

**THE INTERLACING OF MANY WORLDS:  
BOSNIAN FINNISH CONNECTION TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TODAY**

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Abstract <p>The purpose of this research project is to gain more understanding on the lives of the Bosnian diaspora in Finland. An important aspect is to see if the Bosnian diaspora maintains some kind of communication and/or network with the homeland as well as diaspora networks in other countries. Due to the complexities of diaspora networks across nations and societies, theoretical frameworks such as soft power, transnationalism, trans-localism, and imagined communities are utilised to help better grasp the vastness of the evolving situation. The data collected included transcribed open-discussion interviews as well as answers to a questionnaire.</p> <p>The results indicate that, first, there is frequent communication with Bosnian communities in Finland as well as in Europe and the United States of America. Second, attempts are actively being made to try to maintain links to Bosnian heritage while adapting to Finnish ways of life. Third, despite the Bosnian diaspora in Finland having frequent contact with the homeland, they experienced instances of feeling unwelcomed by Bosnians currently residing in Bosnia and Herzegovina.</p> <p>The results are significant, for example, for policy makers, organisations, and historians in Finland as well as abroad to understand and better prepare for any collaborations with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The complex history of the Balkan region still impacts the mindset and interactions of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina today. With the information presented, people can use the uncovered information for future use.</p>	
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## ACRONYMS

<b>BiH, B&amp;H</b>	Bosna i Hercegovina, Also known as 'Bosnia and Herzegovina' in English
<b>BKC</b>	Bosnialaisten Kulttuurikeskus Suomessa, Also known as 'Bosanski Kulturni Centar u Finskoj' in Bosnian and 'Bosnian Cultural Centre in Finland' in English
<b>ESN</b>	Erasmus Student Network
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>D.C.</b>	District of Columbia, In reference to Washington, D.C.; capital of the United States
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>IDESCO</b>	International Degree Student Community of Jyväskylä
<b>Info</b>	Information
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Student Assessment
<b>USA, U.S.</b>	United States of America
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of Yugoslavia in the 1990's, people and families have scattered all over the world in the search for a better life. Many Bosnians clustered together to form communities in new countries as a support network toward survival and adaptation. This research is focused on the Bosnian diaspora in Finland and their relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina today. Since the memory of struggle and displacement lives on in almost all Bosnians, I want to uncover the missing links which exist amongst the Bosnian diaspora today and any ongoing changes occurring to them in Finland. Being part of the Bosnian diaspora from the United States, I hope this research helps to provide me an understanding where I fit into this globalised community. In addition, my curiosity wonders if there is any influence of Finnish society on the ideals and mindsets of the Bosnian Finnish diaspora today.

As human history reminds us, diaspora communities have been occurring for thousands of years, but it has only been until recently that research focuses on this area. The research I provide may not only help the Bosnian community with their relation to the motherland, but also provide governments, organisations, and institutions in Finland (and abroad) some perspective into what Bosnian and other diasporas experience today. Oftentimes, there are misconceptions that diasporas all come from a single type, diaspora communities remain stagnant, and diasporas are always welcomed by people within the homeland.

The topic of diasporas within the realm of development studies could be a missing link into providing more relevant and sustaining projects. People within the diaspora network tend to be more aware of social cues, customs, and general mindset. This could greatly strengthen Finland's reputation, academic output, and networking capacity. Finally, the exchange of information and ideas could improve the lives of people around the world.



## 1.1 Research Objective and Questions

The proposed objective of this research is to identify the transnational connections of the Bosnian diaspora in Finland.

The research questions are:

1. What connections does the Bosnian Finnish branch hold within the globalised Bosnian diaspora?
2. How is the Bosnian diaspora adapting in Finland while maintaining aspects of one's heritage?
3. How does the Bosnian Finnish diaspora perceive its relationship to be like with Bosnians currently living in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE BOSNIAN DIASPORA**

This chapter addresses the general understanding and definition of ‘diaspora,’ diasporas in Finland, Bosnian diaspora in other countries, diaspora’s previous influence on homelands, and brief overview of diaspora history.

### **2.1 Introduction to Diasporas**

The word for ‘diaspora’ has been used for thousands of years and comes from the Greek word διασπορά meaning “scattering of the seeds.” It was first used to describe Jews and other groups who were exiled from Israel thousands of years ago (Anthias, 1998 as cited in Grossman, 2019, p. 1264). This means that the initial connotation of diaspora meant a group of people who were forced out of their motherland. Overtime, the meaning of diaspora expanded and is continually adapting to the modern world. This can be seen in the latest definition of diaspora which reads, “a group of people who spread from one original country to other countries...” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). People can move to a new country for a variety of reasons such as for work, education, marriage, and safety to name a few. It must also be noted that within diaspora communities themselves, there can be such complexities such as, “migrant histories, legal statuses, gender, educational and professional background and the intensity of transnational relations...” (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4126). For example, the first Iraqi community to settle in Finland in the late 1980’s are radically different from the Iraqi newcomers in 2015 because society in Iraq has changed (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4133). Being a part of a diaspora is a personal choice and this identity cannot be imposed even if the person is part of the community (Grossman, 2019, p. 1275).

Finland is a country relatively new to globalized immigration. Between World War II and the 1970’s, emigration far outweighed immigration but the immigrants who did return to Finland, were Finns who moved to Sweden for work opportunities. Since the 1980’s, a significant increase of immigrants arrived in Finland, including

from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The original integration policy from the 1980's wanted to disperse refugees and returnees into smaller towns and underpopulated areas to counterbalance the ageing population and decreased birth rates in certain areas. However, immigrants and refugees tend to want to settle in close proximity to economic activity and many communities moved to areas around Helsinki, Turku, and Tampere (Lobodzinska, 2011, pp. 44–45). This mirrors closely to that of the Bosnian diaspora in Finland where one of the most diverse immigrant communities in Finland, which includes Bosnians, live in a suburb in Turku called Varissuo. This neighbourhood has been the focus of political discussion regarding immigration and internationalisation (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4128).

## **2.2 Previous Studies of Diasporas in Finland**

When refugees settle into a new society, past traumas and forced migration impact their relationship with the new society. Movement to a new place entails a new language, new culture, and new social circles which influence their social esteem. Social esteem is a niche we have in society that contributes to the common good from our skills and social networks (Turtiainen, 2013, pp. 20–21). Social esteem also has a direct impact on self-esteem and self-realisation because it gives people a purpose in life (Turtiainen, 2013, p. 32). Many feel immense gratitude for being provided protection. Due to what many refugees experienced, there are a few common characteristics which individuals display in Finland: reciprocity, social recovery, and reconciliation (Turtiainen, 2013, pp. 26–27). Contributing to the common good is ultimately an effort to rebuild their country of origin. For instance, settled refugees in Jyväskylä want to help their own people heal from the wounds of war and allow their children to have a brighter future in Finland (Turtiainen, 2013, p. 28). An example of this can be seen from the influx of asylum seekers in 2015 from Syria and Iraq to Finland. Many people from the established Iraqi and Syrian community were worried about possible security threats the newcomers posed in relation to ISIS expansion in the middle east. Some Iraqis and Syrians perceived that the Finnish authorities were not cognizant enough (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4134).

A different study was conducted by Laura Huttunen and Marko Juntunen. They confirm Turtianen's proposal by arguing that, "...understanding the social and political realities in the countries of origin of various migrant groups adds significantly to an understanding of the tensions and divisions in new countries of settlement, in this case Finland" (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4126). This means that to better understand why migrant groups behave or believe a certain way in Finland, we must analyse the social and political situation of their country of origin. Varissuo, a suburb located in Turku, currently has 44% of their inhabitants coming from recent migrant origins. This includes but is not limited to: Vietnamese, Iraqis, Somalis, Bosnians, and Kosovars. From the outside, Varissuo is depicted as a dangerous area but residents inside the community perceive Varissuo as tranquil, green, and with good social services (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4128). This example of Varissuo displays some tension or misperception between "native" Finns and the international migrant community inside. On the international level, political tensions and divisions of home countries continue through visits, family relations and networks, and/or new diaspora waves coming in (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4133).

Regarding the former Yugoslavia, many post-conflict diaspora groups in Varissuo recognize that social interactions in public spaces often mirror that of their home countries. Huttunen and Juntunen note that tensions of violence in the Balkans from the 1990's still impact social relations. Informants who came to Varissuo as adults informed researchers that they spent most of their time with like-minded people to avoid direct confrontation (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4133). Over the years, Laura Huttunen has conducted numerous studies on the Bosnian diaspora in Finland. An article published by her in 2005 does not support the concept of "ancient ethnic hatred" as the cause for war in Bosnia but rather the use of violence and exclusionary politics around ethnicity in the very recent past (Huttunen, 2005). This means that there are misconceptions regarding the Bosnian diaspora as well as societal structures in the Balkans.

## 2.3 Studies of Bosnian Diasporas Around the World

As in Varissuo, Turku, Finland, a similar pattern can be seen amongst former Yugoslavian groups in Australia. Borja Martinovic, Jolanda Jetten, Anouk Smeekes, and Maykel Verkuyten revealed that individuals who identified themselves according to post-conflict ethnicities (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian) tend to associate more with similar people but, individuals who identified themselves with a multi-ethnic label tended to associate with everyone (Martinovic et al., 2017). The researchers conclude that despite coming from the same region of the world, current social relations from the origin countries can impact diaspora groups today.

A similar pattern can be seen amongst second generation ex-Yugoslav youth in Switzerland. Whereas their families only give them scattered information on what happened in Bosnia, there is an understanding that associating with other groups from the former Yugoslavia could bring judgement from family. Youth who tended to view themselves under the Yugoslav label tended to be more open to the other ethnic groups from the Balkans. What makes the study by Dilyara Müller-Suleymanova unique is that many second generation Bosnian youth in Switzerland have felt discrimination by the majority so they associate with other migrant youth (Müller-Suleymanova, 2021).

Regarding financial remittances which the Bosnian diaspora contributes to the homeland, it is roughly 7.6% of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2016. Roughly 1.2 billion euros come into Bosnia and Herzegovina as remittances from abroad (Kovacevic, 2017). These remittances are part of the country's overall GDP of 15.8 billion euros (World Bank, 2017). This means that despite over half of the current Bosnian population living abroad, they have a significant impact on the economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kovacevic, 2017). In addition, the United States Agency for International Development is currently implementing a five-year, \$15.7 million Diaspora Invest project that hopes to result in \$50 million in new diaspora and private investment by 2027 (USAID, 2023).

## 2.4 Diaspora Connection to Conflict, Peace, and Governance

Since the advent of the internet and cellular technology, people can search what is occurring around the world with their fingertips. Not only can today's internet age connect long-lost relatives from around the world, but it can also make people feel historical happenings in real-time. Élise Féron and Sofiya Voytiv argue that on one side, conflicts happening in diasporas' homelands make them aware of their roots and actively welcoming others, but on the other hand, can trigger collective mobilization to get involved in that conflict (Féron & Voytiv, 2021, p. 212). As more people become aware of the conflict, diaspora individuals can sometimes be labelled as 'cultural liaisons' even if they were not aware of what is occurring. This could then lead these individuals to inform themselves and then disseminate information.

Diaspora involvement with influencing the country of one's own heritage is not a new phenomenon. The Czech and Slovak diaspora in North America played a major role in the establishment of Czechoslovakia. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1918, leaders from the Czecho-Slovak independence movement as well as representatives from U.S.-based fraternal organisations met in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They drafted a document that officialized relations between the various groups and influenced President Woodrow Wilson to support the establishment of an independent and democratic state. Representatives of Czech and Slovak descent came from Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania; a total of 29 people signed the historical document called The Pittsburgh Agreement (Grinnell, 2007, p. 8). In addition, Gregory Ignatius Zhatkovych, born in Galambos, Austria-Hungary (now Holubyn, Ukraine) immigrated to the United States at the age of five, graduated from high school in Pittsburgh, and earned his undergraduate and law degree in Pennsylvania. Zhatkovych became the first president of the Ruthenian region of Czechoslovakia (Magocsi, 2021).

Research conducted in 2018 by Jasmin Hasić focused on Bosnian diaspora's influence on the motherland and what perspectives local government and party officials, called elites in this study, had toward their involvement. In theory, strengthening the linkage between diaspora and locals could increase the capacity for local elites to collaborate through a proactive approach in the peacebuilding process (Hasić, 2018,

p. 32). Due to the complex governmental structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hasić conducted interviews in various regions with some similar characteristics. Whereas Brčko elites are fairly welcome of diaspora support, they do not perceive them seriously only because diaspora individuals do not reside in the community (Hasić, 2018, p. 38). Councillors in Bosanki Petrovac and Fojnica claim that economic contributions by the diaspora could spark tensions over access to these resources, which could undermine peace in the area. Hasić points out that there are no unified structural efforts in place to provide effectiveness and efficiency to guide funds toward development projects. There are no official communication channels to coordinate the relationship (Hasić, 2018, p. 39). With Doboj and Stolac, elites' attitudes are shaped by strong party politics. They claim that diaspora individuals are "bigger nationalists than people living here," despite some of these same local officials openly welcoming economic contributions from highly political and religious institutions. Elites in Doboj and Stolac appear to not want the peacebuilding process due to their strong identification to ethnicity (Hasić, 2018, pp. 40–41). Regarding Bugojno, Jajce, Mostar, and Vitez, elites have negative views in peacebuilding because of previous history in trying to institute peace, such as from the Dayton Peace Accords. There is a dismissive attitude toward the diaspora even though elites recognize their contributory power toward investments (Hasić, 2018, pp. 41–42). Overall, it appears that many local government and party officials are aware of the diaspora's financial power but do not know what is going on or how extensive the relationship is between the diaspora and the local people of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To possibly fill in the misperceived perception of diasporas being useless beyond starting conflicts and providing financial support to various factions, let us look at how Irish Americans helped end the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) armed struggle. The IRA is a paramilitary organisation with the goal of ending British rule in Northern Ireland so that there is a reunification of Ireland. One of the most notorious tactics used by the IRA was the widespread use of violence (Arthur & Cowell-Meyers, n.d.). For over 30 years, the IRA used violent tactics in the United Kingdom to get their voice heard and move toward their goal (Cochrane, 2007, p. 216). One of the main financial driving forces of the IRA were Irish diasporas around the world, with one of the main

hubs being in Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America. It was the shift of the Irish American political lobby and the soft power of the United States that influenced the IRA's focus from violence to that of strictly political influence (Cochrane, 2007). Because the United States had a history of Irish immigration, a particular relationship existed between the two countries despite being an ocean apart. This instance shows that even though large-scale migration occurred generations ago, diaspora communities can hold great influence over the motherland, and it would be unwise to dismiss or disregard the ideas and emotions held by such groups.

## **2.5 Cross Cultural Interactions of Diasporas**

Looking into the past, cross-cultural interactions between the diaspora and the homeland is not a recent phenomenon. Over 2,000 years ago, people from what is modern-day China moved to Southeast Asia along the maritime Silk Road. By the early 1400s, Chinatowns were established in Sumatra and Java, which are now part of modern-day Indonesia. Movement of Chinese migrants continued to expand and by the 1940's, there were 8.5 million Chinese expatriates globally (Guotu, 2021).

Between the 1880s and 1930s migrants returned to their homelands in central Europe, including Hungary. Many were peasants looking for economic opportunity in America and returned to their homeland with a mindset of self-agency and financial capital; all of which influenced them to not automatically submit to the traditional rural elites (Varga, 2021, p. 285). Some reform-minded intellectuals, like József Gerényi of Bardejov, predicted that returning migrants are literate and understood the value of public education as demonstrated in their American-educated children. This could lead returning migrants to be active in learning about democracy (Gerényi, n.d., as cited in Varga, 2021, p. 286). A large segment of political leaders and journalists who supported democracy, socialism, and/or anarchy encountered the United States political culture in the early 1990s and the interwar Europe period (Wyman, 1993, as cited in Varga, 2021, p. 286). In addition, displays of hygienic practices, trust in modern medicine, and better home construction techniques were noted in a village in northwest Hungary (Steiner, 1909, as cited in Varga, 2021, p. 293). Economic activity



such as buying land, modernising farms, and starting small-scale industries were demonstrated from returning migrants who previously worked in the United States (Hegedüs, 1905, as cited in Varga, 2021, p. 293). “Sojourners finding success in America paid off their debts and taxes... and donated to the church. Yet purposeful innovation by the sojourn... was rarely reported” (Varga, 2021, p. 296). This means that migrant, or as the modern term diaspora, involvement is not a new phenomenon but rather people at the time did not focus much attention to record many details about it. It can be safely assumed that distribution of ideas, customs, and financial capital across the Atlantic Ocean to the mainland European continent has been happening for at least 100 years.

Interaction between the United States and many European nations challenged the hierarchy of societies. The impact of return migration on central Europe is still mostly understudied due to the lack of resources (Varga, 2021, p. 281).

## 2.6 Literature Review Conclusion

When collaborating with diasporas and homeland communities, it is vital to understand history and ongoing dynamics between entities. The general understanding of diaspora communities is dynamic with some influence going back to thousands of years across various regions of the world. Even though Bosnia and Herzegovina is considered to be a Slavic country, the relation with its diaspora tends to show some distinctions from other groups. This is important to consider given the fact that the Balkans has had some major influence on historical power struggles on the European continent. I hope to focus on the often-overlooked diaspora influence on history as well as establish a baseline understanding of the Bosnian diaspora in Finland.

It is important to note that *Bosnialaisten Kulttuurikeskus Suomessa* conducted research and created a document called, *Bosanskohercegovački Građani u Finskoj – Analiza Stanja* (2021). This document is not currently published online but is accessible only by contacting the community centre. There is no English translation. The information in that study has not been incorporated into this research.

### 3 THEORETICAL APPROACHES OF THE STUDY

In this study, I will focus on the concepts of soft power, transnationalism, trans-localism, and imagined communities. These concepts were selected because they can be used and observed across societies while also considering the historical past and ongoing dynamics today. As the Bosnian diaspora around the world establishes businesses, careers, and social relations, there is a type of influence being established that is not always acknowledged. The interactions between diaspora communities and the homeland may have significant impacts on international relations of the countries where these diasporas are currently located.

#### 3.1 Soft Power and Transnationalism

According to one source, soft power is, “the use of a country’s cultural and economic influence to persuade other countries to do something, rather than the use of military power” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). From this understanding, soft power is a form of national hegemonic influence outside of conventional military use. Because it has become a popular term amongst the social sciences, it is important to be aware of the varying twists of meaning. Another definition explains soft power as, “the ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion” (Mattern, 2005, p. 583). This definition by Janice B. Mattern goes beyond the mere notion of national control on a global scale and makes it applicable on an individual level and which can be demonstrated by almost anyone. The definition which relates to my research on the Bosnian diaspora will primarily focus on Mattern’s definition of soft power. It is important to set the agenda and attract others toward it in order to potentially influence the outcomes (Cochrane, 2007, p. 216).

Soft power was originally coined and published by Joseph Nye in a 1990 book called *Bound to Lead*. Mainstream beliefs began to move away from hard power being the only effective way to influence people (Mattern, 2005, p. 587). As Nye puts it simply, soft power promises, “... a way to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion” (Nye, 1990, as cited in Mattern, 2005, p. 587). This means that soft

power influences others which attempts to respect their free will as compared to possible coercion and manipulation. It may come as a surprise to many that the specific concept of 'soft power' was introduced back in 1990. Significant thinkers such as Foucault, Bourdieu, and Gramsci explained varying versions of soft power. A thinker named Steven Lukes mentioned that power can "...operate socially in ways that subconsciously affect the formation of preferences" (Mattern, 2005, p. 588). This means that individuals and groups can give and receive power with very little thought.

