Transplanted or Uprooted?

Integration Efforts of Bosnian Refugees Based Upon Gender, Class and Ethnic Differences in New York City and Vienna

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ABSTRACT During their settlement in Vienna and New York City, Bosnian refugees experienced class and ethnic conflicts. While the integration mechanisms of the two host societies differed substantially, Bosnian men and women have developed quite different networks. Bosnian women in the Vienna sample developed often lasting relationships with natives or other non-refugees that eventually led to permanent jobs and rather substantial networks. They integrated particularly into wider majority societal circles. However, even though women in Vienna developed substantial networks, clashes based on different social classes often resulted in conflicts in the women's work environment. Bosnian women and men in New York City only rarely established similar networks with US residents and other long-term residents. Their integration occurred more along ethnic boundaries. Bosnian men in Vienna and the Bosnian refugee population in general in New York City integrated predominantly into the newly formed Bosnian communities in those locales.

KEY WORDS Bosnian refugee women ◆ class and ethnic conflict ◆ community creation ◆ discrimination ◆ ethnonationalism ◆ networks ◆ (re)settlement schemes ◆ social and economic integration

Describing migrant and refugee women's structural problems in their efforts to integrate into host countries, migration studies have developed models of 'triple suppression' – focused on class, ethnic minority and gender categories – and of 'double discrimination' – incorporating non-citizenship and gender status. Both models maintain that citizenship provides greater socioeconomic security for natives than migrants or refugees and that women migrants or female refugees encounter additional structural handicaps in host societies. These situations were true for Bosnian refugee women particularly in Vienna, Austria, and to a

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lesser degree in New York City, USA. For Bosnian refugees who resettled in Vienna between 1992 and 1995 and in New York City between 1993 and 1998, however, integration remains a complex matter. Experiencing class and ethnic conflicts, Bosnian men and women have developed quite different strategies and networks in the two host societies. In this article I focus on community formation and the development of informal networks among Bosnian women and men, and between them and native citizens in the host societies during the early stages of their integration.

Integration into host societies ought not be measured solely through participation in the labor market. Social participation and interaction, articulated in relationships with members and institutions of the surrounding society, are additional critical variables of integration. Raymond Breton (1964) has argued that immigrant integration is possible in at least three different directions: within the majority community, within another ethnic minority group, or within the immigrants' own ethnic group. He maintains that integration can happen in these different directions at the same time. It is also possible, however, that the immigrant remains unintegrated. To be sure, Breton's framework is an oversimplification of a highly complex process. It is often difficult to identify not only these social groups and their formations but also their boundaries and interactions. In fact, if one takes a postmodernist point of view, as Östen Wahlbeck (1999: 14) does, one could argue that nobody is fully integrated into postmodern society. Moreover, the concept of integration often represents the stance of the dominant majority and contributes to the creation and perpetuation of the mentality of a 'we' who belong and of 'the aliens' who do not belong. Because of these factors I seek to describe tendencies in the structural aspects of the process by which refugees become part of social groups and institutions in society. Integration depicts a structural process and signifies that a person can keep his or her distinct identity and belong to an ethnic minority group, rather than assimilate, and at the same time be an integral part of the wider society. Although a number of Bosnian refugees in my sample did not want to and felt that they could not, totally assimilate, they clearly wished to play an active social and economic role in Vienna and New York City. All the interviewees expressed this openly.

The fieldwork for this and a broader comparative study was conducted in Vienna from November 1998 to March 1999 and in New York City from May to September 1999. The bulk of my research focused on interviewing Bosnian refugees about their integration experiences during their first years in the host societies. My aim with the interviews was to receive a broad understanding of the refugees' social situation, experiences and problems in their new countries of settlement.[1]

COMPARING TEMPORARY RESIDENCE AND RESETTLEMENT POLICIES IN AUSTRIA AND THE USA

Overall, Austria with about 8 million citizens and the USA with 273 million citizens each took in more than 100,000 Bosnian refugees. How those refugees fared depended on, at least in part, the provisions existing in each country.

The arrival in Austria of thousands of Bosnian refugees beginning in spring 1992 put a substantial amount of pressure on this welfare state, a state with an extensive public sector and a tradition of actively striving to support the socially and economically less privileged. State and civil societies are frequently regarded as quite intertwined because the former has largely taken over functions of the latter and of the volunteer sector. This has had an impact on the reception of Bosnian refugees. The Austrian refugee relief scheme between 1992 and 1998, the *Bund Länder Aktion*, was an outstanding example of state-directed social service policy in Europe. It provided refugees with health services, minimal social benefits and, if necessary, housing and lodging in camps or private accommodation. Both the large number of refugees arriving daily in Austria by train, car, bus and on foot, and the conceptualization of the *Aktion* itself, however, resulted in little or no cultural or social orientation for the refugees besides some German-language and special skills courses provided by the government. Bosnians were considered not as refugees according the 1951 Convention but as war expellees temporarily residing in Austria. At any time during the *Aktion* about one-third of these Bosnian de facto refugees spent substantial amounts of time, sometimes years, in the mass camps without any contact with the native population. The forced isolation of refugees was justified through both the humanitarian considerations and ethnocentric opinions widely held by the Austrian population. In the former, refugees were regarded as disadvantaged persons, as victims who needed special support. These refugees therefore were often seen as persons who had lost everything in terms of material, social and cultural capital. Kathleen Valtonen (1998) and Wahlbeck (1999) point toward similar notions of the disempowerment of refugees frequently observed in Scandinavian countries, where there are also extensive welfare systems and public sectors. For Wahlbeck, there is a risk that the official welfare system seeks to transform active adult refugees into passive clients. Moreover, Austria is a relatively homogeneous society and has at least per forma the expectation that newcomers assimilate into the broader society (although in reality the existing structural discrimination makes this impossible). Hence I have argued elsewhere that the Austrian integration policy, in practice, is relatively assimilationist (Franz, 2001).

