“THEY SAY I AM A TRAITOR”

Contact as a Predictor for Reconciliation among Young Adults in Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Figure 2. Map over Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Abstract

Even though peace accords are signed and peace is declared, many societies are far from peaceful. Rather than talking about peace, one could state that the conflict is moved from the battleground to another arena. Hence, some societies remain divided and polarized long after the war is over. This thesis explores contact among young adults from two towns in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina and how contact affects the reconciliation process twenty years after the Dayton Peace Accords. By using previous research social identity, socialization and intergroup contact, I argue that contact is an important step in order to break the intractability of the conflict and enhance the reconciliation process in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. Qualitative data was collected through eight in-depth interviews with young adults aged 21 to 24 at the end of January and the beginning of February 2016. A qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. The main findings in this study are that the two towns, Goražde and Višegrad, do not provide opportunities for contact and are not suitable places for positive intergroup contact. In fact, contact with outgroup members in the lives of young adults from eastern BiH takes place in other areas of the country. The findings also indicate that contact has a positive effect on the factors vital in the reconciliation process, such as a common vision, sense of victimhood, and ingroup superiority. However, contact does not affect outgroup attitudes.
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Uppsala, 2016-05-14
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>BiH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bosnian Serb Army (Army of Republika Srpska)</td>
<td>VRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dayton Peace Accord</td>
<td>DPA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
<td>IDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party of Democratic Action</td>
<td>SDA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serb Democratic Party</td>
<td>SDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>The International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia</td>
<td>ICTY</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Office of the High Representative of the International Community in Bosnia Herzegovina</td>
<td>OHR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
<td>TRC</td>
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<tr>
<td>The State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>SCBH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yugoslav People's Army</td>
<td>JNA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>FBiH</td>
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<td>United Nations</td>
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1. Introduction

“…that somebody [say] you are [a] traitor, because I have friends, some from other cultures and friends also from, you know, who is Muslim, because [of that] they say I am a traitor because I had friends who is Muslim…”

The quote above comes from one respondent interviewed in this study, he, like many other young people who have grown up and live in divided societies, face a number of challenges when interacting with members of other groups. In this case, members of his own group thought his behavior and friendship with members of other groups violated the norms of the community even though twenty years have passed since the Dayton Peace Accord was signed.¹ This provokes the question; when do armed conflicts end for those individuals and communities who experienced the violence? One might say that time heals all wounds, but still, victims and whole communities struggle to bury the hatchet, get closure and move on. It is not a surprise that the war has a central role in their lives of the individuals who experience the war and have vivid memories of violence. But the conflicts also seem to play an important role in their lives of young people that did not experience the war directly or cannot recall it. Therefore, in certain societies, the conflicts seem to be intractable.

Having said that, young people have an interesting role in many peacebuilding projects around the world. On one hand, because these individuals are born during or after the conflict, they have less negative memories and experiences of violence and betrayal. At the same time, individuals who have grown up in divided post-conflict societies often lack the possibility to interact with members of the other group due to social norms, security issues or by the simple fact that members of the other group are not living in the area anymore. This means that individuals have little experience of the “Other”, and cannot counter negative perceptions about the outgroup with one’s own experience of intergroup contact or friendship. The older generations are likely to have more vivid negative memories from the conflict, but at the same time they may also have positive memories from thriving multi-ethnic communities and friendship before the society was torn apart by violence.

1.1 Problematization

With the introduction in mind, one can also question how quickly post-conflict societies can change. Scholars, such as Roland Paris, have questioned the timeframe of peacebuilding operations. Often, conflicts are seen to have the power to transform a society in a radical way by destroying political and social structures. But the question here is how quickly a society can be rebuilt after it has been torn apart by violence? Societies tend to remain polarized accompanied by long-lasting violence. It is possible to question the power of peacebuilding operations from this perspective. When responding to the challenges in societies affected by mass violence, it is clear that interventions, physical reconstructions, and institution-building measures are not enough.

Research has also noticed that peacebuilding operations have failed to estimate the power of ethno-national loyalties. This critique is based on that many post-conflict societies seem to be “frozen”, for example Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Northern Ireland and Israel. In these societies, certain attitudes and behaviors is kept between generations, even though peace accords have been reached and courts have convicted war criminals. The idea that reconciliation will spontaneously flourish in the absence of violence has been proven incorrect. Peace accords may create an avenue for peace, but they do not reach psychological processes that fortify negative relations between groups. Research has also indicated that there is pressure towards younger people to interact with members of the same group in divided societies. There is also a lack of models how to interact with members of the other group because there is no parent or adults who can function as role models. The division in the divided society cuts through all aspects of life. If the division becomes cemented in the society, it becomes hard to reverse this process because groups tend to stress the importance of

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the continuity of the group, and a culture of continuation of the conflict is established. Simply speaking, the conflict becomes a part of the group. From this perspective, reconciliation can even be seen a threat because it challenges the prevailing structure of the society and the culture of a community which has been prevailing for decades. In other words, it could be seen as the community is losing their identity if the existing structures are challenged.⁹

Furthermore, there is also a need to specify the analysis to certain group. The term “locals” or “ordinary people”, which is often used by researchers, is not very specific and involves a number of subgroups. For example, as Gearoid Millar found in his study in Sierra Leone, there was an obvious difference how the local educated elite in comparison to non-elites experienced the truth-telling process. Millar states that it is linked to the different accessibility to the global discourse of healing. The Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has failed in communicating with the non-elite about the goals and expectations. The non-elite understood that the TRC was there to bring peace, help the people to forgive and forget. But they also believed that the TRC would bring immediate support to the victims of the conflict, and that it would provide monetary support to people.¹⁰ Hence, it is clear that different groups in the local arena may have different understanding of the ongoing processes. Narrowing the analysis can therefore reveal more knowledge and give us a better understanding of the society as a whole. This thesis focus on young adults from the towns of Goražde and Višegrad. These individuals do not remember the war due to their age, but they have grown up in communities with clear ethnic majorities which means that the young adults have had little contact with members of the other groups in their lives. Research has also indicated that children in divided communities have lower levels of outgroup friendship and demonstrates higher levels of outgroup discrimination in comparison to their parents.¹¹ Therefore, one could question if individuals who grow up in these societies are interested to live with the “Other”, or if they even have contact with members of the group that was their former enemy? And a bigger question is; how do we break the intractability of these conflicts in so called “peaceful” societies?

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¹¹ Ajdukovic and Biruski, “Caught between the Ethnic Sides.”
1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to understand how contact affects the reconciliation process among young adults living in two towns in eastern BiH with clear ethnic majorities. In order to do so, this thesis has an explorative and explanatory dimension. First of all, it becomes necessary to explore how contact takes place in the life of young adults from eastern BiH. By doing so, preconditions for contact in eastern BiH can be explored as well. Secondly, I will look at how contact affects the reconciliation process. The research questions have been formulated as follows:

1. Do young adults from the towns with clear ethnic majorities come in contact with members of the outgroup?
2. How does the contact affect the reconciliation process among young adults in eastern BiH?

To make it clear, the aim of this study is not to evaluate the reconciliation process in BiH or eastern BiH. As written, the aim is to study the relationship between contact and reconciliation. However, this study started with a more explorative aim because it was hard to predict the levels of contact young adults would have in the eastern part of BiH. But along the way the focus shifted more towards an explanatory purpose. This means that the focus shifted during the research process and more attention was given to the second research question.

1.3 Scope and Limitations

All studies have their scope and limitations, and so does this study. Among the three major ethnic groups in BiH: Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats, only the first two groups are included in this study. This does not mean that Croats in any way are irrelevant in the reconciliation process in BiH. Instead, it is question of demographics. In the area under study, Bosniak and Serbs are the predominate groups, both before the war and after. This also means that the most of the violence which took place during the war in this area was between Bosniaks and Serbs. Hence, while discussing the violence that took place and the reconciliation process, Croats are not involved in the local dynamics.

With the study taking place in eastern BiH, it becomes hard to talk about the overall picture of BiH. The respondents live in towns with clear ethnic majorities, and perhaps we can assume that similar settings exist in other areas of BiH and beyond. But without exploring those areas, it
becomes more assumptions and guesses rather than empirically based findings. Therefore, this study limits its finding to eastern BiH.

In this study, reconciliation is seen as a process which takes place at an individual level. Yet, this does not mean that reconciliation is an individual process. As James Gibson notes: “not all questions of reconciliation can be understood in terms of the attributes of citizens. Groups are important, institutions are important, and some individuals (elites) are more important than others”. Hence, a reconciliation process takes place at different levels and among many actors, and this study does not include all levels which is important to have in mind. The term *reconciliation* is a disputed term. The meaning of it and what should be included or not depends on the perspective chosen (see 2.4 The Concept of Reconciliation). This means that not all concepts of reconciliation can be included in this study. For example, land reforms, returnees, socioeconomic factors, or the role of the media are all relevant when discussing the goal or process of reconciliation, but are not seen as part of the reconciliation process in this study.

Moreover, the focus on young adults is not motivated because young adults are more important than other groups. For example, the elites may have more impact on the reconciliation process because they have more power. However, BiH is a society where the conflict is frozen, and the political elites may have an important role in this. Therefore, “ordinary people” can be of more interest when looking at the reconciliation process. As mentioned before, it is also a need to narrow the analysis to smaller groups. This can actually tell us more than trying to reach an average consensus among the “ordinary people”.

1.4 Outline of the Study

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework will be presented. The first part of the theoretical framework deals with social-psychological explanations behind social identities in post-conflict societies. The second part discusses how individuals who have not experienced violence directly or are born after the conflict can still have negative attitudes of the other and sense victimhood due to a socialization process. The next part discusses the concept of reconciliation and how it should be understood in this study. The fourth part presents the contact hypothesis and preconditions for reducing division between members of different groups. The last part of the theoretical framework

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synthesis the different parts of the framework, and explains how contact is crucial in order to break the intractability of conflicts.

The third chapter presents and discuss the research design, method and methodical choices, and the analytical process.

In the fourth chapter, the first part is a short account of the violence that took place in the area of Goražde and Višegrad during the Bosnian War (1992-95). The second part it will contextualize the situation in BiH after the war with a focus on the peacebuilding process.

Chapter five presents the findings regarding the respondents’ level of contact, where it takes place, and factors affecting the contact from the respondents’ point of view.

The sixth chapter presents the respondents lines of identification, perceptions on in- and outgroup, and views on a multicultural society.

Chapter seven presents the respondents’ sense of victimhood at a personal and collective level, and explore sources of victimhood among young adults in this area.

In the analytical chapter, first, contact in the lives of the respondents is analyzed, with a particular on the area of Goražde and Višegrad. Second, attitudes and perception are analyzed and compared between respondents with different levels of contact with the outgroup. At last, concluding remarks are made regarding the findings and the next step in the research process is discussed.
2. Theoretical Framework

So far, this study has introduced and identified the research problem. Now we will turn our attention to the theoretical framework. The theoretical chapter is divided into five subchapters; the first part of the theoretical framework deals with social-psychological explanations behind social identities in post-conflict societies. The second part discusses how individuals who have not experienced violence directly or are born after the conflict can still have negative perceptions of the “Other” and sense victimhood due to a socialization process. The next part discusses the concept of reconciliation and how it should be understood in this study. The fourth part presents the contact hypothesis and preconditions for positive contact between members of different groups. The last part of the theoretical framework synthesis the different parts of the framework, and explains how contact is crucial in order to break the intractability of conflicts.

2.2 Social Identities in Post-Conflict Societies

According to Henri Tajfel, social identities are a part of the individual’s self-concept. The membership is arising from one’s knowledge of membership to a particular group and the emotional meaning connected to that membership. Everyone has a need to belong to a group, humans are social beings and we need others to thrive. Furthermore, these social identities also become a source of pride and can provide us with self-esteem. This means that individuals are often trying to strengthen the status of one’s own group, the in-group. By enhancing the status of the ingroup, the individual’s self-esteem is enhanced because the self and the group are connected. Yet, no one has just one social identity, every individual and every society have multiple identities. The individual realizes oneself among these identities, and this is a way a navigating oneself through the society. This process is called categorization, and explains how individuals understand and make order of the world. However, it would not possible to categorize if we did not compare, therefore, social comparison is another important component. Once individuals have identified and categorized themselves, they turn their attention toward the “Others”, the outgroups. Again, self-esteem becomes important, and by comparing the in-group with out-groups, one can generate positive thoughts about the in-group and oneself. This process has several consequences for the individual: First, individuals are drawn to groups that can provide satisfaction, and are more likely to remain in groups that provide satisfaction. Second, if the group membership does not provide satisfaction, individuals will try to leave the group. Unless it’s impossible to leave the group for
different reasons, for example, it may be hard to leave a group which is based on skin-color. Third, if it is not possible to leave the group, one can try to change attributes of the group, or accept the situation and change the social status through social action. At last, satisfaction derives from a process of comparison. Therefore, the meaning of belonging to a certain group is only possible in relation to other groups. However, as written, a person does not belong to a single group. Instead, one will combine identifications with different groups, even though one tends to feel stronger identification with certain groups. When multiple persons share an identification, it creates a cognitive, affective and behavioral effect on the group level. This is the basis of social identity theory.

The process of categorization and comparison creates certain behaviors among individuals, such as discrimination, ingroup favoritism, ingroup superiority and conformity. High levels of ingroup identification are connected to more negative outgroup orientations, and low levels of ingroup identification are connected to more positive outgroup orientations. As Čehajić et al. states, these “normal” processes, such as ingroup favoritism, does not always led to negative intergroup relations. But in a context of violence or in post-war societies where identities become salient, these processes can become highly problematic and obstruct the reconciliation process. Therefore, researchers have elaborated with different cognitive models in order to explain how negative intergroup relations can improve. I will focus on two models; the decategorization model and the recategorization model. The decategorization model builds on a personalization process. When certain identities become salient, individuals will depersonalize members of outgroups, meaning that they are inclined to see individuals as “Serbs” or “Bosniaks” instead of the person behind the ethnonational label. To reverse this process, a personalization process is needed which reduces the salient identities and makes outgroup members seen as individuals. If the personalization process is stable over time, the general perception of the outgroup will change over time. The recategorization model is an alternative model to reduce negative perceptions towards the outgroup. This model focus on reshaping the boundaries between the groups rather than soften

them, meaning that an inclusive social identity is created. By incorporating two groups into one, ingroup favoritism can be directed to the two groups. This also means that perceptions of threats towards the ingroup, which may exist in post-conflict settings, are reduced because the two former warring groups are a “we” instead of “us” and “them”. These two models have their weaknesses and strength, and could be understood as two competing explanations for the same phenomenon. However, this thesis will utilize these models in a complementing way and understanding them as two necessary cognitive models needed in order to establish better relationships between former warring groups. In order to change the existing salient identities, a decategorization is initially needed because it soften the boundaries between the conflicting groups. This means that individuals from different groups can start building relationship over group boundaries. If focus is given to group boundaries in the initial stage, this will cement the division and increase hostility between the groups. But once the salience of the identities is reduced, a common identity can be introduced and ingroup favoritism can be redirected to members of the former enemy.  

