

Maarit Malkamäki

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# The Power of Intergroup Contact and Experiential Learning on Individual Perceptions in the United World College in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Path towards Bottom-Up Reconciliation?

University of Tampere

Faculty of Social Sciences

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## Abstract

The post-conflict society of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), following the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, is still politically, administratively and socially segregated between the three main national groups; the Bosniaks, the Croats and the Serbs. Hence, the public education systems are separated for children of different nationalities, who are thus learning under three different curricula, and in different languages. Additionally, the country is politically and socially vulnerable, unstable, and administratively inefficient.

This master's thesis focuses on the United World College in Mostar (UWCiM); an international school of secondary education that integrates local students from all these main national groups to live and study together, under the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). The college belongs to the broader United World College movement, which promotes experiential learning. The objectives of the college include the enhancement of peace and justice, intercultural understanding, celebration of difference, and the contribution to the post-conflict reconciliation in BiH. The aim of the present research is to analyse the experienced potential of the college's educational model and setting in contributing to the process of reconciliation within the social context, by also reflecting on the Contact Hypothesis, proposed by Allport (1954), and other relevant educational concepts and theories. The research has been conducted by in-depth qualitative interviews with local students and both local and international staff members of the college.

The findings of the present master's thesis indicate a clear transformation of the local students' understanding of identity, as they expressed an enhanced comprehension of the complexity of individuals' fundamental identities. This has also been found to occur in other contexts of nationally integrated education. Through the experiences of intergroup contact with students from the other local national groups, particularly during the social life outside class and with the experienced contrast to the international students within the small and intimate environment of the college, all local students have mutually come to experience a strong sense of shared cultural unity and belonging. Additionally, they have learned to understand and respect the identified religious differences between each other. However, the contested nationalist issues of the past and the contemporary intergroup tensions are to a certain extent avoided within UWCiM, and the members of the community experience an urgent need for the appropriate means to address the issues. Hence, the national identities are mostly segregated within the college community, but a clear sense of distance to them and the nationalist issues is evident in the students' approach.

Additionally, the students have evidently gained skills in critical thinking and confidence to speak up, increased courage to face new challenges, and further motivation to take initiative. The students' approach to reconciliation is clearly bottom-up. However, the broader social influence of these experiences and the intergroup contact, and the consequently gained skills, perspectives and knowledge, has been limited. The local students specifically experience difficulties in transferring the learned skills and perceptions to their home communities. Most of them also plan to go study and live abroad after graduation.

**Key words:** United World College, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Reconciliation, Contact Hypothesis, Intergroup Contact Theory, Experiential Learning

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## Abbreviations

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CAS	Creativity, Activity, Service (part of the IBDP)
EUFOR	European Union Force
IB	International Baccalaureate
IBDP	International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IFOR	Implementation Force
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UWC	United World College
UWCiM	United World College in Mostar

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## 1. Introduction & Aims of the Research

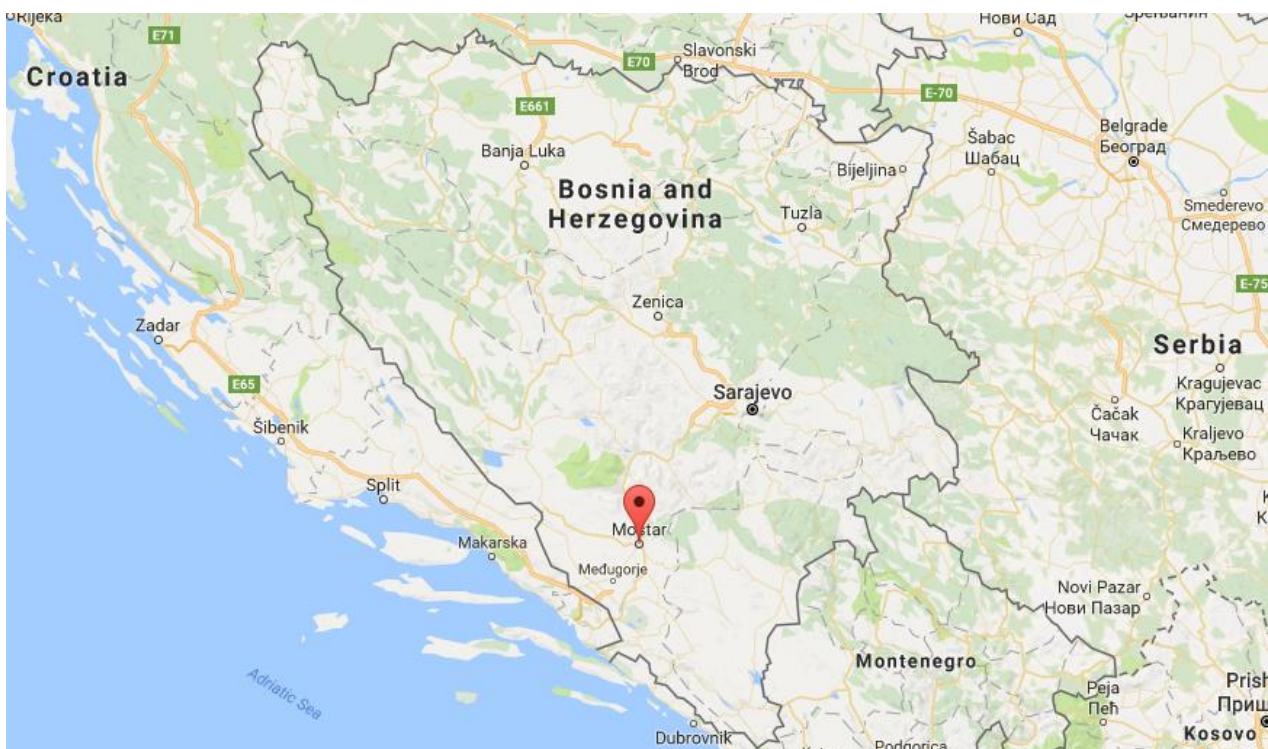
The population of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), a country in the Western Balkan Region and with a relatively small population of an estimated 3.5 million people, is socially constituted of three main national groups; the Bosniaks, the Croats and the Serbs. The devastating and violent Bosnian War from 1992–1995 was followed by the Dayton Peace Accords, the results of which had an effect on the country's new constitution. The successful end of violent conflict also led to the transformation of these national groups' truly peaceful and interactional social coexistence into a nationally segregated post-conflict society. (Swimelar 2013, 161-163, Pearson 2015, 213, Hromadzic 2009, 110, The World Bank Group 2017.) The concepts of nationality and national group have in this master's thesis been defined as the personal and collective identification with, and a sense of belonging to a particular in-group, on the basis of the socially constructed and experienced collective national identity, and do hence not in this study entail an understanding of any legal relationship between an individual and a state.

Since the aforementioned Dayton Agreement, BiH has been formally divided into two legal and constitutional entities, the Federation and Republika Srpska, along with a large number of secondary administrative units. Segregation based on nationality is clearly visible in all aspects and at all levels of society, ranging from political parties to educational systems, and again to the typical division of nationally formed neighbourhoods in many cities. The children of the different local nationalities are educated separately, under different curricula and in different languages. This constantly and further reinforces the commonplace expressions of collective prejudice, recurring tensions between the groups, and the comprehensive institutionalisation of nationality. (Swimelar 2013, 161-163, Clark 2010, 344, 346-347, Pearson 2015, 213, 222, Magill 2010, 13.)

Furthermore, the international organisations' presence has been notable in BiH since the end of the war, and the state and society continue to be politically and socially unstable, vulnerable and administratively inefficient (Swimelar 2013, 162-163, Magill 2010, 13). Moreover, there has ultimately been an increase in the emergence of events of serious collective nationalistic tensions, as well as a rise in the observed nationalistic rhetoric. Thus, the country's post-conflict reconciliation is far from complete.



This master's thesis' focus is on the United World College in Mostar (UWCiM), an international high school of secondary education situated in the city of Mostar, in the southern Herzegovina region of BiH. The map in the image A below indicates the geographical location of the country and the city of Mostar within its territory. Mostar is visibly segregated between the Bosniak and Bosnian Croat populations. UWCiM, however, is highly exceptional for the local context, and requires the full integration of the attending local students from all national groups, concerning all aspects of the shared daily life and activities. This refers to, among others, all local students and their international peers living together, studying under the same curriculum, and participating in a variety of common extracurricular activities with each other. The college functions in English, and the students study under the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). Most students are supported by a scholarship to be able to cover the costs of the two-year educational experience at UWCiM.



A) Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina, indicating the location of the City of Mostar (Google Maps 2017).

The United World College in Mostar forms part of a larger international United World College movement. Accordingly, its educational model, setting and objectives, promote the movement's idealistic values and mission of advocating for enhanced peace and justice, intercultural

understanding, celebration of difference, educating leaders for a sustainable future and social change, taking action and showing personal example, among other aims. Additionally, UWCiM was specifically established in the post-conflict society of BiH with the purpose of contributing towards the country's reconciliation. This is endeavoured through, in collaboration with the selected students, the construction of a comprehensive educational experience, along with aiming at a certain degree of co-operation with and integration into the surrounding local communities and society at large. The latter is particularly aspired through multiple service and other activities of especially advocated experiential learning organised by and within the UWCiM college community. (UWC International Board of Directors 2005, UWC International Board of Directors 2010, Board of the UWC Mostar 2016, UWC Mostar Endowment 2014, UWC Mostar & Foundation Education in Action, 10, 18, Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017, UWC International 2017c, UWC Mostar 2016b, d, g, j, 1, 4.)

The aim of this master's thesis is therefore to analyse the experienced potential of the college's exceptional educational setting and model in supporting the process of reconciliation in the social contexts of the city of Mostar and BiH at large. The research for the study consists of 12 in-depth interviews with the local students, and both local and international staff of the college. The analysis has therefore been conducted from the perspective of this particular target group. UWCiM was established in 2006 and has consequently been functional for a period of approximately 10 years. Thus, an analysis of its experienced potential contribution to enhancing the process of reconciliation in the city of Mostar, as well as in the social context of the country at large, is highly relevant and valuable. The thesis maps the potential specific means through which the process of contribution towards the reconciliation is experienced to take and have taken place. Additionally, the relevant skills, knowledge, perspectives or ideas gained by the local students, thus potentially advancing a transformation in their mindsets, have been identified.

The analysis of the study has been conducted with concurrently reflecting on a variety of selected educational and social psychological theories and concepts that have been designed as approaches to reconciliation, also in particular relation to contexts of intractable conflicts. In light of the recently experienced trends in the rise of nationalistic rhetoric and collective expressions of intergroup tensions within the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the present research is highly topical in its attempt to identify and map the embedded potential of this chosen — for the context

exceptional — educational approach based on the idea of experiential learning, along with its outcomes and diagnosed challenges, to the process of enhanced post-conflict reconciliation and desired social change within the specific context of BiH. A body of research already exists on integrated education and the power of a certain kind of intergroup contact. However, this master's thesis is specifically aimed at contributing to the collection of studies within the context of contemporary post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## 2. Contemporary History & Political Context of BiH

### 2.1 The Bosnian War

The area of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY, 1945-1991) has historically been extremely ethnically varied, and has a long history of conflicts. The Bosnian War (1992-1995) originated from the republic's violent breakdown. After the death of Josip Broz Tito, the de facto dictator and facilitator of relations between the nations of the former Yugoslavian state, in 1980, the forthcoming organisation of the country and its governance became greatly contested. Strong political segregation took place according to national and religious divisions in the area, and the well-functioning inter-ethnic checks and balances that had successfully served under the authority of Josip Broz Tito, lost their effectiveness. The Serbian political leadership would have preferred to centralise a significant amount of power to the federal government in Belgrade, while Slovenia and Croatia primarily advocated maintenance of the status quo. However, by 1986, due to a variety of political and economic incentives, the latter began to favour the creation of a relatively disconnected confederation between the sovereign socialist republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. A map of the SFRY before its breakdown is presented in image B below. (Burg & Shoup 1999, 62, 69-70, Hromadzic 2009, 110.)

**SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA  
AS OF JANUARI 1991**



*B) Map of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as of January 1991 (United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia).*

As the polarisation of the political elites in the surrounding areas hence intensified, the political scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina also gradually dismantled. Prior to this period, the society of BiH was comparatively unified along national lines, between the three main groups of Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs. Bosniaks comprised approximately 43.5 % of the population, while Serbs totalled 31.2 % and Croats 17.4 % of the population. The national background of citizens was a matter of pride, but seldom determined significant aspects of people's daily lives, including friendships or marriages. A relatively peaceful co-existence of the different national groups was in place. At first, the political parties of BiH expressed resistance towards the breakdown of the SFRY. At the turn of the decade, however, they began to promote the establishment of a loose confederation of the six sovereign republics — which was preferred — or the declaration of independence as an alternative. Nevertheless, national divisions began to deepen, and members of different groups chose to increasingly support the members and political parties of the same national background, in BiH and the neighbouring republics. The Bosnian Serbs were strongly against independence, thus supporting Serbia's stance on the matter. This strengthening of nationalistic in-groups and

identities was seen by many as a means for protection and ensuring one's welfare and safety, as opposed to being an expression of invariably agreeing on the complete political agenda of the political parties and leaders. (Burg & Shoup 1999, 46, 56-57, 69-70, Schuman 2004, 39, Mostar Endowment 2014, Hromadzic 2009, 110.)

General elections were held in BiH, still as part of the SFRY, in 1990. Parties were predominantly established and organised according to the national divisions, and decisive political rivalries unfolded between three political parties distinctly formed on nationalist bases. These elections formed the foundation for the fundamentally segregated political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Burg & Shoup 1999, 46-48, 50, 62.) In 1991, several pernicious wars broke out around BiH. The Croatian war of Independence began in 1991, also drawing Bosnian Croats and Serbs into the conflict. Consequently, BiH held a referendum on declaring independence at the beginning of 1992, and with over 60 % of voters supporting the decision, subsequently declared independence in March of the same year. However, Bosnian Serbs chose to protest against the referendum and did not participate. As a matter of fact, they saw the referendum as a provocation towards war. Consequently, on the day of the state's official recognition of independence, 6 March 1992, the Serbian paramilitary units, along with the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), commenced the physical fighting by invading the capital Sarajevo and roughly one third of the overall area belonging to BiH. The Croat and Bosniak armies mutually cooperated at first, but towards the end of 1992, violent conflicts were also created between them. Additionally, the Bosnian Croats declared a Croat proto-state in the areas dominated by them; named as the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia. However, the Washington Peace Agreement finally stabilised the situation between the Bosniak and Croat armies in March 1994, and the Bosniak-Croat Federation was established. (Burg & Shoup 1999, 62, 117, Hromadzic 2009, 110.)

The Bosnian War was highly devastating, with approximately 140,000-200,000 lives lost, an estimated 1.5-2.2 million people displaced, and more than a million people ending up as refugees abroad. The exact figures are a matter of dispute, but the majority of casualties were suffered by persons of Bosniak background. The atrocities were ruthless, including rapes, ethnic cleansings and destructions of symbols of cultural and religious heritage. The July 1995 Srebrenica massacre has been proclaimed as the most dreadful war massacre in Europe since World War II. The town of

Srebrenica is located in the Eastern part of BiH, nearly at the border with Serbia. At the time of the events, it was proclaimed as one of the United Nations safe zones, with numerous refugees living in the area. Additionally, due to the town being protected by the UN, local citizens had been asked to hand over their arms to the peacekeepers of mainly Dutch nationality. However, the Bosnian Serb troops succeeded in besieging the town in the early summer months of 1995, obstructing any access to food resources, and attacking the city on 6 July 1995. As a result, the UN threatened to defend the area through air strikes, which subsequently led to the Serb forces ceasing to move forward. Nevertheless, the Serbs decided to stay in the area, and around 12 July, were eventually able to kill around 7,000-8,000 unarmed Bosniak Muslim men and boys, despite the presence of the UN peacekeeping forces. In fact, the peacekeepers had assisted in exposing thousands of Muslim men to the Serb troops, in exchange for their colleagues that had been captured by the Serb soldiers. (Mostar Endowment 2014, Burg & Shoup 1999, 169-170, 174, Schuman 2004, 48-49, Hromadzic 2009, 110.)

The Bosnian War ended under the Dayton Peace Agreement, formally the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was signed in Paris in December 1995. The agreement had already earlier been reached in Ohio, United States. The major parties of the Peace Agreement were Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, and the Yugoslavian Federation. They agreed to reconcile conflicts in a peaceful manner, and respect each other's sovereignty and the United Nations Charter. (The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Magill 2010, 19, United Nations Mission in Bosnia & Herzegovina 2003.) As a result of the war, the political and societal situation of the country was transformed decisively, with immense tensions and divisions in place between the national groups.

## 2.2 Aftermath of the War

The Dayton Peace Accords divided the country into two legal and constitutional entities of nearly equal size; the Federation and the Republika Srpska. The former is divided into ten cantons, most of which are dominated by a Bosniak majority, and the rest by a Croat population. The Republika Srpska is, on the other hand, quite homogeneously dominated by Serbs. Since the Peace Accords, the country has been geographically, politically and culturally divided according to the nationalist lines. Image C below demonstrates the division of the country into the different administrative

units. Estimates of the overall population suggest that persons of Bosniak background form around half of the population, while Serbs approximately 30 % and Croats around 15 %.

Nationality is strongly institutionalised in BiH today, and the identity of a citizen is first and foremost defined by his or her national background. (Clark 2010, 346, Swimelar 2013, 161-163, Pearson 2015, 213, 222, Hromadzic 2009, 110, The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Annex 2, 4.) It must be noted, however, that regardless of the majority arguably conforming quite strongly to these nationalist divisions, not everyone identifies with or recognises them. In addition, along with the three major national groups introduced, the population also consists of minority of citizens representing other backgrounds, such as Roma and Jews. Additionally, the Dayton Peace Agreement has been widely criticised, due to having laid the foundation for the current and strongly persistent nationalist divisions prevailing in the artificially constructed state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



## Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina



**1** | Una-Sana Canton

**2** | Posavina Canton

**3** | Tuzla Canton

**4** | Zenica-Doboj Canton

**5** | Bosnia-Podrinje Canton Goražde

**6** | Central Bosnia Canton

**7** | Herzegovina-Neretva Canton

**8** | West Herzegovina Canton

**9** | Sarajevo Canton

**10** | Canton 10

### GUARDIAN GRAPHIC

C) Map of BiH, introducing the country's division into two entities, along with the self-governing Brčko District in the north, and the subdivision of the Federation into 10 cantons (The Guardian 2014).

The governance of the state is also remarkably decentralised; each political entity, including the numerous cantons of the Federation, has its own constitution and ministries, along with other



political tools and organs. This makes the unified definition or efficient administration of the country and its objectives very challenging. Furthermore, the political representation and major political parties in state institutions are also organised according to national quotas, which mainly reasserts the segregation between the groups. Moreover, the Presidency of BiH consists of three presidents, one for each of the main national groups. (Clark 2010, 346, Swimelar 2013, 161-163, United Nations Mission in Bosnia & Herzegovina 2003, Pearson 2015, 213, 222, The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Annex 4.)

The international community has been strongly present in the country since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. United Nations peacekeeping forces, also known as United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), monitored the situation during the peace negotiations, and after the establishment of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (the Peace Agreement), the multinational NATO forces, Implementation Force (IFOR), entered the country to monitor the military aspects of its implementation. The NATO forces have since handed their functions over to the European Union Force, EUFOR Althea, which started its operations in 2004. The EUFOR Althea mandate includes the provision of capacity building to the local counterparts, as the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with offering them guidance on the means to reach the standards required by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The EUFOR Althea has both executive and non-executive mandate and the majority of its work consists of safeguarding the stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (United Nations Mission 2003, European Union External Action - European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2017, The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Annex 1-A.)

Additionally, the High Representative for Bosnia & Herzegovina was appointed after the Peace Agreement, to oversee its civilian implementation. The High Representative works towards peaceful democracy in the country, with the people, institutions and international actors, in order for it to be able to eventually integrate into the Euro-Atlantic institutions. The objective is for Bosnia & Herzegovina to be fully capable of independently managing questions relevant to its peaceful and efficient administration and governance, and the mandate covers a range of tasks from monitoring the Peace Agreement to collaborating with and giving guidance to autonomous civilian organisations, communicating with different sides of the Agreement, and assisting in resolving conflicts and tensions that concern the implementation of the Agreement. Certain

objectives that need to be reached before the closure of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) have been devised; these include Fiscal Sustainability, the resolution of defence and state property, and strengthening of the Rule of Law. Hitherto, nationalistic divisions and tensions on the level of political parties have suppressed potential for significant progress. (United Nations Mission 2003, Office of the High Representative 2015a, b, c, The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Annex 10.)

### 2.3. Recent Political Trends

As can also be concluded from the ongoing remarkable presence of international actors in Bosnia & Herzegovina, the state and society continue to be politically unstable and vulnerable. The strongly nationalistic political rhetoric between different groups and parties continues to be aggressive; stereotypes, prejudices and segregated identities still greatly affect societal relations. Events of the past war and different views on the country's future identity are seen as the main issues causing conflicts between the national groups. (Magill 2010, 13, Swimelar 2013, 161.)

The High Representative, Valentin Inzko, discusses the country's recent political developments, specifically focusing on events that have taken place between October 2016 and April 2017, in the United Nations (UN) report on the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, published in May 2017. He identifies a tendency of growing nationalistic rhetoric and increasing tensions between the political parties formed on the basis of nationalities, and remarks the prevalence of a situation of political turbulence and inefficiency in BiH. The major contentious occurrences, during the recent period covered in the report, include an endeavoured and highly controversial request to review a judgment of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of 27 February 2007, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro)*, as explained below, and the National Assembly of the Bosnian Serb dominated entity of Republika Srpska executing results of a referendum on 'Republika Srpska Day' that had previously been denounced as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of the country. (United Nations Security Council 2017, 3, 4.)

The request to review the former judgment of the ICJ was filed by a legal representative of BiH and supported by the Bosniak member of the three-member Presidency of the country, along with

certain political parties with mainly nationally Bosniak membership. The submission of the request in February was triggered by the fact that the provided 10-year period for the potential applications for the revision of the case was coming to an end. Requests to revise the judgment of the case might be submitted by BiH in the case of new, previously unknown, remarkable knowledge or evidence. The case pertains to the July 1995 Srebrenica genocide and the ICJ's ruling in February 2007 of Serbia not having been responsible for, or complicit, in the atrocities, but rather having committed a breach of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The political parties in Republika Srpska, whose members mainly consist of persons from Bosnian Serb background, objected to the request for revision and considered it unconstitutional, due to it not having been authorised jointly as a state, by the authorisation of all necessary institutions. Ultimately, the ICJ decided to reject the request, precisely due to it not having been legitimately submitted by the state of BiH, with the required approval of and decision made by the entire tripartite Presidency of the country. The dispute further damaged the relations between the political parties functioning on nationalistic ideological bases. It also caused a complete recess in the functioning of the Presidency, for the period between January and April 2017. (United Nations Security Council 2017, 3, 13-14.)

Additionally, the authorities of Republika Srpska held a referendum in September 2016, on implementing a Law on the 'Republika Srpska Day', also interpreted by some as a separate day celebrating the entity's 'statehood'. Later in December, the Constitutional Court of BiH ruled the referendum unlawful due to it violating the vital interest of the Bosniak people, and therefore decided to invalidate its result. The result was significantly in favour of the implementation of the holiday on 9 January. On the date in 1992, the Bosnian Serbs declared the foundation of Republika Srpska, this preceding the War. Regardless of the Constitutional Court of BiH ruling the referendum unconstitutional in December, the authorities of Republika Srpska began to execute the results by modifying the Law and accordingly celebrating the Republika Srpska Day promptly on 9 January 2017. Hence, the ruling of the Constitutional Court of BiH was not respected by the National Assembly and other authorities of Republika Srpska. On the contrary, the Constitutional Court of Republika Srpska promulgated that the national interest of the Bosniak people was in fact not violated by the amendments to the Law with regard to the Republika Srpska Day. (United Nations Security Council 2017, 3, 4, 6 11-12.)

From the course of events described above, it is evident that the National Assembly of Republika Srpska does not conform to the constitutional order of the country. Additionally, the High Representative (2017) notes Republika Srpska's political elite's continued promotion of the independence of the entity, with the potential of holding a referendum on the question. Furthermore, the ruling Bosnian Croat politicians also advocate the dissolution of the country into separate federal units, with the ideal of its stronger segregation according to the national divisions. The mere focus on nationalistically provocative and conflicting issues is ever more common in BiH, as opposed to working together on issues of greater urgency. Widespread corruption on the level of government and public administration is also still a remarkable issue in the country. (United Nations Security Council 2017, 4, 6, 12.) Moreover, the turnout in elections is generally relatively low, commonly between 50 % and 60 % (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) 2017). This is a clear indication of the people's lack of trust in the work, efficiency and loyalty of the political institutions of their country.

#### 2.4 Current Reality of the Educational System

Reflecting the overall divided state of society described above, the current educational system in Bosnia & Herzegovina is also highly politicised, nationalistic and decentralised. As opposed to being seen as a pure socializing tool, it can also be seen as a serious security threat. The decentralisation has given the local nationalists a remarkable power position, and the national coordination of the system is practically impossible. In addition, the quality of the education has is poor. (Swimelar 2013, 161-163, Magill 2010, 13, 33, OSCE 2016.)

The educational system in BiH was unified before the Bosnian War that started in 1992. The educational system was even used to create national cohesiveness and common identity, while also respecting the existing national differences. However, three separate systems of education were created soon after the war, already in the autumn of 1992. Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats wish to assure that teaching of their own version of events and history of the Bosnian War is taught in schools, with the use of their own language. This has led to strong fragmentation of the educational system, which is still in place today. The country of less than 4 million citizens has 13 different educational ministries; one for the Federation, one for Republika Srpska, one for each of the ten cantons of the Federation, and one additional ministry for the self-governing Brčko District

in the north of the country. In addition, the system of 'two schools under one roof' was created in some specific cantons in the Federation. This refers to the manner in which members of the different national groups may be studying in the same school building and even using the same classrooms, but completely separately and at different times. Hence, students of different backgrounds do not often have any contact with each other. The system was established in order to bring all children back to formal classrooms after the war; before the creation of the two schools under one roof system, some of the children were taught privately at homes, to avoid being in the same classroom with students from other national groups. (Clark 2010, 344-349, Swimelar 2013, 161-163, Magill 2010, 13, 14.)