Another important theory in potentially understanding the connection of Bosnian Finns to Bosnia and Herzegovina is called transnationalism. According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, transnationalism is the, "economic, political, and cultural processes that extend beyond the boundaries of nation-states" (Huff, 2014). This means that transnationalism is anything which is not defined by the physical boundaries of nation states. To better specify the meaning of transnationalism in this research, Östen Wahlbeck's definition of diaspora is, "... a transnational social organisation relating both to the country of origin and the country of exile, [which] can give a deeper understanding of the social reality in which refugees live" (2002, p. 222). This means that diasporas can be a type of community or group of people who are a link between countries and a link between the past and present. These variables impact the circumstances that refugees face today. Transnationalism on the micro-level is most often characterised by the, "connectedness across borders, the formality/informality of frequent cross-border activities and practices, and the high intensity and degree of cross-border exchanges" (Tedeschi et al., 2022, p. 604).

Just as the concept of 'soft power' arose in the 1990's, so did transnationalism. This time period also saw a sociological focus away from international migration and toward transnational diasporas (Wahlbeck, 2002, p. 221). Whereas the modes or ways of transportation of international groups have become well documented after many centuries of movement, the differences and outcomes amongst various migrant groups were notable. Wahlbeck notes that there is a plethora of information on refugees but only a small segment examines conceptual or theoretical questions regarding the diaspora process (2002, p. 221). This means that even though research recognizes each diaspora group or individual, not much effort has been put into the process

and/or relationship of becoming or being part of a diaspora. It is important to recognize because the relationship that each person has to the origin country may impact their interaction(s) as part of the diaspora.

The field of anthropology has greatly influenced the understanding of transnationalism. Researchers such as Linda Basch, Cristina Blanc-Szanton, and Nina Glick Schiller made a great impact on the understanding of international migration and transnationalism in the 1990's. They studied people from the Caribbean and Philippines in the United States and how these communities utilised economic, political, social, and cultural means between different societies. This was important in the ethnic relation theories of the 1990's did not connect with the situation which many refugees experienced (Wahlbeck, 2002, pp. 223-224).

### **3.2 Critical Perspectives of Soft Power and Transnationalism**

Since soft power is a relatively new theory in terms of influence and social relations, the debate regarding ongoing revisions and challenges are still being formulated. From what can be found, mainstream attention has not improved the comprehension of some conceptual issues with Nye's first publication on soft power. It could be said that soft power was used as a metaphor that highlighted American power and the continuation of American preeminence, rather than a tool for scientific study (Bakalov, 2019, p. 4). Amongst the populace, there is a distinct division in soft power between theory-centred and case-centred studies (Bakalov, 2019, p. 2).

Theory-centred studies of soft power critically question Joseph Nye's original framework. Many scholars agree that new revisions should relate to (Bakalov, 2019, pp. 10-15):

1. Bracketing resources as measures of differentiation
2. Employing a difference-in-degree distinction between soft and hard power
3. Conceptualising how soft power works

Meanwhile, case-centred research appears to have copied how soft power plays into American hegemony and possibly applies to other countries such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and many others. Different countries can

be better suited for soft power and/or hard power given their history and resources. For example, Brazil has not had a military confrontation in over 100 years so they can be considered to have a lack of hard power compared to the U.S.' involvement in many military interventions (Bakalov, 2019, pp. 15–22). In my research, I will keep this in perspective that soft power and hard power can vary by context and that there is no perfect amount which helps enhance peace. Each nation has its own advantages and weaknesses given various crossings of history, geographical locations, attitudes, time periods, and economic circumstances.

Since the term 'transnationalism' became mainstream in the 1990's, criticism of it also arose. Researcher Paolo Boccagni of the University of Trento in Italy, claims that transnationalism has not made progress outside of demonstrating connectedness of diaspora communities (Boccagni, 2012, p. 118). Transnationalism studies tend to ignore people currently residing in origin countries (Boccagni, 2012, p. 124). In addition, not all immigrants become transnational so it is important to further specify (Portes, 2001 as cited in Tedeschi et al., 2022, p. 605). For the theory of transnationalism to be more representative of current circumstances, three changes to strengthen the theory of transnationalism are:

1. Strengthen the connection with globalisation studies (Boccagni, 2012)
2. Further elaborate on the reference points of transnational lines (Boccagni, 2012)
3. Have a deeper reflection on the relevance of the identifications and senses of belonging to migrant connectedness to the homeland (Boccagni, 2012)

### **3.3 Use of Soft Power and Transnationalism in Diaspora Relations**

Just as research in soft power has recently come into mainstream perspective, so has research on diasporas. As previously mentioned in the literature review, the Irish American diaspora, which connected with Ireland many centuries ago, play an ongoing role in today's world. The United States government utilised soft power from its Irish diaspora to shift the Irish Republican Army's focus from violent means to that

strictly political (Cochrane, 2007). This helped prove that even diaspora formations from many generations past are relevant to today.

Regarding more recent diaspora groups, it has been noted that international communities can bring back political ideologies from the nations they've visited and resided to their origin country. In addition, there had been an ongoing effort focused on Burundi so that international diaspora members maintain positive relations to the origin country through trips and in-person interactions (United Nations & International Organization for Migration, 2019, pp. 170–171). This can allow for the development of a different sense of reality for international Burundi communities through the use and maintenance of soft power relations. This relates to my research because it could possibly confirm possible reality changes amongst the Bosnian diaspora living in Finland compared to the community in Bosnia and Herzegovina (origin country).

The theory of transnationalism does not only refer to economic, political, social, and cultural ties of an individual between societies, but also the emotional bond which holds the person(s) understanding of their current world together. With research on Japanese women living in Australia, researchers noted great emotional connection to their families and nations of origin as an example of transnationalism at work. Migrants who conclude that they cannot help their families from afar oftentimes feel great sadness or guilt. Even though modern technology can help maintain relationships at a distance, many Japanese women in a study still felt helpless in supporting their parents (Takeda, 2012, pp. 22–23). This example shows that despite many Japanese women residing in nations which tend to promote independence, the traditions which have been fostered in their home remain in their consciousness. These feelings may further motivate diaspora individuals to support their family and/or communities in the future through other means.

### **3.4 Is Trans-localism a better fit for the Bosnian Diaspora?**

The third theory which will be used in this research is called trans-localism. With a vast amount of information on transnationalism, new research has possibly uncovered a gap and a need for trans-localism. Halilovich argues that displaced Bosnians are not

necessarily like the ancient Jewish or historical Greek diaspora because globalisation coincided and has ongoing influence on the Bosnian diaspora identity formation (Halilovich, 2012, pp. 163–164). The current theory of transnationalism places diaspora communities into five ‘ideal types’: Victim diaspora, labour diaspora, imperial diaspora, trade diaspora, and deterritorialized diaspora (Cohen, 2010, as cited in Lahiri, H., 2019, p. 19). General categorization for diaspora communities often ignores the socio-economic diversity within each community and ignores the gradual shift of diaspora community ‘type.’ In addition, many displaced Bosnians are further tied to a specific place and community within Bosnia and Herzegovina which may have unique traditions and speech patterns distinctive from the dominant identity of the country (Halilovich, 2012, pp. 164–165). What transnationalism and trans-localism have in common is that they are mechanisms for collective diaspora communities, including the Bosnian diaspora, to maintain their communal consciousness and solidarity. This is because many displaced Bosnians that Halilovich interviewed believe they will never be completely accepted by their host societies in the U.S., Australia, and Europe. On the other hand, many Bosnians have allegedly been successful in integrating into new societies which has created a, “global web of well-organised, interconnected de-territorialized communities, in which a rich a variety of social, cultural and economic exchanges take place” (Halilovich, 2012, p. 165).

Trans-localism describes the, “dynamism and fluidity of the complex relationships in which identity of place as a set of embodied practices [which] transcends its original geographical location and becomes polylocal or trans-local” (Halilovich, 2012, p. 174). This means that trans-localism can be described as a new type of community and/or identity which can occur in many different geographical locations simultaneously.

### **3.5 Imagined Communities**

The fourth theory which will be used in this research is called imagined communities. In 1983, a political scientist and historian named Benedict Anderson published a book called *Imagined Communities*. This theory came into the forefront in the studies of

nationalism and group identity after the downfall of Cold War studies and the rise of ethnic conflict and violence in places such as the former Yugoslavia (Breuilly, 2016, p. 626). "The supranational divisions of the Cold War and class divisions of nation-states were apparently displaced by those between nation-states and between ethnic groups in many of those states" (Breuilly, 2016, p. 627). This means that after the two-sided dominance divide from the Cold War ended, challenges within the nation states emerged.

The general summary of Imagined Communities is the following:

Members of a nation will never get to know all other members of the nation, but they imagine a solidarity among themselves out of a sense of a shared past and present, as well as a perceived shared future. (Drew, 2023)

Benedict Anderson argued that the concept of nationalism resembles religious identification and community building, "...as much as to other political ideologies." Anderson examined how nationalism functioned as "...a matter of symbol, social relationships, and categories of consciousness" (Calhoun, 2016, p. 12). This could help explain why countries which held some former communist ideals, like removing ethnic and social class differentiation, could revert to former differentiated groups. Everyday actions such as reading print newspapers in the morning, which many people assume that others are doing, creates a ritual that fosters a sense-of-belonging in the nationalistic and/or ethnic group sense. Anderson called this 'print capitalism' because national languages and communication developed through capitalist enterprise (Calhoun, 2016, pp. 12-13). Other examples of print capitalism include books and pamphlets; it is important that the print media is written in the national language rather than that of religious leaders (Drew, 2023).

Another important aspect of imagined communities is the role of memory in some respects while forgetting some other historical facts. Memory helps reproduce national identity but can hide flaws to support the national identity itself. For example, William the Conqueror is taught in schools as the Founding Father of the English nation but forget that he spoke no English and was the progenitor of a reimagined England (Anderson, 2006, p. 230, as cited in Calhoun, 2016, p. 14). This means that some historical details which portray the national identity or social group can be



forgotten so that it solidifies the community identity. Other tools used by nation-states to promote collective consciousness include, “television, radio, maps, censuses, and museums” (Drew, 2023). It is also worthy to note the importance of print media in portraying national unity.

Anderson forewarned, “...against the naïve dismissal of nationalism... it offered a mixture of good with bad, real belonging with illusions of greater than real equality” (Calhoun, 2016, p. 16). Imagined communities are a tool in a collective mindset where nationalism could either tear people apart or bring people together. Imagined communities promote a sense of belonging together where investment in institutions and social welfare can be created. The imagined communities themselves use national and ethnic identity as an instrument to create or destroy; nationalism in itself is neither good nor bad because democracy itself can flourish when there are good intentions (Calhoun, 2016, p. 16).

### **3.6 Theoretical Approaches Conclusion**

There have been instances of the United States, a nation known for its large number of immigrants and refugees, using soft power and its diaspora ties to influence power relations in other nations. When looking at diaspora communities themselves, it is apparent that modern ways of life allow regular contact with separated families and communities around the world. The diversity within Bosnia and Herzegovina itself may also play a role in where families from certain places of their homeland were relocated around the world. Soft power, transnationalism, trans-localism, and imagined communities may help understand the complexities of the Bosnian diaspora as well as diasporas around the world. As more international communities are established in Finland, they may adopt characteristics seen in other nations.

## **4 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

Qualitative methods utilise sensitive and appropriate ways to provide new insights and directions about the human condition. This is beneficial because quantitative research methods do not always address the underlying causes as to why people may choose to act inappropriately to certain decisions in life despite seeming to know the right choice. For example, 40 to 80% of smokers do not follow the advice of medical professionals despite seeking help (Frankel & Devers, 2000, p. 253). Qualitative methods are inductive, emergent and flexible, and non-linear and non-sequential (Frankel & Devers, 2000, pp. 253-254). These characteristics are beneficial when interviewing people because it can adapt to changing circumstances, varying personalities, and overall unpredictable outcomes. This is beneficial for studying the Bosnian diaspora in Finland because the newer arrivals tend to come to Finland for many different reasons, even if there is a majority consensus as to the cause as to why Bosnian communities in Finland were established in the 1990's.

### **4.1 Qualitative Research Design**

#### **4.1.1 Sampling Strategy**

The research material for this study contains qualitative data that was collected over a period of three months, October to December, from people residing in Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, and Jyväskylä in Finland. This research study on the Bosnian diaspora in Finland was self-funded. The total data collected amounts to 517 minutes of recorded conversation, transcribed into 53 pages of conversation transcripts, along with three additional pages of information gathered via email. The material was obtained from 13 participants, who were engaged in in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews varying between 44 minutes to 94 minutes per recording. The interview was done through face-to-face interaction being in-person or through Google Meet; the requirement being that interviewees and I must be able to see each other's face. All interviews took place during the afternoon on a weekday. Selected

participants are all currently residing in Finland. The interview was conducted in either English or Bosnian, recorded on a device, and then transcribed all into the English language. All participants were instructed to complete a two-page questionnaire for general statistical gathering. The interview material covers a scope of four categories with at least three questions per category. Because the interview was semi-structured, some new questions arose during the interview process. Seven people were interviewed on an individual basis while six people were interviewed in a group setting; one group had four people while the other group had two people. The questions guided participants as they discussed their connection regarding varying degrees to their relationship with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their life experience living in Finland.

In addition, I have requested of two participants, who were Erasmus exchange students and returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina, their reflection on their participation in the group interview as well as their time during the Erasmus exchange in Finland. This included 12 questions which were sent via email and then the replies were also sent via email.

Sampling in qualitative research can be thought of as an artwork in progress; a rough sketch is developed in the beginning by the researcher but then the research subjects add in new scope and detail to the "art piece." For the research to not completely go off track, the researcher must add guard rails (selecting the appropriate subjects, appropriate sites, and appropriate guiding questions) so that the art piece, i.e., research results, is still on the desired canvas. Purposeful sampling methods help enhance the understanding of selected individuals or group(s) experience which is done by selecting those who provide the greatest insight into the research question(s) (Devers & Frankel, 2000, pp. 264–265).

Due to the relatively small number of Bosnians residing in Finland, roughly 2,000, compared to the collective diaspora as a whole, the interview opportunity was available across all genders, age groups, citizenship status, work circumstances, etc. The only guardrail added was that the interviewees must be a descendant of someone from Bosnia and Herzegovina and they identify themselves as Bosnian. This means

that how participants viewed and categorised oneself impacted their willingness to possibly do the interview.

There are various limitations to this study. Because it was difficult for me to obtain research participants through random sampling, I had to use the snowball method. In addition, the small sample size could have led to different results which vary from the national average on Bosnians residing in Finland. Financial, geographical, and time limitations led to possible overrepresentation by skewing toward Jyväskylä, younger ages, as well as more female participants. It is also important to note that there was a possibility that my biases also influenced the outcomes of this research study, such as investigator bias. Even though research such as this is recommended to have many interviewers and interviewees to maximise the sample, a single researcher working on this possibly provided uniformity of interviews.

#### **4.1.2 Development of Open Discussion Interview Questions and Questionnaire**

Since the beginning of the master's degree programme, I, who self identifies as Bosnian-American, wanted to learn more about the Bosnian diaspora in Finland. I knew there was a possible chance of a Bosnian community residing in Finland but did not know of anyone who was a part of the group. Search results in the English language showed that there has not been much research on this diaspora in Finland, so this provided me a niche to work. I immediately defined the age range of the research subjects to 18 years or older due to regulations, legalities, as well as the content of the research.

Before the specific questions were developed, the initial goal was for me to find information on the Finnish-Bosnian diaspora's connection to peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and if there are any Finnish cultural influences on the Bosnian diaspora's mindset.

1. Ways of keeping contact
2. Perceptions on the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. Maintaining Bosnia and Herzegovina identity in Finland
4. Differences and lessons to learn

After the four main themes were chosen, at least three specific questions were created to address aspects related to the objective and research questions. In addition, I created a questionnaire to obtain baseline information on the Bosnian diaspora in Finland. The open discussion questions and the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1: Information Sheets.

### **4.1.3 Data Collection**

#### **4.1.3.1 Data Collection Procedure**

This study followed a personal perspective. The first research planning activity was determining the study methodology. After noting the extent of human choice and will power within the research topic and questions, the qualitative paradigm was chosen. Throughout the entire research project, the primary focus was on qualitative interview techniques. This was supported by contextual observation notes. Observation methods provide the researcher the opportunity to notice, "... nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities" (Schmuck, 1997 as cited in Kawulich, 2005). This means that face-to-face interactions, often provided by qualitative research methods, allow the researcher to gather more information than what is being verbally said by the participants. This is important because information passed between individuals tends to be 55% coming from the body, 38% coming from the voice - such as inflection, intonation, and volume - and roughly 7% coming from the words being spoken (Calero, 2005, p. 5). Because humans are social animals, the way someone presents themselves and how they communicate with others can have a much larger impact on outcomes than just mere words coming out of one's mouth. Therefore, when researchers conduct qualitative methods on people, it is important for them to not display any negative or judgemental expressions towards the participants during the interview process. I maintained a supportive but neutral composure during the process by utilising formal communication and behaviour to display respect.

Observations, interviews, and questionnaires used in this research are all types of primary sources. Primary sources are "records of events as they are first described,

usually by witnesses or people who were involved in the event” (Kang, 2023). This means that this type of source is a first-hand account which can be either raw data or personal experience with not much editing from third parties in identifying patterns. When working with primary sources, they provide multiple perspectives and allow researchers to formulate questions and make inferences. It is important to realise that primary sources can be seen as incomplete snippets of history (Library of Congress, 2022). Even though primary sources tend to not be subjected to personal bias, it can be time consuming when collecting and sifting through the data (Formplus Blog, 2022).

#### **4.1.3.2 Data Collection Method**

The data was collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups. The interview was organised into four themes of preliminary open-ended questions, which include:

1. Ways of keeping contact
2. Perceptions on the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. Maintaining Bosnia and Herzegovina identity in Finland
4. Differences and lessons to learn

Working with qualitative research along with my understanding of Bosnian culture and the innerweb of the diaspora around the world, it was determined that these four categories would possibly lead interviewees to possibly answer the research questions according to their knowledge and experience. All the research participants were aware that they had the choice of not answering any questions if they deemed it to be uncomfortable or did not have any knowledge regarding that.

Additionally, the research subjects were required to complete a two-page questionnaire for general understanding of the interviewed population. This two-page questionnaire could have been completed before or after the interview. This is so general background information and attitudes can be compared in a precise way. The only exception was that two Erasmus exchange students were to answer 12 questions via email after the end of their exchange time in Finland.

The participants of this research study were recruited through snowball sampling, using the networks of previous research participants. This non-probability sampling method is called “snowball” because it grows like a snowball rolling down a hill.

The sample size grows as individuals in a community recruit other potential research participants. This type of sampling is not random so not everyone in the population has an equal chance of being selected (Simkus, 2022). Some advantages of snowball sampling include access to hidden populations, avoiding risk, and saving time and money. On the other hand, some limitations are in regards to difficulties in determining sampling error, possibility of bias, and samples may not be representative of the greater population (Simkus, 2022). I took into consideration these factors and made numerous attempts in random sampling via online posts and requests to no avail. Willing individuals only joined this research study through the trust from the previous research participants who recruited them.

The process of using snowball sampling in qualitative research is dynamic. It brings to the forefront two concepts: social knowledge and power relations (Noy, 2008, p. 329). Since snowball sampling is the most employed method of sampling in the social sciences' qualitative research, it is effective in obtaining knowledge and access to hidden populations (Noy, 2008, p. 330). A unique type of knowledge is obtained that relates to social aspects because "...it both uses and activates existing social networks.... which... can potentially generate an organic and 'thick' type of knowledge, knowledge that is so valued in the qualitative social sciences" (Noy, 2008, p. 332). This means that the use of social networks in snowball sampling allows for the type of knowledge that is core to the social sciences. This is because the traditional view of knowledge tends to be seen statically and that of monologic. Informants, in the traditional perspective of knowledge, are viewed as having packets of information specifically waiting for the researcher to collect and disseminate to others (Noy, 2008, p. 332). When the researcher uses snowball sampling, they are relinquishing a significant amount of control over the sampling phase. This leads subsequent generations of the snowball stemma to have different social attributes (social capital) from the original research participant at the top of the stemma. As the research progresses, each informant is positioned differently within the social network that is sampled (Noy, 2008, p. 333). "If the informant leaves the interview meeting feeling discontented, or if the researcher did not win the informant's trust and sympathy, the chances the latter will supply the former referrals decreases" (Noy, 2008, p. 334). That is why it's important

for me to maintain a respectful and good quality interaction during the interview process. If the participant leaves dissatisfied with the qualitative interview, they will not advise other people in their social network to endure something similar.

