Women's Stories of the Yugoslav Breakup: Wartime Experiences of Deviance

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Abstract: This project investigates how women construct accounts of the Yugoslav breakup as gendered performances, contributing to Balkan criminology and narrative criminology. Their accounts relate to the wartime illicit settings of the black market and smuggling. Based upon fieldwork in Cyprus and Serbia, during which two narrative interviews were conducted, this study explores how women narrate their stories of illegality with the benefit of distance, particularly how they discursively employ gender as situated subjects in and producers of their discourses. The project elevates the time and context-specific nature of the narratives to see how women narrate their stories as women war survivors; actors in illicit settings and in their accounts. It is stated that a narrative approach reveals women's complexity of their storied experience and their choices - taken within gendered restrictions, but discursively crafted. The project shows the ways women's stories diversify and externalise discourses of the Yugoslav breakup into broader criminological inquiries relating to women's criminality; their relation to crime, multiplicity of experience, and broader understandings of criminality. It concludes that women construct their accounts in ways that inform and 'genderise' existing discourses, elevating agency in discourses of disadvantage and vulnerability, drawing on women's conventionality and wartime normative criminality, and re-negotiating situated positions in wartime and post-war discourses. And as such, their accounts become a great source of enriching existing stories, including women's agency in stories of considerably limited agency within discourses of the Yugoslav conflicts. They constitute part of a broader criminological inquiry relating to incorporating women's stories to further our understandings of deviance.

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Abbreviations

BiH:	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSO:	Civil Society Organisations
ESDP:	European Security and Defence Policy
EU:	European Union
ICTY:	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
KLA:	Kosovo Liberation Army
KT NON:	Kern team Noord- en Oost-Nederland (Organised Crime Unit North and East Netherlands)
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OC:	Organised Crime
SEERC:	South East Europe Research Centre
SVAW:	Sexual Violence Against Women
UNICRI:	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNODC:	United Nations on Drugs and Crime
UNSC:	United Nations Security Council

Chapter 1: An Introduction to the Thesis

1. Introduction

Balkan criminology has emerged within tendencies to enhance integral approaches to European criminology (see Cockroft, 2009) and the need to study Balkan's very particularities (Shelley, 2014; Aebi, 2014). Indeed, Balkan criminology explores broader criminological issues such as global security, the transnational nature of OC and international criminal justice policies. However, it also remains largely preoccupied with regional particularities, namely regime transition and conflict, which resulted in political disintegration, formation of weak states in need of administrative and economic reform, and the flourishing of informal markets (Lindstrom, 2004; Stojarova, 2007). The last has been associated with personal and ethnic survival within embargoed societies in need to arm their newly established states, as well as cultural perceptions of arms as symbols of honour and independence (Arsovska & Kostakos, 2008).

Despite being an emerging field, Balkan criminology has brought insights into women's experiences within criminal settings in the region. One of its mere foci is the position of women in human trafficking networks as professionals, deceived and victims (see Caparini & Marenin, 2005; Friman & Reich, 2007; Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2009; Bilgen, 2012; Brady, 2012; Copley, 2014; Stanojova & Ristov, 2014; Arsovska, 2014; Arsovska & Allum, 2014; Arsovska & Begum, 2014; Kienast et al. 2014).

Another advanced research area is about women's wartime experiences of sexual abuse during ethnic cleansing campaigns. But Balkan criminology often tends to draw on stories of women of little agency, such as accounts of displacement, expulsion and fears of impregnation (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2000; Simic, 2005; Skjelsbæk, 2006; 2010) due to highly sexualised ethnic cleansing strategies. Or it applies a 'doing gender' perspective, where the emphasis is placed on how women operate within highly masculinised environments (see Arsovska & Begum, 2014). Although such studies centre upon the strategies and roles of women within such settings, they can often been seen as stories of little agency, as women rarely appear to operate in ways that challenge existing masculine hierarchies within such networks. But even when Balkan criminology

turns its analytical lenses into female wartime offenders, it tends to apply a material factors perspective, particularly to explore what had led women to get involved in the black market (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2009; Women in Black 2013).

This thesis is about the experiences of women during the Yugoslav breakup, particularly focusing on the experiences within the illicit environments of the black market. It will draw on Balkan criminology, and particularly the case of the Yugoslav breakup, to study stories of deviance of women whose experiences have not been told in certain institutional settings or they themselves have never been part of such institutions.

The war had given women some opportunities to get involved in illicit activities without being convicted of their actions or without undertaking the institutional processes of going straight. As the conflicts have created those chaotic conditions that blur the distinction between what is deviant and what is the norm, women can often speak about their wartime roles in illicit environments without potential concerns of being labelled or stigmatised as criminals; and although their acts might have been seen as illegal, the particularities of the war enable them to speak about such behaviour without the constraints of risking to associate themselves with the authentic offender.

1.1.   The Balkans: Historical and criminological contexts

The region of Balkans takes its name from the Balkan Mountains and includes Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, the Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and parts of Turkey. As such, the region is characterised by diverse cultures, languages (Slavic, Romance and other languages such as Albanian, Greek and Turkish) and religions (Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Roman Catholicism). The project specifically refers to those parts of the Balkan Peninsula that had formed former Yugoslavia and which had been ravaged by conflict in modern recent years. During Cold War, Yugoslavia was under a communist regime, but not a part of the Soviet Union. Instead, Yugoslavia joined the Non-Aligned Movement. However, in the 1990s the collapse of communism was signalled by conflict (Kalyvas, 2002, Conversi, 2003) and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Competing claims of the different nationalities within Yugoslavia and international support for independent Croatia and Bosnia in an attempt to carve out Slobodan Milosevic's plans for the creation of a greater

Serbia (Mazower, 2002) had led to expulsions of Croatian Serbs from Krajina, the inclusion of Bosnian Serbian-dominated territories into the newly independent Bosnia, and the NATO bombing of Serbia. The conflicts resulted in the establishment of six republics with Croatia and Slovenia being part of the EU integration, Montenegro and Serbia negotiating accession to the EU, and the Republic of Macedonia being granted candidate status.

However, in recent years there has been an increasing trend toward furthering integration of the European criminological communities. The approaches rest on challenges emanating from the transnational nature of crime and on the idea of 'the universal citizen' (Cockroft, 2009: 15). Such perspectives enable understandings of different crime rates, prison population trends, crime control cultures, and victim policies across (Western and Eastern) Europe (see Snare, 2004; Caparini & Marenin, 2005; Levay, 2005). Universal aspects of criminology are merely concerned with issues of social cohesion and exclusion (Levay, 2007) within European integration discourses, of international sentencing, and of organised crime (i.e. the transnational role of diaspora in organised crime) (Brady, 2012), but other less common studies have also been indicative of this. For example, examining the situation of urban security and regional security provisions in the capitals of former Yugoslavia, Mesko et al. (2013) elaborate on shifting global security environments and challenges.

Similarly, Xenakis's (2010) study on the regional scope of interventions against organised crime and corruption in South Eastern Europe results in an analysis of the global dimensions of the lessons learned for future policy making. Although Xenakis reviews organised crime trends and counter efforts in the context of 'historical tradition of lawlessness' (2010: 1) and corruption in the region, she aims at examining the role of such interventions in setting local and international priorities - especially where regional criminal environments are perpetuated by foreign demand.

The interrelation between the international and the local is also prevalent in studies on the ICTY. The discourse on the ICTY draws from international sentencing issues and local understandings of the tribunal. Bassett (2009), Ohlin (2009) and Ewald (2010) view the work of the ICTY as essential in gaining a better understanding and developing a coherent theoretical and empirical approach of international criminal justice. Although the studies highlight the

importance of the ICTY to rethinking international sentencing practices, Ewald's analysis involves reference to the context, as 'the concept of case-based reasoning provides some plausible perspectives in understanding international decision-making' (2010: 385). The analysis therefore shifts from a 'one-and-only consistent pattern' (2010: 373) to understanding the particular historical situation and heterogeneity among different cases. It does, however, seek a new approach that is appropriate to globalised, but heterogeneous circumstances. Ohlin (2009) centres on issues such as over-influence of domestic standards, inadequate sentencing and its consequences on international peace and collective security, and on victims. As such, the issues refer to international procedures that are intertwined with local matters. Clark (2008), Nettelfield (2010) and Andrieu (2014) shift the attention to matters of accountability for crimes.

Involvement of the EU and other international institutions in combating crime in the region shows the transnational nature of crime. It also shows the importance of an integrated European criminology, as EU integration is tightening. Agreements between the EU and Western Balkan states 'lay out priority actions for closer EU integration' (UNODC, 2010a: 15). Such agreements pertain to pursuing reform, including reforms in the criminal systems of the region. The reforms or what Spencer and Hebenton refer to as 'processes of harmonisation' of criminal law within Europe are 'no longer viewed as peculiar to each country and culture' (1999: 3). Such developments have an impact on integrative criminological discourses. For example, Mounier (2007) analyses the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and the EU's internal security by drawing upon the work of the European Police Mission in Bosnia, particularly to the need for reforms of the security sector in the Balkans to prevent organised crime and terrorism from entering the EU territory.

1.2. Regional particularities

The Balkan region, as a main geopolitical and geo-economic hub between the EU, Turkey, the Middle East and Russia (Labayle, 2012), constitutes an important centre in illicit trading networks (Lindstrom, 2004). Such activities, albeit universal, are not evenly distributed across regions (Shelley, 2014). Drawing on a comparative study of crime rates (victimisation rates and rates of offences) in

Western and Eastern Europe, Aebi reflects such universalised, but also diversified perspectives:

> In November 1989, the fall of the Berlin wall produced a substantial modification of crime opportunities by putting in contact two parts of the continent that differed dramatically in wealth; thus, within a few months, a substantial market for stolen products [...] emerged in Central and Eastern Europe. This led to a more organised kind of crime with the development of gangs that took advantage of the new lives for the transportation of drugs, illegal goods and commodities, and even human beings, between both sides of the continent (2004: 47).

In addition, despite efforts to harmonise the judicial system, detachment of criminal law from its cultural basis is not without difficulties, as the region has its own distinct socio-cultural and economic particularities; highly militaristic settings (Gilboa, 2001; Helms, 2003; Simic, 2005; Skjelsbæk, 2006); communal political (ethnic) and socioeconomic violence, including SVAW (Nicolic-Ristanovic, 2001; Mertus & Wely, 2004; Simic, 2009; Skjelsbæk, 2010) and increasing domestic violence (Deljkić, 2006; Nicolic-Ristanovic, 2009). The exposure of detention and rape camps in the aftermath of the conflicts (Skjelsbæk, 2006: 373) and the ICTY – established to deal with mass atrocities – containing the first UNSC condemnation of wartime rape and resulting in the introduction of the term rape camp in international documentation (Skjelsbæk, 2010: 27), are indicative of such particularities.

The breakdown of socioeconomic and political structures as a consequence of the war has resulted in the expansion of different types of crime. During and after the Yugoslav conflicts and political disintegration, there has been a flourishing of (organised) crime associated to weak state administration infrastructures and economies (Lindstrom, 2004; Stojarova, 2007; Arsovska & Kostakos, 2008); the region is under the process of restructuring, and economic and administrative reform (UNODC, 2010a; Mesko et al., 2013). The Balkan regions, particularly Bosnia and Serbia, present specific characteristics related to organised crime and financing war criminals involved in such activities (Brady, 2012). Stagnating former economies, unable to meet people's needs, have caused

the flourishing of illegal markets as a 'normal occurrence' (UNICRI, 2008) or in Arsovska's and Kostakos's words, as 'pragmatic responses to real needs' (2008: 6). In Serbia, the NATO bombings have contributed to what Antonopoulos refers to as the 'normality and social embeddedness of illegal markets' (2008: 2), as organised crime becomes socially acceptable. Arsovska and Kostakos (2008) argue that the distinct nature of illegal markets in the Balkans, operating within both formal and informal economies, is embedded within the region's extraordinary histories and circumstances.

Bosnia's reconstruction has been associated with a large presence of international stabilisation forces in the region, which are considered to be partially accountable for increasing human trafficking in the area (Friman & Reich, 2007; Brady, 2012). Whether levels of organised crime have undermined international peace forces or the latter contributed to this through providing large amounts of money without checking the recipients (Brady, 2012), the debate shows the particularities of the region. Drawing on the process of democratising policing in the region, Caparini and Marenin (2005) note that policing reforms have been associated with regional peace-building procedures through efforts to remove those police officers involved in ethnic cleansing.

Stojarova (2007) and Pangerc (2012) expand on such discourses on the link between organised crime and Bosnia's restructuring, stressing on the lack of cooperation between the political entities in Bosnia in order to tackle organised time. On the contrary, there is an inter-ethnic cooperation among organised criminal groups, which are benefited from the political situation in the country. Fatic (2004) refers to a political and institutional background that nurtures the appropriate conditions for organised crime groups to exercise political control and power (also see Albertini, 2012).

Arsovska and Kostakos (2008) maintain that organised crime has a long-standing tradition in the Balkan region. However, their aim is not merely to present the Balkans as the 'core of the problem' (2008: 355), but rather to analyse organised crime beyond economic terms by exploring the cultural and socio-political characteristics of the region. As such, the study challenges the economically embedded concept of organised crime as 'a rationally organised illicit enterprise that thrives and forms the same way legitimate business do' (2008: 355, also see Albertini, 2014), based on market perspectives of demand

and supply, monopolies and price fluctuations. Drawing on cultural parameters, Arsovska and Kostakos link organised crime activities to regional characteristics related to male honour and gun possession, with arms playing a vital role as 'a symbol of pride, masculinity, courage, and above all, security' (2008: 374).

This chapter provides an overview of my research project with reference to the literature of Balkan criminology. Part 1 describes the emergence of Balkan criminology and women's positions within discourses of the Yugoslav breakup. Part 2 offers an overview of this thesis and part 3 provides a roadmap of the thesis.

1.3.   The emergence of Balkan Criminology

Balkan criminology encompasses a range of studies, such as victimisation studies (Getos & Giebel, 2013), research on perceptions of corruption (Datzer et al., 2006; Žibert, 2006; UNODC, 2010a, Jancsics, 2014) and fear (Getos & Giebel, 2013; Mesko, 2014), as well as comparative studies on socialist and post-socialist criminological traditions and practices (Levay, 2005; see also Caparini & Marenin, 2005), comparative studies on violence among youth in Western and Eastern Europe (Mesko & Bucar-Rucman, 2004), and comparative projects on trust in the police in the Balkans and Western Europe (Mitar et al., 2013).

It also includes studies on globalisation and criminality (Albertini, 2012), analyses of national strategic (Dordević, 2009b) and police (Unijat, 2006) responses to organised crime, research on policing (Caparini & Marenin, 2005; Dvoršek, 2006; Mekinc & Anžič, 2006; Mikšaj-Todorović & Dujmović, 2006; Karas, 2006; Lobnikar et al., 2006; Meško et al., 2007; Zekavica et al., 2013) and security (Davidovic et al., 2012), as well as projects on data collection systems of crime and criminal justice (Terrettaz-Zufferey, 2006; UNODC, 2010b).

Other studies in the field focus on civil society's role in tackling organised crime (Ivanova, 2013), unconventional deviance, such as terrorism (Šelih & Meško, 2010; Ivanović & Faladžić, 2011), as well as discussions on war victims' position in restorative justice (Nikolić-Ristanović, 2005), research on assessing governmental efforts in tackling organised crime (Anastasijević, 2006), projects on crime and media from socialist to post-socialist transition (Kesetović, 2005; Kesetović et al., 2006; 2009; Bučar-Ručman & Meško, 2006), and research on the

prison system (Petrovec & Meško, 2006) and on offenders' perceptions of their sentences and criminal justice system (Brady, 2012).

Organised crime (and its transnational dimension) has been central to Balkan criminological studies. As the phenomenon involves a set of coordinated global and local activities (Dordevic, 2009), its study concerns with issues of organisation, cooperation and illicit engagement at transnational and local level. They pertain to the kind of groups (traditional mafia like or professional) (Hajdinjak, 2002; KT NON, 2002; Arsovska & Kostakos, 2008; 2014; UNODC, 2010a; Albertini, 2012; 2014; Hartmann, 2012), the group members (Hadjinjak, 1999), how they cooperate (strong alliances with other criminal groups or case-by-case deals) (Hadjinjak, 1999), the type of criminal activities they engage in (Hajdinjak, 2002; Davydova, 2013), and whether they specialise in specific illicit markets (Hajdinjak, 2002).

Although the 'dual transitions' (Rehn, 2008: 2) signalled institutional enhancement and some shrinking of the grey economy, organised crime remains a threat to formal economy because of corruption and to public security through crime. The issue of corruption involves the interweaving interests of political elites and criminal groups emerging during the war and being mediated by state officials. The process of independence indicated that the leaders of the seceding states had to arm the newly established armies by using existing and emerging smuggling channels due to embargoes imposed by UN, resulting in the development of a stable arm (and oil in the case of Serbia), and later on a human and drugs, smuggling system. As Hadjinjak notes:

> The Yugoslav experience shows that the temporary symbiosis between authorities and organised crime during the process of creation of new states leads to a permanent transformation of state/national interests into private ones and fosters the development of corrupt, non-transparent and crime-permeated societies (1999: 6).

In addition, smuggling, particularly of arms, owes to the transitional particularities of the region. It is the result of massive quantities of weapons left outside governmental control with the end of the breakup (Anastasijevic, 2006; Brady, 2012) and of communist traditions based on developing contacts to gain

access to resources. Dobovšek and Meško (2008) assert that during the transitional period new forms of networking emerged based on previous contacts. Albertini notes that such availability to large amounts of weapons has resulted in criminal operations of 'military-style precision' (2012: 111).

Balkan criminology, particularly studies on the ICTY, has also enhanced socio-legal perspectives of war crimes that expand beyond aetiology to accountability and prosecution (Masco & Bucar-Rucman, 2004) or security and peace building (Tominc & Sotlar, 2011). Balkan criminology has also been instrumental in applying different perspectives to the analysis of organised crime. For instance, Dordevic (2009a) refers to the case of Serbia to explore realist and social constructivist perspectives of security threats resulting from organised crime. Similarly, Fatic draws on the Balkan case to explore what he refers to as the 'New war-making criminal entity model', noting that 'South-Eastern Europe has less well-known, yet highly consistent examples of a continued and deeply-rooted style of warfare by underworld organisations against state institutions' (2004: 139).

In addition, the field has incorporated analyses of organised crime as not solely motivated by profit. Indeed, the case of Kosovo Liberation Army shows that drug smuggling was aimed at funding the ethnic cause of the movement. Fatic (2004) sustains that this example can be generalised for any group labelled as 'insurgent'. Balkan criminology has also been instrumental in analysing stories of sex traffickers. Drawing on their accounts, including cases of the Balkan region, Copley (2014) attempts to understand how sex traffickers use neutralisation techniques to explain their actions.

However, Balkan criminology encounters a number of challenges emanating from a lack of reliable, representative, and readily available crime statistics and reports in the region (Aebi, 2004; Mesko et al., 2013; Arsovska and Begum, 2014). More research is also required for a comprehensive analysis on crime trends in certain regions, such as Serbia (Mesko et al. 2013). Under reporting is attributed to regional attitudes towards recording and reporting crime and to manipulation of data (UNODC, 2008). Xenakis admonishes 'cautiousness in interpreting official statistics from the region' (2010: 2). Similarly, Brady (2012) refers to limited official and intelligence data, and

inefficient data exchange due to poor police agency structures, lack of transparency, political obstruction, and restricted budgets.

Difficulties in reporting also emanate from the shadow nature of criminal industries (Copley, 2014). Arsovska (2014) identifies a number of limitations relating to measuring Balkan organised crime due to its transnational nature, definitional problems and language barriers. She focuses on the lack of a systematic recording of women's presence in organised crime in official documents. This may partly be because women are usually expected to remain in gender-defined roles or due to their peripheral positions that make them less 'visible'.

Drawing on comparisons between Eastern and Western criminology, Mesko and Bucar-Rucman (2004) identify significant differences deriving from the underdevelopment and advanced development of Eastern and Western criminology respectively. Balkan criminological research is becoming indeed increasingly integrated into the broader international criminological community with further inclusion of local studies in international projects being shaped by topics and methods prioritised in criminological studies of international scale. As Albertini notes, 'the new millennium saw an increasing presence of Balkan organised crime groups in security reports and newspapers' headlines in these countries, and in the rest of Europe as well' (2012: 118). However, only a few studies conducted in and about the regions are available in English (Mesko & Bucar-Rucman, 2004).

1.4.   Women's stories and Balkan criminology

Balkan criminology has recognised the importance of women's post-war stories in analysing experiences of wartime violence (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2000; 2009; Skjelsbæk 2007; Simic, 2009; Selimovic 2010). Stories of forced migration are located within a wider context of systematic violence, ethnic cleansing campaigns, and demoralising societies. Balkan criminology has largely incorporated women's experiences of displacement from detention or rape camps and refugee centres in former Yugoslav republics.

Threats, expulsions, forced impregnation, shame, and trauma have been central themes in women's narratives of the Yugoslav breakup (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2000; Simic, 2005; Skjelsbæk, 2006; 2010). For example, Hagen

(2010) refers to a campaign of a sexually obsessed ethnic cleansing, where the broadcasting of rapes stressed the ethnicity of 'victims' and 'perpetrators' in an attempt to fuel hostility. Goldstein (2003) argues that in Serbia, pornography and sex films broadcastings were accompanied with war pictures in an attempt to turn population's attention away from internal problems, such as corruption. Nikolic-Ristanovic (2000) points to misogyny (also see Goldstein, 2003), suppressed under the ideology of gender equality in communist period, and acts of revenge. She notes that women of mixed marriages are often prone to be sexually abused (2000: 64), as a punishment for marrying someone from a different ethnic group.

Women's stories of displacement are also described within the broader framework of political tolerance to the perpetrators. Gilboa (2001) suggests that army generals often encouraged SVAW in an effort to increase soldiers' solidarity and morale or as a reward for a good behaviour. Governments appeared to avoid perpetrators' punishment, and in some cases encouraged massive action in the conflict; prisoners were released in order to participate in the war, and civilians joined the military forces due to abundance of arms. Paramilitary forces were reinforced due to a breakdown of order, and criminal and quasi-criminal groups were organised and centralised during the war. Kaldor (2003) refers to the establishment of citizens' militias in Tuzla and Zenice to support local populations, highlighting the role of civilian groups in the Bosnian war.

Nikolic-Ristanovic (2000) links stories of women in refugee camps with a backlash to traditional power relationships. For example, a woman with a superior pre-war social status could be a target of sexual abuse in an attempt, on the behalf of the aggressor, to establish the traditional gender relationships, as the Croat camp Dretelj case indicates. Other targeted groups included women who had refused sexual relationship with particular men, or women who had taken over wartime responsibilities that challenged traditional gender roles (Littlewood, 1997).

Darydova (2013) and more extensively Stanojova and Ristov (2014) and Arsovska (2014) make use of stories of victims of human trafficking to analyse the violent modus operandi of OC groups, where violence is used to crush and control the victims. But similarly to most scholarship, the studies explain how women do gender in their actions described.

Particularly, Balkan criminology explores those distinct political, socio-cultural and economic contexts in the Balkans that frame women's profiles in criminal networks. Although involvement of women in (organised) crime due to connections with male criminals or out of poverty is by no means a Balkan characteristic, Siegel (2014) explores women's reasons of engagement in such activities within the socioeconomic context of the region, concluding that such participation resulted from increasing opportunities emerging in the 1990s and was associated rather with survival than intention to become wealthy.

