

**“IT IS IN THEIR BLOOD TO FIGHT”: ETHNIC PREJUDICES AMONG YOUNG  
MACEDONIANS**

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## **Abstract**

The following study investigates and compares the attitudes and prejudices of the primary school students of Macedonian ethnicity, toward the members of the Albanian minority in the Republic of Macedonia. A comparison is made between children at the ages of 10 and 11, attending [almost] ethnically homogeneous schools, where instructions are given only in Macedonian language vis-à-vis children attending the so-called “mixed” schools, where instructions are given in both Macedonian and Albanian languages. The research structure of this study is guided by the theories and concepts of Prejudice and Prejudice Development and Contact Hypothesis Theory. As no previous research covering this topic is conducted in Macedonia, the thesis relies only on primary source data acquired via six focus group discussions – three focus groups per school. Then, by employing the Thematic Analysis method, I present the results by identifying common themes of discussion and by simultaneously reporting on the similar and/or different attitudes children have regarding the topic. The analyzed data indicates that there is no positive correlation between contact and prejudice. In fact, the study discovered that the children attending ethnically mixed school hold more negative attitudes towards the Albanians, than the ones attending ethnically homogeneous school.

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## Introduction

One can argue, that within the academia, the phenomenon of prejudice is researched to the point that now people know about it enough to understand what it actually is, and how the society should deal with prejudiced attitudes. While I acknowledge the vast literature on prejudice, I argue that we should not think of it linearly and statically, nor we should treat prejudice as separate, independent entity. In fact, prejudice is fluid phenomena that can appear, disappear and/or reappear across the societies. They are often referred to as one of the most important "social hurdles for the development of democratic societies".<sup>1</sup> When societies change, so do prejudice and in order to follow up, we need continual research. Moreover, in order to really understand it, we should always look into the broader context with which prejudice co-exist. Consequently, each different context provides an invaluable data on prejudices that can be similar, but never the same when compared with other studies. The data acquired from the specific context will not provide a universal understanding of prejudice, nor would it help us fight current world problems [partially] caused by prejudices, but it will surely guide us in building better societies.

This thesis tries to contribute and engage with the literature on prejudice by introducing a new research study – the case of Macedonia. The study aims to explore the prejudiced attitudes and compare the experiences of Macedonian children (aged 10 and 11) studying in ethnically homogeneous school to those of the children studying in an ethnically mixed school. As I argued before, prejudice should not be separated from its background. Therefore, in order to introduce

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<sup>1</sup>Luca Váradi, *Youths Trapped in Prejudice: Hungarian Adolescents' Attitudes towards the Roma* (Springer Science & Business, 2014).

the research and its question[s], in the following subchapter, I first give an overview of the specific context of the issue. Then I proceed with presenting the theoretical framework which guides the design of this study. Finally, I present the analysis followed by a conclusion and further discussion.

## Chapter 1.The Context

The Republic of Macedonia is an ethnically and culturally diverse country<sup>2</sup>, in which the social life of the different ethnic communities takes place along rather than across the lines of the ethnic divisions.<sup>3</sup> The country is home to many different ethnic minorities, to mention the largest ones: Albanians, Turks, Roma, Bosniaks, and Vlachs.<sup>4</sup> Although most of these communities tend to live in separate, paralleled societies, the deepest ethnic cleavages exist between the majority of the Macedonians and the largest ethnic minority – The Albanians. Communication and interaction have been even worse since the 2001 ethnic conflict between the two groups; a conflict that was stopped by the international community with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement(OFA) before developing into a civil war. Since then, the gap between these two groups rapidly widened which led to widespread xenophobia thus creating further alienation, limiting the already eroded communication between them. After seventeen years of the ethnic conflict, the distinct language, cultural traditions, and religion are still keeping these communities in great social distance. This is mainly due to the fact that these differences are further systemized by the homogeneous institutions the Albanians and Macedonians use. Schools, in particular ethnically segregated primary schools, are one of the main contributors to the climate of general distrust among the youth in Macedonia.

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<sup>2</sup>Kire Sharlamanov, "The Multiculturalism in the Republic of Macedonia, Observed Through the Perceptions for the Symbols of the Other Ethnic Groups: Framework of the Symbolic Interactionism," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2, no. 23 (n.d.): 64–70.

<sup>3</sup>Aisling Lyon, *Decentralisation and the Management of Ethnic Conflict: Lessons from the Republic of Macedonia* (Routledge, 2015).

<sup>4</sup>CENSUS OF POPULATION, HOUSEHOLDS AND DWELLINGS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, 2002 - BOOK XIII

Educational institutions play a major role in the development of our societies. They transmit the knowledge and values on the next generation with the aim to create a socio-political continuity of the communities. Therefore, educational institutions' role in post-conflict societies, such as Macedonia, will be even more crucial than the ordinary. Educational institutions' function can provide and facilitate the needed framework which will allow the former warring sides to establish common ground and rebuild their social infrastructure.<sup>5</sup> But ethnically divided schools cannot really serve this purpose. Instead, they nourish negative stereotypes and prejudices about the "others" which continues to keep these sides in distance.

In Macedonia, the primary schools' segregation is not an enforced political measure, but rather an arrangement as a consequence from the implementation of the rules and regulations of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.<sup>6</sup> The OFA arrangement entitled all the ethnic minorities that count at least 20 percent of the entire municipality population, to establish schools and universities through which they can acquire diplomas in their own mother tongue.<sup>7</sup> Due to the fact that the Albanians are the largest minority in Macedonia, it is the Albanian schools that are most widespread. Thus, both Albanians and Macedonians usually attend separate, ethnically homogeneous schools.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, there are the so-called "mixed" schools, which are the

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<sup>5</sup>Zlatko Čustović. "Ethnically Divided Education and Its Contradictions: The Case of the Croatia Program in Bosnia and Herzegovina." Master Thesis, Central European University, 2015.

<sup>6</sup>Koneska, Cvete. *After Ethnic Conflict: Policy-Making in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014.

<sup>7</sup>Macedonia: Understanding History, Preventing Future Conflict," United States Institute of Peace, accessed May 23, 2018, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2004/02/macedonia-understanding-history-preventing-future-conflict>.

<sup>8</sup>Barbieri, Sara, RoskaVrgova, and Jovan Bliznakovski. "Overcoming Ethnic-Based Segregation: How to Integrate Public Schools in Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina," November, 2013. Accessed May 30, 2018.



similar concept of "two schools under one roof". To note, these schools are not to be confused with schools promoting integrated education model. Their existence is rather for pragmatic reasons, such as lack of resources to establish another school, etc. Sometimes, these schools adopt a strict shift system where the ethnic groups use the same school at different times of the day (different school shifts) or if they go in the same school shift, they have their lunch breaks scheduled at a different hour of the day.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, as there is no published data, very little is known about what is happening in these schools. In addition, there has been no previous research done in Macedonia dealing with prejudices. Previous work related to the field is only tackling issues of multiculturalism in education, education policies in Macedonia and evaluations of the same, and summary of discrimination cases based on ethnicity within the educational institutions.<sup>10</sup> Due to the lack of previous literature, formulating a proper research question represents a challenging task. However, the purpose of this thesis is not to answer one specific question, but rather, it aims to introduce and explore the topic in order to provide a better understanding of the similarities and differences which the children attending the homogeneous and mixed schools have. With this, the thesis also aims to provide a data which will serve as a ground for further academic research on the topic of ethnic prejudices in Macedonia.

With that said, one of my main questions is: How do the children's attitudes from the homogeneous school differ from the attitudes of the children in the ethnically mixed school?

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<sup>9</sup>“Overcoming Ethnic-Based Segregation in Public Schools – Policy Brief,” *IDSCS* (blog), December 2, 2013, <http://idscs.org.mk/en/2013/12/02/overcoming-ethnic-based-segregation-in-public-schools-2/>.

<sup>10</sup>See: Daftary, 2000; Petrovski, 2007; Beshka et al. 2009; Krzalovski et al. 2010

Additionally, I aim to explore: What are the common themes through which children show negative attitudes for the Albanians? I then compare their experiences with the guidance of the Contact Hypothesis. Following this theory, the next question this thesis tries to explore is whether the contact situation results in a positive outcome, i.e. less prejudiced attitudes among the children. Thus, the question will be: "Do the children from the ethnically mixed school have fewer prejudices than the children in the ethnically homogeneous school? The overview of the relevant theoretical frameworks is presented in the following chapter.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

In order to understand the processes through which the participants form their opinions and attitudes towards the Albanians, as already mentioned, this study relies on the guidance of two different theoretical frameworks: 1) Prejudice and Prejudice Development and 2) Contact Hypothesis. In the following pages, I review the relevant literature on these concepts and theories.

