



**International  
Journal of Society, Culture & Language  
IJSCL**

Journal homepage: [www.ijsc.net](http://www.ijsc.net)  
ISSN 2323-2210 (online)

## **Engendering Migration, Naturalization, and Citizenship: An Autoethnographic Approach**

Serap Fišo<sup>1a</sup>, Emel Topcu<sup>2a</sup>

### **ARTICLE HISTORY:**

Received December 2022  
Received in Revised form January 2023  
Accepted February 2023  
Available online March 2023

### **KEYWORDS:**

Migration  
Citizenship  
Naturalization  
Skilled migrant  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

### **Abstract**

This study aims to provide a personal, reflective look at the experiences of migration, citizenship, and naturalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina, using an autoethnographic investigation. There is limited literature, particularly in relation to individual experiences in the country, so this study seeks to fill that gap and provide insight into the region. The research aims to answer these questions: What prompts a skilled Turkish migrant to pursue citizenship? What difficulties and opportunities arise during the citizenship application process? How does the naturalization and citizenship journey affect the cultural linguacultural concepts, experiences, identities, and aspirations of a Turkish skilled female migrant? The results highlight the cultural aspect and difficulties associated with navigating bureaucratic procedures. It is most notable that the application process for citizenship reinforced patriarchal hierarchies and male dominance at the macro level, as well as linguistic and cultural concepts and male dominance at the micro level for the author.

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD Candidate, Email: [sfiso@ius.edu.ba](mailto:sfiso@ius.edu.ba) (Corresponding Author)  
Tel: +38-762-725055

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Email: [etopcu@ius.edu.ba](mailto:etopcu@ius.edu.ba)

<sup>a</sup> International University of Sarajevo (IUS), Bosnia and Herzegovina  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/ijsc.2023.1989100.2930>

© 2023 Fišo and Topcu.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

## 1. Introduction

Studies in the migration literature have observed that a country's young, educated, and economically active residents are the most mobile and vulnerable to migration (Castles & Miller, 2003; Kvedaraite et al., 2015). In this context, Boneva and Frieze (2001) emphasize that the population with higher performance and power motivation is more job-oriented and willing to go abroad. The decision of migrants, particularly skilled migrants, to leave their country of birth can be influenced by differential wage levels across countries, the desire for economic freedom, and the desire to gain experience in pursuing a career. It is commonly understood that states favor skilled immigrants over unskilled immigrants (Castles, 2002). However, some researchers have also found that education and skilled migrants can have a positive impact on cooperation and integration, with highly skilled migrants potentially serving as agents of integration (Riemsdijk & Basford, 2022). According to Trenz and Triandafyllidou (2017), integration policies are often based on traditional ideas of national citizenship and civil society integration. However, getting citizenship can protect from deportation and the repetitive nature of the documentation process for most immigrants. It refers to the identification of citizenship through the establishment of a formal legal status between the individual and the state and assumes that the acquisition of citizenship is the last crucial link in the chain of integration (Stewart, 1995). Scholars also emphasize that different migration, settlement, and citizenship patterns influence depopulation in migrants' countries of origin and population diversification in host societies (Bloemraad et al., 2008; Caponio, 2008; Morawska, 2008).

Using an autoethnographic method, this research reflects on the personal journey of one of the researchers as a skilled Turkish migrant in Bosnia and Herzegovina, exploring their migration, naturalization, citizenship, and integration experiences. The research was conducted two years after one of the researchers got citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina and aims to shed light on the challenges and experiences encountered during applying for citizenship. One of the researchers is a young, educated, and economically active resident and one of the researchers who has traveled through

various migration routes. It also emphasized the influence of cultural encounters, identity, and vision during this application process. Thus, Richard (2015) emphasized that autoethnography puts readers in control and motivates them to reconstruct their meanings and insights based on their experiences. All experiences of a similar association in global migration are significantly different and unique.

Using an autoethnographic approach, this research explores the experiences of a skilled Turkish female migrant who got citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina while married to a Bosniak citizen. Through this analysis, one researcher has developed a typology of migration, naturalization, and citizenship to better understand these concepts in the literature. The study aims to provide a unique perspective on these issues through the lens of one of the researcher's personal experiences. This research, which is based on one of the researcher's personal experiences as a Turkish skilled female migrant in Bosnia and Herzegovina, provides a unique perspective on the interrelated processes of migration, naturalization, and citizenship within the context of global migration flows. Besides examining these issues, the study also highlights one of the researcher's experiences with multiple identities, including being a Muslim woman with Turkish citizenship, a student, a skilled migrant, stateless, and a new citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As a result, by combining this argumentation with unique experience and methodological power, the study sheds light on a critical look at migration, the learning process for applying and the legal requirements, the social opportunities available in this application process, and citizenship.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. The Migration by Autoethnographic Notes

The feeling of not belonging in any place is the endless migration experience of the human being (Autoethnographic Notes of SF, August 2020, Sarajevo)

This reflection was prompted by reading Bauman's book "Culture in a Liquid Modern World", in which Bauman argues that there is no way for immigrants to escape their minority status in their country of origin other than to accept it (Bauman, 2011). This can be a difficult

and unwelcome feeling for many immigrants. However, Bauman (2011) also notes that one cannot escape this reality by referring to Rutherford's (2007) concept of belonging and homeland, which emphasizes the relationship between identity and nationality, individual and place, physical environment, and cultural identity in recent migration patterns. This has led me to question my sense of belonging and what I consider to be home. The process of migration, naturalization, and citizenship has helped me to evaluate these questions.