Arsovska and Begum (2014) highlight that little is known about the profiles of women in illicit networks and base their study on former Yugoslavia's socio-cultural spaces that influence the (subordinate) roles women hold in criminal activities, exploring how 'stereotypical imagery of women in organised crime as appendixes to their male counterparts, as their mistresses, as sex objects, or as femmes fatales' (2014: 91) shapes perceptions of women's roles, preferences and norms within such networks. The peripheral roles and profiles of women pertain to enacting femininity and accepting (gender) hierarchies within extremely violent settings, although there are cases where female partners of main male suspects show an active participation in the group (KT NON, 2002).

Arsovska and Begum (2014) highlight that analysing women's criminal profiles in the Balkans is essential in furthering our understandings of the role of women in transnational crime. They apply a multicultural feminist approach, which acknowledges that different ethnic groups may have different gender norms; gender roles vary according to variations in socialisation in different regions; and diversity of cultural norms, histories and their stereotypes affect one's position within illicit networks. The multicultural feminist approach is taken within the context of 'doing gender' – women's gender strategies and how they operate within highly masculinised illicit environments. Arsovska and Begum (2014) draw their findings from interviews, court cases, police files, and trafficking victims' statements; and where interviews were conducted with women who had been part of criminal networks, the participants had merely been identified as trafficking victims.

Balkan criminology encompasses a spectrum of studies on human trafficking (one of the most diverse and advanced studies relating to women's engagement in illicit settings), providing three different inter-organisational roles

of women in such networks; women as victims, professional, and deceived (Kienast et al., 2014). The first group refers to women who have been victimised as both, trafficked persons and individuals living in poverty, inequality and violence. As such, their activities in these networks are seen as efforts of survival (Bilgen, 2012; Arsovska and Begum, 2014; Kienast et al. 2014; Copley, 2014).

Copley draws on the Yugoslav paradigm to explore women's position in these networks. As women have been at the heart of ethnic cleansing campaigns, their involvement in trafficking networks relates to their forced transportation in 'bordello' or 'rape' camps (2014: 52). Arsovska and Allum (2014; also see Arsovska, 2014) attribute women's lack of active participation in OC to the highly masculine settings of such organisations, highlighting those sociocultural (i.e. traditional male attitudes) and politico-economic conditions that justify victimisation of women and women's acceptance of the victim role.

Bilgen elaborates on cultural trends that 'inherently create a demand for victims' (2012: 3) by normalising women's exploitation and intertwine with border officials' corruptive policies. Similarly, Arsovska (2014) refers to a culture that is used as a tool in the traffickers' hands, enabling justification of crimes relating to trafficking. Victimisation can also be found in the recruitment process where this is forced through, for instance, abduction or kidnapping (Stanojoska & Petrevski, n.d.). Such discourses tend to depict men as rational and intentional during offending, and women as disadvantaged, victimised and exploited within criminal environments (Fleetwood, 2014).

Although the Balkan case shows that women's criminal involvement has not always been about making business, but rather about commitment 'to the culture and the life, at all costs' (Arsovska and Begum, 2014: 106), as many women did not necessarily estimate the consequences or have long-term plans. However, Kienast et al. (2014) explore women's involvement in OC as a means of socio-economic advancement rather than survival. Such engagement involves positions of recruiting new sex workers and supervising them. Women's roles also include guarding and receiving payments from the victims on behalf of the pimps (KT NON, 2002).

Similarly, Nikolic-Ristanovic (2009) refers to female managers (madams) or owners of bars, nightclubs and brothels, emphasising women's moving toward the organisational side of human trafficking. Stanojoska and Petrevski (n.d.) turn

the attention to female traffickers who are not in visible positions as recruiters in order to attract potential victims, namely the 'proxy recruiters' (n.d.: 5).

The third category is that of women as deceived about the nature of work they are to undertake. It may be the case as women often enter OC groups through the influence of a partner or a family member (Kienast et al., 2014), they are more likely to trust such groups and their fallen promises. Stanojoska and Petrevski refer to the 'lover method' (n.d.: 5), and Arsovska to a 'lover-boy approach (2014), where a love relationship or marriage can result in deceiving the trafficked or where a woman becomes the pimp's lover and his spy, shifting position in the hierarchy. Also, deceit may emerge during the recruitment process through false display or concealment of facts – often through women acting as 'proxy recruiters'. Where deceit is partial, women are seen as 'exploited' or misused' (KT NON, 2002: 62), while full deceit during the recruitment process refers to the 'misled' women (KT NON, 2002:62).

Arsovska's (2014) study draws on the intesectionality of ethnicity and gender, comparing women's profiles in Slavic and Albanian criminal groups. The study concludes that Slavic women posses more central positions in OC networks than Albanian women. It also analyses the role of 'emotional bonds' in network hierarchies. Men's efforts to control their female associates relate to a combination of violence, threats, sexual relationships, and buying things that result in emotional attachment. In a similar study, she highlights an increase in cooperation between Albanian men and Slavic women, particularly in the case of Kosovo. However, she maintains that women with the status of 'partner', albeit portrayed as intelligent, beautiful and money oriented (Arsovska, 2014), remain victimised when not doing their job 'properly'.

However, women's offending experiences during the Yugoslav breakup have been overlooked within a broader analysis of the widespread phenomenon of black market and explanations that merely refer to survival reasons, oversimplifying the complexity of women's experiences and their relationships to crime.

1.4.1. *Black Market*

Studies on women's criminality in the Balkans incorporate an analysis of the impact of war on the involvement of women in illicit activities. Ruth Jamieson

(1999) explores the model of war as a 'temporary reversal' of moral progress, maintaining that women are more likely to participate in crime in an attempt to deal with emerging issues, such as loss of jobs during war, hasty marriages for financial reasons, goods shortages and increased family responsibility. Economic, social and family changes at wartime have increased female criminality, especially under circumstances, which allow the oppressed to use violence as a means to express feelings of anger.

Women in Black stress that during the Yugoslav breakup, women had been forced to work in areas of grey economy, especially in the black market in order to 'defend some kind of family frontlines' (2013: 78), while the male members of the family were at war. Similarly, Nikolić-Ristanović (2009) points out that unemployment and inflation at wartime have led to the criminalisation of the entire society in Serbia, with the whole population involved in some kind of illicit activity, especially in the black market. Similarly, Anastasijevic (2006) refers to an absolute dependence of the impoverished population on the black market.

Indeed, the black market appears to be a widespread wartime phenomenon. According to Hadjinjak (1999), illegal trade operations during the war have sustained the existence of a grey sector, where criminal and semi-criminal groups cooperated with state administrators and agents of security services (custom, police and border control). Also, the breakup created those socio-political conditions, which strengthened perceptions of illicit activities as essential to survive. For example, fuel and arm smuggling during embargo was rather seen as a state-building effort than a criminal act; it was considered as an attempt to arm the newly established republics and a necessary step to achieve secession. Such governmental efforts were gradually transformed into a business transaction for personal gain and involved other illicit activities (Hadjinjak, 1999). Particularly, the arm smuggling in Serbia and Kosovo has merely been funded by drug money. Similarly, extortion and racketeering of refugees has often been associated with human trafficking (Hadjinjak, 1999).

On the same tone, Arsovska and Kostakos highlight that 'illegal markets must be viewed as a social process in which the criminal and the legal, the financial and the political, the 'underworld' and the 'upper world', can hardly be separated' (2008: 8). Legal and illegal markets appear to operate within the same socio-economic environment, with legal businesses often drifting between legal

and illegal practices. Furthermore, Arsovska and Kostakos explore normative perceptions of illegal markets in former Yugoslavia. Such activities do not exclusively pertain to the elites, but also to the disadvantaged, as a means to access commodities, services and opportunities and to assist recovery of legal markets rather than as the victimiser of formal economies.

Kesetovic et al. (2009) explore popular perceptions on shadow economies through images of criminal groups in the media. Such images pertain to the rise of criminal groups from marginal to heroes during the war and businessmen at and after the conflicts. Their idolisation as 'tough guys capable to confront evil' (2009: 127) remained even during the post-Milosevic era, despite media's coverage of crime committed under the Milosevic regime. Indeed, as Doborsek (2008) notes, the analysis of informal networks in the Balkans is one where material benefit and efforts to correct unfair aspects of the politico-socioeconomic system are inseparable.

In the case of former Yugoslavia, the wartime settings should be conceived as something different from traditional mafia settings (i.e. traditional mafia in Sicily), as the conflicts had fostered an environment where the deviance was the norm. It is in these environments of blurred distinctions between deviant and non-deviant (Albertini, 2012) that participants detract their wartime stories from when explaining their experience of the Yugoslav breakup. As such, the act of doing *illegal* is not synonymous to *being* illegal (or criminal), as the offender appears to have distinct characteristics from those involved in criminality during conventional periods. As we will discuss in a later chapter, the participants involved in wartime illicit activities appear to distance themselves from the 'authentic' offenders - those who largely profited from such activities (i.e. governmental officers) or those who continued such actions in the post-war period.

As 'individuals are situated at the intersections of multiple social structures' (Fleetwood, 2015: 44, see also Bjorkdahl & Selimovic, 2013), women who experienced the Yugoslav breakup can produce distinct experiences associated to local particularities. The wartime conditions have established the framework where deviant behaviour had often been seen as the norm. As such behaviour is not always and necessarily stigmatised and shameful, women may feel freer to speak about their actions and initiatives within criminal networks.

Indeed, many women who joined illicit groups have not been part of institutions, such as prisons and courts and their associated agendas, and as such they may have different experiences within the post-war and post-deviant lifestyles from those women participating in illicit activities in peace times. They may reveal different aspects of their relationship with crime, as they may not have been as restricted by institutional narratives. Or they may show some elements of agency that have not been evident in stories that have been highly influenced by certain institutionalised frameworks.

2.   Overview of the thesis

This thesis seeks to address gaps emanating from a scholarly emphasis on women's stories of little agency within the wartime criminological settings in the Balkans. It is therefore, a response to a lack of attention to women's agency in Balkan research, emanating from an emphasis on the material and inequality factors or the doing gender approach when analysing women's stories of wartime deviance.

Daly and Maher (1998) note that criminological studies should take into account both intellectual positions towards their subject (women) – 'real women' and 'women of discourse' (p.4) in order to further our understandings of women's agency and criminality. The first refers to women as subjects of their realities, while the latter as products of discourse. The project shares relevant literature with feminist criminology, viewing women both as effects and producers of knowledge – constructed in and by existing discourses but also agents who construct their realities. However, feminist criminology does not explore women's identities as performances through storytelling. It does not elevate the storied nature of experience, and thus this interaction between experience and narrative in understanding criminality.

This study is concerned about the ways in which gender and women's unique experiences at war shape their stories of deviance, exploring how women receive and produce (gendered) discourses of offending, the ways they make use of the gender variable in stories of wartime deviance, how they perform themselves in such accounts and what this tells us about their relationship to deviance.

It attempts to merge real women and women of discourse by employing a narrative approach. As experience is already understood through storytelling and gender is accomplished in and through narratives (Fleetwood, 2015), women's agency and their ability to perform a self will enable us to explore the ways they accomplish gender (and other identities) in their stories of deviance, and thus further our understandings of women's relationship to offending.

The study employs a narrative approach to women's wartime experiences of deviance. It explores agency in its discursive form, sought in the narrator's ability to merge existing cultural narratives, multiple – often contradictory – selves, and fragmented, shifting experiences; to challenge certain discourses or structural explanations of offending, including gender norms and roles, without necessarily and always rejecting (parts of) conventional discourses; and to negotiate positions, especially within the highly masculinised discourses of subculture, and form group categories to perform a (conventional) self within stories of deviance.

Hence, the project goes beyond material and ideological factors that constrain women's agency, emphasising agency relating to self-narrative construction. It also extends beyond the doing gender perspective which, although focusing on women's strategies within illicit environments, such roles rarely show the complexity of women's profiles within subcultural settings. The study particularly centres upon the ways in which women's stories are shaped by gender as well as women's wartime and post-war circumstances – how women do gender (and other aspects of their identities) in their stories of deviance, and what kinds of agency appear in such stories which – when analysed from the material factors or doing gender perspectives – leave women without much agency.

Therefore, the significance of the stories lies in extracting data from the narrator's ability to construct knowledge that can provide new perspectives, particularly on discourses about women's relationship to crime, as well as their ability to perform a (conventional) self within stories that are considered highly masculinised.

More specifically, the research provides insights into women's accounts of wartime offending as gendered performances - the kinds of structural and individual stories associated with their activities, how they narrate their

interactions and attributes during offending, as well as their wartime offending activities as active producers of their narratives (albeit not always necessarily as agents of their actions). Therefore, the project intends to address the following two research questions:

- How do women narrate wartime offending (black market, smuggling) as women?

  - What are the interactions narrated by women in the wartime illicit settings of black market and smuggling?

  - What kinds of individual and canonical stories (and their associated values) emerge from women's narratives of wartime offending?

- What elements of creativity can be found in the construction of women's stories that draw on archetypes?

  - How are stories embedded in culture negotiated in the private?

  - How do stories of enacting offending interplay with stories of reflection?

The project is *not* concerned with perpetrators of war crimes or victims of mass human-right abuses directed by political and military campaigns during the Yugoslav conflicts[1]. It is rather about the illicit activities of black market and smuggling (and thus of economic nature) that increased during the breakup and continue to engross Balkan criminologists as present legal and illegal markets in the region are explored in the shadow of the Yugoslav war, its current legacies and the socioeconomic conditions it has created[2].

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[1] Narratives of victimhood are often concerned with victim's lack of agency, but also with subjective concepts of victimhood within particular sociocultural contexts. Such narrative analysis centres upon definitions of victimhood that are constructed against something and for a particular audience. Issues relate to how victimhood is produced in narrative and about interactions of various constructions of the subject victim (Cole, 2015).

[2] For example, Vojta (2015) explores imprisonment in the Balkans through those historical common traits of Former Yugoslavia – the rationale as well as normative developments and

2.1. Contribution

The novelty of this project is that it attempts to explore women's agency through stories of women offenders who have been absent from offending through circumstances other than gradual internalised processes of desistance/recovery. The stories' 'turning point' is not to be found in experiences of imprisonment or rehabilitation, but simply in the cessation of the Yugoslav conflicts. As post-war circumstances differ from individual processes of (moral) transformation within institutionalised settings at peace, women offenders' stories might differentiate from those normative images often encouraged by certain organisations. The project's contribution lies in exploring women's criminal activities and profiles that may not always and necessarily conform into women's normative roles as promoted by specific institutions. Stories that come outside such organisations and their agendas may show women's different and diverse relationships to crime.

What different stories could possibly women tell us from those stories narrated in the aftermath of the war? Nickson and Braithwaite (2014) highlight that with the passage of time people are more likely to be emotionally ready to share their past experiences and more available to talk as they are no longer preoccupied with rebuilding their homes, communities and lives. Time influences storytelling, as the narrated experiences 'take on new significance depending on their later consequences' (Ritchie, 2003: 34). As Brants notes, 'power relations change […], perceptions and memories fluctuate, images alter with the passage of time' (2013: 5). Many participants now live outside the region of former Yugoslavia (Cyprus and UK) or live in Serbia as minorities from other parts of the region, being detached from their wartime communities.

As time allows for further internalisation and mediation of the past, people are more likely to reshape their perspectives in the long-term. It enables an evaluation of wartime offending actions, becoming 'central to an adequate theorisation of agency' (Fleetwood, 2015: 16) as social structures are mediated by individual capacity for reflection. Thus, the project brings new insights into existing stories, since such experiences are retold and re-evaluated with the

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practices of imprisonment that shaped the penological systems in the region (see Balkan Criminology News, 2015).

benefit of time and of the current shifting circumstances. Indeed, it shows the ways in which women do gender in their stories of deviance, while at the same time such narratives are affected and (re) shaped by social wartime and post-war circumstances.

Additionally, the project attempts to explore agency in stories of illicit activities that have so long been seen of minimal agency. As existing literature tends to view women's stories in wartime black market from material and inequality perspectives, no previous empirical enquiry has so far been undertaken to analyse these stories as gender performances. Indeed, a narrative approach to women's stories of deviance, including a discursive aspect of agency (narrative creativity), is what distinguishes this project from existing Balkan research on stories of women's wartime participation in informal economies.

Existing literature in Balkan criminology tends to overlook women's experiences within illicit environments, as it merely focuses on women's disadvantaged positions within illicit networks. In Balkan criminological discourse, the doing gender perspective analyses women's strategies within such networks, but women appear to enact femininity or/and accept female subordination within such settings. In some cases, discourses on women's wartime offending have been oversimplified within broader (often without mention to gender, such as wartime arm smuggling) discussions on the wartime shadow economies.

The project's participants originate from ethnic minority groups within embargoed regions or heavily dependent on embargoed Serbia (Krajina, Sprska). In these areas, smuggling became an important source of income for the broader population (Hadjinjak, 1999) and indeed certain activities, such as smuggling of medication was seen as an action that realised eligible social goals (UNICRI, 2008). As sanctions fostered anti-western perceptions in Serbia, any activity (including criminality) relating to breaking the blockade was seen as positive. As such, the Yugoslav breakup provides proto-narratives that distinguish women's stories of offending from other studies about women's criminality due to particular wartime legacies. Gender constraints often break during periods of conflict, bridging nonconventional gender behaviour to normative beliefs (i.e. maternal sacrifice and relations of responsibility for others), offering unique insights into the complexity of women's experiences.

The contribution of this project is that it succeeds to explore the interplay between women's conventional and subcultural behaviour, diversifying women's relationships to crime and their deviant profiles. The study does not downplay women's victimised positions, yet neither does overlook those subcultural norms associated with parts of their activities. It achieves to elevate those subcultures not solely as coping strategies to deal with particular situations within highly masculinised environments or efforts to gain respect, but also as qualities that women to some extent have embraced and indeed enjoyed.

Ultimately, the project brings Balkan criminology into the international criminological debate on furthering understandings of women's criminality - particularly how gender works within women's narratives of wartime deviance, the ways in which women perform a self - including accomplishing gender, and their relationship to deviance. By exploring the ways gender is employed, shaping women's deviant stories of the Yugoslav breakup, this study further links these narratives to broader criminological inquiries of how to bridge women's reality and discourse in order to gain a better understanding of criminality.

3. Conclusion

The project is based on a four-year research on exploring the ways in which gender plays within women's stories of the Yugoslav breakup. It involves research from two countries – Cyprus and Serbia – and interviews with two women; one Bosnian-Serbian from the Republica Sprska and one Croatian-Serb from Krajina, who no longer stay at their pre-war places.

This project is divided into six chapters; this introductory chapter has described approaches on an integrated study of (European) criminology, outlined Balkan criminology's distinct position within criminological studies, offered a brief description of the developments in the field, the role of women's stories in the advancement of Balkan criminology, and an overview of the research.

The second chapter provides a literature review on the theoretical underpinnings of narrative criminology which our analysis of women's stories draws upon. Narrative theory is valued for enabling an analysis of women's accounts as gendered performances, enhancing discourses of women's relationship to crime, integrating Balkan criminology into broader criminological

debates and ultimately aiming at furthering understandings of women's criminality.

The methodological chapter uses women's stories as an empirical resource, drawing on narrative analysis and its epistemological status – the discourses chosen by the narrator, her position in these discourses, the content of the story (what we can know), the narrating process (when it has been said, interviewing context), and what the narrator appears to achieve with that story.

Chapter 4 explores women's narratives in the black market (arms and fuel illicit markets), particularly stories from the regions of Krajina and Sprska. The chapter discusses the kinds of conventional, subcultural and individual narratives used in women's stories of the Yugoslav breakup, which describe women's attributes, gendered strategies and interactions within the Balkan wartime illicit environments, as well as their family and personal circumstances and relationships.

Chapter 5 draws on the previous chapter, expanding the discussion in order to address the two main research questions. Drawing on Darja's story, the chapter explores those creative elements employed to renegotiate stories of wartime offending within familial environments. The chapter also analyses the interplay between Nevena's stories of enacting offending and reflection narratives, and the creative ways in which she merged action and reflection stories in an attempt to perform a conventional self. The project finishes with a concluding chapter bringing together the preceding chapters and their findings.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Engagements in Narrative Criminology

1. Introduction

Narrative Criminology: Understanding Stories of Crime, edited by Lois Presser and Sveigung Sandberg and only published in 2015, is considered to be 'a collective first step toward establishing the field of narrative criminology' (2015: 13). Although emerging, narrative criminology is often described as a viable alternative to mainstream criminology, 'radical in its insights and implications' (Maruna, 2015: vii), drawing on a range of intellectual orientations, theoretical traditions and thoughts.

It specifically draws on interpretivism – a paradigm that provides an alternative to positivism, as it centres upon the belief that individuals define their own meanings within particular socio-political and cultural settings and through interactions with such environments; perceptions of social reality are shaped by socio-political factors, but also by individual experiences and sense-making capacities (Snape & Spencer, 2003, Walla, 2015). Its ontological underpinnings entail a relativist approach, as reality appears to be intertwined with perception; and a subjective epistemology, as knowledge is perceived as socially constructed.

The paradigm makes use of qualitative research to gain an in-depth understanding of human action. The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) was a key proponent of interpretivism or social theory action; his research centred upon social action through interpretive means in an attempt to understand the subjective meaning and purpose that humans attach to their actions. Weber suggested that human scientists should be concerned with *verstehen* – an understanding of the meanings attached to human actions as a way to explore the motives that give rise to such actions (Chowdhury, 2014).

The chapter is divided into four sections; the first section outlines narrative criminological ideas rooted in earlier socio-criminological concepts. The second part reviews 'pre-narrative' criminology, particularly neutralisation theories and the early works of David Matza, Gresham M. Sykes – as the theories have influenced narrative criminological inquiry. The project furthers to current discussions in criminological approaches to narrative, including its leading

advocates Lois Presser and Sveinung Sandberg, and their mere research foci. Next, the study explores the work of Jennifer Fleetwood, as well as that of Jody Miller, Kristin Carbone-Lobez and Mikh V. Gunderman, incorporating the gender factor into current narrative criminological debates. The last part attempts to address the contribution of narrative criminology to Balkan criminology. It therefore, covers an introductory part and the following sections: 'From neutralisation to narrative criminology'; 'Narrative criminological theory'; and 'Linking Narrative and Balkan Criminology'.

1.1.   Related concepts from sociology & criminology

In the early 20th century, questioning that objectivity and the methods of natural science (positivism) can apply into the study of societies, members of the Chicago School supported qualitative research in order to form theories about how individuals live in their environments, signalling the beginning of interpretivism in sociology. However, interpretivism remained relatively unpopular in sociology until the 1960s. Nevertheless, its sustained use by the Chicago School (Keating, 2013) resulted in putting Weber's ideas into practice in an attempt to shape social policy and reform. Such studies developed different variations of interpretivism, founded on the same epistemological principles but employing different approaches to apply such principles, such as phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and ethnography.

Interpretivism's popularity increased from the late 1960s onwards due to ideological shifts (Keating, 2013), such as the post-war emergence of neo-Marxism and post-colonialist studies, which influenced the theoretical positions, and the cultural turn in the early 1970s – a movement that included scholars from the humanities and social sciences to elevate notions of culture as the primary focus of theoretical and methodological debates.