2.3 Growing Up in Post-Conflict Societies

As presented, the social identity theory view division as a consequence of the need to belong and need to have a positive self-image. At the same time, no one is born a member of a society, all individuals are shaped into a member of certain groups and the society. The beginning of this process is called internalization. Internalization means that one becomes aware who belongs to one’s group and who are one’s fellow members. Secondly, it also brings meaning to one’s social reality. The creation of meaning is not an isolated process which is undergone by individuals themselves. Instead, according to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, all individuals are “taking over” other peoples’ worldviews. Therefore, one becomes integrated to their worlds. This process of becoming a member of a society is also known as primary socialization, which occur in the childhood years. This does not mean that a child will see the worlds in the exactly same way as the parent. The child will modify the parent’s understanding of the world with its own experience. Yet, if the child is enough integrated into the parent’s world, there is an ongoing identification between them. When integrated to this extent, the child has become a member of the society. However, the socialization process does not stop after the childhood, it continues through life, and

this is known as secondary socialization. Primary and secondary socialization are both similar in the way they function, but primary socialization is the one which is more formative for the individual.\textsuperscript{18}

Olga Muldoon et al. examine the influence of parents and family in the construction of national and religious identifications in the border area between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. They identify parenting behavior as particularly powerful in the construction of identities and the division of society. The respondents, all between ages thirteen to sixteen, did not view their national or religious identities as the reasons behind the division between the groups in the area of study. Rather, it was the decisions taken by both adults and adolescents in their lives, leading to a reinforcement of differences which were underpinned by the national and religious identities. There was clear intergenerational continuity regarding the identity of the adolescents and the parents, meaning that the children over-takes the identity of their parents. None of the respondents were willing to criticize the parents’ practices or behavior. The respondents also denied that their parents had educated them in their identities, instead, they argued that they had ownership and control over their identity. However, from the authors’ view, it is not education or instruction that is central for construction social division. It is the social behavior of the parents in the everyday life that is important because it is the juncture between personal, family, and sociocultural contexts.\textsuperscript{19} This means that children are likely to take over not only worldviews but also behavior that their parents have. This can become problematic in post-conflict societies where negative perception and discrimination is likely to occur.

Further, growing up in divided post-conflict communities, younger people may become less prepared to have close relationships with outgroup members because they are likely to have negative perceptions and low level of contact with the “Other”. Individuals growing up in these social contexts may also lack the experience and skills to interact with individuals that are perceived to be different. Adults will function as role-models, whether positive or not. If the adults do not interact with outgroup members, the children are likely to reproduce that behavior. But as mentioned before, it does not mean that children will directly copy the behavior of the adult. They


will modify it because the social context, social norms and peers will also influence the attitudes of children.\textsuperscript{20}

Furthermore, a common reaction in conflict is that groups struggle to be the true victim and develop beliefs that their groups suffered the most in the conflict. This is needed in order to keep a positive view of the ingroup, which is required due to the need of positive self-image. Hence, acknowledging the actions of the ingroup during the conflict becomes a threat to the positive image of the ingroup.\textsuperscript{21} Victimhood is described by Dan Bar-On as “an energy-draining mechanism of individual and collective identity that hinders peacebuilding efforts and processes”.\textsuperscript{22} Note here that victimhood takes place on both an individual and collective levels. Collective victimhood is not necessarily based on experience of violence or injustice; it is also a social construction. It is the shared beliefs about the victimization of the ingroup. If violence is directed towards the ingroup, all members of the group is attacked even if not all members experience the violence. All members who identify with the group are concerned about the well-being of the group. Hence, individuals will perceive themselves as victim due to their membership of a group who suffered during the conflict.\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, victimhood and injustice are rarely a personal matter, instead, it is part of the group and often becomes a political issue. To forgive, or reconcile, can actually threaten the political system and becomes an important topic for everyone in that society.\textsuperscript{24}

Daniel Bar-Tal who focuses on sociopsychological infrastructure to explain how conflicts develop cultures that functions as a continuation of the conflict even though the violence has stopped. This can lead into intractable conflicts which are characterized by being perceived as “existential, irresolvable, and zero sum nature” by people involved in the conflict.\textsuperscript{25} Still, sociopsychological infrastructure is based on three societal beliefs: collective memories, ethos of

conflict, and collective emotions orientation. These beliefs are shared by the members of the in-
group, and focus topics and issues that are relevant to the groups and creates a sense of uniqueness.
For example, the groups involved in the conflict tend to perceive the suffering of the ingroup as
uniqueness. Societal beliefs tend also to be brought up often on the political agenda, being
discussed in the everyday life, therefore, it becomes natural reference points for the members. But
the infrastructure also serves a purpose, it helps both the collective and individuals to face the
challenges of intractable conflicts. It satisfies needs, helps to cope with stress, and to withstand the
“Other”. The conflict in itself becomes a part of the group, the individuals' everyday lives, and
shape boundaries. It affects the perceptions, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors of the individuals
involved in the conflict. For individuals growing up in these societies, the conflict will have a
central place because it becomes incorporated in the group.

In sum, the theoretical argument presented above holds that socialization is a crucial component
in the construction of identities, behavior, perceptions of the outgroup, and a sense of victimhood
among young people growing up in post-conflict societies.

2.4 The Concept of Reconciliation

The process of rebuilding societies affected by civil wars have been heavily debated during the last
decades due to the increasing number of intrastate conflicts since the end of the cold-war. Johan
Galtung, one of the pioneers of peace studies, states that the absence of psychical violence is central
to peace. Yet, the removal of physical violence is not enough to build a true peace. The absence of
psychical violence, or direct violence as Galtung calls it, is a negative peace. If one wants a positive
peace to be achieved, one must eliminate structural and cultural violence as well. He defines
structural violence as “the non-intended slow, massive suffering caused by economic and political
structures in the form of massive exploitation and repression.” Cultural violence is the attitudes
and beliefs against a certain group that legitimatize direct and structural violence. A peace which

26 Ibid. p. 1433-1441.
27 Daniel Bar-Tal, “From Intractable Conflict through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis,”
29 Johan Galtung and Dietrich Fischer, “Positive and Negative Peace,” in Johan Galtung, Springer Briefs on Pioneers
has any of these components is a negative peace. But why are Galtung’s ideas relevant for reconciliation? From Galtung perspective, there is an intimate connection between peace and violence. In order to understand peace, we need to understand violence, because we find the same mechanism in both processes. Therefore, both negative and positive peace can be seen as an ongoing process which reinforce itself. In similar fashion, Daniel Bar-Tal discusses how intractable conflicts develop cultures that functions as a continuation of the conflict even though there is no physical violence. From this perspective, peacebuilding measurements must aim at changing the sociopsychological infrastructure in order to improve intergroup relations. The violence in the past leave communities with anger, grief, injustice, sense of victimhood and a will to revenge. This requires that beliefs about societal goals, the adversary group, the ingroup, and intergroup relations needs to be challenged. Bar-Tal states that reconciliation is a process “...which requires the formation of peaceful relations based on mutual trust and acceptance, cooperation, and consideration of mutual needs.” Both Galtung and Bar-Tal are arguing for a societal shift, but in different ways. Galtung put emphasis on societal structures, while Bar-Tal focuses on sociopsychological structures.

Furthermore, reconciliation can be conceptualized differently on different levels. In the political arena, reconciliation has often had religious undertones. From a Christian standpoint, reconciliation cannot be earned, instead, it is given through forgiveness. Forgiveness is also connected to wish to move on, based on the assumption that forgiving undermine feelings of anger and revenge. Another point of view comes from the human right perspective, which challenges reconciliation as a religious concept. Actors following this idea tend to view reconciliation as way to transform relationships with the help of rule of law and prevention of recurring violence.

Authors have used the term co-existence because it is a more realistic description of post-conflict societies. This is the minimalistic approach which is in line with Galtung’s concept of negative peace. The more ambitious approach would strive for a society where members of former

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30 Galtung and Fischer, “Positive and Negative Peace.”
32 Bar-Tal, “From Intractable Conflict through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation.”
warring groups live in harmony. Further, Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly states that there is often confusion on how reconciliation should be understood at the local level. Among their respondents, all from Northern Ireland, many viewed reconciliation as a religious process. Many respondents also mentioned shared vision and rebuilding relationship as important components in the reconciliation process. Dealing with the past was a complicated topic, many agreed that it is significant for the reconciliation process, but there was no consensus on how societies can deal with the past. Some of the respondents in their study agreed that there has to be a cultural and attitudinal change among the society members in order to reconcile. The communities need to move on from a culture of fear, mistrust, and violence to a culture based on tolerance, respect, and human rights. However, reconciliation was a sensitive topic because it challenges the prevailing structure of the society, the culture of a community or a group. In other words, it could be seen as the community was losing their identity if the existing structures were challenged. The last finding is particularly interesting when discussing long-term conflicts, it means that individuals may hesitate or refuse to join reconciliation initiatives due to the fear of losing one’s identity when bridging differences between different communities. Hence, a reconciliation process can be perceived as a threat towards the continuity of the community.

According to Maria Ericson, the major obstacle on the road to reconciliation is the opposing “moral landscapes” among the individuals involved in the conflict. A moral landscape is an abstract term; however, she uses five different elements which need to be dealt with in war-torn societies: experience of trauma, views of the conflict, identifications and loyalties, views on oneself and of the “Other”, and last, norms for interaction in a conflict situation and interpretations of values. Ericson means the relationship between perpetrators and victims is often flawed, and they have different understanding of central values such as “justice” and “peace”. In order to change these relationships, the understanding of moral landscapes needs to be challenged. One can do so by bringing former opponents together in “safe spaces”. In these spaces, prevailing views can be

challenged by listening to others stories and perspectives. This is similar to Lederach who understands reconciliation as a place where the past and future can meet. Where members of former warring groups can acknowledge the past and create a common vision about the future. From this perspective reconciliation is a place.

When it comes to reconciliation one thing is certain; reconciliation is a vague term characterized by imprecision and the lack of consensus. Are we talking about intrapersonal reconciliation between individuals on the ground, or are we talking about communities? Is reconciliation a goal, process or a place? From my point of view, at the local level, reconciliation should aim at rebuilding broken relations between individuals, which eventually will transcend into a community-building process. Following this logic, reconciliation at the local level is not dependent on initiatives at the macro-level, yet, this does not mean initiatives at the macro-level will not have an effect on the micro-level. Reconciliation is a both a goal and a process. It involves acknowledgement of the past, but to do so, individuals and communities must alter their perception about the ingroup’s victimhood. A common vision about the future, which includes the “Other”, must also exist. If a common vision exists, individuals from different groups have common goals to work towards. At last, a change in behavior and attitudes of the Other and the oneself is needed in order to have constructive relationships.

2.5 Contact in Post-Conflict Societies

The idea that contact between members of different groups will lead to better relations between former warring groups is an old concept which can be traced back to the 1940s. It builds on the notion that an integrated context will break down negative stereotypes that members of conflicting group have of each other, and therefore undermine the conflict between the groups. According to Gordon Allport, contact in itself has never been enough to overcome social division. Contact can reduce the division or conflict in the society if not: “two groups (1) possess equal status, (2) seek

37 Maria Ericson, Reconciliation and the Search for a Shared Moral Landscape: An Exploration Based upon a Study of Northern Ireland and South Africa, Europäische Hochschulschriften 730 (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Lang, 2001). P. 123-124.
common goals, (3) cooperatively dependent upon each other, and (4) interact with the positive support of authorities, laws and customs.” Hence, contact is not always something positive. During the right preconditions, contact can have a positive effect on intergroup relations and break down the division in society. If society does not provide these conditions, we cannot expect contact to be a force of good. If the contact with outgroup members is a negative experience, this will have a negative effect on intergroup relations.

However, since the dawning of contact hypothesis, different lines of thought have developed. One of them focus of the intimacy between members of different groups. Thomas Pettigrew found that having friends from the other group leads to lower of subtle and blatant prejudice among western Europeans. It also increased support for “pro-out-group policies”, positive attitudes were generalized to other members of that group. On the other hand, if individuals had co-workers or neighbors who belonged to the other group similar effects was not found. Therefore, simply having contact cannot be expected to alter attitudes toward the outgroup. According to Pettigrew, friendship potential is essential because if the potential is realized, it changes behaviors, and increases the awareness of the outgroup and the ingroup. If the contact does not have friendship potential, we cannot expect individuals to change outgroup perceptions. Still, friendship ensures that the contact is qualitative. Drawing on this finding, individuals with quality contact should have more positive outgroup perceptions. Sabina Čehajić et al. support this idea by studying students in Sarajevo. But according to the authors, contact needs to be of good quality and also frequent. Rubert Brown et al. on the other hand reported that the quantity of contact was associated with more positive outgroup attitudes. Hence, researchers are divided of which type of contact that is most effective in order to change outgroup attitudes. Quality and quantity seem both to be relevant when predicting the attitudes toward the outgroup. Further, contact has also proven to increase perspective-taking and reduces perceived victimhood. In post-conflict societies, and reducing the sense of victimhood is necessary in order to recognize the suffering of the other

43 Čehajić, Brown, and Castano, “Forgive and Forget?”
Batson et al. demonstrated in their study that perspective-taking is closely related to empathy. With his logic, contact increases empathy, and empathy increases perspective-taking.

Criticism has been raised of the theoretical individualism that contact theory builds upon. The theory aims at explaining intergroup perceptions through intrapersonal perceptions. Meaning that individuals are supposed to generalize their positive perception about outgroup members onto the whole outgroup. But this does not always occur, instead, outgroup members are often seen as an exception in comparison to the rest of the outgroup. Research has also indicated that negative emotions were reduced to a higher extent if the outgroup member was seen as a typical outgroup member. This means that if the outgroup member is seen as an atypical member of the outgroup, individuals are less prone to generalize the positive perceptions on the outgroup as whole.