Migration, as commonly defined in the social sciences, refers to the movement of people from one location to another for various reasons, whether temporary or permanent (Hagen-Zanker, 2008). For this study, the term "international migration" is relevant for understanding naturalization and citizenship. The term "migrant" is not specifically defined under international law, but it is a generic term that encompasses various categories of migrants, such as temporary migrant workers, unskilled migrant workers, skilled workers, etc. (Castles, 2000; De Hass, 2007). In migration, the terms "emigration" and "immigration" refer to the movement of people out of or into an area, respectively (Adler & Gielen, 2003).

This study focuses on the experiences of skilled migrants, defined as individuals with qualifications such as professionals, technicians, students, or similar who migrate internationally (Castles, 2002; Castles, 2004). Skilled migrants must be supported by states because these individuals are few and are, therefore, less likely to face political opposition. States can control international mobility, and supporting skilled migrants is important because they are few and less likely to face political opposition. (Castle, 2004; Hollifield, 2004; Williams et al., 2018).

This study, therefore, examines the micro-level experience of an individual in the macro-level forces that shape migration, mobility, and naturalization decisions. It reflects on my autoethnographic experiences as a female emigrant from Turkey and a skilled immigrant to Bosnia and Herzegovina in international migration.

## **2.2. Naturalization and Citizenship by Autoethnographic Notes**

I walked into the main waiting room of the Turkish Embassy in Bosnia and

Herzegovina, which was located on Vilsonova Šetalište street. In June 2019, after returning from a conference on migration in Bari, Italy, I began to consider applying for citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, I was not prepared for the feeling of desperation that came with surrendering my Turkish ID card and passport. As I sat there, I began to question the concept of state, power, and nationality. It was only then that I realized the true meaning of existentialism and the power of being an individual free from the constraints of a state. For the first time, I understood how constructed my life was (Autoethnographic Notes of SF, September 2019, Sarajevo).

Naturalization is the process by which immigrants can gain certain rights, also known as "acquiring citizenship" (Bloemraad, 2000, p. 158; Janoski, 2016, p. 27; Wallace-Goodman, 2010, p. 3). However, naturalization is not a straightforward or easy process. In the literature on citizenship law, naturalization for immigrants is often classified based on the country of origin and the country of destination (Dronkers & Vink, 2012, p. 392; Helbling, 2008, p. 27; Yang, 1994, p. 462).

The naturalization process for immigrants is influenced by a variety of factors, including demographic characteristics (Euwals et al., 2007). Both citizenship and naturalization are governed by state laws and policies (Bloemraad, 2000). Immigrants often experience a significant drop in naturalization rates before they gain full citizenship rights (Wallace-Goodman, 2010).

Research has also shown that naturalization is positively related to sociocultural integration. Yang (1994) focused on the personalities and social contexts of immigrants and found that destination countries (Yang, 1994) often influence immigrants' decisions about naturalization. Yang's (1994) study also revealed that the most significant demographic factors for gender difference in naturalization are being a woman and being married to a citizen of the country of origin (Helbling, 2008; Yang, 1994). My husband was unaware of Yang's research, but after our brief conference trip to Italy, his subtle tactics of using patriarchal hierarchy prompted me to apply for citizenship to merge our family documents, as

he, too, was affected by the visa application process and discriminatory attitudes.

Citizenship is a complex concept. While some view citizenship as having three aspects at the individual level: law, identity, and civic virtue (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000), it is legally defined as a bond between the state and the individual. Citizens may reside in a specific territory and are subject to the state's control mechanisms as members of a democratic sovereign under whose authority laws are made (Benhabib, 2002). Regardless of whether it is a nation-state, a multinational state, or a confederation of states, a government has the power to exercise political authority over a territory and population to which its laws apply (Baubck, 1999; Benhabib, 2002).

Citizenship also has social, cultural, and psychological dimensions for the individual, as it signifies belonging to a nation and expresses individual identification (Hammar, 1985). While citizenship is primarily a legal status, it also represents the fulfillment of the social contract between the state and all legally recognized citizens. However, integration is not solely the responsibility of the state; it merely acts as a legal entity to provide contract-based documents.

Here I am, for the first time in a while, with my Bosnian passport and ready to travel with no visa restrictions. Being a citizen in the document so far seems the easy part of the integration, but it is almost close to impossible and unacceptable in the minds of people and society. People are willing to make fun of my accent by claiming it's so cute, are willing to ask why I'm not going back to Turkey, or are willing to call me none of them. Without knowing that I am legally identified as a Bosniak, have the same rights, and have the right to vote as a civic duty, none of these matters, especially not in public: I am Bosnian on paper but Turkish in public. That is why, after handing in our passports at the RS border, the border police have to close the window to joke and laugh with their colleague. No hard feelings. This made me realize the true challenge of my life: it is what my ancestors suffered and what I received in an epigenetic way. Everyone has their own transgenerational trauma;

mine should be called being "other" (Autoethnographic Notes of SF, August 2021, Sarajevo).

