.

⁵ This reference is taken from the IRSA webpage, and no year was included in the document. The webpage was retrieved 03/28/2002 from http://www.refugeesusa.org/who/refugee_faq.cfm.

⁶ This reference is taken from the webpages of "The National Alliance for Multicultural Health," and no year was included in the document. The webpage was retrieved 04/20/2002 from http://www.refugeesusa.org/help_ref/lessons_field_manual.pdf

Women were particularly targeted and persecuted during the war in the former Yugoslavia, and there are several gendered aspects of this war. First, women were systematically and strategically targeted and sexually violated in many of the concentration camps, some of which have later been referred to as “rape camps” (Copelon, 1995, 204, Fabri and Boskailo, 75). Second, refugee movements are also clearly gendered, since the majority of those fleeing are women (Schmuki, 1998, 7). This has been referred to by some as the feminization of refugees (Man, 1997, 2). While the gendered nature of refugee movements is nothing new, it is only lately that the international development regime has paid attention to this fact and started creating specific policies directed towards women refugees (Schmuki, 1998, 7).

Sadly enough, the war created stark ethnic divisions and nationalism between the different religious groups in the former Yugoslavia. With a history of influence from both the east and the west, Bosnians prided themselves as multi-ethnic and multicultural: “by the time the war started in April of 1992, about 40 % of registered marriages in the urban centers were between ethnically (and therefore religiously) mixed individuals” (Fabri and Boskailo, 74). This war led to stronger division between people and hostility between groups of people of different ethnicities who had previously lived together peacefully as neighbors. Some statistics show that the war created about 3.5 million refugees altogether from the former Yugoslavia (Fogelquist, 1995).

The war in the former Yugoslavia had profound effects on women in general, both for the women who stayed in the country and the women who fled and became refugees. Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a place where women are discriminated against. The UN reports that domestic violence has increased, especially towards ethnic minorities, and that there are severe problems of prostitution, trafficking in women and discrimination against women (Asylumaid, 2002; Asylumaid, 2001, 75-76). In addition, women are underrepresented in positions of economic or political power (Asylumaid, 2001).

As with most refugees, the women who fled from the former Yugoslavia experience a variety of difficulties in their new countries of resettlement. Fabri and Boskailo (76) note that “some may feel that learning a new language and considering employment are impossible tasks. Many factors enter into how well and how quickly a Bosnian refugee can make adjustments. Sometimes, symptoms related to the traumatic war and refugee experiences interfere.” What is, then, the situation of Bosnian women of those who fled and resettled in the United States? While

one can only create limited generalizations about the situation of Bosnian women in the United States, it is important to continue to explore how the experiences of these women inform our understanding and discussion of women who have experienced war, and guide a framework for policy directed towards the integration and needs of women refugees. These issues are discussed in the empirical portion of this paper.

Refugees and Resettlement

The resettlement process can be difficult for all refugees, but it is important to note that the particular experiences of women refugees are often very different from those of men. This is due to the different position women and men generally have within a society and the specific issues women and men refugees face as a result of their gender (Mc Spadden and Moussa, 1993, 205). The concerns women refugees have during their flight, resettlement and integration process are therefore also likely to vary between women and men. Moreover, “female immigrants generally suffer more dramatic changes in role status than do their male counterparts” (Drachman and Ryan, 2001, 662). Role reversal can cause friction or conflict, especially in families with strong traditional roots. This can, for example, take place in a family where a woman finds a job before the man, and she becomes the breadwinner. As a result of the growing understanding of a women’s important role in a family’s well being and the gender-specific concerns of women who are refugees, many scholars of the refugee and immigration studies are gradually focusing their attention around the specific experiences and needs of women refugees.

A developing literature within refugee studies now seeks to define the experiences of women refugees. Doreen Indra (1999) examines how and why the issue of gender in forced migration is important, and she also identifies the various contexts of forced migration. A large part of the contributions in her book center on issues related to the situation of women in war zones (Nordstrom, 1999), women in refugee camps (Giles, 1999) or gender related human right abuses (Cammack and Mardsen, 1999).⁷ Various case studies also focus on the specific problems women face in refugee camps (e.g., Ager and Long, 1995), or on refugee resettlements in general but with no particular mention of women (Shuck and Munz, 1998).

⁷ All references in Indra, Doreen (1999); see reference section.

Moreover, in her book “Rape Warfare” (1996), Allen discusses the issues affecting Bosnian women during the war. This discussion omits any mention of women refugees who left Bosnia-Herzegovina and resettled but focuses more significantly on gender, rape and patriarchy during the war. Guida Man (1997) states, “research in migration has historically either failed to include women in the analysis, or has conflated women’s experience with their male counterparts, and had subsumed it under men’s experience.” According to the United Nations’ International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the debate surrounding the integration of refugees “to date has either centered around male migrants, or at best, been gender neutral” (Instraw). Yet others argue that, if gender specific strategies have been identified, they have not been integrated into the policies of organizations or of governments assisting refugees. Furthermore, UNHCR’s Executive Committee (2001) states that the “interests of refugee women, and their dependent children are not adequately met when refugee assistance and protection activities are designed and delivered within a gender neutral framework.”

Malkki (1995) finds that the development discourse on refugees is problematic altogether, due to the failure of the international regime to focus on the political and historical contexts of the refugee situation. Malkki (1995, 506-507) believes that international organizations have formulated a substantial part of the questions asked in refugee studies, and Hein (cited in Malkki, 1995, 506) states that the NGO practitioners tend to see a “the ‘refugee’ [as] an indicator of world system dynamics.” Malkki adds that the development discourse on refugees has “sometime facilitated the continued depoliticization of refugee movements...and tends to see a whole world in a refugee camp” (Malkki, 1995, 507).

Several authors in the field of refugee studies are now challenging the earlier models of refugee integration and refugee identity. Earlier accounts of refugee studies have focused on resettlement and integration by models of assimilation, or they have been understood in a “linear and bipolar fashion” (Molesky-Poz, 1997), in which refugee integration was thought to constitute an interconnected set of stages that all refugees go through (Malkki, 1995). Taran (1998) explains how integration often was thought to include refugees’ abandonment of their original language, customs and beliefs, and adopt those of the place they resettled. Eventually, they would assimilate with the traditions of the people and place of resettlement. The assumptions

were that “the newcomers had little or nothing to contribute to the culture and society of their new land, except perhaps their labor” (Taran, 1998).⁸

This notion of integration has now changed substantially. According to Taran (1998) the new models of integration embrace “multiculturalism” and “emphasize affirmation of different identities, and the importance these have in upholding the health and well-being of immigrants and refugees.” Immigrants who are able to preserve their own identity during their resettlement are now believed to experience a more efficient and less costly process of integration. Increasingly, refugee literature focuses on new understandings of refugees, representation, and identity, and has searched for new ways of re-conceptualizing these. An examination of the specific concerns of various groups of refugees, including the understanding of the special situation of women refugees, has emerged from the development of earlier feminist theories. I return to this later in the feminist theory section of this paper.

Resettlement and Integration

The United Nation’s (UN) model of a “durable solution” to the refugee problem includes repatriation, integration, and resettlement (Malkki, 1995, 505). UNHCR reports that “in order to accomplish the task of receiving and settling refugees ... the United Nation’s High Commissioner for Refugees must work together with governments, a wide range of humanitarian organizations, the private sector and even the military” (UNHCR: “Protecting Refugees,” 2001). The humanitarian needs of refugees have thus to a large degree been assumed by a variety of organizations or government offices, and international refugee agencies have come to play a large part in the resettlement and integration process (Malkki, 1995, 505, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1999).⁹ The work these organizations do is therefore important to the successful resettlement of refugees. Moreover, the interaction between various organizations, agencies and refugees is oftentimes the first link the refugees have with the new environment and culture they find themselves in and they thus become an important connection. Since refugees depend on these institutions for support, it is important to identify the specific problems and concerns of refugees.¹⁰ In order to more closely examine the needs of refugees during

⁸ This reference is taken from a webpage, and page numbers are therefore not included. The article can be found at: <http://www.refugeenet.org/documents/volg.php3?ID=163>

⁹ NGO involvement can also be seen in the increased communication they have with the UNHCR on issues concerning refugees, through participation in meetings to the production and submission of documents (Piper, 2000, UNHCR, 2001).

⁸ Although many non-profit organizations often do not have the capacity to undertake such assessments, it is my hope that this study can further identify the gender-specific needs of women refugees.

resettlement and integration, it is helpful to understand who the refugees are, and how they are generally portrayed.

The governments of the European Union (EU) and of Canada have recently taken steps to develop gender sensitive integration practices (Refugee Net, 2000; Volunteer Canada;¹¹ Fredriksson, 2001). Canada was one of the first countries to recognize the gender specific claims of women refugees (Anker, 1995, 204). The EU has also taken initiatives to specifically facilitate the integration process of women refugees. The European Union Networks in Integration of Refugees and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) has facilitated specific research with the intent to examine various aspects of refugee integration from a gendered perspective (see for example RefugeeNet, 2000 “European Meeting;” ECRE, 1999). Most importantly, such research puts the gendered experiences of women on the agenda.

I borrow three aspects from ECRE’s (1999) study that describes integration in further detail:

ECRE considers integration to be a process of change that is:

- a) Dynamic and two-way: it places demands on both receiving societies and the individuals and/or the communities concerned. From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness to adapt public institutions to changes in the population profile, accept refugees as part of the national community, and take action to facilitate access to resources and decision-making processes.
- b) Long term: from a psychological perspective, it often starts at the time of arrival in the country of final destination and is concluded when a refugee becomes an active member of that society from a legal, social, economic, educational and cultural perspective.
- c) Multi-dimensional: it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of durable asylum as well as to refugees' own perception of acceptance by and membership in the host society (ECRE, 1999).

From the European example, we find that the most noticeable barriers to women’s successful integration include their legal status, language difficulties, isolation, family and domestic responsibilities, and poverty (Refugee Net, 2000).¹² Other problems involve domestic

¹¹ No year is provided on this webpage. The article can be accessed at:
http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/canada_new_needs.htm

¹² Several ethnic groups were surveyed in this study, and the study was conducted in a variety of EU countries.

violence, health, age, culture and tradition. This study reveals that these barriers to integration lead many women refugees to live in isolation, to take jobs in the black market, and to fail to learn the language. It becomes increasingly difficult to learn the new language during times of unemployment or when one lives in isolation from the rest of the population. It is also difficult to obtain a job without speaking the native language. Thus, several of the barriers that women refugees experience in accessing the labor market are interconnected and negatively reinforce each other, and some may experience this as a downward spiral that hinders their progress of integration.

Integration through Employment

Obtaining meaningful employment is an important part of the resettlement process and has also been identified as a vital part to a person's integration into a new society. According to ECRE (1999), the long-term and multidimensional part of integration is tied into a refugee's economic participation in the country of asylum and it includes being an active member of that society on multiple levels. Moreover, participation in the work force is also an important step towards self-sufficiency after a refugee has entered the place of resettlement. Taran (1998) contends that rapid integration is dependent on certain opportunities and skills, including language, customs, and responsibilities which allows the newcomers to "function in public social situations, obtain a working income, and earn their own living and that of dependents." In his conclusion, Taran (1998) asserts, "the rapid possibility for people to become self-supporting and not dependent is critical to refugees regaining a sense of stability and self-worth from the beginning." Studies have, however, found that newly arrived immigrants in the United States have a much higher unemployment rate than the country's citizens' does. Meisenheimer (1992) finds that the immigrants' "sharply different occupational characteristics result in much lower earnings."¹³ Meisenheimer's work also reveals that immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for several years have labor market characteristics that more closely resemble those of non-immigrants.

Interestingly, this study also shows that cohorts of immigrants who arrived in the United States some years ago experienced less unemployment in the initial period of resettlement than those who have arrived more recently. This was also true for studies of refugees in Canada,

¹³ This reference is taken from a webpage, and page numbers are therefore not included. The article can be found at: http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/rlib_doc.asp?docn=3684

where “the average earnings of refugees in the first full-year after landing have declined noticeably among cohorts landing since 1988” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1998, 2). While Meisenheimer (1992) attributes this finding to the difference in skills and education the two groups had before they entered the country, he also emphasizes the importance of previous US work experience and knowledge about the labor market, as well as the ability to speak English. Meisenheimer (1992) claims, “the labor market performance of immigrants who speak English fluently compares much more favorably with that of natives than does the performance of immigrants who are not fluent.”