If we focus on research that has taken place in BiH, a lot of attention has been paid to larger urban areas and divided communities, such as Sarajevo, Tuzla, Mostar. Less attention has been given solely on respondent from small communities with clear ethnic majorities. Therefore, is a need to identify the preconditions that exist in smaller communities, and if contact can be a predictor for reconciliation among individuals from these communities.

So far, four separate parts have been discussed, but one question remains, how do these components relate to each other?

2.6 Theoretical Synthesis

Drawing on the arguments from previous research, conflicts become a part of the ethos of the society. When communities are affected by violence, they will cope with it and develop beliefs of

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ingroup superiority and victimhood, and justify the actions of the ingroup. But putting down the guns and signing peace accords does not mean that the conflict ends. Peace will not necessarily lead to reconciliation. Instead, socialization plays an important role in cementing the conflict in the society. Therefore, attitudes and behaviors that young people are exposed to by significant others and their community will affect their worldviews’. Through this process, individuals acquire beliefs, attitudes and emotions due to their membership of a certain group. This means that members who do not experience suffering directly can still develop a sense of victimhood. Victimhood can serve as a basis to create a common reality, identity, goal-settings for the group. It becomes a common lens for the members which they can process information through and mobilize.\(^5^0\) It means that victimhood becomes a central part of the group, and groups become protective about their victimhood. Further, in divided post-conflict society certain identities are salient. This means that individuals grow up in societies where loyalty to the ingroup is prioritized, and identities remain salient. High levels of ingroup identification should lead to negative intergroup relationships in the aftermath of violence.

In order to alter the negative processes that were spawned by the conflict, contact plays an important role to change the mindsets of individuals in post-conflict societies. This theoretical framework incorporates the decategorization model and recategorization model with contact. In order to challenge salient identities, contact becomes necessary because contact between members of different groups will create a decategorization among individuals. In a post-conflict setting, negative stereotyping and negative attitudes towards the outgroup are often prevailing. Therefore, individuals will judge outgroup members due to negative stereotypes and attitudes they hold. Yet, contact with outgroup members can make ingroup identities less salient and the interaction becomes more personalized through a decategorization process. If members of both groups reduce the salience of their identities, intergroup relations will improve.\(^5^1\) A common ingroup will lead to more positive perceptions toward the “Other” and enhance the reconciliation process. Support of this idea can be found in post-conflict societies such as Chile and Northern Ireland.\(^5^2\) The common


ingroup model is about creating “we”, instead of an “us” and “them”. It is not necessary to merge two groups into one, especially not in post-conflict where certain identities are salient. Rather, a superordinate identity is a more realistic option.\textsuperscript{53} This is also relevant in when focusing on BiH with the ongoing nationbuilding process and the existence of a state identity.\textsuperscript{54} Moreover, contact can facilitate a change in the identity if members have similar interest and values. Creating a common identity which all members of a society can identify should in theory improve the attitudes to the former enemy because they are a part of the new ingroup. This also means that a reconciliation process needs a change in identity. Yet, changing identities is not a simple task, especially when certain identities are salient. Therefore, a decategorization process is necessary in the initial stage. One way to personalize outgroup members is to have contact with them through “prolonged, self-revealing contact with out-group members and the development of shared goals”.\textsuperscript{55} Contact also decreases the sense of victimhood, which becomes is necessary in order to acknowledge the past. As long as ingroup members perceive themselves as the true victims of a conflict, and struggle to have that status, it will be hard to recognize the suffering of the other group. Having good quality contact should also increase perspective-taking, and gives individuals the possibility to find common interest and form a common vision.

Hence, the theoretical argument is that contact, and especially quality contact, is necessary in order to break “the ethos of the conflict” which is passed on through one generation to the next. Contact becomes important to alter the negative processes that were spawned from the conflict and sustained through socialization, and obstructs the reconciliation process.

2.7 Operationalization

The independent variable in this study is contact. Yet, researchers have discussed different types of contact and its impact on reducing division and conflicts. Pettigrew discusses the need of good quality contact. However, it is hard to assess whether the contact is qualitative or not if one does not observe the interaction. Quality contact is operationalized as \textit{close friends with outgroup}


\textsuperscript{54} See Kostić, “Nationbuilding as an Instrument of Peace?”

members. Closer friendship requires intimacy and ensures that the contact has good quality in comparison to contact which is more superficial. This means that contact is divided into three levels no contact, contact, and friendship with outgroup members.

Reconciliation is the dependent variable. However, reconciliation includes different processes as discussed earlier. First, perceptions about oneself and the outgroup needs to be changed in order to have constructive relationships. When it comes to individuals’ commitment to their ingroup, two measurements are used; ingroup pride and ingroup superiority. The first was measured by Do you feel good being a member of your group? and the latter was measured by asking Do think your group is better than the other group in the area? Perception about the outgroup was measured by asking What are your feelings towards the other group? A common vision for the future was identified as vital for the reconciliation process. However, what constitutes a common vision between members of different groups is hard to define. In this study, a common vision measured through attitudes toward a multicultural society by asking What are your thoughts regarding a multicultural society?. Acknowledgement of the past was identified as an important of the reconciliation process. However, in order to acknowledge the past, one must reduce the sense of victimhood. Victimhood can be measured in different ways, for example, loss of property, loss of family members, and so on. Still, victimhood is a subjective process. Therefore, sense of personal and collective victimhood were measured by asking Do you perceive yourself as a victim due to what happened during the war? and Do you perceive your group as a victim due to what happened during the war?. In other words, the focus is on the respondents’ perceptions about their own beliefs.

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3. Research Design

This chapter is devoted to discussing the method and methodological choices that have been taken, and how the fieldwork and analysis was conducted. The first part discusses and motivates the design of the study. The second part deals with the case selections, and why these cases are relevant for the study. Next, the interview process and issues surrounding this process are discussed. The fourth part focus on the sampling, and what implications it has on the study. At last, the analytical process is presented and discussed.

3.1 A Qualitative Case Study Design

This study has a qualitative case study design. The reason why I opted for this approach lies in the opportunity to probe cases, which will give us a deeper understanding of the cases in itself, but it also gives us the chance to take the understanding of the cases at hand and apply to other cases. This was suitable due to the explorative and explanatory dimension of the study. A common misconception regarding case studies is that they attempt to understand spatially bounded phenomena or a certain event. In political science and peace studies, studies are often theoretically driven. Explanations concerning specific events are more in line with the work of historians. Therefore, it is more useful to view case studies in this discipline as theoretical defined events, which can be used to validate theoretical arguments that eventually can be generalized. This also means that researchers in political science and peace studies often aim at generalizing beyond the case or to develop hypotheses. These hypotheses can later on be tested by other methods, usually by a quantitative approach. These studies are often called hypothesis-generating case studies. The strength with this design is the intimacy with the data. The researcher can in these cases suggest alternative and contextual variables, identify scope conditions, and causality. Another approach is a plausibility probe, which can be viewed as a pilot study to sharpen theories, adjust operationalization and measurements. These studies help the researcher to avoid purposeless pursuits, and is used before one launch a costlier and more extensive study. One can also use this strategy in order to provide the reader with an example, or to prove the usefulness of the theory by identifying a relevant case. The aim with the latter strategy is not to provide an explanation or test

a theory, meaning that the researcher will stop at this stage. This is different in comparison to the first type, which is the first step in a multi-stage process. In a multi-stage process, this strategy can be an important step in the development of a theory, either as a first step or as a step between hypotheses and empirical tests. This study is plausibility probe. The reason behind this is that the area where the respondents live is underresearched. Hence, it is on beforehand estimate the level of contact young adults has in this area (the cases will be discussed further in the subchapter 3.2 Case Selection). The lack of data regarding young adults was also a reason why I opted for a probe. The strength of this design is that I can provide highly detailed analysis and may provide theoretical evidence inductively. On the other hand, the possibility of generalization from a qualitative study with a low number of respondents becomes harder in comparisons to Large-N studies. This means that the researcher must be careful not to overgeneralize one’s findings. At the same time, a quantitative approach would have a harder time to explore contact in the lives of respondents. A longitudinal design would also be useful in order to better understand the relationship between the variables, however, with the time-frame of this project it could not be done.

3.2 Case Selection

But then the question arises; why BiH? BiH is chosen as a critical case. Critical case strategy builds on selecting cases that can have a big impact and generate the most knowledge. On the other hand, the drawback, once again, is the possibility of generalization. But with solid evidence and rich data, researchers tend to rely on logical generalization. This study needs a society which is divided since armed conflict. However, many societies are divided, even societies that have not been hit by violence to any higher extent. Bar-Tal discuss societies that are affected by conflicts that are “existential, irresolvable, and zero sum nature”. The key in these conflicts is that the same questions remain unsolved over time and there is a continuity of the conflict. Hence, even though peace is reached, underlying causes are not solved, such as ownership of land or control over institutions.

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61 Bar-Tal, “Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts.”
BiH fits this description, an example of this in BiH is the Bosnian Serb leadership who recently threatened to break away from the country. However, as discussed in the scope and limitations, this study focus on two towns in eastern BiH, and not the whole of BiH. This means that we have two cases (Goražde and Višegrad) within the case (eastern BiH). BiH is suitable because it has the intractable character that this study is looking for, but eastern BiH and the cases provide the local dynamics. Concerning the selection of the towns of Goražde and Višegrad, which will be introduced further in the empirical chapter, the cases have a number of similarities. First, both towns are located in eastern BiH which saw a high amount of violence during the Bosnian War. Second, both towns were multietnic prior the war. However, after the war the population in Goražde is predominantly Bosniak and the population in Višegrad is predominantly Serb. Third, the towns are located forty minutes by car from each other. This means that the towns are close, but still separated. It might seem unwise to study contact and its impact on the reconciliation process in an area as this. Perhaps a more divided urban setting would have been more suitable because one might expect higher levels of contact between members of different groups. At the same time, this setting provides a least likely design for contact and also gives me the opportunity to explore the context of eastern BiH.

Furthermore, fieldwork is also costly and time consuming, therefore, focusing on one or two cases is often appropriate. Fieldwork also demands knowledge often the context and connection with the local population, which often makes a small number of cases suitable. Therefore, I decided to have a focus on a small group of people in a small geographic area. Meaning that the findings become more localized than studies that try to capture the overall picture of a state.

3.3 In-Depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted in and around Goražde and in the town of Pale in various settings. Sometimes in homes, other times at cafes or similar spaces. The only preconditions I had was that the interviews could be conducted without interruptions, and pressure or influences from others than the interviewer and the interpreter. The respondents had the chance to suggest a location

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where they felt comfortable, otherwise I would make a suggestion. One might note that none of the respondents from Višegrad opted to do the interview in their hometown. The reasons behind this is speculative. One possibility is that the respondents felt uncomfortable talking about the topics that are discussed in this study in their hometowns. This is especially relevant in a context where, for example, contact with outgroup members can be seen as treason to the own community. In Goražde, I could provide a location that was private.

Furthermore, I had the opportunity to meet some of the respondents before the interview and explain the purpose of the study, but more importantly to connect and to start building trust. I also aimed to make the interviews more like a conversation rather than a formal interview. However, this is not always simple, especially when working with an interpreter. Yet, making the interview similar to conversation was useful in order to bridge the hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, and to downplay the formality of the whole interview situation. The interviews had semi-structured approach. This means that the same set of questions was asked to all respondents, but I also had the opportunity to probe topics that were discussed during the interviews. This made every interview unique in their own ways because the respondents were given the opportunity to steer the interview in certain directions. This leeway was important because it gave the data collections flexibility, which is necessary in order not to “pigeon-hole” the respondents. One has to remember that this study is a probe. If one uses too inflexible methods, one risk to miss important perspectives. This is also the reason why in-depth interviews seemed suitable. The semi-structured interviews gave me flexibility, however, it also gives structure and coherence in the data, which was important at a later stage when the data was analyzed. Unstructured interviews were also considered, but this type of interviews seemed risky because it is likely that the data would be too widespread, meaning that it would be harder to find patterns in the data.65 In the end, the method chosen brought intimacy to the research subject by providing depth, detail and first-hand accounts. This gave me the opportunity to get a fuller understanding of the realities of individuals who have been living in post-conflict societies their whole lives.66 Focus groups were considered because group processes were studied, but this strategy would not provide detailed individual experiences of contact. One could also discuss how comfortable the respondents

would be about sharing their experiences and opinions with other people. Hence, discussing doing one-on-one interviews with an interpreter was more suitable.

The interviews were conducted with the help of two interpreters who were Bosniaks. This is problematic due to the past and the present relationship between Bosniaks and Serbs in the area of study. The most optimal option would be using a Serb interpreter with Serb respondents, and a Bosniak interpreter when interviewing Bosniaks. However, due to limited resources this was not possible. None of Serb respondents stated that they had a problem with using a Bosniak interpreter, even though it is impossible to guarantee that the interpreters’ backgrounds did not influence the interview. However, not all interviews were conducted in Bosnian/Serbian, four interviews were conducted in Bosnian/Serbian and English to certain extents. Before every interview, the respondents were asked if they wanted to do the interview in English or Bosnian/Serbian. Three respondents opted for English, these interviews were carried out mostly in English, and the respondents used the interpreter occasionally. One respondent opted for Bosnian, but because the interviewer was asking questions in English, the respondent sometimes chose to answer in English. Speaking another language than the native language may affect the validity of the respondents’ answers. At the same time, all the respondent who spoke English during the interview had the opportunity to turn to the interpreter if needed.

Doing research in post-conflict societies demand sensitivity and respect towards respondents and the society as a whole. Even though the conflict took part over twenty years ago, it does not mean that all wounds are healed and that it is a mellow topic. A guiding principle is to “do no harm”. Still, this is not always a simple task. It is hard to predict how individual participants respond to certain questions and topics. One topic might raise emotional responses from one individual due to certain experiences, and in the next interview another topic generates more emotions. The research can mentally prepare themselves, but one must be able to read the situation and the respondent. All respondents were informed before the interview that they had the right to stop or pause the interview at any time if they felt uncomfortable. In addition, they also had the opportunity to change the answers or make additional comments during the interview. The respondents were also ensured the right to anonymity so they could speak more freely. A voice recorder was also used with the approval of respondents. At last, because the study takes place in

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part of BiH which experienced high levels of violence, the interview guide was discussed with a psychiatrist from and working in Goražde before the interviews were conducted.