### **2.3. Migration, Naturalization, and Citizenship by Autoethnographic Notes: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Bosnia and Herzegovina became a sovereign state under the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement) in 1995. However, as Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a nation-state but a federal union based on the sovereignty of ethnic groups with political supremacy over individuals, it is difficult to come to a clear acceptance and definition of citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajlic, 2010). As a result, the concept of citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been only moderately developed, with ongoing debates about its political, social, and ethnic dimensions (Sarajlic, 2010).

The legal division of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the federation level, the entity level, and the ministry of civil affairs (which grants citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina), follows a combination of the principles of *ius soli* (by blood) and *ius sanguini* (by birth). However, citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina is often understood more in terms of ethnicity (Bosniak, Serb, Croat, other):

Official: How would you like to identify yourself?

Me: I'm thinking about it; isn't that a matter for the state?

My inner voice: "I have never asked myself this question. I was officially identified as a Turk from birth; nobody in Turkey ever asked me that. When I was first confronted with the importance of freedom of choice, the state asked me how I wanted to identify myself. Long live freedom. I wake up to my husband's voice.

My husband: Bosniak, Bosniak.

Me: Yes, Bosniak, I'm married too ...

My inner voice: I wanted to be a citizen of this country; why did the government force me to belong to an ethnic group, too, because ethnically, I'm not a

Bosniak? (Autoethnographic Notes of SF, September 2019, Sarajevo)

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, “facilitated naturalization” is defined in articles 11, 12, and 13 of the Dayton Peace Agreement (Sarajlic, 2012). This process, which follows national citizenship rules, may vary. The process of naturalization is complex and requires a different legal framework. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, foreigners who are married to a citizen and have lived in the country for five years are eligible to apply for naturalization (Bloemraad, 2002; De Voretz & Pivnenko, 2005; Janoski, 2016).

Besides the requirements mentioned above, the foreign spouse of a Bosnian citizen can get citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina if the marriage has lasted at least five years prior to the application and is still in effect at the time of the application. The applicant must also have had a permanent residence in Bosnia for at least five years without interruption before the application process. Unless a bilateral agreement states otherwise, the applicant must renounce their previous citizenship or risk losing their acquisition of Bosnian citizenship (Muminović, 1998; Sarajlic, 2010). All documents from the country of origin must be stamped by the authority of the registered municipality with an apostille. Legal documents from the embassy of the host country are not recognized.

The policeman: “Ohhh, I’m not sure if the minister will accept this renunciation of citizenship from the embassy. This document must be submitted with the stamp of the Turkish Ministry of Interior.

Me: But after you gave me a guarantee certificate, I went to the Turkish Embassy to get all the necessary documents; after that, I renounced my Turkish citizenship at the Turkish Embassy in BiH, and I also had to return my passport. So, how could I return to Bosnia if I had renounced my citizenship to the Turkish authorities?

Policeman: I really don’t know, but it is a legal requirement to bring original documents with stamps from Turkey.

Me: I can’t travel to Turkey now; what should I do? Any solution?

Policeman: I will send these documents to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of BiH, but I’m not sure what they will do.

Me: giving error ...

And after two months ...

I received a call from the ministry. They told me that they could not process documents unless they received the original documents, which were issued by the main authority in Turkey. We had a similar conversation as with the policeman.

Inner Voice: Here, I am enlightened by what Dr. Karic says in his book ‘Consociationalism in the post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina’. He would always quote in the 2009 Introduction to Political Science class, ‘Bosnia begins where logic ends’. Now I’ve come to the point where I feel powerless against statelessness, aside from the fact that it’s all illogical. (Autoethnographic Notes of SF, September 2019, Sarajevo)

Based on the autoethnographic notes, it is clear that the naturalization process is more uncertain compared to the residence permit process, regardless of the historical period or geographical location. This is due to lengthy and unpredictable waiting times and other uncertainties (Sarajlic, 2010).

### 3. Methodology

“We are a sign, meaningless ...” (Hölderlin, 2004, p. 50)

#### 3.1. Participants

The presence of a second author in this research has enhanced the use of scientific methods for data collection and analysis. The article is authored by two female academicians at a university, where one as a mentor and the other as a Ph.D. candidate. The corresponding author, a forty-year-old, has been living in the host country for fifteen years, married to a Bosniak national. The second author, aged sixty, has spent close to three years in the area. The collaboration between the two authors is because the thoughts and ideas presented in this article are derived from autoethnographic insights, but the second author acts as a mentor to the first author, who has experienced the

social problem being examined. This mentorship helps guide the first author in using a scholarly writing process to produce scientific knowledge.

### 3.2. Instruments

Spry's (2017) definition of autoethnography particularly resonated with me: "autoethnography is not just about the self at all; rather, it is about a desired embodiment of the we" (p. 49). This method allows one researcher to use inductive reasoning skills to include personal reflections on emotions, arguments, and general thinking rather than simply describing events. Autoethnography is considered a credible and valuable research method because it allows the researcher to engage in self-reflective storytelling when analyzing their cultural biographies (Farrell et al., 2015). In this study, using autoethnography to connect my migration and integration stories from a personal perspective has helped me to overcome the challenges and difficulties I faced while adjusting to my new citizenship status.