In contrast, the USA, as a nation of refugee and immigrant populations, has been labeled a multicultural society and is considered to be a liberal

welfare state in which public assistance (PA) and social services are of marginal importance. Numerous voluntary, religious and grassroots organizations are actively engaged in and help mold civil society. The state does not have the necessary means nor the wish to provide for groups of newcomers. The resettlement program in the USA is based on a highly structured and seemingly efficient public–private partnership. The USA considered Bosnians as refugees according to the 1951 Convention and the 1980 Refugee Act. Thus Bosnian refugees there gained immediate permission to work and enjoyed free travel and settlement options according to their individual preferences (in contrast to Austria). The resettlement scheme for Bosnian refugees in the USA began more than one year after the outbreak of the war, late in 1993. By 1997, two years after the Dayton Peace Agreement, American resettlement provisions for Bosnian refugees were the most generous of any available to other resettled refugees in that country (Franz, 2003). Moreover US resettlement policies through public–private partnerships appeared to be more multicultural than Austrian policies because agencies sought to incorporate all refugee groups as quickly as possible into society. While the public–private partnership was based on a multicultural premise, the resettlement agencies did not have the flexibility or resources to take into account cultural differences in practice. They provided all newcomers with the same services in a streamlined process. US social support and acculturation schemes did not provide Bosnian refugees with sufficient tools to adapt their language skills to the appropriate levels necessary to find jobs in their prior professions. Refugees instead had to worry about bread-and-butter issues immediately after their arrival in the host countries. The US resettlement policy in general was based on expectations of the refugees' quick integration at least into the economy.

Bosnian women and men had to adapt to different sets of political realities in Vienna and New York City. While the Austrian policy isolated refugees by initially preventing them from entering the job market, and later – when it became clear that they were there to stay – only gradually opening up the employment market for them and only in the lowest segments, the American policy explicitly focused on early economic self-sufficiency. Regardless of different resettlement policies, the Bosnian men and women in both host societies were pressured to take on jobs in the same low-pay, low-skill industries soon after arrival. As argued elsewhere (Franz, 2001), despite the vast differences in residence status and in reception schemes, the socioeconomic profile of Bosnians in New York City and Vienna was thus quite similar.

BOSNIAN ADAPTATION AND THE (LACK OF) FORMAL INTEGRATION ASSISTANCE

All Bosnian refugees needed money. Neither the Austrian payment (ATS1500 per month) nor the American support (one-time payment of US$740 per refugee) was sufficient to provide for them over longer periods of time. Therefore almost all refugees began to work (illegally in Austria) soon after their arrival. Refugees' accounts of their experiences provide clear evidence.

In Austria, 37-year-old Bosnian Muslim Sabrija, who arrived from Sarajevo with her 42-year-old husband Haris and her two children in May 1992, took on an illegal cleaning job to support her family, while Haris began to study German in Vienna shortly after their arrival.[2] Haris, a former manager, got a job in a grocery store in 1996. Recently promoted, he was now the head of the beverage section in the grocery store. Sabrija, however, still worked as a cleaner in a Viennese hospital. The family could stay in Austria because Sabrija eventually gained a *Beschäftigungsbewilligung* (work permit) and was legally employed as a cleaner in a hospital.

The story of 28-year-old Bosnian Croat Monika, who came with her mother and 10-year-old brother from Bosanksi Navi in 1992, resembles Sabrija's experience. Although Monika's mother divorced her abusive father, she nonetheless had psychological problems and could not work. Monika therefore began to work (first illegally and then legally) in housekeeping. In 1999, she was working 14-hour shifts at a hotel. She was the sole wage earner in her family and made ATS12,000 per month (about US$900), which supported her, her mother and her brother. They were living together at the time of the interviews in a rented apartment 35 meters square in a suburb of Vienna. About her integration experience, Monika explained: 'We have been fighting since the first day. We fight for work, the apartment, money, and a future.'

Sabrija's and Monika's stories about their economic acclimatization are also similar to the stories of Rijalda and Irma. Rijalda, a 29-year-old Montenegrin, came from Brcko to Vienna in June 1992 with her Bosnian Muslim husband, Aljia, and their two daughters. While her husband failed to open a business as he had planned and consequently fell into a severe depression, Rijalda began to work as a cleaner. Irma, a 43-year-old Bosnian Serb, came from Doboj to Vienna with her Muslim husband and their two daughters at the end of October 1992. While she was a mother and housewife in Doboj, she quickly realized in Vienna that she needed a job outside the home. She began working (illegally) as a cleaner in a factory and took an accounting course in her spare time. Since February 1999 she has also done the accounting work in the factory and has been legally employed. Irma's husband, however, who had been the manager

of a plumbing company, wanted to return by any means possible to Doboj. In Vienna, he became depressive, alcoholic and violent against other family members. He committed suicide in this host city in 1997. All of those women found jobs on their own – the Austrian *Arbeitsmarktservice* (job placement service for Austrian citizens and long-time foreign residents) was not responsible for placing Bosnian de facto refugees in jobs.

In the USA, the different resettlement agencies provided job placements, and their continuous funding depended upon placement numbers. It was therefore in the agencies' best interest to provide refugees with jobs as early as possible in the integration effort. Whether placement officers provided job referrals or the refugees themselves found jobs, the stories of Bosnian refugees about their first jobs sounded quite similar.

After staying for one month with friends, 29-year-old Bosnian Muslim Dobrovko began to work at a Long Island golf club six days a week, 12 hours a day as a busboy, waiter, kitchen assistant, bartender and room attendant. Fifty-four-year-old Bosnian Muslim high school teacher Faruk, who arrived with his three daughters from Sarajevo via Essen, Germany, in 1996, became a doorman. Nineteen-year-old Bosnian Croat Iskra, who arrived with her immediate family and grandmother from Tuzla via Split in Croatia in March 1995, began to work two weeks after her arrival in a toy store, while her father, an electrical engineer, began to work as a assembly worker in a printing factory. Thirty-eight-year-old Bosnian Muslim Selma, who arrived with her family via Zagreb on 1 March 1995, began to work within the first month as a housekeeper in Manhattan. When the 18- and 20-year-old Bosnian Muslim sisters Alma and Semsa arrived on 28 November 1995, they were taken in by their uncle and Alma immediately began to attend high school. Semsa, who had worked as an English-language correspondent for a local radio station in Tuzla, quickly found a job as a bookkeeper at a real estate company. She provided the income necessary to rent their own apartment in Brooklyn, where they still lived together at the time of the interview.