3.4 Sampling

A snowballing strategy was used to find suitable respondents. The idea of this strategy builds on finding information-rich respondents and have valuable insights on the subject of study. These respondents will eventually be asked if they recommended other persons that can be significant for the study. This will lead to a bigger and bigger pool of possible respondents.\textsuperscript{68} This sampling strategy is criticized for the risk of lopsided representation among the respondents.\textsuperscript{69} This is a valid critique, the sample in this study is not random, which affect the external validity and the possibility to generalize. However, as Alan Bryman notes, without accessible sampling frames and the time-consuming challenge to create one, the researcher is often pushed to use a snowball strategy.\textsuperscript{70} Furthermore, as Johanna Mannergren Selimovic notes, by using this strategy, the researcher is often depended on so called “gatekeepers”, who to some extent controls who will be interviewed.\textsuperscript{71}

In order to study reconciliation, which is a two-way process, it was important included both Bosniak and Serb respondents. In total, eleven interviews were conducted during the fieldwork. However, two of them were pilot interviews used to adjust the interview manual, and one respondent did not come from the area of study which rendered the interview inadequate. This means that eight interviews were used in the analysis, five of them Bosniaks and three Serb respondents. The respondent was between 21 and 24 years old. Seven of the respondents were men. Five respondents were students, two respondents had blue-collar jobs, and one respondent has a white-collar job. The shortest interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes and the longer lasted over an hour.

Concerning validity, this type of sampling strategy will reduce it. Yet, this study has qualitative approach, and the question is if we can have the same expectations regarding validity, reliability and generalizability as in quantitative research. I would disagree. For example, the one who attempts to replicate also need to have similar ascriptive characteristics as the original researcher, such as age, gender, nationality, etc. This also leads into a notion on reflexivity. No researcher can

\textsuperscript{69} Ritchie and Lewis, \textit{Qualitative Research Practice}, p 94
\textsuperscript{71} Mannergren Selimović, \textit{Remembering and Forgetting after War}. p. 76
be value free, therefore, bias will always exist in research. Instead, the researcher should take a self-reflexive stance and consider how one may influence the research process. Conducting a study in BiH as an “outsider” raises certain questions and issues. Mannergren Selimovic states that a foreigner will often be seen as a representative of the international community.\textsuperscript{72} That may be true to some extent, but it is hard to view oneself through the eyes of others. However, it was clear that I, as a Swedish citizen, was perceived as privileged. This is a reoccurring theme that has been brought up during my trips to BiH, and something that was brought up during the interviews. For example, that I have had opportunities in life that is far greater than persons my age in BiH. This is a clear case when the researcher becomes a part of the knowledge producing process, when respondents use the researcher as a point of reference during the interviews. Yet, being viewed as an outsider is not always negative, for example, it gives the researcher the opportunity to be “stupid” and ask questions about things that might be seen as obvious to people living in the local context. This is especially relevant when studying something mundane as contact in the everyday life. As stated, the aim of this thesis is to explore young people’s perspectives. Being in the same age as the respondents became an important entry point where I could level with the respondents.

3.5 Literature
The main bulk of the empirical part and analysis consist of primary sources gathered in BiH. However, additional sources have been used in both the empirical part and the analysis. First, findings and press releases from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), The State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SCBH), and news articles from Justice Report from Balkan Insight and Justice Report are used in order to establish a picture what happened in the area of Goražde and Višegrad during the war. When it comes to Višegrad, it is easier to find material because it has been under scrutinize of the ICTY, and cases have been closed. Goražde on the other hand has gained less attention. Only recently, the SCBH has started to investigate the crimes that took place in Goražde, and no verdicts have been researched so far. Therefore, I had to turn to news article and press releases from the SCBH in the case of Goražde. Additional literature with a focus on peacebuilding is used to in order to contextualize the situation in BiH since the war. In the empirical part and the analysis, secondary data is presented. However, the role of

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. p. 78.
secondary data is to compare, support or question the findings from the field study. The focus lies on primary sources.

3.6 Analysis

The analysis in this study is based on interviews conducted in BiH. A content analysis has been used in order to analyze the data. Content analysis is useful when the researcher aims at analyzing both the content and context of the sources. With the growing use of content analysis and a growing number of techniques, I intend to clarify the analysis process in this subchapter.

Klaus Krippendorff states that a content analysis aims at creating “replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other close matter) to the contexts of their use.” Content analysis can also take place at different levels, the manifest and latent, which are two very different ways of analyzing the data. The manifest level focus on what is being said or written, simply what is stated by respondents. A latent level analysis focuses on the meaning that is hidden in the communication, what is implied and not outspoken in the source, such as double meaning or sarcasm. James W. Drisko and Tina Maschi state that a number of different content analysis can be divided into three categories: the basic content analysis, the interpretive content analysis, and the qualitative content analysis. Basic content analysis is a literal approach, which focus on manifest level. Word count is a typical technique used in this approach, and the sources used is often used initially with another purpose, newspapers are one example. This technique is often understood as quantitative technique. In the interpretive approach, both the manifest and latent levels can be analyzed. The aim here combines the objectivity of manifest analysis, and the deeper understanding of the data that the latent analysis can capture. The latent level makes it possible to bring the context into the meaning of the message. The mixed approach might leave the researcher with difficult questions about, for example, epistemology. According to Drisko and Maschi, researcher tend to solve this problem by relying on more quantitative criteria, but at the same time not assuming objectivity. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, aims at developing specified categories from the data with the help of a feedback-loop process. This means that the researcher revises and refine the categories while

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73 Ritchie and Lewis, *Qualitative Research Practice*, p. 200.
working with data in order to ensure credibility and usefulness. One should note that qualitative analysis may seek other measurements than reliability that quantitative analysis might strive for. Instead, qualitative analysis focuses on transparency and guiding the reader through the text, often by providing quotes from texts or interviewees. The analysis in this thesis is based on a qualitative approach. It was suitable because I wanted to put the data in its contextual meaning. This is important when discussing topics that can be sensitive in post-conflict societies. One a side note, some of the quotes that will be presented later on have been modified for the sake of clarity and to make it easier for the reader to understand.

Further, Steinar Kvale identifies three different interpretations in qualitative analysis. First, self-understanding which occurs when the researcher tries to capture the respondents' understanding of a certain phenomenon. Secondly, a critical understanding based on common sense where the researcher aims at put the respondent statements in a broader arena of general knowledge. In the third interpretation, the research aims to put statements into a broader theoretical arena. However, it is not easy to differentiate between qualitative traditions. For example, some scholars would state it is impossible to do a descriptive and a-theoretical analysis. This means that Kvale’s different categories do overlap to a certain extent. With the explorative and explanatory objectives of this thesis, the analysis is a combination between capturing the understanding of the respondents, but also placing their understanding in a broader theoretical arena.

The coding process was done inductively and can be divided into four different stages. After interviews were transcribed, I started reading through all transcripts and notes from interviews a couple of times without writing down any impressions. The aim is simply to understand what the sources are about. In the next step, I took notes about important or striking attitudes, ideas, behavior, etc., that I found interesting. This was the initial stage of the coding. In the second stage, I started going through the sources again, but this time I generated themes in the data. When this was done, I moved on to the third stage, which involved reviewing the initial coding. I was looking for connection between codes and if the codes were overlapping. By doing this, the number of codes was reduced. Eventually, in the last stage, the codes were considered in relation to the theoretical framework. Once again the number of codes was reduced, this time due to their

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76 Ritchie and Lewis, Qualitative Research Practice, p. 201.
theoretical relevance. As seen in the table below, variables derived from the theoretical framework can be found on the left side, and codes relating to variables in the middle, and scale to the right. By coding the answer of the respondent as positive/yes, negative/no and neutral, I could compare the answers between respondents with different levels of contact which was necessary in order to understand how contact affect the reconciliation process.

All interviews were coded with the help of the software program MAXQDA.

Table 1. Variables, Codes and Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Place of contact</td>
<td>Yes/No/Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference between places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues surrounding contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Contact</td>
<td>Close outgroup friends</td>
<td>Yes/No/Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup Commitment</td>
<td>Ingroup</td>
<td>Yes/No/Neutral</td>
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<td>Ingroup pride</td>
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<td>My group better</td>
<td>Yes/No/Neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Vision</td>
<td>Multicultural Society</td>
<td>Positive/Negative/Neutral</td>
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<td>Attitudes toward outgroup</td>
<td>Feelings towards the outgroup</td>
<td>Positive/Negative/Neutral</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dealing with the past</td>
<td>Personal victimhood</td>
<td>Yes/No/Neutral</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Source of personal victimhood</td>
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<td>Collective Victimhood</td>
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<td>Difference in suffering between in- and outgroup</td>
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4. Background and Context

This chapter will first shortly introduce the towns of Goražde and Višegrad, and provide as short account about the situation is the towns during the Bosnian War and the situation today in BiH. I do not intend nor have the possibility to provide a full account of what happened during the war and the current situation today. Instead, it should be understood as an attempt to contextualize the situation during the war and today.

Goražde and Višegrad are located in the mountainous eastern part BiH with the river Drina running through the towns. Višegrad is known for the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge, which was immortalized by the Nobel Prize Winner Ivo Andrić in his book The Bridge on the Drina. In the heart of the town, placed on a peninsula stretching out into the river, the newly constructed Andrićgrad is placed which is raised in honor of the author. Goražde is located forty minutes by car to the south-west of Višegrad. Goražde is characterized by the steep slopes surrounding the town, and the town itself spreads up the mountain sides with family houses. In the center of the town there is an abundance of cafés where the local population socializes during the day and evening. Before the Bosnian War, the municipality of Goražde had a population of 37,573, 69.98 per cent identified themselves as Muslims, and 26.19 per cent as Serbs. In Višegrad Municipality, the total population was 21,199, 63.54 per cent Muslims, and 31.80 per cent Serbs. Today, both towns are almost “ethnically clean”. Goražde is predominantly Bosniak while Višegrad is predominantly Bosnian Serb. The municipality of Goražde had an estimated population of 29,613 in 2015, and the municipality of Višegrad had a population of 11,774 in 2013.

In order to understand today’s post-conflict BiH, one must also look at the dynamics of the conflict. During the war, all sides tried to control territory that they claimed to belong to their group in order to create “homeland”. Therefore, the territory had a very central part in the conflict, and it is also a central part of post-conflict BiH. More than half of the population in BiH were driven from their homes. Half of the people who had to leave their homes became internally displaced.

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78 Note that the census in 1991 used the term Muslim and not Bosniak.
79 Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Bosne i Hercegovine, Nacionalni sastav stanovništva - Rezultati za republiku po opštinama i naseljenim mjestima, Statistički bilten (Sarajevo, 1993).
persons (IDPs) and the other half became refugees. This means that many former ethnically mixed areas became dominated by one ethnic group.\footnote{Internal Displacement Monitoring Center. *Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ethno-political agendas still prolonging displacement*, 19 November 2014} If we look specifically at the towns of Goražde and Višegrad, the war affected the two towns in very different ways. In Višegrad, high levels of violence were committed in the early phase of the conflict. In April 1992, violence took place on a regular basis, mainly directed towards the Bosniak population. When the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) entered the municipality, many Bosniaks fled the area or went into hiding. At the same time, Bosniak militia armed themselves to protect their villages around Višegrad, and eventually took control over the hydroelectric dam and started releasing water. This led to an intervention of the JNA, which took control over the town. During this period, almost the whole Bosniak population left the town and fled to locations which seemed safer. However, after securing the town of Višegrad, the JNA in with the help of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA)\footnote{Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije), primarily a Bosniak party which was the biggest party in the municipality in multiparty elections in 1990.}, urged the Bosniak population to return to their home and guaranteed safety for all citizens. SDA and the Serb Democratic Party (SDS)\footnote{Serb Democratic Party (Srpska Demokratska Stranka), primarily a Serb Party which was the second biggest party in the municipality in multiparty elections in 1990.} started negotiations with the involvement of the JNA. In order to protect the Bosniak population, the SDA with the help of JNA brought parts of the Bosniak population of the local football stadium. On arrival, the JNA searched the population for weapons. Eventually, the Bosniak population from the left side of the river could return home while the rest of the Bosniak population had to stay put until the next day. This lead to that many villages were empty of the Bosniak population for a shorter period. When returning to their villages, the Bosniak population found that their houses had been searched, damaged, and in some cases burnt down. The JNA also set up checkpoints both inside and outside the town with the help of local Serbs. Most who was stopped were Bosniaks, and without a permit that could be obtained at the local police station, they could not leave or move within the town. Beatings from police officers and disappearance of men in military age occurred, and many men fled the town if they had the opportunity. In May 1992, the JNA withdrew from the Višegrad area while paramilitary units stayed, and more paramilitaries arrived, while some of the local Serbs joined the paramilitary groups. The non-Serb population that had not left the area found themselves ensnared. The violence against the Bosniak population escalated after the departure of the JNA and reached its peak in the
months of May and June with numerous cases of arbitrary killings and disappearances. Many bodies were disposed by throwing them into the river Drina. Parts of non-Serb population was also expelled by bus, and in the process robbed of valuables and identification documents. Non-Serb homes were also looted and sometimes burnt down. The two mosques located in Višegrad were destroyed. In the aftermath of the war, hundred bodies of Bosniaks have been found in mass graves in the municipality, most of them men in military age. 86

When it comes to Goražde, the town was under siege by the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) for longer parts of the war. The siege lasted for more than 1,300 days with shelling on an almost daily basis. This lead to that the local population suffered from shortage of food and water. 87 In comparison to Višegrad, Goražde was never controlled by Bosnian-Serb forces. Instead, the Goražde area was declared a “Safe Area” by the UN, but still surrounded by territory controlled by VRS. Due to this, the violence played out very differently, and Goražde has not been under scrutinize by the ICTY and the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the same extent as Višegrad. This means that there is a lack of written sources regarding what happened during the war. Recently, the court of Bosnia and Herzegovina have payed attention to crimes that happened in the area during the war. During the spring of 2016, two former policemen from Goražde were charged for illegal detention and inhumane treatment of over 100 civilians in period 1992 to 1993. 88 Since the spring of 2015, four former members of the Army of BiH are standing trial for murdering three Prisoners of War in Goražde. 89 In February 2016, the former commander of the First Višegrad Brigade of the Army of BiH has been indicted for War Crimes against Civilians and War Crimes against Prisoners of War in the municipalities of Rudo, Višegrad and Goražde. The accused is charged with involvement in inflicting bodily and mental pain, inhumane treatment of civilians,

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looting, unlawful incarceration and displacement, among other crimes. Furthermore, four persons are indicted for War Crimes against Civilians. The accused allegedly attacked a column of Serb refugees that were going towards Rogatica from the Goražde area in August 1992. Hence, with fewer cases surrounding Goražde it is harder to establish a clear picture about the violence that took place. Still, it is clear that there was violence directed toward civilians, and that the majority of the Serbs civilians who lived in the town before the war do no longer live in there.