### 3.3. Procedure

According to Richardson (2015) and St Pierre (2008), writing is a process of thinking and discovery that can be both interesting and complex. This paper primarily examines the connection between constructed migration status and integration from the perspective of citizenship and the role of autoethnography in understanding these issues. The aim is to provide a detailed description of these topics from an autoethnographic perspective.

#### 3.3.1. Data Collection

In using autoethnography for various research, I discovered my story and the potential for writing to bridge the gap between the public and private spheres (McAdams, 2006). This connection between the autobiographical impulse (looking inward) and the ethnographic impulse (looking outward) can be healing, according to Tetlock (2005) (cited in Richard, 2015). In this research, I have used autoethnographic notes to reflect on my life in Bosnia and Herzegovina during three different phases in order to gain insights into my migration experiences.

#### 3.3.2. Data Analysis

The study combines a micro-level analysis of my personal experiences with a macro-level

examination of migration and citizenship relations. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of these issues through the lens of my own experiences based on autoethnography in the reflexivity of the self.

## 4. Results

My migration status in BiH was conceptualized in three different time-lapses: student migrant, marriage-get migrant, and migrant who gained the right to citizenship. In 2008, I came to BiH to do my undergraduate studies. I got married while I was still studying in 2011 and then decided in 2019 to apply for citizenship.

The findings revealed by the study of the autoethnographic reflection of female Turkish immigrants who experienced immigration, naturalization, and citizenship have highlighted the following three timelines: (a) pre-naturalization; (b) statelessness; and (c) getting citizenship.

### 4.1. Pre-Naturalization

#### 4.1.1. Acceptance in Society Requires a Longer and more Active Interaction Process

I have encountered these different time lapses in my life through autoethnographic reflection. Being a student immigrant was the least stressful of the three-phase periods of the migration journey, and integration expectations were at an average high. Being a married migrant was brought thought to have sped up expectations for the integration progress compared to the previous phase. Even so, I encountered social resistance that questioned my existence in Bosnia. Because being a married immigrant was fraught with societal expectations, these relationships are autoethnographically reflected through friendship and kinship affiliations, and none of these affiliations have provided a greater sense of sincerity than being official.

For instance, one day, we met our old neighbor in the elevator, and while this old lady was talking to my husband, I somehow noticed her ignorant attitude toward me. When my husband introduced me, her comment was still echoing in my ears like "ona nije naša" (she's not one of us). Later, this echo could be heard everywhere I spoke. This kind of resistance, taunting or joking about my accent, caused more and more formality in daily life interaction.

In addition, having two houses in different social strata of the country—the urban area of Sarajevo and the rural area of Sarajevo—provided me the opportunity to observe and analyze different attitudes and behavior patterns towards me as a migrant. Gradually, I noticed that the resistance in the rural areas and partly also in the urban areas was melting away; they started to speak more acceptably, at least without making fun of my language skills. For instance, one of the ice-breaking points was the time of the Eid celebration. Islam has two EID celebrations and holidays that follow the Islamic Calendar. These events have distinct customs and practices for observance. Among Muslims, a widespread tradition during these occasions is to prepare customary meals and pay visits to family and friends. People exchange gifts and commemorate their holy day together, often sharing a meal as well. As a migrant who came from Macedonian and Turkish culture, I prepared conventional meals like baklava this is a dessert with a widely recognized name that is prepared by combining nuts and sorbet. Its distinctive shape and unique features are part of its appeal, and sarmsa this savory dish is a Macedonian specialty typically enjoyed during Eid celebrations. It is crafted from unused baklava dough topped with yogurt. Baklava is often served alongside it as an accompaniment. This cultural transmission of food somehow contributed to my integration into society.

#### *4.1.2. Official Dilemma in Bureaucratic Progress*

My interaction with the institutional government bodies could be considered complicated because there have been various bureaucratic dilemmas throughout the residence permit applications. We can understand this bureaucratic dilemma as a point of irregular standardization; the co-author also contributed her experiences in her residence permit application:

I was not faced with problems completing my application process with a Bosnian-English translator as a Turkish-skilled migrant applicant to receive a residence permit in the first year. The second year, I followed the same instructions to collect papers and approach the Service for Foreigner Affairs with the same translator who must be authorized by the court, and the responsibility for covering all costs related to transportation, finance, and

other expenses rests with the migrants themselves. This process may pose significant difficulties and obstacles for those who lack sufficient financial means, which could ultimately become a major issue for them. Bosnian-English language; the officer informed me that in order to progress with my application, I needed to come here with a translator of Bosnian-Turkish, not a Bosnian-English language translator. It creates much more pressure on the applicants. I couldn't handle the application that day. So, I made another appointment a few days later with the Service for Foreign Affairs, and I went with a Bosnian-Turkish translator to pursue my application for a residence permit. I had to pay for both separately, and it cost me a lot of time, money, and effort (Autoethnographic Notes of ET, 2021, Sarajevo).

Obtaining resident permission or any other documentation requirements can easily be turned into a waste of time, money, and effort. Because of the inconsistency in the system, although applicants collect all the required documents according to the list that was provided, bureaucratic standardization has always been an issue with a standardized application.