There is also some evidence suggesting that refugees are currently experiencing a slower integration in terms of wage assimilation as compared to those who arrived earlier. Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) in the United States published a Triennial Report on Immigration in 2001 examining the effects of immigration on the U.S. Labor Market (INS, 2001). The findings in the report show that the amount of highly skilled immigrants in the US have actually increased, while “successive cohorts of persons arriving from certain countries over the past three decades appear to have experienced slower wage assimilation than their conationals who arrived earlier” (INS, 2001).¹⁴ The researchers of this study do not agree on what caused this development, but the report indicates that there may be differences in the immigrants as well as in the US labor market (INS, 2001). These statistics do, however, suggest that it is necessary to assist immigrants in obtaining a more favorable position in the labor market in order to facilitate their integration into the U.S. society. The difference in labor market characteristics between refugees that resettled earlier versus those that have resettled more recently could also depend on an increasingly competitive labor market or a change in the availability of certain jobs in various job sectors. The findings of these studies suggest that if the earnings of newly arrived refugees continue to decline, the integration of refugees into the labor market may become increasingly problematic in the future.

The lack of language skills has been identified as a significant barrier to the successful integration of refugees. A survey research study conducted with refugee women in Illinois showed that language problems were identified as a major obstacle to the integration of refugee

¹⁴ Many of these analyses are based on census data, which do not differentiate illegal residents and refugees from legal immigrants (INS, 2001).

women in the labor market (U.S. Department of Labor).¹⁵ Most of the refugee women involved in this study were concentrated in low-wage jobs. Of all the women involved in this study, 65 % made less than \$ 6.99 per hour, and only 8 % made more than \$ 9.00 per hour. Furthermore, 38 % worked in housekeeping services, 20 % in service jobs, and 19 % in factory jobs. Only 8 % of the women in this study were professionals (U.S. Department of Labor). The women surveyed in this study illustrated the importance of language difficulties in obtaining employment: “many respondents recognize their limited English proficiency as a major barrier to self-sufficiency” (U.S. Department of Labor). About 75 % reported that they needed translation assistance. Moreover, the participants identified reasons why additional training in the English language was not feasible. Many stated that family responsibilities and work took too much of their time, and several women “expressed concern about the lack of time available to improve their language” (U.S. Department of Labor). This study also revealed that one major reason why women fail to be successful in the areas of work, or do not get the social benefits they are entitled to, is due to their limited knowledge of their rights. This fact is also likely to be tied into poor knowledge of language and the inability to read documents that contains such relevant information. The problem of poor legal literacy among various groups of women has been recognized as an obstacle to the advancement of women worldwide, including that of women refugees (Womanwatch; USAID, 1999; United Nations, 1998). Non-governmental organizations and development agencies have advocated legal literacy to promoting women’s empowerment and it is considered to be a “critical strategy in helping women recognize and advocate their rights” (USAID, 1999).¹⁶

There are also many other barriers that keep refugees from using their full potential as successful participants in the workforce in the country of resettlement. While many refugees have “qualifications, skills, and cross-cultural experience to offer, they are confronted with social and economic exclusion from society at large” (Refugee Net: “Refugees Included”). Man (1998) recognizes that the multiple barriers faced by refugee women in Canada in obtaining employment include “their uncertain legal status, and the racialized and gendered structures of the labor market” (Man, 1998, 2). Frequently, refugees with a higher education or a professional

¹⁵ No year is provided in the WebPages of this article. It was retrieved on 28/03/2002 from: http://www.dol.gov/dol/wb/public/info_about_wb/regions/refugee.pdf

¹⁶ Quote taken from the webpage of USAID at: <http://www.usaid.gov/wid/pubs/ib4.htm>. Page number is therefore not used, quote can be found in introduction of this article “Gender Matters” from the Information Bulletin no. 4, September 1999.

background often encounter difficulties in having their qualifications recognized in the country of asylum. Man (1998, 2) sees this requirement of “Canadian experience” as an institutionalized discriminatory process. Moreover, as many women refugees are the sole provider for their families or children, there are few women who can afford or find time to reeducate themselves, or go through the training it would require of them to return to their primary field (Man 1998, 2). If refugees were given opportunities that would allow them to utilize the relevant skills and training they arrived with, they would be able to make a contribution to the society they live in, and become self-sufficient at an earlier stage. This, in turn, could assure a more rapid integration into all levels of society.

Feminist Perspectives on Women Refugees

In this section, I examine the alternative viewpoints of feminist writers with regard to women refugees, including the emergence of women’s human rights and the implications the human rights and women’s rights provisions have for refugees during resettlement. I also explore how these writers have challenged the constructions of refugee identity, and how displacement affects women refugees, and finally, how practical and strategic gender needs and interests apply to women refugees.

Some feminist theorists contend that women’s concerns and women human rights are different from the Universal Human Rights adopted by the United Nations, which have generally been created by white, European men (Schmuki, 1998, 31). Feminist theory has, in particular, served to challenge mainstream knowledge production:

Feminist theory deals with difference in a way that breaks down universal notions of concepts like equality, truth, justice and categories of analysis like the universal woman. These theories of difference are grounded in two specific arguments:

- that women’s lives are best theorized from the perspective of their lives which yields multiple realities, and
- that theorizing from this standpoint needs to be from the perspective of women’s lived experiences (Schmuki, 1998, 5).

Women’s human rights emerged through the criticisms of the Universal Human Rights, based on the argument that the Universal Human Rights did not explain or protect the particular interests of women. These observations have been followed up by modifications of the initial human rights provisions. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the most comprehensive legal document outlining women rights today and was

adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 (Schmuki, 1998, 32). The articles outlined in the convention contain guidelines and measures that the signatory countries should implement to protect the interests of women and to eliminate the discrimination of women in their societies. One example on the adjustments made through the implementation of CEDAW include women's rights in the private sphere.

Walter (2001) explains that women's rights emerged from women wanting equal rights with men, and that some "special provision" had to be made to promote this equality. This interpretation of equal rights recognizes the significance of the differences that exist between women and men, but also suggests that women and men can be different yet equal at the same time (Walter, 2001, xvi). The introduction of women's rights into the human rights provisions has also caused some controversy pertaining to their efficiency and usefulness.

Do legal rights really offer anything to women? Women's disadvantages are often based on structural injustice and winning a case in court will not change this. Because women in most societies are starting in such a disadvantaged position, rights discourse offers a significant vocabulary to formulate political and social grievances which is recognized by the powerful (Chalesworth, cited in Cook, 1994, 4).

Women who were not part of the Western women's movement have argued that mainstream feminist theory has done little to explain the subordination they have experienced (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993, 113). According to some theorists, various groups of women who considered themselves "at the periphery" include women of color, lesbian women, and other non-Western women. These groups of women found their own ways of explaining the discrimination they experienced and thus challenged mainstream feminist theory (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993, 113).¹⁷ This development suggests that the policy on women's human rights has progressed in conjunction with the theories created by women at the periphery, "and [has] reinforced policy for refugee women" (Schmuki, 1998, 7).

Similarly, the notion of being a refugee is defined in increasingly specific ways, and as a result, the understanding of refugee identity has changed during recent times. The notion of difference, which has been important in the construction of various feminist theories, has also challenged the mainstream understanding of knowledge and identity of refugees and immigrants

¹⁷ Such understandings, or various groups of feminist theory, based their explanation in various factors, such as class, race, sexuality, and ethnicity as a reason for discrimination.

(Schmuki, 1998). The director of the NGO RefWID in Washington DC, Sima Wali (1995), explains that women's concerns are still neglected because they are different from those of men. She writes that "in the camps in countries of first asylum, the priority accorded to male refugees means that the needs of rape victims, widows, and the handicapped are especially ignored because men do not regard them as valuable or because they lack male protection" (Wali, 1995, 337). She continues: "rendered voiceless and powerless, refugee and displaced women are expected to defer their needs to the political and religious dictates of the male hierarchy (Wali, 1995, 337). While the concerns of women refugees have been increasingly studied, they are not always implemented into policy on refugees.

The introduction of gender into human rights, and finally, of gender into the categorization of refugees has still helped expand the possibilities of refugee identity. Schmuki (1998) argues that while theories of difference have been important to development theories, human rights discourse, and the humanitarian aid regime, a closer examination of the observed and the observer has become necessary. While it is important to analyze the identity of various groups of women, it is just as important to examine the identities of those observing. Schmuki (1998, 4) suggests in her essay that we need to look critically at the epistemology created by Western women and the international aid regime because the construction of refugees serve to benefit just these institutions.

The distinct issues related to refugee movements, resettlements and refugee policies have not been created by refugees, but mainly by the international development regime. Schmuki gives two examples on how the development regime has controlled the epistemology on the make-up and issues related to refugee groups. First, the notion of who qualifies as a refugee has been developed by this regime.

The international system of emergency aid is built on inaccurate notions that portray refugees as waves, floods and tides of humanity whose masses will undoubtedly scramble for limited precious resources---notions which separates us from them, the fortunate from the unfortunate, defining refugees as the distant and unfortunate "other" (Schmuki, 1998, 7).

She also points out the constructions of refugee identity have made it increasingly difficult for refugees to "shed their refugee skin" and thus return to normalcy: "does the construction of 'refugee woman' ...shape the process by which any individual woman also becomes a 'refugee'?

in a way that makes the subsequent process of becoming normal again difficult or improbable?” (Man, 1998, 8). She suggests “the process of becoming normal again is hampered by the previous process of becoming a refugee because the constructions of the refugee woman, in many cases, act to reinforce and maintain the systems of management, administration and regulation by the regimes, especially the development regime” (Man, 1998, 8). Frequently, refugees who have resettled are typically labeled as “former refugee” or “repatriated refugee,” to suggest that the refugee status is the most important aspect of that person.

Second, it only recently that refugee movements have been seen as gendered: The gendered characteristics of refugee groups didn’t suddenly appear in the last decade as the policies were being developed, but existed long before the regimes were aware. Refugee women were turned into a distinct issue by academics, policy makers, activists and aid workers inside and outside of the development regime, with a general thrust of discourse and knowledge production originating in Europe and North America *about* refugees in developing countries (Schmuki, 1998, 7).

According to Schmuki, the various categories of refugees are political tools used to frame certain issues, by “those creating the conflict and those administering aid” (Schmuki, 1998, 7). As such, a refugee’s status is defined by the regimes in power, both by those in the country of flight and resettlement, as well as those of the aid and donor communities. The development discourse pertaining to refugees, constructed by the international development regime, “frame what will be named as development problems for women and, in turn, decide which projects will be funded and how they will be designed” (Schmuki, 1998, 6). Schmuki notes that the international system of humanitarian aid stands to benefit from the “more than 48 million people worldwide whose status in the nation-state system is ‘refugee’ or ‘internally displaced person’.” The marginalized thus rarely participate in formulating their particular needs, and the voices of the international development regime do not necessarily reflect those of the marginalized. This constructed notion of refugeeness thus becomes a political commodity, and relates directly to issues of power and privilege.

Refugee identity can be based on numerous factors, including, but not limited to, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and age. Molesky-Poz (1997) points out that a refugee’s identity does not only get shaped through someone’s cultural background alone, but through a variety of factors, often depending upon the historical and political context of the country of origin as well as of the country of resettlement. According to Molesky-Poz (1997), the context, through which

immigrants position and define themselves, is important. Moreover, “in crossing international borders, immigrants encounter new hegemonic definitions: cultural dislocation, marginalization, reconstructed gender roles, changes in the balance of power in families, new domestic groups and networks” (Molesky-Poz, 1997, 4). According to Polesky-Moz, useful models of immigration include those that acknowledge the interconnection between a person’s place of origin and that in the US.

Furthermore, some scholars are now challenging our notion of what it means to be a refugee, as well as the dynamics of the process by which a woman becomes a refugee. In her critique of how Western institutions have created refugee epistemology, Schmuki (1998, 4) explains that “the image portrayed by the news media, that of the helpless victimized woman wholly dependent on aid for survival, is at least partially consistent with the image produced by the other three construction sites.¹⁸” Malkki (1995) also challenges the way immigrant identity has been defined within refugee studies. She states, “the implicit functionalism of much work in “refugee studies” is especially clear when one is dealing with questions of identity, culture, ethnicity, and tradition” (Malkki, 1995, 508). Malkki (1995) criticizes authors such as Stein (1981) and Taylor and Nathan (1980) for following what she labels the “sedentary norm.”¹⁹ The functionalist approach promotes the theory that all refugees experience certain stages during their integration. Malkki (1995) suggests we stop viewing our society as a “whole” or as an organism where everything is interconnected. This can often cause us to adopt a simplistic and incorrect understanding of what it means to be a refugee.

Some scholars reject the assumption that all refugees experience a loss of culture, identity and habits during resettlement. Malkki (1995) challenges the generally accepted view that refugees experience the country of resettlement as a strange and frightening society. Such assumptions are based upon the premise that a person’s homeland is “not only the normal but the ideal habitat for that person” (Malkki, 1995, 509). She further points out that the reason a person fled his or her homeland in the first place was because it became strange and frightening due to

¹⁸ Schmuki (1998) is defining these construction sites as: “The physical and conceptual space in which institutional networks carry out processes of knowledge production.” The three other construction sites Schmuki refers to includes: 1) the development site, and includes such as the United Nations, NGOs, governmental organizations, and the alliances and conventions agreed upon by these, and other large multinational organizations; 2) the human rights site, and includes international law and international policy, and human rights policy groups; 3) the scholarly site includes the various academic disciplines which engages in the study of refugees, such as sociology, political science, or international relations (Schmuki, 1998, 4).