4.1 Post-Dayton BiH

After signing the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA) in the end of 1995, the country was divided into two entities, the predominantly Bosniak and Croat inhabited Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the predominately Serb inhabited Republika Srpska. This has led to decentralized state which builds upon power sharing. Both entities have their own government, police force, and education system. Today, Goražde is located in the FBiH while Višegrad is located in Republika Srpska.

Post-Dayton BiH has been able to survive due to substantial international involvement through NATO led forces and the Office of the High Representative of the International Community in Bosnia Herzegovina (OHR). In addition, perhaps the biggest number of governmental and non-governmental organization ever seen has been deployed in the country. More than 200 NGOs and over 100,000 foreigners has been involved in the relief efforts. In 1995, 22,500 peacekeepers from the United Nations (UN) were deployed accompanied by a number of UN organizations. However, the intervention in BiH goes further than simply keeping the peace. The peacebuilding

operation is a state- and nationbuilding project which aims at build a self-sustaining peace. It builds on the logic that nationbuilding can create new identities at the state level and by doing so reduce ethnic loyalties. The idea is that existing groups will be brought together into a common society, and with the help of common symbols, language, educations and mass media, a national identity can be established. For the sake of clarity, BiH consist mainly of three groups: Bosniaks (Muslims), Croats (Catholics Christians) and Serbs (Orthodox Christians). Bosnian is a citizen of BiH, whether ethnic or religious belonging. Hence, Bosnian is the overarching state identity.

Further, the external peacebuilding project has cemented the division in the country and the political situation at the national and local level rather bringing the groups together. Robert Belloni states that politics in BiH is about reversing Clausewitz, a “continuation of war by other means” controlled by the nationalist elite. According to the constitution, Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs are the three constituent peoples, which makes the state dependent on ethnic representation. When politicians are elected due to their ethnicity or seen as a representative of ethnic group, they have no need for implementing cross-ethnic policies. Hence, there are no incentives for cross-ethnic cooperation among the political elite in BiH. Therefore, the peace accord has not encouraged a softening of the ethnic identities and the civil societies is still fragmented since the war. This means that non-nationalist and alternative forces have hard times to implement alternative projects and visions. After the war, local authorities and communities have still been engaged in “ethnic engineering” rather than creating a multiethnic BiH. Meaning that there is a continuation of the process of creating “homelands”, but by other means.

The possibility of BiH unified political structure in the country is slim. Even if Bosniak leadership have been discussing a smaller Bosniak state, they have tried to maintain the borders and consolidate power within it. On the other hand, the Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb leadership have been in favor of autonomy and closer links to Croatia and Serbia. The reasons for this can be traced to the fear that Bosniak leadership, and population, will enforce their political, cultural, and religious beliefs on the rest of the Croat and Serb population. The fate of the country is still

96 Kostić, “Nationbuilding as an Instrument of Peace?”
discussed in contemporary BiH, lately by the Bosnian Serb leadership who threatens to break away from the country through a referendum. This means that the same questions that was part of the outbreak of the war are still discussed in the country.

5. Contact in the Lives of Young Adults

Research has paid a lot of attention to urban areas and divided communities. This is not the case in this study which focus on two small towns that is dominated by one ethnic group. Therefore, this study has an explorative dimension. This part will present if the respondents have contact, how contact takes place, and factors that have an impact on contact with outgroup members.

Two respondents reported that they no contact with the members of the outgroup, meaning that six out of eight respondents had contact with members of other groups (see table 2. below).

Table 2. Contact with Outgroup Members

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<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<td>A</td>
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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes,

However, the contact that the respondent had in their lives differed. Tarik101 had contact with outgroup members because his neighbors belonged to the outgroup. He described his relationship with his neighbors in following way:

“… If we look at today, and during the war, we had Serb neighbors who lived next to us and turned against us overnight, they attacked us, in other words, they put up barricades and shot at us, and now after 10 years, it is as it never happened because they still live as [our] neighbors, and that trust between us is simply not there anymore…”102

Tarik also made a difference between those Serbs who fled the conflict in comparison to Serbs who stayed and fought, indicating that he is more open to have contact with Serbs who did not fight in war. What we can see here is that contact in itself does not necessarily lead to good relations with

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101 The names used in this study are not the real names of the respondents.
102 Interview 5.
members other group. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, contact does not necessarily reduce division. If individuals do not want to have contact, do not perceive the groups as equal, and are not prepared to work for a common goal, contact is not likely to be a positive experience. However, one must also note that this study takes place in a post-conflict society that saw high levels of violence. As seen in the quote from Tarik, the same people that he has contact with, shot at him and his family during the war. But with the lack of opportunities to have contact in the hometowns, many respondents had contact outside their hometowns. Filip reported that intercommunal programs provided an opportunity to come in contact with outgroup members:

“Of course I have a lot of friends like Bosniaks and Croatian, and also Jewish because I take part in a lot of seminars, a lot of programs, intercultural, interreligious, and international programs here in BiH so I have a lot of friends from other ethnical groups, not just Serbs…”

For Ana, who was born in Sarajevo, her trips to Sarajevo gave her opportunities to have contact with outgroup members:

“During 1998 my parents and I started going to Sarajevo, so I made a lot of contact and communication… and my grandfather still live in Sarajevo, and I go to him always.”

Eldin reported that studies at the university provided an opportunity for contact, which also provided open atmosphere:

“Yes, I would say that, there [at the university] you meet more regularly with other people from other cities and other nationalities, you are more open and you have your own opinions and freedom of expression and you can think more critically.”

As seen in the Eldin’s quote, the place where the contact took place were also important. All respondents were comfortable having contact with members of the other group, but only four respondents were comfortable having contact with others anywhere in BiH. Hence, having contact with the “Other” was not the problem, meaning that it is not intergroup anxiety that the respondents expressed. This is important because, according to Pettigrew & Tropp, intergroup anxiety is the

103 Interview 6.
104 Interview 9.
105 Interview 4.
main reason for avoidance of intergroup contact.\textsuperscript{106} Carli J. Mosby found that “emerging adults” from the three constituent groups experience lower levels of intergroup anxiety in comparison to adults. One reason behind this is believed to be that emerging adults do not remember the violence to the same extent as the older generation.\textsuperscript{107} However, contact with outgroup members in their “territory” could be uncomfortable. For example, Ajdin was not comfortable meeting Serbs in Republika Srpska:

“No, not that comfortable, there is something that you cannot describe to people who have not experienced something like the war, we have, so, normally when I go to Republika Srpska, they look differently at you, but when they come here [to Goražde] I think it is, the feeling is a little bit more relaxed.”\textsuperscript{108}

Hence, going to the “territory” of the “Other” could be uncomfortable, even after two decades of “peace”. Edin said that it was not necessarily the fear of getting attacked that was the problem:

“It is something when you hear the Republika Srpska that gets a negative connotation to me, I do not know if it could be the media which paints it, the people around, so when I go there I feel that I want to look a little extra over the shoulder, that is the feeling I get when I’m there, even though it may be safe there.”\textsuperscript{109}

One could see this as a security problem, that the individuals do not feel safe in certain areas in BiH. But still, as Edin says, it is not the risk of attack that is the issue. Rather, there it is something that makes it uncomfortable. Annika Björkdahl discusses how the process of peace is always situated in different spaces and places. She states that city spaces often become ethno-nationally contested in conflicts. Divided and contested spaces seem to persist even though peace accords have been signed, and peacebuilding and reconciliation processes have been implemented. Further, spatially segregation often means social segregation. If this segregation becomes permanent, “imagined walls” are raised, which prevents intergroup contact. Refugees and IDPs are also likely

\textsuperscript{108} Interview 3.
\textsuperscript{109} Interview 1.
to change the demographic structure which might lead to even more polarization and tension in the local areas.\textsuperscript{110} The social setting in the area of Goražde and Višegrad is very different from city spaces due to their size and because they are dominated by one group. Therefore, these towns are not ethno-nationally contested. Instead, they are ethno-nationally dominated spaces. It is clear that there are “imagined walls” between the communities, which reduces the opportunities to interact with outgroup members. However, one should also remember that according to half of the respondents, these imagined walls were not as strong or non-existing. In the words of Nikola:

“Of course, there are some people from Bosnia who [are] scared to be in Sarajevo because [it] is Muslim town, it is embarrassing for me calling the town like that way, like I said, some people are scared when [they] go to Sarajevo, [to] put out the their cross (pointing to his orthodox prayer bracelet) because they are scared to, I do not know, to express themselves, and for me it is so stupid.”\textsuperscript{111}

Eldin also reported that he was comfortable having contact anywhere in BiH. He occasionally spent time in Mostar and made a comparison between his hometown and Mostar:

“Yes, it is, Mostar is divided between Bosnians and Croats and there is it not always good to reveal your nationality in the wrong circles, it is for example, nationalist tendencies occur during bigger matches between different teams.

Q: so would you say that you can express yourself more freely into Goražde then?

Here in Goražde is easier because it is a small town and most people know, is familiar with each other in one way or another, in Mostar you do not know who can attack you in the street and how the people reacts to one's nationality.”\textsuperscript{112}

So even though he was open for contact anywhere in BiH, he stated that he could express himself more freely in his hometown. Still, one has to remember that where respondents feel free to express themselves also depends on the attitudes the individual has. For example, the respondent above call himself a patriot. Therefore, it is not surprising, that he felt more comfortable expressing himself in his hometown of Goražde that is predominantly Bosniak in comparison to Mostar which is

\textsuperscript{110} Annika Björkdahl, “Urban Peacebuilding,” \textit{Peacebuilding} 1, no. 2 (June 1, 2013): 207–21.
\textsuperscript{111} Interview 8.
\textsuperscript{112} Interview 4.
divided between Bosniaks and Croats. Other individuals might feel that they can express more freely in, for example, Sarajevo.

As mentioned before, this study focus on respondents living in smaller towns with clear ethnic majorities. But due to the fact that contact often took place outside these towns, the respondents made comparisons between smaller towns like of Goražde and Višegrad and bigger towns such as Sarajevo or Mostar. It was clear that the hometowns did not provide many opportunities to interact with individuals from other groups. In the words of Ana:

“There is a difference between Sarajevo and Višegrad because Sarajevo has more minorities, people, small group of people of other ethnic group, and in Višegrad you have a majority of Serb people so you have the difference between everyday life in Višegrad and Sarajevo… there are not a lot of people from other groups (in Višegrad), I have more inter-ethnic contact with people in Sarajevo because in Višegrad people from other ethnic groups are mostly older people…”\(^\text{113}\)

However, it was not only that the towns had clear ethnic majorities, there was also a different mindset in small towns. In the words of Haris:

“A lot of my friends, a lot of from my college, a lot of students [at my] university come from Republika Srpska, they are Serbs, but they normally study in Sarajevo, normally live, normally cooperate with [us]…I am happy about it, but we can also make it better because there are a lot of small villages, small towns with conservative state of mind so we need to change it, we talking, we cooperate and that.”\(^\text{114}\)

Tarik pointed out that it was the demographic composition in the capital Sarajevo that lead to more openness among the population:

“…Sarajevo is a bigger city with more opportunities and it is very multicultural and multiethnic there, and nationalities do not play a big role when you go to school or what work you should have, unlike Višegrad, and it may have to do with these older people, those who remain in them these towns [in the countryside] still have prejudices while prejudices are torn down when moving to other major cities such as Sarajevo.”\(^\text{115}\)

\(^{113}\) Interview 9.  
\(^{114}\) Interview 2.  
\(^{115}\) Interview 5.
Mannergren Selimovic notes in her dissertation that the tension between urban and rural BiH is often ignored in research, instead researchers tend to frame the post-conflict society in terms of ethnonational identities.\(^{116}\) Furthermore, Anders Stefansson discusses the socio-cultural cleavage in contemporary BiH. According to the author, there is a habit of ranking culture within the Bosnian society. In this ranking, being “cultured” and “non-cultured” are two common binary oppositions, as well as being urban or rural, being educated or uneducated, being western and modern or Balkan and backwards. In this discourse, Sarajevo is the home of the Bosnian “high culture”, associated with education, wealth and cosmopolitanism. In his study, Stefansson also found that respondent from Sarajevo stated that the rural population were more supportive of the nationalistic parties prior the war, and also, due to their backwardness, more prone to attack members of different ethnonational communities during the war.\(^{117}\) This resembles the perceptions among the respondents even though they live in a rural area of BiH. However, their comparison is rather between small towns in comparison to larger urban areas. Small towns, such as Goražde and Višegrad, are perceived as more closed minded and backwards in comparison to larger urban areas such as Sarajevo.

A number of studies discuss the concept of Komšiluk\(^{118}\) as an important factor in building or rebuilding cross-ethnic relationships in BiH.\(^{119}\) However, none of the respondent brought up neighborliness as an important factor, which is not surprising due to the fact the towns have clear ethnic majorities. Yet, two respondents reported that they had neighbors from another group but did not feel close to members of the outgroup. This indicates that even though there is a chance to interact with members of the other group in the hometown, this chance is not taken. However, one must also identify the age of the neighbors. If their neighbors are much older or younger, it is not likely that contact will take place or friendships develop.

Being part of a community often means that members demand loyalty of other members. Therefore, individuals can fear that their interaction might be seen as a social deviant in the eyes


\(^{118}\) Simply meaning neighborhood, should be understood as the “spirit of neighborliness”.

Moreover, two of the respondents who had close friends from the other group also discussed how their friendship with members of the other group could be condemned by members of their own community. Nikola talked about an experience that he had in his hometown:

“…when you in my community say ‘I have a best friend who is Muslim and that I go often to Sarajevo’, you know, there is interested guys, who said ‘what is wrong with you, you are Serbian, it is not cool man, your dad was in war with that people’, I said ‘who cares man’, its been in the past and this is the past, we must be open minded, we must cooperate and this is the biggest problem because people live in past and they will say that war just been, they say that, on this way how this war been yesterday not twenty days ago, you know, it is so difficult.

Q: Does it happen often?

Not often but…

Q: Every now and then?

Sometimes it happens.”

Even though two respondents reported social sanctions, most of the respondents felt that they could express themselves freely and have contact with members of other groups without social sanctions. However, one should have in mind that respondents who do not interact with members of other communities to any higher extent should not have these experiences.