As mentioned, the three national groups have prepared separate curricula for certain subjects, including history, religion, language and literature, and geography and society. Some of the history books have, for instance, stated that the coexistence with the other national groups would be dangerous. The nationalist collectives also demand the right to study in their own national language. However, it is commonly argued that the languages are not at all significantly different, but rather different dialects within the same language. Because of linguistic similarities, the members of different national groups are usually able to easily understand each other. All of these measures and tools to segregate the main national groups in the educational system of BiH merely reassert the existing prejudices and stereotypes between members of the groups, as opposed to promoting tolerance and acceptance of others. These expressions of nationalism still play a significant role in society, over 20 years after the Dayton Peace Accords, along with the end of the active conflict and violence. (Clark 2010, 348, 350, Swimelar 2013, 161, Kolouh-Westin 2004, 495-509, Magill 2010, 13, 14, OSCE 2004, OSCE 2016.)

The new constitution of Bosnia & Herzegovina, created during the Dayton Peace Accords, is commonly regarded as the main reason for the continuation of segregation in national public education. This is due to the Peace Agreement and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages ensuring that all children have the right to be educated in their mother tongues. Based on this right, the segregation of the educational systems can easily be justified by the national groups. Although the Accords were highly successful in bringing a so-called negative peace into the country, referring to an absence of direct physical violence, a democratic and unified political system is still missing. The Dayton Peace Accords divided the country into the two nationally

segregated entities; the Federation and the Republika Srpska, and decentralised the national governance. (Swimelar 2013, 163, Magill 2010, 13, The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Annex 4, Council of Europe 1992 Article 8.)

In addition, the Ministries of Education for both the Federation and Repulika Srpska signed an Interim Agreement on Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children in 2002. This was the result of an initiative of the Office of the High Representative in BiH, and gave parents a right to decide about the education of their children. The main purpose was to facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their communities, after the devastating ethnic cleansings which took place during the war. The system was initially supposed to take effect for only a short period of time. The agreement gave parents a right to choose the entity or canton of the education of their children, and the curriculum that would be applied. This led to some children going to school in different canton to where their family lived, to avoid using the curricula of other national groups, or discrimination of their children in schools dominated by another group. Although it can in some ways be regarded as morally positive for parents to have decision-making power in the education of their children, the Interim Agreement can also be seen to have further increased the gap between the Bosniaks, Serbs and the Croats. (Clark 2010, 347.)

The decentralised and politicised public education, in the manner explained above, is often used to increase and maintain the powerful position of one's national group in a certain area. It simultaneously creates experienced threats to the other groups in that area, and arguably to the entire state of BiH. (Swimelar 2013, 161.) Furthermore, the lack of centralised control of the national education has made it difficult to compare the quality of education in different systems, or to ensure that all children have equal access to their basic right to education (Magill 2010, 30).

## 2.5 International Educational Initiatives

Several initiatives to reform and integrate the educational system of Bosnia & Herzegovina have been initiated, since 1999. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)'s Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its key partners in the country, has been contributing to the formulation of an Education Reform Strategy, the goal of which is to create a single standard for national education. The organisation argues that the strong politicisation of education and

public administration has weakened the quality of education in the country. The strategy has been planned in co-operation with local experts, national and international authorities and partners, and citizens of BiH. (Clark 2010, 353, OSCE 2004, OSCE 2016.)

Since 2002, the OSCE Mission has been attempting to carry out a curricular reform in primary and secondary schools. The goal is to create increased respect for diversity and democratisation in decision-making, and these reforms are seen as essential for the achievement of long-term solutions in the process of reconciliation between the different national groups. Partial success has thus far been achieved with respect to these aims, and a new generation of history textbooks, with the addition of previously lacking elements of diversity and tolerance, along with elimination of hate speech prone to reinforce the nationalistic identities and intergroup tensions, has been produced. (OSCE 2004, 2012.)

Another project for educational reform in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Education for Peace, has been applied to approximately 100 schools in both the Federation and Republika Sprska. The initiative highlights the importance of training teachers and school staff in the dynamics of the healing process and the traumas that conflicts might have caused. These skills can then be applied equally to all subjects. (Clark 2010, 353, OSCE 2004, OSCE 2016.)

Several initiatives, only some of which have been introduced above, have been taken and projects carried out to improve the quality of education and strengthen the process of reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the institutional and cultural environment of the country has stayed in such a condition that successful educational reforms are challenging to complete, and a significant amount of work is still necessary. Nevertheless, as Magill (2010) has also argued, it is evident that an equal, integrated and coherent national public educational system would be essential for the achievement of complete or sufficient societal reconciliation, and thus a more efficiently functioning political and economic society. This would unquestionably bring benefits for all. One of the major goals of education, as has also been noted by Spinner-Halev (2003), is commonly seen to be the development of critical thinking towards history, politics and oneself, and to teach to tolerate and respect differences. As has also been remarked by Nelles (2006), a reformed and integrated educational model and setting could at its best be used as a tool to form peace and prevent further conflicts in post-conflict society, and hence the constant development

of successful educational approaches is essential. (Magill 2010, 29, Nelles 2006, Spinner-Halev 2003, 51.)

### 3. United World College (UWC) Movement and UWC in Mostar (UWCiM)

The United World College movement was founded in 1962 by, among others, the German educationalist Kurt Hahn. It currently consists of a chain of 17 international high schools in different regions of the world and the number of students educated each year reaches approximately 9,000. The globally diverse student body comes from over 155 countries. The student body at the colleges is comprised of young people in their teenage years, mostly between the ages of 16 and 19, with the aim of completing their last two years of secondary education. (UWC International 2017a, b.)

The movement's leading idea is to promote peace and justice by bringing young students from all over the world to study and live together, and to create communities that enhance, among other things, the basic values of personal enrichment, intercultural understanding, celebration of difference, personal and mutual responsibility and integrity, a sense of idealism, compassion and service, respect, and personal example. The purpose is to establish a long-term commitment to these common values that will have a determinative effect on the future life choices of the students. (UWC International 2017a, UWC International Board of Directors 2005, UWC International Board of Directors 2010.)

The stated mission of the movement is as follows:

*“UWC makes education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.”* (UWC International Board of Directors 2005).

Kurt Hahn's educational idea has its fundamental basis in preparing the students comprehensively for life and in teaching them perseverance and ability to endure hardships with increased patience. The educational approach of the movement builds on the perceived power of experiences, with them providing the opportunity for acquisition of new insights, and therefore



allowing for increased courage and possibility for change. Youth of the introduced age group are seen as still open to new perceptions and ideas, and are thus an ideal target group to be exposed to experiences potentially advancing personal development. The idea is then to ideally educate future leaders in communities and societies all over the globe, to be able to make a difference and positively change their communities, in accordance with the values of the UWC movement. The colleges typically have a larger percentage of students from the host country and region, with the rest of the student body consisting of international students from various countries. (UWC International 2017a, UWC International Board of Directors 2005, UWC International Board of Directors 2010.)

Kurt Hahn (1886-1974) had a very pragmatic approach on education, focusing on the idea of experiential learning, inspired by his observations of the state and development of humankind, the readings of thinkers such as Plato, and personal experiences during the World Wars. Additionally, Hahn's understandings were influenced by the conservative Christian tradition. Hahn perceived the Western European societies very critically, and argued for an observed moral decline and defeat of populations; an overall deterioration of the human worth, which he perceived as having led to the World Wars. He specifically identified an observed decline in young people's physical fitness, in the willingness to take initiative, in the mental areas of memory and imagination, in skill and care, and in the self-discipline and compassion towards others. He hence argued for the need for an educational system to be able to encourage the youth to recognise their hidden potential and thus grow into the whole persons they are, through the integration of fitness training, expeditions, learning of manual skills, and service activities. These experiences would then contribute to overcoming weakness and learning compassion and the dignity of manual labour, among other skills. According to Hahn's educational approach, students would ideally be closely integrated into the functions and decision-making of the school, with some allocation of responsibility, and would hence have a sense of true purpose as part of the school community. This would consequently enhance their skills and capabilities as active citizens. (van Oord 2010, 253-259.)

In addition to the above, Kurt Hahn aimed at as if protecting students from their own social backgrounds, through integrating students from both privileged and less privileged social classes. He referred to this as 'experiencing the brotherhood of classes'. As part of his educational ideas,

he put significantly more emphasis on the depth of learning, as opposed to the more cursory manner of covering a larger amount of material. In line with this, he regarded many educational systems as focusing overly thoroughly on the content of the formal teaching, and lacking respectively in their capacity to contribute to building the students' character. He consequently focused on the most appropriate manners in which to educate the youth for moral responsibility and political leadership. Kurt Hahn established a number of educational institutions, in addition to the United World College movement, and also had an indirect impact on the establishment of the IBDP. This can, for example, clearly be seen in the IBDP's focus on community service, along with the aims of addressing global and inter-human interdependence and active citizenship. (van Oord 253, 259-260, 263-264.) Moreover, Hahn's educational ideals have clearly been integrated in the functions and principles of the United World Colleges.

To be able to most effectively promote the basic values of the UWC movement introduced above, some essential conditions have been outlined in the *Guiding Principles of UWC Schools and Colleges* (2010). These include the importance of a diverse college community, with regard to both geographical and social variety within the backgrounds of the students, to mirror the complex array of tensions also present in the daily realities outside the college communities. The mentioned quality is then seen as vital in increasing intergroup and interpersonal understanding across the youth. Additionally, the value of promoting empathy, along with a critical and conscious dialogue on and commitment to questions relevant to peace and social issues, are seen as crucial for the mission. Close relationships and constant interaction between community members are also regarded as highly important, and the continuous participation of all members is perceived as integral for the creation of a dynamic and functioning community in line with achieving common goals. The students should also be provided with adequate opportunities to practice the skills outlined as part of the core values of the UWC movement, to challenge themselves and take risks. Sustainability and individual differences should at all stages be taken into account. (UWC International Board of Directors 2010.)

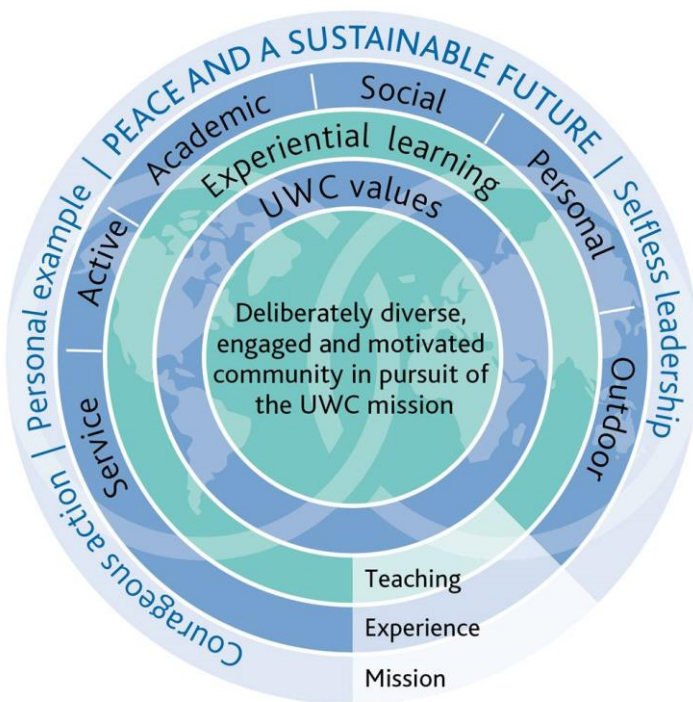
As mentioned, the aim of the movement is to educate students comprehensively, in different areas of their being. These include those of 'intellectual, moral, aesthetic, emotional, social, spiritual and physical' (UWC International Board of Directors 2010). However, due to the colleges having been established within a diversity of regions and in differing social, cultural and historical

contexts, each college has its own specific identity and areas of focus. These are determined according to the possibilities, needs and resources offered by the college's locations. (UWC International Board of Directors 2010.)

Prevention of future conflicts is one of the goals of the movement, and is specifically promoted by the encouragement of communication between different ethnic, cultural and religious groups. Students are typically selected by UWC National Committees in their home countries, through a long process of careful consideration that is based on the applicants' merit, personal qualities and motivation. The colleges and UWC National Committees have scholarship programs to provide an opportunity for the majority of the chosen students to be able to leave their home countries for the purpose of attending the colleges. (UWC Mostar & Foundation Education in Action 2014, Board of the UWC Mostar 2016.) The ideology of the movement can be directly linked to the concept of Contact Hypothesis that many reconciliation theorists see as vital in the long-term solution of conflicts. The hypothesis is presented in the theoretical framework section below.

### 3.1 Educational Model

The UWC Educational Model can be found in image D below. It expresses the commitment to the mission and the core values of the movement presented above, in addition to the holistic approach of comprehensively developing different aspects of the self of the students. Experiential learning and the establishment of a diverse college community are seen as essential, along with the formal teaching taking place in classrooms, all under the curriculum of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). (UWC International Board 2013). The primary and overarching aim of the movement, promoting peace and sustainable future, has been integrated in all activities and functions of the colleges. The additional sub-goals of enhancing selfless leadership, personal example and courageous action, are also incorporated in the community service and the physical, academic, personal and social activities. The diverse, conscious and proactive college communities are at the core of the aims of the movement, and the introduced values and principles are pursued largely through the use of experiential learning.



D) UWC Educational Model (UWC International 2017d).

### 3.2 International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP)

Approximately 4,000 of the total 9,000 students studying at the United World Colleges complete the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) each year. The IB Organisation was founded in 1968, after the foundation of the United World College movement, and the two have worked in close co-operation since. The aims and values of the globally recognised IBDP are much alike with those of the UWC movement, highlighting the importance of holistic and active learning, along with individual long-term development and international understanding. Students are expected to learn analytical and critical skills in treating information, to communicate clearly and argue convincingly. Today, in addition to the United World Colleges, IBDP is applied in a large number of schools worldwide. The academically demanding IBDP is also recognised and respected by high-ranking universities around the world. (UWC International 2017b.)

Academic subjects have in the IBDP been divided into six subject areas, according to their focus, and the students are expected to study one subject from each of the groups in depth; three on so-called standard level, which is less in-depth, and three on so-called higher level. The specific subjects offered within each group vary according to the emphasis, resources and location of each individual school applying the IBDP. Additionally, the program includes studies in Theory of

Knowledge (TOK), focusing on critical reflection on the nature of knowledge. Moreover, students are expected to write an Extended Essay (EE); a short independent research exploring a topic of their own choosing, and participate in different activities of Creativity, Action and Service (CAS), to learn skills in taking responsibility and initiative, along with social competence and empathy towards differences. The CAS activities also vary from each college and context to another. (UWC International 2017b.)

### 3.3 UWC in Mostar

Mostar is a city of a little over 100,000 citizens, situated in the region of southern Herzegovina, BiH. The population of the city consists of mainly Bosniaks and Croats, and it was one of the most severely affected locations by the Bosnian War. Initially, the Bosniak and Croat troops were jointly defending the city against the JNA forces, but eventually also ended up in violent fighting with each other. This resulted in a total segregation between the two nationalities in the area, physically divided by the Neretva River running through the city. The Western side of the city is dominated by the Croat population, while the east is nearly exclusively inhabited by the Bosniaks. The traces of the war are, still today, clearly visible in Mostar, as there are ruined buildings in different parts of the city. Furthermore, the local political administration has been unable to function practically since 2008, due to the inability of the political parties to find a common solution for determining the regulations related to holding elections and establishing the administration. As a result, no local elections have been held and no working City Council has been in place in Mostar since 2008, regardless of the different measures taken by the Constitutional Court and the EU to resolve the urgent issue. (Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017, Hromadzic 2009, 110, European Commission 2016, 6.)

The United World College in Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina, was founded in September 2006, within an existing national high school building, Gymnasium Mostar. Thus, local students attending the national public educational system, both under the Croat and Bosniak curricula, study in classrooms on a separate floor of the same building. Image E presents the school building below. The students of UWCiM live in three different residences scattered around the city of Mostar, sharing a room with at least one other student from the college, and supervised by staff members of the college. The college's policy encourages the appointment of students to rooms with others

from different nationalities, cultures, religions, and so forth, to ensure diversity also within the residences. (Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017, UWC Mostar 2016d, f, i, j, 1, United World College Mostar 2016, UWC International 2017c.)



*E) UWC Mostar, school building (Maarit Malkamäki 2017).*

UWCiM has now been operating for over 10 years and was the 12th United World College to be established. In addition, it was the first college of the movement that was established in a post-conflict society, and the selection of both local and international students is based on the idea of having students attending the college from various post-conflict regions. Thus, the particular goal of UWCiM is to have a positive impact on the process of reconciliation in BiH, along with paving a way for a desired future reform in the organisation of the nationally segregated public national education. It is also one of the only institutions of secondary education in the country that specifically requires the integration of the whole student body, regardless of nationality or religion, to study together under the same curriculum. Thus, also the local students attending the college all study together, following the same curriculum and using the same language. This is perceived as a means to oppose the division of the national public education in the country, which is seen as restraining the reconciliation process. The objective is to find peaceful ways of mediating differences and thus to educate potential future leaders, also for the Balkan region,

with the skills to contribute to the construction of an integrated and peaceful society, along with increased equality and tolerance. (Board of the UWC Mostar 2016, UWC Mostar Endowment 2014, UWC Mostar & Foundation Education in Action, 10, 18, UWC Mostar 2016d, j, 1, Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017, UWC International 2017c.)

In 2006, the first students of the UWCiM came from over 30 different countries. During the academic year 2016-2017 — when the present research was conducted — the number of students at the college was 200, and they were from more than 60 different countries. 61 students, comprising roughly 1/3 of the student body, were local students from different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The number of local students has been decreasing over the years, mainly due to resource-related reasons. The number of females attending the college is overall higher than that of males; During 2016-2017, there were 120 female students and 80 male students. The important international patrons of the College include the former High Representative of the International Community for Bosnia & Herzegovina (1999-2002), Wolfgang Petritsch and Elisabeth Rehn, the former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Bosnia & Herzegovina (1998-1999). (UWC Mostar 2016d, Board of the UWC Mostar 2016, Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017, UWC International 2017c.)

The CAS activities at UWCiM, meaning those of Creativity, Action and Service, are closely linked to the aim of collaborating and working closely with the local community of Mostar. As part of their service activities, for instance, the students spend time with and organise different events for the elderly, disabled and marginalised children, refugees and other similar groups with special needs within the local community. These activities are implemented specifically with the aim that students will have greater opportunities to learn, among other things, the value of service for others, respect, empathy, understanding difference and taking initiative. Students are also expected to contribute to the functioning of the internal college community, by taking part in the college service activities. Additionally, the college has, along with its students, been involved annually with organising various educational and other events, projects or seminars in the city, country and the region, and these initiatives are also partially performed with the purpose of greater integration into and involvement with the surrounding society and community. (Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017, UWC Mostar 2016b, c, g, h, j, 4, UWC International 2017c.)



Moreover, the college annually organises so-called *Culture Weeks* for each global region to be able to present their culture to the rest of the college community. Additionally, in sessions called *Global Awareness*, students regularly gather to discuss current global and local issues from different perspectives. They also participate each year in a Project Week, engaging in a range of activities all over the region. UWCiM has also in recent years, beginning in 2014, organised a special course on *Balkan Studies*, directed solely for the students studying in their first year at UWCiM. The objective of the interactive mandatory program is to introduce all students, both international students and students from the region, to the history, geography, culture, language and politics of the region, and to challenge their beliefs on certain issues. Some of the past topics discussed during the sessions include identity in the Balkans, outsiders' views of the region, Yugoslavia, divided cities, the Dayton Accords, and personal family stories of the Civil War during the 1990s. (UWC Mostar & Foundation Education in Action, Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017, UWC Mostar 2016a, e.)

### 3.4 Selection Criteria

According to the *UWC Admissions Principles* (2012), the ideal of establishing a diverse community of students from a variety of backgrounds needs to also be taken into account by the UWC National Committees during the process of admissions for the new generation of students each year. Hence, it is seen as essential to consider both the applying students' potential in addition to their proven merit, when deciding on the admissions, as not all candidates have had the same opportunities available to them. Gaining a socioeconomically diverse student body is thus one of the reasons for the maintenance of the different scholarship programmes, to fulfil the financial needs of as many students as possible. The importance of these aspects is also highlighted in the *Core Selection Criteria* (2012), created by UWC International to guide the selection processes independently undertaken by the UWC National Committees. (UWC International 2012.)

The established Core Selection Criteria is as follows:

*“Intellectual Curiosity and Motivation*  
*Active Commitment*  
*Social Competence*  
*Resilience, personal responsibility and integrity*



*Motivation for UWC” (UWC International 2012).*

According to personal communication with several members of staff of UWCiM that are and have been involved in the selection of new local students into the college over the years, the process includes a number of different stages. The aim is to explore the students’ motivation, general knowledge, social and communication skills, and their commitment to the core values of the UWC movement. The purpose of the selection process is not to look for students already possessing certain qualities or experiences, but rather ones that express openness and commitment towards positive transformation of themselves and the community. Additionally, to acquire as diverse body of local students as possible, students from smaller villages and certain regions of the country have at times been positively discriminated during the selection process. This particularly applies to the Bosnian Serb dominated entity of Republika Srpska, as it has in that area been more challenging to raise interest and acceptance towards the college’s values and objectives. Furthermore, the number of female applicants tends to be significantly higher than that of male candidates, which has also occasionally led to the need for positive discrimination towards male candidates. (Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017.)

The opportunity to apply to UWCiM is promoted through a series of introductory visits at schools around the country, along with distributing posters and other marketing materials. However, the college has in certain regions been seen, specifically again in Republika Srpska, as a threat to the national local unity, and the opportunities to organise visits and promote the selection process have been very limited in these areas, due to resistance from local authorities that consequently tends to be transferred to the members of these communities at large. (Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017.)

### 3.5 Previous Studies on the UWCiM

Few studies have previously been conducted and published with the purpose of evaluating the impact of the UWCiM. In 2008 and 2009, only few years after the establishment of the college, Mary Hayden and Jeff Thompson conducted a comprehensive research focusing on the success of the integration of the students attending the college; locally, internationally, and with the students of the Gymnasium Mostar. They conducted the research among a large number of participants from within and outside the college community. Some of the most relevant

conclusions of the study include the finding of the social life and the students living together having the most remarkable impact on the students. Moreover, it was found that the local students have integrated more closely amongst themselves, as opposed to having grouped equally with the international students. Additionally, the students were found to have experienced an increased sense of open-mindedness, flexibility and willingness to change their opinions and discuss mutual disagreements, while at the same time experiencing an increased confidence of their individual perspectives and values. This is thus somewhat contradictory. Additionally, many had experienced a loss of connection with their friends in their home communities, due to no longer sharing common values or mentalities. The influence on the students of the Gymnasium Mostar was also found to have been limited. (Hayden & Thompson 2010, 5-18.) Many of these conclusions are also in line with those of the present study, and are to be further discussed below.

Moreover, simultaneously with the present research, an academic *Impact Study* on the social impact of the UWCiM was conducted, in collaboration with the college. A number of stakeholders participated in the study. The main relevant conclusions include the found significance of the service activities in the students' personal development of enhanced intercultural sensitivity, communication and conflict resolution skills, and self-confidence, among other skills. Additionally, according to the research within the outside local community, these activities and the college community are generally positively regarded. Most of the citizens also appear as aware of the college's activities and principles. Furthermore, the students have been found to learn new behaviours that they consequently transmit back to their home cultures, which contradicts the findings of the present study, as becomes evident below. (Alic, Ceric, Habibovic 2017, 10, 12-14.)

## 4. Educational Approaches to Reconciliation

### 4.1 Reconciliation

Achieving reconciliation in a post-conflict society is essentially about restoring and repairing relationships injured by and during conflict. However, the concept has been widely studied and contested, and some most relevant approaches are explored in this section. These are consequently reflected on as part of the analysis of this research. Jeong and Lerche (2002) see reconciliation as a tool to bring the conflicting groups psychologically closer to each other. They do

not regard social peace as the achievement of perfect harmony between the different groups, which would practically imply them having nearly congruent needs and interests, but rather as their peaceful coexistence within the same social and political system, maintained by constant negotiation. This idea of reconciliation is highly applicable in the social and political context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the segregation between the national groups extends to all aspects of society, and is further reinforced by the political and administrative system established by the Dayton Peace Agreement. Reconciliation can be perceived from various viewpoints, including those of theology, psychology, and politics. The exact definitions of this contested concept are also multiple. In addition, reconciliation can happen on different levels; on the grassroots, nationally or internationally. (Clark 2010, 344-345, Schaap 2008, 250, Jeong & Lerche 2002, 329, 335-336.) The focus of the present research is on the local grassroots level, centring on subjective individual experiences and perspectives.

Andrew Schaap (2008) has defined reconciliation with the attempt to do it as non-confrontationally and neutrally as possible, to avoid potentially emerging arguments of resistance towards policies with this aim. He has consequently defined the concept as follows:

*“A public reckoning with a history of political violence and oppression and their legacy in order to enable people divided by that past to coexist within one political community and to recognise the legitimacy of its law” (Schaap 2008, 250.)*

Reconciliation is viewed quite similarly in this thesis. The minimal requirement for social reconciliation is seen to be that of previously conflicting groups coexisting within the same political community or society, seeing each other as humane and legitimate actors with the same rights, and for them to be able to co-operate peacefully and respectfully for the purpose of common good, without prevalent fear of violence. Achieving that would thus create the basis for further advancement in the approximation between the collectives.

Spinner-Halev (2003) has a somewhat differing idea of reconciliation. According to him, democracies are typically dominated by the identity of the majority group, due to that part of the population wanting to ensure its achieved power position in society (Spinner-Halev 2003, 55). He also argues that for successful reconciliation to take place in divided societies, it would be important for the state to be able to construct a common overarching state identity,

simultaneously accepting all social groups with their various unique identities (Spinner-Halev 2003, 53). Some liberal theorists have also accordingly proposed that education has the potential to create a sense of patriotism among students. This would consequently lead to increased contributions to common justice and well-being of all, by all, thus leading towards a greater reconciliation through the formation of common identity, based on shared nationality. (Spinner-Halev 2003, 52.)