### 2.1. Prejudice and Prejudice Development

It happens very often that we hear and/or use the word “prejudice” in our everyday conversations. When we use or hear the word, we assume that the person at the other end of the conversation understands “prejudice” in the same way as we do. The chances are that we both have at least slightly different understanding of its meaning. Over the last decade, the term “prejudice” has been used to designate a variety of phenomena. The first explanation of the term was provided by the prominent Harvard social psychologist Gordon Allport. In his book “The Nature of Prejudice”, he defines prejudice as “an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization that may be directed towards a group or an individual of the group”.<sup>11</sup> Since then, different authors modified, contributed to and contested this definition according to the needs of their research. Yet, as Fishbein<sup>12</sup> and Brown<sup>13</sup> noted, all of the different interpretations of the word “prejudice” conclude that it is a negative *attitude* towards the others because of their membership in a particular group.

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<sup>11</sup>Gordon Willard Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Doubleday, 1958).

<sup>12</sup>Fishbein H.D., *Peer prejudice and discrimination: The origins of prejudice* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2002).

<sup>13</sup>Brown Rupert, *Prejudice: Its social psychology*. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2011)

Bearing in mind that the research samples in this study are children aged 10 and 11, providing a comprehensive definition of prejudice is more challenging task than usual. The common definitions might not be suitable in this case, as the literature suggests that the children's prejudices differ from those that the adults have.<sup>14</sup>

Children are not born prejudiced; instead, they learn about prejudices through their parents, teachers, cultural and social norms, etc. Before the age of 10, children are transmitting their parents' prejudices without any further awareness or personal negative feelings for the different group.<sup>15</sup> However, at the ages between 10 and 12, they begin to understand the different social categories and learn how to use them.<sup>16</sup> Children can make a distinction between the 'in-group' and the 'out-group' members,<sup>17</sup> which allows them to develop an identity that is built upon their sense of belonging in the group. This stage of prejudice development is extremely important and crucial since at these ages children structure their personal values that are carried throughout adolescence and often stay for life.<sup>18</sup> As much as this seems exciting due to the fact that the prejudices are not crystallized yet, and the negative attitudes can be influenced before they are carried further in life, when it comes to social research, approaching the attitudes of this age group is relatively difficult. In order to properly explore the nature of prejudice, the literature suggests that one should look into all of the three components of the prejudice: 1) *cognitive* (information about the members from the other group); 2) *affective* (feelings about the members

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<sup>14</sup>Kay Deaux and Mark Snyder, *The Oxford Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2012).

<sup>15</sup>Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Frances E. Aboud, "The Development of Prejudice in Childhood and Adolescence," in *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 310–26, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470773963.ch19>.

<sup>18</sup>Luca Váradi, *Youths Trapped in Prejudice: Hungarian Adolescents' Attitudes towards the Roma* (Springer Science & Business, 2014).

from the other group); 3) *behavioral* (actions taken when in contact with the members from the other group).<sup>19</sup> Although all of these categories are important and interrelated, when it comes to children and prejudice, major inconsistencies can be noticed between their attitudes and behavior. This is indeed a consequence of their age and the fact that their cognitive system is not fully developed yet.<sup>20</sup> For this reason, when analyzing the results of the study, I will be only looking at the cognitive and affective elements of the children's prejudices. That said, further in this study, I refer to “prejudice” as negative *feeling* or *attitude* of an individual towards members of another group because of their membership in that particular group. Lastly, due to the fact that I explore prejudices towards an ethnic group, I label them as ethnic prejudices.

## 2.2. The Contact Hypothesis

The consequences of the contact of two conflicting groups was a widely discussed topic long before Gordon W. Allport<sup>21</sup> introduced the famous Contact Hypothesis (or Intergroup Contact) Theory. Most of the experts in the field were skeptical of the idea that the contact reduces conflict and prejudices.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the early empirical evidence did not show positive results.<sup>23</sup> It was not until later in the history that the scientists found a way to make contact work. One of the strategies was introduced by Allport and his Contact Hypothesis Theory which argued that before the conflicting groups came together, the following conditions should be established: 1) equal status; 2) common goals; 3) intergroup cooperation, and 4) support from

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<sup>19</sup>Howard J. Ehrlich, “The Social Psychology of Prejudice: A Systematic Theoretical Review and Propositional Inventory of the American Social Psychological Study of Prejudice /,” 1973.

<sup>20</sup>Aboud, “The Development of Prejudice in Childhood and Adolescence.”

<sup>21</sup>Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*.

<sup>22</sup> See: Summer(1906); Jackson, J. W. (1983); Levine, R. A. & Campbell, D. T. (1972).

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, “Allport’s Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence,” in *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport*, 2008, 262–77, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470773963.ch16>.

authorities.<sup>24</sup>The conditions' aim was to support the contact for it to result in a positive outcome. Since first introduced in the field of social psychology, the theory has been tested through hundred case studies. In one of the more recent pieces, Pettigrew and Tropp (2005, 2013) implemented a statistical meta-analysis model to track down studies dealing with Contact Hypothesis Theory and its outcomes. Drawing on five-year research and 515 studies, authors concluded that there is a positive correlation between Allport's theory and prejudice reduction.<sup>25</sup>More importantly, the extensive literature on the intergroup contact does not overlook Allport's proposed conditions. On the contrary, studies often discuss the importance of the conditions and the results from it.<sup>26</sup>By relying on the empirical data, one can argue, both for and against the necessity of the conditions in the contact situation. For example, in their attempt to establish a program that ends school segregation, Schofield, J. W., & Eurich-Fulcer, R. used the contact strategy without the support of the four conditions. In result, the program did not succeed in reducing students prejudices.<sup>27</sup> In the meantime, other empirical data suggests that the contact works regardless of the fact that the conditions are not established. As John F. Dovidio and others suggest, "there is impressive evidence across a range of minority groups, including homosexuals, people with a psychiatric disorder as well as racial and ethnic minorities."

The inconsistency of the conditions' employment and the contact results, I argue, is a consequence of two things. First, the studies seem to overlook the specific context when they

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, p.226.

<sup>26</sup>John F. Dovidio, Samuel L. Gaertner, and Kerry Kawakami, "Intergroup Contact: The Past, Present, and the Future," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 5–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430203006001009>.

<sup>27</sup>Janet W. Schofield and Rebecca Eurich-Fulcer, "When and How School Desegregation Improves Intergroup Relations," in *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 475–94, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470693421.ch23>.

draw conclusions on whether the contact works with or without the conditions. In practice, this means that contact without the conditions can work when, for example, one's negative feelings and attitudes for the other[s] are based on general stereotypes and/or no personal experience. But if the prejudices are based on a personal experience involving violent past (think of the cases of ethnic conflict) than the contact without the condition established is less likely to produce positive outcomes. Additionally, in the case of the violent past, one should also look at the time of the violent events, vis-à-vis, the time when the contact is applied. If it is too soon after the event, the contact (without the conditions) might not work, but if it is, for example, ten years in the future, then the conditions might not be necessary. Yet, this also depends on how these communities continued their interaction after the conflict ended.

Secondly, related to this, the literature pays little attention to the definitions and meanings of the conditions within that specific context. For instance, what does “an equal status” mean? Bearing in mind that the same status can be perceived as “equal” by one of the groups in the conflict, but “unequal” by the other group<sup>28</sup>, how can we be sure that the condition is properly established? Similarly to the contact, it is also important not to neglect the broader context when we look into the contact's conditions. In line with this, critics are also addressed in one of the most recent studies by Judit Kende et al. In their observation, authors argue that to understand Allport's conditions and the contact itself, one should look beyond the immediate contact situation. The study is primarily dealing with the contact and the “equal status” condition, situating it in the

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<sup>28</sup>Sven Heidenreich, *The Equal Opportunity Illusion: The Effects of Prejudice and Power on Information Seeking, Employee Evaluation, Task Assignment, and Estimates of Employee Success* (GRIN Verlag, 2004).

cultural context of the conflicting groups.<sup>29</sup> The main logic behind these authors' arguments is that contact cannot be isolated from the wider cultural surrounding<sup>30</sup>. Thus, if we look in the cultural background, the case might be that in some cultural societies the "equal status" condition will be more crucial and in others, it will be more peripheral. Logically, we can expect that the establishment of the "equal status" condition will be more necessary in the former situation, whereas in the latter, groups are likely to seize the positive outcomes of the contact without the employment of the "equal status". Borrowing the results of Pettigrew and Tropp's above-mentioned meta-analysis research, Judit Kende et al. add a cultural level of analysis by using the calculated country mean score with the subscales of the Schwartz Value Surveys.<sup>31</sup> The research concludes that there is indeed a correlation between the broader cultural context and the immediate contact i.e., the equal status condition. Lastly, as I also note before, the final results support the argument that every different culture is valuing the equality factor in social relations distinctively, and it is therefore inevitably to expect that in more hierarchical cultures (where the equal status is not so valued) the contact-prejudice association will be weaker. On the contrary, in the egalitarian societies where equality is loudly endorsed in people's social lives, the equal status is resulting in stronger contact-prejudice association.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, the case of the Republic of Macedonia has its own dynamics. While nearly 20 years have passed from the ethnic conflict between the Macedonians and the Albanians, simple contact might not work in this case due to the institutional divisions of the ethnic groups.