## **4.2 Positionality and Reflexivity**

The researcher's positionality should be seen as a dialogue in the research process – both of which may challenge perspectives and assumptions about the social world and about the researcher themselves (Palaganas et al., 2017, p. 427). I chose to utilise the personal reflexivity route throughout the entire research process. Being part of the Bosnian refugee diaspora in the United States of America, I from the very beginning wanted to explore the Finnish branch of the global Bosnian diaspora. I have never heard nor known of any Bosnians residing in Finland. Nations such as the United States of America, Australia, Germany, Austria, and Sweden have vast numbers of Bosnians living within their borders. What makes Finland unique comes from the fact that roughly 2,300 Bosnians reside in a country of 5.5 million people. This is even smaller than in Norway; a country of roughly 5.4 million people with around 17,400 Bosnians (Dzamarija, 2017). It means that compared to another Nordic nation of similar size, the Bosnian diaspora in Finland is about seven-and-a-half times smaller. There is a likelihood that the community is more tight-knit, and many people know each other. Due to the social relation circumstance, I utilised their heritage to connect with potential study participants. I made attempts to search for Bosnians from the general population online, to no avail. The best way was through social connections; one interviewee made recommendations to reach out to another potential interviewee (snowball method). Deep-down, I wanted to see similarities and differences between the Bosnians in Finland and the United States. This curiosity led to the creation of the research questions, two-page questionnaire, and the four categories of preliminary open-ended questions. I want to contribute to Bosnian and Finnish history by studying a part of the international web and for the information to be saved and secured in many different locations around the world (whether it be through online or in-print). This is in the hopes that Bosnian history and identity would not be erased. In August



1992, two million books and many rare volumes were destroyed in Sarajevo. Some of these documents described multicultural life of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires (Sito-Sucic, 2014). It took one day to erase hundreds of years' worth of history. I made attempts to look for Bosnian participants of various backgrounds, hoping to display the historical, multicultural aspect of society. In addition, I understand that this work written in the English language provides access for 1.35 billion people to understand.

During the work of this study, my mindset was that it does not merely reflect my efforts in the master's thesis, but it may also influence future researchers and scholars when trying to understand globalisation, diasporas, the Balkans, and Finland.

### **4.3 Data Analysis Procedure**

The main analysis method was a reflexive thematic analysis. The interviews were transcribed using Atlas.ti 22 software. I used inductive coding rather than deductive coding, which means that I did not generate or use a codebook before coding. I have also used the hierarchical coding frame. There is the topic, section, main themes, and then subthemes which could reflect positive, negative, or neutral aspects of each area. Some themes and subthemes focused on more positive aspects of the themes while others focused on more negative aspects.

#### ***Reflexive Thematic Analysis***

Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that is used to identify patterns, categorise groups, and find meanings across datasets (Braun, 2022). It is important to keep in consideration that thematic analysis is a procedure and not a method. "The process applied the method to work with and makes sense of the data, but is embedded in, and surrounded by, a bigger set of values, assumptions, and practices, which, collectively, make up the method" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 6).

The first stage is dataset familiarisation. This is where the researcher immerses themselves with the data so it becomes intimately familiar (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 34). I listened to the audio recording of the interviews multiple times and wrote notes

that possibly link specific interviews to the overall pattern of the dataset, general patterns, or personal feedback. In addition, I transcribed the interviews.

The second stage is data coding. This is where the researcher begins to fine-tune the information with initial categorisation. The focus is to, “identify segments of data that appear potentially interesting, relevant or meaningful for your research question, and apply pithy, analytically meaning (code labels) to them” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 35). There are also different levels of coding such as explicit (semantic) or implicit (latent). It is important to record my own perspective during the process. Once coded the entire dataset, in which in this case are interviews and some other answers to questions, the code labels are arranged in a way that are then compiled into fitting sections of information for each code. (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 35). Having used Atlas.ti 22 software, I uploaded the transcribed interviews and then added different labels. By the end of the coding process, I created over 200 different labels from scratch which were mostly semantic. The first interview that I coded was the one I perceived as the most in-depth and longest compared to the rest. This allowed me to create a baseline for the other 12 remaining interviews.

The third stage is initial theme generation. This is where the researcher focuses on pinpointing common patterns of meaning across the dataset. Clusters should begin to form around core concepts that could answer the research question(s). It is critical to remember that this is not an excavation where complete answers are revealed but rather the theme development is influenced by the researcher based upon the data, research questions, and researcher’s own knowledge and understandings. While codes indicate specific meanings, themes should envelope broader, collective meanings. Once there is a group of themes that could answer the research question(s), sort all codes into each candidate theme (Braun & Clarke, p. 35). First using Atlas.ti 22 software but then transitioned towards traditional paper format, I thought of a few possible overarching themes which could work and wrote them down.

The fourth stage is theme development and review. The researcher evaluates whether the candidate themes are suitable together and the overall research. Because there were so many codes and possible themes, I decided to focus more on answering the three research questions.

The fifth step is theme refining, defining, and naming. As mentioned in the name, this is where refinement of each theme is distinguished and has a strong base to which the codes support. Even at this step, the researcher can dismantle the theme and try again (Braun & Clarke, p. 35). In this stage, I tried to focus on the themes that could possibly answer the research questions and have a possible impact on future research on the Bosnian diaspora. I've decided to go with three sections, eight themes, and eight subthemes which can be seen collectively as Figure 1 in the Findings and Analysis chapter.

The final step is writing up. As mentioned in the name, this is where written recordings and explanations are provided so that readers can understand the data in a coherent manner and so that the reader(s) understand how the researcher is approaching it in a persuasive approach. "Final writing up also involved producing the introduction, method and conclusion sections of a research report. And a lot of editing" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 35). The final details are polished, and any possible visual presentations are improved. This is seen throughout the Findings and Analysis chapter in this research study.

#### **4.4 Ethical Considerations**

To respect participant autonomy, protect all parties involved, and lessen ambiguity, a signed consent which details important aspects was obtained in advance of the interview. All the participants received a copy of the participant information sheet as well as the human research consent form. The participants received a front-and-back page of both which are either in Bosnian or English, in which all participants signed their signature on the English version. Participants have the sheet and form in either a physical or virtual document format.

The only ethical concern from the researcher standpoint that I have is that six out of thirteen research participants suddenly decided to do a group interview despite the participant information sheet stating, "This research will consist of a one-on-one interview." In the physical and virtual environment, nobody verbally nor behaviourally objected to being part of the group interview. Everyone appeared to be aware that the

information discussed will remain anonymous and confidential. All were aware that they could retract their research contributions in a timely manner. This sudden change in interview structure has possibly provided beneficial information for this research study.

The power relations before, during, and after the interview process is to be described as equal between me and the interview participants. I have no legal, financial, or social authority over the interview participants nor vice versa. The participants were not required to do anything else beyond what is requested for this research.

#### **4.5 Validity and Credibility of the Findings**

During the interview process, I did some personal reflections within 24 hours of the interview. 12 out of 13 participants appeared to have represented themselves and provided more personal perspectives throughout the interview. One participant communicated in such a way that they were representing their organisation rather than themselves. One participant appeared to be hesitant or withdrawn throughout the interview process, but they were still willing to answer the questionnaire as well as the open discussion questions.

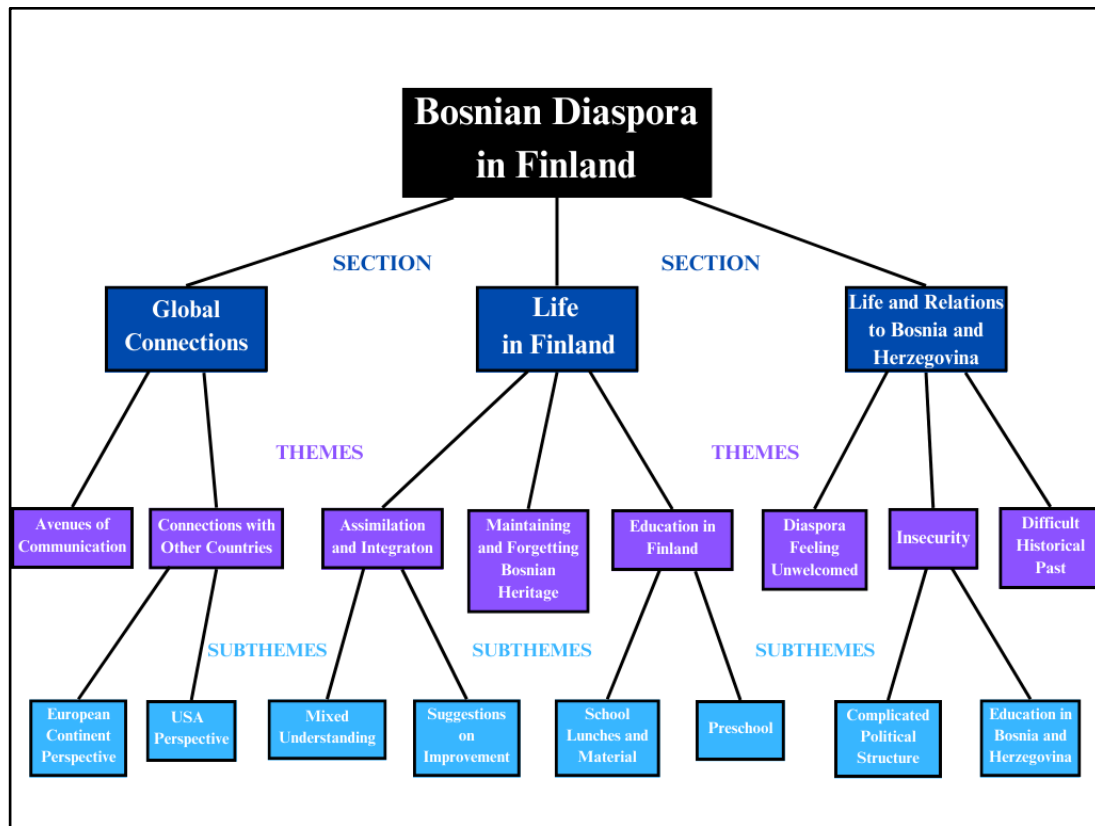
## 5 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter describes the findings of the data-driven, thematic analysis of the research material and the background information collected through a questionnaire. The overall purpose of the data gathering was to find answers to questions related to:

1. What connections does the Bosnian Finnish branch hold within the globalised Bosnian diaspora?
2. How is the Bosnian diaspora adapting in Finland while maintaining aspects of one's heritage?
3. How does the Bosnian Finnish diaspora perceive its relationship to be like with Bosnians currently living in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

In response to these questions, the first part of the chapter provides general background information that I gathered from the questionnaire. The second part examines the expansive global connections that the Bosnian diaspora in Finland have. The third part looks into Bosnians' lives in Finland. The fourth part looks at Bosnian diaspora in Finland's relationship to Bosnians in the homeland and their perceptions on life there. To better sort the data, I have categorised the three main sections into themes called: Global Connections, Life in Finland, and Life and Relations to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Overview of the findings can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Overview of Findings on Bosnian Diaspora in Finland**



Visual overview regarding research conducted on the Bosnian diaspora in Finland. Three sections emerged with eight themes and eight subthemes. It is important to note that some of the themes and subthemes in Figure 1 are slightly rearranged within their appropriate section in order to fit the themes and subthemes evenly into the figure.

## Background Information on the Research Participants

13 research participants, living in four major Finnish cities, partook in this research study. Nine participants were female while four participants were male. 11 participants were born in Bosnia and Herzegovina while two participants were born in another country. Out of thirteen people, six had children and out of these six participants, three had two children, one had three children, and two had one child. Out of these six participants who had children, only one had a child born inside the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and none of the interview participants' children are currently living in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Table 1: Overview of the Interviewees**

Participant	Gender	Current Status in Finland	Current Residence in Finland	Stayed Outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina Longer than anticipated	Nation of Birth
B1	Female	Legal Permanent Resident	Jyväskylä	No	BiH
B2	Male	Citizen of Country	Tampere	Yes	BiH
B3	Female	Citizen of Country	Turku	Yes	BiH
B4	Female	Student	Jyväskylä	No	BiH
B5	Female	Student	Jyväskylä	No	BiH
B6	Female	Citizen of Country	Jyväskylä	Yes	BiH
B7	Female	Citizen of Country	Jyväskylä	No	Finland
B8	Male	Citizen of Country	Turku	Yes	BiH
B9	Female	Citizen of Country	Helsinki	No	BiH
B10	Female	Citizen of Country	Helsinki	No	BiH
B11	Male	Student	Jyväskylä	No	BiH
B12	Male	Citizen of Country	Turku	No	Finland
B13	Female	Citizen of Country	Turku	No	BiH

Table 1 shows the designated participant number, gender, current status in Finland, current residence in Finland, if they stayed outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina longer than anticipated. Nearly 70% are currently Finnish citizens, about half are living in Jyväskylä, and about 70% did not stay outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina for longer than originally planned. The current residence of all the research participants mirrored previous research regarding immigrants and refugees settling in towns and cities, areas known for economic activity, rather than in rural areas (Lobodzinska, 2011, pp. 44–45). As mentioned previously in the methodology chapter, it is important to note that due to financial, geographical, and time limitations led to possible overrepresentation by skewing toward Jyväskylä, younger ages, as well as more female participants. There is possible bias coming from me as well since I identify as part of the Bosnian diaspora.

**Chart 1: Age Range of Bosnian Diaspora in Finland**

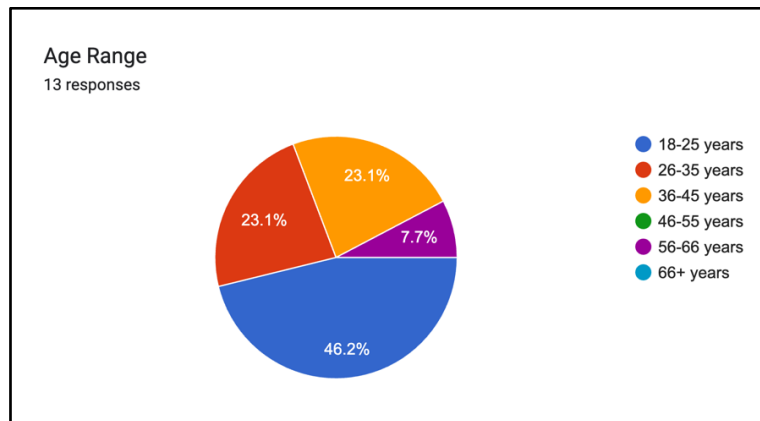


Chart 1 shows about half of the interviewees were between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five, the youngest allowable category. One interviewee was between the age of fifty-six to sixty-six, the oldest participant in this research. There were no participants under the age of eighteen directly involved in this research study. Given the fact that the Bosnian War ended almost twenty-eight years ago, this means that roughly half of the research participants do not personally recall life before the war in Yugoslavia. When looking at all of the research participants' ages collectively, the average age was thirty-one.

**Chart 2: Length of Time Living Outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

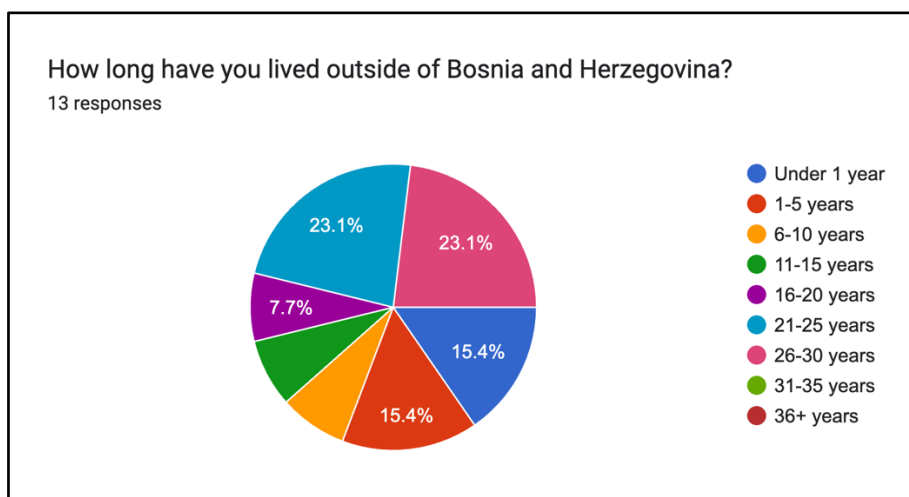


Chart 2 shows that about half of the interviewees lived outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina between twenty-one to thirty years. Two interviewees resided in Finland for under one year while three interviewees have resided in Finland between twenty-



six to thirty years. When looking at all of the research participants' time outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina collectively, the average was around fifteen years.

**Chart 3: Main Reason for Emigrating from Bosnia and Herzegovina**

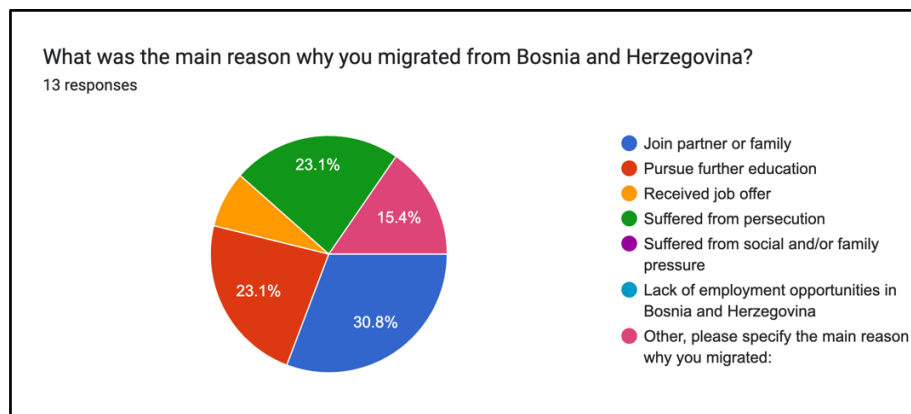


Chart 3 shows a variety of reasons why the interviewees left Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over half indicated that it is due to joining a partner or family; or pursuing further education. About a quarter indicated it was due to persecution. Two interviewees selected other and indicated elsewhere that they were born in Finland. It is important to point out that none of the research participants selected 'suffered from social and/or family pressure' or 'lack of employment opportunities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.'

It is possible that there is some influence from these two unselected options, but the questionnaire form only allowed for one main answer; this is to allow for easy comparison of information. I did not rule out the rationality that these research participants could be influenced by multiple factors listed and not listed within this question. When utilising the traditional use of transnationalism, one quarter of the participants would be considered "victim diaspora" because they left due to persecution (Cohen, 2010, as cited in Lahiri, H., 2019, p. 19). On the other hand, transnationalism can also be too simplistic in understanding the complexities and socio-economic diversity of the Bosnian diaspora those who are still residing in Bosnia and Herzegovina which trans-localism could possibly explain (Halilovich, 2012, pp. 164–165). Chart 4, as shown below, displays the current work/career level of the 13 participants.