Another bureaucratic dilemma faced by the country of FBiH is that regardless of migration status, the entire application is issued annually, which means applicants should apply for a residence permit every year. After a five-year long-term and yearly residence permit, the applicant may apply for permanent residence.

## **4.2. Naturalization and Statelessness**

### *4.2.1. Traveling to the Schengen Area with a Turkish Passport Cause of Discrimination*

Thinking about the citizenship decision started with applying for a Schengen visa to attend the conference in Italy. After I paid the fee and brought my employment contract and other required documents for the conference with an admission letter, they approved the one-week Schengen visa. Admittedly, such a short time limit puts pressure on the person. Although everything went smoothly until the day of departure, on the last day, while we were waiting for the Dubrovnik ferry in Bari port, my husband came to the car, furious and stressed:

My husband said, “The border police have a problem with the visa date on the passport. It really became a burden for all of us. This was supposed to be a simple trip without being kept and explained to the border police.

Me: “I look back down the meaningless path to find out what happened,” I asked him.

My husband said, “I was waiting there because the border police wanted to be sure of your physical existence in the car. I guess they would not have a problem. This is the last day of your departure.

They asked me about you, your passport, and the expiration date of the Schengen visa. Serap, I do not need this for a future trip. Please reconsider naturalization. We need to travel safely and smoothly so that I don’t spend thousands of dollars and time getting a visa.

Me: Silent mood... my inner voice told me he had a point. It is not only waiting; questioning this made me feel inferior and uncomfortable (Autoethnographic Notes of SF, June 2019, Bari).

This was the scene of my conference trip. The autoethnographic reflection of the scene is important because it stimulates thoughts and a reconsideration of the beginning of the naturalization process. The feeling that was transmitted to me by my husband was really displeasing; it was irritating me, and I felt unwanted in this place. This reflected a sociological imagination of gender stratification and, engendering migration as well. Because the situation that bothered me the most was the views of the male-dominated world that he built on me by turning such an issue into a patriarchal world mechanism. As a woman, I was represented as a problem for my family and as a burden. This experience made me feel the pressure of this male-dominated world, patriarchal world order, and gender-stratified mechanisms on women immigrants due to gender-based discrimination and bias.

### 4.3. Get citizenship

#### 4.3.1. Documented Citizenship

After my application for naturalization was approved, I didn’t come to the immigration office, but now I’m back in

the hallway to delete my old ID number. We explained the situation to the officer, and we were given a document to fill out and pay to cancel the old ID number. When we managed to submit all the required documents, we asked how long the decision would take. We were not given a clear or specific explanation of the timing of when the decision could be issued. This uncertainty made me puzzled and frustrated (Autoethnographic Notes of SF, July 2021, Sarajevo).

During this process, I encountered many ambiguities and difficulties with documentation. Applying for naturalization began in 2019 and was finally approved in 2021, but it took an additional four or five months to complete. The bureaucracy did not end with the approval of my naturalization application; rather, it was followed by a confusing and stressful process of collecting various documents and navigating government agencies. Collecting documents and waiting as a stateless person became increasingly frustrating as I neared the end. I felt overwhelmed and exhausted, and the feeling only grew until I received my passport, which finally allowed me to travel. That is why, when I received my Bosnian passport, I felt a greater sense of relief than when I received my ID card. The first trip I took after being recognized as a citizen of a new country was to Turkey.

Even though these new documents give me the same power as locals, they have made me realize I lack the skills to vote properly. Hence, the document gives me the capability to vote, but I need to update my abilities for Bosnia and Herzegovina. For instance, for the first time in my life, I studied the election system, the campaigning of political parties, the programs of political parties, and the profiles of political candidates. Although I studied everything theoretically, the structure of the organization for voting and the ballot was very complicated and made me feel paralyzed. I felt I knew nothing. Because the ballot was not something I knew from my country of origin, it was like a magazine. The only thought that came to my mind was:

I have a political stance! I am aware Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex political and state structure. Ever since I became Bosniak, I knew that I would vote



for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a Bosniak candidate in this divided country. However, I am not expecting to have this kind of ballot, which is as complicated as the country's own political system. There is no stamp at all. Wherever the world puts a cross in the box that is next to the elected candidate, it can be considered a vote. There were several pages for the three members of the Presidency to be elected by plurality in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In total, 518 positions are open across the state, entity, and cantonal levels, with 7,258 total registered candidates. 3.3 million voters registered in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina can vote for 127 political entities, including 72 parties, 38 coalitions, and 17 independent candidates, for either the Bosniak or Croat candidate, but they cannot vote for both different ethnic candidates. It seems more like an exam than an election. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country where voting is seen as a family matter and women are expected to follow their husbands, the patriarchal mechanism did not let me go alone, even in the voting process, such as the private and secret processes. I noticed in the previous election that in the rural area, a husband's political values have a significant influence on the women's political views. I was mentally prepared for my husband's comment (Autoethnographic Notes of SF, October 2022, Sarajevo).

## 5. Discussion

This autoethnographic study has identified various factors that influence the decision to apply for citizenship in the host country, such as family reunification, integration, and documentation. An interesting result of the study is the examination of the role of gender in this process. Social sciences and humanities rely heavily on self-reflection and reflexivity for conceptual development (Kuhiwczak, 2014). Because of this, through the in-depth analysis of autoethnographic notes, the study has found that women may be more likely to apply for citizenship for family reunification and that applying for citizenship has legal,

political, social, cultural, and psychological effects on the individual (Hammar, 1985).