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<sup>29</sup>Judit Kende et al., "Equality Revisited: A Cultural Meta-Analysis of Intergroup Contact and Prejudice," *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, September 12, 2017, 1948550617728993, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617728993>.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. p. 6.



First of all, the poor literature on inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia has not been updated recently.<sup>33</sup> In addition, not many of the previous studies looked into the specific age group that this research studies. However, thanks to the working reports of international [non-governmental] organization, there is some information provided about the school segregation across ethnic lines.<sup>34</sup> To summarize, as mentioned before, the school segregation across ethnic lines in Macedonia is a consequence of the language regulation, i.e., the right of the Albanian minority to pursue an education in their mother tongue. Hence, mixed schools are not structured “multiethnically” in order to foster cooperation between the students, but rather for pragmatic reasons such as lack of resources, etc. As Petroska-Beska and Najcevska note, in the ethnically mixed schools children remain separated in their own ethnic worlds, studying in their own mother tongue.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence, there is lack of communication between the groups, which is also obvious during the lunch breaks and extracurricular activities. Moreover, ethnic divisions also exist between the authoritative figures in this school – children's teachers – who rarely cooperate with each other.<sup>36</sup> Certainly, this observation suggests that in the ethnically mixed schools in Macedonia, Allport’s contact conditions are not established. Although the description of the general dynamics in the mixed school summarized above might already suggest what will be the results when we apply the Contact Hypothesis without the conditions, this study tries to explore this issue from a comparative perspective. Therefore, I am not primarily interested whether the contact with[out] the conditions works in the mixed school, instead, I compare the level of prejudices between the students attending a mixed school and students attending

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<sup>33</sup>See:Ortakovski (2001); Sharlamanov (2013); Simoska (2012)

<sup>34</sup>See:Petroska – Beska 2004; Bakiu, Dimitrova and Brava (2016); Myhrvold (2004).

<sup>35</sup>“Macedonia: Understanding History, Preventing Future Conflict,” United States Institute of Peace, accessed May 23, 2018, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2004/02/macedonia-understanding-history-preventing-future-conflict>.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p.3.

homogeneous school. Yet, if during the data collection process participants share some information that will enable me to identify reasons for why the contact does or does not work; I will address them in my analysis in order to suggest directions for further research.

Due to the lack of a proper reconciliation process generally between the majority of the Macedonians and the Albanians, accompanied with the contact conditions' absence in the schools, I expect to discover that the contact *does not* lead to less prejudice. The assumption is that children attending mixed school will show the same amount or more negative feelings and attitudes towards the Albanians when compared with the feelings and attitudes of the children attending ethnically homogeneous school.

At the end of this section, I want to point out that none of the studies employing the intergroup contact framework is clarifying what contact actually is. How much is enough contact in order to test the Contact Hypothesis? As this question has not been answered, I take the liberty to treat this term according to the needs of my study. Accordingly, I define the contact as the continuous action of basic communication (exchanging greetings) and/or meeting (physical appearance) of two people at the same place, at the same time.

### Chapter 3. Terminologies and Definitions

There are terms used in this thesis which hold a special meaning in the context of the Macedonian case. In order to avoid any possible confusion and ensure coherence, I here shortly explain in which connotation these terms are used. Some of them I already mention and elaborate in the previous subchapters, but I include them here again just to make sure that they are properly explained.

#### *Ethnic Group*

In the past, many experts and scholars have attempted to find a common definition for the notion of “ethnicity”. And they have failed to do so. Since there is a struggle to define the “ethnic”, inherently there are also difficulties in developing a more universal definition of what ethnic group represents. From the variety of definitions, for the purpose of this study, I use this term in a traditional sense. An ethnic group is, therefore, a group of people with a common origin, distinguished by race, language or caste.<sup>37</sup>

#### *The Albanians*

When Albanians are mentioned in this thesis, it refers to the Macedonian’s largest minority (25.2%)<sup>38</sup>. For the relevance of the study, it is important to note that these people do not have any relations to the country of Albania and therefore in many instances, they are referred as ‘Albanian from Macedonia’ or within the Macedonian society as ‘ethnically Albanian’.

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<sup>37</sup>*Ethnic Groups in Conflict, Updated Edition With a New Preface*, accessed May 15, 2018, <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520227064/ethnic-groups-in-conflict-updated-edition-with-a-new-preface>.

<sup>38</sup>Census of Population, Households, and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002 - Book XIII.

### ***Shiptar***

Shiptar (Shiptari in plural) is an additional term used for the Albanians. Its origin comes from the word ‘Shqipetar’ which means ‘Albanian’ in the Albanian language. However, when the term is used by the Macedonians, it is used in an offensive manner, and it is also considered derogatory by the Albanians, due to its negative connotations.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Ethnically Homogeneous School***

In Macedonia, ethnically homogeneous schools are considered the schools in which the students enrolled are from the same ethnic group. In addition, they follow instructions in only one language – their mother tongue. Even more specifically, in this study, a homogeneous school refers to school which only ethnic Macedonians attend. Instructions are given in no other language but Macedonian. Although currently there is no statistical data available to support my claim, I argue that ethnically homogeneous schools do not exist in practice since, at every school, there must be at least one child from another ethnicity. When I write “[almost] ethnically homogeneous school”, this is what I refer to.

### ***Ethnically Mixed School***

The mixed school is the same concept of “two schools under one roof”. Mixed schools usually refer to schools that host students from two or more ethnicities. In the mixed school in this study, as is the most common case in Macedonia, children from Macedonian and Albanian ethnic groups study together. They go to classes in the same school shift, use the same school entrance

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<sup>39</sup>Paul Mojzes, *Balkan Genocides: Holocaust and Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

and have their lunch breaks at the same time. This practice is not always the case, as there are mixed schools in which student go in different shift, use a different entrance etc.

## Chapter 4. Methodological Framework

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the research design. The chapter starts by validating the selection of the case study. Then, the research method and its application are discussed. The chapter continues with an overview of the research sample and data collection, and finally, it concludes with a brief summary and elaboration of the discussion guide.

The present study explores the prejudice through qualitative methods and data materials. I decided to follow a qualitative model due to its “ability to illuminate the particulars of human experience in the context of a common phenomenon.”<sup>40</sup> Consequently, by collecting multiple sources on a common topic, generalizations on the topic of discussion can be drawn.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, as there are no primary sources on this topic in the Macedonian context, it is only through qualitative design that the topic can be introduced and explored thoroughly.

### 4.1. Selection of the Comparative Cases

In order to compare the experiences of the students in ethnically homogeneous schools and ethnically mixed schools, two such schools were compared. When deciding on the study samples, I was not only looking at the schools but also in the neighborhood structure in which these schools operate. The aim was to select schools that reflect the settlement in which they are located. Accordingly, the ethnically homogeneous school is situated in an [almost] ethnically homogeneous settlement, and the ethnically mixed school is located in a more ethnically diverse

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<sup>40</sup>“Making Sense of Qualitative Data,” SAGE Publications Ltd, May 14, 2018, <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/making-sense-of-qualitative-data/book5617>.

<sup>41</sup>Lioness Ayres, Karen Kavanaugh, and Kathleen A. Knafl, “Within-Case and Across-Case Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis,” *Qualitative Health Research* 13, no. 6 (July 1, 2003): 871–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732303013006008>.

neighborhood. Since contact is one of the theoretical frameworks through which the children's experience and prejudices in the different schools are compared, ensuring consistency between the schools and neighborhoods' is highly important since it decreases the chances of students having a contact in both cases. Otherwise, if for example, a participant of this study is a student in an ethnically homogeneous school situated in an ethnically diverse municipality (which is an existing case in some neighborhoods in Macedonia) then he/she might not have a contact with member of the Albanian ethnic group within the school per se, but he/she still might encounter an Albanian outside the school, i.e., in his/her neighborhood. Thus, the contact experience comparison will be irrelevant.

This empirical study classifies as a within-case study, where the Republic of Macedonia is taken as the case study and the different primary schools are the units of comparison and analysis. The within-case studies allow thorough explanation of a single issue. It explores the case in details to identify "how the processes or patterns that are revealed in that case support, refute or expand a theory that has been previously selected."<sup>42</sup>I, therefore, analyze the results from each school in isolation one from another and later on present the results by identifying common themes and comparing them.

#### **4.2. Data Collection Method**

The qualitative method used for data collection in this thesis is focus groups. In the past, focus groups have set a good example for exploring children's deeper perceptions, opinions,

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<sup>42</sup>“Encyclopedia of Case Study Research,” SAGE Publications Ltd, May 14, 2018, <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/encyclopedia-of-case-study-research/book231721>.

attitudes, and concerns.<sup>43</sup> When engaged in a group discussion, children are less likely to feel the imbalance between me as a moderator and/or adult, and them as participants and/or children.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the entire setting of a focus group offers to each individual the support needed, which results in greater openness in the children's responses. Subsequently, the engagement with a group discussion stimulates them to present points that might be neglected in individual conversation, especially when a sensitive topic such as ethnicity and prejudice are discussed.<sup>45</sup> The following section is providing more details about the research sample and the data collection in practice.