In my American sample, women's participation in low-skill labor in New York City appeared to be at the discretion of individual families' decisions and dependent upon their medium- and long-term objectives (Franz, 2003). Bosnian Muslim Danijela, who arrived from Sarajevo in 1995 when she was 29 years old, with her husband, her two-year-old daughter and an infant baby boy, stayed home the first couple of years while her husband attended English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and got a job as a construction worker. She then got her first job as a housekeeper in a hotel. Similarly, both Faruk's wife Hajra, a 49-year-old nurse, and Jasna, a 33-year-old Bosnian Muslim accountant, who arrived with her husband and two children in 1996 in New York, stayed home because of psychological problems.

While few refugees in my US sample used the job placement services of

the resettlement agencies, they were available. The booming US economy in the 1990s provided many service and blue-collar jobs for the Bosnian newcomers, and the resettlement agencies were eager to place the Bosnians into jobs. The Austrian administration, in contrast, rather reluctantly opened up the job market for Bosnians. Nevertheless, it seems that many Bosnians, in both New York City and Vienna ended up with the same jobs and in quite similar living situations. The extraordinary agency of particularly Bosnian refugee women in Vienna becomes clear when the processes of their job attainment are analyzed more closely.

Networking in Vienna

Not all Bosnian refugees found themselves in Austria as strangers in a foreign country without help: their lot was eased not only by a substantial group of Bosnian-friendly Austrian citizens but also by about 200,000 Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter*, or guest workers, who have been living in Austria, especially in the larger cities, since the 1960s and 1970s. These guest workers had experienced similar social and economic exclusions through limited access to both primary employment and adequate housing, and through racist categorizations and representations by policy-makers and service providers against particular groups. The exclusions have materially reinforced migrants' confinement to certain sectors of the economy and restricted their political and social rights.

When asked about their initial contacts in Vienna, a number of my Bosnian informants, predominantly women, repeatedly referred to either support structures from guest worker circles or well-established Austrian individuals who provided assistance and advocacy, including payment of doctors' bills and German-language courses, or made the provision of housing, clothes and jobs available. Many Viennese middle-class families learned, it seems, through word of mouth about reliable Bosnian housekeepers or babysitters through their friends and subsequently hired these women on an hourly basis. This in turn increased the networks and social circles of Bosnian women, who met and who often worked for five or six families. Irma, for example, got her cleaning and accountant jobs at a factory whose owner was married to a Serbian woman who had migrated a decade ago to Austria. Irma met the owner's wife at a friend's house in Vienna in November 1992 and began cleaning at the factory a month later. Other Bosnian women in my sample developed similar, often lasting relationships with natives or other non-refugees that eventually led to permanent jobs and rather substantial networks of friends and acquaintances who could provide material and non-material support when needed. Therefore, networks linked many female Bosnians who sought illegal cleaning and other unskilled jobs and who were willing to work for little money.

Reminiscent of the country's generous aid to Hungarian refugees in 1956, the Austrian population in general felt that both the Croats in 1991 and the Bosnians in 1992 were their neighbors in despair and needed help throughout this time of trouble. Numerous private Austrian citizens, churches, companies, including some banks, and NGOs exhibited generous and supportive attitudes toward the Bosnian refugees. Austrian individuals not only provided Bosnians with jobs, legal or illegal, language and job training and assistance to ensure children's school attendance. They also frequently opened their own homes to them. All Bosnians who had found this kind of hospitality expressed explicit gratitude to their hosts. Twenty-five-year-old Bosnian Muslim Tamara, who had arrived in Vienna after spending one-and-a-half months in a refugee camp in Belgrade, explained that her encounter with Irene, an Austrian national, changed her life from being an 'apathic refugee' to becoming a student of first German and then architecture: 'When I got to know Irene suddenly everything made sense. She asked me if I wanted to study.' Tamara enrolled in a German course for Bosnian refugees. She quit the course after a short time because she disliked the Croatian teacher, who was 'ironic and chauvinist', but decided to study the language on her own. Finally, she enrolled in a German course offered by the Österreichische Hochschülerschaft, the main organization for Austrian university students, and her friend Irene funded it. Similarly, explaining her first contacts with Austrians Rijalda praised her host family:

> We lived for three years with the Sager family. This was a super, super experience! Others did not have that much luck. My own siblings would not have helped me that much. From the first day on we were accepted as family members. My daughters were accepted as if they had been Ms Sager's own. People don't believe it when I tell them about our experience with the Sagers. We ate together, we went out together. At that time I could not really appreciate it as I should have. Nearly every weekend we did something together; for example, we went swimming or ice-skating. Mr Franz and Ms Emi are like grandfather and grandmother to my children.

Rijalda still refers respectfully to her former hosts in the formal form of Herr and Frau Sager or, when referring to them on the first name basis, as Herr Franz and Frau Emi. The hospitality that the hosts provided for her family was very much appreciated by Rijalda. During the interview, Rijalda insisted that when 'I have to go to the dentist with Asemina [her seven-year-old daughter], or when we need something I ask Ms Sager for help'. On a more psychological level, the Sagers, however, seem to remain for Rijalda distant benefactors. The cultural gap between Rijalda and her host family thus could not be entirely bridged, even after years of living together in one household. Although they might stand out as extraordinary, Tamara's and Rijalda's experiences demonstrate how some

Bosnian women created lasting relationships with and were supported by native residents. The relationships provided for some women the anchor from which their personal entrance into the Austrian society could proceed. These connections, many of which have turned into friendships, are more outstanding when one considers the stereotyping and rising anti-foreigner hysteria and xenophobia that has come to affect people all over Europe.