The idea of reconciliation has also been criticised for being too broad for it to be reasonably used as a tool to form coherent and constructive policy. It is, according to some critical scholars, seen as proposing the formation of a political community that does not accept the plurality of its members or take the conflicting history and past injustices into account. Therefore, a clear definition of the concept, as the one presented above and used in the present study, is essential. Mere political rhetoric of the purpose of achieving reconciliation is not considered sufficient without appropriately recognizing deeper societal conflicts and injustices, as well as creating new collective identities, along with a common value-base. (Schaap 2008, 249-250, Schaap 2004, 534-535.) Jeong and Lerche (2002) have also argued for the importance of aiming at long-term solutions towards more peaceful and stable societies. Forgiveness, admitting past crimes, and regret, are essential in building new trust, as opposed to merely instrumentally forcing apparent harmony and co-operation between members of the groups in question. They continue by emphasizing the centrality of overcoming individual and collective trauma experienced by the population, in order to end cycles of violence further provoked by mutual misunderstanding, fear, greed for power and a lack of trust. It is important to attempt at disposing of the experienced threats. (Jeong & Lerche 2002, 329-331.) These aspects of reconciliation are also further explored below, in light of the UWCiM's potential contribution towards the process, in the context of BiH.

However, Schaap (2008) has, conversely, defended the benefits of not defining reconciliation very ambitiously, as was commented above. The likelihood of conflict over the definition itself or over the need for policies towards such a specific aim, is, according to his understanding, reduced by not defining the concept in a very exact manner. In his view, the aims of policies towards reconciliation are often too ambitious, and it would be important to highlight the need for mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence of conflicting groups as an adequate starting point from which to start pursuing further goals. (Schaap 2008, 251-252.)

The importance of the peaceful coexistence of conflict parties, national coherence and political stability are, on the other hand, seen by some scholars as more important than the just process through which the integration of groups into community takes place. According to this instrumentalist idea, parties that have suffered injustices would need to be willing to integrate into the community and voluntarily forgive the others. (Schaap 2008, 255-258.) This is in line with Căbulea May's (2011) approach, which sees the politics of reconciliation as merely with the goal of beneficial, for instance economic, outcomes for everyone. There are, however, no quick solutions to most conflicts, and adequate institutions would need to be established to mediate future tensions and potential conflicts between the sides. These would facilitate the essential and needed change to the commonly existing culture of war, which admires the killing of members of the opposing party as a legitimate manner of dealing with the conflict and creating order in society. (Jeong & Lerche 2002, 329-330.)

Reconciliation takes place on several different levels: on the level of the state, societal groups and individuals. Arguments for the need for official apologies and punishments for crimes against humanity, to overcome traumas and create trust, are commonplace in post-conflict societies. However, groups and individuals also need to experience a change of culture and a feeling of new empowerment, identity and inclusion. Overall, the creation of sincere individual and collective dialogue is essential in the process. (Jeong & Lerche 2002, 331.)

#### 4.2 Contact Hypothesis

As discussed above, the capability of previously conflicting groups to live together within the same political and social entity, and to co-operate in a peaceful and respectful manner is, in the present research, understood as the fundamental goal of reconciliation. This includes the integration of work and daily social contact, as opposed to the mere ability of sharing a common space. Many scholars consider the so-called Contact Hypothesis, or the Intergroup Contact Theory, originally developed by Gordon W. Allport (1954) and later supported by a vast body of scholarly literature, to be important in reducing the role of prejudice and stereotypes between conflicting groups. According to the hypothesis, bringing previously segregated groups regularly and collaboratively into contact facilitates the process of creating, through the reduction in collective prejudice, a

trustful and human relationship between the parties. It is thus argued to enhance the potential for successful reconciliation and further integration and inclusion, to replace earlier exclusion and segregation between parties. This is also strongly related to reducing the fear experienced in post-conflict societies (Spinner-Halev 2003, 56). Those that have previously been seen as enemies can, according to the theory, little by little be seen as other human beings, and the process is thus argued to further decrease the tendency to use violence. Accepting the other is an important part of reconciliation, and common education has the potential to play a pivotal role in the process. This is also due to children being the generation to construct a potentially peacefully functioning future society. (Clark 2010, 344-345.) The Contact Hypothesis has also been widely contested and criticised, and a variety of understandings and perspectives of the theory are examined as part of this section, along with analysing the theoretical approach's potential application in the educationally and socially integrated context of UWCiM.

Based on his research, Allport (1954) identified various particular conditions under which contact needs to take place in order for it to reduce prejudice between individuals or collectives. According to his theory, favourable conditions include an equal status between co-operating groups and them seeking to achieve a common goal, in addition to the acceptance and encouragement of authorities and institutions. Furthermore, according to the vast literature on contact, mainly compiled by social psychologists, it would be vital for contact, among other aspects, to take place on a regular basis, and the number of members of the other group should be close to equal to that of one's own. Prejudice-reducing contact should also result in the creation of true acquaintances between groups, occur in a diversity of social contexts, be based on co-operation as opposed to competition, and be highly valued by the participants. Ideal contact, according to the hypothesis, is also loaded with relatively positive emotions and leads, on occasion, to the formation of real friendships. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) have later found that particularly a combination of these conditions increases the likelihood of achieving best results, as opposed to these circumstances merely taking place on separate occasions. (Pettigrew & Tropp 2006, 766). Contact between collectives or individuals would, overall, need to create a sense of common purpose and humanity between the participants of various groups. Allport has, however, also recognised that ranging personal qualities, which, among other influences, may increase the resistance to change one's prejudgments, may additionally have an impact on the potential

success of contact in reducing prejudice. (Allport 1954, 281, 264, 276, 280, Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux 2005, 699.)

To investigate the accuracy of these favourable conditions of intergroup contact in reducing prejudice, determined by Allport (1954), Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp (2006) have conducted a comprehensive quantitative meta-analytic test on the question. They also tested the validity of the hypothesis in general – of whether contact between conflicting groups truly lessens the incidents of prejudice among members of these groups – and the generalizability of the theory. Pettigrew and Tropp explored and analysed 713 independent samples from 515 different studies, and found significant support for the expectation that contact between groups does indeed provably reduce prejudice. They also demonstrated that these results do not originate from participant selection or publication biases, which have by some been argued to undermine the research on intergroup contact. However, they did find that the crucial conditions for ideal intergroup contact outlined by Allport (1954) are in fact not by any means essential for contact to reduce prejudice. Nevertheless, they found that contact under the conditions introduced does certainly increase the likelihood of a decrease in prejudice, and the conditions thus facilitate this potential process. Additionally, Pettigrew and Tropp concluded that the contact's prejudice-reducing effects can also be extended to other members of the out-group, outside of the immediate contact context. They also discovered the usefulness of contact in reducing prejudice in a multiplicity of intergroup situations and contexts, and with different kinds of target groups. In contrast, Allport's focus was mostly on relations between groups of different race or ethnicity. (Pettigrew & Tropp 2006, 751, 753, 766.) The potential for the extension of the possible contact effects at UWCiM to the broader society is also briefly analysed below.

Ullrich, van Dick and Tropp (2011) have, on the other hand, found that the benefits of contact outlined by Allport (1954) are more likely to be actualised for participants with stronger pre-existing prejudices – them thus potentially gaining the most from contact. It has also been found that the most significant mediators of the influence of contact on prejudices are associated with affective processes, such as greater experienced empathy and lessened intergroup anxiety. Moreover, reducing the experienced threat through contact has been proposed to have remarkable importance, due to people with prejudiced attitudes typically tending to see social settings as competition. (Ullrich, van Dick, Tropp 2011, 271-272, 277.) Vorauer (2008) has also

argued along the same lines of intergroup contact potentially being more advantageous for highly prejudiced individuals. He has found that already a single positive event of intergroup contact is likely to directly influence the future perspectives of highly prejudiced persons, generally on all members of an out-group. (Vorauer 2008, 912-913, 918-919.)

As mentioned, the Contact Hypothesis has also faced some important criticism. That is firstly to say that recognizing the other also entails the possibility of creating more hostile relationships, due to groups in this manner possibly definitively determining the essential characteristics of the other. It creates a sensation of knowing the other, which takes away opportunities of that other side to change its identity or to defend itself. (Schaap 2004, 524.) Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005) have also highlighted that the increased intergroup interaction can potentially create an increase in experienced collective threat against dominant group's socially legitimated privileged position, which may consequently strengthen the existing prejudices (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux 2005, 702-706). However, recognizing the other is also to a certain extent essential in avoiding indifference when relating to that group (Schaap 2004, 537). Attention has also been paid to examining the most beneficial type of group members to participate in the contact, in order for prejudice to reduce against the entire general out-group. Several scholars have argued, as among others presented by Pettigrew (1998) in *Intergroup Contact Theory*, for the contact between members of different groups to be most efficient when the group membership of a participant in contact is particularly distinct. When this is not the case and the members of different groups share common interests and values, or otherwise represent as if atypical members of a certain group, the effects of positive contact are not in place when evaluating other, unknown, members of that group. It has consequently been suggested that it would be beneficial for the saliency of the group membership to vary during different stages of contact. Not seeing the other as a stereotypical representative of his or her group has the potential to be advantageous at earlier stages, but would later need to be followed by a more distinct group categorisation. Recategorisation, ideally occurring at the final stages of contact, proposes potential formation of a common overarching identity among members of both groups. (Pettigrew 1998, 74-75, Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux 2005, 702-706.)

Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005) have also, regardless of in principal accepting the hypothesis proposed by the Intergroup Contact Theory, seen the implications of literature written on it as



overly individualistic, abstract and even utopian, and have demanded a so-called 'reality check' of the hypothesis. According to their argument, the ideal conditions for prejudice-reducing contact, outlined in the Intergroup Contact Theory, are realistically fulfilled in very few societies or communities. In addition, they call for a stronger focus on the individuals' own complex and subjective understandings of contact, as opposed to solely exploring it through ready-made analytic categories, imposed by abstract contact theories. Moreover, they highlight the importance of carefully considering the specific qualities of each particular context in which social interaction takes place, to avoid the creation of excessively generic, and thus practically redundant, theoretical conditions for potentially successful contact. (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux 2005, 700-702, 706, 707.) Furthermore, Dixon et al. explore the normative aspects of Contact Hypothesis, as it is based on the idea of aiming at social change through ideally having an impact on individual attitudes and perceptions. They emphasise the value of recognizing the collective level of experiencing and expressing prejudice and the ways in which the dominating group attempts to maintain its position. The level of individual contact may, in their view, be most inadequate in terms of influencing general attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes between collective groups or, among other things, discrimination occurring on structural and institutional level. Therefore, the potential to achieve desired social change is possibly limited. (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux 2005, 702-706.)

van Dick, Wagner and Pettigrew (2004) have focused on an individual's subjective view of the importance of contact, along with Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005), as presented above. They see it as the most accurate sign of the potential of contact in reducing an individual's prejudice towards the members of other groups. They highlight differences in the manner individuals see and experience intergroup contact and the potential added value it brings to their lives. Some might see intergroup contact as instrumentally enhancing their possibilities of advancing personal goals and gaining certain skills, while others merely value the interpersonal relationship and the broadening of perspectives. Nonetheless, van Dick et al.'s findings suggest that viewing contact experiences as important increase the likelihood of them decreasing the level of prejudice. Their research focuses specifically on intergroup contact between acquaintances and friends, and intergroup friendship is especially regarded as positively affecting the perceived importance of contact, hence encouraging prejudice-reduction. Perceived importance as a measure of the quality

of intergroup contact is also reliably applicable between cultures and groups. (van Dick, Wagner & Pettigrew 2004, 211-213, 220.)

Freeman (2012) has, within the framework of Contact Hypothesis, particularly focused on the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He emphasises the existing contextual factor of strong collective anxiety between ethnic groups, which can pose a specific challenge for creating positive intergroup contact. The reasons for this, outlined by Freeman, are, for instance, the minimal ongoing contact between individuals and collectives with different ethnic backgrounds, widespread pejorative stereotyping between groups, the history of conflict, and the arguably unequal positions of groups in many communities and society at large. All these factors are constantly further strengthened by policymaking and institutions, due to customary structural discrimination and ethnic division also present on the political decision-making level. Freeman has consequently proposed the establishment of relatively small inter-ethnic groups, based on members' common ambitions and interests, which would have the potential to create a common collective in-group identity between the members. He has also suggested the use of integrated education in increasing the groups' knowledge and experience of the other groups. This is important in terms of creating the acquaintance potential of contact, introduced by Allport (1954). He also sees intergroup problem-solving workshops as a potentially useful tool to promote dialogue and co-operation, along with safe and facilitated communication, between the groups. (Freeman 2012, 17, 19, 20, 22-23, 25.)

Common and shared social spaces are indeed important for the creation of new social relations; for the members of different groups to truly have the possibility to safely and openly share their experiences, thoughts and feelings with each other. As introduced, Jeong and Lerche (2002) have further argued for it to thereby be possible to as if move these individual experiences from smaller contexts gradually also to the public space, to collectively strengthen the feelings of trust between groups. (Jeong & Lerche 2002, 331.) This is when the influential role of education and the classroom context come to play. The school environment is ideally a facilitated and safe zone where students gain knowledge, through which they form new perspectives. Many scholars, including Spinner-Halev (2003), have argued for the benefits of students learning in groups with young persons from various different backgrounds and cultures, in order to gain skills in critically approaching their own arguments and self. (Spinner-Halev 2003, 51.) Bar-Tal (2004) has also

argued for education's potential to have an impact on these psychological aspects of young people, by perseveringly exposing them to new ideas and experiences, and hence promoting their real digestion. He sees the youth as an ideal target, due to them still more likely having an open mind to the new ways of thinking and behaving. The schooling system, on the other hand, is an optimal place to reach all youth in society and equip them with skills and knowledge necessary to enhance intergroup coexistence. (Bar-Tal 2004, 259, 261-262, 266.)

McGlynn (2009) defines integrated education as the joint schooling of pupils or students that would otherwise, due to previous conflict or other basis of intergroup segregation, learn separately. Having an even number of kids or youngsters from different groups partaking in the education is also central for her definition. Integrated education thereby offers the students an access to the views of others from different backgrounds, and hence an opportunity to learn an appreciation of the others' perspectives. (McGlynn 2009, 12.) Integrated education has also been found to have a positive effect on the students' experienced identities and forgiveness, along with attitudes towards the members of other groups. McGlynn, in her research on the systems of integrated education in Northern Ireland, has specifically identified their prolonged positive impact on having intergroup friendships, felt appreciation of and greater experienced confidence in situations with others from a variety of backgrounds, and increased intergroup empathy, along with more profound questioning of one's own individual or collective identity (McGlynn 2007, 78). It has interestingly, however, additionally been found that some schools with integrated student body intend to entirely avoid the most critical and controversial questions of, among others, religion, ethnicity or politics. (McGlynn 2009, 13.) All in all, this idea and these potential benefits of integrated education are closely connected to the proposal of Intergroup Contact Theory presented above, and the social and educational context of UWCiM.

However, it is again important to mitigate the risk of merely strengthening the nationalist identities and tensions, through potentially increased experienced threats. Such a problematic and unsuccessful process may take place during integrated educational projects when participants, or often their parents, experience their legitimate in-group narratives, identities or cultural ties as overly challenged by facilitators, such as teachers, or the members of out-group. Thereby, it would be important to promote groups' coexistence with simultaneously promoting their legitimate separate national identities. (Hammack 2009, 134, 138, Bekerman & Maoz 2005, 345-346.)

With respect to the nationally integrated setting and the nature of education in the United World College in Mostar (UWCiM), the focus of the present research, the Contact Hypothesis is seen as one of the most strongly relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks to reflect on in the analysis. In addition, the interviews for the research were partially designed, with context-specific amendments, on the basis of previous research conducted within the vast literature on the Intergroup Contact Theory. As mentioned, a large body of research and literature already exists on intergroup contact, but the aim of the thesis is to reflect on these concepts and theories in the light of the particular experiential educational concept and setting of the United World College in Mostar (UWCiM), in the broader societal context of post-conflict reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

#### 4.3 Education for Peace, Reconciliation and Active Citizenship

The concept of Peace Education is typically employed as a general designation for a diversity of different educational policies, approaches and projects. The educational projects and programs under this label usually aim at achieving greater contributions towards peace by certain individuals and collectives, partially through improvement in their relations. Furthermore, the purpose is to offer participants with new skills, knowledge and insights to be able to independently work towards, and promote, further peace. Peace education initiatives can be put into practice either formally within institutional settings, such as the national public education, or informally within, among other contexts, smaller rural communities (Harris 2008, 15). The concept was first introduced after the II World War. Variants of peace education can be selected for different stages of conflict formation, also as a preventive measure, to ensure, among others things, the fulfilment of basic human rights for all. (Niens 2009, 147, Bajaj 2008, 1-2.) The limitations of the projects of peace education in conclusively resolving complex and deep-rooted conflict situations are widely acknowledged by scholars and practitioners. However, these educational initiatives are seen to have potential to function as preliminary processes for consequent wider social and political change. (Bekerman 2009, 92.) The promotion of peace, justice, intercultural understanding, and a sustainable future, among other objectives, are also at the core of the work of the UWC movement and the UWCiM. Consequently, its educational approach can be regarded as belonging under the concept of education for peace, regardless of the movement not specifically

categorizing itself under such generic categories. In this section, diverse approaches to education for peace, reconciliation and active citizenship, along with their relevance to the context of UWCiM, are discussed. These are consequently reflected on as part of the analysis below.

Firstly, the importance of the critical consideration and self-examination of the diverse identities within oneself, along with the avoidance of stereotyping in relating to other groups, is by multiplicity of scholars recognised as pivotal in achieving visionary multicultural education for reconciliation. In addition to acknowledging and appreciating differences between individuals and groups, it would be essential to not see them as solid or determined, but rather regard them as flexible and under constant development, and value the individual's role in deciding about his or her position and identity. Hence, the mere reproduction of tensions or conflict based on experienced nationalist identities can be transformed to greater intergroup understanding and tolerance, along with potentially increased belonging and empathy between groups. Young people should be, as part of the educational initiatives for peace and reconciliation, provided with the tools to critically determine and reflect on who they want to be. (McGlynn 2009, 11-12, 20-21.) This idea is highly relevant to the present study, as is discussed below in the analysis.

The value of Citizenship Education has also become increasingly more recognised, specifically in Western Europe. This refers to the promotion of, among other aspects, skills and knowledge that allow for young students' increased awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, locally, nationally and internationally, in developing and transforming society. Citizenship Education is thereby more and more commonly integrated into the education systems. Designing a functioning model of Citizenship Education requires a comprehensive consideration of each particular context, with its unique qualities. The implementation of democratic school communities, in addition to the use of dialogue and negotiation, are at the core of Citizenship Education, to ensure that both students and staff have the opportunity to partake in decision-making on matters related to themselves or the school community at large. This is closely linked to the earlier introduced idea by Kurt Hahn of involving the students in the work of the school communities, by giving them responsibilities and thus a clear sense of meaning and capacity (van Oord 2010).

Salomon has particularly focused on the challenges of peace education in the contexts of intractable conflict. He has emphasised the significance of conflicting collective narratives, collective historical memories, negative emotions, and incompatible beliefs between groups, in designing a successful programme of education for more peaceful society. (Salomon 2011, 46-47, 50-52, Salomon 2002, 7.) The mentioned aspects directly affect the manner in which the individuals of conflicting groups see one another and interpret each other's actions, naturally promoting the typically experienced mutual victimhood and hostility, along with often, for one partially, the incorrect perceptions of the other (Hadjipavlou 2007, 41). The concept of intractable conflict, originally developed by Edward Azar, refers to a prolonged history of collective ethnic tensions and violence, along with complex and unequal intergroup relations, based on the conflicting collective narratives and traumatic memories of the past (Hadjipavlou 2007, 40). It is thus highly relevant also in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the nationalist tensions have become so deep-rooted and institutionalised.

Salomon highlights the way the degree of extended influence of a peace education program affects its potential success. This refers to transforming the attitudes, beliefs and emotions of the members of a collective as a whole, as opposed to merely affecting those of the direct individual participants. This is also directly linked to the earlier discussion on the potential for the generalizability of the results of intergroup contact. By extending the impact, it is possible, according to Salomon, to more efficiently ensure the durability of the achieved results, as they have commonly been found to relatively rapidly begin weakening after the end of the programmes. Salomon has thus stated that, due to resisting forces, the relatively short and superficial interventions of peace education programmes are not necessarily adequate to transform the conflict situation with a much-protracted historical background and deeply rooted divisions. However, research also indicates that the achieved transformations typically, to a certain degree, stay rooted within communities and can be rehabilitated by further educational interventions. It has also been found that the desired transformations in attitudes and beliefs are more likely to take place, in addition to being more strengthened and long lasting, when participants' previous perceptions are not entirely incompatible with them. (Salomon 2011, 46-47, 50-52, Salomon 2002, 7.)

The ideal outcomes of education for peace or reconciliation in the contexts of protracted social conflict, according to Salomon, include the understanding of different perspectives, and entailing mutual sharing and listening between parties, consequently leading to increased trust and an acceptance of another group's collective narrative. In addition, it would be vital to critically explore one's own in-group's involvement in the past conflicts, mutually admit committed deeds and reach forgiveness and the recognition of errors and crimes that have occurred in the common history. This progress is ideally accompanied with the feelings of intergroup empathy for the other's suffering and has the potential to facilitate the creation of shared historical narrative between groups, along with possibility for a fresh start with mutually and collectively preferred non-violent means of decision-making and the resolving of arising disputes. (Salomon 2002, 9, Hadjipavlou 2007, 41.)

Furthermore, in their research on integrated schools, Hughes and Donnelly (2009) have found that personal stories and narratives, along with drawing connections to the conflict context at large, play an important role in the successful intergroup interaction and facilitation of intergroup communication. These, as more concrete tools, are seen to function more efficiently than mere references to theoretical and generic concepts of tolerance or respect, for instance. This idea of the importance of sharing personal oral histories is also further explored as part of the analysis. Moreover, Hughes and Donnelly have found the establishment of more intimate intergroup contact to promote increased self-disclosure, and therefore greater feelings of comfort to discuss the contested issues. This thereby potentially promotes the greater experienced intergroup empathy and understanding of the other. (Hughes & Donnelly 2009, 121-122, 130-131.) Miller (2002) has also discussed the importance of self-disclosure; the self-initiated sharing of personal facts or knowledge with another, with reference to the Contact Hypothesis discussed above. He regards the frequency and quality of self-disclosure occurring between the members of in-groups and out-groups as a valid measure of trust and closeness between them, along with decreasing experienced feelings of anxiety and discomfort. (Miller 2002, 396-397.)

Paulo Freire (1921-1997), a widely acknowledged Brazilian educator and philosopher, with revolutionary ideas for his time, centered his work on the importance of an individual's critical consciousness in achieving cultural emancipation, along with the role of dialogue and students' personal experiences in education. He saw education as an instrument of politics, as usually

profiting some actors over others. Critical consciousness refers to understanding facts, as they really exist, causally and circumstantially, as opposed to seeing oneself as superior to, or in control of, them. The latter is implied by the concept of naïve consciousness, defined by Freire. Additionally, Freire highlighted the relevance of comprehending the changing nature of reality, and constantly integrating new experiences and findings into one's knowledge pool. Magic consciousness, on the other hand, refers to men seeing facts as superior to their own consciousness, and hence blindly following orders and destiny proposed by these facts. Freire saw individuals as conscious and responsible actors that have an ownership of their own reality and future, and education as a tool to accomplish greater freedom and liberation from the system, by promoting an understanding of the individual's impact and abilities to contribute to social change. (Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-41, 44.)

Torsti and Ahonen (2009) have suggested that in the case of a post-conflict and multi-ethnic society, such as that of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the idea of deliberative communication is one of the central elements in creating closer co-operation, along with increased trust and respect, between conflicting groups. This is due to the urgent need for an open and comfortable intergroup sharing of experiences and perspectives, in addition to further transparent comparison and evaluation of them. Thereby, through practices of deliberative communication, the groups are provided with an opportunity to establish a common social value-base, notwithstanding ethnic differences or other bases of previous divisions. (Torsti & Ahonen 2009, 220, 222, 224.)

Tomas Englund, inspired by the well-known educational philosopher and psychologist John Dewey (1980) and sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1984), has explored the idea of deliberative communication. The concept refers to interaction during which comprehensively argued and justified, at least partially conflicting, perspectives on contested social issues are equally introduced and examined, with sufficient use of time, and in detail. Consequently, participants patiently and respectfully listen to each other, and attempt to understand the opposing arguments. Peaceful confrontation between them is thus deliberate. The purpose is not to intentionally oppose each other from fixed positions or to find winners and losers, as is typically the case in regular debates, but rather to reach a partial consensus or collective agreement on an issue, focus on the differences between the actors, or map the options for collective decisions and sustainable decision-making. Hence, students have the possibility to gain further intellectual skills



in creating new meanings of contested concepts, and critically evaluating and comprehending alternative perspectives. This strengthens the basis for creating working democratic society, by educating students for active citizenship. Enhanced communication additionally creates trust and a sense of responsibility towards the other. The role of teachers is mainly to facilitate the conversation. (Englund 2016, 54, 59, 62-67, 69, 71, Torsti & Ahonen 2009, 220, 223.)

The relevance of the educational approaches introduced and discussed above will also be analysed below, with respect to the focus of the present research.

## 5. Research Questions & Process

### 5.1 Research Questions

The research question of this master's thesis is the following:

*Do the local students during their experience at UWCiM, through the intergroup contact with their peers from the other local national groups, or the applied educational model and setting of the college, experience gaining such individual skills, knowledge, ideas or perceptions, which have the potential to positively contribute to the process of reconciliation between the national groups in the social context of the city of Mostar or that of the country at large?*

This research question has further been divided into the following sub-questions:

- *Which aspects of the college's educational model, setting and the overall comprehensive experience are specifically experienced to have an impact on this individual learning process and the potential transformation of local students' mindsets?*
- *Which most significant experienced challenges can be identified in the college's work towards contributing to the enhancement of the post-conflict reconciliation process in the city of Mostar and the country at large?*

These research questions are investigated in the context of UWCiM's specific goal to support the process of reconciliation in the country. Local student is defined as a student originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The specific focus of the research has been on the interviewed

individuals' perspectives and experiences concerning the questions under study, in addition to their subjective approaches to framing them. Hence, the direct focus of the research is not on the teaching formally taking place in classrooms, within particular academic subjects, for instance. Additionally, the study does not focus on the perspectives of the international students, the surrounding local community, or the students' parents, for instance.