¹⁹ Both Taylor and Nathan (1980), and Stein (1981) in Malkki (1995).

war, turmoil or political unrest. Lastly, Malkki argues that we cannot claim to know the psychological hardship or “the sources of a person’s suffering,” just due to the fact that a person is a refugee. We can, however, suggest that there are differences between the experiences of refugee men and women.

As we have seen, migration is often thought of as a negative disempowering experience. Resettlement can, however, have both negative and positive effects on women refugees. In any case, resettlement has significant implications for women and can lead to altered gender roles in the household (Marino, 1998). First, women refugees frequently experience the loss of support of their traditional family protectors or their communities, as “the causes of refugee flight frequently result in separation from, or loss of, family members” (Center for Migration Studies, 2001, 21). This can have profound negative effects on women as well as on all members of a family. The loss of a traditional support system can subject women to additional problems including “abduction, rape, sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation” (Center for Migration Studies, 2001, 21). Second, women who experience the loss of their husbands or other family members oftentimes have to “assume new roles and status in addition to coping with the loss of home” (Center for Migration Studies, 2001, 21). Accordingly, many women refugees have been able to redefine their roles in the home and family and have moved away from traditions rooted in patriarchal systems. UNHCR Executive Committee’s Report on Refugee Women (UNHCR, 2001) states that:

While displacement created obstacles to empowerment for refugee women, it also creates opportunities. Every day, displaced women and returnee women, overcome traditional roles that inhibit their participation in economic and political life, challenging customs and traditions out of sheer necessity, in order to continue to provide for themselves and their families.

While the role reversal of women in the family and in the society seems to be beneficial for many women, this shift can create additional challenges within a family. The experiences of Vietnamese refugees in the United States show that immigration “reshaped [women’s] roles within the family and society” (Marino, 1998, 90). The different cultural values these women experienced in the United States society challenged traditional and patriarchal values, and created problems within many families. Mc Spadden and Moussa (1993, 205) point out “it is common that women’s position in the family or in the society may change significantly during

the resettlement process ... there is the likely consequence of a shift in the previous experiences and expected power hierarchy and power differentials.”

Some feminist writers challenge the assumption that migrants and refugees are powerless or passive victims, and elaborate by suggesting that “crossing borders” can be empowering for women, because it allows women to make more choices and hence gain more control over their lives (Valdes, 1996). In her study of Somali refugee women, Hydman (cited in Man, 1998, 2) supports this perspective, and argues that the stereotypical notion of refugee women as “‘vulnerable,’ helpless victims of circumstance”(Man, 1998, 2) is inaccurate, “these women are active participants who employ various survival strategies and indigenous skills in their daily struggles” (Man, 1998, 2) and are able to make ends meet through their own innovative skills.

Narratives by women in exile and women migrants indicate that many women have an opportunity to leave the traditional patriarchal culture behind during their flight and resettlement. Some may then experience a new opportunity to redefine their identities and change their role in the family. Marjorie Agosin (cited in Valdes, 1996), a Chilean women human rights writer, observes how women in exile have started examining “how society has shaped women’s personalities to fit the patriarchal world” (Valdes, 1996, 2). Vietnamese refugees explain how migration into the United States reshaped their roles as women within their families and societies (Marino, 1998, 90). The Vietnamese women reported that they often found themselves “‘balancing a tightrope’” between traditional and U.S. –constructed gender roles”(Molesky-Poz, 1997, 7). Marino found that Vietnamese women used their flexibility and compromise to deal with their new situation, and though their coping skills, these women were able to adjust and create stability in their families.

As we have seen, much of the literature on displacement and refugeeness is not created by the refugees themselves, but largely by Western development institutions which have some individual or institutional self-interest in how the system of migration is defined. However, the existing epistemology is continuously challenged by authors who seek to expand the definitions of refugee identity, and bring the concerns of the marginalized to the forefront. Historically, women have had to struggle to get their concerns included into the human rights provisions. Refugee women are now facing a similar struggle to have their voices heard. Lastly, the mainstream notion of refugee women as powerless and helpless victims is now being challenged. The narratives of women refugees and immigrants show that while displacements create

challenges for many, it can also be a source of empowerment, and can thus create new opportunities for women in the country of resettlement. In light of these new insights, I explore the specific situation and needs of women refugees based on their own narratives. In the next section, I adopt the formulation of strategic and practical gender needs with regards to the needs of women refugees.

Practical and Strategic Gender Needs

An important contribution to the formulation of women's needs in development was made by Maxine Molyneux, and later adapted by scholars such as Caroline Moser (1989) and large development organizations including the World Bank and the United Nations. This approach differentiates between women's practical gender needs (PGN) and strategic gender interests (SGI). Practical gender needs are characterized by women's day-to-day needs, and are related to women's gender roles because they are "formulated from the concrete conditions women experience in their *engendered* position within the sexual division of labor, and deriving out of their practical gender interests for human survival" (Moser, 1989, 1803). Most PGNs include basic needs for human survival and such as food, water, fuel, income, and health-care (ILO, 1998). Women's PGNs are usually related to the domestic arena, on income-earning activities, and on "community-level requirements of housing and basic services" (Moser, 1989, 1803), because the traditional sexual division of labor generally leaves women with the responsibility of domestic work and childcare, family health and food provision, housing and basic services as well as income-earning activities.

In contrast, strategic gender interests include such activities that serve to promote long-term change, and thus they are promoted to change women's gender roles. Strategic gender interests are "those which are formulated in the context of women's subordination to men and with the objective of realizing an alternative and more equal organization of society than that which exists at present" (Women's International Network, 1993). Moser (1989, 1803) points out that SGNs are dependent on the cultural and sociopolitical context of a society, and that they can involve activities that serve to abolish the sexual division of labor, promote political equality, remove discrimination against women, and prevent violence against women. Through the separation of practical and strategic gender needs and interests we can differentiate between women's short-term goals versus their long-term interests (Women's International Network, 1993).

I apply this framework to the needs of refugee women, because women refugees have different needs during the initial stages of resettlement as compared to the later stages. Initially, the short-term interests of refugee women include those needs required for daily survival. PGNs would be met if a woman refugee acquired a certain level of economic self-sufficiency, and would be achieved through income, or initially through the support from families, friends or refugee organizations. PGNs are met if a woman is provided with a job that can make her self-sufficient, or able to cover her daily needs for survival, or if they are otherwise provided with sufficient funds that would secure their daily survival. As previous research has shown, becoming economically self-reliant is often difficult as refugees often have problems learning the language and thus experience difficulties in finding jobs.

Skill training in employment or in the new language, which are used to empower women refugees and make them self-sufficient, would have some long-term benefit for women refugees, and would thus also meet the strategic gender needs. Employment is also crucial to long-term integration and it is thus important for the empowerment of women refugees (ECRE, 1999). Furthermore, employment can help women refugees to become self-sufficient, and can in turn diminish their dependence on a traditional male provider in the family. As we have seen, women refugees who earn their own income and support the family, often experience negative reactions from their husbands or other family members. A role reversal can thus take place if a woman takes on the full responsibility of supporting the household, or if she challenges the sexual division of labor. Depending on the cultural and social context of each individual family, some changes can be advantageous for women in the long run, if it means a more equal division of work in the home or if it means that women gain increased opportunities to make their own choices. When women's traditional gender roles are challenged and change as a result of resettlement, strategic gender interests are protected. As such, we can see that displacement can have a positive effect on women refugees, and create benefits in the long term.

We have also seen that the barriers refugees face in obtaining jobs include lack of equal opportunity in the job market. Initiatives taken to specifically challenge the unequal opportunity women refugees experience in the country of resettlement, have the potential to meet strategic gender interests as well. Such initiatives can consist of programs aimed towards improving the recognition of educational and work experience acquired abroad, or facilitating job skill training that seek to promote career advancement.

While refugee women have some responsibility in acquiring their PGNs (for example the necessary language skills), we should not forget that the host society also carries certain responsibilities in ensuring the successful integration of refugees: “integration places demands on both receiving societies and the individuals and/or the communities concerned”(ECRE, 1999). Organizations, governments, and other citizens have to do their part of diminishing these barriers and facilitate the process by which a refugee can utilize their previous skills and experience in the country of resettlement. In some cases this may call for special provision on the behalf of receiving societies.

Summary of Literature

Research has shown that the world’s refugee population largely consists of women and children. While migration is not a new phenomenon, conflicts around the world continue to cause forced migration in most parts of the world. A great deal of knowledge we have about refugees is in the making and is typically constructed by the international aid regime. Authors such as Malkki (1995), Schmuki (1999), and Fabri and Boskailo advise us to be careful in making assumptions about what it means to be a refugee. The international aid regime portrays a certain kind of refugee identity, based on helplessness and speechlessness. Feminist writers and women immigrants have worked to deconstruct these ideas, through giving their own accounts of how they adjusted during their resettlement. Many women have applied their own survival strategies and made great efforts to secure a smooth transition for themselves and their families. As we have seen, while displacement is often seen as disempowering, it can have positive as well as negative effects on women refugees.

It is, however, important that we recognize the problems refugees encounter during their resettlement. Integration is multi-faceted and includes a wide range of experiences. In short, integration includes the active participation in economic, social and cultural life. Employment is an important factor in the integration process, but unemployment is generally high amongst all refugees, and constitutes a real problem for the successful integration of many refugees. Many women refugees identified language problems as the most significant obstacle to successful integration, especially of integration into the labor market. Governments and organizations can do more to ensure a more rapid integration of women refugees. The practical needs and the strategic interests of women refugees should be considered in providing meaningful support that can assist women during integration.

In further exploring the issues and needs of women refugees, I conducted focus group interviews with women from the former Yugoslavia. I elaborate on the methodology and research design of these focus groups in the following section.

Chapter II. Methods

The objective of this study is to explore the gender specific needs of women refugees during integration and resettlement in the United States. The research questions in this project include: How do women refugees perceive of their own situation after they have arrived in the United States? What are their particular needs during the period of integration with regards to their employment situation? How does the situation change and perceptions differ for women who have just arrived in the US versus those who have been here for some time? I also examine what integration means specifically to women from the former Yugoslavia, to further explore the meaning of refugeeness and refugee identity.

Focus group interviews with women from the former Yugoslavia built the foundation for gathering the data in this study.²⁰ The stories of these women will guide the findings and conclusions as they inform us of the specific experiences of refugee women in the United States. In the following sections I will describe the research design used in this study in further detail. I will also discuss the advantages and limitations of focus groups and how they apply to this particular study.

²⁰ Related studies of refugees have used various methodologies to obtaining data, both quantitative and qualitative. In a study of the labor market and refugees in Canada, data are collected through the New Immigration Data Base. The database contains longitudinal information on more than half of the Canadian immigrant population (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "The Changing Labor," 1998). While this study covers a very large part of Canada's immigrant population, it obtains relatively little information about each person. Authors that exclusively depend on statistics in collection of data are likely to cover a large part of a population, but since the data in this case is obtained from the returns of tax filers, it is at risk of leaving some immigrants out. Moreover, as is the case with much research on immigrants, the Canadian study research makes no distinction between various groups of immigrants, and thus does not discuss refugees in particular. The ECRE Task Force On Integration (ECRE: "Bridges and Fences") applies qualitative methods in their study on refugees' perceptions on integration. ECRE's study use semi-structured interviews in individual interviews with refugees from over 13 different countries (ECRE: "Bridges and Fences, 13-14).

Table 1: Study Design

	FOCUS GROUP 1	FOCUS GROUP 2
Date of Meeting	March 25 th , 2002	April 29 th , 2002
Number of Participants	6	3
Time of Interview	1.5 hour	2 hours
Participants Time in the U.S.	All except one participant lived in the U.S. for less than one year	All participants lived in the U.S. for more than four years
Place	Apartment of Participant, Richmond, VA	House of Participant, Richmond, VA

a. Participants and Focus Groups

Two focus groups interviews were conducted with small groups of participants who volunteered for this study. These groups consisted of a heterogeneous sample of women that belonged to various age groups and had various backgrounds. The commonalties of the participants, namely their country of origin, sex, refugee status, and the time of residence in the United States were therefore considered desired characteristics to the information sought in this project.²¹ All women who were gathered in these groups shared the reasons for living in exile. The first focus group included six women who had lived in the United States for a year or less, and the second focus group included three women who had lived in the United States for four or more years.