### 4.3. Research Sample and Data Collection

In total, six focus groups were formed for this research. Three focus groups took place in the ethnically homogeneous school, and three focus groups took place in the mixed school. In each school, two groups encompassed gender homogeneity (one group male only; another group female only), and in both schools, the third group consisted of both male and female students. The gender homogeneity was employed since the literature suggests that sex division between children at this age exists, i.e., they tend to group themselves as "boys" versus "girls," and friendships are formed along rather than across these categories.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, this arrangement boosts the participants' confidence in the group discussion which leads to more

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<sup>43</sup> Gibson, Faith. "Conducting Focus Groups with Children and Young People: Strategies for Success." *Journal of Research in Nursing* 12, no. 5 (September 1, 2007): 473–83.

<sup>44</sup> Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan, *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods* (SAGE, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 2

<sup>46</sup> "Exploring Children's Views through Focus Groups," in *Researching Children's Experience*, by Sheila Greene and Diane Hogan (1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London England EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2005), 237–52, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209823.n13>.



details. However, the mixed group with boys and girls was formed to avoid biased results as a consequence of some internal group dynamic. Following the experience from previous studies working with children's focus groups, no more than six members were included per group.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, homogeneous groups consisted of five members; gender-mixed groups counted three male members and three female members – six in total. Students were selected with the help from their classroom teachers. Teachers were asked to recommend students who have already formed friendship groups. Preliminary constructed social groups are another strategy for ensuring safe peer environment and comfortable space for discussing sensitive topics.<sup>48</sup> The table below presents the key information for the focus groups structure:

**Table 1. Focus Groups Structure**

SCHOOL TYPE	NUMBER OF MEMBERS	GENDER	CODE	GRADE/AGE
Ethnically Homogeneous	5	MALE	FH1	FOURTH GRADE (10 yrs)
Ethnically Homogeneous	5	FEMALE	FH2	FOURTH GRADE (10-11 yrs)
Ethnically Homogeneous	6	MIXED	FH3	FIFTH GRADE (11 yrs)
Ethnically Mixed	5	MALE	FM1	FIFTH GRADE (11 yrs)
Ethnically Mixed	5	FEMALE	FM2	FOURTH GRADE (10 yrs)
Ethnically Mixed	6	MIXED	FM3	FIFTH GRADE (10-11 yrs)

All parties in this research were briefed about the purpose of the study, and they were ensured privacy and anonymity of the data gathered throughout this process. Since the participants were

<sup>47</sup>Myfanwy Morgan et al., "Hearing Children's Voices: Methodological Issues in Conducting Focus Groups with Children Aged 7-11 Years," *Qualitative Research* 2, no. 1 (April 1, 2002): 5–20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794102002001636>.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, p. 476

underage (at the ages of 10 and 11), prior to their participation in the focus groups, a consent form was delivered to their parents.<sup>49</sup> Children were asked to distribute the consent form sheet to their parents at home, return it signed the next day and handed it to their classroom teacher. Considering the chances of some parents' opposing their children's participation, as a matter of precaution<sup>50</sup>, eight consent forms were planned for each focus group. All of the forms were handed to the teacher, but she was asked to distribute only five of them primarily. If some of them returned with disapproval, the teacher agreed to hand more consent forms to other potential participants of her recommendation. In practice, this was necessary for only one focus group, with only one student (FH1). The following day, another participant was selected, parents' approval was granted, and the focus group counted five participants as initially planned. All of the group discussions took place within the schools' domains<sup>51</sup>, in the week of April 16<sup>th</sup> through April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018. On average, the discussions lasted from 50 to 60 minutes per group. The conversations were audiotaped, transcribed and anonymized in the original language – Macedonian. The quotes from the interviews included in this thesis were later on translated into English by me. What follows in the next subchapter is more information about the topic guideline and its design.

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<sup>49</sup>“Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms — School of the Biological Sciences,” Page, accessed April 28, 2018, <https://www.bio.cam.ac.uk/psyres/information sheets>.

<sup>50</sup>Richard Krueger and Jean King, *Involving Community Members in Focus Groups*, 5 vols. (Thousand Oaks, California, 1998), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483328140>.

<sup>51</sup>Morgan et al., “Hearing Children’s Voices.”

#### 4.4. Topic Guide

After introducing myself to the participants (and vice versa) and before engaging in any discussion with the children, I spared 10-15 minutes for an ice-breaker game. By participating in the game, I aimed to minimize the adult-child dynamics in the group<sup>52</sup> and make participants welcomed and relaxed. Then, I asked the participants to help me set some ground rules for the dynamics of the following discussion. This makes the children feel valued, which contributes to the establishment of safe space, which then results in more open communication.<sup>53</sup>

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, there were no concrete questions formed prior to the focus groups discussions. Instead, I developed a very general guideline of the topics of interest in this research (see Appendix 2). The discussions always started with more general topics and then gradually approached the more sensitive issues.<sup>54</sup> Considering the semi-structured nature of the focus groups, I did not always follow the set guideline, as during the discussions new topics emerged and new questions related to those topics were raised by me.

I often asked “what” and “how” questions, since the literature suggests that they foster better responses from the children.<sup>55</sup> For example, I started the discussion by asking "What do you think makes your school special?; What do you like/dislike the most about your school?" I then proceed with asking about their class: "How do you think your class differs from the other?; What do you think about your classmates?". To finally access their attitudes about the "other", I asked: "Have you noticed anyone different in your school?". When the answer was "YES", I

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<sup>52</sup> Gibson, Faith. “Conducting Focus Groups with Children and Young People: Strategies for Success.” *Journal of Research in Nursing* 12, no. 5 (September 1, 2007): 473–83. 478

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis, *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* (SAGE, 2003).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, pp. 479-480.

proceeded with "What do you think about them? How do you think they are different than you?". When the answer was "NO", they were asked whether they were familiar with a different group of people living in the same country as themselves. Albanians usually came first in mind and from there the discussion developed naturally. To ensure that there was [not] contact among the participants and the Albanians, questions as "Have you met any Albanian?", "Where have you met him/her" were raised. From here, questions explored the contact between them, where do they meet, what they find to be an advantage of the contact or a challenge etc. The full topic guide is available in Appendix 2.

#### 4.5. Analytic Method

In order to compare the experiences of the children from ethnically homogeneous and ethnically mixed schools, I follow the model of Thematic Analysis. I use this model to identify, analyze and report common topics from the children's group discussions.<sup>56</sup> Since the focus groups produced a lot of data<sup>57</sup> that sometimes was unrelated to the topic of this research, for the purpose of this thesis, I aimed to capture only the vital information in relation to the research questions.<sup>58</sup> First, all the data which is explicitly presenting children's feeling and attitudes towards the Albanians was distinguished. From here, common themes and patterns were identified. Lastly, the experiences of the students from the different schools are compared within the scope of the common topics.

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<sup>56</sup>Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (January 1, 2006): 77–101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

<sup>57</sup>"Focus Groups in Social Research," SAGE Publications Ltd, June 4, 2018, <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/focus-groups-in-social-research/book206871>.

<sup>58</sup>Morgan et al., "Hearing Children's Voices."

I present my findings by simultaneously reporting on the similarities and differences between the students from the homogeneous and mixed school. When needed, the direct quotes are accompanied by comments offering an additional explanation about the context and/or terminology used. With this said, in the following section I introduce the analysis from this study.

## **Chapter 5. Analyzing the Results**

As stated before, the data gathered from the focus groups are analyzed in this chapter. At the very beginning, an overview of the discussions' dynamics is provided. Then, the specific themes that emerged from the common patterns identified in the data are introduced and examined. The chapter concludes by summarizing the results of the analysis.

### **5.1. Focus Groups Dynamics**

#### **5.1.1. General Introduction**

Before moving on to the results, a general overview of the data collection experience will be given. In all of the groups, the participants were motivated by the discussion's topic and openly shared their views taking advantage of the informal environment. Overall, all of the members were equally contributing to the group discussions. Except in FH1 & FM3, wherein each group there was one passive and less engaged participant.

In the ethnically homogeneous schools, the conversations usually lasted a bit longer (10 – 15 minutes) since, at the warm-up questions<sup>59</sup>, participants answers were too extensive and broad, referring to their school environment and experiences with their teachers and classmates. This was not the case in the mixed schools since the participants' answers to the same questions were directly related to the multiethnic nature of their school. Consequently, the topic of ethnicity and the Albanians came more naturally into the center of our discussions.

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<sup>59</sup> "What do you think makes your school so special?; What do you like/dislike about your school?" were the opening warm-up questions. For more, please see Appendix 2.