The cultural turn explores culture as a social process of communicating meaning and making sense of social reality. Scholars such as Clifford Geertz (Fuente, 2007), Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu (Sayer, 2003; Friedland & Mohr, 2004) have been instrumental in shifts toward a theoretical and methodological analysis of cultural practices, structure, subjectivity and agency (Nash, 2001). Jeffrey C. Alexander (Friedland & Mohr, 2004; Fuente, 2007) has been the first to introduce the term 'cultural turn' in his work *The New*

Theoretical Movement in 1988. Wright Wills' book (1959) *The Sociological Imagination* has been vital in such analyses, as he argues for studying social structure with reference to the individual – their consciousness and experience – and vice versa – human action with reference to its social context.

Narrative criminologists share a distinct interest in culture (structure) and agency. Its mere aspects, namely unity/fragmentation and structure/agency, are informed by narrative psychology (particularly the study of a unified self-narrative), ethnomethodology (specifically narration as self-presentation of an agent and culturally embedded self), cultural structuralism (i.e. study of the social context and the larger meaning-making structures or discourses of narrative), and postmodernism (i.e. study of narrative as a multidimensional space where different cultural repertoires merge and conflict).

Additionally, narrative criminology is inspired by postmodernist ideas from the field of cultural and constitutive criminology. Cultural criminology attempts to explore crime as a cultural product in terms of its situated meaning. It explores ways in which culture interacts with criminal practices (and control) rendering crime a meaningful human action (Ferrell et al. 2008; Ferrell, 1999; Hayward, 2007). It treats crime as a momentary event, subcultural effort and social matter, based on the development of sociology, criminology and cultural studies (Ferrell, 1999). Ferrell refers to cultural criminology as the study of incorporating insights of cultural studies into criminology.

Its starting point can be traced in the Birmingham School of cultural studies and the 'new criminology' in Britain in the 1970s, particularly the tradition of Marxist and Neo-Gramscian critical criminology (Hayward, 2007). Scholars from the Birmingham School explored the cultural aspects of social class and illicit subcultures as sites of alternative meaning of criminal events. At the same time, American criminology applied symbolic interactionism to analyse the contested making of meaning relating to deviance issues, specifically the situated politics of crime (Ferrell, 1999). However, a distinct cultural criminology only emerged in 1995 with Jeff Ferrell's and Clinton R. Sanders's work *Cultural Criminology*.

Although both criminologies view crime as a social product assigned with meaning within culture and subculture as well as a criminal event in its immediacy, centring upon individual and shared experiences within moments of

criminality, narrative criminology is rather concerned with crime as the central element that aids one to construct/perform a particular self-story (King, 2013). Additionally, cultural criminology diverges from narrative criminology, as its priority often lies in doing rather than speaking (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). Such focus on the discursive aspect of criminal action is evident in constitutive criminology and it is this discursive priority that links narrative and constitutive criminology.

Narrativists tend to focus on their discursive forms of the act rather than the act itself, involving an understanding of the meanings and symbols that are found in the accounts. Presser and Sandberg define discourses as 'ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice' (2015: 3). A discourse can be hegemonic during certain historical periods and shifting due to changes in circumstances. Similarly to constitutive criminology, narrative criminology views social reality in the form of narrative, embedded within larger discourses, and as such, experience is understood as storied.

Cultural criminologists centre upon more empirical forms of criminological analysis or in Aspden's and Hayward's words, upon the 'immediacy and experiential thrill' (2015: 239) of offending – 'the reality of emotional experience' (p. 240). Narrative criminology does not solely deal with accounts of crime, but it is rather concerned with narrative construction of the self. But similarly to cultural criminologists, narrativists incline to humanise the offender by analysing crime as a phenomenon that excites and thrills.

Some particularly influential theories for narrative criminology have been label, strain, rational choice and structured action theories in criminological tradition, as well as criminological concepts of identity. Shadd Maruna points to the notion of identity as an eternal narrative, which has dominated social sciences. As Miller et al. observe:

> Identity is a life-long project; stories about the self are routinely created and recreated, as one's motivations, goals and social position change over time. New experiences may cause one to reinterpret behaviour long past, increasing or decreasing the salience of past experiences for one's self-story (2015: 70).

Maruna is particularly concerned with concepts of identity in accounts where deviance becomes the interactional framework of the story. Criminological inquiry has a long tradition in investigating the impact of identity on deviance. It views identity as a concept that is socially constructed to understand who we are and how we see ourselves by making meaning of our social roles and personal attributes. Similarly, criminological narratives enable understandings of individual interpretations of social realities (i.e. offending) and the significance of identity (Copes et al., 2008).

Indeed, as Youngs (2103) maintains, a narrative should incorporate the narrator's interpretation of their experiences, self-awareness or identity within these actions, and their emotional experiential qualities of the experience (i.e. feelings of regret). As such, mainstream and narrative criminology share a common conceptual ground of identity. However, in criminology, identity is represented as label, not a story. Labelling theorists refer to a mono-dimensional identity that centres upon the label. As such, an imposed label is the authentic identity of the offender.

Narrative criminology is also informed by strain theories; they both share the same focus on interpretations of life circumstances and of the outcomes of criminal action. Other criminological concepts that inform narrative criminology include rational choice theories and structured action theory. The first is concerned with the actor's perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of their criminal conduct, while the second centres upon those social and cultural settings and resources that enable criminal performance (Presser & Sandberg, 2015).

Narrative criminology has also been influenced by the narrative turn in social sciences; such influence originates from its understanding, adopted by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), that people are storytellers who understand the world through stories. As inspired by post-structuralism, it centres upon the multitude of interpretation and ambiguity, and the plurality and multiple meanings of narrative (Sandberg, 2015). The narrative turn that took place in psychology, sociology and social theory during the 1990s has been instrumental in understanding the rendering of the self through popular discourses that extend beyond written sources.

Stories from criminal courts, accounts collected from police work, and narratives originating from prisons and rehabilitation centres illustrate the strong relationship between the study of deviance and the study of accounts. According to Shadd Maruna, crime is measurable and quantifiable, but there is not a mathematical formula to answer its social aspect and understand the offender's experiences (2015: ix). Indeed, as he observes, stories are always evident in the build-up to and aftermath of criminal behaviour and as such, crime and deviance are seen as narrative concepts.

This relationship between narrative forms and criminal conduct aims at understanding (Maruna, 2015: x) experiences and perceptions of criminality rather than predicting and controlling crime. As such, narrative criminology has become concerned with "narrative reality" (Presser & Sandberg, 2015: 13), as it 'conceives of a world where experience is always storied and where action advances or realises the story' (p. 287). Thus, it generates new understandings of criminality and new research questions.

2. From neutralisation to narrative criminology

Narrative criminology ideas draw on earlier studies in criminology, particularly neutralisation theories. This section merely rests on the work of Sykes and Matza, and the later studies of Jack Katz and Shadd Maruna on neutralisation theory.

2.1.   Neutralisation theory

The current study of narrative and crime involves an analysis of the causes of crime (Sandberg, 2013), emphasising the importance of strain, psyche, socialisation, gender, race, social controls and political economy in storied experiences of offending (Presser, 2012: 5). It provides a discursive perspective of crime, including the offender's perceptions of their offending acts. These may derive from efforts to embody a good self or concerns about others' perceptions about the offender (Presser, 2012). It is about self-images and rationales behind the offending act through the use of neutralisation techniques (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Maruna, 2001; Maruna & Copes, 2005; Copes et al. 2008; Presser, 2009; 2012; Sandberg, 2010; 2013; Copes et al., 2014); that is justifications and excuses. Therefore, narrative criminological theoretical underpinnings can be traced in the pre-narrative criminological works on neutralisation theory.

2.1.1. Accounts: Justifications and Excuses

Justifications and excuses take the form of descriptions and explanations (Backman, 2011). Justifications are accounts where the offender accepts responsibility, but denies the wrongfulness or impropriety of criminal actions, while excuses reject responsibility, yet recognise the wrongful or inappropriate nature of offending actions (Maruna & Copes, 2005; Weiss, 2011; Copes et al., 2014). Maruna and Copes (2005) conclude that justifications are more likely to be used in narratives where claims of self-defence or of reasonable reaction (see Matza, 1964) to hostile provocation are prevalent, such as stories of violent offences. On the contrary, excuses are evident in stories where interpretation of self-defence is not necessary, such as in stories of property crimes.

Dilmon and Timor (2014) maintain that excuses - as accounts of one-time lapse, defeasibility, biological drives, and scapegoating - centre on the actor's subjective inner state, while justifications on the external circumstances of the act. In other words, actions require justifications, whereas the actors need excuses. However, there has been an association of denial of responsibility (excuses) with external forces, which are usually associated with justifications (see Maruna & Copes, 2005). Excuses and justifications, according to Katz (1988), are autobiographical accounts, where multiple selves (or actions) are storied as an integrative, synthetic whole to make sense of the experience (see McAdams, 2008).

2.1.2. Mapping neutralisation theory

Neutralisation theory has been part of many different criminological traditions (control, psychological, learning, strain, rational theories - to name a few) before evolving into an independent theory of deviance. Such development is rooted in Matza's drift theory (Maruna & Copes, 2005) where neutralisation techniques played a primary role in understanding the offender's decision-making process. The offender falls into 'a temporary period of irresponsibility or an episodic relief from moral constraint' (Maruna & Copes, 2005: 231); the offender frees themselves from the moral binds of law, rationalising or expanding her criminal behaviour.

Most criminological literature centres on the five neutralisation techniques whom Sykes and Matza originally introduced, namely denial of responsibility,

denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemner, and appeal to higher loyalties (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Katz, 1988; Maruna & Copes, 2005; Presser, 2009; Dilmon & Timor, 2014). Denial of responsibility is what Maruna and Copes refer to as the 'master account' (2005: 231) to relieve offender of responsibility for offending actions and mitigate social disapproval and personal sense of failure. The offender's actions are viewed as accidental or the result of external forces beyond one's control. As such, the offender is portrayed as a victim of circumstance or as a product of her environment.

Denial of injury tends to measure the offender's wrongfulness according to the amount of harm done and to the actor's intentions; the offender can excuse wrongfulness if they believe no one is 'really' harmed. On the contrary, denial of the victim recognises the harmful nature of offender's actions, yet denies the victim, as the latter appears to act improperly and thus deserve the harm; offending behaviour is rather an act of rightful retaliation or punishment. Denial of the status of victimhood for the victim also occurs when the victim is absent, unknown or abstract in offender's accounts. Maruna and Copes note that 'in these situations the offender can easily ignore the rights of the victim because the latter is not around to stimulate the offender's conscience' (2005: 233).

Condemnation of the condemner shifts the focus from the offender's actions to those expressing disapproval of the offending behaviour. The condemners are presented as people with no right to pass judgments on others or authority to make arrests. Last, appeal to higher loyalties considers claims that deviant actions are consistent with the moral obligations of a specific group to which they belong, such as family. This does not mean that the offender rejects the norms that she violates. Instead, other norms are seen to be more of a priority for the offender. Youngs and Canter summarise neutralisation techniques under the label 'moral disengagement' (2012: 238), where interpretations of action tend to defuse responsibility, dehumanise the victim, assume the role of the victim for oneself, and distort the consequences of the actions (also see Maruna & Copes, 2005).

The original list of neutralisation techniques has been extended, often incorporating new techniques, such as defence of necessity and claim of entitlement in the studies of white-collar offender (Maruna & Copes, 2005; Sandberg, 2009b; Copley, 2014). In addition, such techniques have often been

enhanced by 'criminal thinking patterns' (Maruna & Copes, 2005: 242), resting on blaming others or minimising or mislabelling actions. However, Katz (1988) challenges the 'criminal thinking' notion, as elements of denial are evident in every individual life to manage hurt or failure (i.e. victims on victimisation, political leaders on budget expansions); they are culturally embedded learned patterns of thought and thus should not be classified as characteristics of 'criminal personalities' (1988: 286).

2.2.   Neutralisations and narrative criminology

Neutralisation theory emerges from the symbolic interactionist tradition, centring on the assumption that "if people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Maruna & Copes, 2005: 235), implying a link between offending behaviour and the offender's situated opinion. It is seen as after-the-fact rationalisations (Katz, 1988; Sandberg, 2013; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Youngs, 2013) or antecedents to action (Katz, 1988; Presser, 2009; 2012; Sandberg, 2010; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Youngs, 2013).

As antecedents to action, the theory relates to the post-positivist view of narratives as instigator of criminal action, where offending is perceived as the enactment of the story (Youngs & Canter, 2012; Youngs, 2013) and experience as 'narratively mediated' (Ward, 2012: 254). In other words, they can be seen as factors in the motivation for and commitment of an offence (Presser, 2009; 2012; Youngs, 2013; Gathings & Parrotta, 2013) or as 'cognitive structures' that, according to Ward, 'order experience in ways that reflect the content' (2012: 254). As such, individual acts seem to align to the self-narrative (King, 2013), rendering narrative and action inseparable (Sandberg, 2010) and resulting in facilitating crime or in what Maruna identifies as effects of such interaction, 'the hardening process' (2001, 41). As Youngs notes:

> As part of a story or narrative form, motivation and meaning necessarily become the intention to act; the dynamic process that is required to move the drama forward. By understanding the narrative then, we get closer to understanding the action (2013: 290).

Indeed, Presser (2012) argues that criminological approaches consider neutralisations as causes of crime, which, similarly to narratives, are meaning-laden but differ from narratives in terms of exclusively referring to the offending act rather to the narrator's self or spurring offending behaviour without necessarily being fashioned out of words. Scholarship, particularly on criminal and correctional policies, has explored such techniques in the context of de-contextualising past offending behaviours in an attempt to discourage the use of neutralisations and encourage claims of 'ownership' of and responsibility for past actions (Katz, 1988; Maruna & Copes, 2005).

However, Maruna (2001; Maruna & Copes, 2005) argues that these techniques fail as an explanation of primary deviance or criminological aetiology. The techniques may be important in maintaining persistence in offending or in secondary deviance (repetition of offence) or what Katz defines as the 'hardening process' (1988: 271), but are not the onset of offending behaviour. On the contrary, he maintains that justifications and excuses often intend to separate past actions from the 'true self' in order to maintain desistence from offending actions.

Similarly, Presser (2010) sustains that it is more likely for the offender to re-offend when presented to have a criminal narrated identity rather than when using neutralisations to construct a new self. As such, the techniques are not necessarily 'bad', and their relationship with offending is not necessarily causal. Although Maruna and Copes (2005) and Katz (1988) accept that neutralisations can precede delinquency, desensitise and thus make offending possible or persistent, they maintain that the techniques can enable but not cause crime.

Maruna and Copes extend their study on neutralisation theories concerning not merely offenders, but also other groups, particularly victims of domestic violence, exploring how the victims use such techniques to deal with their victimisation (also see Polletta et al., 2011) and restore a sense of normalcy (Weiss, 2011). Neutralisation techniques as both, a causal explanation and a means to detach oneself from past offending actions, are essential in understanding persistence of or desistence from such behaviour from the narrator's point of view.

In their work on neutralisations, Presser (2004), Vaughan (2007), Gathings and Parrotta (2013), and Copes et al. (2014) centre on the role of such

techniques in preserving a positive self-image through mitigating stigma and immorality associated with offending actions. As stigma is not a fixed trait, but rather a social construct, it can be created, contested and resisted through interaction (Opsal, 2011).

Maruna and Copes (2005) analyse neutralisations as shields from emotional and interpersonal cost, as an adoptive mechanism to deal with anxiety and maintain self-esteem (including reputation), as a sense of control over future changes, and as a means to reduce anger or even desist. The latter is associated with a level of respect to the victim, where the offender thinks that the victim is due an explanation. As such, the accounts have the potential to restore equilibrium within social relationships and maintain social order; they also enable the offenders to narrate their experiences of offending with little or no damage to their image (Weiss, 2011), or with a sense of order – especially when confronted with authorship of experiences that threaten their narrative identity (Vaughan, 2007).

Neutralisations have often been critiqued to diminish the actor's ability to control her actions (Copley, 2014), as the offender often appears to lack control over life. However, a lack of control over one's actions is not necessarily regarded as diminishing agency, but rather seen as an attempt to distance from past actions and to obtain a sense of a (new) moral agency and identity (King, 2013). In addition, as neutralisation techniques are utilised through talk about positive self-image (including in relation to others) and state of mind (Copes et al., 2014), they cannot be seen only as structural, but more so as 'intentional and effective strategies' (Weiss, 2011: 447). They are also strategic in terms of bridging inconsistencies in offenders' stories (Katz, 1988; Presser, 2009; Sandberg, 2013). Maruna and Copes (2005) focus on how gaps between one's self-concept as a moral persona and their morally questionable behaviour are bridged through conventional stories of neutralisations (also see Vaughan, 2007).

The techniques draw on cultural and subcultural discourses (Copes et al., 2014), refer to individual actions of offending (Presser, 2009), and are essential in understanding the offender's mind-sets - subjective beliefs and attitudes. However, their analysis pertains to understandings of persistence to or desistance from crime and has often been part of institutional policies to examine the processes of desistance/persistence in offending.

However, such emphasis has often obscured understandings of the offender's account as a gendered performance and thus women's relationship to deviance, since emphasis is on the ways the (ex) offender constructs a narrative of a deviant or desisting identity. Hence, this chapter aims at highlighting the mere narrative criminological debates that have led to current studies that emphasise the need of a narrative approach on women's stories of deviance, and which have inspired the purposes of this project.

3. Narrative criminological theory

Stories accounting for the offender's experiences constitute stores of data (Maruna, 2001, Maruna & Copes, 2005; Presser, 2009; Presser & Sandberg, 2014) regarding criminal actions[3] (Presser, 2009), particularly the offender's cognitive and emotional reactions to past behaviour (Sandberg, 2010). Or in Katz's words, those primary data constitute 'evidence of what it means, feels, sounds, tastes, or looks like to commit a particular crime' (1988: 3).

In their most basic conception, narratives as forms of communication (Roche et al., 2005; Copes et al., 2014) are descriptions of human (offending) behaviour (Presser, 1994; 2009). They are forms of interpersonal transactions (Youngs, 2013), as they provide the human context of events - social interactions and social expectations about what a life should be (Presser, 1994; 2009; Giordano, 2006) or at least attempts to realign actions to such expectation (Gathings & Parrotta, 2013).

Social theories of narrative ground in the ideas that self-narratives are vehicles of identity; narrative identities attach meaning to and shape action (Presser, 2012). Narrative criminology applies such ideas into individual or group offending actions (see Presser, 2009) - the quality of experience, the offender's own situated explanation of their behaviour and involvement in these actions, including experiences of impulsivity and intoxication that go beyond rational

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[3] The characters in the narrative have specific roles with their actions seen as understandable responses to social conditions. They are presented as necessary, valid, spontaneous or constrained (Smith, 1997). Their storied experiences are linked by relationality of parts; causal or 'logical' (Presser, 2009; Linhart, 2013) and explanatory (Katz, 1988) emplotment, selective appropriation (Presser, 1994; 2009), and temporality (Ricoeur, 1980), sequence, and place (Hyvarinen, 2004; Skjelsbæk, 2006), so that they are narrated in a meaningful manner to a certain audience (Sandberg, 2010; Polletta et al. 2011; Buckley-Zistel, 2014).

calculations (see Copes et al., 2014), and relational self-awareness (Counter, 2012).

It often applies to bystanders in order to explain their passive tolerance of offending action (Presser, 2009) and to victims' stories (Maruna & Copes, 2005; Presser, 2010), exploring for instance the role of victim-offender mediation in constructing narratives (Maruna & Copes, 2005). It also concerns with one's journey from an offending past to a legitimate future, including descriptions of how the offender copes with such experiences and the interventions used to prevent future offending activity (Maruna & Copes, 2005; Christian & Kennedy, 2011; Yardley, 2013).

As narratives incline to portray offending as organised in interaction, they often treat 'criminality' as a way to recreate storied identity in what Toolis and Hammack refer to as 'a struggle and success narrative' (2015: 59). However, offending is also understood as moments of freedom from usual constraints, or as a threat to the self, as it diverges from the perceived familiar storied identity (Jackson-Jacobs, 2004).

3.1. Criminological narratives

Criminology analyses narratives of offending in three different ways; as records or facts, as interpretations of an objectively given social world or as constitutive of crime (Presser, 2009; 2010; Sandberg, 2010; 2013; Yardley, 2013). Narrative as a record of experiences is ontologically realist (Presser, 2013; Yardley, 2013), treating stories as indicators of offending behaviour, concerning with the truthfulness of the narrator's statements, and seeking to identify the nature of such actions.

Narrative as interpretation of experience elevates the importance of meaning in narrative, as individuals act based on their perceptions of things that concern them. The approach centres on how individuals see the social world, and how they react and recall circumstances. Although it grounds in subjectivity in the sense that the statements are self-referential, the approach considers the social world to be an objectively given reality. As such, the approach views narrative as socially constructed versions of an objective reality or, in Presser's words, 'individual versions of actual circumstances' (2009: 183).

However, 'real' circumstances may be far from shared between different individuals or groups. For example, Sandberg (2013) explains that Anders Behring Breivik's shootings were not seen by the offender as criminal acts because of his perceived realities about immigration that are not shared within the whole of the Norwegian society. The narrator constructs their own system of meaning or ideology while presenting their stories rather than interpreting from 'real circumstances'. Similarly, Presser (2009) challenges the concept of 'real' circumstances, as individuals appear to make choices from partial perspectives. Circumstances can only be interpreted and the social world seen as 'the product of individual consciousness and cognition, distinct from a realist position, which accepts on objective external reality "out there"' (Yardley, 2013: 165).

Presser makes use of post-positivist (culturally mediated) concepts of narrative, which intertwine individual and social world, narrative and experience, by suggesting that 'experience is acted upon as it has been interpreted' (2009: 184). In other words, experience is storied and thus not prior to its interpretation; instead experience and its interpretation are interwoven. Sandberg (2010) explains that it is important to use narratives in their constitutive sense in order to understand criminal behaviour. However, women's stories as gender performances seem to be absent from his work. Similarly, Presser (2010) and Yardley (2013) make use of such approach without incorporating women's experiences of criminality.

The project views stories as individual versions of a subjective reality, leaning therefore closer to the constitutive or constructivist approach. However, although the project diverges from objective notions of reality, it views narratives as a source of information – similarly to the narrative as interpretation approach. However, information is not about interpretations of what *really* happened, but rather about understandings of situated realities and the offender's performances of the self through storytelling.

3.2.   Narrative (deviant) identity

The 'dialectic relationship between experience and narrative, between the narrating self and the narrated self' (Buckley-Zistel, 2014: 147) is essential in shaping narrative identity.

Narrative implies an unfolding series of episodes that the central protagonist moves through, and the more static aspects of personality traits that are regarded as enduring characteristics of the individual (Counter, 2012: 265).

Identity as a developmental, narrated and situated process is to be found in the capacity of on-going narrative (Presser, 2004; Stevens, 2012). 'The construction and reconstruction of this narrative, integrating one's perceived past, present and anticipated future', Maruna says, 'is itself the process of identity development in adulthood' (2001: 7). Similarly, Presser calls narratives 'frames of identity' (2004: 82), as 'identity takes shape when we verbally account for our behaviour' (1994: 7).

Narratives as vehicle for identity work (Presser, 1994; 2012; Ward, 2012; Sandberg, 2013; Gathings & Parrotta, 2013; Copes et al., 2014) focus on how people establish themselves; self-identification is the result of emploting individual experience embedded in wider discourse contexts (Presser, 2012). Katz describes this as 'an active information-processing structure, a cognitive schema, or a construct system that is both shaped by and later mediates social interaction' (1988: 253) and it is reconstructed in the light of new experience and information (Maruna & Copes, 2005).