According to previous research on migration, women are more likely to experience discrimination and prejudice during the processes of migration, naturalization, and citizenship application (Roy, 2008). In this study, the first research question was, "Why does a Turkish-skilled woman migrant decide to apply for citizenship?" Initially, the main reason for applying for citizenship was thought to be for family reunification and to avoid causing inconvenience to other family members by making them wait at the border during international travels.

Richardson and St. Pierre (2008) introduced "narrative inquiry", a method that involves examining and understanding individuals' stories or narratives that help them make sense of their experiences. This approach can offer insights into the complexities of human experience and how people create their identities, relationships, and meanings in various disciplines, including education, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and ethnography. Narrative inquiry is especially useful for exploring sensitive or challenging topics that other research methods may find difficult to address. The method emphasizes the importance of understanding individuals' stories and the meanings they attach to them. On the other hand, autoethnography is a research and writing approach, as emphasized by Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2014), that involves describing personal experiences (auto) and systematically analyzing them to understand cultural experiences. Autoethnography allows researchers to explore their own experiences and gain insights into how external cultural and social factors have shaped those experiences. In the progress of the writing, the power of autoethnography came to light, and I realized that the real reason was that my husband used the citizenship application as a tool to activate patriarchal, hierarchical mechanisms and injected it skillfully into me.

Our trip to Italy in 2019 was unique in that it was related to my academic career development through conference attendance; thus, to sabotage this conference attendance and my career widening, my husband was closely monitoring the visa application process. Since the beginning, he has been hoping that I would

not get my visa. My academic development somehow irritates him, and his toxic and taunting comment about my attendance at the conference on migration hurts me and makes me realize his undermining mindset toward me as a woman. From the beginning to the end of our journey to Italy, he kept commenting on the most concise conference attendance and the process of my visa application. During our time in Italy, an incident occurred that made me feel weak and vulnerable, and my husband used this as an opportunity to assert control over the children and me. Because of these patriarchal, male-dominated power dynamics, I considered applying for citizenship in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the first time in my eight years of marriage. This decision was influenced by the impact of patriarchal, hierarchical mechanisms (Creswick, 2017).

According to Christou and Kofman (2022), the root cause of my desire to get citizenship was not simply to ease the feeling of being a burden on my family during international travel. Rather, it resulted from a deeper analysis of my personal experiences and how patriarchal power dynamics had sabotaged my academic and personal growth. The study of Zhumasheva et al. (2022) elaborates on this: in symbolic nominations of a person, gender-specific characteristics can be expressed; therefore, extended nominations can be considered a way to reflect gender stereotypes. The metaphorical modeling of a person's image includes gender as a sociocultural manifestation of gender differentiation. Through this autoethnographic study, the macro-level process of applying for citizenship had been used as a tool to reinforce patriarchal hierarchy in my micro-level life. Patriarchy works on an unconscious level to control and oppress women by instilling feelings of guilt, shame, inadequacy, and powerlessness (Christou & Kofman, 2022).

The second question explored in this study was: What challenges and experiences do migrants encounter when applying for citizenship? Naturalization is supposed to provide immigrants with the same civil liberties as native-born citizens (Wallace-Goodman, 2010), but through my in-depth analysis of my personal experiences and autoethnographic notes, I identified a specific challenge related to the bureaucratization and documentation processes during the application. For example,

when I was asked to renounce my Turkish citizenship while dealing with the psychological effects of statelessness and navigating confusing bureaucracy, I became skeptical about the outcome of my application. I was concerned that all the effort, time, and money I had invested in collecting documents and paying for the renunciation of my Turkish citizenship and the citizenship application could be wasted. I had to deliberate my next steps and devise a strategic plan. The bureaucratic challenge I faced during the citizenship application process had a profound impact on my personal life and changed my outlook. To deal with this struggle, I chose to passively endure the bureaucracy between Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Migrant one researcher has found that the naturalization process for immigrants is influenced by factors such as cultural similarities, historical ties, personal and integration skills, and societal attitudes toward migrants (Bloemraad, 2002; Dronkers & Vink, 2012). In my experience, I felt a strong connection to the culture and people of the region. However, what sets my experience apart is the exclusionary attitude towards migrants at the societal level. I have never been accepted for who I am, but I have been labeled as a "Turkinja". A cultural approach to the word is reflected in its semantics. A single word typically has a primary or basic meaning, but over time, its usage may develop to encompass multiple meanings. As a result, the relationship between the word, its various meanings, and the corresponding real-world concepts will influence how a speaker refers to them (Nurbayani & Dede, 2022).

The autoethnographic reflection of my experience with social exclusion and the prolonged waiting process in a state of statelessness, feeling like I was trapped in a cage, brought to the surface my transgenerational trauma. As Bauman (2011) pointed out, being a minority is a difficult and unwelcome feeling for many immigrants. I tried to understand the migration challenges and experiences of my ancestors. Sometimes, your physical appearance or your nationality, as recorded in your passport, will always be seen as a problem or as "other".