### 5.1.2. Boundaries and Terminologies

During the field research, I noted some differences in the ways in which students in the different schools talked about the Albanians. Namely, I identified that in the ethnically homogeneous school students were answering faster and were freer in expressing their opinions. They frequently used the word “Shiptar” instead of “Albanian”. However, in many occasions in the children confused the word “Muslim” with “Albanian” and/or “Shiptar” and were using it as a synonym. Within these terminologies, the word “Cigan[i]” <sup>60</sup>also got mixed. In order to understand how they think of these terms, I asked for clarification. One of the participants from the male group (FH1), answered me:

***FH1:** “Well, they are all the same. I mean it is like this: at the top we have the Albanians. They are from Albania, they are clean, and have more money and better culture of behavior. Then we have the “Shiptari”, they are little bit disgusting, I’m not sure where they are from. And they are not very good people. At the end, we have the “Cigani”, who beg on the streets, smell bad and steal from people. They are at the bottom. It is like this, it is all the same and they all subcategories of the Albanians”*

Since the term Muslim was mentioned before, but the participant did not include it in his clarification, I asked: “And who are the Muslims?” The participant then continued:

***FH1:** “The Muslims...Maybe I would put them between the Albanians and Shiptari... Yes I think that is where they fit.”*

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<sup>60</sup>“Cigan” (plural: “Cigani”) is a word used for describing Roma people. It is offensive and it has a derogatory meaning.

The vagueness of these terms in children's minds is not [only] the result from their age and the fact that children between these ages are just starting to perceive the "us" versus "them" distinctions.<sup>61</sup> If this was the reason for the confusion, then one can expect that the discussions with the participants from the mixed school will produce the same results. In practice, this was not the case.

In the mixed school, none of the participants referred to the Albanians as "Shiptar[i]. The word came into the discussion after I ask the participants if they heard the word and whether they know what it means. Contrary to the students from the homogeneous school, they were very aware of the meaning of the word:

**FM3:** *"Shiptar is also an Albanian. But that is an offensive word. My parents are telling me not to use that word when I'm referring to the Albanians. But to me, it is the same. At home, I call them Shiptari, at school I call them Albanians."*

To confirm that the students in the mixed school clearly understand these categories, I told them that I have heard people saying that Albanians, Shiptari, Cigani, and Muslims are all the same<sup>62</sup> - subcategories of the Albanians. To this, another participant from the same group reacted:

**FM3:** *"No, no. Shiptari are the Albanians. Cigani are the Roma. But they are all Muslim. That is their religion. It means that they go to a mosque instead of church and believe in Allah instead of God."*

The fact that this participant mentioned the Roma— a term that was not even mentioned in the discussions before – as a synonym for Cigani, assured me that there is no such confusion of

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<sup>61</sup> Váradi, *Youths Trapped in Prejudice*.

<sup>62</sup> I referred the example from FH1 in the homogeneous school)



terminology as there was between the participants in the ethnically homogeneous school. Nonetheless, in this school, I observed another dynamic between the participants while they shared negative situations they experience with the Albanians or when they discussed the term Shiptar. Sharing and discussing on these issues made the participants a bit uncomfortable, and this was reflected through their body language. Before sharing any negative feelings or attitudes, or before mentioning the word “Shiptar”, each participant was first looking at the other members of the group, like if he/she was asking for their approval. Also, when pronouncing the word, students usually lowered the tone of their voice and then continued to finish their sentence with the natural tone.

In conclusion, the observations from both schools are indicating that overall, the participants face some difficulties or discomfort when talking about the Albanians. In the first case, the children did not know who the Albanians are. In the second case, they feel uncomfortable talking on some issues related to the topic. Although these issues are different in nature, I argue that they are both consequence from an ethnically divided education system, combined with lack of open discussion among the children and their parents and teachers on this topic. This situation furthermore replicates within the broader context of the Macedonian society, as explained in the context chapter of this thesis.

Regardless whether participants know who they are, or whether they met them or not, they all held very strong opinions and attitudes for the Albanians. Without further due, in the next section, I present the analyses of these attitudes by grouping them in themes.

## 5.2. The Albanians on OUR Territory...

The analysis in this section concluded, first of all, that the participants felt uncomfortable when the word “Albanian” was mentioned in the same sentence as the word “Macedonia”. Participant showed attitudes of [almost] exclusive ownership over the geographical space they share with the Albanians. In some conversations this referred to the homeland, i.e. the geographical borders of Macedonia and in others it referred to the school property. Across the groups, the theme developed naturally, from unrelated question. For example, when I asked the students in the ethnically homogeneous school (FH2), whether they have ever heard about the Albanians, one participant answered:

**FH2:** *“We have a house in Ohrid<sup>63</sup> and we go there every summer. We have a neighbor on the same street, further down from our house and he is Albanian. I don’t know... He seems strange...I think he came from Albania... or his parents came? I don’t know what he is doing here. Never mind, now he lives in Macedonia...”*

As it can be observed, by justifying the presence of the Albanian in the Macedonia, the participant tried to make sense of the entire situation. Similarly to this, other participants also tried to justify the Albanian’s presence in the country, why and how they came here; like there must be some reason, rather than just them naturally belonging there:

**FH2:** *“My father has an Albanian colleague in the clinic. He is from Albania... he now works here. But what can you do. He also has rights. We can’t just decide to send him back.”*

**FH1:** *“A friend of mine from the other class told me that there is an Albanian girl in the first or second grade. I don't know from where she came to this school. But you know, the education is*

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<sup>63</sup>Ohrid is a city in the southwest part of Macedonia. It is very often visited vacation destination.

*free for everyone, so if she has the same rights as we do, than the school cannot stop her from enrolling in the classes. I am not sure where she lives...But it is what it is."*

Since an example from school was mentioned, I used the opportunity to ask if they could imagine going to a mixed school and sharing the hallways and the schoolyard/playground with the Albanians. To this one of the participants answered:

**FH1:** *"Hmm... I think it is better if we don't mix in the schools. I know I wouldn't like it. And I think I speak for everyone here in this group when I say this. Just imagine. Every day we would have to witness how Albanians are being harassed in the school. "*

While everyone agreed, another member of the group added:

**FH1:** *"Yes, yes... I was going to say the same thing. Yes, I mean for me it would be a pleasure to study with them. But I really can't watch them being oppressed all the time. Macedonians will say bad words about them and I don't want to witness that. Plus you know, they are less educated than us, so they will not be able to defend themselves with words"*

In the other groups however, there were participants that seemed to be genuinely excited about the entire idea:

**FH2:** *"I think it would be interesting to have Albanian friends or school/classmates. I mean, why not. At least we can learn about their culture and traditions. For example, I am part of a traditional dance group and we travel a lot. Last month in an event in Serbia, I met a Chinese girl and we hung out. Everybody was looking me strange why I hang out with a Chinese person. I told them that they are just like us and it is just their eyes that look different. It is the same thing with the Albanians"*

**FH2:** *“Yes! That way, at least we can learn something about the Albanians. For example, who they are, what they do, what kind of food they eat? Maybe we will find many things in common.*

*This way, we don’t know anything. I think it would be very interesting.”*

**FH3:** *“Yes I think it is an interesting idea. I love learning about other’s cultures. So having Albanians in this school can maybe teach me something about the Albanian culture.”*

**FH3:** *“I am afraid of the older Albanians. I have heard on the news that they often harm other people. But I am not afraid of the children. Also maybe they can be better people if they learn something from us. Or maybe we will learn that they are not as bad as everyone says.”*

At the very beginning, children from the ethnically mixed school had the same opinion. When I asked them what they think makes their school special, they answered that it is because there are children from other ethnicities:

**FH1:** *“What I really like about this school is that you can find here people from all the ethnicities. We have classes in Macedonian and in Albanian language. I think that is really nice.”*

**FH3:** *“This school is special because children from different nationalities study here. It is nice because we should all hang with each other regardless of our national belonging.”*

**FH3:** *“I agree...” (referring to the previous quote) “... children shouldn’t care about nationality. And yes, I also like this school because there are many different children. I mean children from different nationalities.”*

**FH3:** *“Also, we have two religions. We have Christians and Muslims. That is also nice to mention.”*

However, later in the conversation many of the participants that first expressed positive attitudes were often sharing negative experiences they had with the Albanians. Based on this, I again asked how they feel about the multiethnic structure of their school and whether they would want to change anything if they could. The same participants whose quotes are presented above now told me:

**FH3:** *“If I could, I would change it. I mean we have problems with the Albanians, it’s not like we are all friends. If I could, I would make this school a school where only Macedonians study.”*

**FH3:** *“Me too. This is what I would do. This is a huge building, so we could separate it in two parts. We can build a wall in the middle of the school and we can open another entrance door at the other side. Therefore no one has to look for another building and we’ll have our own school.*