**Chart 4: Current Work Level of BiH Diaspora in Finland**

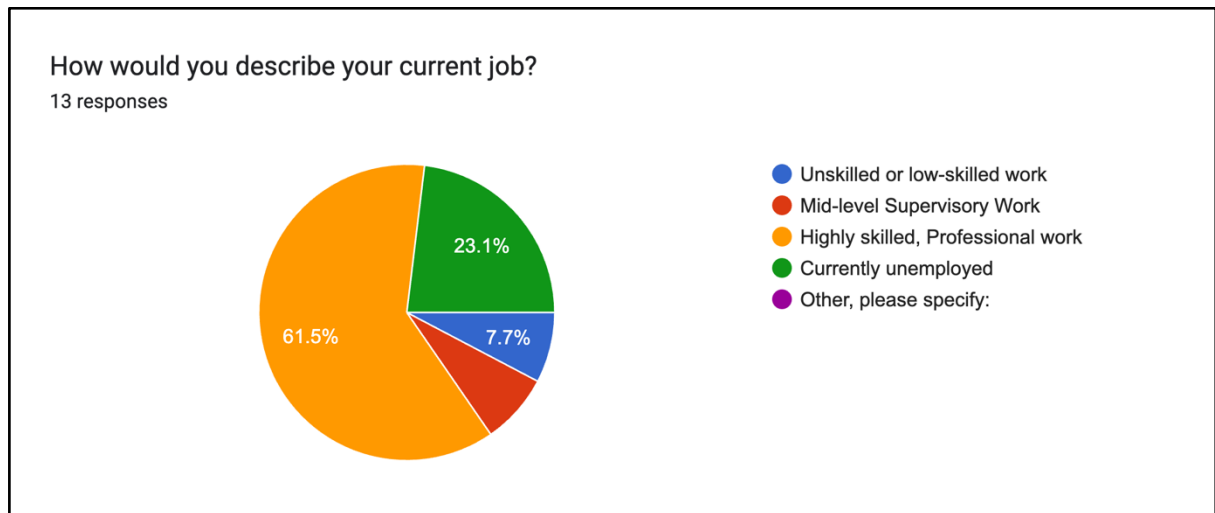


Chart 4 shows that out of 13 respondents, 61.5% were currently doing highly skilled, professional work while 23.1% were currently unemployed. The respondents who indicated their unemployment status currently identify as students. The rest of the respondents were either doing 'mid-level supervisory work' or 'unskilled or low-skilled work.'

## 5.1 GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

In this section, I will discuss the findings of the analysis under the theme: Global Connections, which relate to the relevant elements of soft power, transnationalism, translocalism, and imagined communities as explained in the chapter covering theoretical approaches. As a result of the thematic analysis, two main themes related to global connections were identified in which one had a sub theme: 1.) Avenues of Communication and 2.) Connection with Other Countries, with subthemes of Europe and the United States of America. Next, I will discuss each in turns.

**Table 2: Overview of Global Connections**

Themes	Subthemes	Description
Avenues of Communication		The ways in which Bosnian-Finns contact others in the Bosnian diaspora. Typically results in exchange of information.
Connection with Other Countries		Bosnian-Finns' networks with other Bosnians who currently reside in other societies and countries around the world.
	Europe	Bosnian diaspora networks currently on the European continent.
	United States of America	Bosnian diaspora networks currently located in the U.S. and U.S. territories.

### 5.1.1 Avenues of Communication

The first theme under Global Connections, called Avenues of Communication, will cover various aspects of type of communication that connects various members of the diaspora as well as Bosnians within Bosnia and Herzegovina, frequency of communication, and some information on the location of those on the other end of the communication line.

**Table 3: Information Obtainment and Frequency of Communication**

	Participant												
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13
1. Means of Info on BiH													
BiH News		●	●	●		●	-	●	●	●	-	●	●
Email		●					-		●	●			
Phone	●		●				-	●	●	●			●
Mail							-		●	●			
In-Person in Finland***	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●	
Visitation of BiH			●			-	-	●	●	●			●
Social Media				●		●	-		●	●	●		
2. Frequent Communication													
Overall: Bosnian friend(s) or family	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	●	●	●	-	-	-
... in Europe	●	-	●	●	●	-	-	●	●	●	-	●	●
... <b>outside</b> of Europe			●			-	-	●	●	●	●	●	-

Key symbol '●' on the table confirms that the interviewee has indicated this while the key symbol '-' indicates an explicit no. Sections with no symbol indicate that the interviewee has not mentioned it or chosen to not answer. '\*\*\*' indicates that this is face-to-face communication with family or neighbours in Finland.

For the basis of this study, what was considered as *frequent* is communication with at least *two individuals on a weekly basis*. Anything less often than once-a-week was not considered yes on the table, but communication may occur once a month or seldomly. This does not necessarily mean that all contact has been disconnected but rather the communication within the relationship is not as strong.

The relationship between the number of means in obtaining information on Bosnia and Herzegovina and the frequency of communication with the Bosnian community are complex. However, there appeared to be more leaning towards utilising multiple avenues for information gathering and overall frequent communication with other Bosnians. Since this research was conducted on the European continent, it comes as no surprise that Bosnians in Finland will communicate more frequently with Bosnians in Europe than Bosnians outside of Europe.

Due to the recent impact of the Information Age, there has been less reliance on print media. Many news sources moved away from printing their information on paper and distributing it physically to information distribution via websites, cell phone

applications, and other digital means. This was a modern adaptation to Anderson's theory of imagined communities because he described it in the early 1980s, a time before the average person had access to a desktop computer or cellular device. It can be safely assumed that an online news article overall looks and functions similarly to a print newspaper section from at least 30 years before, called print capitalism previously (Calhoun, 2016). This so-called print capitalism has now mostly shifted into a type of digital capitalism. The content may change depending on national occurrences, but the purpose and impact remains the same. The use of social media sites as well as online news sources could lead the Bosnian diaspora to feel as though they were currently in the country and could get involved in times of troubles such as natural disasters and societal challenges (Féron & Voytív, 2021). In addition, 40% of the respondents indicated frequent in-person visitation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a characteristic of transnationalism (Tedeschi et al., 2022, p. 604).

A key aspect of communication was the importance of in-person, face-to-face, family/neighbour communication in Finland. 10 out of 13 interviewees mentioned that they used this method, and it is the most often used method of information gathering on Bosnia and Herzegovina in this study. In order to understand further, the following excerpts of the interview are provided. When I asked an interviewee about their involvement with the Bosnian community in Finland, they said:

Yes, our Bosnian community – I spend time with some people – especially now that I am in the Bosnian Cultural Centre in Turku. I'm on the board. Our work has just started and in the future, we will connect with more people in Finland and in Bosnia. (B12)

When referencing back to interviewee B12, they were born and raised in Finland with Bosnian heritage on both sides of the family. The fact that B12 was now on the board of the Bosnian Cultural Centre of Finland in Turku, also known as *Bosnialaisten kulttuurikeskus Suomessa* in Finnish, possibly indicated that there were attempts for the next generation to maintain connection with their community. In addition, this may have been the initial starting point in displaying soft power since Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is represented through the Bosnian diaspora, reached into Finland through networking which linked to Steven Lukes' definition of soft power because the Bosnian Cultural Centre may have been indirectly representing Bosnia and Herzegovina in

Finland (Mattern, 2005, p. 588). Important services and social networking at BKC displayed soft power amongst the diaspora in Finland. In another interview, a long-time board member of the Bosnian Cultural Centre of Finland replied to the same question, provided further information:

I've been part of the community centre for at least 10 years, and we are the most active organisation in Finland. We have a lot of occurrences and gatherings, you can see it on our Facebook – photos, videos, etc. (B8)

From the information provided by interviewee B8, it indicated that the community centre was likely a central hub for the Bosnian community not only in Turku, but also for the entirety of Finland. Even though there was face-to-face interaction, the centre utilised social media as an avenue to share information and/or connect with further people in the Bosnian community. This showed the complexity of how the Bosnian diaspora interacts through the use of digital technology. This yet again displayed instances of imagined communities due to gatherings likely based upon holidays and other celebrations linked to Bosnia and Herzegovina. These can be seen as nationalistic rituals which feed sense-of-belonging to the Bosnian diaspora (Calhoun, 2016). Outside of the Turku general area, an interviewee in Helsinki with no known relations to B12 or B8 confirms what they have said:

We started a group that is for young Bosnian people and try to organise get-togethers.... Bosnian people in Turku are more active than in Helsinki. In Helsinki, there are many Bosnians, but they have their own group, and they socialise and help each other within these groups. (B9)

Despite Helsinki being the capital city of Finland, it showed possible complexity of the Helsinki metropolitan area itself, as well as the social interactions amongst the Bosnians, influences how people interact and support one another. Through the perspective of interviewee B9, it sounded as if the Bosnian community was in smaller pieces who assist one another in a more intimate setting. Because there was no indication of a Bosnian community centre in Helsinki, it is likely that trans-localism is much stronger in this area. From my own understanding of the Bosnian diaspora, families and close neighbours in Bosnia and Herzegovina tend to give support domestically and abroad. This means that understandings of the world and ways of interacting with

the global community within these smaller networks could be more unique and fit into the trans-localism (Halilovich, 2012, p. 165).

Looking at the other side of the spectrum regarding Bosnians who do not maintain frequent contact with the Bosnian friends or family, interviewee B6 provided a very brief answer, "I do not maintain contact with the Bosnian diaspora; not even in other countries." My observation notes about interviewee B6 were as follows:

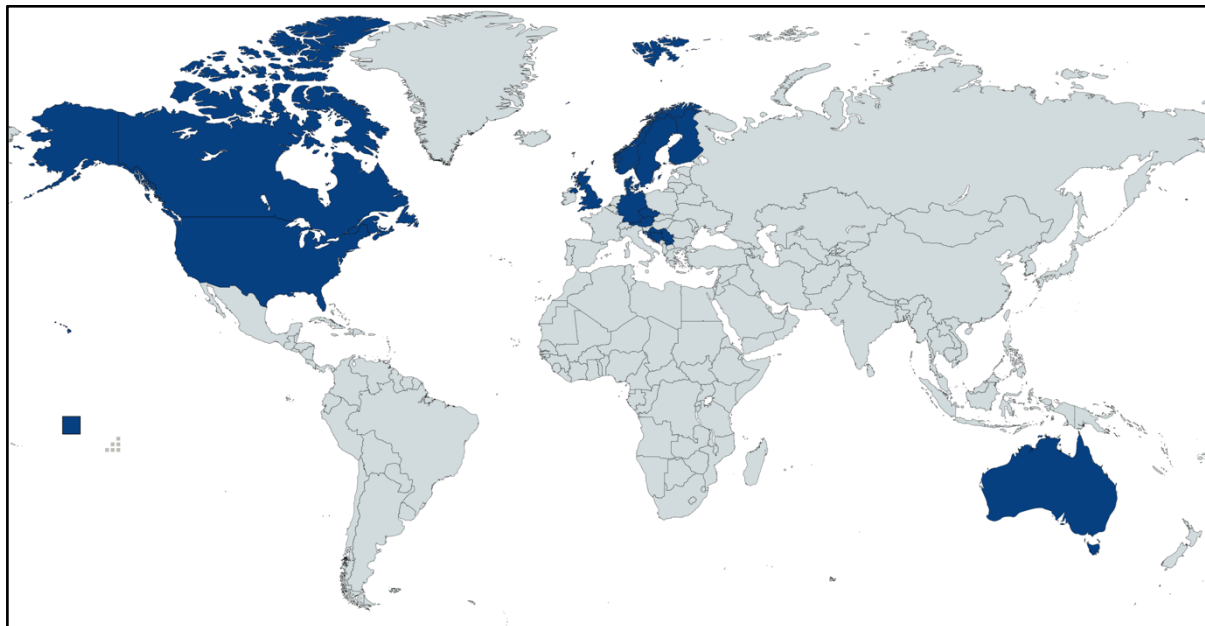
...B6 appears to be hesitant in getting involved with the Bosnian community. B6 is open to communication with me but the body language appears uncomfortable when I reference reaching out to the general Bosnian community. I don't know if there is a hidden reason.

I noticed somewhat negative body language signals from B6. Meanwhile, the adult child of B6, who was B7, chose to not answer the question related to their contact with the Bosnian diaspora in other countries. I inferred that B7 did not communicate with other Bosnians since they now had much stronger roots in Finland. It was likely that B6, the parent, influenced B7 to have less association with the Bosnian community.

### **5.1.2 Connection with Other Countries**

The second theme under Global Connection, which is Connection with other countries, shows the vastness of the Bosnian network. Given that I interviewed only 13 people out of millions in the Bosnian diaspora, the worldly linkage can be noticed even in this small research sample. In the following section, you will see a brief overview of the nations covered which will then be divided between Europe and the United States.

## Image 1: Global Overview: Countries



(Created with <https://www.mapchart.net/>)

*The areas coloured in dark blue indicate direct reference to the specific nations during the interview process. Nations coloured in grey are not mentioned.*

### All Countries Mentioned:

Australia\*, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina\*, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland\*, Germany\*, Kosovo, Norway, Serbia, United Kingdom, and United States of America

\* = these countries are also referenced in other sections of the findings chapter

As an overview, 14 countries across three continents were directly referenced in the 13 interviews. This is important to consider since many of these interviewees likely had perspectives, experiences, and ideas originating outside of Finland as well. Image 1 does not surprise me at all since I expected most of the Bosnian diaspora to be in Europe, the United States, and Australia. It would have been more intriguing if there were connections to lesser-known Bosnian settlements like those in the Middle East and North Africa. Nevertheless, this was the reality presented at this time.

According to the evidence presented in this research, I inferred that most people in the Bosnian diaspora were in contact with their relatives in other countries and societies. This can be seen by B9's answer, "We both have relatives in Australia, USA,

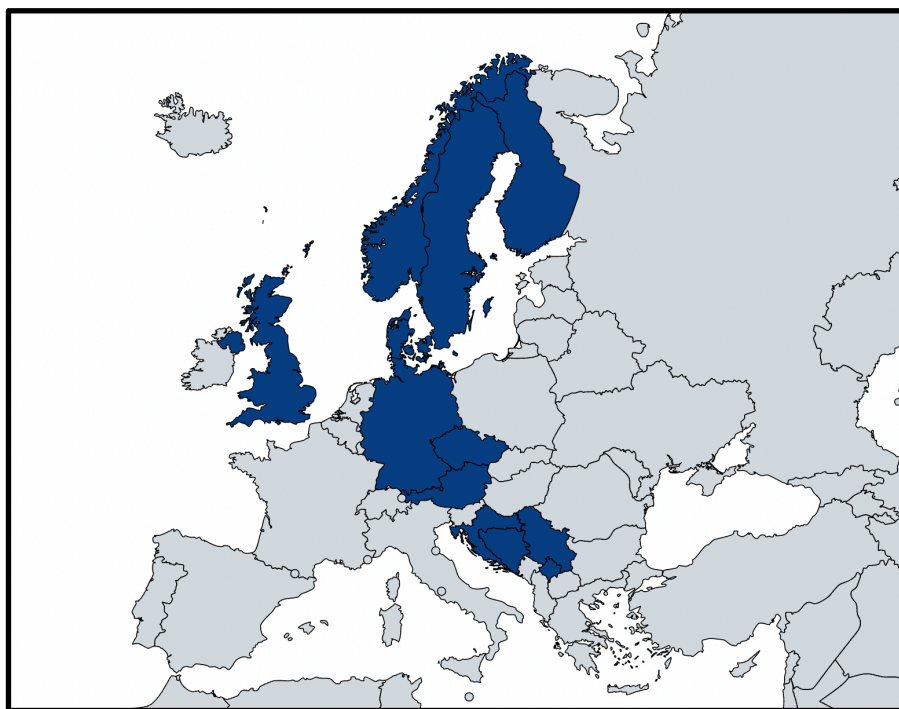


Germany, all over the place! I don't think there is one country that we don't have relatives in. We do keep in touch maybe weekly" (B9). B9 and B10 were both in the same interview and confirmed amongst each other about the extent of communication with their global network family. This short quote reminded me of the general definition of transnationalism because there are family connections which go beyond the borders of countries (Huff, 2014).

### 5.1.2.1 European Continent Perspective

The first subtheme of Connection with Other Countries, which is part of Global Connections, addresses specific connections to European countries and societies, regardless of European Union status.

#### Image 2: European Connections: Countries



(Created with <https://www.mapchart.net/>)

*The areas coloured in dark blue indicate direct reference to the specific nations during the interview process. Nations coloured in grey are not mentioned.*

11 European Countries mentioned:

Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina\*, Croatia\*, Czechia, Denmark, Finland\*, Germany\*, Kosovo\*, Norway, Serbia\*, and United Kingdom

\* = these countries are also referenced in other sections of the findings chapter

Specific towns/cities mentioned: Sarajevo\*, Travnik\*, Zagreb, and Zenica\*

\* = these towns/cities are referenced in other sections of the findings chapter

When looking at the 11 European nations mentioned, it was apparent to me that there were connections to nations nearby the place of origin as well as in the direction of north and west. What surprised me the most was an interviewee's family connection to Czechia because many Bosnians tend to be in Austria or Germany due to better job opportunities. To better understand these European connections, interviewee B8 expressed communication with Bosnians in Sweden as well as the general pattern of across Europe:

...mostly with Sweden, the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sweden, through that, we have a network throughout the world but mostly in Europe. Most Europe... diaspora celebrated Bosnian Independence Day. It depends on the situation, like during the elections. Sometimes once a week, sometimes once a month, depending on the occurrence. (B8)

Utilising the theory of imagined communities, the unified celebration of Independence Day from Bosnians across Europe despite being beyond the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina created a ritual of belonging within the group (Calhoun, 2016, pp. 12-13). In addition, interviewee B3 also indicated a connection to Sweden, "Yes, because my brother lives in Sweden and my cousins as well. Almost all of my cousins who escaped Bosnia and Herzegovina now live in Sweden." Interviewee B3 indicated a strong family diaspora connection to Sweden but did not specifically denote the frequency of communication. I assumed that there was frequent communication due to the findings in a previous section focused on communication. Before coming to Finland from the United States, I did not realise how large the Bosnian community was in Sweden. Additionally, interviewee B1 also confirmed frequent communication with relatives in Sweden, with other countries as well:

Of course, we, Bosnians, have families all over the world because of the war in the 1990's. I have an aunt in London, England, another aunt in Sweden, and an uncle in Czech Republic. I speak with aunts pretty often - once a week. (B1)

Interviewee B1 connected not only with Sweden, but also with Great Britain and Czechia. As mentioned previously, I was surprised by the connection to Czechia because that country was not a part of my awareness of where Bosnians settled within the last 30 years. I found it intriguing that a Bosnian in Finland would have family connections in Czechia because the Czech and Slovak diaspora in the U.S. had major influence in the establishment of Czechoslovakia (Grinnell, 2007, p. 8). I felt as though the global connections have truly expanded since I grew up in Kentucky, a state somewhat nearby where the Czech and Slovak diaspora settled. In contrast, interviewee B11, who indicated not having frequent communication with the Bosnian diaspora said:

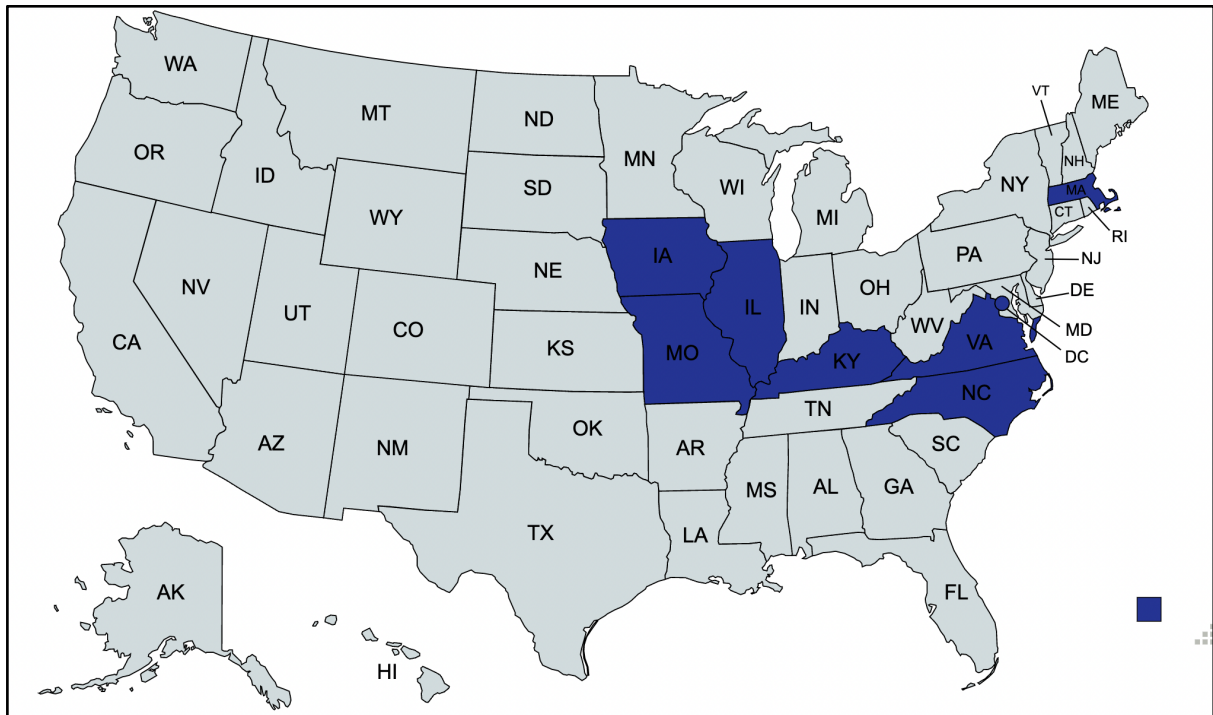
Bosnia and Herzegovina is undergoing one of the fastest brain drains in the world. Everyone is studying German so that when they graduate, they go to Austria or Germany for employment. It's like half of the Austrian population is now Balkan. You go down a street in Austria and some Balkan person will recognise you. (B11)

Interviewee B11 referenced Austria and Germany. Because they said, "everyone is studying German," I inferred that B11 had some connection through friends, family, or neighbours to these two countries. Not only does this display transnationalism, but there was a strong element of Austrian and German soft power upon the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because Austria and Germany have more cultural and economic dominance in Europe, many Bosnians are choosing to learn German; a strong example of soft power (Huff, 2014). Similarly, interviewee B2 also indicated infrequent contact despite some of them living in, "...Denmark, Sweden, and Germany" (B2).