The third question of this study was: "Cultural encounters, identity, and the vision of migrant

women". According to Kulmanova et al. (2022), most historical and cultural connections have their roots in religious culture. It is important to note, however, that language is a necessary component for implementing religious and other interventions. The analysis of cultural encounters was also conducted prior to the citizenship application process (Terragni et al., 2014). This included cultural competencies such as proficiency in the local language, familiarity with the socio-economic environment, and employment and marital status (Ager & Strang, 2008; Logan et al., 2012; Yang, 1994). The long-term cultural encounters that were reflected in my micro-level life were the incorporation of daily life traditions, norms, and rituals because of this citizenship process. I gradually and subconsciously adopted many aspects of Bosniak culture. There was an exchange of kitchen rituals and cuisine between Bosnian and Turkish cultures, especially within my extended Bosnian family, since my marriage. Turkish baklava has become popular among family members.

Cultural encounters, identity, and world vision also developed and were reinforced during parenthood. For example, teaching my native language to my children was met with negativity from family members, various individuals, and even within educational institutions. When enrolling my kids in kindergarten, school, or courses, the first question asked is often about how well we understand the local culture. When my children took part in national day celebrations for Bosnia and Herzegovina in school and sang Bosniak children's songs and hymns, I felt anxious and worried as a Turkish-origin mother about my ability to pass on my cultural identity to my children.

Another strategy for coping with social exclusion was to develop a strong linguacultural relationship with another foreign bride within the family. Among other things, Shokym et al. (2022) point out that gender is not determined biologically, and in different cultures and linguistic communities, concepts of femininity and masculinity are influenced by cultural and historical factors, especially linguistic stereotypes (Kirilina, 2002). It is important to note that linguacultural concepts encompass the peculiarities of a nation's communicative behavior and mentality, which are represented in the customs, traditions,

beliefs, and collective experiences of that nation (Shokym et al., 2022).

These experiences, challenges, and strategies are not solely the result of my migration status or a rigidly defined social construct. Rather, they have been shaped and reinforced by my individual journey to Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2008. It is important to note that these concepts are interconnected. The process of migration has its own dynamics, and even getting citizenship does not mean that the integration process is finished. It is a lifelong learning system.

Previous research has shown that citizenship has a significant impact on the social, economic, and political integration of migrants in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, marriage status does not seem to have a significant effect on integration acceptance at the social level. This can create challenges for female migrants as they face uncertainty about their plans and role within their families. Further research is needed to explore the relationship between citizenship and integration, particularly through case analyses. A deeper analysis of cultural barriers and the citizenship model could reveal potential avenues for future studies.

## References

- Adler, L. L., Kleiner, R. J., Gielen, U. P., & Kleiner, J. R. (2003). *Migration: Immigration and emigration from an international perspective*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166-191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>
- Bauman, Z. (2011). *Collateral damage: Social inequalities in a global age*. Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2013). *Culture in a liquid modern world*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Benhabib, S. (2002). Transformations of citizenship: The case of contemporary Europe. *Government and Opposition*, 37(4), 439-465. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-7053.00110>
- Bloemraad, I. (2006). Becoming a citizen in the United States and Canada: Structured mobilization and immigrant political incorporation. *Social Forces*, 85(2), 667-695. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2007.0002>

- Bloemraad, I., Korteweg, A., & Yurdakul, G. (2008). Citizenship and immigration: Multiculturalism, assimilation, and challenges to the nation-state. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34(1), 153-179. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134608>
- Caponio, T. (2008). (Im)migration research in Italy: A European comparative perspective. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 49(3), 445-464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2008.00123.x>
- Castles, S. (2002). Migration and community formation under conditions of globalization. *International Migration Review*, 36(4), 1143-1168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2002.tb00121.x>
- Castles, S. (2004). The factors that make and unmake migration policies. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 852-884. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00222.x>
- Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. (2003). *The age of migration*. The Guilford Press.
- Christou, A., & Kofman, E. (2022). Engendering integration and inclusion. In IMISCOE Short Reader (Ed.), *Gender and migration* (pp. 95-115). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-91971-9>
- Creswick, H. E. (2017). Women under the radar: The intersection of migration and domestic violence explored through the framework of (un)deservingness (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nottingham). Access from the University of Nottingham repository: <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/41494/1/THESIS.pdf>.
- De Haas, H. (2007). Turning the tide? Why development will not stop migration. *Development and Change*, 38(5), 819-841. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2007.00435.x>
- Dronkers, J., & Vink, M. P. (2012). Explaining access to citizenship in Europe: How citizenship policies affect naturalization rates. *European Union Politics*, 13(3), 390-412. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116512440510>
- Ellis, C., & Adams, T. E. (2014). The purposes, practices, and principles of autoethnographic research. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 254-276). Oxford University Press.
- Euwals, R., Dagevos, J., Gijsberts, M., & Roodenburg, H. (2007). *Immigration, integration and the labour market: Turkish immigrants in Germany and the Netherlands* (IZA Discussion Papers. No. 2677). Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA).
- Farrell, L., Bourgeois-Law, G., Regehr, G., & Ajjawi, R. (2015). Autoethnography: Introducing "I" into medical education research. *Medical Education*, 49(10), 974-982. <https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.12761>
- Hagen-Zanker, J. (2008). Why do people migrate? *A Review of the Theoretical Literature*. Maastricht Graduate School of Governance Working.
- Hammar, T. (1985). Dual citizenship and political integration. *International Migration Review*, 19(3), 438-450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019791838501900303>
- Helbling, M. (2008). Practising citizenship and heterogeneous nationhood: Naturalisations in Swiss municipalities (IMISCOE Dissertations). Amsterdam University Press. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ss0ar-271805>.
- Hölderlin, F. (2004). *Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin: The fire of the gods drives us to set forth by day and by night*. Ithuriel's Spear.
- Hollifield, J. F. (2004). The emerging migration State: 1. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 885-912. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00223>
- Janoski, T. (2016). *Naturalization levels and processes: Consequences for social policy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Karić, M. (2020). Consociationalism in the post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Bosnian Studies: Journal for Research of Bosnian Thought and Culture*, 4(1), 82-107.
- Kuhiwczak, P. (2014). Transculturation and multilingual lives: Writing between languages and cultures. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 2(2), 103-111.
- Kulmanova, Z., Zhirenov, S., Mashinbayeva, G., Orynbayeva, D., Abitova, Z., & Babaeva, K. (2022). Reflection of the religious worldview in language.