## 5.2 Research Process

The research for this thesis was mainly conducted through anonymous qualitative in-depth interviews<sup>1</sup> with local students attending UWCiM during the time of the data collection, and both local and international staff members of the college. Their experiences and views of the educational model and setting, along with the students' all-encompassing overall experience at the college, were discussed during the interviews. Emerging themes and patterns relevant to the college's experienced potential to support reconciliation were consequently identified and mapped. They were subsequently reflected on the selected theoretical approaches on intergroup contact and education, with a focus on experiential learning in enhancing post-conflict reconciliation. The interviews lasted from approximately 45 minutes to 1.5 hours each and took place during the second half of January 2017, in different coffee shops of the interviewees' choosing, in Mostar, BiH. A total number of 12 interviews were completed, with seven (7) local students and five (5) staff members. Two (2) students were studying in their second year and five (5) in their first year. Four interviewed students nationally identify as Bosnian Croats and three (3) as Bosniaks. Furthermore, two (2) of the interviewed local students are males and five (5) females.

With respect to the interviewed staff members, on the other hand, three (3) are from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and two (2) of them from other countries. However, one of the non-local interviewed staff members is from Croatia, hence closely from the region, and both have several years of experience of living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, two (2) interviewed staff members are also alumni of the UWCiM, and hence also responded from that perspective during the interviews. Most, apart from one, engage in the teaching at UWCiM, but all currently also have and have previously had multiple tasks and functions at the college. These include admissions, residential duties and responsibilities for different CAS activities, among other tasks, which have

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<sup>1</sup> Sample interview questions provided in Annexes 1 and 2.

provided these staff members with a comprehensive picture of the everyday realities of UWCiM and the students' experiences. Three (3) of the interviewed staff members have additionally been working at UWCiM for an extensive time period, from the college's very early years. Four (4) are female, and only one (1) is a male. Among the interviewed local staff members, two (2) are of Bosniak and one (1) of Croat national background. Altogether, all these staff members evidently have a relatively close and personal relationship with the college, and it has thus been important to treat their perspectives critically and as fully subjective.

No interviewed student or staff member is from the city of Mostar. It is also important to note that no student or staff member of Bosnian Serb or Serb national background was regrettably available for interview. The selection of interview participants was largely determined by the community members' availability for the research.

The recruitment of the interviewees was mostly conducted through an open call for research, on an e-mail list including the entire college community. The purpose of the research was in the open call described very generally, as addressing "*(--) experiences of the local student body attending the United World College in Mostar (--) in the broader societal context of post-conflict reconciliation in Bosnia & Herzegovina*". Thereby, the interviewees were at this stage not aware of the precise focus of the research, and hence it was not likely to affect their answers. Some of the interviewees were also directly contacted during teaching or through common contacts.

In addition to having gained familiarity with the particular local context and society with its most pertinent issues and recent history, the designing of the very open-ended and relatively vague interview questions used in the research was mainly inspired by previous academic studies pertaining to the fields of Contact Hypothesis, reconciliation and education for peace and reconciliation. Additionally, the researcher's previous knowledge about and personal experiences with the UWC movement were used as an inspiration. The interview questions were designed to cover a variety of themes, including, but not limited to, the local students' motivations to originally apply to UWCiM, their backgrounds, previous attitudes and intergroup relations, the attitudes of family and friends, the image of UWCiM in larger society, along with the learning experiences of teaching, extracurricular activities and of living together with other students. In addition, relationship to the war, hopes for the future of BiH, along with the experienced possibilities to

contribute to change, were mapped. Thereby, it was possible to comprehensively cover the diverse aspects of local students' experiences of attending UWCiM, in order to identify the relevant emerging themes and patterns related to the students' potentially experienced transformation and the college's experienced potential to support reconciliation. The purpose of the research is not to specifically cover or analyse the teaching or classes of each individual subject, as the students, under the IBDP, study such a variety of combinations of different academic subjects of their own choosing, and the content of many of them has no close relation to the themes pertaining to the research question of the present study. The chosen methodology thus qualitatively focuses on the interviewed individuals' perspectives and experiences, in addition to the approaches to framing them, this referring to the meanings and interpretations they assign to their experiences and perspectives. The scope of the study is thus limited to this very specific case and no general conclusions can directly be drawn. The analysis has been conducted by coding emerging themes and meanings from the interviews and it has been inspired by the Grounded Theory approach.

The interview questions were phrased and expressed in a relatively mundane and colloquial manner, avoiding the use of theoretical or academic terminology, to ensure their understandability to the interviewees. Therefore, the aim was for it to be easier for the interviewees to answer the questions, by reflecting on familiar concepts and events from their everyday lives, and this consequently allowing for gaining a truly comprehensive insight into their true experiences, perceptions, opinions and interpretations of the discussed issues, along with their own framing of those. Additionally, all interviewees were given the opportunity to choose the location of the interview, for the situation to be as comfortable as possible for them.

### 5.3 Qualitative In-depth Interviewing

As introduced above, the collection of material for the study was conducted through anonymous qualitative in-depth interviews<sup>2</sup>. They can, to some extent, be compared to regular conversations, with the important difference of the researcher asking most of the questions, along with facilitating the conversation in a particular direction relevant to the research question and making the decisions on which answers to follow up on. Hence, a certain, relatively numerous amount of

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<sup>2</sup> Sample interview questions provided in Annexes 1 and 2.

main questions, around the themes presented above, was prepared in advance, to assure the approximate coverage of the particular areas of interest of the researcher. However, no rigorous order or wording was followed, and the interviewees were encouraged to lead the conversation into the direction most relevant or interesting to them. As a result, each interview was unique and they were different from each other. Moreover, the interviewees were specifically asked to talk about their everyday lives, experiences, and certain related events or occasions, to allow for analysing the manner in which they, among other aspects, tend to frame certain issues and perceive specific occurrences. Hence, it was important as a researcher to really focus on the answers and attempt to understand the real meanings of the interviewees' responses; to be able to naturally react, follow-up and ask for elaboration on the most remarkable topics and accounts, in addition to possible topics not yet covered as part of the answers. Consequently, the interviews rather resembled casual, relaxed and highly positively loaded conversations, during which the interviewees were able to reflect on their daily lives at UWCiM, along with their pasts, and their relationships with other students and/or staff members, among other aspects of their experience. Hence, as researcher it was significantly important to truly, empathetically, and interestedly respond to the perspectives and accounts of the interviewees, for them to feel secure and free to open up and share their personal experiences, stories, thoughts and opinions. As has also been remarked by Rubin & Rubin (2005), this is among the most efficient ways to create trust between the parties of the conversation; the interviewer and the interviewee. Creating a secure and encouraging atmosphere for the interviewee therefore naturally facilitates the gaining of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under exploration, and thus the greater overall success of the research. (Rubin & Rubin 2005, 4, 12, 13, 14, 80-81, 108-109, Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 33.)

The structure of the interviews for this master's thesis was, inspired by the work of Rubin & Rubin (2005), among others, constructed by at first presenting relatively easy, uplifting and generic questions to the participants, for also hence getting acquainted with each other and overcoming potential nervousness. It was additionally essential as researcher to properly present oneself to the interviewees, to establish friendly and pleasant relations with them, along with starting the interviews in a positive manner, with the interviewee feeling good and confident about his or her ability to contribute to the research. After this first phase, the focus was placed in the possibly more sensitive matters, as experiences related to the war, for instance. By this time, all interviewees had already been able to form an understanding of the situation and the researcher,

and hence feel more comfortable to share their views more thoroughly. Finally, all interviews were ended in a more casual and relaxed manner to ensure that the interviewees gained an overall positive experience from the situation. (Rubin & Rubin 2005, 13, 117-120, 129, 136-137, 158-159.)

To ensure the validity, credibility and ethicalness of the research, it was in the planning phase of the interviews necessary to consider certain issues. Firstly, working with the students, thus teenagers, required paying special attention to them feeling comfortable and secure throughout the process, with the covered themes and the questions asked. Hence, it was as researcher essential to continuously seek for a fine balance between encouraging the students to share their experiences and perspectives, and not unnecessarily pushing them to discuss something that they would not be willing to or ready for processing. Moreover, the setting of the research questions needed to be done with great care, to not let the possible conscious or unconscious prejudices of the researcher have an impact on them. It is important for the interviewer to acknowledge and reflect on his or her potential bias or personal stands on the issues, and therefore more efficiently avoid their impact on drafting the questions to the participants, or interpreting their answers. However, an interview situation can always be regarded as an interactive co-construction of knowledge, with the interviewer inevitably contributing to the outcome. Additionally, the researcher thus, during the analysis, has the power to independently interpret the constructed knowledge. Furthermore, the use of colloquial language and the creation of a casual atmosphere become all the more relevant when working with young people. The opportunity to interrupt the interviews was additionally constantly present. However, all the interviewees articulated their happiness to share their views and stories, and many also expressed great satisfaction towards the way in which they had been able to reflect on their experiences and truly and thoroughly discuss them with someone. As a result, many interviewees even regarded their participation in the research as highly beneficial, enriching and personally interesting for them. (Rubin & Rubin 2005, 14-15, 82, 135, Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 34, 155.)

#### 5.4 Analysis of the Interview Material

All the conducted interviews were recorded, after which they were carefully transcribed into written form. Subsequently, emerging themes, patterns and framings were identified and mapped, coded and further analysed. The chosen approach has been inspired by that of Glaser's

and Strauss' Grounded Theory, which refers to the inductive, thorough, qualitative and open coding of the material, to as if decompose the transcribed interviews into certain categories, and to find connections, contradictions, patterns or framings within the conceptions discovered in the material. The codes were hence not determined antecedent, but through the researcher's interpretation during the process of exploring the material of the meanings assigned to particular issues and phenomena. These have then been reflected on the gained knowledge of the context and the theoretical framework introduced above. Thus, the purpose has not been to analyse the material in the light of explicit previously determined theory, but rather a collection of relevant theories in the fields of reconciliation, peace education, and social psychology. The field of the Grounded Theory approach entails a variety of standards on processing the research material, and no single all-encompassing definition of the approach can be drafted. (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 28, 202, Charmaz & Belgrave 2012, 347-348.)

As part of the chosen approach on exploring the research material, inspired by the Grounded Theory, analysis has also simultaneously been conducted during the course of the interviews. This refers to the way in which the theoretical patterns, conceptualisations and emerging main themes, contradictions and framings of the covered issues and phenomena, along with their mutual connections, were constantly identified and remarked, to develop and test them already during the course of the research. Consequently, the approach has allowed for continuous learning and discovering, along the course of the entire research, from becoming familiar with the phenomena and context, to collecting and co-constructing the material, and discussing with the research participants. Moreover, the participants also had the chance to recognise new connections and understandings of certain issues and phenomena, and hence also learn something about themselves and their context during the interview. (Charmaz & Belgrave 2012, 348-349, Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 112, 195.)

## 5.5 Own Positionality

When reflecting on my personal position as a researcher, in relation to the chosen research question, it is certainly a matter that needs to be acknowledged and taken into account. I completed my International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in 2008-2010, in the Li Po Chun United World College of Hong Kong (LPCUWC); another high school that functions as part of the

United World College movement, similarly to UWCiM. One could hence also consider me as forming part of, and having been raised within, the UWC movement, which I regard as an important personal matter.

I truly believe in the values and the mission of the movement, and it has thus been especially important for me to acknowledge my position as a researcher and hence differentiate my personal opinions and views from the study. On the other hand, I also find it essentially important to critically examine the UWC movement and the colleges functioning under its flag, explicitly due to considering the work as remarkably valuable; to allow for development and improvement in the fulfilment of its goals. Hence, I would certainly not regard myself as overly prejudiced to conduct such research as the one in question. Additionally, having a more thorough understanding of the students' two-year experience at UWCiM, due to having gone through a very similar period myself, unquestionably provides me with the tools for gaining a deeper insight into the students' lives. It also assisted me in establishing more friendly relationships with the research participants, as I was also able to share my own stories and experiences from a similar context. However, a great care had to be taken for these factors to not in any way influence the responses of the interviewees.

Overall, it is important for researchers, particularly when conducting qualitative research, to stay neutral towards the context and the used data. When this is not the case, one easily, and in most cases unconsciously, begins to look for certain answers or perspectives convenient to one's own opinion, and simultaneously disregards others not supporting it. This could even lead to the researcher consequently amending the questions towards more leading versions, and hence significantly affecting the results and validity of the research.

## 5.6 Limitations to the Research

During the course of the research, some methodological limitations were identified. They primarily include the composition of the local student body that was interviewed during the data collection process. Most importantly, no local student of a Bosnian Serb background was regrettably available for the study, and the research question can thereby only be investigated from the perspective of local students from Bosniak and Bosnian Croat backgrounds. Additionally, all the



interviewed students actively took the initiative and expressed their interest in the research, as a result of most of their recruitment taking place through an open call, which might have affected the randomness of the sample of local students interviewed. Consequently, their responses might not represent and reflect those of a so-called average local student attending UWCiM. Rather, students with certain qualities might have been more prone to eagerly participate in a research of this type. The same limitation also applies to the interviewed local staff members, as no staff member of Serb national background was available for interview.

Moreover, not an equal number of males and females or first and second year students were successfully recruited for the interviews. Instead, a larger number of females and first year students participated in the study. Students attending their second year of studies at UWCiM might have possibly been able to more profoundly reflect on their experiences and learning. On the other hand, students in their first year might still more clearly remember their previous educational and social context, and hence be better able to compare those to the current one, along with identifying their recent learning experiences and first reactions. Finally, it has to be noted that the number of students and staff participating in the study is not sufficient to draw general or broad conclusions to other contexts.

## 6. UWCiM: Local Students' Backgrounds and Initial Attitudes

The local students at UWCiM, including the ones interviewed for the present research, come from a diversity of backgrounds. Nearly half of the interviewed students (students 3, 5, 6) have been involved in the work of different non-governmental organisations (NGO) in their home communities; in organizing country-wide seminars and camps, addressing inter-ethnic issues, among other questions, and in attempting to promote social change and initiating new projects in their home towns. There are a number of such youth organisations working in BiH. However, not all interviewed students had been involved in such activities, and it is also likely that the interview material for the present research includes specifically many cases of such particularly active young people from within the UWCiM college community, as they also took the initiative and were eager to participate in the present research. The local students come from both small villages and larger cities in BiH. Their home communities are nationally either much segregated (students 2, 3, 5, 6, 7), which comprises the majority, or quite diverse (students 1, 4). Few of the students previously

went to a private school (students 2, 7) before attending UWCiM, while others (students 1, 3, 4, 5, 6) come from the more common public educational systems. Hence, their experiences are very varied among each other.

According to the interviews, the local students attending UWCiM seem to be quite a deviation from an average young person from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as they in many cases (students 1, 2, 3, 5) have already had friendships across the different nationalities before attending UWCiM, they appear to have comparatively quite tolerant and unprejudiced views on the other nationalities in BiH, and they have often been actively involved in working towards a more collaborative society. However, regardless of possibly possessing values and perspectives distinct of the ones dominant in their home communities, they have nevertheless been raised under the impact and common value base of those often nationally segregated or homogenous societies. Additionally, despite of commonly appreciating the values and ideas of the UWC movement, most local students have primarily chosen to apply to UWCiM due to the opportunities it offers, as is discussed below.

With respect to the local students' backgrounds, staff member 1 explicitly stressed a great appreciation towards several students having previously taken initiative in their home communities with such little support and resources available, and towards the students in many cases, regardless of the challenges, being outstandingly aware of global and social issues. Additionally, the students are by the interviewed staff members, in most cases, seen as actually being interested in their education and the studies at UWCiM, which on the other hand is not seen as highly common in the context of BiH. Moreover, many interviewed students (students 1, 3, 5, 6) are proud of their families being exceptionally open-minded in the context of their communities, and presented their parents as not being afraid of changes, having friends across the nationalist divisions, and supporting their children in promoting contact between the nationalities, and an acceptance of difference.

According to the majority of interviewed students (students 2, 3, 4, 5, 7), the most significant reason for many of their friends in their home communities to not apply to UWCiM had, among other reasons, to do with not wanting to leave their homes at such an early age, and not having enough confidence in their English proficiency. Additionally, some students (students 4, 7) perceive the general attitude towards gaining an excellent education as quite indifferent in BiH,

and see many young people as not being interested in the quality of their education. Also, there are undoubtedly numerous parents that would not accept the idea of their children living and studying with others from all the national groups, or merely living away from home. However, the access to better education and thus future continues to function as a great incentive for many, including parents, and it can generally be deduced that in many cases the most active, determined, courageous and self-confident of those knowing about the college, sufficiently identifying with its values and mission, and otherwise willing to apply, eventually end up doing so. The students commonly frame themselves as optimistic, trusting, and willing to take risks (explicitly students 1, 2, 5, 6, 7). Closely related to this quality, one of the students framed the reasons for some other students to not apply, as follows:

*“People build barriers for themselves, like thinking they can’t get in, and then don’t even try.”*  
[Student 5]

### 6.1 Parents’ Influence

As presented, several interviewed students (students 1, 3, 5, 6) specifically highlighted the importance of their parents in them having been raised with more tolerant and open-minded attitudes towards the relations between the national groups, nationalist tensions and reconciliation in the country, and hence as if framing different ideas as ‘normal’, in comparison to most of their peers in their home communities. Student 6 also wished to stress the fundamental influence of parents in promoting respect towards the other national groups:

*“My father was in the war, and he told me that when he was there, he couldn’t hurt a Muslim. ‘I didn’t want to torture him like my friends did in war, to make him pray, or eat pork, or something. And I don’t want you to do that.’ So it comes from parents, definitely. Most of my friends’ fathers were in war and that’s why they hate Muslims, because of the history.”* [Student 6]

Furthermore, when applying to study at UWCiM, the students had in some cases (students 5, 6) faced direct prejudice in their communities regarding their decision to leave home and to go live in such a multi-ethnic and multicultural community. Additionally, many students (students 1, 5, 6) had already previously faced prejudice for volunteering in the youth NGOs. However, some of them (students 3, 5) also remarked their and their parents’ indifference towards these suspicious commentaries, along with the students, in addition to some of their families, rather embracing the

differences between the national groups. One student described the student's parents' approach to difference as follows:

*"My parents have always raised me to believe that all humans are the same, and that I should judge people only based on how good people they actually are."* [Student 3]

According to the interviewed staff members (staff members 1, 2, 4, 5), with reference to the local students' parents, there are typically some who worry about their children losing their national, religious, or other fundamental identities, due to at UWCiM being exposed to such different cultures, religions and backgrounds. However, the majority of these students have been raised with relatively tolerant attitudes and positive approach towards the idea of intergroup reconciliation, as already applying to the college requires a significant amount of courage and open-mindedness, also from the part of the parents. According to the staff members, the recent rise of nationalism and populist political rhetoric in BiH has also increased the tendency to see the college as a threat to national identity, along with more conservative traditions and beliefs. However, also among the interviewed students', anyhow attending UWCiM, some parents (students 2, 7) had been somewhat worried about the students living with people from such different backgrounds. The concern usually derives from not being able to predict the other students' values, lifestyles and cultural customs. Hence, these parents, regardless of generally being quite open-minded towards difference, had worried about the possibility of their children losing their religious traditions, along with being affected by unknown ideologies or lifestyles.

Moreover, concerning parents' mindsets, a relatively more significant sensitivity towards certain issues, with respect to the relations between the different nationalities in BiH, could clearly be identified from the interviews with local students. The question of cross-national dating is undoubtedly among them, as the parents' approaches to the issue are commonly very different and more cautious than to those of their children living, studying and being friends with their peers from a variety of local national groups. An evident conflict seems to exist between the students' and their parents' attitudes towards romantic relationships between the members of the different local national groups.

The most significant factor affecting the parents' more prejudiced attitudes towards intergroup dating, as opposed to attitudes towards friendships or sharing a room, for instance, has in most

cases to do with religion. Some of the interviewed students' parents (students 1, 6, 7), in addition to these students themselves, are worried about the potential for the student to be accepted in the possible future partner's family, due to the different religious backgrounds, or him or her possibly not feeling comfortable in that environment. Additionally, according to the students' descriptions (students 1, 5, 7), some parents are worried about the potential future children being raised in a family with two different religions and them hence becoming confused between them. One of the students described the experienced challenges of dating someone of another national group, as follows:

*"It is much easier if you date a Croat. You really have to love that person to really want that [to date someone of another ethnic group]." [Student 7]*

Several interviewed students (students 2, 3, 4, 5), on the other hand, regard dating across nationalities as something very courageous in BiH, but simultaneously as something natural and normal. Some intergroup student couples at UWCiM have even caught significant media attention, and none of the interviewed students agrees on the approaches of many people to dating between the different nationalities as such an unusual, rare or different occasion. They would rather prefer people regarding it as something normal and private, solely as love between two people. Many of them (students 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) personally see a relationship or even marriage with someone from another local national group as entirely realistic in the future, and some already have experiences of dating someone of another local nationality. The students, similarly to their parents, also commonly (students 1, 5, 6, 7) present religion as the most relevant potential issue in terms of a serious intergroup relationship:

*"I don't think someone would be a better husband just because of being a Croat. I know that if I marry a Muslim, it is going to be tough because of the religion. There is a gap. It is going to be hard to raise a child. But the marriage itself might not be any better with a Croat." [Student 6]*

However, some students (students 1, 4, 6, 7) are uncertain about their parents' attitude towards them for instance marrying someone from another national group, or even already know that their parents would either not agree with it or might even completely disapprove of it. Therefore, it is possible to observe an apparent deviation in the parents' general approach concerning the issue, as the students mostly present them as supportive, open-minded and exceptionally positive towards relations between the local nationalities. However, some students (students 2, 3, 5)

expect their parents to approve of whoever they themselves choose. In conclusion, there appears to be a clear contradiction in the parents' attitudes towards the intergroup relations, as they commonly possess a positive approach towards friendships between the local national groups, but simultaneously often strongly oppose their children having romantic relations with others from different nationalities.

## 6.2 Opportunistic Approach

As the primary reasons for initially deciding to apply to UWCiM, most interviewed local students (students 1, 4, 6, 7) emphasised the possibility of gaining a better standard of education and the more realistic opportunity to leave BiH after graduation. The majority of them compared the education offered at UWCiM to that of the national public educational systems and highlighted its immensely better quality to their previous schools. Some (students 1, 2) are also amazed by their peers from such a number of different countries having chosen to come to live and study in BiH, as they themselves mainly rather wish to go abroad. The local students at UWCiM are typically among the most academically advanced in their home communities, with a considerable amount of potential, and have great career ambitions. The staff members also commonly frame the students' initial interest in the college as highly opportunistic, as opposed to being driven by their idealism, for instance, and have also observed a gradual change towards this direction:

*“At the beginning students were a bit more idealistic, driven by this idea that the labels they grew up with would not matter anymore, that they would meet people, exchange ideas, to kind of learn more about themselves as well, within a new environment. And then on top of that, to maybe get a better education somewhere abroad and to have an academic professional career. Now I see there is maybe a shift towards this second part being a bit more of a motivation.”*  
[Staff member 2]

However, along with the primary reasons of better education and opportunity to leave the country, all interviewed students have also been interested in the new and different opportunities provided by attending UWCiM. Most of them (students 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7) mentioned the intriguing aspects of living in an international environment, trying out new activities, learning more about oneself, meeting new people and creating friendships, and promoting the values and mission of the movement. Some (students 3, 4, 6) also talk about having had ambitions towards being part of building a more peaceful and constructive society in their home country.

Nevertheless, according to many of the interviewed students and staff (students 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 & staff members 2, 3, 5), one can observe a clear change in some of the students' behaviour, attitudes and ambitions, when comparing their performance during the interviews and after having been accepted to study at UWCiM. They noted how the students often appear in the interviews with many ideas to take initiative, with various ambitions to contribute to their society, idealism and interest towards others from different backgrounds. However, these interviewees are often puzzled by several students for instance merely ending up spending extensive amounts of time studying once at UWCiM, and are not as active as they seemed during the interviews:

*"When I came here I was kind of disappointed, because people just stopped caring [about the values and mission of the UWC movement and UWCiM]." [Student 2]*

These interviewees, both students and staff, explain this by the use of similar opportunistic or strategic reasons led by self-interest and individualism, as they also used in framing the students' initial motivations for applying to UWCiM. This is then perceived as having resulted to them, during the application process, exaggerating their interest in having a change in society and believing in the ideals of UWCiM:

*"I really think people are different in the selection process and maybe now. Now I think a lot of people bullshitted their way in, about being open-minded and so on. There are also many amazing people, but about some you wonder why they are here." [Student 7]*

*"The problem is that people lie. People do not present themselves the way they are. People come to the selections and they talk about how much they want diversity, how much they want to introduce themselves to different cultures - and then they come here, and only become friends with other local people. Also, they talk about how much stuff they want to organise, and then they come here and all they do is study" [Student 3]*

Among some of the qualities that the interviewees specifically mentioned they have been surprised about, is how some others appear not to be as open-minded as they expected everyone to be, but rather have prejudice against difference. One of the students gave an example of some not being comfortable with their peers' sexual orientation:

*"Everybody is pretty open-minded, but there are also not that open-minded people, like some people are kind of homophobic. But they wouldn't say that in the selection process. So these*

*people are now different.” [Student 7]*

Student 3 even stated that according to the student’s understanding, some of the peers would create friendships based on the mutual benefits they would potentially be able to gain from those friendships. Student 7 also mentioned how it would not be too upsetting if the created friendships did not last after graduating from UWCiM. These accounts can also be interpreted as expressions of rational opportunism, to some extent inspired by self-interest.

The following presentation of the findings and the analysis of the research have been structured through differentiating between the experienced contributions and potentially transformative influence, with a critical exploration of the relevant challenges in the process, of the social experiences and interaction taking place outside of the direct classroom context, through bringing the students, within the monitored environment of UWCiM, to live, study and do a variety of activities together, and, on the other hand, the activities occurring and perceptions gained in the more facilitated classroom environment. Moreover, the experienced potential for broader societal and future contributions, along with the identified specific difficulties, have been explored. A variety of patterns, issues, connections, contradictions and framings, emerging from the interviews, have consequently been mapped, discussed and analysed within the structure of these more comprehensive divisions.

## 7. The Power of Contact

Conforming to Kurt Hahn’s specific focus on experiential learning as part of education, as opposed to placing greater emphasis on the academic content in encouraging students to acknowledge their true potential as active and morally responsible citizens (van Oord 2010, 253-260, 263-264), the research demonstrates a greater contribution of the social life, interactions and experiences at UWCiM in transforming the students’ perceptions and ideas, in contrast to the formally facilitated classroom context. Hence, these findings are firstly discussed below.