Networks in New York City

Bosnian women (and men) in New York City did not establish similar networks with US residents. This author speculates that the structural arrangement of the resettlement scheme, the society at large, the Bosnians' refugee status and the time frame of their arrival had an impact on network formation. Resettlement agencies provided Bosnians and all other newly arriving refugees with jobs, and if they came without a family, with housing also. Refugees arriving as family reunification cases, such as Alma and Semsa, usually lived with their distant relatives for some time until they managed to earn enough money to afford their own place. Since there were no state-directed resettlement programs for Bosnian refugees in the USA, their life situations were initially very chaotic. One other aggravating factor of Bosnians' practical circumstances in the USA was the absence of a system ensuring the benefits to which they were entitled. Only in the better organized resettlement agencies did case workers usually provide at least some guidance for the newcomers. Dubravko, Faruk, Danijela, Alma or Semsa got no PA benefits. Only Iskra's family received PA; her grandmother got a disability pension and her mother received PA until she died of cancer in 1997. Unfamiliarity with both language and society made application for social security and food stamps very difficult. While Bosnians in Austria often experienced the xenophobia of and harassment from bureaucrats, they were guaranteed certain benefits, most elementary health care and housing, that could not be denied to them. In New York City, however, the refugees had to apply for benefits themselves; there was nothing automatic about the process.

Moreover, the American refugee resettlement program, a truly multicultural institution, incorporates all newly arriving refugees and was not created, as was the Austrian *Aktion,* in direct response to the influx of Bosnian nationals. In US resettlement agencies Bosnians were thus less likely to meet other Bosnians than their counterparts in Austria. Refugees remained largely insulated from American society also because structural directions, such as how to fill out PA application forms, were generally not provided to them. It was common, however, for Bosnians to have with them addresses of friends and relatives from all over the world when they

left their home country. Hence upon arrival in the country of settlement they were able to connect with and become part of a wider Bosnian community. A Bosnian refugee community exists, particularly in the district of Astoria, Queens. In multicultural Queens, this community is structured more along ethnic lines than in Vienna, where class conflicts were, particularly for women, at times the dominant characteristic of their work environments.

Networking in the USA with other newly arrived groups, whether refugee or immigrant, was difficult for the Bosnians. The American resettlement program for Bosnians lagged behind similar European plans and started late in 1993. At that time, the lines in the 1992–5 Bosnian war were already clearly drawn. The majority of Bosnians in the USA interviewed in this study arrived between 1994 and 1997, when the war had extended to its full violent and ethnonationalist potential, and had polarized the Yugoslav people. Thus many nationals of the former Yugoslavia and refugees and immigrants abroad were exposed to and might have been persuaded by nationalist propaganda. The 56-year-old Bosnian Muslim Jasmina followed her sons and her husband from Banja Luka to New York City in November 1994. She explained her disappointment with the Bosnian and former Yugoslav communities in New York City:

> When I came here, I dreamed that I would help other Bosnians and create a Bosnian community. I was really disappointed. There are many different people here. They belong to different groups. About 200,000 people from Serbia and Montenegro live in New York. They make good money, but are poorly educated. They have their own way of thinking. In the beginning they helped Bosnians a lot, too. But then they changed their mind when they realized that we are ambitious and have a legal [residence] status. When they realized that we would receive the green card they became jealous. They returned to their traditional old behavior from the countryside.

Jasmina used the country–city dwellers dichotomy to rationalize her problems with immigrants from the former Yugoslavia. I found through my research that Bosnians did not – or at least not to any considerable degree – have contacts or create networks with Yugoslav immigrants in New York City. This might have been the case because of feelings of resentment among the immigrant community, or because of immigrants' fears that the newcomers, equipped with green cards, would eventually jeopardize their own socioeconomic position.

Moreover, that Montenegrins remained closely allied with the Serbs throughout the wars resulted, for many, in what Benedict Anderson called 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson, 1992: 1). While attempting to contrast patriotism and nationalism as two types of political loyalty, Lord Acton created the aphorism that 'exile is the nursery of nationality' (cited in Anderson, 1992: 2) whose precision strikes true in the ethnic group

differentiations of New York's Yugoslav population. Acton believed that nationality and nationalism arose not from whatever mother-terrain or *Heimat* had nourished them but from exile, 'when men could no longer easily dream of returning to the nourishing bosom that had given them birth', states Anderson (1992: 3). A sort of dubious, quasi-ethnical displaced identity developed among New York's immigrants from the former Yugoslavia and lately, to an as yet less-refined degree, among Bosnian refugees.

COMPARING CLASS AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN SETTLEMENT: A GENDERED ANALYSIS

Transplanted to Vienna

Referring to their first contacts, Bosnian women of my Vienna sample frequently mentioned female Yugoslav guest workers who had been living in Vienna, often without legal residence status, for decades. These latter tended to be employed in low-skill jobs but knew how the Austrian welfare system and society functioned. Moreover, not only did many guest workers' households accept Bosnian refugee families during the *Bund Länder Aktion* but female guest workers also frequently provided Bosnian women with access to (often illegal) jobs. The 25-year-old Bosnian Muslim Enisa, who had arrived in Vienna from Prozor in April 1992, for example, explained how she got her first job: 'a friend, a Croatian *Gastarbeiter*, who is a nurse, convinced me. She told me that, whether I get a *Beschäftigungsbewilligung* [work permit] or not does not matter too much. She knew about a job I could get.' Through this connection, Enisa soon began working in a grocery store. Thus whereas the bureaucratic *Aktion* organized reception structures to ensure equal access to the meager services and benefits for the refugees, the majority of Bosnians in my sample living in private accommodation were introduced to new relationships through their host families or other socialization places, such as parks, cafes, or other meeting places.