Focus groups were chosen as an appropriate method for a variety of reasons. Considerable importance was, however, placed upon existing literature in the field, and supportive evidence was sought to supplement the findings and conclusions of this paper. This study does not seek to make generalizations based on a large sample size, as is often the case in

²¹ All women also lived in the Richmond, VA area.

quantitative studies, or qualitative studies with quantitative elements. Focus groups can, however, provide new insights from the detailed discussion between the participants. The group dynamics of the interviews are considered to be a benefit of the focus groups, and a comment from one participant can evoke reactions from another. Group discussion can “encourage the participants in the session to interact with each other so that the quality of the output is enhanced” (Greenbaum, 2000, 3). Focus groups are helpful in that they provide the opportunity of interviewees to speak in a “permissive, non-threatening environment” (Lewis, 1998, Greenbaum, 2000, 6). People who share an experience may feel more comfortable discussing certain topics together than in a one-on-one interview (Greenbaum, 2000, 12). Focus groups are also important in that they give interviewees a lot of freedom in how they choose to answer questions since questions are typically open-ended, and since the moderator interrupts minimally throughout the interviewing process. Such interviews are therefore considered particularly helpful to gather in-depth information from a group of people who share a similar experience or similar background (Greenbaum, 2000, 3). Other benefits of the focus group interview include the opportunity of verbal as well as non-verbal communication between the participants (Greenbaum, 2000, 10). The researcher thus has the opportunity to identify signals of emotion that the participants may show. Such signals may comprise of pausing between sentences, expressions of sorrow and joy, or other facial expressions and gestures. The responses gathered during the focus group interviews were collected through tape recordings and through note taking. All responses were transcribed and translated into English, as needed. Data were interpreted in the context of other studies and literature pertaining to refugees, as well as feminist theory. Quotes or whole segments were used and replicated in this paper. Ideas and recurrent themes were identified and are described in the “Findings” section. Focus groups are considered advantageous in that they can provide contextual information to a subject matter already studied (Morgan, 1988, 24-25), which is why they were chosen to collect data.²²

Focus group interviews have also been criticized due to a variety of reasons. Some authors believe focus groups are popular among researchers with strong “ideological predispositions” (Boeree, 1998) and are used to steer a conversation into a topic where the researcher has a strong emotional opinion (Boeree, 1998). This pitfall was avoided to the greatest extent possible through asking open-ended questions, and through letting participants

²² No pre- or posttests were conducted, due to time and funding limitations.

choose how they answered the questions. Moreover, the dynamics of focus groups have been criticized on the grounds that strong personalities tend to dominate discussions (Boeree, 1998). Moderators are perhaps best prepared when this scenario is anticipated and will guard against it through being observant and equally encouraging to all the participants. This pitfall can also be avoided by letting particularly dominant personalities understand that their responses are appreciated, yet direct the follow up questions to the other participants by asking them if they have a similar or different opinion on the matter.

b. Sample Selection

The women refugees from the former Yugoslavia were initially identified through the files of the Refugee and Immigration Services in Richmond, by the assistance of employees at the organization. In addition, two of the Bosnian women, who the author of this study had known for the previous five months,²³ were contacted and asked to assist in gathering informants. This method of using referrals in gathering participants is non-random and is referred to as snowball sampling (Trochim, 2002). The two women were initially informed about the study by a caseworker. Other participants were subsequently identified through the assistance of these women, through networking with other women who are members of the same community.

The snowball sampling process has limitations as well as some benefits. Snowball sampling is considered useful, especially when the participants feel they can trust the researcher, or when it is otherwise hard to reach that particular population (Trochim, 2002). This form of sampling seemed particularly advantageous for this project due to time constraints. It is non-random, and is not assured to be representative of a larger population. The responses obtained may therefore be biased (Trochim, 2002). Nonetheless, this sampling procedure is useful when we are searching for opinions or views, and are “not concerned about representing these views proportionally” (Trochim, 2002).

Snowball sampling is also considered useful in finding specific populations, but it makes it likely that several or all participants know each other prior to the interview. This familiarity can work both to the advantage and to the disadvantage of the researcher, because it can influence the answers participants give in various ways. It may cause several of the interviewees

²³ Through English as a Second Language training.

to feel more confident and comfortable to talk openly. However, issues of a sensitive nature may lead to that the participants decide not to reveal their personal opinions, or avoid taking a stance on a certain issue, to potentially avoid conflict. Trying to assess the exact impact this problem has on this particular study is at best difficult.

All informants received a letter describing the purpose of the study and the nature of the focus group interview. This letter briefly introduced the topic of this research, but did not include the actual questions, in order to avoid revealing the exact subject matter. Doing so was believed to potentially compromise the authenticity of the answers obtained, because respondents may construct answers prior to the interviews, especially if they believe their answers will favorably highlight certain aspects of their experience. Prior to the interview session, participants were again informed about the confidentiality of the study, the risks and benefits involved, and the voluntary nature of their participation.

c. Interviews

The interviews took place in the home of one of the refugees who assisted in gathering participants, which was believed to be a familiar and informal environment. The groups were asked one question to initiate a discussion. In cases where participants seemed reluctant or unable to continue the discussion, additional questions were asked. As with all questions, all prompts are open-ended, which is most preferred way of asking questions in focus groups (Krueger, 1998, 31).²⁴ The role of the moderator was to keep the discussion focused on the subject matter, and try to ascertain that everyone felt comfortable to speak and was provided with an opportunity to voice their opinion (Krueger, 1998, 27).

The first focus group interview took place March 25th,²⁵ 2002, and lasted for about one and a half-hours. Out of the six participants, five had lived in the United States less than a year, and one had lived in the United States for about three years. Few of the participants in this group spoke English, and a translator was therefore present. The second focus group was held April 29th 2002, and lasted for about two hours. Three participants were gathered, all of who had lived in the United States for four years or more. All spoke English, and no translator or caseworker was present during this interview. Both focus groups started with an informative briefing where

²⁴ See also "Questionnaire" in Appendix.

²⁵ Both focus group interviews took place later than initially intended, mainly due to the problem of gathering all participants at the same date and time.

the purpose and nature of the interview were covered. The participants were given a chance to ask questions prior to the interview. All participants signed consent forms, which were translated for them before the interview took place. They were also informed about the confidentiality involved in the study, including the protection of their names and the confidentiality of the data.

The familiarity between the moderator, the researcher and translator, and the interviewees can function as a benefit but also as a disadvantage. The translator, who was present throughout both interviews, was an employee of the RIS, the organization that has to a large extent been responsible for the refugee's initial resettlement phase when they first came to the United States. The relationship between the RIS officials and these women can thus lead to bias in responses. It is for example possible that the translator exerted a feeling of authority over their clients, and that the interviewees felt dependent on the organization to some extent, and showed caution in how they chose to answer certain questions. Participants may have also decided to frame any information they give about the RIS in a particularly advantageous way. This problem was limited through restricting the number of questions that pertained to the organization or the relationship between the organization and the refugees.

The knowledge the researcher had about the participants also works to the benefit of this study. It is possible that some participants may felt more trusting towards the interviewer and thus felt that they could speak out more openly on an issue. Lastly, the language barrier was also a factor that could provide limitations during the interview sessions, as well as of the interpretation of results. These shortcomings were lessened through the on-going communication between the translator and the researcher. The caseworkers were also informed about the question- and answer session prior to the interviews, especially information relevant to the function of the moderator and the appropriateness of asking follow-up questions. The questions and responses were translated continuously during the session, with all the translations taped as well. It is the hope of the author of this paper that the benefits of the focus group interviews will outweigh the limitations.

Chapter III. Findings

The two focus group interviews brought up a variety of issues pertaining to the women's experiences of integration. For the first focus group, the most recurring theme was the problem of language in obtaining employment. The participants in the second focus group also discussed the language barrier, as well as the issue of non-acceptance of qualifications. The various topics brought up during these interviews, have been replicated in this paper and organized into themes. Additional themes explored in the interviews include types of jobs, transportation, stress, role reversal and adjustment, economic issues, and support, and are all discussed in sequence in separate sections.

The First Focus Group Interview

Four of the participants in the first focus group knew each other at the outset. In addition, the participants emphasized a desire to have their first names revealed in the paper. All participants voiced their opinion on most issues. The discussion centered on their experiences about employment in the United States. The caseworker from RIS translated from Bosnian to English throughout the whole interview, and these translations were taped and later transcribed, and constitute the raw data in this research project. All responses replicated in this paper, are given as authentically as possible as they were identified and transcribed from the recorded material.

a. Type of Jobs

All of the women in the first focus group shared the experience of having had entry level, mostly manual, jobs since they came to the United States. Examples included fast food restaurant jobs, sales clerk (K-mart), assembly work in factories, woodwork, laundry services, and cleaning. Also, the women agreed that it had been difficult to obtain a job in the beginning, but stated that it was getting easier: "it is much easier now than when we came..." One woman agreed, "it was hard in the beginning, but once you start..." Another woman stated, "first job is hard, the beginning is hard. Later it is simple...only language is a problem. Now we have no problems getting a job." One woman who was currently unemployed disagreed, however, and expressed concern over how she would get a job, "I went today, five places, looking for a job, I am worried about how I am going to find a job."

b. Language

This group of women also noted that language proved to be a big difficulty, in daily life and in job situations. When asked how they found a job in the United States and how they adjusted to the culture, several women reported that language had been a major difficulty:

Many people, many Americans, they ask me, they approached us, they would ask us, they don't know where Bosnia is, if you have TV, if you have a car, if you have a house, where do you live...did you live in the forest, or something? They didn't know where is Bosnia, and what kind of life we live in Bosnia, it is in the middle of Europe so the biggest difference is the language. They had everything, first class before the war, and before they left, you know...you cannot be choosy, because of the language, you know. It is very hard for me to find a job, because of the language, so I have to sit quiet and work for myself. It is hard to find a job, but we have to keep working.

Another woman stated, "working is ok, I don't mind work. It is just hard, because of the language." The problem with language was brought up in three different sections of the interview. On the question on how they would get the desired job in the U.S. one woman answered, "English! We are very smart, but we don't know how to speak." The word English was used 14 times during the interview, generally in the context of the problems the women experienced with employment or how improved English skills could help them get a good job. Improvement of the ability to speak English was considered the most useful support activity for obtaining the desired job, as several women in the group answered: "the English, English-English is a major problem (laughter). When you get the English, a driver's license, you can buy a car. There are too many problems. English, and I am gonna change companies." One participant also added that some women had an English tutor once or twice a week, but that others did not. One woman explained that she depended on her husband's income and help with English, as he learnt the language before she did, but that he later had "pushed her" to take more care of herself. The woman then stated that she started working and that it helped her practice English. Monira, the participant who had stayed in the United States for about three years, added that the first year had been very hard, "somebody is talking about taxes, cars...it is very difficult to understand everything. After approximately one year, things will be more clear..." On the question of how the participants experienced searching for jobs in the United States, one woman explained how her inability to speak English affected her:

I heard stories. In the beginning it looked easy, but it wasn't easy. When I started, the problem was always English...but I had to work. And I looked to myself stupid, because I did not know anything...so I thought they were laughing at me, people were asking about me, and...trying to get information, customers about where she came from, when she came, and why she came...

c. Transportation

Furthermore, the women considered the lack of transportation another obstacle to their job situation: "there is no public transportation, it is very difficult. That is a shock to many people. They would walk, you know, because there is no transportation, but then there is no sidewalk..." One woman added, however, that since she got a car, things had gotten easier, and she has stopped depending on others so much. She stated that she can now drive herself to the grocery store, and to work, and that she is at liberty to change jobs if she would like to.

d. Adjustment & Role Reversal

The women also stated that their work schedules made them very busy in the United States. A couple of women worked night shifts, and one said she never thought she would have "lasted as long" as she has now. Some women explained that they had not been employed in Bosnia. One woman had worked before as a nurse, but was not able to return to her profession here in the United States: "[I] cannot find a job, [I am] in the medical field." (Translator:) "From day to day, her opinion changes...she doesn't know if her abilities are enough, if she is not too old... (laughs). Because culture, you know, people from Bosnia or Yugoslavia, they think they are too old at 35-40 years old." When asked about their expectations to finding work in the United States, one woman stated:

We go to school, we learn English, and we pass the same exam, if we go back to school. Many people did that, they went back to the same field. It is up to the person, some people care... but some people cannot afford to do that. They have to work, they have kids to take care of, and some people just like to do that kind of job, they don't want to switch.

Several other women stated that they had no choice but to work in the United States, in order to support their children and pay the bills. This was especially the case with those who had lost their husbands in the war: "it is harder for the ones without men to support them. Life isn't the same here, they work..." Still, Hasiba wanted to clarify that they did not mind having to work:

I know I have to work, and I was expecting a job when I came, I need...I came because of the future of my kids, I want to have better future for my kids, that is why I came...and I will have to work. If I had enough work...(laughter).