*We will have ours, they would have theirs.”*

These inconsistencies and contradictories of the participant’s feelings and attitudes, as explained in the theory part, are the consequence of their specific age group. They tend to feel one way, but behave in another. But more importantly children at these ages are [sometimes] only transmitting the information they have gained through listening the others. Just to compare, when I went to a meeting with the school principal in the mixed school in order to ask for research permission, I told her that I have chosen that particular school because I have heard that both Albanians and Macedonians study there. She seemed to be very proud of this fact; it was almost like she was bragging when she told me that they also have students from other ethnicities, like Turks, Roma and Bosniaks. This gives an impression that the school wants to use its multicultural nature in order to create a positive image. Therefore, these ideas and narratives might be transmitted to the children as well. Nevertheless, as observed before, those are not their personal feelings about the

school in which they study. This dislike of and dissatisfaction from the mixed school was also expressed later in that conversation. Participants were sharing ideas of how they think their school can shift its composition from ethnically mixed to ethnically homogeneous. One of the members in the group suggested:

**FM3:** *“I have a proposal. All Macedonians should gather, because after all this is Macedonia... So, they should all gather, decide who are the problematic Albanians in this school and send them back to their country”*

In this sentence same pattern of exclusive territorial ownership were also identified. The Albanians are perceived as temporary guests. If the Albanians should be ‘sent back to their country’, that means that the participants do not think of Macedonia being Albanian’s country (homeland), regardless of the fact that majority of the Albanians were born and raised in Macedonia and Macedonian citizenship is the only citizenship they had ever acquired. I also observed this in another’s participants’ comment:

**FM2:** *“My father told me, that when he was my age, he also studied in this school and there were only some Albanians in his generation. He also lived in this same neighborhood, but a fair majority of the residents were Macedonians. Not like now... The Albanians keep coming and coming. Now we are less Macedonians. Even the mayor came and said that Macedonians should move back to this neighborhood. I mean, can you imagine? We have more Albanians than Macedonians and this is Macedonia. But what can you do, you cannot ask them to move away when they bought a house. The only solution is for the Macedonians to resettle here.”*

**FM2:** *“Yes, this is very true. I hang out with Macedonians in school, but in my building, I am the only Macedonian. The rest of the children my age are Albanians.”*

I then asked: “*So you do not want to hang out with the Albanians?*” to which she replied:

*"I don't know. I mean some of them speak the language, some of them don't. So if those children that know the language are not around to talk to me or translate for me, then it is pointless.*

*Some of them don't understand Macedonian. I can't be the one learning their language..."*

Regarding the issues discussed above, it turned out that children in the mixed school have more negative attitudes for the Albanians than children in the ethnically homogeneous schools. The last quote included in this theme section suggests a new issue that was widely discussed among the children. I therefore conclude here and continue with the next topic in the following section.

### **5.3. The Language Issue**

Just in general, the use of the Albanian language in Macedonia is a controversial issue since the country's separation from Yugoslavia in 1991. In the higher educational institutions particularly, education in the Albanian language was a significant issue prior 2004, when the first university offering instructions in the Albanian language was officially recognized as legal institution after ten years from its establishment and operation.<sup>64</sup> In the meantime, with the Ohrid Framework Peace Agreement of 2001, the use of the Albanian language for everyday purposes was modified, and municipalities that had more than 20% of the Albanian population became bilingual.<sup>65</sup> Active debates around the Albanian language were successfully avoided until the last preliminary parliamentary elections that took place in Macedonia on October 15, 2017. The current prime minister promised to co-officialize the Albanian language for the entire territory of

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<sup>64</sup>“Macedonia: Government Permits Albanian University,” RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, accessed June 7, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1091777.html>.

<sup>65</sup>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Refworld | The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Framework Agreement Signed in Ohrid, 13 August 2001,” Refworld, accessed June 1, 2018, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3fbcdf7c8.html>.

the Republic of Macedonia. This agenda included plans that influence[d] the primary education, i.e., with the new suggested law, every Macedonian student was required to study the Albanian language. With heavy resistance and endless negotiations, the law was finally passed in the parliament, but never signed by the president.<sup>66</sup> I here presented a concise and short summary of the language controversy to provide context for the following analytical part. When reading this part of the analysis, bear in mind that the entire debate around the use of the Albanian language is very present at the time when the data from the field research was gathered. In the section below, the children's attitudes regarding the Albanian language are compared.

### ***5.3.1. "Their Language in MY Country!?"***

The Albanian language, or rather the use of it, was identified to be another topic through which participants expressed negative feelings towards the Albanians. However, it is important to note here that the attitudes about the Albanian language, in this case, are not entirely independent from the attitudes participants' shared about the geographical territory of Macedonia in the previous section. In the children's understandings, the one depends of, or results in the other. As summarized above, regarding the territory, it was concluded that the children clearly think of their country as (or as it should be) ethnically homogeneous, inherently belonging only to the Macedonians. It is therefore expected to imagine that same country as monolingual. Consequently, the idea of another language (in this case the Albanian) in the country is perceived as illogical.

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<sup>66</sup>“Иванов не го потпишува Законот за јазици | Телма.”Accessed May 27, 2018. <https://telma.com.mk/ivanov-ne-go-potpishuva-zakonot-za-jazitsi/>.



Similarly to the previous case, within the focus groups, the language discourse came up triggered by a different question. In the homogeneous school, the topic came to a discussion after the participants were asked whether they have heard of the Albanians, or if they knew who the Albanians are:

**FH2:** *My mom says they are the ones that are trying to steal our country. Now they are going to make us learn their language! We are going to have Albanian classes in school...*

I then asked whether they mind learning the Albanian language and how they feel about this question in general. The same participant continued:

**FH2:** *"I mean... I don't know. I think that knowing any foreign language is nice and it is considered to be an advantage. But Albanian? Ok, if we were in Albania, you know in their country, then alright. That is fair. But it is them that are in our country, and now we even have to learn their language? In our own country? To me, this is not very logical."*

In relation to this, another member added:

**FH2:** *"Yes, I want to know, and maybe you can answer me..."(referring to me) "... Why does Albania exist as a state? I mean what is the role of that country? If they want to speak Albanian, they should go in Albania. I don't want to study the Albanian language. I have my own mother tongue."*

In another group, a participant shared personal experience while he attended a German Language school competition hosted in an ethnically Albanian school:

**FH3:** *"I asked one of the Albanian teachers to give me some additional explanations for the task we were required to do. She pretended that she didn't understand Macedonian and refused to*

*help me. It was really uncomfortable. Am I supposed to know the Albanian language when I have my own mother tongue? I am sure she knew the Macedonian language. They all know and understand the Macedonian language, but refuse to speak."*

Besides the use of it, participants also brought up attitudes on the Albanian language in general. Often when the students talked about the Albanian language, they talked about how it sounds in comparison to the Macedonian language. They talked about their language in positive terms and on the contrary, the Albanian language was complemented with negative adjectives:

**FH2:** *"To me it is scary. I mean their language is very hard. It is not like ours. Our language..."*  
(referring to the Macedonian language) *"...is soft and sounds nice. Their language sounds rough, and it always sounds like they are yelling something offensive to us."*

Students from the mixed school contributed with similar opinions as their peers from the homogeneous school:

**F1:** *"I mean in our school we can study in Macedonian and they can study in Albanian. So I do not see the point why we have to learn the Albanian. If we want to understand each other, they can speak to us in Macedonian. Or even English. They are both so much better sounding than their language."*

**FM2:** *"To me, the Albanian language is disgusting. I mean really, when I hear someone speaking Albanian, I feel like vomiting. It is just an awful language and I never ever want to study it or to speak it. I have my own mother tongue."*

**FM3:** *"Their language is just aggressive. It's like they are constantly yelling something to the others. And one of my friends told me that their cursing words are worst then ours and they have*

*more cursing words than us. That is why they curse more. It is just not a nice language, you cannot understand it. The Macedonian language, for example, it is very easy to understand. All the words are easy to pronounce. That is why they know Macedonian, but Macedonians don't know Albanian language."*

I asked how they can be sure if the Albanians swear more than the Macedonians. The participants shared different experiences. Some of them have not even heard an Albanian swearing and were not sure if the information is accurate. Others were arguing that they have heard an Albanian using cursing language. Finally, later in the discussion, a participant noted:

**FM3:** *"I mean... How do we know? I know. Don't you see how they are? They are like a tribe (pleme).<sup>67</sup> They are uncivilized."*

In this group, the conversation ended here. However, while analyzing the data, similar notions as Albanians being "uncivilized" reappeared in almost every group. Accordingly, the analyses are presented as a distinct theme in the following section.

#### **5.4. "It is in their blood to fight!"**

This is one of the last themes through which children's prejudice are analyzed. It is in this section however, that the most explicit negative attitudes towards the Albanians are presented. As it can be observed, in the previous patterns presented, the participants expressed their attitudes towards the Albanians through symbolic themes such as the territory and language. Whereas, in the following section they were attributing physical characteristics to the Albanians.

The discussion opened up after the children were asked "*Who are the Albanians?*":

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<sup>67</sup>"Pleme" is very often used by Macedonians when they refer to the Albanians. The word means tribe. When used in this context it usually refers to the Albanians being uncivilized.