Of course, many of these women experienced severe emotional and physical difficulties during their time of acculturation. The Bosnian Muslim social worker Najla referred to the women's processes of adaptation to the labor market as a 'work trauma'. Sabrija and Irma cited their working conditions as being responsible for their physical problems: the loss of hair, eyesight, fingernails and skin on their hands. Worse, however, was the discrimination and humiliation many Bosnian refugee women experienced at work.

Prior to the war, approximately 200,000 Yugoslav citizens lived in Austria, many of whom settled in Vienna. Mainly Serbs, they came as

Gastarbeiter in the 1960s. By the end of the 1980s, according to Fassmann and Münz (1996), this group of migrant workers was still employed in low-wage jobs as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. The system of work permits and the discriminatory segregation in the labor market pushed female *Gastarbeiter* and Bosnian refugee women into the same sectors of the economy, mainly cleaning and tourism. Due to seniority, however, *Gastarbeiter* frequently held the positions of supervisors, for example, in the cleaning teams. The clash of different social classes, based mainly on educational differences, often resulted in conflicts in the work environment. Najla explained:

> There is a great deal of discrimination among the co-workers. Decades ago, women who were not well educated had to leave [Yugoslavia] to find jobs in Western Europe. Now these women have been in Austria for 20 years. They are not Bosnian women but women from other parts of the former Yugoslavia because Bosnian women traditionally took care of their families and rarely left their home province. [The older *Gastarbeiter* women] are the bosses or lead the cleaning teams. Therefore, the better educated refugee women have to work according to guidelines that the less educated give to them.

The class differences caused numerous conflicts among women working as maids. Bosnian women, many of whom have professional backgrounds, had to repeatedly endure severe humiliation and discrimination from working-class women if they wanted to avoid losing their jobs.

Nevertheless, these Bosnian women found ways to endure the discrimination, the decrease in their social status and the psychological humiliation frequently experienced at work. In their narratives, Bosnian women in Austria tended to disregard entirely notions of ethnic identity and the politics of national exclusivism. They minimized or even joked about the humiliation and harassment they experienced but emphasized their social and economic aims and achievements, focusing on their friendships and their children's futures. These women spoke about their personal objectives in terms of comfortable homes and better jobs. For example, in her narrative of her adaptation experience, Zeljka, a petite Bosnian Muslim in her late forties living with her two teenage daughters in Vienna, explained that over the last couple of years, she had earned about ATS11,000 (about US$760) per month. She lives in a apartment 40 meters square, for which she pays a rent of ATS6,000 (US$400) per month. To be able to pay commission fees and the monthly rent, Zeljka took out a loan of ATS100,000 (US$7500). To pay back the loan, she began to clean apartments for middle-class Viennese in the evenings, after her regular daywork as a nurse. Zeljka did not initially elaborate on her living situation in Vienna, but when asked to describe her current housing situation she spoke in detail on what she referred to as a 'kind of an ironic story':

> These refugees come from Bosnia, considered customarily as a poor country; Vienna is the capital of a rich Western country. For Bosnians, to have a pleasant and beautiful house was always an important part of daily life culture. I grew up in a house that was 100 years old, but my parents had installed running water and built bathrooms. In every room there was a jug of water to wash one's hands, a necessary requisite for one of our religious traditions. . . . In Vienna many Bosnian women were shocked by the apartments that were offered to them. Frequently, old buildings in Vienna have one or two communal toilets for a whole set of apartments. This was extremely shocking for many Bosnian women because of the importance they had assigned to living in a nice flat as part of a good life.

Criticizing the poor hygienic condition of many apartments in Vienna, Zeljka carefully switched from her first-person narrative to the living situation of 'Bosnians' and 'Bosnian women'. To justify her comments, Zeljka immediately explained that Bosnian women wanted to reach the same standard of living they had had prior to the outbreak of war: 'They are ambitious.' Moreover, for Zeljka, 'refugee women are also realistic and want their children to remain in Austria. If possible they want to take care of their children in Austria.' Zeljka thus justified having to take on work as a cleaner with her ambition and family needs.

Individual women (both in Vienna and New York City), to be sure, expressed their anger and traumas in their interviews. Some felt that they would never be entirely happy again; others were frustrated that they had never received an apology for what had been done to them. Their main dilemmas, however, centered around finding better housing for their families and jobs with higher salaries. They were dedicated to their children's education, the search for bigger, more comfortable apartments, the payment of loans they had taken out, and the pursuit of jobs in their former professions. Most Bosnian women in my Vienna sample perceived their lives as 'transplanted' to Austria, where they certainly had learned to face new socioeconomic challenges.

By creating networks with native Austrians and long-time resident *Gastarbeiter* women, Bosnian women in Vienna believed that they had begun to build their new existence and identity. Based upon their interpretation of the refugee situation and their construction of identity (through cultural and religious traditions and focuses on the family and children), Bosnian women were rebuilding their future from the bottom of the economic ladder.

Uprooted in Vienna and New York City

However, fruitful exchanges and interactions were not possible to such a significant degree between male Yugoslav guest workers and male Bosnian refugees in Vienna or between Montenegrin, Croat, or Serb

immigrants and (male and female) Bosnian refugees in New York. Bosnian men, as many male Yugoslav migrants in both host societies, identified with their individual ethnic groups, their regions of origin and the politics of ethnonationalism rather than with their families and traditions, as women did. In Vienna, Haris explains his antipathy toward Serbs:

> The Serbs say we Bosniaks [nationalist term for Bosnians] are Serbs who are followers of Islam. We have been misdirected, confused by the Turks. But then I do not understand why they want to cut my throat open. We [Bosnians] are not afraid of others but they [the Serbs] are. And a people that is afraid is dangerous. We Bosniaks mix into our culture what we like from other cultures. That is why we have been rich. . . . Then the propaganda began, as in the times of German fascism. You can find Goebbel's ideology in Milosevic's and Tudjman's speeches.