Upon answering the question on how they were able to adjust to the U.S. society, the women stated that they did not have any major problems except for the language: “the biggest difference is the language.” One woman added that they had been required to adjust to a new environment many times:

For many of us, it was always a new beginning, and you adapt for the last ten years, you are adjusting off and on, off and on...every time they had to move somewhere, they had to adjust. In the beginning, always...when they got a new job, they had to adjust, so...for many of us, had to adjust many times.

e. Economic Issues

One woman stated during the interview that she would like to have two full-time jobs. She expressed that she does not mind what kind of job she works in, “she hopes to get more hours, and work day-shift. Doesn’t matter what job it is, retail or what.” One woman also stated that she would like to work during the day, rather than during the night shift. Monira explained, “they like us Bosnians, they loved us, because we like to work.” The women also emphasized that they did, however, find time to socialize with members of their community. The women also explained that they would like better pay, and on the question whether they are able to manage financially, Monira said:

Not yet, maybe in ten more years. It is not easy. You have to buy a car, you need to pay rent or for the house. It takes time...ten more years, maybe....with this kind of income, they can...so far they are paying the bills, and rent, and ...some borrow money for the car...and they have enough to live, so... Some have good income. One or two incomes...some have two adults working...it makes a big difference...And we have a single mother with two kids, and she is not working...she worked once. And we have another single mother with two kids, but one of the sons is working part-time...so it is like, it was always...it was a struggle in the beginning...She has a husband, he works and [support] the family, and she is staying with the baby.

e. Support

Lastly, this group of women received assistance from a variety of places during their integration, whether it was during their adjustment of the culture, language and their work situation. While some received support from new American friends at the work place, others found jobs on their own, through the refugee office, or through friends: “one black lady, Donna, taught me many words, and little by little, that is how I learned...” One woman stated that she

“got the first jobs through someone she never had known or met, a total stranger. (*Prompt: how?*) Their kids played together, and they started talking and that is how they got the job. Later on she got a job through a friend.”

The Second Focus Group Interview

Three women participated in the second focus group interview, and all knew each other at the outset. Topics covered in the first focus group interview were also explored here (as outlined in the questionnaire). Several of the key themes revealed during the first session were brought up during this interview. Such topics include issues related to language, non-acceptance of qualifications, sources of support during integration, problems at work, stress, economic issues, family, and adjustment. Since the second focus group met for about two hours, had only three participants, and all interviewees spoke English, each participant gave a more extensive and detailed discussion of their experiences of integration. As the participants did not wish to have their names revealed in the study, all names used in this segment are pseudonyms. The themes discussed most extensively during this interview included those of language, and non-acceptance of qualifications.

a. English

The word English was used 18 times. Ivana stated that she did not know much English when she first arrived in the United States:

I am surprised to see American people [struggling in the United States]...cause we came here, and we could find jobs and you know...do what we did...buy a house and everything, without knowing English, and some people still don't speak English, they never learn how to speak English, but they found job, in a company where you don't have to speak English...

Both Ivana and Katarina were assisted by the members of a church to get familiar with life and language of the United States. Some church members would teach English As a Second Language (ESL), and others assisted them in grocery shopping, furnishing of their homes, or assisted with other practical matters when they first arrived in this country. Jelena did not, however, have an ESL tutor, and she still feels as if language is an obstacle in her daily life. When asked what she would like for her future, she stated, “I will take some school, I need to learn English...” Ivana was, at a later stage, offered a position as an ESL teacher. She reflected

on some the problems many Bosnians had with language when they first arrived in the U.S, for example in communicating with their children's teachers:

I got a paper, and they asked me if I would like to be a volunteer help at school, and I went there and I just called...and they told me, you can probably be a ESL teacher. Because probably they did not know any other way that I can help them, maybe at that time...it was almost four years ago...they had maybe ten kids from Bosnia, now they have 24...And at that time they had ten kids, and not one parents who speak English. They needed help with all papers, and filling out forms. And papers came back without signature, most kids they don't speak, almost all of them, they don't speak English...they needed desperate help.

Ivana also explained how she had made a great effort to learn the English language independently, instead of depending on the assistance of caseworkers or other refugees who had lived in the country for a while. She explained how she used the dictionary to look up word for word in the beginning. Ivana highlighted how time consuming this had been to her, but that it helped her to learn more quickly. Ivana also added how being employed had helped her learn English:

People from our church, they asked me if I could... if I wanted to work in a Hannaford store, now it is Kroger. It was good, I can practice my English... and it helped me, I stayed there for a year and a half... I had contact with customers...and I tell them I am from Bosnia, and I...you know, couldn't speak that much English, when I first came, I could, you know, understand when they speak very slowly. It really helped me to practice English.

Lastly, Ivana pointed out how important it was to assist refugees with learning the language:

Just like Jelena said, when I ask church to help them. They said, what do they need? They just need someone to be a friend. They don't need any tables, they don't need any furniture, they just need someone, to come to their apartment, to be there, when...to teach them English, that is the most important.

b. Non-Acceptance of Qualifications

The women in the second focus group brought up the issue of non-qualification of previous educational- and job experience they had from the former Yugoslavia. Katarina had a previous medical degree, and Ivana worked as a Biology and Chemistry teacher in middle school. When asked what their difficulty they had experienced with regards to employment,

Katarina stated, “Well, I can add that the problem was to connect us to our degrees, because they don’t accept our degrees.” Ivana explained that she agreed, “it would probably be ok if I did not have that degree in our country, if I was just worker, it will be okay for me to work, you know...like this job, or to work in the store, that will be ok, because it is not too bad, but because I was a teacher once, and even if I knew I was not going to be a teacher, but I still know there is a possibility that I can be a teacher again, it is just...” Moreover, since Katarina still works in the medical field, she expressed how it is hard to be unable to express her opinion as a physician:

Sometimes, you need to keep quiet, to shut down, even if you know something about the patient or something, it feels like...hard all the time...when I am starting to work, you know: “you are not a physician here, you cannot tell your opinion about therapy,” or something like that...sometimes it is hard. You are feeling yourself dumb, I wanna tell something, but...

Both women explained that their goals would be to obtain jobs in the profession where they previously had training and experience:

I guess everybody wants to get their degree, or their professional, what we had before, because that was our choice. You know...our first choice, I am hoping that I will become a physician one, I am dreaming...to be a physician one day...I don’t have issue to be pediatrician, but physician.

While a large part of the discussion focused on the issue of non-qualifications of previous experience, the women explained that they expected this problem before they arrived in the country. Katarina stated:

We already knew it was going to be hard to get our degree accepted. And they already tell us in Yugoslavia, that we will wash the dishes (laughter). They were telling me, your husband and you will come [back again] after a couple of months...because you were here a physician, and then you wash the dishes, and come back (laughter).

Ivana added that she was ready for that. The women did, however, express that they did not feel bitter because of this. All three women feel lucky to have a job, and two of the women still stated that they feel lucky to work in a field close to their professions. Ivana said,

That is what I like about my job, and maybe I am lucky one to have...people in my school, they respect me like a teacher, every time they send me any papers, they have

ESL teacher, I have all the benefits. I can take summer institute, they treat me just like any other teacher. I have all benefits, and they talk to someone, “she is a ESL teacher.”

While they explained how they expected they would have to change professions, Katarina expressed:

But everyone has the same goal when they arrived here, to find a better future for our kids. It is not so important for us, we know that we have to sacrifice something in this country, you know...for our kids, you know...we don't want they to pass through what we passed through, or lose everything in one day or something like that....

Ivana also pointed out the importance of finding a safe place for her children, during her initial explanation of her experiences in this country:

I was a Bio/Chemistry teacher, and they told me, that probably I am not going to work as a teacher, and they don't accept my degree, and I knew I had to help with cleaning or work in a store, but I was ready for that...I don't care, I just want my kids to stay safe, cause I was in the war for a long time...I stayed in refugee camp for four years, and I had three kids. I was just looking for the safe place for them, I came here to work, and...and I came to work here anywhere. When I first came, they offer me a ...job, to work with dogs, I told them no, I am ready to clean, I am not ready to clean dogs...(laughs)...I can work anywhere, no problem, probably part-time. Of course, I would prefer to be in the school with kids, cause it is my life, it is my job, it is what I work for 7 years in my country.

As cited in the previous section, the opinions of the women in the first focus group interview reflected this view. Several women who were interviewed said that they would not have left Bosnia if they did not have children they cared for.

c. Adjustment and Role Reversal

Women in both focus groups expressed that their situation had changed in the family since they left ex-Yugoslavia. Hasiba and Halima from the first focus group had not been employed previously, but Hasiba had worked on a farm, “before the war, husband goes for job. His income is enough, women work on the farm.” The women who came without their husbands also explained that they had to work now. The women in the second focus group seemed enthusiastic about how their lives and their role in the family had changed since they came to the United States. One woman said that she does not feel the need to cook for her husband anymore. She smiled and used gestures while she explained how she had told her husband that he could eat

canned soup if he was hungry. Ivana and Katarina were especially vocal about how their lives were different at this point. Initially, Ivana stated:

And I like the right that women have here, in this country. I told you before, I was the one that was like the white sheep in that (Jelena corrects her:) Black sheep... (laughs)... in the family, and now I can tell my husband, cook if you'd like, and I can tell me husband "you are not better than I am," they think that the man is better than the wife, and you don't have right to talk, and they can tell you "you are not supposed to talk."

Katarina added that it was not usual for a woman to drive in ex-Yugoslavia, "he was the man, he was driving the car. It was very unusual for women to drive in our country." Ivana added, "you would drive a car and ...oh...it is not your duty...you can count on your fingers, really, on just one hand...[how many times I drove] (laughs)." Ivana continued, "this is country for me, this is a place where I would like to live, because I could do that in my country, but I...it wasn't so...they probably look at me, like...she is not good wife, you know...I did not do anything bad. I remember when they said: "she is wearing jeans," or something unusual... The women agreed that the United States is a good place for women, but "not for men... probably they are not happy...(laughs)" The two women also pointed out the opportunity they now had to go to the malls, or meet their girlfriends at lunch. When Jelena was asked if she shared their opinion, Katarina and Ivana impatiently stated, "she is still ironing, we are trying to teach her. Ivana tries to teach her...you are ironing, everything, underwear. Jelena, enjoy life! You don't have to iron..."

d. Support

These women spent a lot of time discussing the great role members of a local church had played in their lives since they arrived in the country. The women explained that members from this church had helped them finding jobs, given them furniture, clothes and a car, and also become their best friends. Katarina stated,

With people from church...they had more time, and it was like four families for every refugee family, and some of them were helping with the grocery store, in the beginning, you know...and it is nice, they are like our best friends... I will not experience the USA, without my best friends, probably I will be homesick more, or more desperate, without the friends, without the family, she was like my older sister, and she showed me all the best things in the USA (laughter), and probably my experience in the US, was completely different because I had her, and she is still my best friend, the kids are great. We were

pregnant at the same time, the kids are great together, we are seeing each other at least once a week, the people are still coming every birthday of my kids...

Ivana and Jelena agreed, “they are just wonderful people, I am not homesick, and I just enjoy being here.” Moreover, in answering the question of how coming to the United States have affected their lives, Ivana said once again:

I just think we, of course, missed our country and friends and relatives, and... but we had people that presented this country in the best way. We were lucky, to have that people, I have to say...because everything would be different, what you eat, a different situation if I did not have that people. I think I was just lucky that we had that people. They decided to start with myI was the first.... we were the first family that the church accepted us. And we had people that were educated, people that have...we did not have to be too bored, because there were husbands with enough money, and they had enough time, ... and they said “you can call us anytime” and, I knew I can call them really, anytime. Anytime, day or night, anytime I need help. It was big help.

The conversation between the women showed that they support each other a great deal. Ivana had worked as a volunteer where she would help members of the Bosnian community. After she learnt English, she continued volunteering as a translator and interpreter. She explained how people would call her at any time to ask for her assistance, because they knew they could depend on her assistance. The discussion between the women also reflected that they were eager to help and support each other, and it reflected that they enjoyed a relationship as close friends. They encouraged each other to simplify and enjoy their lives more. Upon reflecting on Jelena’s first job, Ivana stated that Jelena found it difficult to say ‘no:’ “she was too nice to say, ‘I don’t want to do that’...” Katarina stated that “sometimes you need to tell them, ‘I can’t do that’...and you are scared...you don’t know anything, and you feel like, it is kind of an obligation, for the refugee office, who offer you the job...”

e. Economic Issues

When asked how they managed economically, Ivana once again brought up the help she received from the church:

We came with very little money from our country, we did not have any money when we first came, but I think again, that the church helped us, the brought all...we didn’t have any furniture, but we did not have to buy it because they brought us used furniture, and they brought us clothes, they ask me “do you mind if we bring you some used clothes?”