### 7.1 Experienced Cultural Unity and Enhanced Understanding of Religious Difference

The value of social life in the learning occurring at UWCiM was one of the most highlighted aspects among the interviewed students’ responses. Firstly, an emphasis on experienced unity and shared common cultural identity of local students of all the country’s main national groups at UWCiM, along with an increase in the understanding of religious difference, were clearly present in the



conducted interviews. It was noted, by all students and staff alike, that common language and shared cultural background and mentality are generally the most remarkable single factors affecting the formation of groups of friends at the college. Consequently, students coming from neighbouring countries and same geographical regions often spend comparatively more time together, than with students from other regions. On the other hand, the most frequently mentioned experiences of mutual difference between the local students were typically related to the diverse religious backgrounds present among them.

As local students from BiH, along with the students from other countries of the Balkan region, compose the largest single group of students, which share approximately the same culture and are able to easily understand each other when communicating in their mother tongues, their commonplace grouping together at UWCiM is more visible than that of any other equivalent group of students. Therefore, all interviewees instantly indicated an existence of an experienced clear division between local students from BiH and international students from other countries. The feeling of unity and shared cultural identity among all local students was something unquestionable in the responses and significant in the experiences of students and staff, and there is absolutely no evidence of local students' differing national backgrounds having an impact on their formation of these friendships.

*“When it comes to that [local students’ ethnic background], no one really pays attention to that.” [Student 2]*

Many interviewed students (1, 3, 5, 6, 7) experience this extent of identifying strongly with all the other local students from varying national backgrounds at UWCiM as something exceptional or even unthinkable in their original home communities, where strong expressions of nationalism continue to occur on a daily basis. However, they experience the shared ‘local’ cultural identity as something entirely normal and natural in the community of UWCiM. Some students (1, 3, 5, 6) frame the experienced common cultural identity as sharing a very similar sense of humour, mentality and background among all local students, in addition to watching the same movies, listening to the same artists, and so forth.

*“We have our own humour that all of us understand but no one else does. It cannot be translated to any other language.” [Student 3]*

Additionally, the interviewees emphasised the way the local students' perspectives of the world are quite similar to each other and how they all face the same social issues, *"from poor infrastructure to corrupted politicians"*, as the interviewed student 1 aptly put it. Additionally, local students define their shared culture as quite conservative, in comparison to many of the, as perceived, more liberal Western European cultures, for instance. On the other hand, many students (5, 6, 7), especially those of Christian religious background, frame religion as the most significant cultural aspect leading to some differences in lifestyles among the local students from different national groups, but experience the culture itself as very similar for all, regardless of the religious differences.

Another important observation is that of recurrent discourse on 'local' language among the local students. Officially, three different languages; Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian, were recognised during the Dayton Peace Accords, and they are practically treated as the three main official languages in BiH. The use of these languages is also strongly politicised, which has also led to the creation of three separate educational systems and curricula. For these reasons, the mother tongue literature studies of these main local languages are also at UWCiM studied in separate classes. However, all but one of the interviewed students (student 7) argue for the practical existence of one single language in BiH, and would hence prefer studying a so-called 'local language', all together in the same class, due to perceiving it as potentially more inclusive and insightful.

Student 1 also aptly phrased the above described sense of unity as so-called Yugo-Nostalgia. This refers to the now segregated national groups having all previously been part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and the students, as framed by student 1, having positively nostalgic feelings of that historical period. As presented above, the students, in most cases, wish to promote similar ideologies of solidarity and multiculturalism, among other ideas, that were also promoted in the SFRY, and strongly relate the unity and local students' shared identity to this common historical period.

*"Calling us locals unites us. I mean, it's one of the most beautiful things here. I mean like you get to know each culture, but to be connected that much [with the local students] (...). Yugo-Nostalgia, it's the feeling we mostly have here."* [Student 1]

However, some interviewed students (2, 7) also have contradictory feelings about the shared common identity of all local students, as they experience the division between locals and internationals as both positive and negative. On the other hand, they regret that the mentioned separation exists, as the college's ideology, values and goals promote, among other things, the celebration of difference and intercultural understanding, which are not in line with any division on cultural or linguistic bases. However, the students are also immensely pleased with the very exceptional experienced cultural unity among local students of all national backgrounds. Most of the interviewed students (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) also personally have other local students as their best friends, in addition to having both local and international students as part of their larger group of friends. Two interviewees expressed their feelings about the local unity, as follows:

*"I like the thing that we are introduced to international students as locals. Because there are no barriers at all. Because there is no such thing as locals here [in society of BiH at large]. Because this is the only place where actually all barriers evaporated"* [Student 1]

*"Before I referred to Croats as "us" and now I refer to all locals as "us". I feel like we are kind of united here."* [Student 7]

Nevertheless, it can even be concluded that the question of any potential nationalist segregation among the local student body is a complete taboo at UWCiM. Such attitudes would not be accepted by other students and staff, and would hence be immediately strongly opposed, if such arose. As has been presented above, all interviewed students regard the issues of nationalist segregation in BiH's society as very difficult, and would wish for a more collaborative future for the country. Thus, any local student with potentially hostile attitudes against members of the other national groups would most likely be socially excluded from the UWCiM community. This can also be seen as a result of what the students consider as being expected from them in the community. One of the interviewed students has also observed the paradox, and laughingly stated the following:

*"Here to have prejudice is something that – like people have prejudice if you have, like it's not a thing. Why would you."* [Student 1]

Based on the above, it can be argued that the students' initially relatively tolerant attitudes, along with the increased intergroup identification, understanding and widening of perspectives experienced by the students, do not extend to tolerating or attempting to understand non-tolerant views. This is also a sign of a certain polarisation of attitudes within the UWCiM community, reflecting that of broader society.

Conforming to the experienced local cultural unity, many interviewees (students 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) have peers from other local national groups as among their best friends, and they expressed their full trust towards them, also with respect to their ability to express worries, fears, or opinions and feelings, among other personal issues, to them. Student 7 even reflected on it being easier to share criticism towards yourself or your own nationalist in-group with members of other groups. This is due to the student feeling that in the social context of BiH, one is constantly expected to stand up for one's own national group, specifically when surrounded by members of that in-group. The same student also expressed an in fact preferred approach to begin with criticizing your own in-group and attempting to understand the other groups, as follows:

*"I try to live with the principle that if I criticise something, I start from myself and with my own. I think it is better to try to discuss and understand, and not to just always agree on everything, which is just pointless, like it is often supposed to be with your own ethnic group. Better to open up your mind and understand, compare facts, and not always fight on disagreements." [Student 7]*

The quote from student 4 below also indicates the student's experience of the other local students' national backgrounds as having become nearly meaningless to the student, mainly due to the local cultural unity experienced at the UWCiM community being so strong and normalised.

*"If I think about my Bosniak friend, the only thing that represents her being Bosniak is her religion. Her behaviour and other stuff just represent her personality." [Student 4]*

Accordingly, generalisation among students is more evident along the lines of global cultural differences, as introduced above through the created division between local and international students. As noted, local students commonly consider themselves as coming from a very similar cultural background with each other, and it could from the interviews be deduced that they do not, in cultural terms, tend to generalise or categorise each other's behaviour according to the

local national groups. However, the probability of some level of generalizing of others into different stereotypical national categories increases as the difference in the students' cultural background becomes greater. Hence, according to the interviews, local students typically tend to see each other as incomparable individuals within their, to them well-known, larger cultural group, but see students of more unfamiliar and distant cultural backgrounds more easily as forming a relatively homogenous cultural out-group. The quote from one of the interviews below illustrates well how this specific interviewee has ended up generalizing all Italians into their particular and as experienced, rather homogenous, cultural category.

*"Italians, they are people that we ... some kind of ... we just can ... we just click, as people."*  
[Student 1]

The same interviewee has also acknowledged the way this process takes place; due to one not having extensive opportunities of contact to persons of a certain more distant cultural background. Consequently, to simplify one's comprehension of the mentality and lifestyle of members of that relatively unknown group as a whole, the students tend to generalise the knowledge they have gained through contact with just few students from that culture or region. Below is another quotation from an interview with the same student:

*"When you are talking to a certain person and ask them about the country they are living in, you only have like one source. If it's only them, so it's kind of like silly, but it's like you see the whole country in one person."* [Student 1]

In addition to the clear construction of a unified cultural identity among the local students, differentiating them from the international students from other regions, the interviewed students, specifically of Christian religious backgrounds, generally highlighted the importance of meeting other young people that regularly exercise certain, in most cases religious, traditions, or possess particular beliefs, that they themselves have previously framed as somewhat curious or have even not been aware of. The interviewees felt that they could, through truly becoming acquainted or even friends with these people, remarkably more naturally empathise with others appreciating these different traditions, and understand and respect the meaning and origins of their backgrounds and lifestyles. Consequently, the students experience being more equipped with skills to tolerate differences and potentially compare the observed religious or other qualities to their own.

*“You make a lot of friends here from different perspectives and you learn how to sympathise. How to accept other people, how to live with them. Then you can use all that education to make peace, that’s the most precious thing that UWC has.” [Student 4]*

As mentioned, most of the interviewed students of Christian religious backgrounds (students 4, 6, 7) explicitly recalled some stories of religious beliefs or traditions that they had for the first time closely observed or lived through during their stay at UWCiM. One student had for example witnessed an incident that caused another student being worried about the possibility of certain witchcraft, which forms part of that student’s religious beliefs, and of which the interviewed student had previously not been fully aware.

*“That was really funny. But I don’t know, she believes that [in the witchcraft], she told that there were some examples in her family. I’m kind of scared of that, I don’t really believe in that. But that’s what I’ve learned. I’ve heard that before, but I didn’t really believe in that, like I didn’t hear these kinds of examples.” [Student 7]*

As concluded from the citation above, the interviewed student had no clear position on the question even after the incident. However, the interviewed student had clearly gained further respect towards the beliefs of the other student; a friend, who truly believes in them. The interviewed student had hence additionally more profoundly thought of their origins and to some extent personally identified with these beliefs.

Another student (student 4) raised the question of varying religious dress codes in certain social situations. The interviewed student had previously possessed some prejudice or doubts about typical, particularly women’s, clothing among members of particular religious groups, different from which the interviewed student identifies with, and had recently begun to better understand the reasoning behind wearing those pieces of clothing. This was due to at UWCiM having become close to and living with friends who are used to wearing such clothing, and hence being able to, in a certain degree, identify with their beliefs.

*“We, for example, had discussion about burkini, if women should wear that or not. And before I was like, why would they wear that, and I couldn’t quite understand. But now that I encounter those people and they actually show facts, and how people feel and stuff. Some things like this really changed my mind. I think it’s because I’ve become connected to the different people, it’s a different feeling when they are my friends. Before my friends were mostly Croats, so I wouldn’t*

*really care if it was another ethnic group. Now that I have friends from all around the world and stuff, I really think like what if it was one of them.*" [Student 4]

Additionally, during the service activities, the students often work with marginalised groups of disabled children, refugees, elderly, and other such groups with special needs. Hence, they also experience having learned new ways to more naturally interact and work with these groups, and to respect their life situations. Consequently, some of them (students 4, 5) specifically framed the effect as having become more open-minded, patient and understanding towards handling individual differences.

## 7.2 Approaching Difference – Address of Avoid?

During the interviews, many students (1, 4, 6) also remarked the importance of learning to discuss, compromise, and hence overcome disagreements that at times naturally arise among the students from different backgrounds living together, due to them possibly having previously gotten used to varying lifestyles.

*"Of course I can have problems with living with people from such different backgrounds, but we can discuss it and try to find a solution."* [Student 6]

However, a strong simultaneous presence of a clear initial reluctance to change one's position or even discuss the most sensitive and contradictory nationalist issues can also be identified from the interviews. Firstly, many of the students (2, 3, 7) thought, when asked about the potential change in their thinking during the time spent at UWCiM, that their attitudes or opinions have not drastically changed, regardless of having been introduced to new perspectives, opinions and belief systems. For some (students 3, 5), however, the previous cross-national interaction, through working at the youth NGOs, for instance, had already had a strong impact on their attitudes and opinions. According to the students (2, 3, 7) viewpoints, they have not been persuaded by the new ideas to the extent of changing their original opinions, but are now more capable of understanding and accepting the others' mindsets and perspectives, along with expressing their own more insightful and profound viewpoints.

*"I've had many discussions where our opinions are actually quite different. But I don't think anyone has been able to persuade me to their way of thinking. I mean they have given me a*

*perspective that I could understand why they think so different, but no one has changed me.”*  
[Student 2]

One of the staff members also stressed that the aim is not to as if bring students to the college to forget about their backgrounds, beliefs or identities, but rather to introduce them to different belief-systems and mindsets.

*“Nobody wants to bring people here to forget about who they are and where they come from.”*  
[Staff member 1]

Moreover, the students’ and staff’s approaches to discussing the past Bosnian war and the current nationalist tensions are various. All interviewees are of the opinion that the issues and differences should ideally be appropriately discussed, to be able to move on and overcome the nationalist tensions and divisions, along with the widespread nationalistic and populist political rhetoric that strongly determines life in the society of BiH, along with raising awareness of the events in order to prevent them from ever being repeated:

*“People cannot just move on, like that’s definitely not how the world works. It definitely needs to be discussed upon, for us to move on. In the long run, yes to move on, definitely, but the way to move on is not just like moving on, it’s a long process.”* [Student 3]

*“Because we just left it there, like it happened, and no one is talking about it. Even in our history books there is nothing really about it. Like, discuss it, and I’m surprised that some people don’t even know what happened.”* [Student 4]

These perspectives are thus remarkably in line with the importance, highlighted by the interviewees, of open communication and discussion in overcoming issues arising within the college community.

Nevertheless, regardless of this ideal approach, most interviewed students (1, 2, 3, 6) believe that they would not be able to agree with other students of different national backgrounds on most questions regarding the events of the Bosnian War, for instance, and hence typically prefer not to discuss the specific events or questions of guilt, among other sensitive issues, very profoundly. They justify this by wishing to avoid unnecessary confrontations, in addition to not wanting to risk the formed friendships with peers from other national groups, merely for questions of the past war, as they are typically not ready to change their opinion on the issues. Therefore, the strong



reluctance to change one's understandings of certain social issues that determine the national identity of one's social group can again be discovered in the way the students frame their approaches to different perspectives. The citations below clearly demonstrate how national identities are seen as solid and non-adjustable, as opposed to having been constructed by certain collective narratives that constantly strengthen and maintain these identities.

*"I still think it's a huge issue here. I try to avoid it as much as possible when talking with local friends, because I know we won't share the same views, and I know it's a foundation of conflict. I don't know if an agreement could ever be reached. And I don't want to hang out with someone just because I know we don't share the same opinion about some historical event."* [Student 2]

*"There are some things about the war that we just cannot discuss. If we disagree on something, I am not going to change my mind. But we can discuss."* [Student 6]

This is closely linked to the, in the context of BiH, widespread idea of protecting one's fundamental nationalist identity, and hence not being open towards compromising any aspects of it. Regardless of the local students at UWCiM generally not identifying as strongly with these divisions and them experiencing a sense of a shared cultural identity, there appears to exist a clear reluctance to compromise one's beliefs, mindsets or perspectives for the establishment of some potential common national social reality or truth.

Additionally, with the most socially sensitive issues, such as the war and nationalist tensions, and deviating from their introduced approaches to inter-religious questions, the students also appear to be less open towards understanding the reasoning behind the others' perspectives, regardless of considering each other as close friends. Consequently, there is an apparent difference to cultural and religious understanding presented above.

*"I'm kind of quite open about my opinion about those kinds of things [Bosnian War and ethnic tensions] and I'm not afraid to just say it, and if someone is not ready to accept it, it's their problem and not mine."* [Student 2]

Some interviewed students (2, 3, 6) also recalled stories about them discussing these issues with their friends in their previous schools or back in their home communities. On the basis of these narratives, it could similarly be identified how the students experienced having such different views to their peers that they did not even want to start conversing about the issues with them.

*“With my friends, I would say because of the society we were in, whenever we would try to discuss it, my friends would become, like lean on the nationalistic tone, which would bother me, so I would just turn myself off the conversation.” [Student 3]*

In addition to not being overly optimistic about being able to agree on certain issues concerning the Bosnian War and the consequent nationalist tensions, the primary reasons for the interviewed local students to avoid discussing these questions with others from the other national groups are mainly related to being worried about potentially offending each other. Hence, they commonly choose not to start discussions on these issues.

*“Not everyone is really open to discussing the past. Some people really don’t like to talk about it. Like when you mention the war or the past, it’s like no, let’s not talk about it, just close down, don’t want to discuss it. Maybe they just don’t want to offend someone, or they don’t want to be offended by something.” [Student 4]*

Furthermore, few students (1, 5) feel that they lack sufficient factual information about the war and contested historical events, mainly due to the lack of their own personal experiences, to truly be able to have an unbiased and open discussion about them. Many, on the other hand, (1, 2, 3, 5, 6) expressed their acknowledgement of their own bias on these issues, due to the impacts of their home community and history teaching, for instance, and hence also prefer not to cover these topics during conversations with their local peers.

*“It should be talked about. But we should just try hard to have the facts, like objective information. Because most people know all these stories that their grandparents and parents told them, and that’s subjective, what one person experienced.” [Student 5]*

On the other hand, several interviewed students (4, 5, 6, 7) introduced the use of humour as one of the tools with which they commonly approach the questions of nationalist divisions, differences and tensions, along with the issues of the Bosnian War. The students tend to at times mock each other with some well-known nicknames and labels designated for certain national subgroups, during the period of the Second World War, for instance, and according to the interviews, the clear majority of the local students involved in these situations typically find it merely entertaining. They have additionally been shouting these names out on the streets and caused some disdain among the local population, regardless of the fact that they have previously not been allowed to mention those names even in the company of their own parents. This clearly indicates the

students' willingness to contest the common values, attitudes and mindsets in society, and draw attention to particular issues of their concern.

*"It's not very easy to get along about one point of view [concerning the issues of the past and ethnic tensions]. But there weren't like any fights over them, we just discuss or joke about them. There is this name Ustaša, they were like Nazi Croats in the WWII period. And we are like, we are Ustaša, it's just a joke. I don't get offended by that. Those kinds of jokes but not offending anyone."* [Student 7]

*"Once they were yelling Ustaša [Croatian Nationalist and fascist organisation, approximately from the 1920s until the end of the Second World War, ruled Croatia during the War] on the street and people were just looking at them. That was funny."* [Student 6]

Most of these students (4, 6, 7) also highlighted how they are good friends and hence know that the others are merely joking, as opposed to truly wanting to insult them.

*"Sometimes my roommate is like, 'oh I am going to send you on the other side [dominated by the other ethnic group] of the town and you are going to see', like a bit nationalistic jokes. But it's just like in the moment and we just laugh. Because I know we are actually good friends and she doesn't mean it."* [Student 4]

Staff member 1 also noted this local students' habit of joking about the history or the nationalistic conflicts and divisions, and regards it as highly positive. Student 7 also mentioned examples of some staff members joking about the current issues and experienced ridiculousness of the lack of functionality in some practical matters, caused by the nationalist tensions, for instance, along with one of the teachers, sharing the same national background with the student, often joking about and jokingly insulting people from their own nationality. The student does not find it disturbing but rather funny.

*"I don't get easily offended by those things. They mostly joke about how we are divided and how it's actually quite funny."* [Student 7]

Also, with respect to above-introduced approach to the sensitive nationalist questions, it is evident that the students do not regard these contradicting perspectives as fundamentally determining their relations with others from different national groups, but rather view them as a single part of the social reality they live in. This reveals a certain experienced distance from the past events and collective nationalist hostilities. Many of the interviewed students (1, 2, 4, 5) indeed concern it as easier for them to somewhat ignore the nationalist issues and contested open

questions of the war and focus on other aspects of their lives, along with the future, in comparison to older generations. This is framed as being due to the older generations having lived through the horrors of the war and thus possessing clear personal memories of the events. Thus, the students feel that they are better able to focus their attention on other areas of life:

*“Yeah, we actually discuss these issues sometimes, especially with my roommates, we just mention that. I mean it’s not that hard because we are not a part of it, so we don’t really understand it. But we discuss it.”* [Student 4]

Staff member 3 is also of the opinion that the students and young people are generally more stimulated by the events of nationalist tensions of today, which they observe in the news, rather than the past war that they have not personally experienced:

*“The war is kind of like a historical event for them [this generation of youth studying at UWCiM]. They are saying that something happened before, and the time passes on. I would say more recent tensions kind of cheer them up a bit more than the war. Maybe they disagree with something [that has to do with the war], but it’s not as dramatic as, let’s say, referendum in Republika Srpska. So that was a more heated discussion, because it is taking place right now and that is more current. But I wouldn’t call it ethnic tensions necessarily, it’s a discussion and people have different opinions.”* [Staff member 3]

Furthermore, student 6 explicitly stated the experienced disagreement with annually highlighting certain important events of the war, to collectively commemorate the fights and celebrate the victories, for instance. Some of the students (2, 3, 6) also particularly stated their wish to rather focus more on the future and life together.

*“No, the war is not important to me. I don’t know why every year we mark some day when Serbs attacked. That is not important. I know it’s important that they fought for our country and so on, but if we continue doing this, we never going to be friends with Serbs or Muslims.”* [Student 6]

Hence, also from the citations presented, it becomes clear that the local students at UWCiM do not entirely judge each other or determine each other’s identities or social value, for instance, based on the opinions of the war, or the mutual perspectives on the national intergroup issues or the open questions between the national groups, but are rather able to comprehend the complexity of a number of identities within their peers and themselves. This is evidently among the most essential skills they have gained during their experience at the diverse community of UWCiM.

*“Sometimes we mention stereotypes, like oh because you are a Croat you do that and then I say oh it’s not because of that. And then we mention like in the war this group attacked that group, and we just discuss the events. It’s a peaceful discussion, not anything like, oh I hate you because of that.” [Student 4]*

*“In creating friendships, I’m not interested in what they think about it [the war]. I mean I just ignore that part and like completely skip it, and then we just never mention it. I mean sometimes it can be kind of brought up and my friend will say something, and I will say something, and then we just go to a different topic. I don’t think anyone [at UWCiM] is willing to go to a verbal fight over that and I think there are many more stuff we could be discussing that are much more worthwhile than how someone interprets history.” [Student 2]*

### 7.3 Discussion

The findings presented above on the local unity experienced on a cultural basis, along with the sense of enhanced understanding of religious difference, which is clearly seen as the most remarkable differentiating quality between the local students, particularly by the students of Christian background, are both highly relevant to the concept of Contact Hypothesis, originally introduced by Gordon Allport (1954). As part of the hypothesis, he established certain ideal basic conditions for intergroup contact to most efficiently reduce prejudice. As the research of this thesis demonstrates, these conditions are to a great extent fulfilled in the college community of UWCiM. Firstly, the local students, being the focus of the study, come in close to equal numbers from all the three main national groups of the country, along with a diversity of geographical regions, which hence assures their equal representation and social power within the community. This is, according to the Contact Hypothesis, among the vital prerequisites for prejudice-reducing contact. (Allport 1954.)

Additionally, the values and mission of the college ensure the existence of a common goal; the enhanced reconciliation and social change in local society, along with the students gaining a high standard education and enhanced individual skills, knowledge, ideas and perceptions. This is then more concretely implemented through the varying co-operative extracurricular and social service activities and the continuous intergroup contact, among other instruments. Moreover, the creation of truly close relationships between the students, also significantly appreciated by them, is commonplace. Additionally, the contact between the students occurs in a variety of social contexts, ranging from the classroom, to sports and social service activities, and to sharing the

same room, among other situations. Hence, the social conditions established at UWCiM are nearly optimal for reducing intergroup prejudice, as defined by the Intergroup Contact Theory, as the facilitated college environment allows for a safe and encouraged contact between the students. (Allport 1954.)

Several scholars have also argued for the importance of an individual participant's subjective experience of intergroup contact. According to this approach, the subjective experience of finding the contact personally valuable and important, for one reason or another, determines its potential in reducing prejudice. (van Dick, Wagner & Pettigrew 2004, 211-213, Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux 2005, 702.) The establishment of the sincere and close friendships between local students across all national groups, with a stable existence of mutual trust and frequent interpersonal self-disclosure between them, is a sign of highly regarding these positively formed personal relationships. This is also related to the self-expansion model, utilised by van Dick et al. (2004), among others, to support their findings. The model argues for the inclusion of self-expansion as part of the basic human needs, and close friendships as an important means to pursue the fulfilment of this need. This refers to these relationships' essential importance in establishing and understanding one's identities, perspectives and resources, through merging those of the others in the self. The close friendships thus contribute to creating the basis for understanding and differentiating between oneself and the other as part of oneself, and result in the increase in experienced empathy and the simultaneous reduction in prejudice towards these members of the outgroups. (van Dick, Wagner & Pettigrew 2004, 211-213, 220, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, Mashek, Lewandowski, Wright & Aron 2004, 103, 105-106, 122-123.) As such, the affective quality of the relationships between local students at UWCiM contributes to the relatively high potential of these relationships to reduce prejudice, due to the extensive and continuous personal sharing that takes place between the individual students.

Research has also been conducted on the specific type of members that are seen as most suitable for intergroup contact to more widely reduce prejudice. According to a number of findings, having the members of different groups to be as representative, and as if as average in that group as possible, would ensure the most beneficial conditions to enhance the possibilities for broader generalisation of the reduction in prejudice (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux 2005, 702-706, Pettigrew 1998, 74-75). However, according to the present research, the local students do typically not

represent an average young person from their home communities. It could hence be argued that the probability of the local students to more generally apply their positive learning experiences to other members of the out-groups is decreased, due to them rather regarding the intergroup contact as interaction between two unique individuals, as opposed to two representations of certain collectives. However, with respect to the enhanced understanding of religious difference, it became evident during the interviews that the students do commonly generalise this increased empathy and a sense of personal connection to the broader religious out-group, as opposed to only identifying with the members personally known to them. This is due to the students indeed appearing as representatives of their religious identity and in-group, this hence enhancing the positive general collective intergroup understanding. Moreover, the students clearly perceive each other as representing separate groups in national terms.