Even the Bosnian men who left in the spring of 1992 and did not see combat in their villages and towns have become engaged in their home country's politics and in the war. Rijalda described her and her husband Alija's different approaches to Bosnian politics: 'My husband listens to the Bosnian news every night. I have not listened to it for quite a while. . . . Now I have been here for seven years. They went by fast.' Similarly, among the male Yugoslav guest worker population antipathy and anger against members of other ethnic groups involved in the war were – at times – high. Rumors frequently spread throughout Vienna that a number of wealthy Croat restaurant owners were in the process of creating weapon depots in their apartments to ship to the front. Alija said once: 'If I walk on this side of the street and I see a Serb walking toward me on my side of the street – I switch over to the other sidewalk.' Thus there was a substantial amount of friction based on ethnopolitics among male members of ethnic groups in Vienna. Men much more than women seemed to be conscious of this friction and to believe that it had a substantial influence upon their lives. Men also talked more about the political situation in Bosnia, Bosnia's relations to Europe and the history of the war. These men in host countries, it seems, were much more interested in the current events in their home country than the women, who were more concerned about what effects the war was having on family members and friends left behind in the home villages and towns.

In New York, moreover, the nationality debate ranked more prominently among Bosnian men than class issues did. One of my informants in New York stated cynically: 'Nowadays everybody wants to be Bosnian.' He referred to a group of South Slav immigrants that the 'real' Bosnians call 'PGs', standing for Plav Gusinge, a small Montenegrin village bordering Bosnia. Many Montenegrins, especially from the area around Plav Gusinge, emigrated to the USA in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of them

entered illegally and remained throughout their residence in low-paying and low-skill jobs. Now, according to my informant, who considers himself a 'real' Bosnian, those PGs try to pass themselves off as Bosnians. As a humorous people, Bosnians often phrase their social or ethnopolitical criticisms in jokes. Samir, a 24-year-old Bosnian Muslim from Sarajevo, explained the character of PGs with a saying popular among Bosnians in New York City: 'If you go to Australia you will find them [the Montenegrins] in the kangaroos' pouches!' Therefore, at present there seems to be a deep rift not only between the established Croat and Serb communities and the Bosnian newcomers but also between the Muslim group, the 'real' Bosnians and the so-called PGs, roughly encompassing (mostly Muslim) people of Montenegrin origin.

Thus Bosnian men and women in New York integrated socially in the late 1990s almost exclusively into the Bosnian communities in Queens and Brooklyn rather than into New York City's majority society, and they are manufacturing an increasingly exclusivist ethnic identity, possibly in response to the host society's ethnic and economic parameters. Bosnians might do so in response to the Montenegrins, Serbs and Croats who created in New York City, where ethnicity is perhaps only second to income, the most important identity marker, a harbor for their own ethnonational identities.

Integration Efforts in New York City

Almost all the Bosnian men and women in my New York sample were eager to integrate into the broader American host society. Danijela's husband, Damir, expressed explicitly his wish to assimilate: 'If I go to the mountains I will bring skis. If I am in a river I will swim. You have a choice, stay here or go back.' For him, no conflict existed between his wish to integrate totally and to raise his children according to Bosnian tradition. He explained that 'I am here to become American, I want my kids to become Bosnian.' Later in the interview he stated that he believed 'you have to blend in because if you don't you will not survive'. Bosnians, however, sought to integrate not just with the majority society. Dobrovko (who came alone from Sarajevo via Zagreb to New York City in January 1995) explained how he actively sought to integrate into his own ethnic group: 'I went to Astoria networking' on each day off work. He realized that

> . . . all the people I know, I know through my own efforts. There is not much time, everybody has to work. Now, after living in New York for four years, I feel I am an expert here. I don't feel like a foreigner. There is [however] no comparison between New York and Bosnia.

In response to my request that he clarify what kinds of comparisons he

was referring to, Dobrovko replied dryly, 'I don't think that many Austrians want to come and live here.' While Dobravko was very aware of his refugee-ness and lack of belonging in New York, he sought actively to create networks with other Bosnians, some of which turned into friendships. To be sure, Dobrovko considered life at home in Sarajevo, life in Europe, more satisfying than his current life in New York, because he believed that 'European life is better than American life. It is slower, people here are stressed. They get nuts. Life is really fast here.' He recalled that creating networks with both Bosnians and Americans was hard work for him. Still, he insisted, '90 percent of my friends here are Bosnian and 10 percent American'. He, however, felt he was sufficiently integrated into the American society. Both Damir's and Dobrovko's integration efforts into society demonstrate that Bosnians in New York City sought to recreate Bosnian networks and communities and, at the same time, become a productive part of the American majority society with which some Bosnians were quite disillusioned.

Some Bosnians understood their residence in the USA as only temporary and planned to return to Europe. Although both of his parents are dead, the 28-year-old Bosnian Muslim Natasan, for example, wanted to go back to Europe. About life in the USA he concluded:

> Everybody is busy here. The way of living here makes you cold. They think just about themselves. It makes you feel lonely. People have weird relations here. I would like to go back to Europe. I want to get the US citizenship and then move to Holland. I love that country. My sister lives there. Here most people have problems. Few say that they love the country.

Similar to Dobrovko and Natasan, many Bosnians felt that although they desired networks with 'real Americans' (American citizens of European descent), they lacked frequent contacts with them. This may be true because the most concentrated Bosnian community is located in the multicultural district of Astoria in Queens, which traditionally has been a magnet for newcomers. Bosnians in Astoria share the streets with Greeks, Pakistanis, Indians, Russians and many other immigrant nationalities and, if they also work in Queens, might not meet too many 'real Americans'. Thus, many Bosnians of my sample were not totally satisfied with their integration, seen by them as a structural process, into New York's white society. In that sense, Bosnian refugees in New York can be seen as not having become rooted. At the same time, however, they have created close-knit networks within the Bosnian communities that to a degree at least function as substitutes for networks with white America. Nevertheless, Faruk's 22-year-old daughter, Ambra, pointed toward what was on the minds of many Bosnians who arrived in the USA via a European country. In contrast to Essen, Germany, where her family had lived for two years, the USA 'is more of a freedom country. They [Americans] don't

look at you as a refugee; in Germany you are not considered German. I prefer living here because it is important to be socially accepted.' Thus Ambra optimistically believes that in the long run she and her family and most Bosnians will be successful in their attempts to integrate into the socioeconomic fabric of New York City.