Identity work does not only pertain to the self, but also attempts to classify others (Copes et al., 2008; Ward, 2012). It is 'the cultural makeup of identity categories' (Copes et al., 2008: 256), a process where individuals identify themselves in terms of similarity to certain groups of people and their experiences in terms of positively defined behaviours associated with those groups. Stevens explains identity as:

Inherently fluid and fragile, actively and selectively constructed, dramaturgically performed and achieved, in response to both one's maturing and mutable cognitions, desires, expectations, choices and conduct, and one's relationships, of similarity and of difference, with others and the social structure (2012: 528).

Hence, although narratives of the self are often incorporated into individual level theories (Presser, 2009), they are hardly exclusively an individualising process; they are highly dependent on individual's capabilities, resources and opportunities (Ward, 2012), but they simultaneously connect personal and collective experiences, desires and efforts. As such they become 'narratives of typical actors engaging in typical behaviour within typical plots leading to expectable moral evaluations' (Loseke, 2007: 664), drawing on what Bruner refers to as 'cultural legitimacy' (1991: 15) - normative expectations and what counts as socially acceptable.

Being told in institutionalised (i.e. policymaking processes) or organisational (i.e. process of 'repairing' deviant identity) settings (Loseke, 2007; Linhart, 2013), such as truth commissions or prisons and rehabilitation centres, narratives have (re) produced and reflected collective social identities, relations (Buckley-Zistel, 2014), and interpretations of the world (Smith, 1997). Similarly to cultural narratives, institutional and organisational stories tend to categorise individuals, as institutional policies are targeted to certain types of people and groups and organisational processes pertain to certain segments of the population (Loseke, 2007). Hence, narrative identity is formed within 'social performances that are interactively constructed, institutionally regulated, and assessed by their audiences in relation to hierarchies of discursive credibility' (Polletta et al., 2011: 110).

As experiences shift over time, narrative identity becomes transformative. Transformation usually emerges from the processes of desistence, involving personal agency through adjustment to the expectations of new roles and new structures, such as employment (Vaughan, 2007). The offending past shifts into a story (moral tale) where the narrator masters her actions.

Morality is instrumental in making acceptable the ambiguous parts of life and attaching meaning to a negative past (Maruna, 2001). The actor gains a certain degree of power or autonomy (King, 2013) that enables explanations of past (often negative) actions and identity construction in a more positive tone. As narratives are used as explanatory devices often for moral reappraisal (Presser, 1994; 2009; Kreiswirth, 2000; Sandberg, 2009; 2010), Presser (2010) concludes that their point is a moral stance, emphasising the caring-towards-others true self in opposition to the troubled self of the past and distancing from the latter. As

such, narrative identity has the potential for future change (Presser, 2009; King, 2013).

As there is not a 'predestined path' (2007: 395), openness to change relies on 'desires and new-found commitments' (2007: 400). The story of moral transformation tends to employ three strategies; the behavioural strategy when the narrator engages in moral actions (i.e. helping others to desist), structural when the ex-offender appears as no longer stigmatised, and cognitive when the story is about occurring shifts in thinking (i.e. usually as a maturing process). In some cases, however, the narrator does not attempt to transform into someone new, but restore identity to some previous state, to the 'true' self.

The narrator often seeks social acceptance in the face of stigma or/and marginalisation through culturally and socially recognisable narratives or what Presser refers to as 'dominant cultural templates' (1994: 39), and respect within criminal networks through subcultural forms that elevate what is valued within such groups (i.e. supremacy of the tough, capable criminal - what is valued within such networks (Copes et al., 2008).

But she also constructs boundaries that separate her from those disrespected within criminal groups, but also from the 'real criminals' – those involved in on-going offending. As such, past (offending) actions are portrayed as being imposed on the narrator, coming from external circumstances, and momentary; they do not result from the narrator's 'true' character, but rather constitute a brief chaotic episode (Presser, 1994) in their lives due to a lack of freedom of choice and thus control over life (Maruna, 2001). Thus, the narrator is depicted to possess characteristics that are antithetical to intentional misconduct (Presser, 1994), such as naïve trust. A lack of connection between intentional behaviour and ultimate outcomes tends to render the narrative passive and the narrator victim of circumstances (Maruna, 2001).

However, transformation requires a level of agency through decision-making about changes in future life. As transformation pertains to a shift back to the true self of the pre-offending chaotic era or to becoming a different person, distancing from past actions (Presser, 2004), it requires an explanation of the turnout (Presser, 1994; Maruna, 2001). This is usually evident in stories of desistence (Ward, 2012), where the narrative has to make desistence a logical necessity (Maruna, 2001).

3.2.1. Narrative creativity

With the plot being conditioned by what Presser refers to as 'local relevancies' (2004: 83), narratives are interpreted within particular contexts that structurally determine the actor. As Polletta et al. (2011) point out, storytelling involves constructing a socially acceptable self, and thus highly dependent on existing cultural and social norms as well as dominant narratives. Drawing on the example of victims of abuse, Polletta et al. (2011) argue that the victims often place their individual stories within the context of ideologically laden dominant stories in order to normalise their experiences and thus endure them.

Cultural complexity has been essential in constructivist criminological tradition. As meaning is ground in 'discursive environments' (Sandberg, 2010: 455), it is important to understand the cultural sources that inspire certain actions, roles and discourses. Sandberg refers to inter-textual narratives – stories that are determined by 'an order of discourse' (2013: 79), as they draw on a flow of existing discourses and often reduce into a set of collective narratives.

However, stories appear to contain a degree of creativity ground in the narrator's capability to balance and merge different narratives with different rationales (Presser, 2012; Sandberg, 2010; 2013), including narratives that are not included within dominant discourse, yet still seek social recognition (Sandberg, 2010) or what Maruna refers to as 'abnormal' or 'marginal' (2001: 9) stories of individuals with low levels of integration within society.

Indeed, Youngs refers to the 'dynamic, self-awareness/experiential, and agency-focused qualities of the narrative' (2013: 289). Sandberg (2013) concludes that the ability to adjust personal stories within broader collective narratives or what is often called 'formula stories' (Brookman et al., 2011: 398; Linhant, 2013: 15) involves an element of creativity. By making adjustments, the narrator becomes a 'chooser of themes' (Presser, 2012: 17) - 'a creative auteur whose authorship is nonetheless deeply structured' (Presser & Sandberg, 2014: 7). Creativity relates to narrator's choices of what and how to tell their story, although the 'what' and 'how' are culturally constrained. For example, Polletta (2006) pays attention to disadvantaged groups; through storytelling such groups can expose their particular experiences while drawing from a cultural stock. Presser and Sandberg (2014) strengthen Polletta's argument, linking socioeconomic exclusion with one's choices on narrative repertoires. Toolis's and

Hammack's (2015) work on homeless youth indicates a level of resistance to hegemonic stigmatising stories of homelessness.

Criminological discourse often treats narratives as reproductions of dominant discourses shifting the emphasis away from individual responsibility to the cultural and social context (Sandberg, 2013). However, even when the narrator draws on cultural narratives, they are required to decide among different repertoires (Yardley, 2013) and challenge certain structural explanations of offending.

In addition, as the narrator contrasts herself to others, she shows elements of creativity while making judgments within what Copes et al. refer to as 'the process of boundary maintenance and othering' (2008: 268) - the active construction of identity categories requiring empirical knowledge and the ability to reflect past actions and shifting processes, rather than having a puppet narrative identity (Yardley, 2013). The knowledgeable identity of the narrator involves a continuous process of revising, questioning, assessing and (re) evaluating of the self (King, 2013). This is not to ignore the structural context of such process, as boundaries are partly centred on culturally identifiable categories that constitute markers of pride or disgrace (see Copes et al., 2008) and emanate from normative obligations and expectations. Offenders (as any other group) adapt their stories to conform to the moral of dominant narratives (Roche et al., 2005).

But in their efforts to discard identities that have been imputed to them (see Gathings & Parrotta, 2013) or counter label membership in a certain group (see Presser, 2004), they rearrange those patterns of the story that establish the boundaries and acceptability of their actions (i.e. through neutralising such actions). Additionally, although the origin of the problem (here offending) may be sought within social circumstances, creativity can still be evident where the narrator internalises responsibility for the solution of the problem. Maruna refers to this as the 'compensatory model' (2001: 148), that is an active process where the ex-offender attempts to establish the authenticity of their reform.

The criminological debate of narrative creativity versus narrative conditioning is currently enhanced by incorporating women's stories of criminality into the discussion (see Fleetwood, 2014; 2015, Miller et al., 2015). As social structure positions subjects, women are situated in and their experiences

structured by discourses. However, women are also producers of narratives, negotiating culturally available subject positions in their offending, and individually crafting within existing discourses.

3.2.2. *Fragmentation and complexity*

Maruna and Copes (2005) explain that a story is not classified as logical, and thus acceptable, if it lacks unity. Coherence offers a sense of completeness (including sense-making), albeit it is recognised as fabricated (Presser, 2009) since the narrator is unable to recapitulate all that has happened to him/her. It is achieved through unfolded events across the time within a story or through a consistent identity (Polletta et al., 2011) within the process of becoming (Ward, 2012; Youngs, 2013).

However, different, and sometimes competing, characters and stories tend to disrupt narrative coherence. Indeed, Sandberg (2010) in his attempt to answer what narrative repertoires are available for the offender narrator, why people emphasise particular stories and how they do so, he explores the complexity of social life and culture through the shifting discourses. Narrative identity as coherent or as more diverse and flexible (Sandberg, 2010; 2013; Presser & Sandberg, 2014) emanates from its various conceptual notions ranging from realist views of the self as distinct from the narrative and distinguished from reality to postmodernist claims of the self as multiple and comprised of fragmented stories (Ward, 2012). As such, the realist distinction between the self and self-conception acknowledges ideas of self-deception and self-knowing, whereas postmodernist concepts of the self enable reflection through cultural and social processes, which are essential in constructing the self and conceptions of it.

Drawing on the theoretical insights of narrative psychology and ethnomethodology, as well as the theoretical traditions of French structuralism and post-modernism, Sandberg (2013) notes that most theoretical traditions agree on the importance of understanding narrative identity as both united and fragmented; and a more nuanced understanding of narratives requires an analysis of narrative self as coherent drawing on a diverse range of discourses that may cause fragmentation. In other words, it should be understood as a single, coherent story on disorderly, ambiguous and changing experiences where

multiple selves (or different parts of a single self) correspond to different, fluid phases (Presser, 1994; 2009; Maruna, 2001).

An illustrative example comes from narrative identity theory of desistance. Albertson (2015) refers to desistence subjective changes and identity transformation as a narrative journey. Narratives of desistence - among the most common shifting narrative identities in criminological literature (Maruna, 2001; Stevens, 2012; Ward, 2012) - are largely characterised by incomplete, continuously adapting and evolving selves (Yardley, 2013), shifting, multifaceted identities, and changing lives, but tend to be presented in a coherent way, so that the desisted can be effectively rehabilitated and socially reintegrated.

Coherency adds normality to contradictory stories; it enables the desisted to speak about and distance from past actions without necessarily dealing with the associated shame as such events are positively reinterpreted as lessons, making the narrator the person they are today – able to make decisions and assess actions (Maruna, 2001). Stevens (2012) maintains that the process of self-discovery requires a more secure environment where the individual can re-evaluate past actions and their legacies or what Stevens calls acquiring 'a state in conformity' (2012: 531); the individual may deny responsibility of past actions by claiming that such behaviour does not reflect their 'true self', resulting in a self that makes excuses for past actions, yet simultaneously takes responsibility of current accomplishments, seeking some purpose for past actions; suffering becomes redemptive with mistakes being seen as instrumental in positive change (Maruna, 2001).

Such shifts (fragmentations) in narrative identity require a 'turning point' (Srevens, 2012: 532, also see King, 2013), for example imprisonment, but also individual capacity for change, amounting to the construction of 'a cohesive replacement self' (Stevens, 2012: 541). Similarly, Ward (2012) draws a distinction between persistent and desisted offenders ground in two different narrative scripts. The condemnation script tends to be used by persistent offenders who appear as victims of external forces out of their control, with little ability to refrain from offending. The redemption script allows the desisted to make sense of earlier actions and link past undesirable acts to new ways of (desistence-focused) living (also see Stevens, 2012; Counter, 2012; Youngs & Canter, 2012), constructing what Ward refers to as 'a more adaptive narrative

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identity' (2012: 251), which involves a more reflexive understanding of experience.

Toolis (2015) describes redemptive patterns that confer positive meaning to suffering as mechanisms to cope with negative experiences, translating into a journey from immaturity to actualisation (see Toolis, 2015), or the maturational reform (Albertson, 2015) where the evolving subject grows up and out of crime and concerns with agency. The narrative progression is thus one of a 'bad story' shifting into a valuable narrative of growth or as Toolis (2015) maintains, it is one of ''emancipation', which progresses from domination to freedom' (p. 60).

Albertson (2015) stresses that the narrative experience, drawing on identity transformation theories, interacts with other theoretical perspectives in the desistance literature, such as social bonds development (sociogenic theories) - where the offender's social relationships become more positive - enabling the narrator to depict an alternative, non-offending identity within the same narrative. Coherency also allows maintaining a sense of identity, since the narrator becomes a new person without necessarily rejecting the old self (Maruna, 2001). Vaughan explains this detachment - yet not complete secession from the past - as an attempt to 'constancy to some future ideal self' through a 'shunning of previous habits' (2007: 391).

Emphasising on how past actions have led to new identities or what is addressed as the 'question of congruency' (2001: 8), Maruna attempts to understand the kinds of perspectives that integrate experiences and make them meaningful. His analysis grounds in environmental influences (structural obstacles, opportunities, cultural narrative archetypes) and individual capacities in order to understand how ex-offenders reinterpret the past and rationalise decisions and efforts of change. His findings suggest that former identities are perceived as accidental and in contradiction with the new, real, and empowering identity.

Maruna (2001) attempts to understand identity perspectives within re-conceptualised notions of desistence as a phase of abstinence from crime rather than as an abrupt cessation of offending behaviour – a termination event, as often illustrated in criminological literature. Attention is rather given to the ability to maintain abstinence than to change from one phase to another (from offending to

desistence) and as such, it does not translate into a complete overthrow of the past. According to Maruna:

> Although self-narratives do change, this change tends to involve incremental, internally consistent shifts rather than a wholesale overthrow of the previous self-story (2001: 86).

Complexity is thus to be found in the temporality (i.e. phases of abstinence from offending), incompletion (i.e. on-going developing selves), and accidental, but also empowering nature of the offending (including suffering) storied experience. As far as the study is concerned with women's stories as gendered performances, it draws on these narrative criminological debates on fragmentation/unity dichotomies - merely how women merge shifting selves and fragmented stories to perform gender in their narratives.

3.2.3. Criminal roles in narrative

Youngs sustains that narrative 'draws attention to the internal processes that may support and shape a criminal role within the individual' (2013: 291). Such role within a narrative takes the form of descriptions that capture agency (power and achievement) and intention that underpins the action in a particular situation. Youngs (2013) maintains that such descriptions often relate to socially unconventional themes.

Youngs and Canter (2012) and Dilmon and Timor (2014) provide four distinctive offending roles prevailing in narrative: the revengeful offender, the survivor (also see Smolej, 2010), the professional and the victim (see Smolej, 2010). The first pertains to a powerful individual reacting to certain events and seeking impact of their actions on others. The survivor role involves a sense of alienation, social distance in which reference to the victim would be minimal or non-existent, yet concerned with others' demands, grounding in feelings of being put upon or pushed by the fate. The role dismisses the harm inflicted to the victim and assumes powerlessness to avoid inevitable circumstances. However, it also revolves around inner strength to carry on, which derives from external environments (family or friends) and personal inner qualities.

The professional role centres on power and expertise, as the actor possesses control over their actions and is not concerned with the impact of her behaviour on others. On the contrary, the victim role appears alienated from and powerless in the hands of others. Her future prospects seem unhopeful or left open due to an on-going struggle to overcome hardships, physical or/and economic vulnerability.

The survivor and victim roles often prevail in redemption scripts, as they 'establish(ing) the conventionality of the narrator – a victim of society' (Maruna, 2001: 87), who becomes involved in offending due to external forces and circumstances. The offender enters the desistence phase, a process of re-constructing the self. Maruna refers to this as the process of 'making good' (2001: 87), involving the establishment of the true self (or freeing the real self from external constraints), optimistic perceptions of individual control and the desire to offer something back to society. Here the survivor becomes a moral and self-satisfied character.

However, Sandberg (2015) distinguishes the moral and survivor stories, as the first involves overcoming challenges and will power, while the latter is concerned with survival marked by the hardship endured. However, he asserts the complexity of narrative, as different narrative kinds often intertwine. Youngs and Canter (2012) explore these roles in connection to neutralisation techniques in an attempt to explain how the content of a narrative (criminal) role relates to agency and structure. As such, roles are seen as 'related to a given context through descriptions that capture the quality of the agency that is underpinning the action in that event' (Youngs & Canter, 2012: 239).

Women's stories from institutional settings tend to draw on the redemption script and consequently such narratives favour the survivor/victim role for women offenders. However, stories that come beyond institutional settings may reveal a more complex relationship between women and deviance.

3.2.4. Conventional and subcultural norms

A number of studies (Maruna & Copes, 2005; Presser, 2009; Sandberg, 2010; Copes et al., 2014; Presser and Sandberg, 2014) on the offender's subcultural (i.e. culture of violence, code of the street or gangster culture) value systems have enhanced understandings of narratives of crime. Such narratives involve

concerns prevalent in subcultures of crime, such as the struggle for gaining respect from others and self-assertion, i.e. through images of toughness, smartness, excitement, autonomy, fate and honour (see Sandberg, 2009b; Brookman et al, 2011). Katz refers to this as the 'impenetrable self' (1988: 81), which is not morally or emotionally accessible. The narrator often strategically appears in juxtaposition with those who do not fit into such subcultures, i.e. the 'crack head' and draws on subcultural or counter narratives (see Yardley, 2013) – including non-conventional stories with different rationales (i.e. combining subcultural stories of fate and autonomy) – to narrate experiences that lie beyond or in opposition to dominant understandings of life.

However, the narrator also often appears to commit to cultural discourses, downplaying for instance the differences between her and mainstream society (Sandberg, 2009). Indeed, Maruna and Copes (2005) sustain that although the offender rejects conventional norms in order to commit an offending act, they retain some level of commitment to the dominant normative system. Similarly, Hochstetler (2010) identifies gaps in criminological enquiry (including the offender's self-construction) emanating from analysing the offender's identity through contrasting the belief systems of offenders and more conventional individuals.

Indeed, the offender often appears to be influenced by both conventional cultures and delinquent subcultures. Sandberg (2009) maintains that the narrator may do so by neutralising subcultural narratives. For example, the offender may evoke traditional (conventional) family values in order to appeal to higher loyalties (i.e. provided support to the family) and therefore to rationalise illicit involvement. This suggests that neutralisations can be deeply rooted in social norms and thus widely accepted in society (Sandberg, 2009) or as Copley states, they can be identified as 'forms of socially acceptable excuses and justifications' (2014: 47).

Similarly, Katz (1988) and Bohner (1998) draw on the example of rapist stories, maintaining that rationalisations of rape tend to reflect myths of a dominant patriarchal culture. Fleetwood (2015) highlights that men seem to draw on a wider range of stories, for instance about fraud, than women due to institutional legitimacy of certain kinds of subject positions.

In their study, Brookman et al. explore how informal rules on respect and defence in subcultures of violence, and particularly stories of fight, are used as 'vocabularies of motives' (2011: 402). Stories appear to respond to sub-cultural normative expectations, where deviant behaviour is seen as a duty and a reasonable reaction to certain attitudes (i.e. disrespect, dishonour) or even as a 'lesson' (punishment) to the disrespectful.

Brookman et al. (2011) conclude that the offenders have used multiple storylines and narrative repertoires (including cultural stories) to explain a single offence, concluding that such multiplicity lies in the possibility that the offenders may not have considered one explanation as good enough or they perceived all explanations used as reasonable. According to Brookman et al. (2011), this illustrates that although street codes can be used as a template that scripts certain responses to particular situations, they also draw on wider cultural narrative repertoires.

Another example is Katz's 'sneaky thrill' (1988: 53), where a person generates the experience of being seduced to offending. Albeit the offender may not desist and indeed may be comfortable with being associated with a deviant culture, they manage to produce conventional appearances and portray their actions as accomplishments (i.e. associated with feelings of independence) rather than a real crime.

Even in more disorderly situations, such as conflict, conventional narratives remain an important discursive resource. For instance, although Swaine and Feeny (2004) in their work, *A neglected perspective: Adolescent girls' experiences of the Kosovo conflict of 1999,* highlight that adolescent girls' wartime experiences expanded beyond dominant discourses of children's vulnerability into individual agency, their stories appear to largely draw on cultural discourses about Kosovar Albanian girls in need of male protection.

Commitment to conventional norms may imply that the offender presents feelings of guilt or shame when violating dominant values. Under conditions of shame, the offender tends to rationalise such behaviour or neutralise feelings of guilt, employing what Maruna and Copes refer to as 'defences to crime' (2005: 229), denouncing personal agency, ignoring the consequences of such actions or blaming the victim.

A level of acceptance of conventional norms signals the 'softening process' (Katz, 1988: 271) – a weak commitment to crime and a willingness to change. For example, in narratives of desistence the offender attempts to show some level of commitment to conventional society as an attempt to desist, manage shame and reintegrate (Katz, 1988; Maruna, 2001). Katz (1988) argues that the more committed to social norms (marriage, stable employment) the offender is, the more likely to use neutralisations for her offending actions.

More importantly, conventional norms and their interplay with subculture have enabled men to accomplish their gender within narratives of deviance. However, women appear to have a different relationship to crime that yet needs to further be explored. But before tuning its analytical lenses into the importance of women's stories in narrative criminological debates, the project attempts to explain how it makes use of the concepts narrative truth and narrative time, and how it employs the narrative element.

3.3.   Narrative truth

Narrative truth (Sanders, 2000) in individual stories is not about the truthfulness or details of circumstances, but rather about personal understandings of subjective experiences (Dilmon & Timor, 2014). As the narrator does not appeal to standards of proof, narratives are rather about verisimilitude than claims of absolute truth (Polletta et al., 2011),

Instead, emphasis lies in value systems and how experiences are framed rather than facts (Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2009; Sandberg, 2010; Polletta et al., 2011); the latter are seen as narrated events and thus socially constitutive. Such approaches favour openness to interpretation (Polletta et al., 2011; Presser & Sandberg, 2014) over positivist truth claims or what Barnes calls 'false objective standards' (2006: 956); they recognise that stories are not uninterrupted, but rather unfold over interactions with their meaning, as people do not respond automatically to situations, but use stories to define and interpret them. Experience is therefore storied and socially constructed; structured in multiple interpretations and embedded in (shared) discursive repertoires (Sandberg, 2010).

For narratives do not exist, as it were, in some real world, waiting there patiently and eternally to be veridically mirrored in a text. The act of constructing a narrative, moreover, is considerably more than 'selecting' events either from real life, from memory, or from fantasy and then placing them in an appropriate order. The events themselves need to be constituted in the light of the overall narrative... (Bruner, 1991: 8).