Scholars have also argued for the intergroup contact to be more efficient for members with stronger pre-existing prejudices. This is also closely linked to the generalizability of the potentially positive results of contact, due to less prejudiced individuals typically preferring to consider each out-group member as a unique individual, and attempting to avoid broad generalisations of the qualities of those individuals to their entire out-groups. Furthermore, some less prejudiced individuals might, through the encounter, also tend to assess the value of their own in-group, as opposed to that of the out-group. (Ullrich, van Dick & Tropp 2011, 271-272, 277, Vorauer 2008, 912-913, 918-919.) It could hence be argued that the intergroup contact cannot be as efficient in the case of the local students studying at UWCiM, due to their more open-minded initial attitudes, as it would be for initially more prejudiced students. However, the local students at UWCiM do nonetheless commonly tend to express and possess a certain level of nationalistic and religious prejudice and out-group generalisation with regard to the most sensitive social issues of the past violent conflicts and current nationalist tensions in the society. Additionally, as also discussed, many of them (students 1, 4, 6, 7) have originally decided to attend the college due to rather opportunistic reasons, as opposed to primarily wishing to enhance the aims and missions of the UWC movement. Furthermore, as introduced above, to establish a diverse student body, some applicants have at times been positively discriminated in the selection process. This specifically applies to those from the entity of Republika Srpska, which is among the most challenging regions to raise interest and acceptance with respect to the college and its values. (Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017.) Hence, the intergroup contact

has a potential to efficiently impact the attitudes among these students and concerning the specific national issues. Additionally, as introduced, it has also been found to reduce the prejudice with regard to the inter-religious differences present within the local student community.

The above is also closely linked to Salomon's ideas of, specifically concerning the contexts of intractable conflicts, of the importance of affecting the understandings, memories, and experiences of collectives, as opposed to single individuals, to ensure the sustainability of peace education programmes aiming at further intergroup reconciliation (Salomon 2011, 46-47, 50-52, Salomon 2002, 7). The ideally advanced mutual intergroup empathy, as a result of the increase in intergroup understanding, consequently creates potential for a new, more peaceful, beginning. As discussed, however, the sensitive nationalist questions are often somewhat avoided within the community of UWCiM, as many students are to a certain extent resistant towards trying to accept, understand, discuss or listen to conflicting views and opinions about these deeply rooted and controversial issues, and hence implicitly express a strong wish to protect the solid identity of their national in-group. This conforms to McGlynn's previous research within contexts of integrated education, as she has found that the avoidance of the most controversial and sensitive questions can be rather prevalent (McGlynn 2009, 13). The commonplace lack of optimism towards being able to agree on the issues, regardless of the students also to some extent feeling a certain sense of distance from them, has led to them in many cases not discussing the matters, as the students attempt to avoid conflict within the community. Therefore, the intergroup contact's effect on the collective aspects of understandings, memories, and experiences of guilt, victimhood and forgiveness, among other aspects, to reduce prejudice among the students, stays limited.

As such, the attitudes within the community are still nationally polarised concerning the most sensitive social issues of the past war and the nationalist tensions, and also with regard to the culturally and religiously more tolerant attitudes exclusively dictating the discourse over any potentially existing alternative perspectives. This is evident in the expressions of cautiousness towards any intergroup or interpersonal prejudice. The polarisation has the potential to result in neglecting to address any possibly underlying prejudices, along with not attempting to understand the reasoning behind, or prevalence of, these nationalist perspectives. The finding is closely related to the criticism directed at reconciliation at times attempting to exclude some members of the community or hinder the processing of some of the sensitive societal questions, which is not



seen as sufficient to truly achieve sustainable reconciliation (Schaap 2008, 249-250, Schaap 2004, 534-535). This sort of highly persistent polarisation of collective nationalist perspectives with regard to the experiences and representations of the events of the war, among other sensitive questions, are also typical for contexts of intractable conflicts. As introduced, Bar-Tal (2004), among others, has regarded education as having remarkable potential to influence this segregation within younger generations. (Bar-Tal 2004, 259, 261-262, 266.)

The above observation is also closely relevant to Allport's (1954) definition of prejudice. His understanding of prejudice entails the incompetence of a person to integrate newly gained information into one's previous perspectives and beliefs, particularly when this new knowledge is perceived as contradictory to one's existing understanding of a certain question or a group of people. This, when directed towards members of a certain out-group, typically leads to commonplace criticism and antipathy towards the general entire group, based on erroneous and inflexible generalisation of that out-group. (Allport 1954, 9.) Therefore, contesting the full effectiveness of intergroup contact in reducing prejudice becomes relevant also within the context of UWCiM, as the students are evidently reluctant to amend their perspectives on the certain most sensitive nationalist social issues. This is then also related to Freire's idea of the development of critical consciousness and the following cultural emancipation entailing the capability to understand the constantly changing nature of reality (Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-41, 44). All in all, the widespread nationalist polarisation of BiH's society appears to thus also be somewhat present at UWCiM.

Drawing from the discussion above, three most important collective categories of identification have been detected among the local student body, all of which are experienced in significantly different terms. Firstly, all local students have found to strongly identify with each other culturally, this resulting in a positively experienced sense of unity, the feeling of new inclusion, and a shared overarching cultural identity among them. Additionally, the students have through the intergroup contact experienced a remarkable widening of perspectives and understanding concerning each other's differing religious backgrounds and beliefs, which has evidently reduced their potential prejudice against these peers, along with those collective religious out-groups as a whole. Lastly, a clear polarisation of perspectives and identities can still be detected, also within the UWCiM community, with regard to the nationalist questions of contested history and tensions, as strongly

identifying with and protecting one's national in-group appears as the norm among the students, also conforming to the general state of affairs within the larger society. Hence, a clear need to properly address these issues continues to exist. Therefore, in the national sense, the students typically regard each other as belonging to segregated groups, and in these terms commonly possess a certain level of prejudice against each other. This is closely related to them then avoiding addressing these questions, as they prefer to place a greater emphasis on each other's cultural and religious identities. As mentioned, however, being able to differentiate within an individual's complex set of identities can already be regarded as a remarkable step forward in the path towards a potential advance in the process of reconciliation, and this skill greatly derives from the exposure at UWCiM to others from such a variety of different cultural, religious and national backgrounds. These findings are also closely in line with those of McGlynn (2009), in her research of integrated education in Northern Ireland. She also found the prevalence of students beginning to question and reflect on their collective and individual identities. (McGlynn 2007, 78.)

The observations of the local students' cultural identification are also closely linked to Spinner-Halev's (2003) idea of the importance of creating a common overarching state identity as part of the process of successful post-conflict reconciliation (Spinner-Halev 2003, 53). However, as the nationalist segregation and intergroup tensions are so deeply rooted, normalised and institutionalised in the context of BiH, this has by some been seen as nearly unattainable.

Nevertheless, regardless of the students commonly not being able to agree on, or even willing to attempt to discuss, the nationalist social issues, and hence clearly experiencing them as sensitive and problematic, they have at UWCiM been able to establish this strong common identity based on qualities not pertaining to nationality. This conforms to the proposal by some liberal theorists, of the potential of education to instil a certain kind of patriotism in students. Based on this sense of common identity, they are more likely to consider the collective needs and equal well-being of all, as opposed to merely that of their own particular in-group, formed according to certain criteria. This has the potential to lead to further social empowerment of all and is an important step forward towards the potential establishment of a further common social identity, which would also have the possibility of eventually comprehending the questions of nationality; to a sufficient extent overcome the tensions and segregation produced by the nationalistic collective narratives. (Spinner-Halev 2003, 52.)

The clearly identifiable and commonplace joking in the community about the issues related to nationalist tensions and separation can, on the other hand, be interpreted as a two-fold phenomenon. The students feeling sufficiently close and safe amongst themselves to be able to jokingly insult each other, without the need to worry about the others getting offended, can be framed as a manifestation of a high level of trust and sense of comfort between the local students of different national groups, in addition to that within the entire community, including the staff members. Additionally, being able to naturally approach the issues with the spontaneous use of humor indicates how the members of the community truly disagree with the nationalist separation, don't relate to each other with prejudice, and sincerely disagree with the stereotypes that have been created for the national groups. This is hence a step forward towards openly discussing the issues, which still seems to be a challenge in the community of UWCiM. Approaching the sensitive questions with humour has clearly, by many members of the community, been identified as a functioning means to approach the issues. On the other hand, joking about the issues also depicts how the young students already feel somewhat distanced from the events of the war.

However, the use of humour in discussing the socially most sensitive and traumatic questions, also in the context of UWCiM, can also be seen as a subtle manner to approach and process the potentially underlying prejudices. Due to the values and mission of the college, in addition to the general attitudes and atmosphere, direct confrontations between students would not be accepted. Therefore, the use of humour can also be framed as a more indirect means to approach these contested issues loaded with personal values and emotions, which have as if become a taboo within the college community. They, nevertheless, continue to play a remarkable role in all members' lives. This is closely related to the ways in which humour is also exploited by some of the students' parents. Few students (students 5, 7) mentioned an example of their parents jokingly asking whether they have already become members of some of the other national or religious groups, due to having become closer to and more knowledgeable about them. The parents can in most cases also be regarded as more open-minded than an average person of their age in BiH, but the mentioned examples also manifest their nationalistic prejudice and some level of concern towards the other groups, along with a differentiation between themselves and those nationalities. The introduced jokes illustrate them being worried about the contact with other nationalities having a changing impact on the identity of their child.

*"I just joke about this [possibility of dating someone from another ethnic group] with my mother, and she just laughs that 'Are you already a Bosniak or something?' It's just joking."*  
[Student 7]

Hence, the local students' responses illustrate how most of them are constantly struggling with searching for the most appropriate ways of dealing with the sensitive questions of the past war and the current nationalist tensions. However, they clearly experience a need to do so. They do not themselves generally agree, at least fully, with the nationalist separation and lack of contact or co-operation between the groups, but have been raised in and are constantly surrounded by such an environment. It is thus commonly challenging for them to predict the reactions of their fellow students, or even their own reactions, when addressing the most sensitive social issues, and they consequently prefer to often avoid these questions. In addition to the local students, the teachers and other staff members also clearly seem to avoid engaging into discussions about the Bosnian War or the current nationalist tensions, mainly due to their desire to avoid conflict. It is hence concluded that the community is still clearly lacking the tools with which it could safely and efficiently work with these questions, as causing unnecessary resentment or unresolvable conflicts within the community is not desired. It can, from the responses of the students, be deduced that they would wish to have more professional guidance to actively manage and approach these issues in a more formal setting. Related to this, some of the students (students 2, 3) have attempted to promote the merging of the local students' mother tongue literature classes, to further enable the establishment of a safe and open platform to discuss the sensitive issues introduced above. Schaap has also argued for the importance of truly recognizing the intergroup social issues and past injustices, as opposed to merely promoting the importance of reconciliation (Schaap 2008, 249-250, Schaap 2004, 534-535).

Paulo Freire, on the other hand, has examined the power of dialogue in social change. He has determined the purpose of dialogue as to critically examine a certain issue, jointly by the two participants; openly, empathetically, equally and optimistically, and ideally leading to a mutual exploration and discovering of new understandings of the shared reality. This would then provide the actors with the skills and tools to further contribute to social change. (Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-44.) Conforming to the observations and analysis above, the students at UWCiM are indeed able to establish such warm and sincerely

mutually interactional dialogue with the peers from different national groups, when it comes to certain religious issues, for instance. This can already be seen as major progress. However, work is still needed to also create such dialogue concerning the sensitive national issues of the past war and the nationalist tensions.

With regard to the Contact Hypothesis, it can be concluded that the cross-national intergroup contact indeed contributes positively within the specific, relatively small, closed and intimate educational context of UWCiM, in transforming the students' understanding and perceptions. Moreover, the experienced cultural contrast with the international students strengthens the sense of shared qualities with other local students from different national backgrounds. It is evident that the intergroup relationships between all local students have become friendly and based on individual qualities rather than potential prejudice or collective stereotyping, and the contrast to international students is visible in the more frequent generalisation with respect to their cultural qualities.

## 8. In the Classroom – Learning to 'Use one's Own Brain'

As mentioned above, the learning occurring within the formal classroom setting was during the interviews highlighted significantly less than the transformative influence of the social life outside of the classroom context. Nevertheless, when asked about the kinds of special skills the students at UWCiM experience gaining, many students and staff (students 1, 2, 4, 5, staff members 1, 2, 3, 4) stressed those of critical thinking, speaking up, voicing their views coherently and justifying them with valid and analytical arguments, based on comprehensive knowledge from a variety of appropriately analyzed sources. Hence, the students can, as framed by the interviewees, argue more convincingly, which also leads to their greater courage to do it, and consequently more confidently engage themselves into profound discussions to defend their viewpoints. One of the staff members also highlighted the importance education the students about the ability to evaluate and question new information, along with criticizing others' opinions and statements:

*"I always tell them that no matter how bigoted someone else's view is, what is important for you is to understand where that view comes from, rather than dismissing it right away, because*

*that is the easiest thing to do. Appreciating and understanding the rationale behind someone else's opposing views is critical."* [Staff member 2]

As opposed to the means of education in the local students' previous educational systems, they are during the teaching at UWCiM encouraged to compare perspectives presented in different sources, draw parallels between similar cases in different contexts, and discuss these, with each student drawing their own critical conclusions on the questions at hand. Many students (1, 4, 5, 6, 7) emphasised the difference to their previous schools, where they were for instance typically expected to solely learn what the teachers told them, without any questioning of its validity. This type of teaching style often leads to the students forming nationalistic, one-sided and biased views on various important social issues, and hence further societal intergroup conflicts. As mentioned, many students (1, 4, 6, 7) also stressed the differences in the means of learning at UWCiM and the students' previous schools as among the initial reasons to apply to UWCiM.

*"Everything was just theory and that's all. They just want you to know what's in books. In UWC it's different, you explore on your own."* [Student 6]

Furthermore, the students experience that the teachers at UWCiM encourage them to speak and discuss different questions freely in class. They also feel that they are allowed to make mistakes without being judged for them, and are hence more able to productively develop their skills. This is in line with the importance of ensuring an open classroom climate, which has also been at the core of different Citizenship Education models, due to it encouraging the voicing of one's opinions and the contribution to developments in society and local communities. This derives from the open classroom climate ideally promoting democratic decision-making, equality, co-operation and mutual respect among students. (Johnson 2007, 27, 32, Patterson Dilworth 2008, 428.) Moreover, this support that the students at UWCiM experience receiving from their teachers is congruent to Paulo Freire's idea of the relevance of maintaining an equal, empathetic, and genuinely interactional dialogue between the students and teachers, to develop the students' critical consciousness in understanding the reality, and cooperatively, with their teachers, exploring it further (Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-44).

Two of the interviewed staff members (1, 4) also highlighted how the local students that choose to stay in BiH and enrol into a local university instantly stand out during the lectures at those universities. This is, according to the interviewees' view, explicitly due to the gained qualities described above; the students being able to 'use their own brain'. Several staff members (1, 2, 5) also related these skills specifically to a greater and more critical understanding of history, as they consider the ability to critically analyse and evaluate historical information, along with understanding it from a diversity of perspectives, to be at the core of reconciliation in BiH.

These experiences of the students having enhanced their skills in critical thinking, source criticism and in making comparisons between similar social phenomena, are also closely linked to Freire's idea of the relevance of developing students' critical consciousness in achieving cultural emancipation. According to this idea, due to the students at UWCiM having the opportunity and obligation to explore different sources, establish their own opinions according to their previous and the newly gained information, and to present properly justified arguments, among other learning experiences, leads to them understanding the connections between and the contexts of different social phenomena and events, and hence the nature of reality as changing and to some extent uncontrollable. Simultaneously, however, Freire highlighted the importance of individuals recognizing their responsibility and ownership in influencing this reality they live in, and viewed cultural emancipation and liberation from the system, resulting from the development of critical consciousness, as an essential step towards an individual's capable contribution to social change. (Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-41, 44.) The students' approaches towards initiating change and having a social impact are further discussed in section 9.

## 8.1 Balkan Studies and Other Facilitated Approaches

The issues of the Bosnian War or the current nationalist tensions are not actively discussed in most classes, primarily as these topics do not form a part of the determined syllabi of most subjects in the International Baccalaureate Diploma. However, UWCiM established the Balkan Studies study programme in 2014, to introduce the first-year students to the history, contemporary political and social realities, culture and challenges of the region, and for the local students to hence also have the opportunity to discuss these questions amongst each other, along with finding common bases

on how to present them to their international colleagues. The topics of the course have also covered the issues of the Bosnian War and the questions of identity, among other themes relevant for the present study. (Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017, UWC Mostar 2016a.)

Many of the interviewed local students (1, 2, 7) are pleased with the existence of the course, as they believe that the war and the nationalist tensions should be discussed, as was introduced earlier. Some students (1, 7) also mentioned how sharing and comparing stories of their family members and relatives, between students of different national groups, along with those of the events that took place in their villages or cities during the war, has helped them to more profoundly understand the hardships the others' families have had to go through.

*"The stories do not make me hate anyone, it just makes me feel sorry and pity. It's kind of sad."*  
[Student 7]

In their previous educational systems, the local students have generally only covered these issues from the perspective of their own national group.

Nevertheless, few interviewed students (5, 6) also expressed the opinion that staff members at UWCiM are quite cautious about discussing the nationalist issues or questions of the past, to avoid any potential conflict in the community. As mentioned, the local students have during the Balkan Studies sessions been asked to present stories of their relatives or family members, and the staff has recently chosen to mainly facilitate the discussion. This most recent approach appears to have been selected to avoid any member of the community feeling offended or to any extent accused of the historical events, on the basis of national identities. Staff member 1 also accordingly mentioned an experienced personal fear that the local students would accidentally offend each other, if engaging into more profound discussions on the Bosnian War or the nationalist tensions. However, regardless, the same staff member considers the discussion on the issues as essential and welcome, when done without judging or offending, and has also seen it working smoothly among the students. Below are quotes from two students expressing their views on the experienced teachers' approach on discussing the war or the nationalist tensions:



*“It was funny how teachers were really cautious when we were talking about the war during Balkan Studies, they were careful that they wouldn’t say something that would offend someone. It was very weird and not comfortable for me, because you were able to see how hard they were trying to say everything correctly, so that no one would get offended. I don’t think they are really pleased with talking about the war. The staff didn’t want to lead the sessions, and they wanted the local students to prepare the sessions. They encouraged personal stories or some events that we want to discuss.” [Student 5]*

*“I’ve never discussed these issues with teachers or heard them discussing it. And I’m not sure how they would react. I guess they would be fine with that. They are UWC teachers, they are different. They really ARE different. Maybe they wouldn’t say a lot about that, but they would be fine with that.” [Student 6]*

During the past years, some tensions have indeed arisen during a session on the Bosnian War in the course of the Balkan Studies, as a group of Bosnian Serb students felt accused for certain events of the war. Hence, some students of the same national background had during the ongoing year nearly decided not to participate in the session, due to being worried about having to experience similar accusations. These approaches, along with those of the staff members presented above, are closely related to the deliberate avoidance of these most sensitive and contradictory nationalist questions within the school community, as discussed above.

*“But I know that this year some students didn’t want to come because of last year’s tensions, because they were afraid that somebody would insult them. But I would come, like I don’t really care. It is better to listen to the story, to know from the other point of view, to really be open-minded.” [Student 7]*

As during the social life outside class, as discussed above, a clear urge from the part of the students for a more formal and facilitated framework to discuss the past and the contemporary nationalist issues was also identified with respect to the classroom context. Many interviewed students (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) also implicitly expressed a significant level of frustration towards the issues not being more widely addressed within the college community. From the interviews, it can be deduced that the students would wish to have more support and professional guidance from the staff in approaching the issues within some formal framework, as they think that they should be discussed, but evidently lack the skills to approach the questions. One of the students expressed the felt frustration towards the difficulty of discussing the issues and the experienced potential for that present within the UWCiM community:

*“It should be discussed, but without problems, without consequences, that’s hard. I’ve realised you just have to find the right person to talk about it. When I came here and realised that they are talking about war, I was wondering why. But that’s fine, they are just fine with that.”*  
[Student 6]

## 8.2 Discussion

Drawing from the discussion above, the local students clearly experience having at UWCiM, within the facilitated teaching, gained important skills in critical thinking, speaking up and voicing their views with valid and analytical arguments. They have also experienced the reception of significant support from the teachers during the classes. However, a clear urge for a clearer and more professionally facilitated approach to discussing the sensitive nationalist questions is evident also within the classroom context.

Many interviewed students (1, 2, 7), however, highlighted the experienced usefulness of the Balkan Studies sessions, as they have allowed for a more formal and facilitated sharing of the students’ families’ experiences and collective memories. Duckworth (2015), among others, has also argued for the importance of sharing of and listening to the collective oral histories of previously marginalised and traumatised groups, to enhance their experiences of justice and social healing, along with those of recognition, empowerment and gradual recovery, after years of experienced suppression and collective invisibility. This has the potential to slowly begin to mutually produce the joint, and ideally more truthful, collective historical narratives, and eventually a more stable future. (Duckworth 2015, 184-185.). Additionally, Hughes and Donnelly (2009) have also stressed the power of more personal stories or narratives in creating closer relationships between members of different groups, and hence in promoting self-disclosure and feelings of comfort and intimacy. They thus allow for a more well-functioning exchange of perspectives and understanding. (Hughes & Donnelly 2009, 121-122, 130-131.)

Freire also emphasised the benefit of focusing on and taking advantage of the students’ life experiences as part of education, as tools to advance their skills in reflecting on their existing understandings in relation to the gained new information and perspectives. He also saw this as closely linked to the capacity to recognise one’s limited knowledge and understanding, and hence the importance of being open to transforming the possessed ideas and views according to the gained viewpoints, experiences and information. (Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-44.) As such, the idea of dedicating some of the Balkan Studies

sessions to exchanging the students' families' experiences and hence the most personal emotional attachments to these issues and collective memories, is greatly in line with Freire's, Duckworth's, and Hughes & Donnelly's ideas.

Pilvi Torsti and Sirkka ahonen (2009) have discussed the efficiency of the use of deliberative communication, also with regard to the specific educational model of UWCiM and the post-conflict society of BiH, as an educational tool to specifically enhance the creation of a mutual historical culture and understanding. They have placed their focus on the history classes, and also emphasised the importance of sharing personal and collective stories, being able to jointly assess their credibility and sources, and establishing a mutual dialogue between them. (Torsti & Ahonen 2009, 220, 222, 224.)

As introduced, the idea of deliberative communication is for all students to be able to openly express their somewhat contradictory opinions and perspectives, to critically explore them, and to ideally establish collective agreements and new mutual understandings of contentious questions. The goal is then to, through equal and free interaction, advance democratic practices within communities and society, and hence promote further active citizenship and transformation into more peaceful society. The participants are not expected to amend their perspectives on the questions, but rather widen their understanding of them. (Englund 2016, 54, 59, 62-67, 69, 71, Torsti & Ahonen 2009, 220, 223.) This somewhat conforms to how the students have, as presented above, after having encountered all the new mindsets and beliefs at UWCiM, mainly experienced strengthening of their existing perspectives, as opposed to transforming them according to the newly gained knowledge. This has occurred through being better able to justify these previous viewpoints with the integration of the newly gained knowledge into the arguments. However, as also introduced, the appropriate exploration of different perspectives regarding the nationalist questions has still been limited within the college community.

The idea of the sessions of the Balkan Studies, along with the experienced support provided by the teachers for students to freely express their opinions and perspectives, are certainly in line with the idea of deliberative communication. Nevertheless, the potential usefulness of the further exploitation of the practices and ideas of deliberative communication, in establishing the desired, more structured, platform for truly and in detail comparing and exploring the students'

perspectives, narratives and experiences, is evident in constructing new joint understandings and agreements on the certain most sensitive issues within the society.

Duckworth (2015) has also, for her part, written about the importance of peace educators to focus on the collective and conflicting intergroup public narratives, to enhance sustainable post-conflict peacebuilding and the construction of a common recognition of the destructive power of these narratives in segregating society. This ideally allows for a collective narrative transformation, which makes a more peaceful shared future possible, through jointly envisioning the contested past in a more progressive and comprehensive way, also acknowledging the deeds committed by one's in-group, along with the suffering of the other. (Duckworth 2015, 170.) This is yet to be achieved within the UWCiM community. Moreover, bringing in students from a variety of conflict and post-conflict regions on the global scale, to allow for the drawing of comparisons and discussions, is one of the explicit aims of the college (UWC Mostar 2016d, Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017). However, the local students' learning experiences through possible discussions or drawing comparisons with other students' experiences from different conflict areas has clearly stayed limited, as none of the students referred to this potential aspect of their experience.

One of the aims of the UWC movement is also to 'educate leaders for a sustainable future'. The aim of the college is, as presented earlier, clearly to promote intercultural understanding, mutual respect and responsibility, and ultimately the reconciliation in the context of BiH. As part of the practice of successful peacebuilding, Elise Boulding has stressed the usefulness of the idea of Futures Visioning. This refers to the exercise of using one's imagination to picture a positive ideal image of the desired future, as opposed to simply focusing on the negative collective memories, and consequently mutually sharing these different legitimately constructed images. Jointly constructing such images of a peaceful future then has the potential to empower whole societies previously affected by severe collective traumas, along with creating empathy and mutual trust between the individuals partaking in the practice of Futures Visioning. The exercise is also further suggested to advance skills in peaceful democratic participation, with the focus on solidarity and potential healing. (Duckworth 2015, 180-181.)

The approach of Futures Visioning thus has the potential to unblock existing barriers to addressing the issues of the past and nationalist tensions that continue to be institutionalised in the context of BiH, reaching to the community of UWCiM, and hence causing a variety of societal issues and mistrust. The active imagining of the collective future would also possibly further promote active citizenship, as the common goals are, according to the suggested concept of Futures Visioning, ideally drafted proactively and in collaboration with members of the out-groups. (Duckworth 2015, 180-181.)

## 9. Potential for Broader Social Impact

The aim of this section is to explore UWCiM's potential for having a broader social impact with its long-term goal of positively contributing to the process of reconciliation in the post-conflict context of BiH. The focus is on the experienced influence of the individual students living in such an exceptional environment, surrounded by others that, to a certain extent, share similar values and aims, the support provided by the staff of the college, and the increased experiences of courage, along with other aspects of the experience that potentially influence the students' capability to take initiative and contribute to developing the community and society they live in. Hence, the potential broader social impact of the individual transformations is explored. Additionally, students' ideas of the future are discussed.

### 9.1 Active Citizenship; Self-Confidence, Inspiration, and Courage

Many of the interviewed students (2, 3, 4, 5, 7) are intrigued by perceiving their peers and teachers in the UWCiM community as highly ambitious, optimistic, socially conscious, and aware of the world, along with being interested in a variety of different social and global issues. Furthermore, the students at UWCiM are generally interested in their studies, this therefore mutually encouraging everyone to sincerely put effort into their personal learning. The interviewed students hence often experience the others as exceptional in the context of BiH, but simultaneously as in many ways similar to themselves. Closely related to this observation, one of the common reasons for local students to apply to UWCiM, as appears from several interviews (students 5, 3, 6, 7) has also to do with feeling partially excluded or somewhat different from the others in their home communities, and hence searching for their own place and new, more diverse, ambitious and accepting, community. Additionally, all students regard teachers at UWCiM

as very supportive and committed to offering the best possible guidance and assistance, and view this as immensely motivating.