Integration Efforts in Vienna

In Austria, Bosnians have realized that, as 38-year-old Bosnian Muslim Besim, who had left Bijeljina for Vienna in July 1992, put it, 'higher integration' into Austrian society will not be possible because of existing institutional and socioeconomic discrimination and xenophobia. Besim, who has an 11-year-old son with his Bosnian Serb wife, however, could not envision the family returning to Bosnia either. He therefore realized that he has little choice but to make the best of the family's situation in Vienna.

In their everyday life encounters with Austrians, the vast majority of Bosnian men and women were frequently superficially seen as *Gastarbeiter*, 'uneducated' and who 'do the dirty work no one else wants to do'. Such stereotypes usually do not differentiate between Turkish, Kurdish, Serb, or Bosnian guest workers. (The Catholicism of Croat and Slovene guest workers distinguishes them from their southern neighbors because the Croats and Slovenes are seen as a 'civilized and modern people' by many Austrians.) The majority of Bosnian men articulated in their interviews that they had experienced various kinds of xenophobia or racism in Vienna. No women in my sample, however, referred to such abuses, perhaps because these women were generally not found in places where these abuses have taken place, for example, bars or other public meeting places.

The discrimination refugees experienced at the hands of some Austrian authorities, however, was, to Bosnians, much more substantial than what they experienced in the streets and public places of Vienna. Anti-foreigner sentiments are widespread and ingrained in the mentality of many Austrians. When talking to Mr Pfann (telephone interview, 28 December 1997), head of Vienna's Beratungszentrum für soziale Fragen, one of the agencies supporting Bosnian refugees in Vienna, he emphasized the 'acculturation problems' of Bosnians:

> There are a number of cultural problems with Bosnians in public camps in Vienna. For example, we cannot accommodate for meal preferences based upon religious faiths. . . . It is not my fault when they [the Bosnian de facto refugees in camps in and around Vienna] don't want to eat *Schweinsbraten* [pork roast].

Schweinsbraten is considered a gourmet meal traditionally prepared on

Sundays in Austria. Bosnian Muslims, however, do not eat pork and were put in a complicated position because as guests it is not polite to turn down offerings from their hosts.

The institutional discrimination in Austria against guest workers and citizens from other non-EU member states is substantiated by Besim's account of his numerous encounters with officials:

> The people are nice but the politicians are horrible. The residence permit procedures are a *Schikane* [vituperation] with all those papers and procedures. It is impossible to get them all complete to the officials. And after hours of waiting in line, when they then tell you that you don't have this document or that document you have to start all over again.

Besim emphasized that being at the mercy of the bureaucratic arbitrariness in Vienna is 'inhumane' and, for refugees, the worst form of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (xenophobia against foreigners). 'It has been a five-year-long fight for survival [for me]. After five years I got my unrestricted visa. Now citizenship is not that important anymore.' His residence document has the letter 'A' imprinted, according to Besim. 'A' stands for *Ausländer* (foreigner). 'The same law was applied during the time of Jewish persecution in Austria', he remarked. This kind of discrimination includes not only direct administrative encounters but other experiences that touch the everyday life of Bosnians. Haris concurred with Besim's emphasis on institutional discrimination against foreigners. No equal opportunity laws exist in the Austrian labor market for refugees or other long-term immigrant residents. Referring to his numerous job applications, most of which were denied, Haris described discrimination by employers against foreigners:

> When I wrote the letter everything was clear. At that point they did not know that I was a foreigner. They invited me to interviews. During the interview, however, everything I said was wrong. Therefore they did not have to hire me. [That's why] Austria has no workers . . . or too many students.

But, although the majority of Bosnian refugees of my sample had experienced actual, systematic discrimination, Haris and Besim also emphasized that they did not feel alienated from Austrian society as a whole. As Haris explained, Bosnia once belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and it was a period of cultural and economic boom in Bosnia. He emphasized that, in his view, Bosnia is a European country and could even still belong to the Austrian monarchy if the country had not split up after the First World War. Besim saw himself as being a 'human being first, who lived in Bosnia, studied in Serbia, and now works in Austria. I have worked in China and other places . . . I am willing to integrate. But a higher integration will not be possible' because of both the

institutional and socioeconomic discrimination that he and his family experienced daily.

The reasons for the difference between the optimism of (particularly younger) Bosnians in New York City and the pessimism of Bosnians (particularly men) in Vienna might be found in the socioeconomic constraints of Austrian society. The Austrian idea of *Heimat* as a special place connected with nature and a particular landscape is based upon a notion of *gemeinschaft*-like membership within an imagined ethnic community, which excludes all *Ausländer*, even if they nominally hold Austrian citizenship. Terms such as *Heimat*, which had become obsolete by being misused under Nazi rule, were given new socially acceptable meanings in the 1980s and 1990s. The term *Ausländer*, however, does not only refer to the English word 'foreigner' but also means, literally, 'someone who belongs outside'. In contrast, New York City, is a much more multicultural *gesellschaft*-like society, which provides in the long run at least the opportunity for Bosnians to integrate into the white majority society. Bosnians hold a more privileged social position in the USA for another reason: they fit into the dominant racial group (in contrast to the experience of most Latin American or African refugees, for example).

CONCLUSION

In the short run Bosnian women in Austria, more so than men, adapted successfully to the host society because they pragmatically responded to the existing economic segregation and to the socioeconomic demands by creating networks with Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* women and Austrian citizens. In New York City, however, female Bosnian newcomers neither desired nor considered it necessary to create similar links to Yugoslav groups who had migrated to the USA in previous decades. Their integration occurred more along ethnic or local boundaries.