However, as discussed in the theoretical chapter, simply having contact does not mean that the contact is qualitative. Therefore, is also necessary to establish if the respondents have friends from the outgroup which ensures good quality contact. As seen below, four out of eight respondents reported that they had close outgroup friends.

Table 3. Quality Contact

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Ericson, *Reconciliation and the Search for a Shared Moral Landscape*. p. 72

Interview 8.
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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes.
6. Me, You, Us and Them

Identities are central in how individuals interpret the world and others. Identities are also likely to be salient in the aftermath of conflicts. In case of ethnic conflict, where individuals are targeted due to their ethnicity, ethnic identities are the ones that are likely to be salient. High levels of ingroup identification is expected to increase or cement the division in the society. Therefore, the salience of ethnic identities is an important factor to discuss if one attempt to study a reconciliation process. But reconciliation is not only a change in the perception of oneself, but also the perception of the Other. Hence, one must study both the views that individuals have about themselves, but also the Other. This chapter focus on how the respondents identify themselves, commitment to ethnical and national identities, and how they perceive the Other.

All respondents except one identified themselves in line with the predicted identities; Bosnian, Bosniak or Serb. All Serb respondent just used the term Serb to describe themselves. When it came to the Bosniak respondents, there was some difference how they identified themselves. Three respondents used both Bosniak and Bosnian to describe themselves. According to one respondent, Bosniak and Bosnian referred to the same group, and therefore it was no need to make a distinction between the groups. One Bosniak respondent stated that he only used the term Bosnian because he is a citizen of BiH. However, by doing so he is referring to the group that I call Bosniaks in this paper. In other words, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats were not included in the Bosnian identity from his point of view. Haris identified himself as Bosnian and Herzegovinian:

“Primary reason why I identify myself like Bosnian and Herzegovinan, [the] Bosniak, Serb, Croatian [identities] is in the narrower connection with religion, and my personal opinion, and what I teach during my life is that religion is [a] private thing so [I do not] identify myself with religion, because I have other priorities in my life, so social things, everything, religion is not primary.”

Haris’ identification becomes interesting because it can be seen as resistance against the ethnonational identities that have dominated post-war Bosnia. He also chose to belong a group of people that are like-minded, rather than belonging to a group due to shared ethnonationality. Haris may be an “outliner”, but it also demonstrates that there are individuals that resist the conventional lines of identification that exist in divided post-conflict societies. In the same way that some individuals can be seen as ethnical entrepreneurs, there is enough breathing space for individuals

122 Interview 2.
working for alternative lines of identification and against the dominant structures. Furthermore, Kostić found that among the three constituent groups, it is primarily in Bosniak dominated areas where the superordinate identity, Bosnian, is embraced. Croats and Serbs tend to reject the Bosnian identity and stress their loyalty to Croatia and Serbia instead.\(^{123}\) We can see the same pattern among the respondents in this study, the Serb respondents were satisfied with being called Serb, both when it comes to ethnicity and nationality. On the other hand, Bosniaks demonstrated more variation concerning how they identify themselves. The majority was calling themselves both Bosnians and Bosniaks. However, as seen, one respondent resisted the conventional identities in order to find a superordinate identity that can embrace all citizens of BiH whether religious or ethnic belonging by calling himself Bosnian-Herzegovinian. Still, I have not found any support in the literature that Bosnia-Herzegovinian is used to any higher extent. In fact, I have only met two persons during my stays in BiH that have used the term Bosnian-Herzegovinian to describe themselves. However, as Paula Pickering notes, not all citizens in BiH are completely comfortable labeling themselves after ethnonational lines of identification. For example, individuals with mixed heritage, or individuals who identified themselves as Yugoslavs before the war and who feels pushed into ethnonational categories. Moreover, the Bosnian identity was also seen by Bosniaks as a secular identity, but perceived as “hijacked” among minorities in Bosniak dominated areas.\(^{124}\) In this study, one Bosniak respondent perceived Bosniak and Bosnian as two terms for one group, one excluded Bosnian-Croats and Bosnian-Serbs which correlates with Pickering’s findings. Hence, the Bosnian identity is not seen as an inclusive identity by the respondents.

6.1 Ingroup Pride

In order to reduce the conflict and division in the society, the salience of identities has to be reduced. Therefore, one must look at the levels of ingroup commitment. All respondents stated that they felt good being a part of their respective communities (see table 4. below). In the words of Eldin:

“Yes, I can feel it, I think being patriotic or have to love one’s country is okay.”\(^{125}\)

\(^{123}\) Kostić, “Nationbuilding as an Instrument of Peace?”
\(^{125}\) Interview 4.
Nikola expressed himself the following way:

“Yeah, of course, I’m proud to be Serbian, I’m proud to be a part of this religion (referring to being orthodox), is also said again, it’s important to me to believe in something, something bigger than person.”\(^{126}\)

Hanna Hjort and Ann Frisén studied ethnic identity and reconciliation among adolescents in Mostar. The authors conclude that adolescent in the Mostar area demonstrates low levels of identity exploration and high levels of affirmation, belonging and commitment to their ethnic identity. This indicates that the adolescent live in a context where exploration and questioning one’s identity is not encouraged. High levels of affirmation, belonging and commitment can also be understood as a response to live in a society which do not provide good prospects for the future.\(^{127}\) One example of this is the unemployment rate among the age group 15-24 which is 57.9 per cent.\(^{128}\) However, the point here is that individuals have grown up in a society which demands high levels of commitment to the ingroup.

**Table 4. Ingroup Pride**

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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes,

6.2 Ingroup Superiority

Another measurement on ingroup commitment was ingroup superiority. Two respondents thought that their own group was better than the outgroup as seen in table 5. From Haris’ point of view:

\(^{126}\) Interview 8.  
“I think we are the best group in BiH because we do not think in borders, ethnical border, religious borders, because religion is not in first place, first place is knowledge, think about future, social things, everything, religion is just private, in four walls you know.”\textsuperscript{129}

In the words of Ajdin:

“Well, I really admire also other groups and I respect all of them, but I am sticking to my group so without any offense to others but, it is normal feeling, normal opinion so everyone has the right to choose their group.\textsuperscript{130}

The majority of the respondents stated that they did not perceive their respective ingroup as better than the outgroup as seen in the table below.

“I would not say that, but every nation has its own people, and every nation has good and bad people.”\textsuperscript{131}

Further, a common strategy while talking about ethnic or national groups was to state that all groups have good and bad members, or to steer the conversation from a group level to an individual level, like Filip did:

“I am Serb and that is okay, if some person from other group, maybe Bosnian group or Croatian group show himself like better man from others, I will respect that man no matter if his from other group… that it just important, how are you like man, how are you like person and it does not matter which ethnical group you represent…I judge people just about personality not ethnical group, if you are good you are good no matter which group.”\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{129} Interview 2.  
\textsuperscript{130} Interview 3.  
\textsuperscript{131} Interview 4.  
\textsuperscript{132} Interview 6.
Table 5. Ingroup Superiority

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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes,

6.3 Attitudes toward the Outgroup

A change of negative perceptions is needed in a reconciliation process, therefore, it was necessary to discuss attitudes toward the “Other” with the respondents. Concerning attitudes towards the other group, seven respondents stated that they had neutral attitudes toward the other group (see table 7.). Once again similar patterns can be found the answers of the respondents. The respondents stated that all groups have members that are good and bad persons, and that people should not be judged because of their ethnicity, including themselves. Hence, turning the discussion to an individual level was common to avoid talking about their perception on the outgroup. One example was Nikola:

“I do not know, I said to you when we start conversation that I had best friend who is a Muslim and I think that is answer of all of your questions, because, you know… when you give somebody chance to speak to you then you will see how, how he has suffered just like you, and how he is good, when, you know, that friends who is best friend with me, he changed my mind, you know, my whole world, he helped me when nobody can… and I had a lot [of friends] who is a Serbian and who said, when I had some problem, you know, ‘I cannot help you’, he has be there, you know, and my father and his father been in war 20 years before that and he help me right now, I think that is that great.”133

However, one of the respondents stood out and expressed negative attitudes toward the other group:

133 Interview 8.
“I would say that I do not harbor any greater sympathy for the group, I have friends, or rather acquaintances from the group that I hang out with, of course, then there are also people I do not even want to look at all or hang out with, so there are also different people with different characters in both groups, of course, but that's the way I feel about the group.”

Still, even though this respondent expressed negative attitude toward the outgroup, he managed to acknowledge that there are good and bad people in both groups. The reluctance of talking about groups in itself demonstrates that respondents wish to judge individuals due to personal characteristics instead of judging them because they belong to a certain group. In the same way that they also wanted to be judged themselves because of their personal characteristics rather than group belonging.

Table 6. Attitudes toward the Outgroup

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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes,

6.4 Attitudes toward a Multicultural Society

A common vision which included the “Other” was identified as an important part of the reconciliation process. In total, five out of eight respondents were positive to a multicultural society, but they had different reasons why. For example, Haris stated that a multicultural country would be a dream come true, but was also a pure necessity:

“I dream about Bosnia and Herzegovina [to be] like [a] multicultural country, where every person [is] free to express whatever you want, not whatever he want, whatever is normal from his culture, I dream about [a] country where we do not have difference between Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska, where we do not have 10 cantons or something like that, I dream about [a] strong country, multicultural country, with one main goal…we need to find out that Bosnian and Herzegovina is our country, not just mine country, our country, country of every citizen

134 Interview 5.
in Bosnian and Herzegovina, and when we find out it, we will make Bosnian and Herzegovina like [a] strong multicultural country, because Bosnian and Herzegovina will never, always must be, Bosnian and Herzegovina must be multicultural country because if you want to make like just one cultural country, you need to do a lot of work to kill out the people, to make them refugees or something like that, we need to make country for every single person.”

None of the respondent stated that they were against a multicultural society, but three of the respondents were hesitant about living in a multicultural society (see table 7.) Edin saw it the following:

"First you have to forget the war, you will never be able to forget the war because it is passed on to every generation, and it is being talked about and every group has their own history to tell, and they will continue to do so…

Q: so you do not think it is realistic to have a multicultural society?

Maybe in the future sometime, but right now I do not think so… you can live together, but it will never be like it was during the time when everyone lived together in one state, Yugoslavia.”

Hence, Edin was not against it a multicultural society per se, but did not find it possible in the present. The groups can co-exist with each other, but the relationship between the group will never be as it was before the war. The table over respondents’ attitudes is presented below.

Table 7. Attitudes towards a Multicultural Society

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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes,

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135 Interview 2.
136 Interview 1.
7. Victimhood

Dealing with the past is identified as an important part of the reconciliation process. However, to deal with the past is a simple task. One example of the difficulty of challenge victimhood is the case of Research and Documentation Center in Sarajevo. When the center published its findings concerning the number of deaths during the war it created an outcry. The organization estimated that number of deaths was 100,000 in comparison to the 200,000-250,000 of deaths that had been widely used after the war. Instead of welcoming the findings, human rights activists and stakeholders withdrew support and employees of the organization received threats. Hence, this investigation by an NGO sparked a firestorm rather than providing healing for the Bosnian society.\textsuperscript{137} The tragicomic outcome of this investigation demonstrates the difficulty to deal the past and challenge victimhood in the aftermath of mass violence. This section will present the respondents’ sense of victimhood.

Four out of eight respondents stated that they had a sense of victimhood on a personal level, three respondents did not, and one respondent was ambivalent and were not interested in discussing the topic.

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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes,

However, the respondents who had a personal sense of victimhood had different reasons why. Eldin explained it this way:

“Yes, I see myself as a victim, I lost a large part of my childhood during those years because I grew up during mortar fire, and I still see myself as, that I have scars from that time although I do not personally remember it, but my parents have told me about it.”\(^{138}\)

As we can see, the respondent discussed a loss of his childhood because he grew up during the violence and were exposed to a life threatening situation. He is a victim because of the direct violence that he experienced, whether he can recall it or not. Edin, who is from the same town, but who is one year younger, did not see himself as a victim because he did not remember anything from the war:

“Q: Do you perceive yourself as a victim due to what happened during the war and afterwards?

No, I do not remember anything, I was born in 1993 in the end of the war, and I do not feel that.”\(^{139}\)

This is interesting because we have two respondents with similar background, but only one of them has a personal sense of victimhood. When discussing victimhood with the respondent it is clear that victimhood is multifaceted, which was reflected in the respondents’ perceptions regarding victimhood. Some were discussing suffering which is directly related to war, other respondents were discussing the period after the war. For example, Ajdin explained the source of victimhood in the following way:

“First of all, even though I have not remembered anything of the war, I remember that I was separated from my father because I went to Germany only with my mother and my sister so I lived five years without my father and, that is my feeling of being a victim, growing up without a father and knowing that he is here in danger, and it is not very easy to live like it.”\(^{140}\)

In this case, the respondent stated that he perceived himself as victim. His sense of victimhood did not come from the violence itself, instead being separated from his father and the uncertainty of his father status during the war. The different sources of personal victimhood make it hard to predict whether the respondents will have a sense of personal victimhood. However, as discussed in the theoretical chapter, victimhood is not only about the personal experience, it is also a collective experience.

\(^{138}\) Interview 4.
\(^{139}\) Interview 1.
\(^{140}\) Interview 3.
7.1 Collective Victimhood

According to Bar-Tal, the ingroup struggles to monopolize the feeling of victimhood. Therefore, the ingroups need of victimhood is a central part of the sociopsychology barrier which hampers reconciliation.\(^\text{141}\)

As seen in table 9. below, six out of eight respondents saw their ingroup as victims due to what happened during the war. Hence, among the majority of the respondents there was a sense of collective victimhood.

\textit{Table 9. Collective Victimhood}

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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes,

A bit surprisingly, the respondents recognized that the suffering from the war was not exclusive to their group. Instead, they opted for stating that all people were victims. They demonstrated what can be called inclusive victimhood. Some said that their group suffered the most and compared the suffering between the groups, and by doing so creating a hierarchy of victimhood. Others said that the suffering was equal between the groups, and were not willing to engage in the discussion who suffered the most. Still, all groups suffered. The respondents demonstrated a number of different perspectives regarding who was a victim. Filip explained it the following way:

“...during the war, a lot of people lose their lives, in every group during the war, the people who lose their lives they were doctors, scientists, everything, and the victim of war is a complete system here, and complete groups.”\(^\text{142}\)

\(^{141}\) Daniel Bar-Tal, “From Intractable Conflict Through Conflict Resolution To Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis,” \textit{Political Psychology} 21, no. 2 (June 1, 2000): 358.