The people that were coming to my house, they had kids, and I told them “of course, I don’t mind, you know...kids can use it,” and that probably helped us.

All women also explained that they are expected to send money to their friends and relatives in ex-Yugoslavia. When the topic was first brought up, all women simultaneously cried out, “yes.” Jelena expressed concern over her relatives in Bosnia “I am thinking of my family in Bosnia, he has a sick child and... he has a hard life and...I can’t, I can’t, thinking of my life, because I always see how hard it is...”

f. Stress

Furthermore, Jelena and Ivana explained how it had been difficult to adjust to a new environment and life in the United States. Jelena talked about the stress she experienced when she first came here, “when I came here, I...my social worker find me a job, in one small company...and it was so hard...I work there two years...in the company called...it packs the medicine...” Katarina and Ivana elaborated on Jelena’s experience:

She was so scared...[she thought] we area going to die...she thought it is not possible to live here, she has babies, she had a child who was two years old...and she was so, you know...She could not wait to get her first job...she keep asking to get a job: “please, I need a job...” but she doesn’t drive, she don’t have car, and then finally they found a place, it was very reasonable, and the first day she was so scared, she was so afraid...if she can really do a good job, she was so dizzy, and they had to call 911...and she was the best worker, she was so scared, it is really a big frustration...you know, it is really hard...

Katarina continued, “and when you are in a factory, it is very difficult.” Ivana also added, “she try to do that very hard, to do right her job, she doesn’t know how to do the job, but after that... they loved her, they cried when she found another job...” Lastly, Katarina added, “she was too nice to say: “I cannot do that”...” Ivana also reflected upon her own experiences of coming to the U.S.:

I have to say, everyday, it was a really big pressure, because we were afraid, because we did not know this country, we did not know what to expect, everything was new for us, and still language was a big problem...and, you know...I have maybe headache for all year, every day, and I was scared, because I did not know if something were wrong with me, but then I realized it was just because of big stress, and now, everything is just fine. Everything is so easy, and... I am not afraid for the future...

Chapter IV. Discussion

The literature reviewed in this paper suggests that refugee women face a variety of obstacles to their successful integration in the United States society. While various authors recommend that we do not make generalizations about the experiences of refugee women, literature and previous studies suggest that women refugees experience common obstacles to their integration in the place of resettlement.

The findings of this study show that women refugees from the former Yugoslavia found language problems to be one of the most important problems to integration and employment, especially during their initial resettlement period. While some women had access to ESL training, others did not. Some women got an ESL tutor after they had been in the United States for some time. Language training can serve to meet both practical and strategic gender needs and interests. Basic language training can be given only to the extent that it enables women refugees to obtain a job or to work, and would thus meet practical gender needs, but if such training does not facilitate a long-term change, strategic gender needs are not protected. However, strategic gender interests are met if language training helps women refugees become self-sufficient in the long term and if it enables women to experience empowerment due to this training. Language training can be empowering if it improves women's skills to communicate and further makes them more active participants in the society, or if it improves women's ability to get familiar with their legal rights in the country of resettlement. The experiences of the second focus group suggested how the improved language skills facilitated their daily life tasks and that this had made integration easier over time.

Due to the common obstacles women refugees face, language training can become an important part of their empowerment. The lack of language skills can be a particular impediment for women whose roles are confined to the household. Women who traditionally have been responsible for the work in the domestic arena, and continue to stay in the household, would not learn the language as quickly as other family members who are employed or go to school. It is therefore particularly important to recognize women's needs for language training. Improved language skills among women refugees can also be empowering if it makes women more self-sufficient and less dependent on the man as the breadwinner of the family. Increased self-sufficiency can be a result of a woman earning her own income, or that she manages to use

public transportation, or have her own driver's license. This study suggests, however, that many women refugees arrive in the United States without their spouses and thus become the sole breadwinner for their children. Language training is therefore particularly an important initiative to fulfill the practical as well as strategic gender needs of women refugees.

Other obstacles identified by the women interviewed in the focus groups include the lack of transportation. This was particularly the case with the women who had lived in the Richmond, VA area for a short period. Transportation is an example of a practical gender need that is important for women's access to and from the work place. When the problem of transportation is resolved through initiatives serving to enable women to become independent of the assistance of others, long-term interests are protected. Such initiatives can include giving women refugees driving lessons or assisting women in getting their driver's license, all of which would meet a strategic gender interest. Access to public transportation to the workplace is dependent on the area refugee women live in. Women refugees who resettled in different areas in the United States will have different needs of transportation to their workplace. Public transportation is usually more accessible in urban areas. Some of the women involved in this study found transportation to be an important obstacle in getting to work, as several of them did not live close to any public transportation, or had a driver's license. The issue of transportation also creates a special concern to these women because several of them did not drive a vehicle in their home countries. According to some of the women from the former Yugoslavia, driving was considered a man's domain, according to the traditional norms. Moreover, availability of transportation creates an even greater obstacle for those women who work at certain jobs or at odd hours. This study has shown that several of the refugee women who had arrived at a later stage worked in entry level jobs, either part-time, overtime, or night shifts. The experiences of the women refugees interviewed in this study show that transportation is an issue of a gendered nature.

For the women who had lived in the United States for several years, non-acceptance of previous qualifications was seen as a barrier to integration in the job market. This concern may have felt greater for those who previously had a higher education, as suggested by one of the women. The problem of non-acceptance of qualifications might be disempowering for many women refugees. Practical gender needs are met if the host country accepted the previous skills and qualifications that the women refugees arrived with, because the women would be more

likely to obtain employment. The acceptance of previous qualifications are empowering because it enhances women's opportunity to choose the kind of job they would like, and creates higher job satisfaction. Strategic gender interests would thus also be fulfilled, because obtaining a meaningful job could benefit a woman refugee in both the short- and the long term. The findings of this study suggest that the transition into the U.S. society can be made smoother by giving the women an opportunity to work with what they had chosen and with which they were familiar. The example of non-acceptance of qualifications illustrates some of the challenges refugee women experience as a result of displacement. Such challenges can be difficult to accept, and can affect refugees in significant ways, and can also increase the level of stress they experience.

This study confirms that several women experienced great levels of stress and had to make various adjustments during their integration period and during their initial period of resettlement. Other possible reasons that accounted for stress include odd working hours (night shift), uncertainties related to employment (part-time or temporary work), and problems at the work place (language). Stress would also naturally emerge from the traumatic experiences refugees have had as a result of the war. The amount of stress someone experience would depend on where that person came from and what she had previously experienced. Some of the women from the former Yugoslavia left the country at an early stage and others stayed in the country for several years before they fled. A few women explained that they had lost everything they had during the war, including their family members. As a result, many women had taken on new roles when they arrived in this country, either as the sole caregiver in the family, and/or as the breadwinner. For many, this created a great transition from what they were accustomed to in their home country, as many of them had never been formally employed before. Others again revealed a positive attitude towards the change of roles in the home, in the family, or in the society at large. While some women had gained a certain level of freedom in becoming the head of the household and the breadwinner, it should be noted that this could also create a triple work burden on some women, since many are still in charge of bringing up their children and household duties. Hence, what may have seemed to be empowering at one instance, can actually be disempowering if a refugee woman is left with a double or triple work burden in the end. This issue seems to be particularly concerning to women refugees due to the fact that the majority of refugees are women and their children.

The experiences of the women who had been in the United States for a longer period of time, reflected that their situation has gotten a lot easier as they became familiar with the language and culture in the U.S. Their views also suggested that this transition was made easier with the support network of friends or other refugees. The interaction and familiarity between the participants of this study also show that these women constantly support and depend on each other. It also illustrates that these women found great support from members of a local church, and that these people helped create a smoother transition for the women into the U.S. society.

One woman's story depicted the great efforts she had made to learn the language and depend on her own abilities to adjust. Women from both focus groups explained that they worked hard to support themselves and their families and that they were optimistic about the future. For some women, this meant learning the language or obtaining different jobs, and for others, it meant returning to the profession they held in ex-Yugoslavia. Furthermore, several women from the first focus group emphasized their willingness to work in the United States and learn the language, even if this meant that they would take a role they had previously not held. These examples suggest that women refugees who experienced reversal of their roles or the need to make adjustments, adjusted through their own "innovative skills," and through making great efforts. The examples from this study thus support the literature that challenges the notions of refugees as helpless or as victims of their circumstances.

Comparisons between the two focus groups show that the women who have lived in the United States for several years have gained agency during their time in the United States. The women from the second focus group explained that they had experienced significant changes since they arrived in the U.S. and felt more at liberty to make their own choices in their daily lives. As a result, their traditional roles in the homes and in the family had changed. Furthermore, the responses given by the women from the second focus group suggest that their situation had gotten easier through time. The comparisons of the women in the two groups hence suggest that there is reason for optimism for the future of the women refugees who more recently arrived and resettled in the United States.

This study thus proposes that resettlement can affect men and women in considerably different ways. While this study did not include interviews with refugees who are men, it was found that displacement affect women in significant ways, which are likely to be different from those of men, due to the different roles between the sexes. This study contributes to the

viewpoint that being a refugee does not always have negative implications, because it can be empowering for women refugees in many ways. Previous notions, which have been used to describe refugee identity, continue to be challenged by this study, and are criticized on the grounds that they are often not created by the refugees themselves, but by a larger entity, which stands to gain or have some stake in the outcome.

It is important to note, however, that this study based its findings from very specific geographic and demographic contexts. First, the resettlement experiences of the women from ex-Yugoslavia were influenced by, and dependent on the existing traditions, culture, and religion with which these families arrived. Some of the women interviewed were Muslim, and others were Catholic or Christian Orthodox. All were Caucasian. The integration and resettlement process would also be dependent on the refugee's background, as well as on the characteristics of the place in which they arrive and resettle. The context of Richmond as a resettlement site includes: urban, part of the old "South," with a predominant African American and Christian population. Additional characteristics of Richmond that would be important in shaping these refugees experience of integration include unemployment rates or access to public transportation. Muslim women may find that their integration process becomes somewhat more difficult if a large part of the support refugees receive takes place through church-based networks. Similarly, African refugees who resettle in an area with a predominantly Caucasian population can experience other challenges related to race.

Numerous other factors determine how efficiently and smoothly refugees experience integration, but they cannot all be listed here. The resettlement experience could likely be different in a different area in the United States, or in a different country. As noted, the previous experiences of the refugee are also important factors, which influence how well a refugee integrates into the new society. Refugees from different countries are expected to have somewhat different experiences of their resettlement than the women interviewed in this project. Moreover, refugees who have lived in another country before they entered the United States could experience integration differently.

Table 2: Women, Employment and Integration

ISSUES DURING INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT	HOW THEY AFFECT REFUGEE WOMEN	STRATEGIES & SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS
<i>Language</i>	Access to information, obtain job, and ability to communicate	Provide assistance to improve English skills, i.e. teach ESL to all women (through support from organizations or church)
<i>Non-Acceptance of Qualifications</i>	Income and job satisfaction	Promote changes in refugee/immigration policy on a national level, which currently disregards previous qualifications
<i>Transportation</i>	Availability to/from work place, general mobility	Provide or improve upon assistance from support networks, provide info. about transportation. Utilize existing resources, through collective efforts. Create need assessments.
<i>Stress</i>	Problems in work-place, stability in family, mental health issues	Target cause of stress; individual assessments. Continue to work on language skills. Provide information about host society, and other assistance
<i>Adjustment & Role Reversal</i>	Both positive (less responsibility in house) and negative (friction btw. spouses), adjustment	Assist and inform refugees of adjustment issues, to decrease friction in home.
<i>Economic Issues</i>	Poor income, part-time, temporary or contract jobs	Improve language skills to improve job-hunting skills. Financial assistance from org., gov't, or from other networks.

Chapter V. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study suggests that some of the most common problems refugee women from the former Yugoslavia experience include language, non-acceptance of qualifications, transportation, stress, role reversal and economic issues. Recommendations to these issues are briefly described in Table 2. Language creates a barrier that several women identified as the issue of most concern and which often prevent women refugees from obtaining their desired employment or any employment at all. Lack of language skills or lack of legal literacy also affects the women's ability to communicate efficiently and can be a barrier that hinders their access to information. It can thus prevent women from utilizing the resources available to them or prevent them from knowing their rights in the new country. Continued and improved support from organizations, churches, volunteers, or other refugees can be an important way for refugee women to get involved in ESL learning. Where the capacity of organizations specifically established to assist refugees is limited, new measures may be necessary to reach as many immigrating refugees as possible. Such measures may include greater efforts of reaching volunteers who are interested in teaching ESL classes. It can also include the establishment of a more systemized and coordinated support network of those refugees who have already resettled in the United States. As this study suggested, many refugees who have lived in the United States for a while, have made great efforts to assist their country mates, often on a volunteer basis.