- International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 10(3), 31-43. <https://doi.org/10.22034/ijsc.2022.544382.2484>
- Kvedaraitė, N., Baksys, D., Repečkienė, A., & Glinskienė, R. (2015). Research of experience of emigration for employment and education purposes of students. *Engineering Economics*, 26(2), 196-203. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ee.26.2.3863>
- Kymlicka, W., & Norman, W. (2000). *Citizenship in culturally diverse societies*. Oxford.
- Logan, J. R., Oh, S., & Darrah, J. (2012). The political and community context of immigrant naturalization in the United States. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 38(4), 535-554. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.659116>
- McAdams, D. P., Josselson, R., & Lieblich, A. (2006). *Identity and story: Creating self in the narrative*. American Psychological Association.
- Morawska, E. (2008). Research on immigration and ethnicity in Europe and the United States: A comparison. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 49(3), 465-482. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2008.00124.x>
- Muminović, E. (1998). Problems of citizenship laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Croatian Critical Law Review*, 3(1-2), 71-87.
- Nurbayani, S., & Dede, M. (2022). The effect of COVID-19 on white-collar workers: The DPSIR model and its semantic aspect in Indonesia. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 10(3), 73-88. <https://doi.org/10.22034/ijsc.2022.550921.2592>
- Richards, M. (2015). Turning back to the story of my life: An autoethnographic exploration of one of the researchers' identity during the Ph.D. process. *Reflective Practice*, 16(6), 821-835. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2015.1095731>
- Richardson, L., & St Pierre, E. (2008). A method of inquiry. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 3(4), 473-499. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417734567>
- Roy, A. (2008). Engendering citizenship: An agenda for a praxis of citizenship. *Indian Historical Review*, 35(2), 209-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/037698360803500212>
- Sarajlić, E. (2010). *A citizenship beyond the nation-state: Dilemmas of the "Europeanization" of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (CITSEE Working Paper Series, 9). CITSEE.
- Sarajlić, E. (2012). Conceptualizing citizenship regimes in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Citizenship Studies*, 16(3-4), 367-381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2012.683247>
- Shokym, G., Burankulova, E., Yessenova, K., Sarbassova, A., Bauyrzhan Kyzy, B., & Yerzhanova, G. (2022). Representation of the "kyz" gender concept in the Turkic linguistics. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 10(1), 125-134. <https://doi.org/10.22034/ijsc.2022.543085.2467>
- Spry, T. (2017). Who are "we" in performative autoethnography? *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 10(1), 46-53. <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2017.10.1.46>
- Stewart, A. (1995). Two conceptions of citizenship. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 46(1), 63-78. <https://doi.org/10.2307/591623>
- Terragni, L., Garnweidner, L. M., Pettersen, K. S., & Mosdøl, A. (2014). Migration as a turning point in food habits: The early phase of dietary acculturation among women from South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Countries living in Norway. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 53(3), 273-291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03670244.2013.817402>. PMID: 24735209.
- Trenz, H. J., & Triandafyllidou, A. (2017). Complex and dynamic integration processes in Europe: Intra EU mobility and international migration in times of recession. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(4), 546-559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1251013>
- van Riemsdijk, M., & Basford, S. (2022). Integration of highly skilled migrants in the workplace: A multi-level framework. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 23(2), 633-654. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00845-x>
- Wallace Goodman, S. (2010). *Naturalization policies in Europe: Exploring patterns of*

- inclusion and exclusion*. <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/19577>
- Williams, F. (2018). Care: Intersections of scales, inequalities, and crises. *Current Sociology*, 66(4), 547-561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001139211876520>
- Yang, P. Q. (1994). Explaining immigrant naturalization. *International Migration Review*, 28(3), 449-477. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019791839402800302>
- Zhumasheva, K., Sapargaliyeva, M., Sarkulova, D., Kuzhentayeva, R., & Utarova, A. (2022). Representation of gender metaphor in lexicography as a reflection of culture. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 10(3), 151-162. <https://doi.org/10.22034/ijsc.2022.555683.2662>