\(^{142}\) Interview 6.
Tarik had a bit different perspective and did not compare ethnic group, instead he compared his generation with older generations when it came to victimhood:

"My whole generation, I think, are victims, who was born during the war, we could not do anything to change the war, we had no responsibility for the start of it, and we got to experience the consequences of the war also.

Q: I see, do you perceive your group as a victim?

I see both my own group but also all other groups as victims of the war, in my generation.

Q: But what do you mean with your generation, I am not sure if I follow so, all Bosniaks, Serbs and Croatians from your generation are victims?

Yeah

Q: But how about the older people?

Some of the older have changed attitudes in life and views after the war, some live in the past, in the 90s and believes that the war was justified

Q: But are not they victims, or cannot they be victims?

They can support this system anyway."

From his perspective, ethnicity is not the most central factor when judging who is a victim or not. Persons who supported the war, or support the current “system”, are not victims. Individuals from his generation are all victims due to the lack of control over the situation, they did not start it and could not stop it but still had to face the consequences of the war. Haris perceived it the following way:

“The war starts, you need to survive, to fight, survive, we are victims because some, it is hard to explain, it not about if you, if “I’m Bosniak, I’m victim”, it is just about the personal [experience].”

According to him, victimhood has nothing to do with his ethnic belonging, it is about the personal experience during the war. However, as discussed, some respondent saw differences in the

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143 Interview 5.
144 Interview 2.
suffering of the group. For Ajdin, the start of the war and genocide of Bosniaks was important when discussing victimhood and the suffering of the groups:

“Yeah, the things that I know is that, my group, Bosnians, has not started anything because we all know that the Serb started the war but none wants to admit it so I think the Bosnians [are] the victims…because most of the genocide happened in Bosnia, I do not know any of them happening in Serbia and most of the conflict happened on the territory of Bosnia...”

Even though Ajdin recognized that members of the other group suffered, he made it clear at his group was the victim of war. As mentioned, the inclusiveness that the respondents demonstrated is interesting. Ervin Staub and Johanna Vollhardt have introduced the concept “altruism born of suffering”. The experience of violence can often recast individuals’ beliefs and lead to a sense of meaninglessness. Both individuals and groups may feel vulnerable and perceive others as threats. At the same time, some individuals have created meaning out of the violence, and becomes more caring and helpful. Still, in intergroup conflict, the other side is often perceived as responsible for the start of conflict, and therefore the suffering of the ingroup as well. This means that the suffering of the outgroup is denied or perceived as different. However, individual and collective victimhood do not necessarily need to be a mechanism that obstructs reconciliation. Instead, it can lead to understanding and prosocial behavior toward the outgroup and outgroup members if individuals focus on similarities in the suffering. And as seen above, the respondent recognized the other groups suffering, some even stated that the suffering was equal. This is a surprising finding because according to Bar-Tal, collective victimhood is a part of the ethos of conflict, and ingroup tends to monopolize the feeling of victimhood. In an ethos of peace, individuals must recognize the suffering and victimhood of the group. And as Jelena Subotic notes: “ethnic identity is still the ordering principle of political life, as is witnessed in the efforts at education

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145 Interview 3.
148 Ibid. p. 154.
149 Daniel Bar-Tal, “From Intractable Conflict Through Conflict Resolution To Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis,” *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (June 1, 2000): 358.
remembrance and memorialization projects. The past in the Western Balkans has an ethnicity of its own.”

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8. Analysis

In theoretical the chapter, reconciliation was defined as a process which must deal with the past, change in attitudes, and former warring groups must find a common vision which includes both sides. The theoretical argument is that contact between members of former warring groups is necessary in order to disrupt the intractability which follows certain conflicts, such as BiH. Individuals who have grown up in divided post-conflict societies are also likely to have less contact, meaning that they have had low levels of intergroup contact or deeper relationships with members of other groups. So far, this thesis has presented the theoretical framework and the findings from BiH. This chapter aims at merging the theoretical framework with the empirical findings from the field study. The first part focuses on contact with the lives of the respondents and the possibility of contact in the area of Goražde and Višegrad. The second part focus on the relationship between ingroup superiority and contact. The following chapter deals with ingroup pride and contact. The fourth part focuses on outgroup attitudes and contact. The fifth part focus on the relationship between a common vision and contact. The last part of the analysis deals with victimhood and contact. Finally, a concluding discussion will be given at the end, which summarize the findings and discuss how the study could be improved.

8.1 Contact among Young Adults in Eastern BiH

Six respondents reported that they had contact with outgroup members and only two respondents had no contact with outgroup members. Four of the respondents reported that they had intergroup friendship. This can be put in relations to O’Loughlin’s survey from 2005 among adults throughout BiH. 41 per cent of the sample reported that all or most of their friends were from their own nationality. Logically, the levels of outgroup friendship were higher in larger urban communities. With this in mind, and that they fact that they live in communities dominated by one group, it is surprising that half of the respondents felt close to outgroup friends. However, as discussed in methodical part, this study builds on snowballing sampling. Hence, one must be careful to generalize this finding.

Further, as discussed in the research design, this study is a probe and has an explorative dimension. Therefore, attention has been given to the contact takes place. When discussing contact with the respondents it becomes clear that there is a lack of opportunities to interact with the outgroup. Many respondents reported that contact took place outside the towns of Goražde and Višegrad, even though, for example, two respondents had neighbors from the outgroup. However, as we could see with one of the respondents who described his relationship with his neighbors, they have been involved in fighting with each other. It is a difference between having contact with outgroup members that once tried to kill you in comparison to outgroup members who were not involved in the fighting in the local context. With this in mind, one could question the friendship potential between members of different groups in the local context. As Pettigrew states, if the contact needs friendship potential in order to alter perceptions about the outgroup. Contact outside the local context does not involve the local grievances that exist since the war, and can have higher friendship potential.

Moreover, one respondent noted that outgroup members in the hometown are old, and contact or friendship with these individuals does not come naturally. In divided societies, contact can be hard to arrange in the first place even if members of different groups live in the same area. In eastern BiH it becomes harder due to the physical distance between the groups. Living in a town where the own group is in a clear majority mean that one will not stumble upon outgroup members in their hometowns. Opportunities to interact becomes even scarcer due to the fact half of the respondent are not comfortable to have contact in areas which is perceived to belong to the Other. Among the four respondents who were comfortable having contact anywhere in BiH, three of them had both contact and friendship with outgroup members (see Appendix 1.). The fourth respondent who was comfortable having contact anywhere reported that he had contact. Hence, individuals who have more contact are more comfortable having contact in various settings. Yet, the dilemma here is that the individuals who are most in need of contact are less likely to go outside area that are dominated by their ethnic communities. The idea that certain areas belong to certain groups is an obstacle when it comes to the possibility to have contact. Good quality contact is even less likely to occur because it often needs frequency in order to develop, at least at an initial stage. Therefore, mobility is key in order to have contact. For example, respondents reported university studies were important in order to have contact with outgroup members. This finding is important because contact can reduce conflict and division if certain preconditions are met. This means that the place
of contact is essential, and the question is how the precondition at universities differs from Goražde and Višegrad. This has complications for researchers attempting to study contact among individuals in eastern BiH because one must track down the place of contact in order to identify the preconditions surrounding the contact.

Furthermore, the respondents also emphasized a difference between small towns, such as Goražde and Višegrad, and larger urban areas such as Sarajevo. The small towns in eastern BiH were seen as more closed minded and backwards. Two respondents who had close relationships also reported that they had experienced social sanctions by members of their communities due to their interaction with outgroup members.

Equal status between the groups was identified as a cornerstone for positive contact according to Allport. Group status is often connected to majorities and minorities, where the majorities are higher status groups and minorities are lower status groups. Research has indicated that low status groups tend to be less willing to cooperate with high status groups. This becomes problematic in BiH where certain ethnic group dominates municipalities and entities, as seen in towns as Goražde and Višegrad. This leads to power inequalities in the country members of different groups do not depend upon each other. Contact also needs support by authorities, laws and customs. This is not the case in BiH where the politics builds on ethnic representation which creates no need for cross-ethnic policies. A unified political structure would be more suitable if one wants to promote cooperation and dependence. This indicates two things; first, eastern BiH is not favorably setting for positive contact. Second, the reconciliation process in eastern BiH, at least among young adults, takes place in other areas of BiH.

The fact that individuals from these areas have contact should be seen as something positive. Research has also demonstrated that contact with outgroup members can have an effect on fellow community members. This is called extended contact. Knowing that members of one’s own community are having intergroup contact or intergroup friendship can improve attitudes toward the outgroup. However, it is doubled-edged sword. If individuals witness positive contact, it is good. But if individuals witness negative contact, it will have a negative effect on the individuals’ perception of the other. Still, the idea is that the more members of different groups have contact, it

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can change the ingroup norms of what is acceptable and not. The case of Nikola, discussed in the fifth chapter, demonstrates that members of his community do not approve friendship with the former enemy. But increasing the level of extended contact can change the norm, and open up the possibilities of contact for individuals who do not have contact with outgroup members in the present. Tausch et al. found that extended contact through friends and family members lead to more outgroup trust in comparison to extended contact through neighbors and work colleagues. With the limited possibilities for contact in eastern BiH, extended contact can be important for the reconciliation process. If one attempts to study the effects of contact on the reconciliation process in this area, one should consider the effects of extended contact.

8.2 Contact and Ingroup Pride

Building a common identity was identified as an important step to change negative outgroup perceptions. However, in order to find a common identity, individuals must undergo change in the identities. Therefore, one must focus on the commitment of the existing identities. All respondents felt good by being a member of their respective ingroup regardless the level of contact or if they had quality contact with outgroup members (see appendix 1.). This finding is not surprising due to the fact that the ethnonational identities were expected to be salient in intractable conflict. From a social identity perspective, individuals use their social identity in order to boost their self-esteem. Therefore, there is a need of having a positive image of the ingroup. Also, living in post-conflict societies which do not provide opportunities for personal development, ingroup pride becomes necessary in order to boost self-esteem.

However, four out of five Bosniak respondents identified themselves as both Bosniaks and Bosnians. One should also note that one Bosniak respondent had already rejected the Bosniak and Bosnian identities. Instead, he opted to identify himself as Bosnian and Herzegovian which, according to himself, was a superordinate identity. With this in mind, the Serb respondents become particularly interesting. Yet, none of the Serb respondents identified themselves as Bosnian. This means that the state identity is not embraced by the Serb respondents. This correlates with Kostić’s finding discussed in chapter six, that the Bosnian identity is embraced in Bosniak dominated areas.

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This means that there is no common identity that members of both ethnic groups can share. If individuals would have perceived their ingroup as something negative, they would search for alternative identifications. If individuals have a strong attachment to their ethnonational identity, an overarching identity, such as the Bosnian identity, will be harder to implement. However, ingroup pride was not the only measurement on ingroup commitment, ingroup superiority was also measured.

Because identities were expected to salient, ingroup pride could be operationalized better. For example, *being a member of the ingroup is a very central part of my life* could be an operationalization which could demonstrate higher variation among the respondent. With the use of, for example, surveys it is possible to measure it as *I am glad being a member my group* and *being a member of the ingroup is a very central part of my life*, and so on.

8.3 Contact and Ingroup Superiority

When it comes to ingroup superiority, we can see a difference between respondent who have contact and not (see appendix 1.). Among the six respondents who had contact, all except one stated that their ingroup was not better than the outgroup. One should note that the outliner identified himself as Bosnian-Herzegovinian (see chapter six), and the outgroup he is referring to is not only Serb, it also includes Bosniaks. Among the respondent who did not have contact, one stated that the ingroup was better and one remained neutral.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, two cognitive processes are involved when it comes to improving intergroup relations; the decategorization model and the recategorization model. The first reduces the salience of ingroup identity, and the latter is reshaping group boundaries. A decategorization process should take place when having contact with outgroup members, and decategorization should reduce the salience of the ingroup identification. This finding indicates that there is less ingroup bias among respondents who had contact, which is explained by the reduced salience of the ingroup identity. Hence, contact did not affect ingroup pride, but it affected the respondents’ view on their ingroups’ superiority.

This tells us that the contact between young adults lead to decategorization but not recategorization. However, one cannot assume that contact or intergroup friendship will automatically lead to a recategorization process. It facilitates this process, but without perceived similarities, a recategorization process is not likely to flourish. And as the theoretical framework
states, first a decategorization process among individuals is necessary before a recategorization process can take place. Still, the fact that the respondent did not have a common ingroup identification should have implications on the attitudes toward the outgroup.

8.4 Contact and Outgroup Attitudes

Regarding attitudes toward the outgroup, only one respondent demonstrated negative attitudes and the rest remained natural regardless the level of contact (see appendix 1.).

One might expect to see a variation between individual with no contact and individuals with contact, especially the respondents with quality contact with outgroup members. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, research has indicated that contact lead to better outgroup attitudes (or negative attitudes under certain conditions). But we have to remember that this study takes place in a post-conflict society. Perhaps it is too optimistic to expect that the respondents would have positive outgroup attitudes in this context. But still, then we expect respondents with lower levels of contact to have negative outgroup attitudes because of the negative attitudes that were spawned by violence, salient identities, and the socialization process.

However, as discussed in the sixth chapter, the respondents moved the discussion from a group level to an individual level. From one perspective, it can be understood as they avoided this topic. Then the question why they did so arise. Is it likely that they did not feel comfortable to express their opinions? If the respondent did not want express negative attitudes, we still expect the respondents with contact or quality contact to express more positive attitudes. If respondents did not feel free to express positive attitudes, then we should expect respondents without contact to express negative attitudes. From another perspective, it demonstrated that the respondents were able to decategorize members of the outgroup, at least rhetorically, by moving the discussion from a group level to an individual level.