Leydesdorff et al. highlight the 'move from the emphasis on the discovery of new social realities through hearing hidden voices to a recognition that their subjective dimension is fundamental to understanding them' (2009: 5). It is this shift to subjective dimension that is at the core of the research, emanating from partial insights that relate to individual experience. Yet, it is this relevance that makes knowledge valid. As such, the project lies in partialness; recognition of the multiplicity and diversity of social realities, which are always context-dependent (Warr, 2004) and highly interpretative (meanings given to the environment). It is this experiential knowledge that rests in the heart of the research.

As the narrator's social reality is (re) constructed and negotiated within the interview situation and by the researcher/researched interaction, the distinct interpretative frameworks (see Sandberg, 2009b) within which narratives are fashioned (including exaggeration or justifications of certain actions) cannot be downplayed.

This project does not seek for the objective empirical existence nor does it seek for 'one story as the "best" account of "what happened"' (Swift, 2008: 981), but rather for the phenomenological presence of experience in the subject's reality. The importance is placed on the experience's narrative form; how it is made to happen, which relates to its recognition and how the narrator stories it (Sandberg, 2009).

3.4. Narrative time

Narrative is not simply the device through which the past is represented and viewed in a passive fashion; it has significant effects in the present and toward the future by eliciting appropriate emotional responses that condition the agent's current dispositions (Vaughan, 2007: 399).

Narratives shift over time as new information becomes accessible and available to society. Smith refers to 'shifting narrative frames of discourse' (1997: 105) as the results of cultural shifts and evolving societies. The interactive and transformative (Christian & Kennedy, 2011) nature of narrative make time pivotal in standing back, reflecting, rethinking and making informed judgments about past actions (Jackson-Jacobs, 2004: 231). As narrative is open to on-going re-evaluation and reinterpretation (see White, 1980; McAdams, 2008), it involves retelling and cherishing the stories over the years, establishing and (re-) negotiating the relationship between past and present (Beck, 2014: 184) than diluting the 'original' story due to the passage of time (Dilmon & Timor, 2014: 1129; also see McAdams, 2008).

But it also 'serves the sense of self and its continuity' (Ritchie, 2003: 32). Identity is not communicable in mono-dimensional terms, but rather in past, present and future tenses. It is understood as a lived experience, which shifts over time. 'In the face of observed variations in the self' (Presser, 1994: 5) over the time and across circumstances, the narrator seeks to establish a non-static, but nonetheless, a cohesive self (Presser, 1994). Over the time, the narrator encounters new social relationships (Ward, 2012), and accumulates new experiences, commitments, views on life (McAdams, 2008; Randall et al., 2015) and different patterns of action (Counter, 2012) which, when added to the narrative, revise its plot (see Presser, 1994). Recalling experience is a long-term process of (re) negotiating and reconstructing identity – a self unfolded over time and potential for further change, enabling the narrator to split and distance from past actions (Presser, 1994; 2004).

Additionally, the 'storied quality of memory' (Youngs, 2013: 289) – albeit with its constraints, including challenges emanating from collective memory (Elmir et al., 2011; Polletta et al. 2011) – allows understanding of what information is meaningful for people today, since what becomes insignificant in their lives is no longer retained in memory (Ritchie, 2003; Cammiss, 2006; McAdams, 2008) and narrative.

3.5.   Employing the narrative element

The project views narrative as 'a spoken rendering of one's personal experience as an agent in the world' drawing 'selectively upon lived experience' (Presser,

1994: 2), exploring them as performances of a self where the constructed, altered and maintained identity is configured (Presser, 1994; Hyvarinen, 2004).

The study does not deal with narratives as reproductions or representations, but rather as gendered performances. People experience their social world narratively through their specific positions within culture, structure and discourse as well as their individual circumstances and capabilities. And based on such positions and understandings, they employ discourses to perform a self:

> It is in the nature of a narrative to make something about the narrator known to other people. To convey a particular viewpoint is to portray oneself as one who has that viewpoint. In this way, a narrative is an important resource for managing the impression or 'face' that the narrator is making (Presser, 1994: 21).

The paper treats narratives in their multiplicity of meanings (Tamboukou, 2008), exploring how different stories interact and connect with each other (i.e. stories of women's engagement in illicit activities intersecting with stories of family duty). It explores roles in the wartime and post-war action-scene, and not throughout the participants' whole lives. It is, therefore, not ground in life-course perspectives (see Sampson & Laub, 1992).

The project explores stability and change in individual attributes and experiences through longitudinal perspectives. The contextual analysis of narratives often escapes the wartime framework, extending its lens into the post-war background upon which the narratives have been told and which the narrator's attempts to situate themselves. It enables an understanding of 'what remains of the past in the lived reality of groups or what these groups make of the past' (Huberman & Miles, 1998; McAdam, 2008).

The stories are about women's roles in illicit wartime environments, as defined by individual and cultural normative boundaries of acceptability. The participants did not refer to belonging to a particular group or organised network, but their narrated experiences were deeply embedded in those unequal and violent structures that underpin activities in the black market. Albeit their

stories remain highly located in conventional mind-sets, they often extend beyond expected gender interactions and expectations found in cultural spaces.

4. The importance of women's stories

Fleetwood (2015) notes that 'although important developments have been made, women offenders' narratives have been somewhat absent' (p. 42). She attributes such absence to many factors, namely women's offending being less common, women's career in crime being shorter, women being less likely to have co-offenders in comparison with their male counterparts, and a lack of conventional or subcultural norms that support women's offending.

4.1. Maleness of criminality

Fleetwood refers to differences between men's and women's relationship to offending; men's stories of offending are about accomplishing hegemonic masculinity based on societal norms, while women's stories about crime involve stigmatisation. Fleetwood highlights a cultural silence around certain aspects of female deviance (i.e. sex-for-crack exchanges). She sustains that women's offending (i.e. drug trafficking) tends to be explained within discourses of victimisation. These discourses incline to portray women as 'passive vessels for traffic' (2014: 3), where offending only serves to simply make women more vulnerable or of emancipation, depicting women as 'a caricature of the post-feminist consumer' (p.3) – 'empowered, selfish and vein', exploring their offending as 'the dark side of female liberation', and attributing their success to their sexuality (p.3).

Similarly, Miller et al. (2015) points to women's crime as recognised to be 'doubly deviant' (p. 72, also see Fleetwood, 2014), since it is considered to be a criminal violation and a violation of conventional gendered expectations. Miller et al. note that 'when women embrace such narratives of self they are held accountable as *failed* members of the category 'woman'' (p. 73). But while narratives that do not comply with the prescribed standards of motherhood may not be socially acceptable, victim narratives appear to gain wider acceptance for women offenders due to gender inequalities (Miller et al., 2015). According to Miller at al. (2015), such version of victimhood combines 'feminine attributes' and agency in women's attempt to reject the stigma of double deviance. As such,

women's stories are instrumental in reducing misrecognition of women's offending experiences.

The studies of Fleetwood (2015) and Miller et al. (2015) reflect the broader literature within feminist criminology regarding the 'maleness of crime' (Daly, 2008: p.11) and the problematic of such a concept – namely the 'generalisability problem' (p. 11), asking if criminological theories, heavily based on men's experiences, could be used to understand women's criminality (also see Chesney-Lind, 1986, Davies, 1999).

Criminological studies on women's gendered strategies within what is culturally considered to be a male-dominated environment often suggest that women appear to enact masculinity within such settings (see Daly, 2008; Grundetjern & Sandberg, 2013; Althoff, 2013). Although applying the 'doing gender' approach (West & Zimmerman, 1987) that assumes that gender is generated in social interactions and the behavioural outcome 'is considered gender-appropriate' (Flavin, 2001: 273), have furthered understandings of men's criminality linking crime and masculinity, studies on women and crime require a more complex understanding of the relationship between enacting masculinity and accomplishing femininity (Davies, 1999).

Feminist criminology has furthered its inquiry to emphasise the blurred boundaries between criminality and victimisation – and their intersectionality (Burgess-Procter, 2006), that is the ways the individual's many identity aspects interact to shape experience – in an attempt to understand the relationship between women's victimisation experiences and (their subsequent) deviance. However, as Daly (2008) notes, such understandings tend to limit women's agency, as offending is merely explored within experiences of victimisation. Miller and Mullins (2006) also highlight that such interpretations often fail to explain women's aggression against women.

Fleetwood's and Miller et al.'s studies also lie within feminist criminological discourses on women's 'double deviance' (see Heidensohn, 2011; Phoenix, 2011). Phoenix (2011) for example, observes that women who engage in prostitution in the US often receive justice punishment based not merely and solely on their individual prostituting activities, but on other factors as well, such as their relationships with men in their personal lives and the appropriateness of their housing.

4.2. Real and discursive women

Women's law breaking is often analysed within the context of material inequalities or the 'real and discursive women' approaches (Fleetwood, 2015). However, such analysis is sometimes problematic, as it, for example, fails to explain why more men than women are drug mules, considering feminisation of poverty (Fleetwood, 2010). More importantly, Fleetwood (2015) argues for a narrative approach to women's stories in an attempt to explore the discursive aspect of gender. As the concept of 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) prevails in analyses of women's offending experiences, gender is merely employed as an on going 'undertaking tailored to each situation' (Fleetwood, 2014: 93).

Literature on women's offending needs a narrative approach to their accounts (Fleetwood, 2015), understanding gender as a discursive category in theories about women's offending, raising the storied nature of social life, particularly how women perform their selves – and the case of the Yugoslav breakup is not an exception. Feminist criminologists such as Daly (2008, 2011), conclude that research should attempt to bridge the real – deviant experience as independent from existing discourses – and the discursive – the ways women are constructed in and by socio-legal and criminological discourses (Smart, 1992). Yet, a narrative approach could merge the two approaches and further understandings of the relationship between women and crime.

4.3. Merging the real and the discursive: a narrative approach

Women take their gender into account to dealing strategies in illicit environments, and such choices are a response to women's social positions as well as to the gendered nature of such settings. For instance, Fleetwood (2014) notes that performing femininity was a gendered strategy for female crack cocaine dealers to keep their activities hidden. Although their participation in illicit activities has often been peripheral, women have been part of such environments, employing gendered strategies to deal with male-dominated/associated settings.

Indeed, criminological studies recognise women's stories as important in analysing how women do gender in their dealing strategies – including women's distinct social circumstances, expectations and norms as women (i.e. single,

young mother) and femininity as a key strategy by female offenders. This has been vital in exploring more complex profiles of women's criminality beyond simply resisting poverty (i.e. women's sense of control and autonomy). It enables understandings of gender as a social structure, where the subject position's meaningfulness rests on gendered norms, but also understandings of gender as a strategy to choice.

However, if we seek to increase women's stories' potential, it is important that we do not constrain discourses on how women do gender in their dealing strategies of offending, but also on how they discursively construct and employ such gendered strategies to perform a self within certain discourses – as these are not located outside women, but internalised by them through experiencing the word narratively and interpreting it.

Fleetwood (2015) highlights the need to further incorporate women's stories into criminological debates relating to feminist and narrative inquiry. Drawing on stories for female prisoners in Ecuador, Fleetwood (2015) notes that women's narratives centre upon motherhood (providing for the children, meeting collective needs), as well as vulnerability discourses. For example, women mentioned that they had been coerced to drug traffic by their partners or due to 'romantic love' relationships. Fleetwood (2015) concludes that women's stories had been highly influenced by institutional policies, as the prison settings encouraged a certain narrative based on discourses of femininity that elevate motherhood and passivity as central to feminine gender norms.

But the inmates themselves had also favoured a certain narrative. Being convicted and labelled as drug mules had been very stigmatising for the women prisoners. As their actions had been associated to offending and breaking gender norms, women drew upon vulnerability and disadvantage discourses to accomplish feminine gender. A conventional, feminine self would enable them to make sense of their actions and raise their voices against perceived injustice emanating from their conviction as serious offenders (Fleetwood, 2015).

Similarly to Fleetwood, Miller et al. (2015) observe the centrality of motherhood in women's stories of deviance. Drawing on narratives of women participating in a prison-based correctional drug-treatment program, Miller at al. (2015) conclude that motherhood enabled women to build or return to their respectable, feminine self. Similarly to the redemption script, where the ex-

offender constructs a self that owns control of their future life, many women spoke about returning to the good mother role for their children. Miller et al. conclude that women's narratives reflected the program's settings and aims.

This is not to say that institutional influences in women's narrative practice are problematic, as the project recognises that all narratives inevitably draw on their contextual frameworks. But what about women who have not been part of such institutions? Could stories that are not in line with certain institutional agendas enhance our understandings of women's agency and complexity of their deviant activity, as well as understandings of their narratives as gendered performances and hence their relationship to deviance? Furthering such insights is essential in bettering our understandings of women's criminality.

5. Linking Narrative and Balkan Criminology

This section attempts to answer where the interests of narrative and Balkan criminology meet. Before doing so, it explains why former Yugoslavia offers an important case study and why greater attention should be paid to women's storied experiences in war. Such narratives refer to engagement in illicit activities during the dissolution of the Yugoslav state, armed conflict based on sexually-obsessed ethnic cleansing campaigns, and the establishment of unstable (in the case of Kosovo, quasi-) states with lax border controls and shadow economies (see Hajdinjak, 2002).

Thus, the environment in which women committed deviant behaviour and their narration from a longitudinal perspective constitute great sources in terms of theory, as they enhance insights into women's wartime criminal experiences in the Balkans and their relationship to crime; and practice, as they test elements of creativity in narrative. The study brings narrative and Balkan criminology together by exploring women's self-narrative of the Yugoslav breakup.

5.1.   The importance of the Yugoslav case

The case of the Yugoslav breakup has enabled approaching participants that do not necessarily come from institutionalised settings. Narrative criminology on women offenders tends to draw on stories that come from institutionalised settings, and which incline to promote certain narratives. Such stories do not differ much from the condemnation script within the desistence literature.

The Yugoslav breakup provides a case where stories to some extent diverge from formal transformation process. The condemnation script that is often promoted by institutional agendas and according to which transformation pertains to 'new hooks for change' (Giordano, 2006) that connect a deviant and 'true' self (positive self-image) in the sense making process, is not so prevalent in this study, as the latter relates to women who have not gone through the official desistence/recovery process due to the particular socioeconomic, cultural and historical context of the Balkans; post-war lack of opportunities, wartime legacies, and normative and subcultural systems in the region.

Our paradigm is one where societal values are not always and necessarily described in their conventional sense due to disorder during (and often after) the Yugoslav breakup. As such conventional and subcultural values do not only relate to dominant and underworld cultures, but also to the intertwined nature of societal norms and wartime legacies (i.e. parochial attitudes that have become canonical due to wartime chaos), offering insights into the complexity of women's experiences of wartime deviance.

5.2. Links embedded in narrative & Balkan criminology

The project attempts to link the lack of stories that come from outside certain institutions in narrative criminology with the lack of attention to women's agency within illicit wartime environments in Balkan criminology. The Yugoslav case can enable narrative criminology to shift beyond certain institutionalised stories to narratives that may not be so attached to the condemnation script or certain agendas, while a narrative approach to Balkan criminology will enable the latter to explore women's agency within stories of wartime deviance and their relationship to wartime criminality.

Balkan criminology has yet to employ a narrative approach to stories of women offenders, as the existing literature is merely concerned with material and inequality factors as well as the doing gender perspective. Although the First Conference of Victimology in Bosnia and Herzegovina (March 2015) has included stories on war violence (human suffering, mass atrocities), analysed for the first time as 'products of interpersonal interaction and meaning-making activity' (Basic, 2015: 1), stories from women that are not labelled as criminals or victims are yet to be approached in their narrative sense.

Indeed, narrative tradition in the field relates to those labelled as offenders (or perpetrators in case of gross human-rights abuses) and victims; stories come from convicted offenders in courts and prisons; or they constitute narratives about victimhood, reconciliation and forgiveness (Basic, 2015). However, the link between Balkan criminology and narrative tradition in this project is one of a common interest in the stories of women who have not been labelled as victims or offenders; have not been a convicted offender; nor do they predominantly view themselves as victimised.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on her research in Croatia, Banjeglav (2013) ascertains the limitations of developing stories beyond dominant discourses as these are driven by sociocultural expectations and interactions. However, the ability to merge different cultural narrative repertoires reveal elements of creativity in such stories. This chapter discusses narrative theory's interest in exploring this relationship between structure and agency. Additionally, narrative criminology treats narrative as transformative and fragmented in nature, suggesting more complex aspects of storied experience.

This chapter explores the narrative criminological theoretical underpinnings in an attempt to converge research foci between narrative and Balkan criminology; women's experiences of the Yugoslav breakup provide some unique stories for narrative analysis regarding the ways gender shapes the stories of deviance when expanding beyond narratives that derive merely from institutional settings.

This can offer insights into merging 'reality' and 'discourse' to understand the ways women talk into acts that are traditionally viewed as masculinised. As such, the study can turn its analytical lenses towards those creative elements that have been overlooked in Balkan criminology, as women's stories of wartime deviance remain stories of minimal agency.

The chapter argues that an analysis of women's stories as gendered performances will further understandings of how women accomplish gender in stories of deviance and thus of their relationship to offending. The next chapter turns its analytical lenses to the methodology of the thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

1. Introduction

The project applies a narrative analysis to the study of women's experiences of the Yugoslav breakup. It explores narrative as the object of the study, centring upon how women who participated in the illicit environments of the Yugoslav breakup construct a self-narrative. But the project also views narratives as the tool to study something else. As such, it makes use of women's wartime stories to extend the study of women's experiences in offending beyond stories that come from certain institutionalised settings and the material factors perspective (see above) – an approach that appears to dominate Balkan criminological research on women's wartime involvement in illicit activities.

The particular case has been opted, as it has the potential to analyse women's discursive patterns that give meaning to wartime 'criminal' through performances of the self that enable us to understand the different relationships of women to criminality, and the level and types of creativity developed in women's stories of deviance when accomplishing gender in their accounts. Narrative criminology on the Yugoslav conflicts has employed narrative analysis to examine the discursive patterns that contribute to constructing the categories of 'victim' (Skjelsbæk, 2006; Basic, 2015a; b; c) and 'reconciliation' (Basic, 2015a; b; c) in narratives of wartime mass human-rights abuses. This project, however, makes use of narrative criminological methods to explore stories beyond gross human-right violations. It also shifts analysis beyond stories shaped by certain institutional settings, such as prison and courts, without nonetheless downplaying the structures and discourses upon which the narrator draws to construct a self-narrative.

The storytelling endeavour to create a self-narrative is one that has the potential to elevate the subjectivity of individual experience and its discursive nature in all its complexity. As the focus of the study is *how* the narrator discursively does gender in stories of deviance, treating women's account as gendered performances in an attempt to understand their particular relationship to offending, a narrative analysis appears the most appropriate method for the project's purposes. It is one that explores the relationship between the story and

the crime, and elevates the role of narrative in bridging reality and discourse to understand women's positions within and relations to wartime offending.

> When persons note something of their experience, either to themselves or to others, they do so not by the mere recording of experience over time, but in storied form [...] Stories are the closest we can come to experience [...] A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history [...] People live stories, and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones [...] We try to gain experience of our experience through constructing narratives of that experience. What becomes apparent here is that many of the ways we come in touch with our own experience, come to know what we know of our experience, is through stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994: 415).

This project concerns accounts of offending as gendered performances and it could not have chosen other type of analysis rather than narrative. As Hollway and Jefferson maintain, 'the particular story told, the manner and detail of its telling, the points emphasised, the morals drawn, all represent choices made by the storyteller' (2008: 308). It recognises that interviewees may emphasise the gender dimension of their experiences as they acknowledge that the interviews concerned only women. However, this has not been seen as problematic, as the project seeks to explore those subjective accounts as gendered performances. Additionally, this has not overwhelmed other identity aspects, as experiences were heavily storied through an intersection of different sets of identities.

Such analysis also enables understandings of how narratives are negotiated, contested or accepted in shifting (post-war) contexts. As Yarrow sustains, 'narrative takes the form of a series of events and activities that appear as consecutive revelations, each examined in terms of the light it sheds on the kind of person he (the narrator) is today' (2008: 343).

This project is concerned with elements of narrative creativity; it follows Sveinung Sandberg's (2013) work on exploring creative elements in narratives that act positively to drive criminal action through narrative analysis. Indeed, Sandberg's work on studying those creative elements in Breivik's manifesto shows how creative references (albeit within narrative cultural templates) are

used to tailor and forebode the moment of crime. His work is a breakthrough as it turns the criminological research focus from an analysis of narratives of crime as post hoc stories that are readily identifiable by the protagonist into strategic stories that influence criminal action through standardised and fleeting (creative) narrative themes.

The study however, differs from Sandberg's work in terms of incorporating the gender factor; it makes use of narrative analysis to bridge discourse and 'reality' when studying women's creative ways of talking into crime; it studies stories as gendered performances, seeking women's stories of deviance that are specifically shifting and fluid within longitudinal post-war environments, but at the same time escape institutionalised narrative patterns (see Fleetwood, 2015; Miller et al. 2015). Indeed, Fleetwood (2015) stresses the need to incorporate women's stories into narrative criminological inquiry. Drawing on this, Fleetwood (2015) and Miller et al. (2015) analyse women offenders' accounts as performances. However, women's accounts are yet to be performed outside institutional settings.

Stories motivate offending behaviour and the latter enables us to realise a particular self-story. Thus, the project makes use of narrative analysis to understand criminal behaviour for women; how they construct self-narratives to accomplish a conventional identity, what discourses in the story inspire offending action and how these stories merge with conventional (feminine) traits, as well as the ways in which women perform a feminine, non-deviant self given that their stories are not merely shaped by certain institutional policies and agendas.

The narrative analysis has been a situated and relational practice, taking place in particular social contexts, and resting on individual understandings (Salmon & Riessman, 2008; Andrews, 2008) and the researcher/researched interactions (Samon & Riessman, 2008; Riessman, 2008). It has also been a circular process entailing on-going evaluation, as the study lies in the recognition of multiple possible subjective pasts that can be analysed in the light of a constantly changing present - shifting present perspectives, present choices, the person we are when we analyse the data, new aspects of identity and meaning, historical changes and changes in personal circumstances (Andrews, 2008).

This introductory section has centred upon the importance of using a narrative methodological approach to this project. The rest of the chapter will

describe the research process. It will outline the 'Research design': research objectives that shaped the method, the interviewing questions, and the approaches of the project. Next, it will describe the 'Interviewing sample' and explain 'The research process' of approaching potential participants followed by the 'Methods of data analysis' section about data gathering and narrative analysis. Lastly, it will explore the 'Methodological and ethical procedures', incorporating a range of issues relating to the research conduct, its possible effects on the participants, and ways to improve ethical practices (Clark, 2012).

2. Research design

Matters relating to sensitive nature of the research have shaped research design, as the study has the potential to reveal details that are (further) stigmatising or incriminating (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008) the participants. This is particularly important when dealing with vulnerable groups, such as migrants, ethnic minorities or low-income groups with high perceptions of risk due to their systematic exposure to discrimination (Tilley, 1998; Warr 2004; Dickson-Swift et al., 2008).

The study also revolves around subjective experiences. As such, I have chosen to conduct qualitative research as it has the potential to 'reach out into different life worlds and portray them with complexity, thoughtfulness, and insight' (Warr, 2004: 586). It is also 'more suited to the study of sensitive topics, as it does not assume prior knowledge of people's experiences. Instead it allows people to develop and express their own reality' (Dickson-Swift et al. 2008: 7). And it has been instrumental in 'accessing those internalised identity constructs' (Maruna & Copes, 2005: 254).