### **5.1.2.2 United States of America Perspective**

The second subtheme of connection with other countries, which is part of Global Connections, looks at the Bosnian Finnish connection to the United States of America. Being one of the largest countries in the world with a large number of immigrants and refugees, the U.S. harbours some of the largest communities of Bosnians outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina today (Gilsinan, K., 2013). Given the nature of the answers, the global connections have been split up between Europe and the U.S. for ease of understanding. The U.S. is divided into 50 states and a few territories with Washington, D.C. being the capital.

**Image 3: USA Connections: States and Territories**



(Created with <https://www.mapchart.net/>)

*The areas coloured in dark blue indicate direct reference to the specific states and territories during the interview process. States and territories coloured in grey are not mentioned.*

Eight U.S. States and territories mentioned during the interview process:

Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, District of Columbia

In addition, these five specific U.S. cities were mentioned as well:

- Arlington, VA
- Chicago, IL
- Des Moines, IA
- Louisville, KY
- St. Louis, MO

Note: Washington, DC functions as a territory despite itself being a city on its own.

Despite the United States being at least seven time zones away from Finland, the Bosnian diaspora in Finland had connections to at least eight U.S. states and territories. As I am part of the Bosnian diaspora that grew up in Louisville, KY, all these states

and territories were within my awareness of having Bosnian or Balkan communities. The only states that I knew less about their Bosnian community were those in Massachusetts and North Carolina. Having been raised in Bosnia and Herzegovina, earned a bachelor's degree in the U.S., and now being a student in Finland, interviewee B11 provided their perspective on the U.S.:

...I visited St. Louis, Missouri, and there's a little part of the city called Little Bosnia. They say it has the highest population of Bosnians outside of Bosnia.... They eat Bosnian food most of the time, speak exclusively Bosnian, and it's a very similar thing in Chicago with the Serbian diaspora. At some point, depending on the country, I don't believe there is a strictly Bosnian diaspora. There is a former Yugoslav diaspora that has a subset of Bosnians in it. (B11)

B11 described what they observe was a strong aspect of "Bosnian-ness" in St. Louis. The people maintained their language and some ways of life within the United States. An interesting point came about that B11 said a similar pattern can be seen with the Serbian diaspora in Chicago. On the other hand, B11 contradicted the "Bosnian-ness" of St. Louis by stating that there was no distinct Bosnian diaspora. B11 then went on to describe another instance:

One time, I was in Massachusetts and a guy was selling poppy seed roll dessert. I got so excited and ran up to him. He was so surprised and asked. I replied that I was from Sarajevo and then the seller code switched into Bosnian saying, "why didn't you say that you were us?" The guy was Croatian from Zagreb. That was a genuine connection. It was a massive touch of home in an unfamiliar place. I've never seen that guy again. It's from my cultural area and my language. All the Balkan differences fizzle away when you're abroad because individually you're such a tiny, powerless group. On many levels, Yugoslavia still exists in the diaspora. (B11)

Interviewee B11 travelled to Massachusetts and went to a festival where a man sold poppy seed roll dessert. For people who are not aware of general American culture, poppy seed rolls are not a common dessert to be seen in the U.S. It is typically part of Balkan, Central European, Baltic, and Eastern European cuisine. The vendor was likely surprised that an English speaker showed so much enthusiasm towards a dessert. B11 again referenced similarities between Bosnians and another Balkan group, that being Croatian. Even though B11 spoke in Bosnian, the vendor of Croatian origin appeared to understand them, and they connected. This relates back to the theory of imagined communities which said a common, secular language is a driving force in

bringing communities together (Drew, 2023). In another incident, interviewee B3 also shared a story of their time in the U.S. This is what they said:

I have some extended family members living in America. One lives in Washington, D.C. I visited her in D.C. a few years ago. They have a house in Arlington County, Virginia. I was in the D.C. area in 2016 during the U.S. elections, when Donald J. Trump won. (B3)

Interviewee B3 concluded this with a giggle regarding the 2016 United States presidential election. B3 stated that they had many relatives throughout the U.S. and provided an example of actually visiting a relative in the Washington, D.C. area. This showed that communication was not through technological means but also visitations, a key aspect of transnationalism (Tedeschi et al., 2022, p. 604). Interviewee B3 interacted with the Bosnian diaspora living and growing up in different societies.

In regard to interviewee B8, I asked if they had family connections in St. Louis, Missouri and B8 replied, "Not in St. Louis but recognisable people live in that direction, like Muhamed Fazlagić." Coincidentally, Muhamed Fazlagić currently resides in Louisville, Kentucky, my hometown. I pointed this out during the interview process. Muhamed Fazlagić, who goes by Fazla, is a recognisable figure in the Bosnian community because he represented Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1993 Eurovision Song Contest, which was during the civil conflict in the country (Marshall, 2016). When I heard and reflected on the interview with participant B8, I was yet astounded by how small this world can really be even despite being seven time zones away. In addition, interviewee B8 pointed out, "I have relatives in Chicago, Des Moines, and North Carolina." All of these sounded relatively familiar to me with North Carolina being a bit more distant.

## 5.2 LIFE IN FINLAND

In this section, I will discuss the findings of the analysis under the theme: Life in Finland, which relate to the relevant themes of soft power, trans-localism, and imagined communities as explained in the chapter covering theoretical approaches. As a result of the thematic analysis, three main themes related to Life in Finland were identified in which two have a subtheme: 1.) Assimilation and Integration, with subthemes Mixed Understanding and Suggestions on Improvement, 2.) Education in Finland, with subthemes of School Lunches and Material as well as Preschool, 3.) Maintaining and Forgetting Bosnian Heritage. Next, I will discuss each in turns.

**Table 4: Overview of Ways the BiH Diaspora Live their Lives in Finland**

Themes	Subthemes	Description
Assimilation and Integration		The similarities and differences between being part of the group at the cost of one's own heritage versus being included while still connected to one's heritage.
	Mixed Understanding	Overall misunderstanding with the interviewees between assimilation and integration.
	Suggestions on Improvement	Recommendations given on developing the transition to life in Finland smoother for immigrants and refugees
Education in Finland		Overall educational system and structure in Finland.
	School Lunches and Material	Easy access to basic needs improves educational quality.
	Preschool	Bosnian youth in Finland getting access to quality early-childhood education.
Maintaining and Forgetting Bosnian Heritage		The ways in which the diaspora attempts to preserve their identity through Bosnian language classes, celebrations, customs, etc.

### 5.2.1 Assimilation and Integration

The first theme under Life in Finland, which is Assimilation and Integration, has two subthemes: Mixed understanding and suggestions on improvement. This theme

contains two subthemes which are mixed understanding and suggestions on improvement.

### 5.2.1.1 Mixed Understanding

The first subtheme of assimilation and integration, which is part of Life in Finland, addresses the varying and possibly misunderstood meanings of assimilation and integration. These two terms sound familiar and interconnected but there are some different outcomes associated with each.

**Table 5: BiH Diaspora Explicit Opinion on Assimilation and Integration**

	Participant												
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13
Explicit mention of Assimilation/Integration													
Assimilation is good	●	-	-					-				●	
Integration is good		●							●	●	●		●

*Key symbol ‘●’ on the table confirms that the interviewee has indicated this while the key symbol ‘-’ indicates an explicit no. Sections with no symbol indicate that the interviewee has not mentioned it or chosen to not answer.*

Table 5 shows a general mixed attitude toward assimilation and integration. Other interviewees of Bosnian origin who did not explicitly mention the two terms did provide examples which can be seen further in this subtheme.

**Table 6: Comparison of Assimilation and Integration**

Term	Definition	Example
Assimilation	“...adopting the ways of another culture and fully becoming part of a different society” (O’Brien, M., 2016).	Bosnian-Finns skipping Ramadan fast because most of their co-workers are non-Muslim and must maintain productivity quotas.
Integration	“...incorporating individuals from different groups into a society as equals” (O’Brien, M., 2016).	Finnish workplace provides a prayer room and work hours accommodation to Bosnian-Finns during Ramadan.

This subsection exclusively focuses on some of the answers to the interview question which reads, “From your perspective, how will the Bosnian Finnish diaspora



look in the future? Do you see the youth maintaining aspects of their heritage or become fully enveloped by the dominant culture?" The answers I received were intriguing but also mixed. Even though I did not explicitly mention anywhere in the interview process the exact terms 'assimilation' or 'integration,' about half of the interviewees addressed it, which I find fascinating. To start off, interviewee B11 provided their perspective on why they see integration as good or important. "I would like to get involved later on. It's important to integrate yourself into the new society BEFORE you get involved with the diaspora. There is a very real risk that the diaspora becomes your only community" (B11). From the answer provided by interviewee B11, they view integration as a process which must start immediately that consists of being away from the Bosnian diaspora. This was different from the definition and example of integration provided in Table 6. It is possible that interviewee B11 was confusing integration with assimilation. A key factor comes from the fact that one must be away from the diaspora in order to join the new society. From my perspective, distancing yourself from the diaspora in a new society may or may not be beneficial. It is likely that because interviewee B11 was proficient in the English language, they may not be fully cognizant how difficult learning a new language could be after adolescence. If a person lacked language ability, they were more likely to seek out people who spoke their language and understood their mindset as a means of survival.

In a different interview, interviewee B12 refers to assimilation by having said:

Yes, and Finnish people say that Bosnians assimilate very well but better than some other nationalities. I think it's because Bosnians want to work and they want to take care of their family, so they are hardworking people, and they will do what their boss says. The community: When one person gets one job or school admission, some other people will want to do the same. (B12)

In this instance, B12 said that Bosnians assimilate better than some other nationalities but then goes on to mention how Bosnians within the community help one another to get jobs. This example likely connects to integration rather than assimilation. On the other hand, interviewee B12 does indeed mention that Bosnians will do what their boss says. This statement was somewhat vague to clearly point out whether it was integration or assimilation. I do not think there was enough evidence in this reply to show that Bosnians adopting the workstyle was directly related to assimilation.

Moving on to interviewee B2, their reply better aligned with the general definition of assimilation and integration while relating to the Bosnian diaspora in Finland:

We have two lines here: BiH citizens who are interested in maintaining their culture, identity, language, and connection with BiH by visiting. When they are in Finland, they save their identity, culture, religion, language. Within all this, there is another group of people who have assimilated into Finnish culture, who have forgotten their Bosnian identity. I think that assimilation is exceptionally dangerous, wrong. Do become a member of Finnish society, talk in the Finnish language, have a good job, study, have a beautiful home to live in, and adopt beautiful things! If you adopt the Finnish way of life but forget your heritage, it is the wrong way. (B2)

Interviewee B2 addressed two main opposing groups of Bosnians in Finland. One group focused on maintaining cultural and personal ties while another possibly disregarded that. B2, in their perspective, explicitly mentioned that assimilation is dangerous. Even though they do not mention the term integration, the final two sentences aligned with the general definition. Despite interviewee B2 mentioning ‘dangerous’ and ‘wrong,’ I believe that their overall intention was benevolent, and they spoke in an open, honest manner.

On the other side of this discussion, some interviewees did not mention whether assimilation or integration was good or bad, but rather it is happening, and they see it. Here is what interviewee B6 said:

My daughter only speaks Bosnian to me. She speaks to her brother in Finnish. I am concerned that I may forget the Bosnian language even though I was born and raised there. When I returned to Bosnia, I heard all sorts of words that I don’t know since I don’t use them. I’m worried about my children. As years pass by, will they know how to speak? How much Bosnian language will they know? I’m already feeling like I am forgetting Bosnian words. I read a lot of Bosnian on the internet. I speak to my daughter on a monthly basis, and we only communicate the basics of everyday life. My son, who is the oldest, uses very little Bosnian language. (B6)

In this answer, interviewee B6 referenced their adult offspring sitting nearby (interviewee B7). They are worried about their own situation regarding Bosnian language as well as that of their offspring. It appeared that the two offspring only utilise Bosnian language when in communication with their parents. Through the perspective of imagined communities, losing their ability to speak the Bosnian language may disconnect them from the overall Bosnian imagined community (Drew, 2023).

### 5.2.1.2 Suggestions on Improvement

The second subtheme of assimilation and integration, which is part of Life in Finland, which is called suggestions on improvement, will primarily focus on possible areas of development to assist international people settle into Finland. These suggestions are provided by various interviewees in this study who are part of the Bosnian diaspora in Finland.

In order to understand the challenges that newcomers to Finland endured, interviewee B2 said:

A lot of foreigners have a difficult time adjusting to Finnish culture and also adapting to the weather in Finland, including me. I think that Finns could improve on becoming more open towards strangers... and give foreigners more opportunities. (B2)

Through the perspective of B2, foreigners appear to have a difficult time becoming part of Finnish culture, dealing with the weather, and meeting Finns. They suggested that Finnish people should be more open and offer more chances. In general, I agree that openness and providing opportunity to others was a good intent in helping others become part of society. This is also addressed by interviewee B12 who commented on the assistance to asylum and more general support:

Accept asylum and into the system. To not let them stay and wait basically. Also, for the Finnish people to be open, they are open, but to be more open and basically accept them. They are people who need help and come from a long way because of war or something... Also, for NGOs, government, and third sector - they should have more funds to do better work and do more because there are many customers who need help with getting a new job, homework from school, or getting documents. They should also be supported more. (B12)

B12 said that people who are coming to Finland in general need more support as well as individuals and organisations who are helping to provide support. I agreed with this along with overall more support for vulnerable populations in Finland.

Now moving on to concerns focused on students, interviewee B11 suggested a similar improvement regarding openness, "For Jyväskylä: More events meant for mingling between international students and Finns. Even if you go to IDESCO, you meet only international students, same with ESN (B11)." IDESCO stands for 'International Degree Student Community' and ESN stands for 'Erasmus Student Network.'

Through interviewee B11, it appeared as though international students are in their own sphere away from Finnish students. They suggested a variety of events to combine different parts of the student community. As I was a member of IDESCO and ESN Jyväskylä, I personally agreed to this. There were many planned events within each student organisation but there was not much awareness of the other student events or opportunities for more intermingling.

## 5.2.2 Education in Finland

The second theme under Life in Finland, which is Education in Finland, will cover the general attitude of Bosnian Finns about the educational system in Finland. Then, this subsection will be further subdivided into school lunches and material, and preschool. Table 7 shows the overall attitude regarding the Finnish education system.

**Table 7: Bosnian Diaspora Impression on the Finnish Education System**

	Participant												
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13
Finnish Education system													
... is good or excellent	●	●	-	●	●	●	●	-	●	●	●	●	●

*Key symbol '●' on the table confirms that the interviewee has indicated this while the key symbol '-' indicates an explicit no. Sections with no symbol indicate that the interviewee has not mentioned it or chosen to not answer.*

Roughly 85%, or 11 out of 13 respondents, had a good or excellent impression of the Finnish educational system while two respondents did not. It can be generally said that in this study, the interviewees perceived the educational quality in Finland is good or excellent. Shared below are what was said as well as the two interviewees who do not agree. Interviewee B2 shared their positive perspective:

I am employed in a Finnish school...I have no words to describe – every child, regardless of their socio-economic situation, has a chance to achieve and get an education...In other countries, there may be instances where children don't go to school all but in Finland, these children would immediately be a part of the education system. These children would get the feeling of being valued. Every child is looked after in Finland, much attention and love in school. (B2)

Interviewee B2, who grew up in Bosnia and Herzegovina and studied to become an attorney there. B2 resided in Finland and worked in the Finnish school system. They felt speechless on the amount of attention provided to each student and reflected on how the situation would be different if these children were in a different society. When connecting back to theories, interviewee B2's socio-economic situation mirrored that explained in trans-localism because becoming an attorney is a long-term goal which may signal at least a slightly high socio-economic standing (Halilovich, 2012). In addition, their experience in the Bosnian education system and currently employment in the Finnish educational system signalled to me that this person knew what they were talking about. Interviewee B2 had enough experience, at least in my perspective, to understand the complexities of each educational system. Similarly, interviewee B13, who was in the same life situation as B2, said, "For me, this is the best educational system in the world, due to their public schools. They are not hesitant to spend money on education" (B2). In the case of B2, they were saying that direct investment in public education was the reason behind Finland's school system success. This was fascinating information for me to hear because during my time in American public education, there was concern about budget cuts in education and teachers buying their own school supplies in order to better serve students. I felt peace realising that youth of Bosnian descent could focus more of their attention on other matters. Furthermore, Interviewee B5, who was in Finland as an exchange student, said, "...positivity, going outside daily, physical activity. There are two breaks during the school day: One is 30 minutes and it's mandatory, no matter the weather" (B5). At the time studied to become a teacher in Bosnia and Herzegovina, interviewee B5 addressed the internal and external factors to what they observed which differs from what they learned and experienced. Interestingly enough, there was no mention about specific content being taught. This made me think that good educational quality was not only about the content, but the overall academic environment.

In contrast, interviewee B8 provided feedback as to why they did not perceive Finland's education as being the best:

If you look at PISA, Finland's scores have actually dropped. It's no longer amongst the top. There are many reasons, difficult to say. They've been the best until 2010. It's possible that what they call "free living" with no boundaries may have an impact. There needs to

be some boundaries, not like the physical ones in the Balkans. They don't respect their teachers, cursing, hurting. The law is that the teacher is guilty if they try to stop it, and if they do, the teacher pays a fine. There are reasons and many are discussing. For example, Estonia - one that used to be a "left-behind country" after the collapse of the Soviet Union, has now surpassed Finland in PISA scores. Estonia is also better in technological advancements. When you get something easily, you don't value it as much anymore. We should be learning more from Estonia. (B8)

Interviewee B8 focused on Finland's PISA scores in the year 2000 because it was one of the defining marks to Finland's soft power around the world. Finland's education exports brought in roughly 1 billion euros into the nation's economy (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2022). This was important in regard to Finland's soft power because it impacts the country's reputation globally even though Finland did not purposely make it that way (Huff, 2014). What interviewee B8 was trying to say is that not only was the educational quality possibly dropping but Estonia's soft power was rising due to its education and technology sector. Interviewee B3 had a similar opinion to interviewee B8 in terms of education, "They wanted to try something else but now have seen their PISA test results fall. The Finnish education system isn't as good as it used to be" (B3). It appears that interviewee B8 and B3 based the quality of the education primarily on the PISA test scores but also interviewee B8 addressed growing disrespect toward educators. This sounded familiar to what I witnessed during my time in public school in Louisville, but I am still sceptical that misbehaviour in some Finnish schools was on the same level as misbehaviour in some American public schools.