The rejection of previous experience and education from ex-Yugoslavia creates a second barrier to women's ability to obtain their desired jobs in the United States. These policies negatively affect job satisfaction, as well as the potential income among women refugees. This barrier seems particularly difficult to overcome, since it is related to U.S. national policy, and cannot easily be solved through the efforts of a local community. Policymakers should consider, however, that the large and continued influx of refugees and immigrants into the United States society calls for an improved or more efficient solution to the acceptance of professional experience or education from other countries. This step would hopefully signify a great advantage for the integration of refugees, and could also benefit the host country.

Third, for many women who newly arrived in the country, transportation creates an obstacle to get to and from the work place. It can also hypothetically prevent women from attending activities, information sessions, or community events that can advance refugees' integration. Greater access to transportation can be facilitated through support networks,

consisting of volunteers or other refugees. Such efforts do, however, depend on improved coordination of a larger entity, such as an organization or other collective efforts. The need of transportation varies from one family to another, and individual need assessments could be beneficial in establishing who requires the most support.

Fourth, stress was identified as a problem women typically encountered during the initial resettlement period. Stress can complicate person's employment situation, or make it harder to obtain a job at all. It is also likely to affect other family members, and can thus affect the stability of a family. This study shows that stress can be caused or intensified by the loss commonly experienced during a war, but can also stem from the inability to get a job, the inability to communicate with co-workers and others in the community, or the lack of ability to gain financial independence. Continued stress can create more serious problems related to mental health, and might necessitate the involvement of a counselor or a professional in the field. A smoother transition into the host society can potentially diminished the amount of stress the women experienced. As discussed previously, improved language skills, support of organizations or other support network can simplify the integration transition. Moreover, stress related to the inability to gain knowledge about the host society, should be diminished through information sessions intended to prepare women refugees of some of the common problems or obstacles women refugees commonly experience in the country of resettlement.

Furthermore, changed gender roles can be a source of frustration, but can also be empowering for some women. The reversal of gender roles requires adjustment on parts of a woman as well as a man in the household. For some, this can be a cause of increased stress and frustration, and demand a great deal of adjustment on the part of all family members. In the worst case it can create great friction between spouses. Once again, this scenario can be prevented through information sessions or through the communication with refugees who resettled earlier, and faced similar predicaments. This study shows that the various needs of refugee women are interrelated. Employment is usually dependent on the language skills, and the lack of language skills can create problems with obtaining information and knowledge, using public transportation, and the level of stress.

Increased knowledge about the concerns of women refugees is important because the majority of all refugees are women and children. Feminist theories suggest that women's experiences are different from men's, and this study supports that perspective. However, in

addition to their gender, women refugees constitute a vulnerable group due to their status. The challenges women refugees experience are distinct due to their involuntary uprootedness, and the precarious circumstances of their situation. This study acknowledges these differences, and set out to identify what perspectives women refugees from the former Yugoslavia had of their own integration into the U.S. The issues and concerns identified in this study are gendered due to the gendered nature of the relationship between women and men, and due to the gendered nature of refugee movements. I propose that gendered problems have gendered solutions, and therefore apply the framework of Maxine Molyneux of practical gendered needs and strategic gender interests to the findings of this study. While practical gender needs would target the daily necessities and short-term goals of women refugees, strategic gender interests include those initiatives that transform the situation of women in society and benefit them in the long term. Strategic gender interests have to be addressed in any attempts to empower women refugees. These interests will require more efficient efforts by organizations and governments, and possibly require changes in existing policies. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE, 1999) states that integration is a process that is dynamic and two-way. We have seen that women refugees make great efforts to adjust, but it is important to note that the receiving societies must also take the responsibility of the refugee's successful resettlement and integration.

Moreover, this paper has also suggested that displacement has negative as well as positive effects for women who resettle in the United States. While displacement creates a wide range of challenges for most women refugees, some women may also experience empowerment due to their changed opportunities and reversed roles in the family. This project thus confirms the theories proposed by authors such as Valdes (1996), Hydman (cited in Man, 1998), and Marino (1998). It also shows that many women refugees are able to adjust through their own efforts. In addition, however, the findings of this study show that there are numerous obstacles women refugees have to overcome through their initial resettlement period. Some women, who traditionally have been responsible for domestic, unpaid labor, have entered the labor market and become the breadwinner in the family. While this at first glance, seems advantageous, one must recognize the double or triple workload this can place upon women refugees. Some women may end up working day and night to take care of their families and the household, in addition to working in a full-time job. Strategic gender interests have to address this dimension of displacement as well.

In order to further explore the challenges women refugees experience, the accounts of women are invaluable. This study has suggested that a large part of the literature on refugees does not successfully portray the authentic experiences of the refugees themselves. This project shows that being a refugee includes a wide variety of experiences that cannot be generalized on the grounds of one study. Displacement can affect women refugees positively and negatively. The narratives of women refugees show that the previous notions of refugeeness often are inaccurate, as scholars of refugees (i.e. Malkki) and feminist literature (i.e. Schmuki) now propose. This study continues to challenge notions of victimization and helplessness, on the grounds that many women refugees are able to leave their patriarchal traditions behind during their resettlement period. This study concurs with the above-mentioned authors' point of view, but adds that each individual refugee's situation is unique. While the empowerment of women refugees often comes with increased self-sufficiency and increased independence, it often comes with a high price, as women continue to be responsible for the welfare of the family and the household.

It is important to note that this study yields limited results. The findings of this study are not believed to be generalizable, due to the nature of the discussion, the non-random selection of participants as well as the small number of participants of these focus groups. This study set out to support the findings of previous studies. Thus, the findings are limited and do not by any means reveal the whole range of issues faced by women refugees or women who arrived in the United States from ex-Yugoslavia.

Chapter VI. Suggestions for Further Research

This study has revealed some of the issues women refugees face during their resettlement and integration after they arrive in the United States. Further studies are needed to develop a greater understanding of the problems women refugees typically face, and what can be done to assist these women when they arrive in the United States. This research thus raises new questions of other possible concerns faced by women refugees. Future research is needed in assessing what can be done to make the integration process more efficient, especially for women refugees.

This study did not reveal gendered problems of a more personal nature such as domestic violence or mental health issues. Some of these problems would not likely be revealed by the participants in a focus group, but could be studied through alternative methods. Certain issues would be better studied through one-on-one interviews, through surveys or through a combination of multiple sources of evidence. Depending on the level of comfort between the interviewer and participant, one-on-one interviews can provide a more in-depth information and potentially reveal insights about concerns of a personal nature. A survey instrument would, however, provide a heightened level of confidentiality and would therefore possibly make participants more inclined to give detailed information about their experiences after they resettled. Surveys questionnaires would also give participants an opportunity to provide their biographical information such as marital status, educational background, and religion. When questionnaires are given to a large population, it can give the researcher enough data to enable her or him to make broader generalizations. Finally, the use of multiple sources of evidence, for example a combination of the methods described above, is particularly useful in that it provides more convincing and accurate results (Yin, 1984, 90-91).²⁶

New insights can also be gained from studying refugee populations that originate from other countries, or by comparing one ethnicity against another to find what commonalties women from different ethnic groups experience. Variability of refugees' race and religion can also affect the integration process. The findings of this study are likely to change as a result of the place of resettlement that is investigated. The context of Richmond, including its demographics

²⁶ Several of these research methods require more resources on the part of the researcher, such as funding or time. The method of using multiple sources of evidence is particularly time-consuming and requires that the researcher becomes familiar with all methods involved (Yin, 1983, 91).

(religion, race) and availability of public assistance (transportation) is likely to have played into how refugee women experience their resettlement in this study. Other variables that could yield new findings about the refugee women include studies of the participants' age and marital status. This study has revealed that women oftentimes experience a greater change in their roles and relationships in the family and homes. These findings raise questions regarding how women's marital status may change over time. Future research (i.e. longitudinal studies, or a follow up of this study) may find that marital status change over time during resettlement.

Future research should further address differences between men and women refugees, to contribute to existing feminist theories and to frame the particular issues faced by women refugees. It is possible that men who are refugees share many of the concerns of women, but as this study suggested, the experiences of men and women are dependent on their gender, and their position within the family or society can change as a result of displacement. Further research should also be done to assess what the exact differences are between the experiences and perceptions of women and men refugees.

The findings of this research can be either corroborated or challenged with new studies where larger numbers of focus groups are utilized, or where each focus group contain more participants. Additional research of comparisons between the integration process of women over time, or between a comparison of different ethnic groups, or between various settlement sites in the United States can yield more extensive contributions about integration over time.

Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. What are your experiences with obtaining employment in this country?

- a) How did you find a job (RIS, friends, family, other networks?)
- b) Have you had any difficulties in the job-searching process, or during your employment?
- c) What were your expectations to finding work in the United States? (Non-acceptance of qualifications, unemployment, language difficulties, prejudice).

2. What kind of jobs have your had so far?

- a) Part-time/full-time, odd jobs, manual jobs, administrative etc.
- b) Have you been able to manage economically with your income?

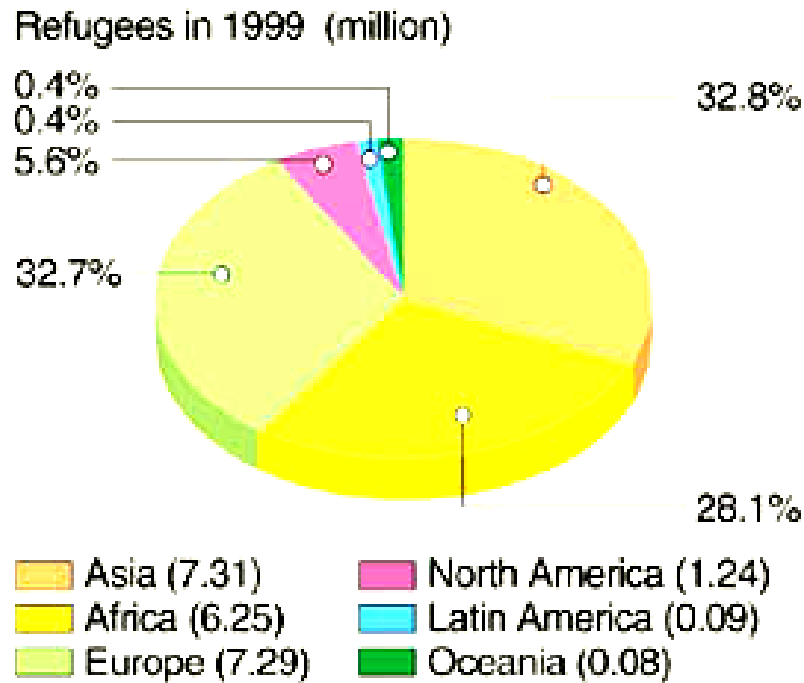
3. Has coming to the United States changed your life?

- a) How did you adjust to this culture?
- b) How do you feel your opportunities have changed since you arrived here?

4. What kinds of job(s) would you like to have in this country?

- a) How do you think you could be able to get the job you desire?
- b) What support activities do you think would help you obtain this job?

Appendix B: Refugee Population by Region



Note: The figures exclude Palestinian refugees, but include displaced persons in the former Yugoslavia (3.73 million).

Figure 1 (Hollman).²⁷

²⁷ This figure is taken from the webpage of the Foreign Ministry of Japan, "Foreign Assistance." Page numbers or year is not provided. The webpage can be found at: www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pamph96/refugee.html

Bibliography and Literature Consulted

a. Books and Articles

Ager, Alastair, Wendy Ager and Lynellyn Long. (1995). The Differential Experience of Mozambican Refugee Women and Men. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 8 (3), 265-287.

Anker, Deborah E. (1995). Women Refugees: Forgotten no Longer? In Rita J. Simon (Ed.), *Neither Victim nor Enemy, Women's Freedom Networks Look at Gender in America*, (pp. 203-228). Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America.

Allen, Beverly. (1996). *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Buijs, Gina. (Ed.) (1993). *Migrant Women: Crossing Boundaries and Changing Identities*. Oxford, England and Providence, Rhode Island: Berg.

Center for Migration Studies. (March 2001). Resettlement of Refugees With Special Needs. *Migration World Magazine*, 29 (3), 21.

Cook, Rebecca J. (Ed.) (1994). *Human Right's of Women, National and International Perspectives*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Cernea, Michael. (1995). Understanding and Preventing Impoverishment from Displacement: Reflections on the State of Knowledge. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 8 (3), 245-264.

Copelon, Rhonda. (1995). Gendered War Crimes: Reconceptualizing Rape in Time of War. In Peters, Julie and Wolper, Andrea, (Eds.), *Women's Rights, Human Rights, International Feminist Perspectives*, (pp.197-215). New York and London: Routledge.