**FH3:** *"They are a different sort. They are very loud, and they always fight. That is what bothers me the most. If I ever meet an Albanian, I don't know how to talk to him. I'm afraid that if I say something wrong, he will immediately try to fight me."*

**FH3:** *"Yes, yes. That is true. For example, when I attend a football match, or even when I watch it at home if one of the teams playing in that game is Albanian, they always organize in large groups and go to cheer. But they don't cheer! That is not cheering. They just go there to fight the Macedonians. And if their team loses, I think they can snap and kill all the Macedonians. They carry knives and guns with them."*

I then asked the participants to think of the Macedonians at the same match. I ask how they react to the game. One of the participants noted:

**FH3:** *"Macedonians can also be aggressive, but with words. They sing songs and are very loud. But they would never carry guns or knives or want to fight, because they can solve problems with a conversation"*

In the mixed schools, participants shared similar opinions. These opinions were often based on their personal experience. For the boys, this was during the Physical Education (PE) class:

**FMI:** *"Sometimes during the PE class we go to play football in the field outside. If Albanians happen to be there either we agree to share the football field in half, so we play on one half and they play on the other, or we decide to play against each other. But every time there is some kind of incident and they want to fight us right away. It is either I pushed him, or touched the ball with my hands... I mean of course these things will happen when you play football. But nooooo! They don't understand! We always try to solve everything by talking, but you can't really talk with them. They are crazy."*

**FM1:** *“Ok, I just want to say... Let’s be fair, we...” (referring to the Macedonians) “...also sometimes get mad if they make mistakes in the game or when they accidentally hit us. The difference is that we understand. We sometimes react, sometimes don’t. But we always use words. We don’t fight like we are from the jungle.”*

Through examples from experiences within their neighborhoods, other participants expressed same attitudes:

**FM3:** *“When they see me and my friend riding a bike in our neighborhood, they start throwing things at us. For no reason. I don’t get it... I don’t get why they have to be so aggressive always and with everyone. It is like it’s in their blood to fight.”*

**FM3:** *“What can I say? I mean this is not a problem they have with the Macedonians. They fight with everyone. There is always something that doesn’t suit them. Like they are the best. Yes, exactly! They think they are the best. They think they are better than us”*

I then asked: *“And what do you think?”* The participants replied:

**FM3:** *“I mean how can they be better when they only know to fight with everyone. The Macedonians are at least patient and can express their feelings with words. I mean I would never change my opinion about them unless they learn how to behave like us. It is just the worse”.*

The girls also agreed with this. They shared examples from their meetings with the Albanians in the school hallways and bathrooms during the in-between class breaks. They also added the examples of the boy’s experiences (which I already shared above).

**FM2:** *"Every time I go to the bathroom, and the Albanians are there it's a mess! They splash with water. And out of nowhere, before we leave the bathroom, they also splash us. I mean I don't understand why they are doing this! I understand that this might be a game to them. But even in the winter? Plus, this is a school. We should act according to the school rules and be civilized. They can't follow any rules. And their teachers don't care. Maybe they teach them to do that. Or maybe it comes from their parents at home."*

**FM2:** *"They always run like crazy in the hallways. Sometimes their teachers allow them to leave the class earlier. And they come to knock on our door, and they yell and laugh at us for being in class. I mean... our teacher also lets us leave the class earlier sometimes, but she also tells us to be quiet not to disturb the other students. Maybe their teacher is telling them the same, but as my friend said, they can't follow orders."*

**FM3:** *"When the boys play football, we usually go to watch them. If they are playing against the Albanians, the Albanian girls also come to watch. And if something happens between the boys, we..." (referring to the Macedonian girls) "...try to solve the problem. But the Albanian girls then yell at us not to get involved. I mean why would they want the boys to start a fight? I don't know, I think they are also aggressive. We cannot really understand each other with conversation".*

From hearing all of this, I got the impression that overall, children think of the Albanians as more aggressive than the Macedonians. So then I raised that question. A girl in the mixed group then elaborated:

**FM3:** *"Yes they are. I will put it like this because I love math. If we take that there are 100 percent Albanians, 85 to 90 percents of them are aggressive. Whereas, from 100 percent of the Macedonians, only 30 to 40 percent of them are aggressive".*

In this case also turns out that the children in the ethnically mixed school hold more negative attitudes towards the Albanians than the children from the ethnically homogeneous school. This could be simply the result from the personal experiences (*the contact*) of the participants from the mixed school, on the contrary to the examples that children of the other (homogeneous) school shared; examples which were based on something they have heard, rather than on something it happened to them. So why the contact does not work? What makes the participants in the mixed school more prejudiced than their peers in the other schools? Among the children in the ethnically mixed school, there were some information shared which suggest why the contact does not work. In the following subsection I present my overall impressions about the contact situations the children in the mixed school have.

### **5.5. The Contact**

It turned out that children in the mixed school have more contact with the Albanians that I initially assumed contact to be in the case of this study. They were not very friendly with their Albanian schoolmates, but they had formed closed friendships with Albanians which live in their neighborhood. This contact however, did not help in the prejudice reduction process. For example, one of the boys from FM1 was telling me how he thinks that the Albanians are very aggressive and uncivilized, but when I asked them whether he has an Albanian friend he said that his closest friend is an Albanian:

**FM1:** *“I mean there is nothing else to add when it comes to the Albanians except they are mean and aggressive. And I would never change my opinion.”*

Then I asked him: *“And do you have any Albanian friends?”*

**FM1:** *“Yes! My closest friend is an Albanian. He doesn’t go to this school.”*

When asked whether they have Albanian friends, another girl who was previously complaining about being splashed with water (p.42) by the Albanians in her school bathroom added:

**FM2:** *“Yes, I have one very close Albanian friend. I don’t have friends in this school, although I know some of them. But I know this friend because we attend private English Language classes together. We are inseparable.”*

Later in the conversations, it was inevitable to notice that children did know their Albanian schoolmates, but did not hang out with them. They only had friends outside of the school. When I asked them why this is the case, a participant answered me:

**FM1:** *“I mean we do hang out with the Albanians from the school, but only during the summer breaks. When we go back to school, they act like we don’t know each other and start to behave bad again.”*

**FM3:** *“There are some children from the Albanian’s classes whom I hang out with. But only during the summer break. After we start school, I don’t know, we just don’t hang out anymore”.*

First conclusion I want to point out is that in the case of the children in the mixed school, the contact with one Albanian does not necessarily reduce the prejudices they have for the entire ethnic group. As it can be observed, they are completely unrelated; some of them have very close Albanian friends, but still hold negative attitudes towards the Albanians as an ethnic group. The



second conclusion I draw is that the communication between the Albanians and the Macedonians (in the mixed school) stops when their school years starts. It can be argued that the school seems to be responsible for creating such an environment. Besides hosting both of these ethnic groups, the school does not do anything in order to promote good relations and foster interaction between them. One of the girls noted:

**FM2:** *“Often we celebrate the day of our school together. I mean we do it in the same day. We...”* (referring to the Macedonians) *“...prepare our own activities for the day, they prepare their own. And then it is usually us that go first, them that go last. We don’t do joint activity.”*

“Why is this the case?” I asked them. Then one of the participants answered:

**FM2:** *“I don’t know, but it wouldn’t work. Ones we worked on a mutual project in school on nature and recycling. And the teachers left us in the classroom by ourselves, just the students. And I’m not saying it wasn’t nice, but it was such a waste of time because we couldn’t always understand each other. Because some of them didn’t understand Macedonian.”*

Moreover, unrelated to this topic, while still at the beginning children were discussing what they like and dislike about their schools, one of the girls noted:

**FM2:** *“I don’t like that during the lunch breaks we don’t have many options. The teacher asks us to grab some lunch and snacks and come back to the classroom. We usually stay in the classroom”*

I asked for further explanation, to which she replied:

**FM2:** *“It sometimes happens to us and children from other classes, when they go to buy food across the street they meet with the Albanians and problems often arise between them. Not like*

*fights maybe, but students usually end up at the principal's office. It is not very nice when you are called at the principal's office, so the teacher is trying to avoid this entire situation."*

In the first case the teachers abandoned the classroom leaving the students with no assistance in the communication process. In the second case, the teacher made an arrangement which further limits the interactions of these groups. As a consequence instead of facilitating the integration process, by limiting the contact between the students, the school alienates these ethnic groups further more. This is contrary to the "support of the authorities" condition which Allport suggested earlier in his work.

Lastly, it is maybe most importantly to note that one of the biggest challenges in the contact situation is the language issue. When previous studies look at conflicting groups and contact, they often refer to groups that share the same language. However, in the case of Macedonia, this is not applicable. Therefore, even if the contact is facilitated by the four conditions Allport proposed, the results can be still diverse.