#### **5.2.2.1 School Lunches and Material**

The first subtheme of Education in Finland, which is part of Life in Finland, addresses the significance of access to school lunches and material supplies for public school students. Many interviewees perceived this as an important characteristic of quality education in Finland. In the following, there are excerpts regarding this topic.

To begin, Interviewee B1 shared their overall positive perception regarding Finland and what they saw on the university level:

When I first came to Finland, I was an Erasmus exchange student for 10 months.... Once I came here, I knew that I'd die here.... There is a law that middle school is mandatory, that means the material needed for school is free. Everything is paid for and university is

free for Finnish citizens. In primary school, their lunch is paid for. It comes from our taxes, but you know where the taxes go. It is being used better than what I can come up with. (B1)

Through ESN, interviewee B1 had the opportunity to spend one school year studying in Finland. From what they learned and experienced, it left the impression that they wanted to spend the rest-of-their-life in Finland. What impressed B1 was the perceived equity in access to school supplies and student lunches. When I heard this, I reflected back to my time in American public education. There were some similarities and differences to Finland. Middle school is mandatory in the state of Kentucky but not all school material is covered by taxes. I visited a Finnish middle school in Jyväskylä a few months ago and saw that schools had complete musical instruments in their classrooms in excellent condition, a rare sight to see in Kentucky schools. On a similar note, interviewee B10 provided an analogous observation:

...there aren't significant differences in classes like "rich ones" and "poor ones." I like that we have lunches in schools for kids because in Bosnia, children had to bring food from home. Some children in Bosnia would have croissants, chocolates, and chips for lunch while in Finland, we have warm food. (B10)

Interviewee B10 said that because students are not offered food in school, children are more dependent upon the family situation to feed themselves. This meant that some students would come to school with snacks for lunch and other less healthy options. School lunches in Finland are expected to be cooked, which requires them to be warm upon serving. Reflecting back to my time in American public school, it was similar in terms of in-school lunch cafeteria but there was no guarantee that the food options would be fresh upon serving. Interviewee B10's observations were further confirmed by interviewee B6 who had both children go through the Finnish education system, "Their books and food are free" (B6). In fact, a fourth interviewee also mentioned school lunches, "If I am a politician in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the first thing I would do is implement lunch restaurant food for children" (B13). Insight from interviewee B13, as well as others, indicated that there was no national school lunch programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina like how it was in Finland. This piece of information shocked me because I assumed that the food that Bosnian students brought from home would be typical home cooked meals, just inside of lunch boxes and bags. This meant

that some students in Bosnia and Herzegovina could be loading themselves up on fast-digesting carbohydrates in the middle of the school day which was likely to not keep students feeling full for long (British Diabetic Association, 2023). If interviewee B13 had the governing power of the nation, they would make changes to the school system so all students in Bosnia and Herzegovina would have access to food from in-school restaurants. If the Bosnian diaspora utilised their soft power, there is some possibility that a Bosnian national lunch programme which serves students could be established. This could also provide opportunities for economic growth and job security for the local people.

### **5.2.2.2    Preschool**

The second subtheme of assimilation and integration, which is part of Life in Finland, addresses the importance of access to affordable, quality education for pre-elementary aged students. Before doing this research, I had no idea about the Finnish preschool system since I did not have the opportunity to go to an affordable preschool in the United States.

When I questioned interviewees B9 and B10, two young children entered the interview space. B9 and B10 were the parents of these children. When it was time to ask questions about the education in Finland, it naturally steered towards preschool. Interviewee B10 shared their experience with sending their child off the preschool:

My child started preschool one and a half months ago. First, she was there for a couple days a week but now she is there every day except today; We have a free day for her to stay at home. On one hand, it is really sad to send your kid to preschool this young. I was struggling with that a lot but then, on the other hand, she learned so many things there. She has friends, something that is better organised than being with me at home. She's almost one and a half years old. There are pluses and minuses. Sometimes I am scared if they are raising her properly. Maybe I would do it better but then I need to trust them - they are professionals. They know what to do and how to raise them. You just need to trust the system. (B10)

Interviewee B10 addressed the opportunities as well as the drawbacks of sending their young child to school. It was apparent that even though they must learn to trust the system, it was possible that Bosnian cultural mindset still played a role in wanting their child to be closer to parents at home. Interviewee B9 shook their head in



agreement to what B10 had said. I did not know that it was possible to send a child younger than the age of three to preschool since it was not a part of my awareness previously. For fast developing brains, I could only imagine how preschool activities boost the brain connectivity of young children. There was also a possible risk that being more away from parents at a young age may delay the children from learning social cues familiar to people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### 5.2.3 Maintaining and Forgetting Bosnian Heritage

The third theme under Life in Finland, called maintaining and forgetting Bosnian heritage, covers the ways in which the Bosnian diaspora in Finland is either trying to sustain the connection with their heritage or, over time, slowly losing connection to it for a new identity. The participants reflected on their ‘Bosnianness’ in a dominantly Finnish society. This theme led me to much self-reflection and comparison as part of the Bosnian diaspora of the United States.

**Table 8: Self-Reported Fluency in Bosnian Language**

	Participant												
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13
Bosnian Language Skills													
Complete Fluency	●	●	●	●	●	●	-*	●	●	●	●	●*	●

*Key symbol ‘●’ on the table confirms that the interviewee has indicated this while the key symbol ‘-’ indicates an explicit no. Sections with no symbol indicate that the interviewee has not mentioned it or chosen to not answer. ‘\*’ symbol in this table indicates that the interviewee was born and raised in Finland.*

Table 8 shows self-reported fluency in the Bosnian language. This is important because not only does the language connect with a sense of identity, but it also allows for communication with relatives who do not know Finnish or English. When looking at this information through the lens of transnationalism and imagined communities, the role of a shared common language helps keep distant communities in various societies together (Calhoun, 2016, pp. 12–13).

To start off, interviewee B10 reflected on their experience and what they hope for their children:

We are trying to raise our kids to have their Bosnian culture. I have been living here for 20 years and I do have mixed culture – Bosnian and Finnish – so I think it is okay to have both, but I really want to raise her to appreciate Bosnia and Herzegovina, speak Bosnian, and to have Bosnian friends. [Interviewee B9] and I are trying. (B10)

In reference to interviewee B9, who was in the group interview with them, interviewee B10 said that it was possible to have both identities but tried to prioritise the Bosnian heritage. It appeared that visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina, speaking Bosnian, and connecting with a Bosnian community was a priority for B10 to instil into their children. This is a characteristic of transnationalism due to planned attempts of connectedness across borders and even within the border containing a microcosm of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tedeschi et al., 2022, p. 604). Throughout the interview process, interviewee B9 and B10 had their very young children in the interview but they are too young to interact with. After what B10 said, B9 elaborates by having said:

I hope that my daughter will have a lot of Bosnian heritage and culture if she continues living here. She will have effects of Finnish culture. My husband and I will try our best to maintain aspects of her heritage. She is still Bosnian, and we are both Bosnian, living here. I am sure, she will take in Finnish culture. (B9)

According to interviewee B9, their hope for the future was that their daughter's Bosnian heritage would remain a defining part of them. An interesting point came across that despite the mother and child spending most of their life in Finnish society, the Bosnian identity remained. This meant that interviewee B9 perceived one being Bosnian was not necessarily tied to physically being present within the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina but rather tied to the parents and traditions which the parents actively tried to teach. This mirrors a description of trans-localism because it is now the customs and practices held by the individual which defines them, not just being inside the border of a country (Halilovich, 2012, p. 165). From personal experience, this was the general attitude I have come across when I visited Bosnia and Herzegovina a few months ago despite never living there.

Previously when interviewee B8 mentioned that they were on the board of the Bosnian Cultural Centre in Turku, they then went on to further explain their intent of the community centre, "We have a project for 2030 that we make a place for the next generation at the Bosnian Community Centre. Now, 11 younger people have taken

over and we will help with what needs to be done” (B8). At this point in time, it appeared the long-time leaders of the community centre implemented a plan to pass along the responsibility by the year 2030. Having interviewed B8 before B12, I specifically asked in detail about the Bosnian language classes offered at BKC and this is what they said:

...we have one class a week... The teacher is Bosnian who came here in the 1990's. She teaches each group one hour each week. For me, it was held on Mondays. These classes depend on the grade level. Small kids may start at noon, and the bigger you are, the later you have class. We don't pay anything for it - we don't pay for schooling in Finland... I think it is good that we have Bosnian language classes because some kids don't learn that much at home. (B12)

B12 said that Bosnian language classes in Turku were taught by a Bosnian woman who likely came to Finland as a refugee. This Bosnian language teacher taught various levels of the Bosnian language from the very young to much older. People who attend these classes do not need to worry about finances. B12 also made a point that some children may not learn that much Bosnian, possibly because their parents were not professional experts in the Bosnian language but rather use it in colloquial speech. I further asked interviewee B12, “When you were taking the class, what were some things that you learned?” Interviewee B12 replied:

Mainly Bosnian history and grammar rules. Get to know some books and write some essays. One or two group work. I don't remember that much. Here, the Bosnian classes are until ninth grade - from first grade to ninth grade. In some other schools, there is no Bosnian language. (B12)

History and grammar rules of the Bosnian language appeared to have left an impression on interviewee B12 many years after they completed the class. Having felt further curious, I asked a further question on what B12 remembered about the history being taught in Bosnian language classes in Turku. “I don't remember that much but mainly how, who, and where the first people were. When it was populated and different eras. The Kingdom of Bosnia and now. The war in Bosnia. We did learn pretty much everything” (B12). Interviewee recalled learning about the original people in Bosnia as well as general historical eras until the very present. The information provided by interviewee B12 regarding the classes offered at the community centre provided examples of imagined communities because the passing of national identity via

historical details and other commonly known facts of information specific to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Anderson, 2006, p. 230, as cited in Calhoun, 2016, p. 14). I became so fascinated by this information, especially since I have not had the opportunity for this kind of information during my adolescence in Kentucky. I pressed interviewee B12 further about who would join these classes, and they said that only ethnic Bosnians seemed interested. It is possible that the overall Balkan diaspora could be avoiding conflict with one another in Turku, so only Bosnians are taking these courses despite south Slavic languages in the western Balkans being closely interlinked with one another (Huttunen & Juntunen, 2020, p. 4133).

In contrast, interviewee B6 has had a different experience:

My children will never be able to live according to Bosnian cultural norms. One child was born in Finland and the other came to Finland at two years old. Their upbringing was mostly surrounded by Finnish people. When your children are surrounded by Finnish children, it is difficult to maintain your Bosnian culture. There are so few of us, Bosnians, in Finland. If there were more Bosnians, like in America, the culture might maintain itself, but here in Finland, no. As much as I would like to teach my children, it's difficult. (B6)

Interviewee B6 described that their children have on some levels, become disconnected to some aspects of Bosnian culture. They described the difficulty of being an ethnic group minority without a community nearby. When compared to the literature review that looked into certain ethnic group verses 'Yugoslav' identity, it could be likely that instead of B6 and their children having taken the 'Yugoslav' identity, they have chosen Finnish identity (Müller-Suleymanova, 2021). This could have been a possible link to be more willing to associate with Finns and other people due to isolation from the Bosnian diaspora community. Interviewee B6 further went on:

For my children, there was nobody to teach them Bosnian language. Now, with how many Bosnians there are, there is one or two hours of Bosnian language instruction, and this exposure will lead them to at least know something in Bosnian. When I came to Finland in 1996, we came to Finland amongst the first Bosnians. Basically, nobody here was Bosnian. It was really difficult when there was no one from the Balkans, no one to talk to. (B6)

Interviewee B6 and their family were amongst the first Bosnians in Finland. Their children did not receive any Bosnian language instruction outside of the home and it possibly caused the drift. I felt great sadness hearing this because I perceived it as over

500 years of ancestral history almost getting wiped out from the consciousness of two descendants within one lifetime.

Another important aspect which some Bosnians in Finland were doing was marrying other people from the Bosnian diaspora. Interviewee B10 explained:

When I got married, my husband was in BiH before coming here. The process wasn't that difficult compared to Germany. In Germany, they have to learn the language and have some certificates. Then they can apply for a visa. Our husbands didn't have to do that before coming to Finland - they learn Finnish in Finland. (B10)

During this interview, interviewee B10 referred to their own situation as well as that of interviewee B9. It showed that some people of the Bosnian diaspora, despite growing up in Finland, still marry Bosnians from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not only that, but they were also aware of the visa process in Germany. This could only happen if the Bosnian community was in frequent communication and compared laws. This connects to transnationalism as well as imagined communities because there appeared to be social connections beyond the borders which were tied to ethnic group (Tedeschi et al., 2022; Drew, 2023). As a response to what interviewee B10 said, interviewee B9 further explained:

If you look at how to get your husband from abroad to here, Finland is quite an easy country if you have Finnish citizenship, because you don't need to learn the language before coming. Easy to get a visa for their significant other. For example, in America, you need to wait many years. Just like Australia. Wait many years to get a visa. (B9)

Interviewee B9 confirmed what interviewee B10 said while also comparing further countries like the United States and Australia. Because of the response that I received from these two interviewees, during an interview with interviewee B12, I asked them about their input about Bosnian Finns marrying other Bosnians. Here is what they said:

I think many Bosnians do marry Bosnians and usually, at least in Finland, they find someone who lives in Bosnia. They meet online and then they marry, the one who lives in Bosnia comes to Finland and gets a Finnish passport, works here, and has children. Of course, some do marry some Finnish and other people, but mainly Bosnian. (B12)

Interviewee B12 confirms what B10 and B9 mentioned previously. B12 added that it was typically the partner who lives in Bosnia and Herzegovina who came to Finland

(rather than the reverse). I would think that this was the case due to the higher standard of living in Finland as well as more job opportunities compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main partners that Bosnian Finns look for were other Bosnians, but some do marry or partner up with Finnish people. A marriage between two people is not only an action which focuses the present but also an expectation of a shared, common future which again provides further evidence of imagined communities with the Bosnian diaspora (Drew, 2023).

### 5.3 LIFE AND RELATIONS TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In this section, I will discuss the findings of the analysis under the theme: Life and Relations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which relate to the relevant elements of soft power, trans-localism, and imagined communities as explained in the chapter covering theoretical approaches. As a result of the thematic analysis, three main themes related to Bosnia and Herzegovina were identified in which one had a sub theme: 1.) Diaspora feeling unwelcome, 2.) Difficult historical past, and 3.) Insecurity, with sub-themes of Complicated political system (voting) and Education. Next, I will discuss each in the following.

**Table 9: Bosnian Diaspora's Experience and/or Impression on Life in BiH**

Themes	Subthemes	Description
Diaspora Feeling Unwelcome		General attitude and/or treatment by Bosnians within Bosnia and Herzegovina towards its diaspora is perceived cold.
Difficult Historical Past		The historical past of the country still impacts the condition of the nation as well as the people.
Insecurity		Overall sense of instability.
	Complicated Political Structure (Voting)	Much confusion regarding the political and power structure.
	Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina	There needs to be better improvement in education.

#### 5.3.1 Diaspora Feeling Unwelcome

The first theme under Life and Relations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, called Diaspora Feeling Unwelcome, focuses on the overall sense that the Bosnian diaspora in Finland feels an overall sense of being not wanted or desired when in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are various explanations as to why this may be the case which are shown in this theme.

**Table 10: Diaspora Perspective on Government and Treatment in BiH**

	Participant												
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13
Questionnaire Question: To what extent do you believe in this statement: <i>'The government of Bosnia and Herzegovina should work more with the diaspora to improve the situation in the motherland?'</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Attitude or treatment received in Bosnia and Herzegovina													
Positive		•		•	•			•				•	•
Negative	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	

*Key symbol '•' on the table confirms that the interviewee has indicated this while the key symbol '-' indicates an explicit no. Sections with no symbol indicate that the interviewee has not mentioned it or chosen to not answer.*

When looking at Table 10, roughly 92%, or 12 out of 13 respondents, agreed the Bosnian government should work more with the diaspora. Not only that, but 12 of these respondents marked 'highly agree' on the questionnaire form. Despite this, about 77% of the interviewees mentioned that they received negative attitude or treatment by Bosnians in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is important to address that three of these interviewees provided mixed responses while only two interviewees perceived to have received positive attitude or treatment. I inferred from this overview of data that despite the difficulties, there was some hope for collaboration with the diaspora.

In order to better understand Table 10 and the perspectives of the interviewees, the following contains excerpts from the interviews. To begin, interviewee B11 provided their experience as being part of the Bosnian diaspora visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina:

When you are part of the diaspora, three assumptions are made about you:

1. You're a failure thinking about returning to Bosnia.
2. You're financially affluent.
3. You know what's going on in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They possibly see the diaspora as knowledgeable.



Some Bosnians in Bosnia try to intellectually belittle the diaspora. I think I actually brought it on to myself. (B11)

Interviewee B11 listed three major assumptions made about the Bosnian diaspora by Bosnians currently residing in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first point, in a way, assumed that Bosnia and Herzegovina was at the bottom in terms of success. The second point assumed that the diaspora had financial capital. The final point revealed that Bosnians in Bosnia and Herzegovina may not know what was fully going on in their country and the diaspora may have some information. Interviewee B11 then admitted that their behaviour may or may not have led to possible unwelcoming behaviour. The second and third point presented by B11 provided a possible example and opportunity for the Bosnian diaspora in Finland to flex its soft power (Mattern, 2005). With the overall impression of financial remittances as well as information capital, if utilised properly, the Bosnian Finnish diaspora could use soft power to possibly implement changes (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). I am also not surprised about the assumption that the Bosnian diaspora was more financially affluent because they brought in about 1.2 billion euros into the economy in 2016 (Kovacevic, 2017). Now moving on to interviewee B2, they provided a mixed answer as to the treatment they or the diaspora received in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their excerpt was as follows:

...it's not easy for regular people. Regular people who live in Bosnia and Herzegovina are becoming more and more repulsed toward the diaspora. I don't know the reason why it is happening. With that being said, there are a large number of good people who respect the diaspora, who value the thoughts of the diaspora. There seems to exist a mass that shows repulsion towards the diaspora. I don't know if that is coming from the diaspora's incoherent behaviour when visiting Bosnia. Sometimes I myself feel like a stranger in Bosnia even though I grew up there and got my schooling there. (B2)

Interviewee B2 explained that life was not easy for people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It appears that as time passes, the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not like its diaspora. Interviewee B2 did not know why it was happening, but it could be the Bosnian diaspora's behaviour when they visit Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite this, interviewee B2 also pointed out that there was also a large number of Bosnians who respected and valued the thoughts of the diaspora. Just as this repulsion could be seen by some regular people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, previous research noted a dismissive attitude by the Bosnian elites toward the diaspora (Hasić, 2018). I am

uncertain whether the regular people have been mimicking the elites or vice versa regarding distaste toward the Bosnian diaspora.

On the other side of the spectrum, interviewee B13 received overall positive attitude and treatment when visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina:

I have never been treated differently. I don't know if it's because I speak pretty well Bosnian. I've been living in Bosnia for a long time, and when I go visit there, I'm not in any way treated differently from the people there. I don't show that I'm living in Finland. It's only when people directly ask or see the licence plates on our car, then they notice.  
(B13)

Interviewee B13 suspected that their Bosnian language skills and them growing up in Bosnia and Herzegovina possibly allowed themselves to blend in. They did not try to actively show off that they were living in Finland, with the only evidence being the Finnish licence plate on their car. In my experience, some people in the Bosnian diaspora had the tendency to openly display their financial situation while others, like interviewee B13, do not. I do not necessarily think it is in the collective mindset of people in Nordic nations to display their socio-economic advantages. This likely had to do with a person's character.