2.1.   Goals and questions

The qualitative research conducted involved narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Hollway & Jefferson, 2008; Eckerdal, 2013) relating to women's experiences of the Yugoslav breakup from a long-term perspective in an attempt to explore how women narrate their wartime experiences of offending from their distinct positions as women and perform gender within stories of considerable little agency. The narrative interviews were uninterrupted, asking about women's wartime experiences of the Yugoslav breakup and resulting in prolonged and

detailed stories. As the interviewing agenda was open to development depending on the participant's experiences, the interviews were open in unexpected emerging issues on matters that the researcher had not thought prior the interview, such as family relationships.

This aimed at providing somewhat authority to the interviewee and developing more trusting research relationships, especially when dealing with participants who lived in conflict areas 'permeated by misunderstanding and mistrust' (Boyden, 2004: 241).

> Whatever effort the researcher makes to build a sense of mutuality and confidence with respondents, these cannot override relationships fractured by war. Research is ultimately an act of disclosure that in war creates a gulf with everyday realities which are marked by secrecy, suspicion and the isolation of individuals one from the other' (p. 242).

The narrative interviews also aimed at enabling the narrator to put events together as meaningful wholes (Eckerdal, 2013) and to select and narrate stories in their own cultural and structural terms. As such, they were merely unstructured, yet in some cases I asked questions at the end of the story for clarification reasons or/and in order to keep on track with the direction of the interview.

The interviews centred upon questions regarding experiences in deviant wartime settings, taking into account the wartime and post-war context as well as the interviewing process context; societal shifts, individual aspirations, expectations, frustrations and achievements within the last 20 years, as well as wartime events (i.e. the Srebrenica massacre), national anniversaries and changes in immigration statuses.

The first two questions were those which initiated the storytelling, and normally after that the researcher's influence would be minimal until the end of the narrative. The first question was factual (i.e. where they lived before the war), and the following was broader (what can you tell us about where you were living?), enabling the narrator to speak about their experiences without any interruption.

At the end of the narrative interview, a pre-set list of questions was aimed

at facilitating the interviewing process. The questions encouraged further storytelling; they often were explanatory and/ or exploratory; linked along consequent stories and to the whole narrative. The questions prompted at the end sometimes moved towards more specific or sensitive issues. Understanding that the researcher was not looking for right answers, but subjective experiences (i.e. what do you remember from that night you fled the region?), was vital in establishing more comfortable research settings. This also attempted to minimise participants' possible beliefs of being forced to defend themselves because of past deviant actions (see Maruna & Copes, 2005), although some justification of such activities was expected as part of a coherent story (see chapter 2).

2.2.   Epistemological approach

The project treats knowledge as one that is not objectively given, but rather culturally embedded, shifting in time and created through perception. As such, it is one reduced in epistemological terms; its *validity* (Robson, 2002; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Warr, 2004; Leydesdorff et al., 2009) centres upon the concept of reality as 'a product of social processes deciding how we understand the world' (Sandberg, 2003: 15).

Such approach revolves around constructionism and contents that social phenomena and their meanings are in a constant state of revision, generated by social actors and through social interaction. Once they are defined as real, 'then they are real in their consequences. Therefore, if we categorise behaviour, events, and experiences as similar, and name or label them in specific ways, they appear before us as representations of object-like realities with real effects that can be experienced positively or negatively' (Henry, 2009: 296).

In its narrative sense, the epistemological approach entails an *understanding* of storied experiences and the narrator's workability on constructing a self. Toolis (2015) refers to a tradition of narrative inquiry, which is 'rooted in an epistemology that meaning is discursively and socially constructed and that truth is multiple, thus challenging the notion that reality is objective and naturalised' (p. 53). Thus, narrative inquiry concerns with reality as it is narratively experienced - lived in the narrator's words. As such, experience is already entangled in stories and always in relation to structural and cultural contexts. Reed (2008) explains that what is 'understandable' to the narrator can

potentially become 'understandable to the researcher as long as the actions are contextualised in order to render intelligible and processed by interpretation. This requires the researcher to address to locality; the very given time and space, as well as the very meaningful particularities of the case (Reed, 2008).

3. Interviewing sample & setting

The interviewing sample included one Bosnian Serb and one Croatian Serb woman who now live in Cyprus and Serbia respectively.

The participants present some characteristics, which make their narratives distinct from other stories of offending and worth of studying. They:

- Have not shared their experiences within a larger group of people with similar stories, for instance as part of the recovery or desistence process (see Maruna, 2001);
- Did not experience the process of going straight (this has rather been due to a lack of opportunities or change of circumstances after the wars than a transformative process of the individual);
- The transition to post-war (non-offending) life did not necessarily involve construction of moral selves or productive roles, as occurs in narratives of transformation, recovery or desistence (nor necessarily did employ behavioural, structural or cognitive strategies);
- Did not socialise in 'cliques', as described in street cultures (see Katz, 1988) or have an in-group identification (see McAdams);
- Have not been imprisoned or labelled as criminals/offenders (or identified themselves as merely offenders or victims – these rather appear as fluid categories);
- Have not been involved in sophisticated criminal operations (not part of criminal networks or organised crime structures). Their acts were not systematic or organised within smuggling or trafficking channels, or they may have been very low down the pecking order that they were not aware of the structure they were a part of (Randall at al, 2015: 3);
- Have not followed offending as a career path.

The participants' narratives were told in private places and outside their wartime communities, enabling space for more creativity in their narrative construction.

The sample does not represent a population for criminological study in the way of prisons, social welfare institutions, courtrooms, and rehabilitation centres where narratives are largely shaped by their policies. Such strategies often result in producing an acceptable personal narrative (Linhart, 2013), merely in accordance with programs of recovery or/and social integration. As stories in this study were merely told in houses, they reflect a less institutionalised setting than many studies on women's criminality, with categories such as 'lawbreaker' being used more loosely (i.e. no need to associate offending to shame or regret for reasons of reintegration).

3.1. Interviewing subjects

The narratives extended beyond ethnicity to other variables that had influenced experience and the interviewees were not primarily regarded as ethnic interview subjects. Although the participants were women, their gender played different roles in their activities and had not necessarily been the overruling identity at the expense of other aspects of identity. However, the stories ground in the narrators' experiences as gender subjects, and as such the gender variable has a particular place in the project.

The participants were also defined by wartime experience and deviant activity. Deviant behaviour, therefore, lies at the core of their stories, yet it does not background other aspects of identity. It is not by any means considered as the participants' mere identity. I did not intend to portray a profile of the persons I interviewed or a life story narrative, but rather to explore stories of wartime deviance as autonomous and as part of a wider self-narrative (Sandberg, 2003; Brookman et al., 2011).

3.2. Sample size

The difficulties I encountered to broaden the sample size included a lukewarm response to the project – partly due to assumptions that the stories were not 'good enough' for the project or a lack of interest in the project. There had not been a minimum/maximum sample size set, but emphasis was rather on finding the 'right' participants. I conducted two interviews as a source of generating

knowledge (see Baker & Edwards, 2012) to support the purposes and conclusions of the project. This therefore is a small study, drawing on Gadd's (2004b) argument in favour of a small sample when dealing with individual stories, taking into account subjective particularities of the narrative construction rather than producing generalisable findings (generated in large-scale studies). The participants have narrated rich stories of wartime deviance that enabled to use them as the basis of the project's analysis.

The cases are selected principally on the basis that they are interesting in building Balkan criminology by adding to the literature on women's agency in the (wartime) illicit environments of the former Yugoslavia, and in contributing to narrative criminology by exploring the ways in which gender and women's unique wartime experiences shape their accounts, especially when these extend beyond institutional narratives. Yet their analysis does not come from the representativeness of the sample. It is rather based on the ability of the sample to produce self-narratives that, when added to the existing literature, can further our understandings of the ways in which gender shapes women's accounts, and to establish that such stories are essential in bettering our understandings of women's criminality.

The study is therefore based on a sample where the gender variable and a particular set of experience, namely women's wartime engagement in illicit settings, are involved, but by no means argues that the participants represent groups of people within the broader population. As the project is not concerned with issues of representativeness, emphasis is on delving more deeply into the individuals, settings, as well as their discourses and subcultures. The richness of data does not depend on quantity, but on strong relationships between the researcher and the narrator that can produce detailed accounts.

This project does not seek to challenge grand theories or to look for a patterning of responses. Nor does it aim at comparing different groups of participants (asking for comparative answers) or at considering frequency distribution. It is rather about the quality of the analysis on the ways gender plays in women's accounts of deviance. It centres upon the richness and detail of subjective experience and of the particularities of the case, which enable an in-depth analysis of the interviews.

Nevena's and Darja's (the participants' pseudonyms) accounts have been enough to demonstrate that women's narratives of deviance are more varied than previously illustrated in the literature, when analysed outside institutional settings. The participants' stories have been sufficient to show the complexity of the ways in which gender shapes women's narratives of deviance.

The interviewing process initially included more participants who drew on similar discourses. For example, Helena, from Republic of Srpska, narrated her wartime experiences as a 10 year-old daughter who had to support her mother in the illicit activities of the black market, often taking over domestic responsibilities, so that her mother could sell jewellery in the black market. Similarly to Darja and Nevena (as we will see in the next chapter), she merged cultural wartime perceptions of the black market ('at this time you do all the legal and illegal things to sell, to find a way to make money') and canonical narratives of disadvantage (poverty, need for survival) to construct a conventional non-deviant self.

Lamija and Amna, two Bosnian Muslim sisters who fled the Republic of Sprska at the age of 18 and 15 respectively, narrated their smuggling out of the 'Serbian part' of the country with a Serb male smuggler drawing upon discourses of disadvantage and vulnerability, for instance insecurity about the driver's intentions and their interaction with the Serb men on the border controls, highlighting '*If people [had] gold with them, they (the men on the border checkpoint) would take it off them*' (Lamija), succeeding in maintaining conventional identities while narrating a personal arrangement with the 'enemy' within the illicit environments of human smuggling.

Similarly, Enisa, a Bosnian Muslim in her early teens during the Yugoslav breakup, described her experience of fleeing Republic of Sprska, noting that her mother negotiated the escape with the smugglers, as her father was on the war line. Yet, this interaction was framed within cultural discourses of vulnerability, with Enisa stressing that they '*had to pay somebody to take us out of the country. Then the UN met us in Croatia and took us. There were a couple of people who took loads of money at that time - not just money - they took a lot of things from my house as well. And then they got us into the back of the tractor and they got us across the border [...] we left in the middle of the night. It was about two or three*

o'clock in the morning [...] we were in the back of this tractor before the dawn breaking' (Enisa).

Parts of these narratives are very similar to Darja's and Nevena's stories, suggesting the data are repetitive and thus, enhancing the thesis conclusions. However, they do not identify any new discourses that may further inform about the ways women's stories are shaped by gender. Darja's and Nevena's stories have been the most detailed accounts in the interviewing process, enabling an in-depth analysis, and are adequate to demonstrate that women's narratives that extend beyond institutional agendas can provide stories that would have otherwise been overlooked. They constitute excellent samples to explore women's narratives as gendered performances, as they enable a more complex interplay between the normative and the subcultural. As such, their in-depth analysis is enough to show that non-institutionalised narratives can add to the existing scholarship on women's relationship to deviance and the benefits of doing so for Balkan and narrative criminology.

4. The research process

4.1.   Contact network and fieldwork

The research process consisted of two phases: contact network and fieldwork. The two stages do not always follow a consequent order and have required different procedures in Cyprus and Serbia. The first interview was conducted in Cyprus in August 2013, after an immediate response to my project from a Croatian woman who lives in Cyprus. She is a family friend with strong links to the former Yugoslav community in Cyprus. She could not participate in the project, but she was vital in introducing me to Nevena, a Bosnian Serbian woman with experience in the black market during the Yugoslav conflicts.

In the case of Serbia, the fieldwork was conducted in March 2014, but many contacts were made before my arrival to Belgrade. During my participation in a conference in Thessaloniki I met Nikos Zacharis, the South East Europe Research Centre (SEERC) Director. Making this first contact was vital in a number of consequent introductions with people from the wider region of Balkans and in establishing a contact network for the purposes of the project. It enabled contacting individuals from the region either directly or through people who have worked/conducted research in the Balkans, and ultimately allowing contact with

Darja, a Croatian Serb who joined illicit activities during the Yugoslav breakup. Their guidance and contribution extended beyond introducing the project and approaching Darja to developing relationships that largely influenced the whole process and its outcomes.

Conducting research in unfamiliar settings can be very stressful and time consuming in the search for the appropriate location. The pre-fieldwork connections were therefore essential in facilitating access to the premises of the research centre (SEERC) in order to present the project in a professional manner. This was important in the belief that the participant would feel comfortable and free from any distraction. This would also support my position as a researcher who was independent from any governmental bodies and CSOs. Although the centre was not used, as the participant had a different view of what constituted a comfortable environment for her, the advantage of establishing a pre-fieldwork contact network was invaluable.

The fieldwork in Belgrade lasted one week due to financial limitations and was based on network sampling derived from mouth-to-mouth references. My affiliation with SEERC resulted in meeting Nikos Demitriades, a lecturer at the Executive MBA of City College in Belgrade, who facilitated my entry to other members of staff who brought me in contact with Darja. Before the interview, I contacted Darja's son, who spoke English to arrange a meeting and the interview details. He was chosen to interpret the interviews, since the interviewee did not want an interpreter she did not know.

The meeting was important in making personal judgments in interpreting field conditions, especially in deciding whether I should proceed the interview in unfamiliar settings (participant's houses). I also ensured constant contact with Nikos Demitriades and Darja Koturovic, a Serbian PhD candidate who I met in a conference in Thessaloniki (September 2013).

4.2.   Fieldwork challenges

Before conducting fieldwork, I had studied a plethora of publication on stories of human suffering during the Yugoslav conflicts (see Skjelsbæk, 2006) in an attempt to prepare myself for the interviews. I had not any feelings of loneliness – 'fieldwork blues' (Wood, 2006) – as the period I stayed in unfamiliar settings was very short. Although I did not have any sleep disorders or feelings of dread, the

process has been emotionally laden.

4.3.   The researcher and the project

My research experience prior to my MPhil project included single interviews with people from the same cultural background. The interviews had been conducted in a single-cultural setting with the participants being citizens that enjoyed full rights and had relatively stable/settled lives. The interviews had also been conducted in my native language – Greek.

When entering the former Yugoslav communities for the first time as a researcher in two different countries (Cyprus and Serbia) for the purposes of this project, I had to interview individuals with 'unstable' lives; at the moment of the interviews, one was still deprived of the right to permanent residency or citizenship for herself or even her children; Darja did not speak Greek or English nor did she welcome the idea of an interpreter; the participants still were in dispute with family or other members of their communities due to on-going disputes relating to their past actions; they had changed numerous addresses, faced financial difficulties, had abusive relationships or uncertain future prospects.

As such, the project has been a unique and yet challenging process. Despite the challenges, it remains committed to the recognition that the narrative process is one that reflects the narrator's views on what was considered to be important to be told in the interviews or/and on what mattered to them, as well as the researcher's views on what was related to the study.

5. Methods of data analysis

This section is about data analysis: transcribing the interviews, making sense of what is considered to be unrelated material, and converting qualitative information into qualitative data (Boyatzis, 1998). At this stage, researcher and researched relationships had been taken into account in order to explore those interacting interpretations that shape the field texts.

Additionally, the kind of questions asked and the way they were structured provided a frame within which participants told their stories and created a text (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). As such, the researcher sought minimal intervention during the interviewing.

The analysis of storied experiences focuses on the inward (i.e. hopes, frustration) and outward (i.e. existential conditions, i.e. settings), and on the backward and forward – past, present, future (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

5.1. Transcription

The transcription process required an acknowledgment of the researcher's relationship to inquiry, which enabled identifying data relating to the wartime experiences of women and suggested further analysis for the purposes of the project. It rested on a combination of field and audio-recording notes to transform information into research texts, attempting to turn 'experiences in the flesh' (Warr, 2004: 581) into texts. As Warr notes, 'the power of an embodied voice, which can deliver a sense of struggle, despair, or resilience, is greatly watered down when it is transcribed into mere words on a page' (p. 581).

5.2. Narrative analysis

The transcription produced research texts that have been analysed as narratives; the stories were split into parts/smaller stories (Squire et al., 2008) according to the experience (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998) for further analysis. The selective use of transcribed interview segments is what altered interviews into written texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), helping in breaking the narratives down into smaller stories (i.e. life in Krajina, life in Sprska).

The analysis involved reducing raw information, splitting narratives into shorter stories depending on the experience, and identifying common or related patterns (i.e. similar strategies, circumstances, experiences) from the stories. The patterns have been interpreted within the narrative criminological theoretical background and studied under the unit of analysis: 'Wartime illicit activities'.

5.2.1. Wartime illicit activities

This unit concerns the interplay between women's individual stories and available discourses. It refers to discursively employed gendered strategies and performances in illicit activities, particularly during transactions in the black market, during women's interactions within the unequal and violent environments of shadow economy, and during engagement in highly masculinised and militarised settings.

This project involves an analysis of how relationships and positions are negotiated in stories that extend beyond certain institutionalised policies, how structures and discourses are plotted, and how transition and temporality interplay with coherence in the construction of a self-narrative. Particularly, the project applies a performative approach (Riessman, 2000; 2005) on narrative that views storytelling as performance by a self. This is not to say that the approach suggests that identities are inauthentic; it rather recognises that identities are culturally and structurally situated, embedded in social interaction, and therefore storied in their nature. As Riessman (2000: 13) notes, the positioning of the self and the interactional nature of storytelling signify the performance of identity.

As the project applies a performative approach, it is concerned with what has been said – that is content about women's criminal profiles, how it has been said – particularly with regards to how women perform/construct a cohesive feminine self when narrating stories of deviance, for what purposes the story is said – revolving analysis around strategies to accomplish gender, and when it has been said – centring upon women's stories that are (re) told 20 years after the Yugoslav breakup and as such may differentiate from those performed in the past.

5.3.   Experience-centred approach

An experience-centred approach to narrative analysis has been employed, as the (gendered) self performs depending on the narrator's very personal interactions and standpoints within cultural frameworks. The focus on individual experience or the 'small story approach' (Scholes et al., 2006; Skjelsbæk, 2006; Squire, 2008; Phoenix, 2008; Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; Heinen & Sommer, 2009) takes into consideration those sociocultural aspects of narratives that rest on time and place (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008), such as local setting (i.e. interviewing place), conceptual (i.e. dominant ideologies) contexts (Phoenix, 2008; Doucet & Mauthner, 2008), and cultural stories (i.e. stories embedded in war legacies).

Experience-centred stories refer to lived life parts (i.e. events) and internal journeys (i.e. process of understanding and accomplishing gender). They are, therefore, seen as one of many narratable truths (Squire, 2008). Squire (2008) argues that researchers often expect that certain events should be told in a particular way. However, given the informal shifting settings in which the

participants lived, the project considers such assumptions unproductive, acknowledging narratives in their diversity, uncertainty, and subjectivity (Squire, 2008; Tamboukou, 2008). The analysis, thus, turns its lenses to experiences narratively lived by the individual subject, defined and reconstructed in her own terms and transmitted to the researcher.

5.4.   The 'I' in narrative

Personal pronouns of 'I' are very common in individual stories and have been greatly taken into consideration in the narrative analysis. As Mauthner and Doucet (1998) note, 'this process centres our attention on the active 'I' which is telling the story; amplifies the terms in which the respondent sees and presents herself; highlights where the respondent may be emotionally or intellectually struggling to say something; and identifies those places where the respondent shifts between 'I', 'we' and 'you' signalling changes in how the respondent perceives and experiences herself' (p. 13). This is particularly important in shifting stories over time, as it allows understanding those individual and societal changes that have (re) formed the narrative subject – understandings that enable the researcher to explore the ways women perform a self within stories of deviance. McAdams refers 'a subjective storytelling 'I' whose stories about personal experience become part and parcel of a storied 'me'. The self is both the storyteller and the stories that are told' (2008: 244).

6. Methodological and ethical issues

6.1.   Sensitivity

Relieving potential anxiety of the research experience has been central to the project's ethical considerations, as the research involved stories with induced discomfort or distress in them. Being aware of participants' vulnerable status and possible concerns – stigmatisation, marginalisation, and judgmental attitude – initiatives to reduce potential harm of interviewees' wellbeing had been a top priority.

Such issues were addressed in a range of manners, through showing respect toward the participants, offering to pause or stop the interview, avoiding strict time constraints to give space to talk (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007) and enabling participants to express their feelings or remain silent for some time,

respecting periods of silence as an indication of care and empathy (Elmir et al., 2011), and discussing sensitive issues in the extent that the participants were willing to. I did not attempt to background any sensitive issues that were important in pursuit of the project, but participants were able to discuss them in their own terms (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008).

Participants' informed consent was sought by introducing the project, guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality, and informing about the tape-recording (the latter – although time consuming – allowed detailed transcription of the interviews, which notes alone could not have provided), but also through informal conversations with the interviewees. As such, participants were unlikely to be exposed to any physical harm, but the potential to externalise parts of their private world was well recognised (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008: 10).

Both participants no longer live in their countries, including the case of Serbia, where the participant identified herself as a Serb coming from Croatia. In both cases, the first thing I did was to present myself as a researcher from Cyprus working for an MPhil degree at the University of Sheffield. I presented a research letter explaining the project. I emphasised that I was gathering data on how women who experienced the Yugoslav breakup recall their past with the benefit of distance and I informed them about their rights as participants and the potential risks. The form included my contact details so that the participants were able to contact me after the interviewing process if they wished to ask further questions, inform me that they no longer wish to be part of the project, make changes in their stories or add new stories.

I did not seek a written consent since a written form with their name and signature might have discouraged the potential interviewees from participating. An oral consent procedure was carried on, where I firstly assured the interviewees that their identity would remain anonymous and confidential, and that I would not identify them, verbally or written, as having said particular things. I assured that their participation was voluntary and made aware of their right to decline to answer any particular questions or refuse further participation in the interviewing process.

The participants were informed about the note taking and interview recording. The notes were coded by the number of recording (and later their pseudonym) rather than by the participants' actual names. The procedure had a

dual purpose: the participants to acknowledge the terms, and to be able to exert control over the content of the interview (Wood, 2006). This sense of control was reflected in participants' questions relating to myself, i.e. about my studies (see Clark, 2012).

In addition, the introduction of myself reduced participants' suspicion towards the study, since I appeared to be independent from any governmental or CSO institutions. This has been a priority when conducting research, since 'to carry out research in other civil wars, researchers may need to enter the field with and reside with a non-governmental organisation that may impose explicit restrictions or implicit constraints on the research, thereby compromising the researcher's independence in order to carry out the research at all' (Wood, 2006: 383).

Nor did I have any loyalties or personal risks that would constrain me from revealing particular issues, a problem that insiders sometimes have to face. As Robson concludes, 'it is, paradoxically, often easy for an outsider to spell out the generality of the likely problems to arise from insider status' (2002: 536). I opted to stay in a hotel and not at an acquaintance's house, so that I would not risk my 'neutrality'. As Clark notes, staying with a local family in post-conflict environments, the researcher might gain easy access to one side, but 'having more contact and interaction with one particular group may, in turn, test and challenge the researcher's objectivity' (2012: 826).

Despite my concerns about potential negative perception of the project, my overall impression throughout the interviews was that the participants viewed the project in a positive light. They did not seem irritated at any stage of the interviewing process and very rarely avoided particular questions. Indeed, they often appeared very supportive of a project interested in their stories. As Skjelsbæk notes, '(many women) felt so forgotten by the world outside that they were very happy to receive a researcher who was interested in their lives now that the cameras and journalists had moved on to other parts of the world' (2006: 396).