## **5.6. Observations and Limitations**

Through the common topics identified, in this chapter, I presented the findings that show how children structure and contextualize their prejudices towards the out-group (the Albanians) in the specific context of Macedonia. When compared, the children from the ethnically mixed school tend to be more prejudiced than their peers from the ethnically homogeneous school. This was presented through their quotes, in which they used stronger and bolder descriptions to express their negative attitudes, or to describe the Albanians. Due to the repetition of some of their attitudes, it was observed that the children often position themselves as superior to the Albanians. The most evident instances are when the Macedonian were comparing themselves to

the Albanians by attaching positive attributes and values to themselves, contrary on the values and the attributes they attached to the Albanians and/or their language. Additionally, this can be also observed in the first theme, which is the territorial ownership. By feeling like exclusive owners of the territory of Macedonia, children's attitudes were that it is them – the Macedonians – that have the right to decide who lives in their country, which language those people will speak and how they must behave.

This pattern might be another explanation of why the Macedonians dislike the Albanians. The superior feelings and attitudes the Macedonians expressed can be explained by the Social Dominance Theory. The theory argues that all human societies tend to be structured in group-based social hierarchies. As a consequence they “keep [re]producing” the prejudice, racism, stereotypes and discrimination in order to maintain their position in the society.<sup>68</sup> However, as the theory is relatively new, there are not many studies employing the theory at the age group which this study deals with. Therefore, the theory can be one of the explanations, but we cannot be sure that this is the case. The prejudice might depend on many things. If we want to understand better, we can also look for explanations in other theories such as Social Identity Theory, Authoritarian Personality Theory etc. One should also explore the factors that are influencing the level of prejudices, such as individual's personality, economic background, education etc. Since in the current case the group being researched is children, and their attitudes are still not salient, than one should also consider exploring the personality of children's parents. However, all of this requires a more complex study design and extensive field research. Therefore, although I acknowledge these limitations in relation to my study, in this thesis there was no further space for employing another perspective of prejudice. First of all, there is the

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<sup>68</sup> Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

pragmatic dimension of time and space limit for this thesis and very little was known about what is happening among the children in this schools. Therefore additional theories could not be applied simultaneously. Hence, I argue that the Contact Hypothesis Theory was just enough to produce a valuable data that can be further analyzed by using other theories and approaches.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

As I mentioned earlier throughout the pages of this thesis, prejudice is a complex phenomenon that requires extensive, careful research. What I had done here, it is just a simple exploration of how the prejudices towards the Albanians are developed in children's minds in the specific Macedonian context. By conducting six focus groups with children aged 10 and 11 studying in ethnically homogenous and mixed schools, I identified similar patterns and topics around which the children structure and express their prejudices. I first present and comment on the common topic, and then I report on the participants similarities and differences regarding these issues. Additionally, in order to explore whether there is a difference between the levels of prejudice among the children from one or another school, I employ the Contact Hypothesis Theory. I engage in a discussion about the importance of the contact, the contact context and the four proposed conditions by Allport. Through the guidance of this theory, in line with my initial assumption, it was concluded that children in the ethnically mixed-school are more prejudiced toward the Albanians than the children in the ethnically homogeneous school. Consequently, drawing on conclusions from the gathered data, at the end of the analytical part I offer some explanations for why this might be the case.

However, this does not mean that contact is inefficient for reducing prejudices in every school in Macedonia. Generalizations cannot be really made, due to the prejudice-context relation. For example, the findings in this thesis discovered how the Macedonians in the mixed school think of the Albanians in that specific school. Or, generalizations can be made as far as the schools in the capital of Macedonia are concerned. But, if one looks into mixed school in the city of Tetovo<sup>69</sup>,

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<sup>69</sup> Tetovo is a city in the western part of Macedonia in which the ethnic conflict of 2001 started. The population is predominantly Albanian and the Macedonians are a minority.

then there might be different results, as the entire ethnic composition of the city is different. And indeed this requires a further research.

It is also very important to note that the present study looks at the contact – prejudice reduction relationship from a slightly different setting. Most of the studies measure the contact effect as an experiment. They look at the attitudes in one of the conflicting groups. Then, they create the contact situation with the other group. Finally, in order to compare the results, they look at the participant's attitudes pre and the post contact treatment.

On the contrary, this study looks at the contact when it organically happens within our societies. And then the effects are compared to the parts of the same society that are not experiencing the contact. And in the case of Macedonia, it turned out that the contact does not lead to less prejudiced youth, rather it enforces them through the mechanism of the school institutions.

I have commented before on the special role which schools play in ethnically divided societies. If these same schools assemble more prejudiced youth, than we cannot really work to [re]integrate the opposing sides in the post-conflict area. This is not to put the entire burden on the schools and educational institutions. In order to build inclusive societies it is extremely important to have all the influential factors (such as political and economic support, open media etc) on board. Yet, I argue that primary schools have a special role since they educate children at ages where their attitudes are not salient yet. If we can approach these attitudes like this study does, then we can learn what is going on and, if necessary, intervene before children's negative attitudes are carried out through out life. It is the youth that will become the future parents, teachers, politicians etc and it is them that who we need to integrate first in order for better generations to come.

Lastly, although the present study did not contribute with any specific suggestions for the future, it still served its purpose of introducing the topic and mapping what is actually going on in the minds of the young Macedonians. As summarized above, couple of things can be learned from this thesis, but the more we learn about prejudices, the more there is to know. Accordingly, the results in this study leave space for raising some different questions for future academic and policy making researchers.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Parents of Student Enrolled in the Primary School

\_\_\_\_\_ *[name of the school]* \_\_\_\_\_ in Skopje

**Researcher:**

Dragana Urumovska

**Name of Organization:**

Central European University

Dear Parent,

My name is Dragana Urumovska, I am coming from Skopje and I am conducting a study in fulfillment of my master program at the Central European University in Budapest. The research is looking at children attitudes in the processes of forming friendships in schools. I am conducting this study in two different schools in the city of Skopje.

For this reason, your child has been selected to participate in a short informal discussion among me and four (4) of his/her other classmates. The discussion will take place within the classrooms of the \_\_\_\_\_ *[name of the school]* \_\_\_\_\_ primary school and it will not last more than one school class (45 minutes). The entire research is anonymous, so one will be able to identify your child's responses. I would kindly like to ask you to support my work by allowing your child to participate in this study.

Please note that the study has been approved by the school principal \_\_\_\_\_ *[name of the school principal]* \_\_\_\_\_ as well as the class' headmaster. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have any concerns regarding the study, contact my supervisor.

Thank you in advance!

Dragana Urumovska



### Confidentiality:

**Your child will not be participating in the research without him/her willing to do so or/and without you signing this consent form.** In a very open and relaxed setting, the participants will be expected to respond to questions raised in the discussion, but they will not be forced to do so. If in any time your child feels uncomfortable, he/she will be able to leave the focus group without any further complications.

The only information published in this research will be your children's age and gender. His/her name **will not** be used when the data from this study will be published. All information are confidential and will be accessible only to me.

This privacy is also guaranteed by the Law for Privacy Protection.

(for more check: <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Zakon-za-zashtita-na-privatnosta-11-10-2015.pdf>)

If you and your child agree to take part of my research, please read, fill and sign the following statement:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ *[name of the parent]* \_\_\_\_\_ parent/guardian of the student\_ *[name of the student]*\_\_\_\_ ,  
am approving my child participation in your research which will take place in his/her  
school.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact Information:

- Researchers:  
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## Appendix 2: Focus Group Topic Guide

### *Research goals of the focus group:*

- Did the children ever meet an Albanian?
- How the children think of the Albanians?
- How are the children trying to maintain their position of the dominant group?
- How does the contact influence children's opinions about the Albanians?

### *General questions for guidance:*

#### **1. Introduction**

- The researcher introduces to the participants and vice versa.
- The researcher introduces the concept of a focus group and the discussion flow.
- Icebreaker game (10-15 minutes)
- Cool Down: ask participants to help set the ground rules for the group dynamics.

#### **2. Warm Up**

- What do you think makes your school special? What do you like/dislike about your school?
- What do you think about the other students in your class/school? Are there any different students?
- The other people living in our country. Who are they?

#### **3. Core points**

<b>Ethnically Homogeneous Schools</b>	<b>Ethnically Mixed Schools</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Share a story:</b> I have heard that there are similar schools to yours, but in those schools, children from different ethnicities study...For example, Macedonians and Albanians go in the same school. Did you know?</li><li>- What do you think about these schools?</li><li>- Have you heard about the Albanians?</li><li>- Would you mind if you shared your school with Albanians?</li><li>- Do you think that studying with the Albanians in the same school will</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- How do you feel about sharing your school with the Albanians?</li><li>- What is your experience with the Albanians in school?</li><li>- What is your experience with the Albanians outside from school, in your neighborhood?</li><li>- Where and how often do you meet in school?</li><li>- Would you change something about your school?</li></ul>

change your opinion about them? - What is your opinion about the Albanians?	
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#### 4. Cool down

- **Towards the end of the discussion:** Just to summarize, this is what we talked about...
- Is there anything anyone wanted to share but couldn't? If there is anything you wanted to tell me, but weren't feeling comfortable sharing it in front of the entire group, you can write it down in this piece of paper and put it in the box.
- Thank you so much for coming here. Please thank your parents for allowing you to participate in this focus group. I hope you enjoyed it.

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