In general, the overall sense of the diaspora feeling unwelcome by Bosnians currently living in Bosnia and Herzegovina went against Anderson's theory of imagined communities. An important aspect of imagined communities was that a group is tied together by some sort of national or ethnic ties (Breuilly, 2016, p. 627). The socio-economic situation between the Bosnian diaspora and Bosnians currently in the homeland could create division in the community. I think this could be lessened if the diaspora crafted an organised plan, shared investments, and encouraged good civic behaviour.

### **5.3.2 Difficult Historical Past**

The second theme under Life and Relations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, called Difficult Historical Past, addresses some of the challenges that the Bosnian people faced throughout the centuries. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been at the crossroads of ideologies and empires for thousands of years. This left a mark on the country and its citizens. This theme will provide evidence that the historical past still has meaning

today. I have not asked anything regarding the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina but rather it revealed itself as a possible way that could help understand the collective mindset of the people. To begin, interviewee B11 provided a general summary to me on Bosnian identity:

In general, in the Balkans, we don't have an identity. Our identity is, "let's go 80 years into the past." Balkan Wars, WWI, WWII. The Austro-Hungarian Empire treated Bosnia and Herzegovina as a mixed bag; they brought infrastructure to the area, but it was mainly for their own convenience. The Ottoman Empire ruled Bosnia and Herzegovina for about 500 years but not much infrastructure advancements happened outside of religious purposes.

The book written by Ivo Andric, which led him to win the Nobel Prize in literature called *The Bridge on the Drina*, basically that bridge has baby bones and skulls. Generational pain. Bosnia is unstable but the entire Balkan region is unstable for different reasons. Bosnia is a country built on nationalism. Either embrace nationalism or continue with the status quo. (B11)

Interviewee B2 explained in a general sense that in the Balkans, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was not active effort to define identities according to today but rather based upon in the past. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been associated in many conflicts with European empires and they did not have time to have national autonomy. A famous book based in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed the unresolved generational pain and nationalism that is causing instability for the country. When applying Anderson's theory of imagined communities, it provides possible confirmation regarding national and ethnic group lines from before the establishment of Yugoslavia; one of many countries which played key roles during the Cold War. *The Bridge on the Drina* (1945) provided a good example of print capitalism because, despite it being a fictional book, it provided clues to Bosnia's past and ongoing pain (Calhoun, 2016, pp. 12-13). *The Bridge on the Drina* was originally published roughly six months before the end of World War II. During this time, the concept of national south Slavic identity took a stronghold in the western Balkans. It comes as no surprise that the book was originally published in Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian. The book covered topics such as the Ottoman Empire, incoming Austrian rule, rebellions, death, and general difficulties of everyday life. There was even a part of the book mentioning the possibility of taking a character to America. Nationalism played a key role in the motivation of some characters in *The Bridge on the Drina*. Unfortunately, according to Anderson's theory

of imagined community, the use of nationalism was possibly being used as a dividing tool against progress (Calhoun, 2016, p. 16). When I read the English translation of the book, I was not able to complete reading it because there are some dark details.

### 5.3.3 Insecurity

The third theme under Life and Relations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, called insecurity, will first mention evidence of general sense of insecurity and then end with subthemes relating to complicated political structure and education. To begin, interviewee B1 expressed their feelings that they do not feel safe:

There is zero security, no security, any kind of security. You are in a jungle there and no one follows the law. There are no consequences for breaking the law. I'm afraid to go if someone hits me with a car or a dog attacks me. There are wild dogs roaming the cities. People are so hungry that they will steal from you, especially if you're wearing name brand items. I get depressed from watching it. (B1)

Interviewee B1 compared Bosnia and Herzegovina to a jungle. B1 said that laws exist but civil reverence for the laws and regulations may not be strong. Interviewee B1 also talked about ongoing hunger that some Bosnian people face which could lead some to steal as a form of survival. This impacted their mental health. When I visited Bosnia and Herzegovina a few months ago, I did see dogs roaming the streets, but they did not appear to be a threat towards me. In regard to hunger, I did not encounter Bosnians begging for food in public places. It is possible that people tried to hide their tough situations to protect their self-esteem from public ridicule. On the other hand, interviewee B10 added a twist in that they feel safe in some places but not others:

I do feel secure in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Maybe when we are visiting our hometown - a small place where we are originally from - I sometimes do not feel that secure. It's not dangerous but the history that the place has. There are many ethnicities - Bosnians, Serbs, Croats. I think that's the place where I don't feel 100% safe. In general, I feel safe in Sarajevo. (B10)

Interviewee B10 said that the major cities felt secure to them but the small town/village that their family was originally from still has a charged ethnic history that made them feel uncomfortable. Interviewee B10 felt safe in Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In terms of trans-localism, this provided an example of how

entire families in an area of Bosnia and Herzegovina could be transplanted to an area of Finland (Halilovich, 2012, pp. 164–165). Due to my focus on maintaining the privacy of the interviewees, I did not ask interviewee B10 where they were originally from in terms of smaller places in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The sense that I got was that they have family members from that small town who are also in Finland. When I visited Bosnia and Herzegovina a few months ago, I personally did not sense the charged atmosphere until I went into the countryside of the Herzegovina region.

On another aspect of sense of insecurity, interviewee B11 provided their prediction on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

I can see it sooner or later – peacefully disassembled one way or another. The pieces will be free independent little chunks or a confederacy of Croatia or Serbia. That might be part of the Kosovo Settlement; Serbia gets Republika Srpska OR complete demographic collapse. About 100,000 people leave Bosnia and Herzegovina every year. That is a major number for a country with 2.7 million people. I'm not counted in that statistic. This includes people who revoke their BiH citizenship. Sooner or later, there will be a demographic shift of migrants to that area of the Balkans, and, sooner or later, the majority of the people there will not have anything to do with Bosnian Slavic culture. (B11)

Interviewee B11 had an overall grim prediction on the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were many options but the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina would not have a seat in power. Bosnia and Herzegovina was connected to Croatia, Serbia, and Kosovo. A large segment of the population was emigrating from their homeland, and some were renouncing their Bosnia and Herzegovina citizenship. This was likely because Austrian citizenship law generally does not allow their citizens to have any other citizenship outside of their own and the applicant must officially renounce their previous citizenship(s) within two years (Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2023). Because Bosnia and Herzegovina was not currently in the European Union (EU), renouncing all previous citizenships in order to obtain German citizenship also applied (German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, 2023). As a United States citizen, I realised how unusual the American citizenship process was on European soil because U.S. citizens can generally maintain previous citizenships (U.S. Department of State - Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2023). Since transnationalism was tied to interactions and means beyond national borders, I assumed at that time that

many people treat Bosnian identity as something that was not merely tied to a nation but rather a shared culture and history (Huff, 2014).

When I began the open discussion questions with interviewee B3, I got motivated to ask more difficult questions to interviewee B3 due to their open demeanour. I asked, “Do Bosnians still have that fear that something can happen in the future just like what happened in the past? My mother says that it’s like every 30 to 40 years, something happens in Bosnia.” Interviewee B3 replied:

I think that many people think that something could happen. In fact, what happened previously did not finish, which was started over 30 years ago. \*Laughs\* It always continues. The war we had did not even finish, they only covered it. It’s like a fire that you just placed a blanket over it to stop it, but it is still fired up from underneath. The smoke is still emerging on the sides. (B3)

I heard something similar to this before and it also related back to a book in the literature review called, *Bosnian Studies; Perspectives form an Emerging Field* that had a part which read, “ ‘THE WAR NEVER ENDED; IT continues to be fought—through other means’ is a somewhat tired phrase in Bosnia and Herzegovina in response to daily events” (Karabegovic & Karamehic-Oates, 2022, p. 173). I wanted the interviewee to specify the timeframe origin of the fire that was underneath that blanket. I asked, “Did that start in the Bosnian conflict in the 1990’s or is that fire from even before then?” Interviewee B3 replied:

That was the beginning of the end. In fact, that started before when those who did not benefit from the regime in Yugoslavia. There was a group who planned how to place people into groups and take control. Those entities were awoken in the 1980’s and 1990’s and they started... “And now we will try!” We will go ahead with what we wanted to do that Tito’s system didn’t allow to happen. (B3)

According to the information provided by interviewee B3, an unnamed group coordinated and planned how to divide up Yugoslavia before the collapse began. Some unnamed group was unable to take control as long as Josip Broz Tito stayed in power. Tito’s death marked an opportunity for others to possibly seize control. This snippet of conversation between me and interviewee B3 confirmed the possibility that Bosnians currently in their homeland as well as the diaspora, felt a general sense of insecurity regarding the future. Utilising Anderson’s theory of imagined communities,

nationalism in this instance was being implemented as a dividing line in order to possibly seize control. It was important to remember that nationalism itself is a tool that could be used for positive or negative actions (Calhoun, 2016, p. 16).

### 5.3.3.1 Complicated Political Structure

The first subtheme of insecurity, which is part of Life and Relations to Bosnia and Herzegovina, addresses the overall confusion regarding the complex political structure amongst Bosnians who grew up in Bosnia and Herzegovina but now live in Finland as well as some Bosnians who lived their entire lives in Finland.

**Table 11: Bosnian Finnish Diaspora Perception on BiH Politics and Voting**

	Participant												
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B11	B12	B13
The Political Structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina													
Is Positive or Good													
Is Negative or Bad	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Do you vote in Bosnian elections?	-	●	●	●	●	-	-	●	●		●	●	-

*Key symbol '●' on the table confirms that the interviewee has indicated this while the key symbol '-' indicates an explicit no. Sections with no symbol indicate that the interviewee has not mentioned it or chosen to not answer.*

In general, not a single interviewee perceived Bosnia and Herzegovina's politics as going in a positive or good direction. Roughly 92% of the respondents, 12 out of 13, perceived a negative or bad direction in the political structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite this, about 62% voted in Bosnian elections - which indicated some ongoing hope. To begin, interviewee B2 shared their perspective on the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

The political situation in BiH is difficult. We have a complicated political system. Our complicated constitution doesn't give citizens unified, equal rights. We have a domination of nationalist parties. We don't have a unified vision amongst citizens. Basically, it's a complicated situation. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska don't work together to make a unified voice to help its citizens. The citizens don't get their wants and needs fulfilled through the electoral system. We have a complicated, difficult situation that results in a country that is not organised, not

functioning, which results in people enduring it. There is a large number of people who want to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina. (B2)

Interviewee B2 expressed the difficulty of what was happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina. People do not get equal rights and nationalist parties are not serving the needs of everyone. There was much divide, which caused Bosnians to feel neglected by its government. Many Bosnians wanted to leave the country. This related to how in this nation, nationalism as a tool is being used for negative means (Calhoun, 2016, p. 16). In addition, this possibly confirmed previous research regarding immense disorganised efforts by Bosnian elites in regard to development projects in the country (Hasić, 2018, p. 39). Interviewee B13 expressed similar sentiment:

The political situation bothers me not only now or lately, but for a long time. As long as I can remember, since the war started, the political situation was never good. Security isn't the main problem. You can feel that the people there are passive about many things. I would love to see people move away from passive behaviour and the use of passive perspectives. 15 years ago, I lived in Zenica, and it was difficult to find a job. Almost all fields for a job are difficult. Now, it's not so difficult because many people left and there are vacancies to be filled. The political situation is difficult. (B13)

According to interviewee B13, the difficult political situation has been continuing since the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the 1990's. There was a sense of passiveness from the people, and they wanted to emigrate from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Because of growing vacancies, there were some job opportunities. When I heard this, I felt a bit disappointed towards this passive behaviour until I realised that many people were survivors of the Bosnian conflict and may not mentally be able to handle the uncertainty of trying new things. Meanwhile, interviewee B7, who was born and raised in Finland said, "I don't even know who the president is! I don't know anything about that." I understood this since they grew up in another country and did not receive any Bosnian language or history classes.

As mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, this related to Anderson's theory of imagined communities. Despite 62% of interviewee respondents voted in Bosnian elections, 92% were worried about the political situation since nationalism was being used as a dividing tool between people (Calhoun, 2016, p. 16). Before doing this study, I assumed that nationalism always correlated with bad outcomes due to my



parents' experiences but did not realise that celebrating holidays and other customs were connected to nationalism as well, which meant that nationalism was a tool which allows people to project their plans and goals.

### 5.3.3.2 Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The second subtheme of insecurity, which is part of Life and Relations to Bosnia and Herzegovina addresses some of the experiences that Bosnians in Finland have observed, experienced, or heard about regarding education in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To begin, interviewee B8 mentioned that they and their Finnish colleague saw in Bosnian schools:

Bosnian education is divided like in apartheid. Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian children are separated in school. That didn't exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina before. When I went to school during the time of Yugoslavia, we all went to school together and nobody cared. We had friends. The Croatian political component wants the children to be divided. In the western part of Bosnia and Herzegovina region, it is apartheid to separate children. Imagine if someone told you that you are not Finnish and you cannot enter the main school entrance so you must go around and enter the side door... Croatian students go to the renovated schools which provide food while other children go to the other part that's worse... My Finnish colleague went to Bosnia, working diplomatically. She was surprised that this was possible today. She took pictures in Travnik, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where half of the school is decorated, beautifully done, where Croatian children go. On the other side, the decrepit part is where Bosnian, Serbian, and everyone else enter. (B8)

Interviewee B8 described apartheid in some regions in Bosnia and Herzegovina which correlated with ethnic group divide. Some leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina utilised the educational system to implement segregation on children and adolescents. Children of the Croatian ethnic group were supposedly provided food and better school building conditions which the other children do not get. A Finnish colleague of interviewee B8 went, was surprised, and took photographs. There was a distinct difference in how children were treated. In this instance, utilising Anderson's theory of imagined communities, not only are nationalistic and ethnic group ties being played out in the political sphere, but it has trickled down to the local education level on people who do not yet have power to vote (Calhoun, 2016). Ethnic group ties in Bosnia were strongly interlinked with certain religious affiliation so it possibly further connects to imagined communities. As I heard this, I imagined my father hearing this while in

shock because he did not experience nor witness this at any point in his youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was like from a fictional novel, but it was happening in reality.

In another interview, interviewee B5 came to Finland on an Erasmus exchange, explains their time in Bosnian elementary school:

Bosnian teachers need to realise that children don't think exactly like adults. A second-grade student isn't like a fifth-grade student. When I was in elementary school, I felt like my teacher treated me as if I was an adult. The teacher may argue with you and purposely belittle you. I wish that teachers focused on the psychological stages and consideration of children. (B5)

Interviewee B5, having been a university student at the time of this interview, recalled the treatment they had seen and received as an elementary student from some teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They did not think the techniques that some Bosnian teachers utilised were age appropriate. Given the fact that this individual was studying pedagogy possibly strengthens the statement of their experience. My initial thoughts regarding this as an adult made me realise that the way in which adults behave around children may lead the next generation to believe that this behaviour was normal and okay, until there came an outside perspective.

To further understand the Bosnian diaspora's understanding of how the educational structure is perceived, interviewee B12, born and raised in Finland, described what they heard about the educational structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

It was quite a bit different and the trip to school was quite long. They had to always be the best and learn everything they could. They had to get the best grade, or else they would get punished at home. I think about my school here growing up, and it is quite a bit different. (B12)

Interviewee B12 described what their parents and relatives told them how their life in schooling was like in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The journey to school was lengthy and the stresses to achieve in school were much higher. One way that families tried to instil academic motivation in students was through punishments at home. B12 reflected on the contrasts of what they experienced in the Finnish educational system to that of their parents. The further I heard about the Bosnian education system, or rather the overall Balkan education system, it did not always implement effective learning techniques nor effective treatment toward children. If Bosnia and Herzegovina had

effective and quality schools, their global reputation could mirror that of top academically performing nations.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research project is to gain more understanding on the lives of the Bosnian diaspora in Finland. It focuses on answering these research questions being 1.) What connections does the Bosnian Finnish branch hold within the globalised Bosnian diaspora? 2.) How is the Bosnian diaspora adapting in Finland while maintaining aspects of one's heritage? 3.) How does the Bosnian Finnish diaspora perceive its relationship to be like with Bosnians currently living in Bosnia and Herzegovina? The information gathered in this research came from 13 research participants currently living in four major Finnish cities. The thematic analysis implemented throughout the Findings and Analysis chapter used the theories of soft power, transnationalism, trans-localism, and imagined communities. There were some limitations to this study such as finances, geography, and time. There was some chance of bias such as investigator bias due to my position as researcher as well as my Bosnian heritage.

This study uncovered that most of the interviewees maintained frequent communication with Bosnians in the homeland, in Europe, in Australia, and in the United States of America: collectively, 14 countries in total. This communication, likely occurred through the Bosnian language, occurred through multiple avenues; majority connected to technology. The Bosnian diaspora in Finland showed varying degrees of maintaining their Bosnian identity with a central meeting point at *Bosnialaisten Kulttuurikeskus Suomessa*. This community centre offers language and history classes, opportunity to socialise, voting in Bosnian elections abroad, as well as other matters. On the other hand, the Bosnian diaspora in Finland perceived their overall presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina as unwelcomed despite their financial contributions to the country. The political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to remain complex and stagnant, which led to ongoing confusion. The Bosnian diaspora in Finland appeared to understand how the historical past of the Balkan region contributed to the ongoing generational pain felt today. Because this diaspora has complexity and some intermingling with various societies, no single theory presented in this study can fully explain the Bosnian diaspora. However, soft power, transnationalism, trans-localism, and imagined communities could combine to influence its nature.

Since Finland started to move away from being a nation of emigration to that of immigration, the information uncovered in this research could, for example, guide policy makers and organisations in Finland/European Union better understand the history and diaspora interactions of people from Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are indications that the United States is aiming to strengthen Bosnia and Herzegovina's economy through its diaspora. It is possible that the information uncovered in this research could guide Finland to also strengthen its soft power through its growing international community.

Some suggestions for further research could include the impact of Bosnian language and history classes on the Bosnian diaspora and compare it to countries and/or areas which do not offer this instruction at all or at low cost to youth of Bosnian descent. In addition, the identity of what it means to be Bosnian, or Balkan, could be shifting, which may lead to changes in identity compared to the ancestral homeland. And finally, ongoing research on intergenerational trauma in the Balkans could lead to ways for a society to find justice and heal - which could stop the pattern of conflict from occurring the future.

For a personal note, I felt as though conducting this research study brought peace within myself regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since I grew up in the United States with certain life circumstances, I was unable to visit my birth country for over 22 years. This led to me being curious as well as tense regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina. My original intent of this study was to focus on conflict and peace but then it shifted to overall adaptation to Finland and some diaspora movement to other nations. My entire mindset shifted when I learned about Bosnian language and history classes because I wish that I had this opportunity during my adolescent years in Louisville, Kentucky, USA. I felt happy that Finland offers the children of immigrants and refugees the opportunity to maintain connection to their language and history. I am certain that the Bosnian identity could remain in the next 100 years in other societies, but I am uncertain about the future regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina itself without the support of its diaspora. I hope that this research study contributes to Bosnian history as well as some understanding of Finland's international community.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION SHEETS

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Title of Project:** *The Interlacing of Two Worlds: Bosnian Finnish Connection to Bosnia and Herzegovina Today*

**Please read carefully through all the information before making a decision on your participation**

1. The aim of this study is to explore the relationship that exists between the Bosnian diaspora living in Finland and their connection to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) today. In particular, it seeks to investigate the possible influence of the diaspora on peace and stability in BiH and to uncover influence from Finnish society and culture. Since the 1990's, the Bosnian diaspora has spread all over the world and many have established new communities.
2. This research will consist of a one-on-one interview. There is a one-page questionnaire followed by a series of open-ended questions. It should take approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted in either Bosnian or English but the final results will be published in English.
3. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If at any point you wish to no longer take part in the research, you have the right to withdraw and there will be no pressure to stay. If you choose to withdraw, inform me. As the data is for my thesis, withdrawal notices should kindly be made before the end of December 2022 - the end period of fieldwork.
4. All the information you give **will be anonymous and confidential** and only used for the purposes of this research and will only be accessible to me and my thesis supervisor. No third parties will have access to any information you provide. Data from this interview is for **academic purposes only**.
5. Discussions may be recorded using an audio device, and all recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed and anonymised. This is so that I will be able to focus on the content of the discussion which will be transcribed after the interview is completed.
6. The data will be collected and stored in accordance with The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) and will be disposed of in a secure manner. The information will be used in a way that will not allow you to be identified individually. Interview data will be terminated by May 2023, by which time the thesis will be approved.
7. You will have the opportunity to discuss your participation and be debriefed on the research once it has been conducted and analysed.
8. Findings from this research may introduce new research ideas and interest.
9. If you are not certain about anything mentioned above, do not hesitate to ask me.
10. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. The consent form will be used to identify you. It will be filed separately from all other information.