Yet, these findings suggest that that contact or intergroup friendship among young adults from eastern BiH does not lead to more positive attitudes toward the outgroup. It indicates that contact among young adults in BiH reduce the salience of the ingroup identity, but it does not alter the perception of the outgroup. This led us into the question why respondents with intergroup friendship do not generalize beyond the friends. In the literature regarding intergroup contact, one

\[155\] See Brown et al., “Intergroup Contact and Intergroup Attitudes”; Pettigrew, “Generalized Intergroup Contact Effects on Prejudice.”
explanation why individuals do not generalize is that the outgroup members they have contact with are not seen as typical members of the outgroup. Meaning that are seen as an exception or different than the rest of the outgroup. In similar fashion, the decategorization model states that contact will lead to personalization. If individuals decategorize outgroup friends, we cannot expect them to change the attitudes of the whole outgroup because they see them as individuals and not as Bosniak or Serb. Therefore, it is possible to question if good quality contact through outgroup friends can challenge negative intergroup relations. Instead, a common ingroup identification becomes essential in order to alter the attitudes to toward the outgroup. But as discussed, this is not likely to occur while ethnic identities remain salient. Before individuals can recategorize, they must decategorize and reduce the salience of their ethnonational identities. Furthermore, it is also problematic that the state-identity is not understood as a superordinate identity among all respondents. The Bosnian identity is not seen as inclusive identity, and as Pickering indicates in her study, Serbs minorities in BiH tend to perceive the state-identity as hijacked by Bosniaks. This indicates that the externally created state-identity is understood differently than intended, and it is not based on perceived similarities such as common interests.

In sum, it is positive that only one of respondents expressed negative attitudes and that the respondents were able to decategorize outgroup members. In post-conflict setting, where groups are likely to have negative intergroup relationships, seeing an outgroup member as a “Bosniak” or a “Serb” means that individuals will be judged due to membership of a group rather than one’s personal character. On the other hand, over twenty years have gone since the peace accord was signed, and positive attitudes towards former warring groups cannot be found among individuals who do not remember the war. This demonstrates the persistence of intergroup conflicts, and how hard it is to change the attitudes that are spawned from the conflict.

8.5 Contact and a Common Vision

All respondents who had contact and quality contact with outgroup members were positive to a multicultural society. The respondent with no contact were neutral (see appendix 1.).

As the theoretical framework suggests, contact can reduce the division in the society if there is a common interest between members of different groups. Quality contact also ensures that the contact is a positive experience, which includes common goals. Therefore, respondents with quality contact are expected to have more positive attitudes toward a multicultural society. This finding
supports this idea. Having quality contact with members of the outgroup means that one can find common interests. Hence, good quality contact strengthens divided societies. Therefore, quality contact with outgroup members becomes an important stepping stone in the reconciliation process because common interest can be found. With the same logic, individuals without quality contact are expected to be less positive to a multicultural society because they do not see common interests with outgroup members. But this is not the case, the respondents with contact had positive attitudes as well. But we see a difference with the respondent without any contact. They were not against a multicultural society, but were hesitant and remained neutral. Hence, both contact and quality contact affect the attitudes toward a multicultural society.

The fact that none of the respondent stated they were against a multicultural society should be seen as something positive due to the fact that a multicultural society and the existence of BiH have been debated since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. However, we need to distinguish politics at the state level and the attitudes among the population. By comparing this finding with Kostić’s survey from 2006, one can see that 32.6 per cent of the Bosniaks and 40 per cent of the Serbs agreed that the ideal society was a “society in which a number of nations cohabit without mixing. Each nation protects its own culture and there are no mixed marriages.” 43.4 per cent Bosniaks and 50.3 per cent Serbs agreed that the ideal multicultural society would be a “society in which a number of nations live together, but keep their own culture, yet some mixed marriages are present”. 20.6 per cent of the Bosniak sample and 5.2 per cent of the Serb sample agreed that the ideal society was a “society in which the national belonging is irrelevant. Individuals socialize freely and mixed marriages are common.”\footnote{Kostić. Ambivalent Peace, p. 318.} Hence, the majority of the respondents in Kostić’s study wanted a society where the groups live together to different extents. In the light of this finding, the attitudes among the respondent cannot be seen as unexpected.

8.6 Contact and Victimhood

Dealing with the past is a central matter in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. The sense of victimhood, which takes place on both an individual and collective level, has been identified as a factor which can hamper the process of acknowledging the past. Hence, there is a need to understand how contact affects the sense of victimhood.
When it comes respondents with no contact, one had a sense of personal victimhood. Respondents with contact but no quality contact with outgroup members had a sense of personal victimhood. Respondents with contact and quality contact with outgroup members’ demonstrated higher variations. Two of them had no sense of personal victimhood, one was neutral and one had no sense of victimhood. Hence, this indicates that respondents with quality contact had a lower sense of victimhood is lower but the results are spread (see appendix 1.). The reason behind this is that quality contact increases perspective-taking and can challenge the individuals’ sense of personal victimhood. Simply having contact in itself does not lead to perspective-taking. Living next to outgroup members, does not ensure that people with exchange perspective. Contact occurs, but it is superficial. The respondents with quality contact are expected to have a more awareness of the Other’s suffering. However, one respondent with no contact had no sense of personal victimhood and one respondent with quality contact had a sense of personal victimhood.

The respondents who perceived themselves as victims had different reasons; lack of food or water, being separated from loved ones, life threatening experiences and so on. This makes it hard to predict if individuals will perceive themselves as victims due to what happened during the war because it is based in their subjective experience. We cannot assume that all individuals who share the same experience will develop similar victimhood beliefs on a personal level. One example demonstrating this issue is that two respondents from the same town, one was born in 1992 and the other one in 1993, but only one of them perceived himself as a victim. If one cannot predict the levels of personal victimhood among young adults on beforehand, it will be hard to establish if contact or quality contact affects the sense of personal victimhood. One suggestion would be a longitudinal study, but this also means that one need to find respondents who do not have contact or quality contact but are likely to have it in the future. One group could be young people in eastern BiH who have recently graduated from high school.

When it comes to collective victimhood, all respondents except two had a sense of collective victimhood. The respondents who stood out had good quality contact with outgroup members (see appendix 1.). With the same logic as when discussing personal victimhood, quality contact should reduce the sense of victimhood. In comparison to personal victimhood, the collective victimhood was in general higher. According to the theoretical framework, collective victimhood is intergenerational. Even individuals who did not experience violence can still perceive themselves as victim due to their membership of a group who suffered. This finding indicates that collective
victimhood among young adults in eastern BiH is prevalent. However, with the low number of the respondents, one must be careful with the possibilities to generalize the findings. Still, it was expected that young adults would perceive their group as victims due to their membership of groups that suffered in the war, and struggle for recognition of their suffering.

More surprisingly, when discussing victimhood with the respondents, all respondents recognized the suffering of the other group. As mentioned in the empirical section, some respondent stated that their group suffered more, but none denied the suffering of the other group. This indicates that young adults have inclusive victim beliefs to certain extents. For example, one respondent argued that young people from all ethnic groups were the true victims of the war because they did not start the war but still had to face the consequences of it. This respondent demonstrated an inclusive victim category which includes members from all groups in the country. This finding is surprising due to the fact that research has demonstrated that acknowledgement of the other group’s suffering is rare in intractable conflicts. Rather, the existing literature suggests that competitive victimhood rather than inclusive victimhood should exist in intractable conflict. This might be the case on the state level, and it cannot be ruled out that other subgroups in the Bosnian society have more exclusive victimhood beliefs. A suggestion for future studies would be to study how contact affects the inclusiveness of the victimhood beliefs among young adults. For example, Nurit Shnabel et al. found that when encouraging a common victim identity between Israeli Jews and Palestinians the level of competitive victimhood decreased, and this increased willingness to forgive.\(^{157}\) It has been discussed in the literature how to create an inclusive victimhood category. Johanna Vollhardt states that focus on similarities is the key. She suggests that teaching about suffering in other conflicts and the suffering of the “Other” with the help of books and movies can be a start. Eventually, individuals can start to develop inclusive victimhood beliefs which include members of former “enemy”.\(^{158}\)


\(^{158}\) Vollhardt, “The Role of Victim Beliefs in the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict.” p. 140.
9. Concluding Discussion

The theoretical framework suggests that contact is an important in order to break the intractability of the conflict, and therefore, contact has a positive effect on the reconciliation process. Overall, the findings support the theoretical argument on key factors such as ingroup superiority, common vision, and sense of victimhood. When it comes to ingroup pride and attitudes toward the outgroup, the respondents had the same level regardless the levels of contact (except one respondent who had negative attitudes toward the outgroup). Concerning the first matter, it is explained by the need of a positive self-image which is established by boosting ingroup pride in a society which does not hold many promises. Regarding the latter, it is explained by the decategorization process which means that individuals will not generalize the positive experience, and the lack of a common ingroup identify which members of different communities can unify under.

With the need to for a common identity in order to redirect ingroup bias, this study has also paid attention to the externally created state-identity. As the theoretical framework points out, a common identity will spawn more positive attitudes to former outgroup members. However, the implementation of a state-identity has not been implemented successfully. If attention is given to group boundaries in the initial stage, this will cement the division between former warring groups. Instead, the attention should be removed from group boundaries which will help a decategorization process. Once the salience of the identities is reduced, a recategorization process can take place and a superordinate identity are more likely to flourish, if common interests and values exists. Therefore, this study demonstrates that contact or quality contact is not enough in order to reconcile the Bosnian society. For example, as discussed earlier, a unified political structure could be an important step to enhance cooperation and dependence in order to support contact between the ethnic groups. But it could also serve a basis for a state-identity because a common identity needs to be based on common interests. It is important to remember that contact per se do not lead recategorization, rather, it facilitates such a process if individuals find similarities between each other. From this perspective, the Bosnian society cannot progress toward reconciliation without a common identity that all people of BiH can share.

In sum, the theoretical tool proved useful to explain the attitudes of young adults and the reconciliation process. However, with the low number of respondents, the possibility to generalize the findings is low. Yet, this study is a probe. The central aim is not to generalize, rather, it is to provide a foundation to build upon.
Concerning the area of the study; eastern BiH was not expected to provide a suitable setting for having contact, which this study confirmed. By focusing on two towns in eastern BiH, it was hard to predict the level of contact young adults would have. Therefore, this study had an explorative dimension. The violence and the “continuation of war by other means” has effectively divided the area and hinders contact. But despite the obstacles, young adults who have grown up in towns with clear majorities have managed to have contact with outgroup members. However, much of the contact that young adults take place outside these towns, and even outside eastern BiH. This makes it hard to assess whether contact among individuals who lives in eastern BiH has a positive effect on the reconciliation process. One must also take the local dynamics into account. For example, local grievances are likely to exist when the violence was between neighbors which limits the friendship potential between members of different groups in the local context. These findings indicate that the reconciliation process in eastern BiH takes place in other areas of BiH. But as discussed in earlier, it should have a positive impact on these areas as well due to the effects of extended contact. This means that these young adults who often go outside these towns, having contact frequently, and perhaps managed to build close relationship which ensures quality contact, becomes important actors in the peacebuilding process in eastern BiH.

This also raises questions; what happens when they finish their university studies, does their contact stop, or have they managed to build lasting relationships with outgroup members? It is possible that individuals who return to their hometowns might lose the positive effects of contact. To answer this question, a longitudinal study would be useful. Furthermore, a reconciliation can be seen as a threat towards the continuity of the community in prolonged conflicts. Research has also indicated that ethnic communities in BiH perceive their identities under threat. The question is if individuals from towns with clear majorities experience the same level of threat as individuals in more diverse towns such as Sarajevo, Mostar, or Tuzla. They might go there in order to have contact, but they also have a foot in their hometowns. This could mean that individuals from eastern BiH does not have the same sense of threat. This idea builds on “good fences make good neighbors”. Contact on a voluntary basis also been discussed as important in post-conflict societies

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159 See Roland Kostić, Ambivalent Peace: External Peacebuilding, Threatened Identity and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Report / Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research 78 (Uppsala: Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 2007).
because enforced contact often leads to a backlash. The respondents in this study, who are living in these towns, had high levels of voluntary contact. If they do not wish to interact with members of the other group in their everyday life, they do not need to. Therefore, there is more to be done in order to understand how contact affects the reconciliation process affects individuals and communities in eastern BiH.

Further, this study is a probe, which is used to sharpen theories, adjust operationalization and measurements. Therefore, one must discuss how this study can be improved. Some point has already been discussed in the analysis and will not be repeated, but I intend to discuss the most important. Still, in the next step in the research process, a quantitative design is needed in order to increase the number of respondents so the theory can be put through a test. In-depth interviews were useful because it can identify the preconditions surrounding the contact situation. Therefore, a mixed method design could provide both the possibility to generalize and identify the preconditions in the area of study.

The measurement regarding victimhood needs to be adjusted so it can include perspective-taking. This study only focused on the sense of victimhood. But due to high levels of victimhood in general, a suitable approach would be to establish whether the victimhood beliefs of the respondents are inclusive or exclusive. Recent research has discussed the importance of inclusive victimhood beliefs in post-conflict societies. However, less attention has been given to the role of contact in creating inclusive victimhood beliefs. Research has indicated that contact leads to perspective-taking, but there is a need to establish that individuals with contact actually have more inclusive victimhood beliefs. While discussing measurements, the dependent variables were measured three level scale (negative, neutral, positive). A broader scale would demonstrate higher variation among the respondent. This was hard to implement in this study because semi-structured interviews were used. However, by using quantitative methods, the scale could be increased.

160 Anna-Karin Evaldsson, Grass-Roots Reconciliation in South Africa (Göteborg: School of Global Studies, Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University, 2007), 331.
Further, the operationalization of outgroup attitudes must be adjusted. An alternative would be to add another measurement, for example outgroup trust. It was also discussed whether the respondents felt free to express themselves while talking about the outgroup. But by using another method, such as surveys, interview effects can be reduced. Moreover, extended contact should also be considered in further studies in this area of BiH. Quality contact should lead to decategorization will reduce to possibilities to generalize positive attitudes, but the question is if extended contact lead to decategorization. If not, extended contact can become important to alter outgroup attitudes. This means that different types of contact affect different processes that are vital in the reconciliation process. For example, quality contact increases a common vision, and extended contact might affect the outgroup attitudes. Hence, extended contact hold promises for towns were the populations have limited levels of contact.

A last reminder. As discussed in the limitations in the beginning of the thesis, reconciliation is a broad process which takes place at different levels and among different actors. Contact with the former enemy can play an important role in the reconciliation process, but it is not a panacea for the Bosnian society. It is highly dependent on the preconditions surrounding the contact situation. Hence, contact must be a part of a larger societal shift.
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Appendix 1.

Table 10. Contact and Ingroup Source of Pride

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Quality Contact</th>
<th>Ingroup Source of Pride</th>
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1 = No, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Yes,

Table 11. Contact and Ingroup Superiority

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Table 12. Contact and Attitudes toward the Outgroup

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Table 13. Contact and Attitudes to a Multicultural Society

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Table 14. Contact and Personal Victimhood

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Table 15. Contact and Collective Victimhood

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