For the interviewees, the fact that their voice could be heard might have been enough to convince them to participate. However, firstly I had to explain how significant and unique their individual contributions were to the project. In addition, I did not encounter any incoherence in information, which might have

obscured the interviewing and data analysis processes. Nor had I employ methods that would make the interviewing more accessible to illiterate populations, since the participants had received education at least until their sixteenth year.

6.2.   Cultural particularities

Ethical practice was re-evaluated during the fieldwork in Belgrade, where the impact of Milosevic's legacy on the psychology of Serbian people and anti-Western sentiments had to be taken into account (albeit the researcher is not a Westerner) in order to ensure good interactional conditions among the involved parties.

Such re-evaluation was also important when Darja's son was chosen to be the interpreter. Ethical concerns about interpreters tend to be related to safety issues due to potential mistrust of their role and intentions in post-war zones (Inghilleri, 2009). Although this was not the case in this project, the interpreter's wellbeing was a major concern. Ensuring that Darja's son was aware of interpreting potential stories of traumatic experiences was vital in avoiding or reducing such risk. Darja's son also had considerable knowledge of the cultural and political landscape of the region, understandings that are vital in facilitating the interpreting and thus interviewing process.

6.3.   Research relationships

During the fieldwork Darja asked whether I believed her stories; the participants expressed feelings of injustice and the view that 'their side' has been underrepresented. It was therefore important for me to ensure that the participants were treated with respect (see Bahn & Weatherill, 2013) and to understand what they felt about the project; what might be improved in the questions/interviews so that they would feel that they had the opportunity to maximise their contribution to the project.

6.4.   Other considerations

Due to concerns about what Boyden refers to as a 'highly complex web of expectations' (2004: 243), it was made clear that the researcher was neither in a position of a representative or advocate (see Shaw, 2003), nor in a position to

fulfil participants' possible expectations or have any authority to influence personal circumstances for the interviewees, i.e. regarding their immigration status.

This chapter has outlined the research design, methods, interviewing process, analysis and arising research issues before embarking to the next chapter – the study's empirical section.

Chapter 4: The Yugoslav case in criminological narrative perspective

1. Introduction

The stories in this chapter pertain to profiles of women from wartime illicit backgrounds. In many aspects, the stories of women working within illicit environments during the Yugoslav conflicts do not diverge from prevalent discourses of destruction (burned buildings, demolished cultural sites, ruined towns, gung shootings) and suffering (expulsions, fear). However, the participants' narratives succeed to grasp those longitudinal perspectives of the position of women within illicit environments as well as the complexity of their performed selves and their storied experiences in such settings; black market, smuggling channels, arms and fuel illicit trade. The chapter consists of an introduction on the local wartime contexts of Krajina and Sprska, and three consequent sections: narrating illegality: a grey story; eliciting stories in familial environments (Darja's case); and unravelling action and reflection narrative (Nevena's story).

The participants' narratives tend to have a beginning - they begin with their experiences just before or during the outbreak of the war (i.e. multi-ethnic coexistence); a middle – they narrate experiences of involvement in illicit activities, and life-changing events, such as leaving their communities; and an end – their post-war lives, expectations and uncertain future prospects. As such, their narratives of the Yugoslav breakup are not necessarily conclusive, as many stories are still shaped by wartime legacies, frustrations and future uncertainty. However, they are instrumental in exploring the ways in which gender and wartime/post-war circumstances shape women's stories of deviance, including elements of creativity that emerge within stories that go beyond institutional agendas and policies, in an attempt to better understand women's criminality.

The participants position themselves in the plot according to 'ideologies of self' (Skjelsbæk, 2006: 376), forming a 'relational discourse about the self' (Skjelsbæk, 2006: 376). Even in cases where the narrator had been a witness of an event directly involving other persons, the story is self-referential, centring

upon the narrator's experience and perceptions of that event, and how this affected the narrator.

1.1.   Republics of Krajina and Srpska

The stories regarding involvement in illicit activities merely draw from areas that present their very own distinct characteristics during the Yugoslav breakup, particularly the regions of the Republic of Krajina and the Republic of Srpska. Indeed, the particular historical frameworks of those regions during the Yugoslav breakup are largely explored in political analyses of the conflicts. Both regions share some common characteristics that make them unique from other areas; the Republic of Krajina had been the centre of dispute between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY - Serbia & Montenegro), and the Republic of Srpska between Bosnia and the FRY.

After Croatia's independence declaration, the region of Serb-supported Krajina was self-proclaimed as independent, establishing its own government in Knin. Later, it became a 'Pink Zone' protected by the UNPROFOR after being attacked by Croatian forces, and ultimately part of Croatia after ethnic cleansing policies against the Serbs. As Serb-held, Krajina had been heavily dependent on the embargoed Serbian Republic, and as a neutral buffer zone, surrounded by Croatian forces along its border. During Croatian aggression and the operation storm, the Serbs faced massive expulsions and killings.

Similarly, the Republic of Srpska was helped by the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) to declare independence in the announcement of Bosnia's secession from former Yugoslavia. The region maintained close ties with the Serbian Republic even after Serbia introduced economic sanctions against the Republic of Srpska. Indeed, after Bosnian Serbs rejected the Vance-Owen plan, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia imposed sanctions, but in reality Serbian resources continued to enter the region of Srpska.

The particularities of Republic of Sprska and Krajina during the Yugoslav wars enabled individuals to translate broader politico-historical contexts into their individual deviant experiences. The historian Vadim Prozovov highlights that in the region of Krajina 'there were no resources, no industry, no employment. The Serbian Krajina could not exist independently' (Trukhacher, 2010, n.p.). The two regions appear to have a strong narrative of illegality, where

such activities are highly interconnected to the regions' wartime historic-political circumstances.

However, how do women employ their (gendered) selves in stories of wartime illicit activities? Particularly, what relationships, dynamics and interactions they draw upon to perform a self in their storytelling? And how do participants' distinct positions in the illicit surroundings and post-war (non-institutional/private) settings produce elements of agency in stories of perceived limited agency? Such understandings will in turn enable us to explore the discursive and narrative construction of gender in sections 3 and 4, as well as in the discussion chapter.

2. Narrating illegality: a 'grey' story

The participants who had been involved in grey economy during the Yugoslav breakup, provided stories that often reflect dominant stories of women's subordination in illicit networks; women as dependent, emotional and victimised (Grundetjern & Sandberg, 2013). Women merely occupied peripheral positions within the grey economy, diverging from those female representations enacting 'masculine' traits, such as emotional detachment or violent posture (Grundetjern & Sandberg, 2013). This may have been due to engaging in these activities only for a short period of time; enacting masculinity involves attempts to gain respect from male colleagues, deter attacks and punish those who have disrespected them (Grundetjern & Sandberg, 2013).

However, as the interviewees did not seek to pursue a career in these areas, they did not attempt to construct those stories that centre upon certain delinquency attitudes. For instance, participants' stories of illegality do not always comply with criminal attributes of being tough or presented as heavily influenced (Katz, 1988). Their stories were rather about fears and insecurities while working in these settings, particularly when negotiating prices and selling (stolen) products; they presented elements of vulnerability that are absent in stories of women who hold professional positions and follow a career path in criminality. Bosnian Serb Nevena was 15 years old when the Bosnian war broke and her story reflects such vulnerabilities:

> I grew up in need to look older than my age [...] I preferred to sell bullets to a person that knew my dad so that if he did something, he would have been punished (by her family) (Nevena).

It is evident that the participant did not attempt to portray a hard street woman encompassing those masculine attributes essential in succeeding in illicit activities. The stories were rather about dealing with experienced and 'tough' men who also often belonged to the 'enemy' nation. Explaining her experience as a Bosnian Serbian adolescent selling bullets to a Muslim man, Nevena said:

> I quickly got the money, left the bullets and run away (Nevena).

The story shows the participant's reluctance to challenge individuals in higher positions. As such, the narrative does not conform into subculture stories about challenging a superior force to gain respect and autonomy on the street (see Sandberg, 2009b), nor does it comply with those tough attitudes that characterise subculture.

The lack of autonomy is further illustrated in the circumstances the participant entered the black market. With her family (particularly the male members) introducing her to such activities, the narrator is presented with little agency for her actions. Being a teenage girl out of suspicion, rather than individual decision-making, was the leading factor to her involvement in illicit activities. Her story, therefore, fits into wider narratives of women who are unwillingly involved in criminality (see Althoff, 2013).

However, Nevena's story is not without any agency at all. The wartime circumstances created those opportunities to establish a life beyond family surroundings, despite her father's close supervision of her deviant activities. This was a realisation that gradually emerged, taking different dimensions in the passage of time, as the participant expanded her activities beyond her family's authorisation and auspices. For example, when the police came to inspect her house, the participant stressed that her father was not aware that she had gold in her possession. Such story demonstrates that the participant sometimes worked for herself and not always for the family. Nevena also appears to employ gendered strategies to manage risk; she often draws on kin networks ('I preferred

to sell bullets to a person that knew my dad') to succeed and avoid aggression from other men ('I quickly got the money, left the bullets and run away') in the black market transactions.

Similarly, in Darja's story, the participant does not appear to be a member of a gang group or part of a clique, despite situating her actions into the dynamics of a group. By explaining that her husband was not able to work, as he was involved in a paramilitary group during the wars, Croatian Serb Darja – who joined black market activities at 19 – offered a description of her involvement in illicit activities:

> Some kind of agreement was made so we could go outside our areas and settings. It was brave for a woman to go to areas controlled by Croatians and sell fuel. I could see them (men) in the car pointing at me with a gun, threatening me. To earn money we risked our lives. At nights we used to steal fuel from the station and sell it. I know that was foolish, but after two days I went back again. At this station we used to go and steal fuel [...] (There one day) Croatians cut his (a Serb man's) head [...] it was big news there (Darja).

Darja explained that she was in a state of apathy because of the war; she was exposed to situations that 'were not normal' and that she has now learned from the experience. This may imply that Darja, similarly to the institutional narratives of prison, makes use of the redemption script (Maruna, 2001) to turn a negative experience into a positive lesson.

Additionally, the participant appears to combine elements of pride ('it was difficult for a woman to go to areas controlled by Croatians') and humiliation ('pointing at me with a gun, threatening me'), but also a level of passivity (i.e. being helpless during her interaction with men in the car) with a degree of agency found in decision-making (i.e. decision to go back to the station and repeat the offence). Those contradictions enabled Darja to describe herself as a woman bravely stepping out of her traditional roles to adjust to the shifting socioeconomic circumstances established during the war rather than as a lawbreaker.

Darja's story may not have challenged existing power relations in the settings of black market, but her narrative goes beyond the ethnically based relational pattern of the Serb man and the Bosniak woman to different kinds of interaction. Skjelsbæk notes that 'in writings on the Bosnian conflict, the perpetrator is more often than not cast as a Serb male, while the identity of the victim is more often than not that of a Bosniak female' (2006: 385). As such, the 'hierarchies of credibility' (Becker, 1967: 241) tend to centre upon oversimplified gender and ethnic divisions, downplaying other positions for women within existing discourses.

There are other important patterns of power dynamics analysed in the literature of the Yugoslav breakup, such as between female combatants and civilians, local populations and displaced people, and male soldiers and prisoners. However, women's stories pertain to relationships between male soldiers and female civilians of the same ethnic group, men and women 'colleagues' in illegal wartime activities, men in local authorities (or other power positions) and women from the same or different ethnic group.

But narrating the death of her brother due to a personal dispute between him (a Bosnian Serbian) and a Serbian soldier, Nevena expressed feelings of mistrust among her 'own people':

> We trusted our own army, but it was not the Serbian army. There were many groups and it was difficult to know what each group could do – even the Serbian ones (Nevena).

Nevena expressed concerns about being a girl interacting with soldiers (or armed men of any ethnic group), as they often became violent when drinking. She expanded her narrative by recalling her story of entering Srebrenica after calls from the Serbian army:

> Should we go or are they sending us to death? […] Do our soldiers force us to get [into the town] just to show that we have won? (Nevena).

Such mistrust is further depicted in her stories of illegal involvement. Referring to her interaction with policemen from her own ethnic group, Nevena mentioned policemen's efforts to seize quantities of gold that she possessed:

> And back then of course there were laws, but for their [men's in local authorities] profit (Nevena).

Nevena described her actions of hiding the possessed gold and lying to the policemen, drawing from existing narrative repertoires about the hypocrisy of corrupt governments (see Copley, 2014) that incline to excuse personal involvement in criminality and minimise individual responsibility.

As the power hierarchy here lies in the policemen who allegedly make use of their power for their own benefit, and as the politico-social circumstances appear to push people towards criminality, Nevena seems to have little agency. Yet, Nevena's story involves elements of agency illustrated in decision-making during the policemen's visit into her family's house, and in succeeding to turn her story of deviance into a story of vulnerability by the male corrupt officials. As such, she did not denounce socio-cultural norms or the illegality of her action, but rather creatively drew on existing cultural discourses of corruption and state mistrust that enable her to perform a conventional (vulnerable) self.

Nevena also shows another aspect of interaction with men from the local authorities. Being well known for her involvement in the black market, she was asked by men in the local authorities in Srebrenica to sell them large quantities of alcohol. The alcohol would be given to those who were going to bury dead bodies before the town opened for the international community to inspect the extent of the massacre. Although this can be marked as a cooperative interaction, Nevena highlighted the unequal nature of such relationship:

> When they tell you that you need to do them a favour, you cannot deny (Nevena).

It may be true that Nevena felt as though she did not have a choice, as her actions seemed to be maneuvered by the plans of those in power. However, a lack of agency was essential in distinguishing her actions from the authentic criminals.

As such, the participant appeared to creatively construct group categories that enabled her to distance herself from the corrupt and discredited; in its longitudinal perspective, the story can be seen as a possible response to any alleged association with those groups that expanded their wartime illicit engagements after the war. As such, Nevena's story may concern maintaining a non-offending identity through distinguishing herself from a negative other.

Additionally, Nevena's story is about a knowledgeable narrator (being well known for her involvement in the black market), with the subculture of black market becoming the most important resource of knowledge, while simultaneously she distinguishes herself from the 'real' criminals and from attributes that embody such subculture (i.e. autonomy – could not deny doing what they asked for).

Some stories involve a more tensional interaction. Nevena narrated her experience in escaping from the police (men) while crossing the boarders between Serbia and Bosnia through the river: 'I cannot describe the sound of bullets while they are falling into the water' (Nevena). Although the participant appears to be passive throughout the incident, her ability to escape direct interaction with powerful men and protect herself reveals some level of agency.

Such tensions are often illustrated in Darja's story to assist her husband to hide from the Croatian authorities and at a later stage to find him. Her story is highly interconnected with her husband's paramilitary involvement:

When I came back from Bosnia, my Croatian neighbour told me that Croatians came to look for my husband (in the past he was investigated by Croatian policemen about Serbs' mobilisation). At 5am we started our journey to the Serbian side of Croatia where some relatives lived. We were afraid of being seen. We took a back with his clothes and left throughout the night. The worst feeling was when we entered the vast areas of woods and did not know whether they were controlled by Croatians. We also had to watch for mines. Are we going to enter into some kind of trap? You can see the men, but you don't know whether they are Serbians. You look at each other and you don't know – you try to figure out who they are [...] Then I went back to Bosnia but my husband stayed in the Serbian populated village. Croats attacked that village a few days later. My mother

was in that village and she told me that she had not seen my husband in the village (where men used to gather) (Darja).

Darja highlighted how important it was for her to develop a network of communication with other women from the village in keeping informed while away from her home, especially when her husband was hiding. She explained her behaviour as irrational, encouraging her husband to stay in that area and being at risk during the 'Croatian military action against Krajina':

> My husband came to Bosnia and stayed for 2 months. Then we came back to Krajina [...] Krajina was now Serbian. We had to make it our home, but nothing was working. The UN was there and we felt safe. We collected things from burned houses and we made our house [...] My husband came home one night and said that we had to leave. I told my husband to stay there and protect the place. I told my brother to do the same. What's going to happen when we return tomorrow and they tell us that you left with your wife? We will be ashamed to say that you didn't fight for our home (Darja).

From a longitudinal perspective, Darja felt responsible for putting her husband into risk. She finished her story with a highly agentic story of searching for her husband:

> May 2nd, I was waiting to hear news about my husband. I heard he was murdered, I didn't know. I was scared, I had to go. (There were) people killed in streets. I decided to go to the border between Bosnia and Serbia where it was dangerous to find my husband. Some Serbs brought even dead people there [...] Everything changed coming to Serbia. I had to start from zero for the third time in my life [...] Serbia did not want to accept all refugees. We were controlled by the police to go only to one place. We decided to escape because we didn't want to go to that dangerous area. We escaped to south of Serbia...we had been to a refugee centre for 2-3 months just to get the official papers (Darja).

The participants found themselves in Serbia at some stage of the war or after the conflicts. Darja still lives in Serbia often with mixed feelings about her new home. Nevena has tried to build her future outside former Yugoslavia in an attempt to find 'peace', escaping past legacies. However, the participants' stories have not always been seen as complete. Unlike to stories of criminality that encompass the redemption script of returning to the 'true' self that engages in 'making good' (Maruna, 2001:87), women who participated in illicit wartime activities often found it difficult to adjust to the post-war changes, although they appear to disengage themselves from offending. Such challenges are highlighted in Nevena's story:

> We were from the first families to return back to the village. There was nothing there [...] as more neighbours were returning back to their homes, I wasn't feeling better (Nevena).

This may be attributed to the fact that conflict had given some opportunities that Nevena may have felt that she lost after the war. As Simic notes, 'besides suffering, the conflict can trigger enormous strength and agency in women that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to exercise because of the patriarchal structures in their societies' (2005: 1). The post-war society may have also treated women's wartime illicit actions harsher, as they had challenged traditional roles; they were expected to take care of their younger siblings or other family members (Corley et al., 1989; Musemwa, 1995). Such difficulties are well demonstrated in Nevena's story: 'The better the things were getting in Srebrenica, the harder it was for me [...] While things were calming down, I was getting worse. I had nothing to do [...] No bullets and bombs are falling, but psychologically I cannot calm down, become a normal human being' (Nevena).

Nevena's story of shifting from criminality to legality is far from an internalised process of desistence from offending; it does not involve choice to disengage from illicit activities; and the transformation does not involve a moral point – as we often note in narratives that are largely shaped by institutional strategies. What constitutes the turning point to a different self in Nevena's story

is mastering her actions against those post-war developments that limited her agency. And changing communities is at the heart of such transformation.

3. Eliciting stories in familial environments

The formal procedures of this research include CSOs in Belgrade, initially contacted as potential gatekeepers (Mertens and Ginsberg, 2008). As victim-oriented in their majority, they inclined to relegate to the Victimology Centre, which merely deals with experiences in detention, rape or refugee camps. As such, certain experiences appear to have been prioritised over others (see Franke, 2005; Skjelsbæk, 2006; Bjorkdahl & Selimovic, 2013).

The role of institutional and organisational processes in shaping narratives is well documented in narrative criminological theory literature (see chapter 2). But what about those situational contexts of renegotiating stories from a long-term perspective within familial environments? Indeed, the participants expressed their wish to be interviewed in their houses; Darja asked to have her son as her interpreter; both Nevena and Darja however, mentioned that many of their stories were yet unknown to their family.

3.1.   Renegotiating narratives in the private: Darja's story

Narrating stories in private often sparked conversations among family members – some listening the stories for the first time and engaging in them. For the participants, this interaction may have functioned as an opportunity to speak about distant (time period) or distancing (narrating the unusual or proscribed) (Lee, 1993) stories that are difficult to communicate or 'digest'; the right space and time to speak about matters which are not supposed to be told. The narratives have been shaped within the turmoil framework of conflict, crime, violence, migration, or/and divorce; potential stigmatisation if returning back to the pre-war communities; future changes in their immigration status; concerns about a prevalent culture of impunity; and beliefs that punishment is merely directed towards small and medium level offenders rather than the 'real' criminals (see Brady, 2012; Nevena)

Narrating her stories in the presence of her son and daughter (both in their mid-twenties), Darja explained her actions as tolerable behaviour. To do so, she presented a story that appeals to higher loyalties. According to this, Darja

acted in a way that repudiates conventional norms in an attempt to support her family. With her husband hiding from the Croatian authorities and being unable to provide for the family, her story of illegality became one of beliefs and attitudes towards family or what Sykes and Matza (1957) explain as internal social controls. In this way, Darja lessens the importance of conventional behaviour in favour of more pressing deviant norms that demonstrate loyalty to the family. By appealing to family, Darja also reveals some commitment to conventional values, despite breaking the law. Such commitment to conventional norms is expressed through her social obligations to her family. Loyalty to the family is considered to be distant from the criminal lifestyle (see Hochstetler, 2010).

Partial commitment to the social norms is also apparent in her stories of being acted upon rather than acting within illicit surroundings. Indeed, Darja's actions appear to be rather driven by external forces, such as poverty, largely drawing from conventional disadvantaged discourses. Additionally, although Darja refers to actions of theft (petrol station), she does not mention the victims or the possible distress caused. By recognising her actions as illegal but not hurtful, Darja speaks out about her deviance without diverging from vulnerability and victimisation discourses.

Darja also engaged in a story of 'apology' when describing her wartime behaviour toward her husband. Her narrative served as an account of her attitude that aligned with the wartime legacies, the social norms of a wartime society, which, nonetheless, caused suffering to the family. As such, Darja succeeded in presenting her story in a way that aligns with the subculture of the Yugoslav breakup so that her attitude of pressurising and bullying her husband to join paramilitary groups appears regretful, but also redeemable. It is within these confines of what is normative within wartime that Darja maintains her conventional identity while narrating stories of deviance.

4. Unravelling action and reflection narratives

Brookman (2015), in her work '*The shifting narratives of violent offenders',* offers an analysis of offenders' stories that is based on identifying two distinct sections of their stories: narratives pertaining to the actual enactment of offending and narratives that entail explanations of such acts as well as wider narratives of the self. More particularly, Brookman explains how offenders construct themselves in

ways that are not always compatible with how they describe certain acts of offending due to stigma associated with their offending and the need for a 'moral transformation' in their stories. As such, she attempts to explore the importance of distinguishing action and reflection narratives in understanding the production of narrative.

Albeit this study recognises the blurred distinction between action and reflection narratives, it draws on Brookman's work to identify stories about enacting illicit activities and narrative constructions of the self that involve accounts beyond the offending act. It also attempts to do so for different from Brookman reasons; it seeks to explore how action and reflection narratives play in the analysis of narrative creativity.

4.1.   Beyond narratives of illicit acts: Nevena's story

As Nevena's example illustrates, her stories (descriptions) of offending acts have not necessarily embraced an offending image of themselves. However, a closer reading of Nevena's story reveals those tensions in her account. Nevena's story largely draws on criminogenic forces in her family and broader environment (i.e. her father introduced her to illicit activities, a lack of job opportunities in formal economy, wartime poverty):

> I indeed did not want to risk (my life). It may be my part of my personality to risk to a certain extent, but my family could not survive by any other means (Nevena).

Such external circumstances and a post-war life, which is free from illicit activities, illustrate that Nevena is not an authentic offender. Yet, Nevena depicts a self, which is hardly adjusted to post-war changes:

> We were from the first families to return back to the village. There was nothing there [...] as more neighbours were returning back to their homes, I wasn't feeling better. The better the things were getting in Srebrenica, the harder it was for me [...] While things were calming down, I was getting worse. I had nothing to do [...] No bullets and bombs are falling, but

psychologically I cannot calm down, become a normal human being
(Nevena).