Thank you for your time and effort,  
Elmedina Brkic

## INFORMACIJA O UČESNICIMA

Naziv projekta: *The Interlacing of Two Worlds: Bosnian Finnish Connection to Bosnia and Herzegovina Today* (Preplitanje dvaju svjetova: bosansko-finska veza sa Bosnom i Hercegovinom danas)

### **Molimo Vas da pažljivo pročitate sve informacije prije nego što donesete odluku o svom učešću**

1. Cilj ove studije je istražiti odnos koji postoji između bosanske dijaspore koja živi u Finskoj i njihove veze sa Bosnom i Hercegovinom (BiH) danas. Konkretno, nastoje se istražiti mogući utjecaj dijaspore na mir i stabilnost u BiH i otkriti utjecaj finskog društva i kulture. Od 1990-ih, bosanska dijaspora se proširila po cijelom svijetu i mnogi su osnovali nove zajednice.
2. Ovo istraživanje će se sastojati od intervjua jedan na jedan. Postoji upitnik na jednoj stranici nakon kojeg slijedi niz otvorenih pitanja. Trebalo bi trajati otprilike jedan sat. Intervju će se voditi na bosanskom ili engleskom jeziku, ali će konačni rezultati biti objavljeni na engleskom jeziku.
3. Vaše učešće u ovom istraživanju je potpuno dobrovoljno. Ako u bilo kom trenutku ne želite više da učestvujete u istraživanju, imate pravo da se povučete i neće biti pritiska da ostanete. Ako se odlučite povući, obavijestite me. S obzirom da se moje istraživanje završava krajem decembra, ljubazno bih molila da mi ovu obavijest dostavite do tog perioda.
4. Sve informacije koje date bit će **anonimne i povjerljive** i korištene samo za potrebe ovog istraživanja i bit će dostupne samo meni i mom mentoru. Nijedna treća strana neće imati pristup informacijama koje pružite. Podaci iz ovog intervjua su samo u akademske svrhe.
5. Diskusije se mogu snimati pomoću audio uređaja, a svi snimci će biti uništeni nakon što budu transkribovani i anonimizirani. Zbog mogućnosti fokusa na sadržaj diskusije koji će biti transkribovan nakon što intervju bude završen.
6. Podaci će biti prikupljeni i pohranjeni u skladu sa Finskim savjetodavnim odborom za integritet istraživanja (TENK) i bit će zbrinuti na siguran način. Informacije će se koristiti na način koji neće omogućiti da budete individualno identifikovani. Podaci o intervjuima će biti prekinuti do maja 2023. godine, do kada će teza biti odobrena.
7. Imaćete priliku da razgovarate o svom učešću i da budete informisani o istraživanju nakon što ono bude sprovedeno i analizirano.
8. Nalazi ovog istraživanja mogu uvesti nove istraživačke ideje i interes.
9. Ako niste sigurni u bilo šta gore navedeno, ne ustručavajte se da me pitate.
10. Ako pristanete da učestvujete, od Vas će se tražiti da potpišete formular za pristanak. Obrazac pristanka će se koristiti za Vašu identifikaciju. Biće evidentiran odvojeno od svih ostalih informacija.

Hvala Vam na Vašem vremenu i trudu,  
Elmedina Brkić

## APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

### HUMAN RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

#### SECTION 1: CONTACT AND PROJECT DETAILS

Department: Social Sciences & Philosophy  
Researcher's Full Name & Title: Elmedina Brkic, Student  
Contact Details: ebrkic@student.jyu.fi  
Supervisor's Full Name & Title: Dr. Tiina Kontinen, Associate Professor  
Contact Details: tiina.t.kontinen@jyu.fi  
**Project Title: The Interlacing of Two Worlds: Bosnian Finnish Connection to Bosnia and Herzegovina Today**

#### SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION

##### Participant Certification

In signing this form, I confirm that:

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project and that this will not lead to any consequences. I will adhere to the withdrawal deadlines mentioned in the Participant Information Sheet, if choosing to withdraw.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that new research questions may be generated from this study and my results may be analysed in a different way BUT my personal, identifiable information will remain confidential.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I will not receive any financial compensation.
- I am at least 18 years old and have the legal authority to advocate for myself as an adult.
- I agree to take part in the research project stated in Section 1.

*Participant Signature*

*Printed Name*

*Date*

##### Researcher Certification

- I have explained the study to the subject and consider that he/she/they understand what is involved.
- I commit to respecting and upholding the confidentiality terms associated in the study, including securing data and insights.

*Researcher Signature*

*Printed Name*

*Date*

## OBRAZAC SAGLASNOSTI ZA LJUDSKO ISTRAŽIVANJE

Ovaj projekat je odobrio Univerzitet Jyväskylän. Ako imate bilo kakve etičke nedoumice u vezi sa projektom i/ili pitanja o svojim pravima kao učesnika, molimo kontaktirajte **Finski nacionalni odbor za integritet istraživanja (TENK)**, Web stranica: <https://tenk.fi/en>, E-pošta: [tenk@tenk.fi](mailto:tenk@tenk.fi)

Ovaj obrazac pristanka ni na koji način ne odriče se vaših zakonskih prava niti oslobađa studenta od njihovih odgovornosti. Vaše učešće je dobrovoljno, stoga ga možete povući u bilo kojem trenutku bez posljedica. Takođe možete odbiti da odgovorite na pitanje, nastavite da postavljate pitanja u vezi sa studijom i zatražite informacije o svom učešću u svjetlu novih dešavanja.

### ODJELJAK 1: KONTAKT I DETALJI PROJEKTA

Puno ime istraživača: Elmedina Brkić  
Kontakt detalji: [ebrki@student.jyu.fi](mailto:ebrki@student.jyu.fi)  
Puno ime supervizora: Dr. Tiina Kontinen  
Kontakt detalji: [tiina.t.kontinen@jyu.fi](mailto:tiina.t.kontinen@jyu.fi)  
Naziv projekta: The Interlacing of Two Worlds: Bosnian Finnish Connection to Bosnia and Herzegovina Today (Preplitanje dvaju svjetova: bosansko-finska povezanost sa Bosnom i Hercegovinom danas)

### ODJELJAK 2: CERTIFIKACIJA

#### Certifikacija učesnika

Potpisivanjem ovog obrasca potvrđujem da:

- Pročitao/la sam Informativni list za učesnike i objašnjeni su mi priroda i svrha istraživačkog projekta.
- Razumijem svrhu istraživačkog projekta i moje učešće u njemu.
- Razumijem da se mogu povući iz istraživačkog projekta i da to neće dovesti do posljedica. Pridržavat ću se rokova za povlačenje navedenih u Informativnom listu za učesnike, ako odlučim da odustanem.
- Razumijem da, iako informacije dobijene tokom studije mogu biti objavljene, neću biti identificiran/a i moji lični rezultati će ostati povjerljivi.
- Razumijem da se iz ove studije mogu generirati nova istraživačka pitanja i da se moji rezultati mogu analizirati na drugačiji način, ALI moji lični podaci koji mogu da se identifikuju ostat će povjerljivi.
- Razumijem da je moje učešće u ovoj studiji dobrovoljno i da neću dobiti nikakvu novčanu nadoknadu.
- Imam najmanje 18 godina i imam zakonska ovlaštenja da se zalažem za sebe kao odrasla osoba.
- Slažem se da učestvujem u istraživačkom projektu navedenom u Odjeljku 1.

*Potpis Učesnika*

*Štampano Ime*

*Datum*

#### Certifikacija istraživača

- Objasnila sam studiju subjektu i smatram da on/ona/oni razumiju o čemu se radi.
- Obavezujem se da ću poštovati i održavati uslove povjerljivosti koji su povezani sa studijom, uključujući osiguranje podataka i uvida.

*Potpis Istraživača*

*Štampano Ime*

*Datum*

## APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE AND OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

### Interview Questionnaire Sheet

1. What is your gender?
  - a.) Male
  - b.) Female
  - c.) Other
  - f.) 16-20 years
  - g.) 21-25 years
  - h.) 26-30 years
  - i.) 31-35 years
  - j.) 36+ years
2. What is your age range?
  - a.) 18-25 years
  - b.) 26-35 years
  - c.) 36-45 years
  - d.) 46-55 years
  - e.) 56-66 years
  - f.) 66+ years
3. What is your country of birth?
  - a.) Bosnia and Herzegovina (if this is your answer, go to question 5)
  - b.) Another country (if this is your answer, go to question 6)
4. What is your marital status?
  - a.) Married
  - b.) Divorced
  - c.) Single
  - d.) In a partnership
  - e.) Other, please specify
5. Do you have children?
  - a.) Yes (go to question 6)
  - b.) No (go to question 7)
6. If you answered yes to question 5, please state:

How many children do you have?:  
How many of your children were born in Bosnia and Herzegovina?:  
How many of your children are currently living in Bosnia and Herzegovina?:
7. Which region and city of Finland do you currently reside in?

Answer:
8. How long have you lived outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina?
  - a.) Under 1 year
  - b.) 1-5 years
  - d.) 6-10 years
  - e.) 11-15 years
9. What is your current status in Finland?
  - a.) Citizen of country
  - b.) Legal permanent resident
  - c.) Legal temporary student
  - d.) Refugee
  - f.) Asylum seeker
  - g.) Student
  - h.) Undocumented migrant
  - i.) Other, please specify:
10. What was the **main reason** why you migrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina?
  - a.) Join partner or family
  - b.) Pursue further education
  - c.) Received job offer
  - d.) Suffered from persecution
  - e.) Suffered from social and/or family pressure
  - f.) Lack of employment opportunities in Bosnia and Herzegovina
  - g.) Other, please specify the main reason why you migrated:
11. Did you stay outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina longer than originally planned?
  - a.) Yes
  - b.) No (Go to question 13)
12. If you answered yes to question 11, what was the **main reason** for your longer stay abroad?
  - a.) New educational opportunities arising
  - b.) Employment opportunities arising
  - c.) Low levels of economic opportunities in Bosnia and Herzegovina
  - d.) Meeting partner or getting married
  - e.) Political problems/issues with Bosnia and Herzegovina
  - f.) Social and family problems/issues with Bosnia and Herzegovina
  - g.) Contractual and business problems/issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina



h.) Other reasons; please state reasons for staying outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina longer than planned

b.) No

13. How would you describe your current job?

- a.) Unskilled or low-skilled work
- b.) Mid-level Supervisory Work
- c.) Highly skilled, Professional work
- d.) Other, please specify:
- e.) Currently unemployed

14. Does your current job match your qualifications?

- a.) Yes

15. To what extent do you believe in this statement: 'The government of Bosnia and Herzegovina **should** work more with the diaspora to improve the situation in the motherland'?

- a.) Highly Agree
- b.) Slightly Agree
- c.) Neutral/Indifferent
- d.) Slightly disagree
- e.) Highly disagree

Optional: Explanation for the choice:

## Open Ended Questions

Key:

B&H or BiH = Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Interview guide:

Questions for Participants - themes (Interview guide)

1. Ways of keeping contact
  - a. How do you get information regarding the happenings and events in B&H? News, email, phone (call or text), mail, neighbourhood communication, visits?
  - b. How often do you visit B&H? When was the last time you visited? How many times have you visited in the last five years?
  - c. Do you keep contact with the B&H diaspora in other countries? If so, which countries? How often?
2. Perceptions on current situation with B&H
  - a. What is your perception regarding the political, security, and/or societal situation in B&H?
  - b. If you are a B&H citizen, do you vote in B&H elections?
  - c. Do you think that people in B&H see or treat you differently from the fact that you live in Finland? Does it appear that people value your opinion?
3. Maintaining B&H identity in Finland
  - a. Are you actively involved in the B&H community in Finland? Participation at a community centre, get togethers, etc.
  - b. Do you seek out and/or welcome the B&H diaspora into your home?
  - c. From your perspective, how will the Bosnian Finnish diaspora look in the future? Do you see the youth maintaining aspects of their heritage or become fully enveloped by the dominant culture?
4. Differences & lessons to learn?
  - a. In your experience, what are the most notable difference(s) between Finland and B&H?
  - b. In your view, what are the most respected values in Finland?
  - c. Any thoughts on the educational system and infrastructure in Finland?
  - d. Any ideas on making the transition to Finland for immigrants and refugees smoother?
  - e. Do you notice the B&H community assimilating in Finland? Do you notice any similarities and differences in the Bosnian diaspora youth who grew up in Finland?
  - f. What could B&H learn from Finland?
5. Anything else you would like to share?

1. Koji je Vaš spol?
  - a.) Muški
  - b.) Ženski
  - c.) Ostalo
2. Koji je Vaš raspon godina?
  - a.) 18-25 godina
  - b.) 26-35 godina
  - c.) 36-45 godina
  - d.) 46-55 godina
  - e.) 56-66 godina
  - f.) 66+ godina
3. Koja je Vaša zemlja rođenja?
  - a.) Bosna i Hercegovina
  - b.) Druga zemlja
4. Kakav je Vaš bračni status?
  - a.) Oženjen/Udata
  - b.) Razveden/a
  - c.) Samac
  - d.) U vezi
  - e.) Ostalo, navedite
5. Imate li djecu?
  - a.) Da (idite na pitanje 6)
  - b.) Ne (idi na pitanje 7)
6. Ako ste na pitanje 5 odgovorili potvrdno, navedite:
 

Koliko djece imate?:  
 Koliko je Vaše djece rođeno u Bosni i Hercegovini?:  
 Koliko Vaše djece trenutno živi u Bosni i Hercegovini?:
7. U kojoj regiji i gradu Finske trenutno živite?  
 odgovor:
8. Koliko dugo živite van Bosne i Hercegovine?
  - a.) Manje od 1 godine
  - b.) 1-5 godina
  - d.) 6-10 godina
  - e.) 11-15 godina
  - f.) 16-20 godina
  - g.) 21-25 godina
  - h.) 26-30 godina
  - i.) 31-35 godina
  - j.) 36+ godina
9. Kakav je vaš trenutni status u Finskoj?
  - a.) Državljanin zemlje
  - b.) Stalni legalni stanovnik
  - c.) Privremeni student Pravnog
  - d.) Izbjeglica
  - f.) Tražilac azila
  - g.) Student
  - h.) Nedokumentirani migrant
  - i.) Ostalo, navedite:
10. Šta je bio glavni razlog zašto ste migrirali iz Bosne i Hercegovine?
  - a.) Pridružiti se partneru ili porodici
  - b.) Nastaviti dalje obrazovanje
  - c.) Primljena ponuda za posao
  - d.) Izbjeglištvo
  - e.) Patio od društvenog i/ili porodičnog pritiska
  - f.) Nedostatak mogućnosti zapošljavanja u Bosni i Hercegovini
  - g.) Ostalo, navedite glavni razlog zašto ste migrirali:
11. Jeste li ostali izvan Bosne i Hercegovine duže nego što je prvobitno planirano?
  - a.) Da
  - b.) Ne (Idi na pitanje 13)
12. Ako ste na pitanje 12 odgovorili potvrdno, šta je bio **glavni razlog** Vašeg dužeg boravka u inostranstvu?
  - a.) Pojavile su se nove obrazovne mogućnosti
  - b.) Pojavile su se nove mogućnosti zapošljavanja
  - c.) Nizak nivo ekonomskih prilika u Bosni i Hercegovini
  - d.) Upoznavanje sa partnerom ili sklapanje braka
  - e.) Politički problemi/pitanja u Bosni Hercegovini
  - f.) Društveni i porodični problemi/problemi u Bosni i Hercegovini
  - g.) Ugovorni i poslovni problemi/pitanja u Bosni i Hercegovini
  - h.) Drugi razlozi; molimo navedite razloge za boravak van Bosne i Hercegovine duže od planiranog
13. Kako biste opisali svoj trenutni posao?
  - a.) Nekvalifikovani ili niskokvalifikovani rad
  - b.) Nadzorni rad srednjeg nivoa
  - c.) Visoko kvalifikovan, stručan rad
  - d.) Ostalo, molimo navedite:
  - e.) Trenutno nezaposlen

14. Da li Vaš trenutni posao odgovara Vašim kvalifikacijama?

- a.) Da
- b.) Ne

15. Koliko vjerujete u ovu izjavu: 'Vlada Bosne i Hercegovine treba više raditi sa dijasporom na poboljšanju situacije u državi'?

- a.) U potpunosti se slažem
- b.) Donekle se slažem
- c.) Neutralan/Indiferentan
- d.) Donekle se ne slažem
- e.) Uopšte se ne slažem

Opciono: Objašnjenje za izbor:

## Otvorena Pitanja

Ključ:

B&H or BiH = Bosna i Hercegovina

### Vodič za intervju:

Pitanja za učesnike - teme (vodič za intervju)

1. Načini održavanja kontakta
  - a.) Kako dolazite do informacija o dešavanjima i događajima u BiH? Vijesti, e-mail, telefon (poziv ili SMS), pošta, komunikacija u susjedstvu, posjete?
  - b.) Koliko često posjećujete BiH? Kada ste zadnji put bili u posjeti? Koliko ste puta posjetili BiH u posljednjih pet godina?
  - c.) Održavate li kontakt sa bh. dijasporom u drugim zemljama? Ako da, koje zemlje? Koliko često?
2. Percepcije o trenutnoj situaciji u BiH
  - a.) Kakva je vaša percepcija političke, sigurnosne i/ili društvene situacije u BiH?
  - b.) Ako ste državljanin BiH, glasate li na bh. izborima?
  - c.) Mislite li da Vas ljudi u BiH vide ili tretiraju drugačije od činjenice da živite u Finskoj? Čini li se da ljudi cijene Vaše mišljenje?
3. Održavanje bh. identiteta u Finskoj
  - a.) Jeste li aktivno uključeni u bh. zajednicu u Finskoj? Učešće u društvenom centru, okupljanja itd.
  - b.) Tražite li i/ili primate li bh. dijasporu u svoj dom?
  - c.) Iz Vaše perspektive, kako će bosansko-finska dijaspora izgledati u budućnosti? Vidite li da mladi zadržavaju aspekte svog naslijeđa ili ih u potpunosti obuzima dominantna kultura?
4. Razlike i lekcije koje treba naučiti?
  - a.) Prema Vašem iskustvu, koje su najuočljivije razlike između Finske i BiH?
  - b.) Po Vašem mišljenju, koje su vrijednosti u Finskoj najpoštovanije?
  - c.) Imate li razmišljanja o obrazovnom sistemu i infrastrukturi u Finskoj?
  - d.) Imate li ideje o tome da tranziciju u Finsku za imigrante i izbjeglice učinite lakšim?
  - e.) Da li primjećujete da se bh. zajednica asimilirala u Finskoj? Primjećujete li neke sličnosti i razlike među mladima iz bosanske dijaspore koji su odrasli u Finskoj?
  - f.) Šta bi BiH mogla naučiti od Finske?
5. Želite li još nešto podijeliti?