In part, this might have been influenced by New York's resettlement procedures, which were characterized by voluntary agencies focusing on job placements in a multicultural setting, where interpersonal acts of altruism or humanitarianism may not be crucial or common. While social interaction with Americans was valued by Bosnians resettled in New York, it was not as easy to attain as it was in Vienna. Possibly the particular social behavior patterns in New York that were quite unfamiliar to Bosnians – for example, the lack of time and the degree of stress that New Yorkers seem to experience on a daily basis – contributed to Bosnians' infrequent contact with Americans. This may have been the case even though the settlement schemes in New York were organized by NGOs, which depended on federal funding but otherwise remained responsible for the integration of refugees. Moreover, the most concentrated Bosnian

community is located in the multicultural Astoria district in Queens, traditionally a magnet for newcomers. Bosnians in Astoria might not meet too many 'real' Americans. Thus, many Bosnians of my sample were not fully satisfied with their integration into New York's society, at least thus far.

In contrast, although the public support for Bosnians in my Vienna sample was minimal and they had to face xenophobic officials and citizens, many were generally pleased with the public aid they had received, and the *Aktion* and the subsequent labor legislation for Bosnian refugees undoubtedly led to some positive results. Haris, for example, stated that 'Austria is the best country for Bosnian refugees'. In his opinion there were a number of reasons for this: most important, Bosnians had no problems getting the limited public support that was granted to them. This stands in contrast to the experience of Bosnians in New York City, where many of my informants faced problems in getting even the limited public services to which they were legally entitled.

Most Bosnians in my Vienna sample, such as Besim, realized, furthermore, that their total integration into the Austrian society was not possible. Thus fewer of them were eager assimilationists than the Bosnians in the New York sample. While many Bosnian women sought and found integrated accommodation through the networks they became part of, men in general in my Vienna sample did not engage significantly in similar network and community formation with other minorities or the majority society. The most outstanding difference between the Austrian and the US groups is that many Bosnian women in the former group could establish lasting and meaningful relations, which frequently resulted also in material help and social interactions outside their families and the immediate Bosnian refugee community. The Bosnian Croat Monika and the Bosnian Muslim Enisa became best friends in Austria, whereas the Bosnian Muslims Iskra and Semsa, who went to high school together in Tuzla, remained best friends in New York City. The hierarchically structured reception scheme in Austria, initially limiting the economic integration of Bosnian refugees, resulted in the need for Bosnian refugees to find illegal employment. Women were more flexible than men in adapting to the economic demands and formed support networks that in turn provided them with job opportunities.

The Bosnians in New York rarely emphasized in their narratives the help they received from their often far-removed relatives who signed the affidavits of relationship and therewith committed themselves to housing the new arrivals in their initial resettlement period. The Bosnian newcomers of my New York sample sought instead to gain their social and economic independence, it seems, as soon as possible from their cousins and other relatives. The booming US economy in the late 1990s and the multicultural nature of New York City society isolated many Bosnians in

their socioeconomic struggles from the majority society. As a consequence, Bosnians felt unrooted and began to recreate communities along ethnic lines.

Social integration in Vienna and New York City thus occurred according to different patterns. In Vienna, Bosnian women in particular integrated into the wider majority society, while many Bosnian men in Vienna and the Bosnian refugee population in general in New York City integrated into the newly formed Bosnian communities in those locales.

NOTES

1. I conducted multiple interviews with most interviewees to gain a fuller sense of their attitudes, adaptations and aspirations. Semi- and unstructured interviews allowed the respondents to provide detailed information with the least restraint. While interviewing refugees I listened 'in stereo', as Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack (1991: 11) have called it, receiving both the dominant and muted channels, tuning into them carefully to understand the relationship between them. I conducted the interviews mostly in the homes of the interviewees, but some were also conducted in restaurants, cafes, parks and other public places. My aim with the interviews was to receive a broad understanding of the refugees' social situations, experiences and problems in their new countries of settlement. The average length of the interviews was two hours. Only one interview, in a refugee camp in Austria, was completed with the help of an interpreter. The other interviews were in German in Austria and in English in the USA. During the interviews I took notes that I fleshed out and detailed immediately afterward.

   I do not want to become entangled in the inherent dangers and difficulties of employing and applying western feminist thought to non-western groups. Western feminist theory is, in Biance Petkova and Chris Griffin's (1998: 439–40) words, 'taken from the more powerful and [applied] to the world of the less powerful, that is from West to East'. An important part of any interpretation is my position as researcher. I was born in Austria and lived for nearly two decades in Carinthia, a province bordering Yugoslavia (now Slovenia) and Italy. My position, however, is such that I speak from being located more in the West, which means there is a danger of 'appropriating' the words of the Bosnian refugees I interviewed. As a countermeasure to this possibility I view this article as unfinished; it reflects an attempt to have an ongoing discussion with Bosnian men and women living in Vienna and New York City.
2. Confidentiality has been of utmost importance, and, accordingly, the anonymity of the Bosnian respondents and informants has been protected both in the research and in the writing. I selected interviewees initially based on contacts that I had established with members of the refugee communities in each research site. Also, I endeavored to select a sample representative of the Bosnian refugee community as a whole for each area and included refugees from each ethnic group in my samples. The sample, however, cannot be seen as statistically representative of the Bosnian refugee communities in the USA and Austria. Furthermore, the sample is of course to an even lesser degree representative of the population in Bosnia. Since I

was introduced to my interviewees by fellow Bosnian refugees, I generally experienced fewer problems with access than I had expected. Everyone approached in this way, except one, accepted the invitation to take part in the research. The establishment of a trustful relationship was also facilitated by the absence of sensitive questions relating to the refugees' experiences during the war. (A surprisingly large group of refugees, however, volunteered information about their war experiences.)

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