*“I’ve realised how many people like me there are. Because previously coming from such a small town there are very little amount of people that have the same views as me, so it was hard to achieve something. And now I know there are so many people in this country who have the same views. And that gave me hope to achieve the ultimate peace.”* [Student 3]

As mentioned, multiple interviewed students (1, 3, 5, 6) have in their home communities previously had to fight for their rights and what they believe in; due to this, they, along with their families, have typically been quite exceptionally active and socially conscious in their contexts. To some (students 3, 5), however, this has been quite frustrating, and they have nearly lost their faith in being able to contribute towards achieving a better future. However, during the interviews, all students acknowledged and appreciated the manner in which they can, with their friends at UWCiM, discuss different social or global issues, and how their peers are also interested in discussing some profound questions, or throwing in ideas or suggestions.

*“That is also one of the nice things here; that you can always find someone to discuss the world problems with, to propose solutions, to see if they work, how they would work, how you would do stuff differently, etc. And there is always someone who is willing to do it, and I think it’s quite a gift, to be surrounded by so many people who are ready to discuss and debate.”* [Student 2]

Consequently, many interviewed students (5, 3, 6, 7) expressed their great relief for at UWCiM having realised this existence of several like-minded young people in BiH, supporting the ideals they believe in:

*“My friends [back in the home community] are fine with me sharing a room with a Spaniard but not with a Muslim. I really love UWC for this, because there is no judging. (...) They [friends back home] hate Muslims honestly, they are pretty judgmental.”* [Student 6]

This inspiring college community has thus evidently also strengthened the students’ experienced self-confidence in acting towards what they believe in, and being more optimistic towards achieving their social goals. One of the interviewed students was especially proud to recall the following anecdote:

*“Like even last night, we just found a street dog. Everyone just wanted to save that dog, even though we didn’t know where it came from. And we just found a home for that dog and were all very happy. It’s just small things but we try to do some change.”* [Student 4]

Additionally, many interviewed students (1, 3, 4, 5) emphasised how they have at UWCiM been able to try new activities, and have hence accumulated the experience and knowledge for recognizing and beginning to construct their preferred future paths, along with gaining the courage to explore unknown options. On the other hand, several students (1, 5, 6) noted how the overall experience has been very demanding for most of them, mainly due to them having previously studied under a very differently formed curriculum, along with now studying in English. Moreover, they are living closely with previously unknown people that come from such different backgrounds, in a new city and away from home. The extracurricular activities also demand a significant amount of time, and hence this comprehensive academic and social pressure from diverse sources contributes towards generating a very intense overall experience, simply not even manageable for everyone to successfully live through. Nevertheless, being able to succeed, regardless of the challenges, has contributed positively to the students’ sense of self-confidence in facing challenges and entering into unknown situations. This consequently has the potential to contribute to the students in the future being more optimistic towards taking action in their societies.

*“It is not that easy to move away from your parents, at the age of 16, and come to live with people from different cultures that have different habits that may annoy you or may not, and you still have to live with them for a year. It’s a huge change. So when people adapt to that and go through the experience, they realise that I can do all kinds of things. All this, the studies as well, is just a huge challenge, and when people see they can overcome it, if they just try really hard, they become less scared of new bigger things that are actually just as challenging.”* [Student 5]

Some of the students (5, 7) also stressed how they have as if become more fearless towards meeting new people, for instance, through already having at UWCiM encountered such a variety of lifestyles, backgrounds, beliefs and traditions, and having hence as if gotten used to constantly adjusting to differences. Hence, they believe that they will not be too easily startled by anything anymore, but will rather find new things as interesting.

*“Somehow, I don’t be surprised about anything now, I’ve seen it all”* [Student 7]

A point of criticism, however, from the side of both students and staff, was expressed with regard to the highly demanding academic programme at the college, hindering the students from achieving their highest potential in other, non-academic, aspects of their ambitions. Some interviewees (students 1, 5, staff member 4) for example viewed the intense schedules, the overwhelming amount of homework, and the extensively ambitious academic goals, among other such obligations, as preventing the students from truly connecting with each other, learning about the mutual differences, or to work together and initiate new projects. It was additionally seen as one of the main causes of many students appearing differently in the interviews than after having been accepted to attend the UWCiM. These remarks conform to the criticism, presented by some peace education scholars, towards the often-exaggerated emphasis on high performance in education. Alternatively, focusing on the promotion of values such as caring and empathy would be beneficial, as that would allow for an open and sincere dialogue and listening between individuals and collectives. Thereby, students would have the opportunity to learn to peacefully process feelings of anger, distrust, fear or intolerance. (Shapiro 2002, 69.) This would also in the context of UWCiM potentially enhance the sparking of more profound discussion on the most sensitive social issues resulting in tension and conflicts.

Furthermore, some interviewed local students (1, 5) have also been positively taken aback by actually being able to have a say and an impact on many decisions on the functioning of the college community. They highlighted how the teachers and staff truly ask for their opinions and contributions during the decision-making processes, and the students have also experienced receiving support and guidance when proposing to initiate new activities, for instance. Additionally, the students generally emphasised the tremendous support they get from teachers at the college, along with their comparatively close and direct relationship with them, compared to the generally very hierarchical, even authoritative and formal relations the students at the national public educational systems of BiH typically have with their teachers. Consequently, they have learned to believe more strongly in their own opportunities to have an impact on what is important to them, and to thus more proactively act as active citizens, fighting for their own rights and ambitions.

*“Well you can contribute to the school in so many ways. If you want to change anything in school, you can always talk to someone about that. You can create a new CAS etc. It’s these small things. The school actually wants to know what the students think and that’s not the case*



*in most schools. Teachers here ask for feedback, what they can improve for next year, and that is just a big influence in these kinds of things. And you can always organise something, like an event. It is just these little things that teach students that they can do whatever they want. (...) You learn willingness to work and change things. Because at UWC you can really see that you can change stuff, you can contribute to something.” [Student 5]*

Another student compared the teachers’ attitudes at UWCiM to that of the student’s previous school:

*“They don’t stop us from our ideas. If we have everything to achieve our goal, they are going to support us, just like the ability for us to form any sort of CAS that we want. Like if we have an idea, if we have members that support, are also interested, they will encourage us. In my previous school the teachers actually judged me for being involved in so many NGOs and they were saying that why are you even doing these things that are not part of the school activities. And when I went to an event outside the school, I hardly got the attendance permission and after coming back they gave me a test that no one else had had to do before, just to punish me, because that was out of their sight. If they weren’t interested in something, they just weren’t, no matter how hard you were.” [Student 1]*

Furthermore, significant discoveries could also be made by merely inspecting the rhetoric adopted by the students during the interviews. Most of them (students 1, 2, 3, 5) clearly expressed their possibilities and even responsibility to be part of solving unresolved flaws, with regard to the functions within the college community. As opposed to referring to the position of the staff, for instance, as the party responsible for improving the life in the community and developing new functions or ways of acting, the students often refer to themselves as trying to work out solutions and do something about a certain issue. The quote below demonstrates the clear feeling of responsibility from the part of the student 2 for initiating the desired changes, with regard to issues within the college community.

*“Yeah that’s kind of the problem [division between local and international students] that we still haven’t found a solution for.” [Student 2]*

Furthermore, several students and staff members (students 1, 5, staff members 4, 5) spoke about the combination of freedom and responsibility they are trusted with at UWCiM. They are allowed to freely choose their own subjects from the six academic categories of the IBDP. Also, they live within the city and can freely move and travel outside the college and residences, nearly solely restricted by the general curfew. The students also highlighted their experiences of themselves being responsible for studying, finishing their assignments and succeeding in their studies, as the

teachers attempt to trust them, and provide them with the flexibility to learn to be responsible for their own success, time management, and administration of their own lives. This teaches the students the value and results of being active and of questioning their surroundings or leaving their comfort zones, as opposed to merely adapting to what is given.

*“You are actually yourself responsible for your grades and final exams.”* [Student 1]

Additionally, through meeting people from different countries, student 6 had noticed the manner in which they as local students or students from the neighbouring geographical region are perfectly as competent as any other student from the so-called more developed countries. This has also increased their faith in their own skills and capabilities.

*“Because we are from BiH and then you think that French, Spanish etc. must be better than us. Actually, it’s not true. I thought they are; dress better, talk better, smarter than us. It’s kind of the same.”* [Student 6]

Staff member 5 also mentioned an applied approach to educate the students at UWCiM to every day take initiative and try to have an impact on something they regard as a fault in the system, community or society, as opposed to merely complaining and placing the fault on someone else.

*“I always ask the students when they say that ‘the school should’ that what do you mean [with] ‘the school’? I think in everything we do at the school we try to teach them that it is all of us. Nothing will [just] happen but it is experience from all of us. Even in the UWC educational model, in the middle it is not just students but the whole community. Intentionally diverse community.”* [Staff member 5]

## 9.2 Approach to Politics and Ambitions for the Future

As became clear from the interviews, the local students at UWCiM are and have been strongly involved in the grassroots level of political action in their communities, as they commonly do not believe in the possibility of making a change through the more traditional channels of political participation, due to the commonplace inefficiency and political interference, among other aspects. Additionally, one of the students emphasised the manner in which they have, from very young age, had to fight for their perceived basic rights, especially with regard to their education:

*“The situation in the country is so that we are dealing with some problems and getting into politics in our early ages. And I personally with my friends from my city had to fight for my own rights that some other, international students, didn’t have to fight for. Like some nonsense laws*

*for example, because of our own future. We had to fight for them and get more prepared for life. It's a unique place to grow up and a bit difficult to understand some things that are going on. But I love this country and couldn't imagine living somewhere with just one nationality and religion, that's funny you know."* [Student 1]

The students' political involvement does hence not pertain to the traditional idea of political participation, but rather consists of raising awareness and discussion on different issues, along with lobbying their perspectives in larger society. Furthermore, with regard to the socially widely condemned dating across nationalities creating an inter-generational conflict as described above, student 1 framed the relations as the young people tending to defend each other when their parents attempt to prohibit a relationship between young persons of two different nationalities. This is hence also evidently political, pertaining to the private sphere; attempting to resist the widespread prejudiced social attitudes.

When asked about the way they would like to see their country in the future, all students primarily mentioned an urgent need to bring people from different nationalities to live and work together. For achieving that, students 3 and 6 emphasised the need to reform and integrate the educational systems, while many others (students 1, 3, 5, 6) highlighted the need to merely spend more time together, to get to know each other as peoples and consequently realise the similarities between the groups, and to eventually overcome the existing remarkable prejudices. Additionally, the students and staff see the common nationalistic public rhetoric as among the main causes of the strong maintenance of the segregation and hate between the groups, and the poor and segregated public educational systems as hindering people from being able to critically evaluate the political elite's authenticity. Consequently, many students (3, 4, 5, 6) stressed the importance of education and parents' attitudes in influencing young people's mentalities and perceptions of the other groups, along with the importance of youth and children as builders of future society. They hence clearly have a bottom-up approach on achieving social transformation.

*"Well first step is to educate differently, in history. Our history teachers are full of hate. And then we have to change the students so when they grow up, they can be better parents. So we have to start with young, definitely."* [Student 6]

In addition to the potential reform in education having an impact on people's attitudes, it is also seen as essential in improving the economic conditions and opportunities for the people of BiH. Some students (2, 5) regard economic progress and increased wealth as essential in improving the

intergroup relations between the nations, as people would generally find their lives more meaningful, but at the same time see any progress as hindered by the nationalist tensions. Hence, better-quality education would also potentially have an impact on the people being able to find better work opportunities, to improve their skills in creating those themselves, and consequently on improving people's quality of life and collaboration between the groups.

*"Schools, encouraging young people that if they don't have a job they can create one for themselves. They never do that in schools and it's really sad. Professors just complain about the situation. They say that you are our future but don't believe you can actually change something."* [Student 5]

One student also stressed the fact that members of all nationalities share the difficult economic and social conditions and should work together on improving the situation.

*"There is a really nice graffiti, near our school, that says 'we are hungry' in all our official languages, just written there three times. I think it's kind of powerful message."* [Student 7]

Additionally, the interviewed students have a diversity of ideas on who would have the primary social responsibility to work towards a better BiH, and the reconciliation between the country's three national groups. As introduced above, some (students 3, 6) specifically experience changing the structure of education as something overtly important, as the segregation begins from that period in the childhood, and the young students' attitudes could still be impacted in their early years. Parents were also framed as playing a significant role in the lives of their children, also in influencing their mindsets. Very few interviewed students (2, 7) and none of the staff members see the politicians as important in the process or capable of changing the situation, due to them being seen as highly corrupt, self-interested and merely reinforcing the intergroup nationalist tensions with their nationalistic example and for their own good. Some students (3, 5) also mentioned the power of media in spreading knowledge and potentially affecting the public opinion on the issues, while others stressed the value of every single member of society working towards a less divided society.

*"All of us. I won't say government because they don't do anything, when there are problems. They are very biased. I won't say parents or students, but all of us."* [Student 6]

Many students (1, 3, 4, 5) also specifically mentioned the young people as drivers of change. This is also linked to the concept of active citizenship introduced above, as these students clearly feel responsible for initiating the change they wish to experience.

*“Well young people obviously [have the responsibility to work toward a less segregated society]. We cannot let these older people that have horrible memories of war influence us. And if parents tell you that you cannot do it, you shouldn’t believe them. Like of course I can, you cannot tell me what I can or cannot do. You just have to influence young people to think in that way. You have to believe that you can and then of course put some effort into it.” [Student 5]*

### 9.3 UWCiM as a Social Bubble with Limited External Impact?

It can, from the interviews with the students and staff, be sensed how it would for many students be in fact more difficult to return back to the home communities, than it was to initially face the challenge of coming to live at UWCiM. This is due to the home communities commonly being quite homogenous and more intolerant towards difference, particularly with respect to the members of the other local nationalities. On the other hand, the interviewed students and staff members generally see the UWCiM community as diverse and comparatively open-minded, respectful and accepting towards difference.

This realisation is closely linked to the difficulty of promoting a more tolerant and non-nationalistic agenda in BiH, and the lack of support many advocates of such values face in the country. For this reason, as introduced, along with the lack of essential economic opportunities, among other aspects, many decide to give up and leave the country in search for something better. This presents a real challenge to the optimism and self-confidence, among other personal qualities, gained and strengthened during the time at UWCiM. Hence, the most remarkable challenge faced, post-graduation, is to maintain these ideas and open mindsets within the social and political context of BiH. Nevertheless, the different realities within and outside the college become evident from the interviews, as some students (students 3, 6) explicitly state their different behaviour with their peers at UWCiM, and with their friends outside the college bubble. Their responses imply the manner in which they have gained a significant amount of diverse knowledge, perspectives, tools and skills themselves, as has been discussed above, with regard to critical thinking, understanding difference, contributing to social change, and recognizing the complex set of fundamental identities within individuals. Nonetheless, this might not be sufficient to truly contribute to the

larger reconciliation process in the country, if the transformed mindsets, understandings and perspectives, along with the gained knowledge, are not exchanged or shared with surrounding society.

*“I was also fine with Muslims before, and had some friends among them from the seminars, but I kind of also hated them a bit. And I wouldn’t believe that we can discuss like that, we never did. And I still don’t discuss with friends outside UWC about religion, war, or something like that.”* [Student 6]

Some of the students (1, 4, 6), however, certainly feel they’ll have the immediate opportunity to share the experiences and lessons learned at UWCiM. It would be essential to find the appropriate means to maintain these experiences.

*“When I come back to my city and share my experiences with other people, I see that I’m more open-minded and more optimistic about the goals, and that they can happen. And [I wish] to encourage other teens to work towards the goals. Sharing the experience here is one of the great opportunities [to begin working on these goals of broader reconciliation].”* [Student 1]

As introduced, all interviewed students are at least considering the possibility of leaving the country after graduation, and consequently enter a university abroad. This is closely related to the earlier observed main initial reason for them to apply to study at UWCiM; to gain the opportunity of living, studying and working abroad. Many of the students (3, 5, 6) are planning to not come back in the near future, others (students 4, 7) had not yet made a firm decision on the matter, and few (students 1, 2) are also determined to come back some time after graduation, or even stay in BiH or the neighbouring countries. However, if the great majority of local students graduating from UWCiM commonly decide to directly leave the country, without planning on coming back, all these gained skills and knowledge analysed above will most likely not be fully put into use in society of BiH, as would be ideal in the light of the aims and mission of the college. However, the issue of capable youth leaving the country is also seen to exist on a larger scale and is hence regarded as regrettably not belonging to the college’s scope of influence. As a result, all interviewed staff members also understand the reasons for some students to leave the country, as regardless of their will, the domestic economic and career opportunities are scarce.

However, all the interviewed students acknowledge the option of living abroad for a certain amount of years, hence presumably gaining some economic and social power, through reaching an

excellent level of education and a recognised professional status, and coming back with the improved potential to have an impact in their society of origin.

*“I could have an impact here with money. I was surprised how many things I can do with just money. I can invite people from other cities to my hometown to organise some seminars, to hang out and talk. And some people are going to be like oh, ‘he’s a Muslim and he’s great, why do I hate him?’ That happened to me when I went to Sarajevo. They just need an opportunity to see that and money to do that.” [Student 6]*

Additionally, with respect to the college’s potential impact in the city of Mostar, it can be argued to have been limited. As presented above, UWCiM has numerous ongoing projects with local organisations, in addition to annually holding a variety of events and festivals within society, aimed at reaching the people from outside the college community and creating close and regular contact with them. Furthermore, the college and its students are constantly visible on the streets of the city of Mostar, and hence inevitably form a part of society, also resulting in frequent contact between the UWCiM students and locals. Moreover, as introduced earlier, the college is located within a local high school building. However, closer co-operation and interaction with the students and staff of the local high school community has been relatively limited, as is further discussed below.

When asked about the reputation of the college in the city, many students and staff (students 1, 2, 4, staff members 1, 4) laughingly explained how members of the college community are often perceived as strange and very different from the rest of society, due to mostly the international students coming from a diversity of backgrounds, and hence, among other things, dressing up differently, having different hairstyles, and behaving exceptionally. This creates a certain image for the entire college community. Additionally, all these interviewees appeared to be quite proud of forming part of this unique community within the local context, which conforms to the earlier explored analysis of the local students’ approaches being comparatively less prejudiced when it comes to certain cultural or religious qualities, and them therefore experiencing a greater amount of belonging in such a diverse community. One student talked about the perspective the student has on the reactions of the student’s friends who live in Mostar but are not attending UWCiM:

*“But it’s not a big difference [attending UWCiM], it’s just different education. I think it’s [regarding UWCiM community as strange and very different] because those friends of mine are quite homophobic and when they see a person around with a gay flag, they think it’s quite weird. And different styles of clothing and hairstyles, that’s a bit weird for them. So when they*

*see someone like that and even when they see people of different race, they are not used to that and it's weird for them."* [Student 4]

Hence, the commonly prejudiced perceptions towards members UWCiM community, of locals outside the college community, appear to be closely related to them not being ready or brave enough to accept, or capable of understanding, the observed differences. All interviewed students indeed framed the relationship between local society and the UWCiM college community as quite distant, with certain existing interest on both sides, but with real or closer interaction rarely taking place outside of the mentioned formally organised activities. Many interviewees (students 1, 2, 4, 5) are also of the opinion that the local community does not know about the activities or aims of the college in great detail and are not necessarily very interested in them either, due to the locals still in several cases considering the activities as something solely pertaining to the international community or the local elite.

The people that know more about the activities, on the other hand, are by the interviewees seen to possess a diversity of positions on the college, ranging from mainly seeing the college's mission as valuable, to being jealous of the students' opportunities, or having a nationalistic and prejudiced approach generally towards the promotion of cross-national relations. The citation below demonstrates well the commonplace experienced approach within the local community towards the college, with preferred personal avoidance of closer contact with the students, particularly the internationals.

*"International students are perceived as little crazy because of their appearance, the way they act, because they are so 'wow'. But ah, they accept them well, but it's not like they would get so close to them. Just seeing them as a bit of something that is different to them or wondering what they are searching for here."* [Student 1]

Relevant to this observation, it became evident that many international students, particularly the ones with a different skin colour or otherwise recognizable or exceptional features in the context of the city of Mostar, have suffered of offensive or even racist attacks. Some such students, for instance, have had recurring issues with students of a certain elementary school next to their residence. Consequently, as opposed to attempting to avoid them, UWCiM has implemented initiatives with the purpose of overcoming these issues. The students and staff for example initiated and held workshops and meetings with the school community, during which they



identified the issues, with the purpose of, through closer contact and discussion, demonstrating how the youth of similar age are not that different from each other, regardless of the skin colour or other such qualities pertaining to mere appearance, nationality, language or behaviour. This particular approach also serves as a good example of the approach of the college truly attempting to proactively take initiative, engage with the local community outside of the college, and promote its values and ideas of intercultural understanding, personal responsibility and example and celebration of difference. (Personal communication with the students and staff of the college, January 2017.)

#### 9.4 Discussion

From the observations presented above, an increased sense of optimism, availability of opportunities and a sense of personal responsibility, self-confidence and possibility to take initiative, experienced by the interviewed students during their experience at UWCiM, become clear. This can to a great extent be treated as a result of the received possibilities to experiment with new activities, and hence gain self-confidence and courage to face new situations, the democratic decision-making at the college, the inspiring college community and the students' experiences of being capable of overcoming significant challenges faced during the experience at UWCiM. These experiences are greatly influenced by the support the students experience receiving from the teachers and staff of the college, and have the potential to advance the skills necessary to contribute to desired social change.

The approach of UWCiM to active citizenship, responsibility and freedom, as deduced from the interviews, closely conforms to the ideas of Citizenship Education, introduced above (Johnson 2007, 27, 32, Patterson Dilworth 2008, 428.). The students are, during the experience, encouraged to become acquainted with their democratic rights and responsibilities, and hence their possibilities of transforming their local communities and society. The approach teaches the students the art of negotiation and the use of dialogue, and simultaneously enhances mutual respect, collaboration and equality within the community. These values are also extensively in line with some of the broader aims of the UWC movement, related to the promotion of personal responsibility and integrity, mutual responsibility, personal challenge, and action and personal example.

Furthermore, on the basis of the research, local students mostly regard reconciliation as the peaceful coexistence of the national groups. The students generally acknowledge the existence of certain mutual differences, but simultaneously highlight the importance of communication in overcoming potential issues and misunderstandings caused by the diversity, and the value of embracing the differences. This understanding of reconciliation is remarkably in line with that of Andrew Schaap (2008), used as the baseline in this master's thesis (Schaap 2008, 250). Related to this understanding, the students' political participation mostly tends to happen on the level of grassroots and within the private sphere, to a great extent through resisting the prevailing public opinions and perspectives on certain contested social issues. This can, among other things, be seen from their introduced approach to dating that takes place between members of the different local nationalist groups. Thus, their approach to reconciliation is clearly bottom-up.

Moreover, according to the present research, the external contribution of UWCiM on the attitudes, ideas and perceptions of the local society and the students' home communities, along with the potential reduction of their prejudice, continues to be limited. Related to this, as part of previous research on the Contact Hypothesis and integrated education, it has been found that the mere observation of the others of one's in-group having positive out-group contact, can have a positive influence on reducing out-group prejudice, without the need for oneself to directly have contact with members of that out-group (Pettigrew & Tropp 2006, 751, 753, 766, McGlynn 2009, 78, 80-81). However, as the college community of UWCiM remains to partially be seen by the local community as somewhat distant and different, without sufficiently close and frequent contact to the local community, the likelihood of locals viewing the local students of the college as primarily belonging to their own collective in-group, is uncertain. The contact between the students and the local community does for the most part not fulfil the essential requirements of prejudice-reducing contact, as determined by Allport (1954). However, the impact on locals belonging to the organisations partnering with the UWCiM, truly interacting and working with the students at UWCiM, is likely to be greater. Nevertheless, more research would certainly also be needed within the local community outside the college, on the potential contribution of the college experience on their perspectives. Additionally, research within the students' home communities, including their family members and friends, among others, would be beneficial in understanding the influence of the students' experiences on them.

Notwithstanding, certain examples of prejudice-reducing contact with the local community were identified, this referring to the workshops organised with the local school community having had hostile approaches towards UWCiM's international students of different skin colour. This is also closely linked to Freire's idea of cultural emancipation, resulting from critical consciousness, entailing an individual's understanding and recognition of his or her own power and responsibility to affect the surrounding social reality, and hence represents a valuable learning experience for the students to take initiative in sharing their enhanced understandings of difference and the complexity of individual's fundamental identities, among other things (Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-41, 44).

Additionally, as explained, these students are in many cases planning to leave the country after graduation, and often find it highly challenging to successfully exchange and share the learned knowledge, perspectives, skills and attitudes with the members of their home communities. This idea is also related to the argument of Dixon et al. (2005), among others, of increased intergroup contact having the possibility to merely increase the experienced threat, as the dominating group wishes to protect its exclusive national position, through strengthened intergroup prejudice, as a result of these newly perceived collective threats (Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux 2005, 702-706). However, as argued above, the influence of the UWCiM experience on its individual local students is significant.

Many students initially arrive to the college with the relatively opportunistic motivation to gain an excellent level of education, and subsequently leave the country in search for better future opportunities. As explained, this also typically happens, but the exposure to others similar aims and values, through experiential learning, the increased confidence in taking initiative and questioning the institutionalised social norms, the skills in critical thinking, understanding difference, and recognition of the complexity of individual's collective fundamental identities, inevitably lead to a certain type of detected transformation within the students' mindsets, attitudes and perspectives. As discussed, a number of remaining challenges with regard to approaching the most sensitive nationalist tensions, have also been found. Additionally, maintaining the influence of these individual learning experiences and transferring the contribution to the wider society and the students home communities, is still among the main

challenges faced by the college in its yearning for sustainability. The received opportunities for better education and leaving the country have also clearly diminished the qualities of active citizenship possessed by the students, as they are more focused on their individual futures outside of BiH.

## 10. Conclusion

This master's thesis has aimed at mapping the ways in which the United World College in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its in the introduced social context highly exceptional educational programme, which also integrates local students from all the country's main national groups, has an experienced potential to contribute towards reconciliation on the levels of both the city of Mostar and the country at large. The specific focus has been on the experienced potential transformative contribution on the local students attending the college, and the research has been carried out through in-depth interviews with a number of local students and staff from within the college community. However, the students' experiences, along with the individual or collective contributions of the college, are unquestionably manifold. Consequently, the most commonly emerging themes, patterns, approaches and issues, among other aspects, have been identified and analysed, with simultaneously acknowledging their limited generalizability.