Drachman, Diane and Ryan, Angela Shen. (2001). Immigrants and Refugees. In Gitterman, Alex (Ed.), *Handbook of Social Work Practice with Vulnerable and Resilient Populations (2nd ed.)*, (pp.687-715). New York: Colombia University Press.

Greenbaum, Thomas L. (2000). *A Practical Guide for Focus Group Facilitation*. London and New Dehli: Sage Publications.

Hydman, Jennifer, in Man, Guida. (Feb. 1998.) Introduction: Refugee and Immigrant Women as Workers. *Refuge, Canada's Periodical on Refugees*, 17 (1), 1-3.

Indra, Doreen (Ed.). (1999). *Engendering Forces Migration: Theory and Practice*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Jaggar, Alison and Rothenberg, Paula S.. (Eds.) (1993). Theories of Women's Subordination, in Jaggar Alison and Rothenberg Paula S., *Feminist Frameworks, Alternative Theoretical Accounts*

of the Relations between Women and Men, (pp. 113-126). New York and London: McGraw-Hill.

Keely, Charles B. (Sept-Oct. 1992). The Resettlement of Women and Children Refugees: *Migration World Magazine*, 20 (4), 14.

Kirch, Stuart. (1996). Refugees and representation: Politics, Critical Discourse, and Ethnography along the New Guinea Border, in Morgan, Michael and Leggett, Susan. *Mainstream(s) and Margins: Cultural Politics in the 90s*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.

Krathwohl, David R. (1998). *How to Prepare a Research Proposal, Guidelines for Funding and Dissertations in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 3rd Ed. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Krueger, Richard A. (1998). *Developing Questions for Focus Groups*. London and New Dehli: Sage Publications.

Malkki, Liisa H. (1995). Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to The National Order of Things. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 495-523.

Malkki, Liisa H. (Aug. 1996). Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology*, 11 (30), 377-404.

Man, Guida. (Feb. 1998). Introduction: Refugee and Immigrant Women as Workers. *Refugee Canada's Periodical on Refugees*, 17 (1), 1-3.

Man, Guida. (Oct. 1997). Refugee and Immigrant Women: An International Perspective, An Introductory Note. *Refugee, Canada's Periodical on Refugees*, 16 (4): 1-4.

Marino, Katherine. (1998). Women Vietnamese Refugees in the United States: Maintaining Balance Between Two Cultures. *The History Teacher*, 32 (1): 90-97.

McSpadden, Lucia Ann, and Moussa Helene. (1993). I Have a Name: The Gender Dynamics in Asylum and in Resettlement of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in North America. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6 (3), 203-225.

Meisenheimer, Joseph R. II. (Dec. 1992). How Do Immigrants Fare in the U.S. Labor Market? *Monthly Labor Review*, 115 (12), (pp. 3-19). Available at: http://wdr.doleta.gov/research/rlib_doc.asp?docn=3684

Molesky-Poz. (Sept. 1997). A Course on Contemporary U.S. Immigration: Myths, Histories, and Realities; Pedagogies for Engagement and Transformation. *Transformations*, 8 (2), 1.

Moser, Caroline. (1989). Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs. *World Development*, 17 (11), 1799-1825.

Schmuki, Maryanna. (Feb. 1998). Shedding Their Refugee Skin: Constructions of Women Refugees and International Aid Regimes. *Refuge, Canada's Periodical on Refugees* 17 (1), 4-9.

Schmuki, Maryanna. (Feb. 1998). Setting the Stage for Protecting Refugee Women, in *Refuge. Canada's Periodical on Refugees*, 17 (1), 31-36.

Shuck, Peter, and Munz, Rainer. (1998). *Paths to Inclusion: The Integration of Migrants in the United States and Germany*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Valdes, Ivette. (1996). Exiles, Immigrants, and Refugees: Women Making Choices. *Feminist Collections, A Quarterly of Women's Studies Resources*, 17 (3-4).

Wali, Sima. (1995). Human Rights for Refugees and Displaced. In Peters Julie and Wolper, Andrea, (Eds.), *Women's Rights, Human Rights, International Feminist Perspectives*, (pp.335-345). New York and London: Routledge.

Walter, Lynn (ed.). (2001). *Women's Rights, A Global View*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press.

Yin, Robert K. (1984). *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*. California, New Dehli, and London: Sage Publications.

b. WebPages

Asylumaid. (Sept. 2001). *Refugee Women and Domestic Violence: Country Studies*. Bosnia and Herzegovina. (pp. 65-104).

<http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/Publications/RWRP%20DV%20220801.doc>

Asylumaid. (Nov. 2000). *Bosnia - women of mixed ethnic origin*.

<http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/RWRP/Case%20research/Bosnia.htm>

Boeree, George C. (1998) *Qualitative Methods: Part Four*.

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/qualmethfour.html>

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (March 1998). *The Changing Labor Market Prospects of Refugees in Canada*. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/srr/pdf/res3av.pdf>

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (1999). *Refugee Resettlement, Doing It Better*.

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugee/rrminfo-e.html>

Cupitt, Sally. (Sept. 2000) *What worked for us? Training for the evaluation of empowerment*.

<http://www.refugeenet.org/documents/volg.php3?ID=182>

ECRE. European Council on Refugees and Exiles. *Bridges and Fences to Integration: Refugee Perceptions of Integration in the European Union*. Retrieved Oct. 2001, from

http://www.ecre.org/erfproject/e_library.shtml

ECRE. European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (Sept. 1999). *Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe*. <http://www.ecre.org/positions/integ.shtml>

Fabri, Mary, and Boskailo, Esad. *Bosnia – Herzegovina. Lessons from the Field: Issues and Resources in Refugee Mental Health*. (pp. 70-75). Retrieved April 20, 2002, from http://www.refugeesusa.org/help_ref/lessons_field_manual.pdf

Fogelquist, Alan F. (1995). *How the war started*. <http://www.cco.caltech.edu/~bosnia/doc/start.html>

Fredriksson, John. (April 2001). *Refugees with Special Needs or Special Refugees: Creating New Hope out of Shattered Lives*. www.integrationsverket.se/internatconf/pdf/Track3Plenary.pdf

Green, Margaret. International Rescue Committee. NGO/UNHCR Partnership to Identify At-Risk Refugees in Need of Resettlement. Retrieved March 28, 2002, from www.lchr.org/conference/MEMOGreen.doc

Hollman, A. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. *Foreign Assistance*. Retrieved March 28, 2002, from www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pamph96/refugee.html

ILO. International Labor Organization. (1998). *A Conceptual Framework for Gender Analysis and Planning*. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/mdtmanila/training/unit1/gneeds.htm>

INS. Immigration and Neutralization Services. *The Triennial Comprehensive Report on Immigration*. Retrieved Nov. 14, 2001, from <http://www.ins.gov/graphics/aboutins/repstudies/execsum.html>

Instraw. *International Migration*. Retrieved Oct. 2001, from www.jsrd.or.jp/dinf_us/wssd/pc3/950227121154.txt

IRSA. Immigration and Refugee Services of America. *Frequently Asked Questions about Refugees*. Retrieved March 28, 2002, from http://www.refugeesusa.org/who/refugee_faq.cfm

Lewis, Melinda. (1998). *Focus Group Interviews in Qualitative Research: A Review of the Literature*. <http://www.cchs.usyd.edu.au/arow/reader/rlewis.htm>

NCCRI. National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism of Ireland *Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Women Refugee and Asylum Seekers*. Retrieved Dec. 2001, from <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~racismctee/refugees.html>

OCASI. Ontario's Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants. (1996). *Refugees in Canada*. http://www.ocasi.org/facts/factsheet_2.shtml#spneed

Piper, Margaret. (Oct. 2000). *Report on 51st Session of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/excom51part3.htm#chap6>

Refugee Net. (Oct 1999). *Developing a Refugee Agenda: Report from the Expert Meeting on Refugee Employment in Dublin*. <http://www.refugeenet.org/documents/volg.php3?ID=173>

Refugee Net. (2000). *European Meeting on the Development of Gender Sensitive Integration Practice*. <http://www.refugeenet.org/documents/volg.php3?ID=178>

Refugee Net. (2000). *Gender Guidelines for Female Refugees & Asylum Seekers*. www.refugeenet.org/documents/volg.php3?ID=177

Refugee Net. (Nov. 1999). *Refugees and Employment: The European Context, An Analysis of the ECRE Task Force on Integration Survey on Refugee Employment*. <http://www.refugeenet.org/documents/volg.php3?ID=176>

Refugee Net. *Refugees Included*. Retrieved March 28, 2002, from www.refugeenet.org/documents/volg.php3?ID=148

Seufert, Peggy. (Sept. 1999). National Center for ESL literacy Education (ECLE). *Refugees as English Language Learners: Issues and Concerns*. <http://www.cal.org/ncl/digests/Refugee.htm>

Stubbs, Paul. (1995). *Creative Negotiations: Concepts and Practice of Integration of Refugees, Displaced People and Local Communities in Croatia*. www.stakes.fi/gaspp/docs/paper1.doc

Taran, Patrick A., INTO. (Oct. 1998). *Refugee Integration into European Society. General Thoughts on Refugee Integration*. <http://www.refugeenet.org/documents/volg.php3?ID=163>

Trochim, William M. (2002). *Non-probability and probability sampling*. <http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/samprnon.htm>

UNHCR. (2002). *Basic Facts, Basic Information about UNHCR*. <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?page=basics>

UNHCR. *Note on Resettlement of Refugees with Special Needs*. Retrieved Jan, 2002, from www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.htm?tbl=EXCOM&page=exec&id=3ae68d0b1c

UNHCR. (2001). *UNHCR's Executive Committee reports on refugee women. Refugee Women and Mainstreaming, A Gender Equality Perspective*. <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=EXCOM&id=3b1e26cd4?&page=exec>

UNHCR (2001). *Protecting Refugees*. www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?page=PROTECT&id=3b8366bc4

United Nations. (Dec. 1998). United States Increases Support to Palestine Refugee Agency. <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1998/19981215.pal1868.html>

USAID. (Sept. 1999). *Gender Matters*. Information Bulletin No. 4, <http://www.usaid.gov/wid/pubs/ib4.htm>

USCR. U.S. Committee for Refugees. *Worldwide Refugee Information*. Retrieved March 28, 2002, from http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/women_refugees.htm

U.S. Department of Labor. *Moving from Welfare to Work: The Experiences of Refugee Women in Illinois*. Retrieved March 28, 2002, from http://www.dol.gov/dol/wb/public/info_about_wb/regions/refugee.pdf

Volunteer Canada. *Career Information For New Immigrants and Refugees, Needs Assessment Research. Executive Summary*. Retrieved March 28, 2002, from http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/canada_new_needs.htm

Weiss, Chris. (Aug. 1998). *Essential Information. Economics; Imported Strategies. Women and Development*. www.essential.org/monitor/hyper/issues/1989/09/mm0989_08.html

Womanwatch. *FWCW Platform for Action, Women and Poverty*. Retrieved May 1, 2002 from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/poverty.htm>

Women's International Network. (1993). *Women's Concerns and Development Planning*, Newsletter. <http://feminist.com/win.htm>

2100 Skarnes
Norway

Tel: (+47) 62973788
ojeanette@hotmail.com

Jeanette Olsson

EDUCATION:

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
M.A. Arts, Public and International Affairs
GPA Cumulative (2001) 3.55

Blacksburg, VA
01/00 – 06/02

Concord College
B.A. Arts, Sociology
Dean's List (1999)

Athens, WV
08/96 - 05/99

EXPERIENCE:

Refugee and Immigration Services
Volunteer

Richmond, VA
10/01 – 05/02

- Teach English as a second language to refugee families in an effort to facilitate their assimilation into American society
- Coordinate and organize activities that will facilitate the teaching of English to immigrant families as well as liaison with the immigration services on their progress
- Advise the younger family members on ways to improve their assimilation into social activities such as after school programs and community involvement

Gardermoen Perishable Center
Administration

Gardermoen, Norway
06/01 - 08/01

- Responsible for the prioritization of several deliverables in a time sensitive environment that dealt with the export of perishable goods
- Updated, maintained and ensured timely and accurate delivery schedules in an effort to eliminate any bottle necks that exists in the export process
- Facilitated good management of external vendors and customers to ensure timely service and a higher level of satisfaction

International Student Association
Board member

Concord College
1997-1998

- Planned and organized meetings and events for the school's international community; including dinners and social events, parades, trips and other activities
- Facilitated fundraisers for the student's international organization
- Assisted and supported foreign students through mentoring

ACTIVITIES:

- Women's Network, member
- Amnesty International, member
- Cranwell International Club, member
- Concord College Mountain Lions, cross-country running team

Virginia Tech, 2000- 2001
Virginia Tech, 2000- 2001
Virginia Tech, 2000- 2001
Concord College, 1997-1998