The comprehensive set of means applied to enhance the college's presented objectives, values and mission, ranging from contributing to the process of reconciliation, to advancing intercultural understanding and ideas of mutual responsibility and respect, among other objectives, have been analysed. Consequently, during the process of the present research, several contributions of the educational model and setting on the local students have been discovered, along with a number of challenges still faced with regard to the objectives of the college and the specific aim of contributing towards reconciliation. The greater influence on the students' perceptions of the social experiences and intergroup contact is evident, as opposed to the learning experiences gained during the formal teaching. This is in line with Kurt Hahn's idea, as the founder of the UWC movement, of the power of experiences in teaching the students certain necessary life skills and new perspectives, and hence supporting them in the realisation of their true potential, and equipping them for transforming their communities (van Oord 2010, 253-259).

As introduced above, the initial motivations of many local students applying to or attending the college are framed as relatively opportunistic, with a strong focus on the potential future opportunities provided by the high-quality education offered at the UWCiM. Additionally, applicants from certain regions of the country have sometimes been positively discriminated in the selection process, to gain as diverse body of local students as possible. However, these aspects have, on the other hand, allowed for improved opportunities to transform their perceptions, knowledge, skills, ideas and attitudes, as they have therefore not in all cases necessarily had such strong initial focus on the values and mission of the college. This is also linked to the previously found positive impact of pre-existing prejudices on the possibility of intergroup contact reducing prejudice (Ullrich, van Dick, Tropp 2011, 271-272, 277). However, as also presented however, the local students do typically not represent an average young person in their home communities, as they have often previously been very active with and interested in working towards resolving the nationalist social issues, and possess relatively more open-minded perspectives. Additionally, the attending local students' parents have in many cases raised their children into relatively more tolerant social norms than the ones prevailing in society, regardless of also possessing certain prejudice with respect to certain most sensitive questions, such as cross-national dating. This consequently also allows for the two-year experience at UWCiM to truly contribute to the students' perceptions, as their initial perspectives, ideas and values are typically not entirely conflicting with those of the college.

Firstly, a significant transformation in the local students' understanding of identity could be detected. As introduced, the concept of nationality continues to be strongly and collectively institutionalised in BiH, and the wider society is hence significantly segregated in national terms. Therefore, the understanding of identity is generally largely inflexible, focused on one's collective national identity, and not considered as prone to change. However, the local students at UWCiM were found to strongly identify with each other in cultural terms. This is due to them living, studying and regularly participating in a variety of different activities with other local students from all the country's main national groups, together with international students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Hence, the local students have, also resulting from the experienced contrast to that of many international students, discovered the existence of a predominantly shared cultural background. This phenomenon is within the college community framed as the experienced 'local unity', referring to the sense of close and united community of local students

within the broader college community.

Notwithstanding, concerning religious identities, greater differences are experienced and framed to exist between the local students. As introduced, specifically the interviewed students of Christian religious backgrounds recalled experiences of discoveries with regard to certain religious beliefs or traditions of the other local religions, and they have experienced having become personally connected to these beliefs and traditions, through experiencing them with and learning about them from their friends. Consequently, a greater experienced empathy, understanding and respect towards these religious differences became clear from the interviews, also extending to the collective intergroup level. This thus closely conforms to the Contact Hypothesis, as originally introduced by Allport (1954), of intergroup contact under certain defined conditions reducing prejudice. The contact experienced within the UWCiM college community clearly fulfils the set criteria for these conditions. Additionally, the commonplace creation of true friendships among the local students is important in further increasing the amount of trust and self-disclosure between the students, and hence contributing to the theoretical idea of self-expansion; the students understanding each other as part of their own self (van Dick, Wagner & Pettigrew 2004, 211-213, 220, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, Mashek, Lewandowski, Wright & Aron 2004, 103, 105-106, 122-123).

Nevertheless, with regard to national identities and the contested nationalist questions in the wider social context, a lack of similar sense of unity or understanding is clear. The students expressed an evident disorientation concerning the ideal means to approach these most sensitive issues within the community, with the other local students from different national backgrounds. The interviewed students remarked their perplexity with respect to not wanting to risk their created friendships over these issues, as they also commonly possess a certain sense of distance to the contested history and nationalist tensions. Additionally, as the students commonly conform closely to the collective perspectives of their national in-groups with respect to the contested nationalist issues, nearly all of them were certain about them not being able to mutually agree on these heated questions with each other. The students expressed their reluctance to change their perspectives on these particular questions and their lack of willingness to even properly listen to contrasting views on them. Hence, they tend to commonly avoid addressing the questions entirely or profoundly, similarly to most staff members of the college, with the aim to avoid conflict.

However, the students simultaneously experience a contradicting need to process these questions, and would often wish to have more guidance on the appropriate means with which to address them, as well as a formal and facilitated platform for doing this.

However, as also deduced from the discussion above, the students have clearly been able to successfully differentiate between the complex identities present within individuals. Hence, as opposed to merely placing their peers into the solid and collectively institutionalised nationalist identity categories, they are able to perceive these conflicting national identities as a single part of the identity of their friends and other members of the community. The presence of the international students, and the college community being such a closed, small and intimate environment, can be seen as supporting factors in the learning process. This is also closely linked to Allport's (1954) definition of prejudice, as well as Freire's understanding of critical consciousness, as the capability to integrate newly gained information into one's existing knowledge and perspectives, and thus comprehending the dynamic character of reality, is seen as highly essential by both, in the processes of reducing prejudice or achieving cultural emancipation, respectively (Allport 1954, 9, Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-41, 44). Consequently, some degree of reduction in intergroup prejudice and achievement of critical consciousness has certainly been detected among the local students, and can be perceived as the first steps of bottom-up reconciliation.

McGlynn (2009) has, in her research on integrated education in Northern Ireland, found similar outcomes and learning experiences within the mentioned different context. Firstly, she has similarly detected the commonplace avoidance of the most sensitive intergroup issues within the educational communities. Additionally, she has also found the presence of an enhancement in the individuals' understandings of identity as more flexible, diverse and complex. (McGlynn 2009, 11-13, 20-21.)

With respect to the avoidance of the nationalist questions, the interviewed students generally highly appreciate the offered opportunity during the Balkan Studies sessions to listen to each other's personal stories and narratives, and hence learn about alternative perspectives to the issues. As has been argued by Duckworth (2015), such sharing of oral histories also has a further potential to empower and collectively recognise the marginalised social groups, and to

consequently transform the previously segregated collective narratives into a somewhat mutual and more objective shared historical understanding, eventually ideally leading to a more peaceful future of, in this context, cross-national coexistence (Duckworth 2015, 184-185). Additionally, in the contexts of intractable conflicts, the collective exploration of one's national group's involvement in the contested past, along with the experienced intergroup empathy, have the potential to contribute to the construction of a shared narrative of the common history (Salomon 2002, 9, Hadjipavlou 2007, 41). Moreover, as suggested by the concept of Futures Visioning, developed by Elise Boulding, placing stronger focus on intergroup sharing of personal positive images of future, as opposed to the negative memories of the past, would also be highly beneficial in the process of reconciliation (Duckworth 2015, 180-181.). Nevertheless, none of the interviewed students mentioned possible learning experiences with international students from other conflict or post-conflict areas, which does not directly conform to the aims and objectives of the college in bringing in these students (UWC Mostar 2016d, Staff and Administration of UWCiM, Personal Communication, January 2017).

Most interviewed students (4, 5, 6, 7) also introduced the common practice of joking about the contested national issues with students from the other local national groups, as this is often experienced as a more accessible and tolerated manner in which to approach these sensitive issues, partially as the likelihood of someone becoming offended is hence decreased. This can be seen as a two-folded phenomenon, due to it possibly indicating the also explicitly expressed students' willingness to discuss these sensitive issues, but still lacking the proper means to do it. At the same time, however, it can alternatively be framed as a sign of potentially underlying nationalist prejudice that is manifested by the use of humour, due to the potential open expressions of prejudice not being tolerated within the community. This is also related to the other detected challenge of the dominant discourse at the college only allowing for certain type of tolerant and open-minded perspectives on these sensitive questions of the contested past and the nationalist tensions, and the following inevitable exclusion of the alternative perspectives from the college community. Hence, the understanding of the rationale behind these perspectives or their prevalence is unknown within the community, hence hindering any further exploration or understanding of them.



Furthermore, through the diverse service activities, the support received from the teachers and other staff in taking initiative and responsibility, and the experienced ability to truly have an impact on the life of the community, the students have clearly gained an increase in their self-confidence to take action and attempt to transform the social reality they live in. Hence, they have evidently accumulated a further acknowledgment of their own possibility, role and responsibility in constructing the social or other change they desire, and, also by living through such a demanding and comprehensive experience at the UWCiM, to more courageously overcome allegedly remarkable faced challenges. This is then also clearly in agreement with the importance of genuinely democratic community in encouraging active citizenship, as determined in the field of Citizenship Education (Johnson 2007, 27, 32, Patterson Dilworth 2008, 428).

Additionally, many interviewees (students 1, 2 4, 5, staff members 1, 2, 3, 4) remarked an experienced enhancement in the students' capability to think critically, construct their opinions more comprehensively, and, on the basis of justified knowledge, consider different perspectives, and voice their opinions with an increased confidence. This is partially due to the open classroom climate, constructed by the teachers and as according to the principles of the IBDP, offering the students with abundant possibilities of jointly developing and discussing their thoughts and ideas with each other. Moreover, the inspiring environment within the college community, comprised of like-minded students sharing a similar value base, provides them with a variety of perspectives from all over the world. This experience greatly differs from the one they have previously gained in the national public educational systems. The above-mentioned learning experiences within the classroom context have also been identified to enhance the local students' confidence to resist the socially normalised and institutionalised dominant attitudes, understandings, perspectives and discourses, as was also discovered through the way they typically question their parents in restricting them from beginning a romantic relationship with someone from another local national group. This, for its part, can be seen as a manifestation of the students' political activity within the private sphere and it is also in line with their found bottom-up approach to social change. This practice of a continuous, open and sincere dialogue between students and teachers within the educational context is also in consonance with Freire's idea of this resulting in the enhancement of the students' critical consciousness and the ideally collaborative seeking of new learning experiences and revelations, through a critical exploration of existing knowledge, also placing

value to the students' personal experiences (Freire 1973, viii, 44-46, Freire 2001, 9, Roberts 2000, 38, 40, Bartlett 2008, 40-41, 44).

As such, the learning experiences discussed above have evidently had major contribution to the individual understandings, skills, ideas, and perceptions of the local students, but the influence on the wider community and society in the city and country at large have thus far been rather limited. The students' individual positive experiences have not been extensively transferred to the collective level of society, and their possibilities of having an impact on the perspectives, ideas and mindsets of the members of their home communities have also been identified as scarce. With respect to this, it would have been especially interesting to have the chance to interview students from the Bosnian Serb national background, to allow for a comparison with and analysis of their experiences. Additionally, all local students consider leaving BiH after graduation. Therefore, as many of the students have been relatively active and socially conscious already before attending the UWCiM, it could even be argued that their motivation to use the possessed qualities of active citizenship in the context of BiH has reduced, due to the newly gained global opportunities. This consequently presents a clear challenge to the sustainability of the work of the college.

With regard to the earlier introduced definition of reconciliation by Schaap (2008), also applied in this master's thesis, and the ultimate aim of the research in assessing the potential contributions of the United World College in Mostar on different levels of reconciliation in the country, some final conclusions can be drawn. Schaap's (2008) definition emphasises the collective processing of the contested intergroup issues and the past, and the ideal ultimate achievement of a peaceful and constructive coexistence of the previously conflicting groups. This is ideally delivered through a recognition of each other's legitimacy and humanity, and hence some extent of normalisation in the relationship. (Schaap 2008, 250.) The definition is closely in line with the students' expressed ambitions for the future of the country, as they mostly stressed the experienced urge for a more peaceful and co-operative co-living between the national groups, including the establishment of integrated education and a gradual change from below. The students' understanding of reconciliation is clearly bottom-up.

Progress towards the idea of complete reconciliation, as introduced, has hence been identified within the college, through most importantly transforming the individual students' understandings

of identity, along with widening their understanding of difference. It thus has the potential to pave the way for a further collective identification, allowing for full reconciliation, as the students have been able to form a new collective identity group. Hence, a potential for future collective transformation from below, through the individual students, certainly exists, and is strengthened by the skills of critical thinking, increased confidence to speak up, active citizenship and courage to face challenges. However, the desired most appropriate means to address the sensitive issues of the past and the nationalist tensions are still lacking within the community. Additionally, the contributions to the wider society and the relevant local communities have been limited, as the students have not been successful in reflecting these learning experiences back to their home communities or the society at large.

Several findings of the present study are in line with those of Hayden and Thompson (2009), introduced in section 3.5, in their research on the success of the student integration at the college. These include the found greater contribution on the individual transformation of the social life outside of the classroom context, as opposed to the formal teaching. Moreover, they also found the significant prevalence of the local students often exclusively grouping together, due to the shared cultural and linguistic qualities. Furthermore, Hayden and Thompson also concluded that the students experience a sense of enhanced skills to overcome disagreements and understand different perspectives, while simultaneously feeling more confident of their own perspectives. Hayden and Thompson also concluded that many students had not been able to maintain the previous friendships, which also conforms to the finding of the present research of the students not feeling capable of transferring their learning experiences back to their home communities. (Hayden & Thompson 2010, 5-18.)

### 10.1 The Need for Further Research

Due to the scope of the research as a master's thesis, in addition to the limited resources available, the study leaves considerable room for further research. Firstly, conducting longer-term ethnographic observations and comparatively more casual conversations within the college community, consisting of nearly continuous presence in the residences and during classes, CAS activities, and project weeks, along with other relevant events that form part of the everyday life in the community, would have been highly beneficial. The ethnographic observations would have

allowed for a more comprehensive and impartial understanding of the context, the existing intergroup relationships, and the collective and individual framings of the issues pertaining to the process of reconciliation under focus, in addition to the skills, attitudes, understandings and other tools and ideas that the students have accumulated during the experience, as discussed above as part of this master's thesis. It might subsequently also have been possible to compare the analysis of the in-depth individual interviews to that of the observations made for the same research participants, and analyse the emergence of possible conflicts between the two sets of data. However, due to the relatively limited time and other resources, for the scope of the research being merely a master's thesis, conducting such ethnographic observations was regrettably not possible. Successfully conducting the interviews for the current research already required a period of approximately two weeks.

Additionally, the present study would have benefitted remarkably from conducting focus group interviews and discussions among the local students and staff. As a result, in comparison to the present research, different kinds of issues, themes and tensions might have emerged, due to purposefully bringing together a variety of opinions and perspectives, and addressing and debating them among the members of the community. Hence, the group dynamics would also have been likely to modify the outcome of the discussions. Furthermore, designing and distributing survey questionnaires among members of the community might have allowed for the use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods during the course of the research, and would therefore have provided the results with an added value of diverse methods, along with a possible inclusion of a larger number of participants in the research. Lastly, conducting a higher number of interviews, possibly also among international students, members of local partner organisations, or parents, for instance, would have inevitably produced a more extensive and all-encompassing analysis with regard to the research question. However, due to the introduced limited time resources available, the use of the mentioned methods was simply not possible for the present master's thesis.

Furthermore, conducting research among the local alumni of UWCiM would certainly prove valuable in analysing the influence and contribution of the college experience through the actions, paths and life choices the alumni has chosen to take, and consequently the impact that attending UWCiM might have had on these. This would consequently allow for a more credible research on

the potential broader social impact of the college's functions. The alumni are also presumably more mature to reflect on the experience and whether and how it has holistically transformed them; their ideas, beliefs and perspectives. Focusing on the alumni would then also allow for an investigation of a similar research question as the one posed in this study, from the perspective of the alumni, and hence possibly provide an opportunity to also compare the results gained from analysing the responses of, for one the current students and for one the alumni. Finally, further research would certainly be beneficial within the broader society of BiH, or the segregated city of Mostar specifically, to evaluate and analyse the potential broader social impacts of UWCiM on locals not attending the college. Hence, similar comparative research with local youth of the same age range would be highly valuable, in addition to researching the experiences and perspectives of other locals having had contact with the UWCiM college community.

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## 12. Annexes

### Annex 1: Sample Interview Questions for Local Students

#### Basic Information:

1. Year of Birth:
2. Gender: [X]?
  - a. Male [ ]
  - b. Female [ ]
  - c. Other [ ]
3. City of birth:
4. Mother tongue:
5. Religion:
6. Do you identify yourself ethnically as Bosniak, Croat, Serb, or other?
7. 1st [ ] year or 2nd [ ] year student?
8. Subjects that currently study in the IB:
9. Who do you live with in the residence?

Theme(s) 1: Background and previous attitudes/prejudices/stereotypes (importance of reconciliation): categorization of the self, impact of society/community family and friends

**1. What motivated you to apply to UWC Mostar?** Do you remember the specific moment when you heard about the school and actually started to think of the possibility of applying - what were your first thoughts? **Was there something you were worried or not sure about, when applying?**

- **Did many of your friends apply to UWC Mostar? What do you think were the reasons for people not to apply? What kinds of people applied to UWC Mostar and who decided to apply somewhere else?**
- **What was emphasised in the selection process when you applied to the school?** How is the application process commonly considered, (e.g. demanding/challenging/difficult or easy/lose/just requires money to get in)? **Do you think the right criteria is used?**

**2. How did your friends, neighbours or family react to you applying to UWC Mostar? How have they reacted now that you study at the school (and live on campus)?** Can you give an example on these reactions? What kind of reputation does the school have in Mostar or BiH?

Theme(s) 2: Relations/contact to other ethnic groups (their kind and importance, comparison with oneself previously and with others in the society/community), talking about the war

**3. How have you experienced it that there are students from all the main ethnic groups of the country studying and living together?** (Challenges, positive sides, reactions from friends and relatives) Could you give some examples?

**4. Who do you spend most time with at the school? How much do you interact with students from the ethnic groups different from your own?** In what kinds of situations, examples? Visits at home, mainly at school and formal hobbies, also during free time?

- **Would you say you have created true friendships with these students?** Would you say inter-ethnic relationships are common at the school? **Do you ever talk about the ethnic conflicts or the war, do they affect these relationships? Do you think your friends from different ethnic backgrounds are good representations of that ethnic group as a whole?**



- **How do you feel about your possibilities of openly discussing the 1992-1995 War and the following reconciliation with students from the ethnic groups different from your own?** Could you give some examples? What aspects do you think specifically affect this? Are the positions between the students equal?
- **How do the students form groups at the school in general, who commonly spends time with whom during free time?**
- **What do you see as the most important things you have learnt about the other ethnic groups through these relationships?** Do you feel you have learned more from them or the international students? **What about the Bosnian history?**

**5. Did you have friends from the other ethnic groups before coming to UWC Mostar?** Why do you think that is? Is that common?

Theme 3: Current attitudes towards the other ethnic groups (empathy, categorization, trust, identity, belonging, stereotypes, prejudices, resentment, respect etc.), talking about the war

**6. Please react to the following statements with the number on the scale below that best suits your opinion/position. Please explain why.**

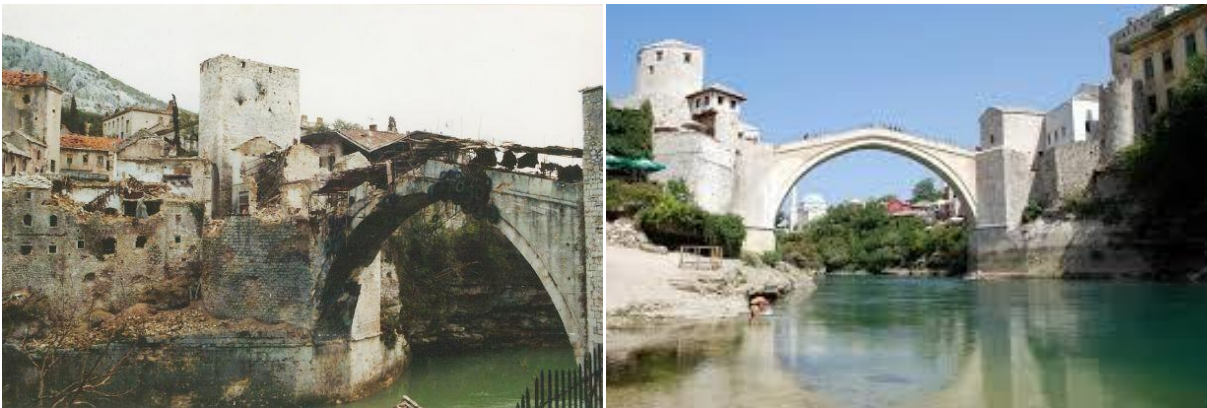
*Strongly disagree: 1 | Disagree: 2 | Neither agree nor disagree: 3 | Agree: 4 | Strongly agree: 5*

1. Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs are in many ways very different to each other as peoples.
2. I cannot as openly share my personal feelings, experiences and fears with the people I know from the other ethnic groups, as I can with the people I know from my own ethnic group.
3. Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs should all have an equal position to freely express their views, even if I disagree with them.
4. I would more often like to see persons of the different ethnic groups in BiH working together towards a common goal.

**7. Are you familiar with the image below and the story of Uros and Antonija? How do you feel about it? Do you see it as a personal possibility to date or even marry a person from an ethnic group different from your own? How would your fellow students or teachers and staff react?**



**8. What do these images of the Stari Most Bridge represent to you in terms of war and peace?**



**9. Do you think you would have answered differently at some earlier point in your life? Why?** Do you think your answers might be very different from those of another local student at UWC Mostar or some random person on the street? Your siblings?

Theme 4: Reconciliation (its meaning, discussing it and the war, its importance, how should it be approached, possibilities to talk openly at the school, the encouragement provided by the school, wishes for the future)

**10. What does reconciliation mean to you?** (Make peace, come together, peaceful co-existence, respect between the groups/members of the groups)

**11. How do you feel about the current relationships between ethnic groups in the society? (Equality?) What kind of a future do you wish for in BiH?** Do you think this wish is shared (with members of the other ethnic groups, family)? For how long have you had this wish? **How important is the Bosnian War to you?** Do you feel you have very different ideas of the war when compared to another local student from a different ethnic group?

**12. Have you discussed the war and ethnic conflicts in Bosnia or reconciliation in class, in some of your subjects?** (History, Literature, Global Politics etc.) **What about outside class, during Balkan studies or the CAS (Creativity, Action, Service) activities, for example? EXAMPLES** How do you feel about it, should it be discussed? **What have you learned from these discussions?** Have you participated in some workshops on these themes? Is reconciliation discussed at home?

**13. What have you, during the studies, learned about resolving disputes or conflicts? What about the differences between the Bosnian ethnic groups? What have you learned about the possibilities of you as a young person in being part of the reconciliation? Who do you think has the responsibility to work towards reconciliation in BiH/having a change in the society?** How do you, for example, personally react to some opinions or views that are completely against those of your own?  
Future/Conclusion

14. **How do you think studying at UWC Mostar will affect your life later in the future?** (thoughts, behavior) Will it make some difference in your community or do you see it has some impact here in the society of Mostar?

15. **This is all I have to discuss. Would you have something else you would like to add or talk about?**

## Annex 2: Sample Interview Questions for Staff Members and/or Alumni

### Basic Information:

2. Country and city of birth:
3. Mother tongue:
4. Religion:
5. Do you identify yourself ethnically as Bosniak, Croat, Serb, or other?
6. In which year did you graduate? / Since which year have you been working at the UWC Mostar?

1. **Is reconciliation taken into account when selecting the students, especially the local ones? How? How do you see the students' initial attitudes towards reconciliation are when they first enter the school? How do you feel about the selection criteria of the students?**
2. **What kinds of students, in your opinion, decide to apply to UWC Mostar?** (Alumni: what initially motivated you to apply to UWC Mostar, what were you worried about? How did your friends and family react?) **Are you aware of some challenges in collecting a diverse group of students?**
3. **What do you think is emphasised in the selection of staff members when it comes to reconciliation? Is this the correct criteria?**
4. **How do you see the relationships between the local students at UWC Mostar? Are real friendships formed between them, with persons from different ethnic backgrounds? Do some prejudices, stereotypes and/or tensions exist between the students in the everyday life of the school? Could you give some examples?** (Alumni: reflecting on your own experience, have you identified some change over time? Who did you spend most time with at the school? Have you maintained those relationships after graduation? How did you experience it that there are students from all the ethnic groups studying together? What were the most important things you learned about the different ethnic groups during your time as a student at UWC Mostar?)
5. **What do you see as the most important quality within the school community that causes groupings between the students? Has this changed in the recent years?** (Alumni: has this changed from your time?)
6. **Have you noticed some changes in the attitudes or behavior of individual students, when it comes to the other ethnic groups, social tensions or the war, over the period of two years? What about differences in time in the way**

**people see reconciliation and its importance?**

- 7. What, according to your knowledge, are the most important aims of the school when it comes to reconciliation? How have they been attempted at (in the curriculum, teaching, other activities, etc.)? What would you identify as the major challenges or successes in this?**
- 8. Are reconciliation, the war and the present-day ethnic tensions explicitly discussed in the school, during teaching or the other activities? How? Do the students have the opportunity to openly discuss these issues? How do you feel about the need to explicitly discuss the issues?**
- 9. Who do you think has the responsibility for working on the reconciliation in society at large? What does reconciliation mean to you? What kind of a future do you wish for BiH?**
- 10. Promoting tolerance, equality and peace are stated as among the aims and values of the college – how are these specifically attempted at, would you have some concrete examples? Have you yourself identified some change in the way your attitudes towards people with completely different opinions, for example? Or towards the war and ethnic tensions in society?**
- 11. What knowledge, skills and qualities do you see as necessary to promote the reconciliation? How are they aimed at in the school?**
- 12. I've seen these success stories of UWC Mostar (Uros and Antonija as an example) – would you have some similar stories of some challenges over the years between members of different ethnic groups, of situations when it has been specifically difficult to promote the values of the school?**
- 13. How do you see the broader impact of UWC Mostar in the society? Or in the local gymnasium located in the same building? What is the reputation of the school in the society like? How is the co-operation with the gymnasium or the integration to the larger society? Has there been a change in this over time?**
- 14. (Alumni: how do you personally feel attending UWC Mostar will have or has already had an impact on your future life?)**
- 15. This is all I have to discuss. Would you have something else you would like to add or would see as important to talk about?**