Such narrative diverges from her narrative of interacting in the black market – a narrative that pertains to the illicit act. And it undoubtedly contrasts the excitement and thrill prevailed in her narrative of enacting illicit activities:

> The borders were closed. You couldn't go anywhere. I had to find a way to get out and back in (the country). The border between Serbia and Bosnia was a river. On Serbia's side there was the Serbian army and you couldn't enter (the country). I paid a policeman I knew and he used to take me from Bosnia to Serbia by boat during the night […] In Serbia, I used to go by bus to the boarders with Hungary to buy 200/300 litres of benzene, some coffee, sugar and those candles for the church […] I used to go back over and over again until one night that they (soldiers) had realised that something was going on there […] When in Bosnian waters, I heart a voice: Stop, I will shoot. How were we supposed to stop? They would shoot at us in any case – either we stop or continue. And I had 300/400 litres of benzene on the boat and I knew that they would explode it […] We switched off the boat's engine and tried with oars to reach the edge of the river. And they saw us; they switched on the big lantern and they saw us […] In some way we managed to reach the edge … (Nevena).

Nevena's story of engaging in activities in the black market shows the thrill of her transgression. However, it also depicts a self that is risky, expanding contact networks (i.e. men in authorities – here policeman) and being committed to illicit activities for personal profit:

> I used to sell benzene from mouth to mouth, coffee – I couldn't sell it much more expensive because I risked my life, but I also wanted to profit (Nevena).

This is further illustrated in her story of selling gold:

At that moment I was also working for gold […] Back then you try to be clever, artful – say that as you prefer. A dunce fell of the wall and in the hole I hided the gold and I covered it with a calendar. Policemen came into our house […] Six people, six policemen! They searched (for gold), they moved everything and said that they did not find (anything) […] They knew that I had gold possessions but they couldn't prove it. Not even my dad knew that (Nevena).

Here Nevena depicts a self that combines ploy and smartness, coming in tension with disadvantage discourses about war. Such craftiness was often explained with excitement:

I sold bullets as well. I used to ski and I had a ski costume. I removed the cotton off the costume in certain parts – here, here and here (she shows with her hands) and put 15 pieces (bullets) (Nevena).

Nevena appears to move from conventional discourses about the war (i.e. external circumstances, disadvantaged positions) to subcultural values associated with smartness and excitement. Indeed, the distinction in some cases is extremely fragile, such as the example of self-assertion involved in discourses of subculture and that from conventional commitment to hard work and responsibility for the family. Such contrasting discourses require little effort to compromise in Nevena's narratives of illicit acts.

However, this is not the case in her narratives of the self. Indeed, while Nevena in her stories of offending acts has little hesitation to portray herself as a smart law-breaker who profits from her activities, nonetheless in her narratives of the self she appears to place more effort into distinguishing herself from authentic (professional and on-going) offenders – those who really profited from illicit activities during the war (see above). Her stories of the self are characterised by attempts to construct a non-offending identity and as such, by more work to depict a non-harmful (to other people and society) image.

5.   Concluding remarks

The fieldwork in Serbia took place during the marking of bombing Kosovo, with media analysing the Crimea crisis - often drawing parallels between Crimea and Kosovo. Kosovo remains an emotional symbol to Serbs as the cradle of Serbdom (Clark, 2008). Persistent perceptions that Serbia's bad economic situation is partly caused by wartime international sanctions, assumptions that Serbia inevitably found itself involved in wartime circumstances and was victimised by the conflicts, perceived injustice against Serbs by the international community, historical 'injustices' against Christian Orthodox populations in the Ottoman Empire and Serbs in the former Yugoslavia, and matters of EU integration have further emotionalised the narrative process, even though the stories were told in the private (interviews in Cyprus & Serbia, 2013/4). Individual stories of criminality are, thus, not distinct from those cultural circumstances and ideologies that keep wartime legacies alive.

Stories of criminality draw merely on the subculture of black market, but also on canonical narratives that justify such engagements, such as wartime hardships, as well as the current position of the participants; leaving their countries when they were adolescents or during situations that 'were not normal'. Nevena still swings between returning back or trying to build a life outside the former Yugoslavia; Darjia has already acquired a citizenship or permanent residency in another country and does not wish to return back, still living in the region of the former Yugoslavia, but she is distant from her pre-war community.

As the chapter shows, Darja's illicit activities are presented as a struggle to support family. Indeed, family has been central in Darja's stories, ensuring a sense of commitment to her son and daughter who were listening to her stories. This might have made it easier for Darja to speak about many of her then silent stories. Such focus has also been instrumental in combining cultural and subcultural norms, maintaining a certain self-image, and rationalising her actions. Therefore, family becomes the 'reputable world' (Hochstetler, 2010: 511), from which Darja draws to neutralise the subcultural and ultimately craft her self-narrative.

Indeed, in her narrative Darja presents those traits that characterise subculture, such as risk-taking. However, Darja succeeds in presenting this attitude as a result of situational demand rather than as inherent character traits.

This might be true, as Darja did not continue participation in such activities after the conflicts ended, but she does not make any connection between social circumstances and those possible individual characteristics (i.e. youth, disregard of consequences) that attribute a more personal nature to her offending behaviour.

The example of Srebrenica

Bjorkdahl and Selimovic have pointed to 'spaces for agency that may be hidden, ignored or misrepresented' (2013: 4), highlighting the role of women's experiences in accessing such spaces. Mothers of Srebrenica are an illustrative example of moving beyond public stories associated with men. As Simic puts it:

> 'Mothers of Srebrenica' is the leading organiser for events that mark the anniversary of the genocide each year in Srebrenica and BH; it continues to keep memories of the genocide alive … (2011: 2).

However, the story of wartime Srebrenica remains one of women's massive displacement and men's killings (see Simic, 2005; 2009). As such, Nevena's story of being engaged in efforts to bury or relocate bodies of victims from the massacre in an attempt to hide such atrocities is far from fitting women's canonical narrative of expulsion. In her story, Nevena presented herself as part of this effort, albeit with a secondary role in it; she appeared to recognise that she was part of a web of silence, as she affirmed that she had not yet spoken about certain experiences. The story of a woman assisting those who buried the bodies of the massacred Muslim men is unquestionably unconventional with the narrative of women of Srebrenica.

Nevena's story of offending is not only about what she did, but also about who she is; it is a narrative construction of the self and as such it expands beyond action narratives. Nevena's action and reflection narratives seem to draw on conventional and subcultural discourses. However, as this chapter has illustrated they are distinct in many ways, making her narrative creative.

Nevena's action narratives draw upon normative systems: disadvantage discourses are used to explain how she was introduced to illicit networks and activities, while subcultural systems pertain to excitement and responsibility in

the black market. However, her reflection narrative was more complex. Similarly to her action narratives, conventional norms centred upon disadvantage discourses. But such discourses were rather used to rationalise (or neutralise) offending acts in an attempt to depict a non-offending image – the 'true' (pre-war) self.

Although Nevena used subcultural discourses of smartness and often toughness, she largely remained committed to conventional norms while constructing the narrative self through vulnerability discourses; she appeared victimised by powerful men in her encounters in the black market. And despite drawing on wartime legacies to justify her illicit actions, Nevena yet attempts to exempt herself from corrupt actions that rest on such legacies. For example, her action story regarding illegal possessions of gold centres upon agency in offending, while her broader narrative of the self attempts to distinguish the real corrupt and law breaker – the (male) police through victimisation discourses (i.e. law is used for the benefit of powerful). It is in these extensions from action to wider reflection narratives, that Nevena's narrative creativity can be found.

This chapter has examined aspects of women's experiences of the Yugoslav breakup, centring upon their situated positions within cultural and subcultural discourses and their associated interactions, attributes and values, and strategies that have been employed to perform a (gendered) self. Next, a discussion chapter will draw on this chapter to address the research questions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

1. Introduction

As the project is about women's wartime experiences within illicit environments during the Yugoslav breakup, it has centred upon those stories that the participants had chosen to narrate as part of their experiences in wartime offending and self-narrative construction.

The thesis is a criminological study on women's engagement in illicit wartime surrounding, focusing on stories where women usually appear to have little agency. It primarily explores women's agency in its discursive form – the creative ways women employ gender and the ways the latter shapes their stories – merging the conventional and the subcultural, gender norms and deviance, and the wartime with the post-war circumstances/legacies within stories of deviance.

The study recognises that elements of agency exist in all storytelling processes. However, stories that do not derive from certain institutionalised settings may present elements of creativity that may not have been evident in narratives that have largely been shaped by organisational strategies, as many women have not been convicted or labelled as offenders, associated to stigmatised and shameful behaviour, or/and necessarily in need to conform to certain normative images.

Indeed, recent studies in narrative criminology have turned their analytical lenses to women's stories of criminality, pointing out that women cannot accomplish (feminine) gender and relate to their deviant roles as long as offending is solely seen as an act of masculinity (see Fleetwood, 2015; Miller et al. 2015). Nonetheless, the studies focus on women's stories that come from institutionalised settings, such as prisons and rehabilitation programmes, and as such their stories largely draw on institutional policies and their promoted narratives. This is not to be seen as problematic, since all narratives draw upon existing structures and cultural repertoires. However, there are women left outside these institutions who may have different stories to tell.

As the project identifies that most of women's stories of deviance in Balkan (Yugoslav case) and narrative criminology come from certain institutionalised settings, and acknowledges a lack of attention to women's agency that derives

from existing perspectives of women's deviance - namely material and inequality factors, and doing gender approaches – it seeks to explore the ways in which women's stories of deviance are shaped by gender, thus treating women's stories as gender performances.

Balkan criminology has yet to apply a narrative approach to women's offending experiences. It has only employed a narrative approach to women's stories of wartime sexual abuse and victimisation, exploring the discursive patterns that construct the category of victim, drawing thus on women who merely identify themselves as victims (Skjelsbæk, 2006; Basic, 2015a; b; c). This project, therefore, attempts to address its research questions through a narrative approach that enables understandings on the ways gender plays into women's construction of a self-narrative of deviance and which furthers our insights into women's deviance.

2. Addressing the Research Questions

As the project aims to explore the ways in which gender and wartime/post-war circumstances shape women's stories of deviance in an attempt to further understandings of women's relationship to crime, narrative as a gendered performance lies at its core.

Agency is understood through enabling women to perform a self within narratives of wartime criminality. As this process requires accomplishment of a conventional (feminine and non-deviant) self within stories that are considered to challenge women's conventionality, agency is sought in the ways women do gender in narratives of deviance, escaping stories of offending as merely an act of masculinity, but also stories that fully conform into their gender norms as encouraged by institutional settings.

Such approach is essential when furthering understandings of women's criminality. As deviance is considered to be an enactment of masculinity, the ways women do gender in their stories can tell us about their relationships to crime and thus about women's deviant behaviour and profiles per se. This section directly confronts all of the proposed research questions:

- **What elements of creativity can be found in the construction of women's stories that draw on archetypes?**

- o **How do stories of enacting offending interplay with stories of reflection?**

Nevena's stories of action and reflection draw on Brookman's work about the impact of different methodologies on the kinds of narratives retrieved. Yet, while the project recognises that action and reflection narratives are distinct (2015: 210), it seeks narrative creativity in their interconnectedness. Nevena's action narratives appear relatively simple; they describe Nevena's actions in wartime illicit surroundings, but they fail to give a more holistic expression of the experiential nature of her actions.

Indeed, Nevena has not been asked to describe her wartime experiences, but to openly speak about such experiences. Nevena was rather asked to recall her wartime life from a long-term perspective, and she did so by creatively expanding action narratives into a narrative of the self rather than distinguishing them. Where disadvantaged discourses, for example, played a role in elevating subcultural values (i.e. toughness and autonomy are associated with survival) in her action narratives, the same discourses drew on conventional contexts (or at least conventional in the wartime context) to construct the narrative self (i.e. vulnerability due to a lack of control over life). Her creativity can thus be found in those links between the action and reflection narratives where similar discourses are used for different purposes and outcomes within her narrative of experiencing the Yugoslav breakup, and enable distinguishing between what she did and who she was (not)– and especially who she is.

- o **How are stories embedded in culture negotiated in the private?**

Miller et al. (2015) point to the discourse of the 'good mother' as socially acceptable for women offenders. Similarly, Fleetwood (2015) mentions that one way is to emphasise collective needs and the significance of others in women's narratives. Indeed, Nevena and Darja underline such collective responsibility in the context of the war - particularly Darja, who successfully used the conventional norm of motherhood in a way that makes her stories acceptable within familial

(post-war) environments. She explained her wartime bullying and deviant behaviour through cultural scripts of the good mother who is committed to self-sacrifice to support family (see Miller et al., 2015). In this way, Darja attempted to maintain the image of a good mother.

Indeed, as Darja's offending experiences violate normative gender expectations for women, her stories can be seen as an effort to keep her image within the normative standards of motherhood. And although her bullying behaviour toward her husband would not need further explanation within cultural narratives that still hold some kind of wartime legacies and belligerent attitudes, for instance images of brave women encouraging men to join the army or intimidating them when refusing to fight in order to boost the war morale (Women in Black, 2013: 80), family as the very setting of Darja's story telling might have shaped a narrative that enabled and even called for reflections on such actions. Elements of creativity can be found in the use of the conventional value of motherhood to perform a self within her story of deviance, but also to resist stories embedded in canonical narratives and yet possibly unacceptable (or unfavourable) within the boundaries of the private.

- **How do women narrate wartime offending (black market, smuggling) as women?**

  o **What kinds of individual and canonical stories (and their associated values) emerge from women's narratives of wartime offending?**

Conventional stories of vulnerability and disadvantage (Anastasijevic, 2006; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2009; Women in Black, 2013) - economic hardship, becoming the sole provider of the house or supporting the family - have been common in women's storied experiences in the black market. However, more emphasis is rather given to those conventional stories that normalise black market practices due to cultural symbolisms. During the conflicts, selling and buying guns was linked to ethnic survival and pride. As this activity became a duty (Arsovska, 2014), stories of bullet dealing often draw from conventional discourses developed in highly militaristic environments. Arsovska explores the gung culture

in former Yugoslavia within the collective framework of a country, which legitimised army through images of people's struggle for freedom (against fascism) and self-sufficiency. The breakup preserved such legitimisation through insecurity and mistrust between ethnic groups, but also to state institutions, as they proved unable to provide order. It is within this context that Arsovska analyses the Balkan gung culture and guns' symbolic meanings of power and protection.

Nevena's story of selling bullets in the black market is not one that pressurises for a particular explanation, contrary to, for example, her story of indirect involvement in burying dead bodies; it was rather told within the broader context of the popular culture of the black market (especially in the embargoed area of Sprska). However, it is unique as it draws from a conventional narrative of nation building (see Hadjinjak, 1999; Doborsek, 2008; Kesetovic et al., 2009), while her transactions in the black market settings were sometimes with men of the 'opposite' ethnic group.

In this way, Nevena uses broader stories of collective interest (i.e. 'guns were the only thing they cared about in Bosnia' or supporting the community - ''helped' someone because he had seven kids and he couldn't feed them') to often describe stories of simple market transactions grounded in personal interests in an attempt to standardise and often dismiss the illegal, immoral or non-conventional, especially in actions that might be seen as 'unpatriotic'.

In her encounters selling guns to a Muslim, Nevena focused on her vulnerability rather than the fact that she traded with the 'enemy'. Such vulnerability discourses may have served to depict a conventional self (different from subcultural attributes), but it may have also well served to match with the conventional discourses of wartime collective (Bosnian-Serb) victimisation. It may also be that Nevena's experience emanating from her distinct social position as a woman generates vulnerability.

In another case, Nevena explained her decision to hide illegal possessions from the authorities drawing on a cultural and subcultural narrative of distrust in authorities. She therefore combines a conventional narrative of distrust to authorities – 'an outcome of a difficult history that embraced communist values and dislike of state authorities' (Arsovska, 2014; 183) and a subcultural narrative

– shared among lawbreakers – of corrupted local authorities who are the main profiteers – a story that enables a more conventional (victimised) self.

Nevena and Darja have constructed a narrative self that has not been fully integrated into the subculture of the black market; involvement was temporary and different from that of the 'authentic' criminals, with subcultural attributes having limited effect in their stories of the self. Arsovska (2014) explains that building a criminal identity requires sharing subcultural values and being subjected to the interests of the criminal group – although there are not always and necessarily clear norms and rules to follow. Nevena and Darja do not appear to be part of a group, although they might have been at the bottom of a criminal network. In any case, their actions can hardly be defined as part of a sophisticated group's operation and their stories often much differ from the subcultural masculine model.

In some cases, however, Nevena and Darja, appear to immerse themselves in the illicit world of possibilities. They do this by delving into the seductiveness of offending without comprehensively embracing the masculine criminal identity; loyalty to a particular criminal group and attempts to seek respect, which are traditional and subcultural norms in the Balkans, are almost absent in Nevena's and Darja's stories; nor are the stories of illegality associated to matters of honour and valour (see Arsovska, 2014); or their actions narrated drawing on the themes of honour and respect. Darja draws on discourses that make wartime offending inevitable (i.e. disadvantaged discourses, motherhood), yet her actions only become meaningful when constructing the narrated (real) self (i.e. past as a lesson, similarly to stories from institutional settings).

Thus, Nevena's and Darja's stories may not have challenged structural narrative, but they have largely worked out those traditional cultures that generated subcultural ideas in the Balkans in an attempt to master an individual narrative of the Yugoslav breakup, shrinking the gap between 'reality' and discourse (see Fleetwood, 2015) as their 'reality' is deployed in its discursive nature – in those workouts of narrative construction.

- o **What are the interactions narrated by women in the wartime illicit settings of black market and smuggling?**

Nevena's and Darja's stories elevate wartime offending as central in their experiences as women survivors of the breakup; they are both accomplice of a deviant world and alone in the mercy of the 'authentic criminals'. In their narratives, they step out of their comfort zone, undertaking responsibilities that expand beyond gender expectations. Particularly, Nevena enthusiastically emphasised her ability to hide and smuggle bullets, while Darja stressed her experience of repeating stealing in the petrol station.

However, Darja does not consider her repeated actions as a sophisticated, well-planned and organised activity. And Nevena, although showing some sort of professionalism in smuggling bullets, her experiences rather draw on excitement, trouble and tests of autonomy. Indeed, their experiences reveal a fragile relationship between offending and vulnerability. Nevena for instance, narrated stories of subculture without necessarily embracing deviant attributes. In some of her stories she appears to be far from tough and independent, but rather fearful; she does not seem confident or respectful; and she is not authentically criminal.

Yet, her experience involves some sort of responsibility in illicit settings. She successfully operates in highly masculinised environments, actively experiencing the disorderly settings of the black market, without necessarily identifying herself with such contexts or even being an autonomous part of such processes (i.e. under her father's auspices). Her experiences and interactions swing between lacking control over life and acting independently for her own interests. She is in the mercy of external forces - economic hardships and people, but despite such interaction (i.e. with men in the local authorities, policemen), a kind of vulnerability interplays with her ability to delude them. This complexity in Nevena's and Darja's stories builds to Fleetwood's idea of furthering understandings of deviant identities and performances that better fit into women's experiences, incorporating more creatively employed aspects of gender and other identities and roles for women.

Additionally, Nevena and Darja do not only refer to who they are (or do), but also about what they are not (see Ugelvik, 2015). For instance, they pointed out how they are *not* 'authentic criminals', creatively drawing on group categories that enable them to maintain conventionality in their stories. Their stories also inform discourses on women's profiles within wartime illicit networks in ways that explore possibilities for more complex experiences and interactions. An

illustrative example is the Srebrenica massacre, which has been central in the narrative of the Yugoslav breakup. Although women's stories have largely influenced the narrative, they remain absent from the action of the massacre. Nevena's story has however provided a more engaging and direct experience of the massacre. Her account of complicity (albeit not a perpetrator) as a gendered performance has the potential of reshaping the narrative of Srebrenica, offering insights into women's different roles in the conflict.

3.   Conclusions

This chapter has sought to explore women's wartime accounts as gendered performances, looking at the ways in which women's narratives of deviance are shaped by their gender and their unique wartime and post-war circumstances that enabled them to construct such stories outside institutionalised settings and agendas. The chapter discussed the research findings, centring around the two main research questions about elements of creativity in stories where women usually show little agency and the ways women perform their conventional feminine selves in stories where are often associated with maleness. The chapter has also explored such gendered performances from a longitudinal angle, as women's stories do 'not stay the same over time and in different circumstances of telling' (O'Connor, 2015: 174). Such discussion brings the project to its last, concluding chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

1. Introduction

This research project springs from two interviews with women of the former Yugoslav communities in Cyprus and Serbia. It is combined with an interest of how gender is discursively employed in women's narratives about wartime offending, elevating elements of creativity in stories of considerable little agency in the existing literature, particularly women's peripheral positions of the grey economy, or stories that are often constrained within the institutional frameworks. Story telling was analysed in line with its role in enabling women to construct a self-narrative of the Yugoslav breakup as a gendered performance.

The narrators have lived experiences and by reiterating the stories over the years, they may add different or new perspectives, modify the accounts (Shaw, 2003), or even break silences influencing narrative and Balkan criminological inquiry. Women's stories of wartime offending are not only about women's experiences of intimate engagements with wartime illicit environments, but also about the ways the gender variable works in women's stories of deviance.

Chapter 1 explored those integral approaches that link the regional (Balkans) and the universal (European). Such approaches highlight the role of Balkans in cross-border crime within Europe, but also regional criminogenic particularities. The chapter showed that women's stories of deviance remain of little agency and merely within the regional remain. However, in its overview section, the chapter has suggested that the stories can bring Balkan criminology into the international criminological debate if pursued through narrative criminology.

Chapter 2 brought together insights from Presser and Sandberg in order to explore criminological approaches to narrative. It furthered by drawing on the works of Fleetwood (2015) and Miller at al (2015) to highlight the importance of incorporating women's stories into narrative criminology, and ultimately sought to fit Balkan criminology into narrative criminology inquiry – stressing the importance of stories that traditionally lack attention to women's agency within illicit wartime environments (as they do not treat such narratives as gendered

performances) and/or which tend to be studied within institutional settings, for the purposes of the study.

Chapter 3 outlined the methodological procedure of the study: research design, interviewing sample and setting, and the research process of data collection and analysis of women's accounts as gender performances. Chapter 4 turned its analytical lenses to women's narratives of wartime offending, centring on the kind of discourses used and their associated attributes, interactions and gendered strategies.

It illustrated that renegotiating stories in private can differ from the public or institutionalised settings, but equally complex, especially where stories have been untold for years. For example, although an absence of the victim in Darja's narrative refers to Youngs' and Canter's survivor role - prevalent in the redemption script we often see in institutionalised narratives, Darja did not describe any internalised processes of desistance (her absence of offending *happened* when she moved out of Krajina), and as such, the story differs from narratives that come from institutional settings.

Although the narrators were expected to draw on cultural disadvantage and vulnerability discourses, the chapter also noted that Nevena and Darja also spoke about wartime regional constraints that enhanced their positions as women in such environments (i.e. restrictions in movement increased Nevena's cross country activities in the black market).

Chapter 5 discussed the research findings by addressing the main research questions. It pointed to elements of creativity when using similar cultural discourses to achieve different outcomes in action and reflection stories, to the ways conventional norms have applied within stories of deviance, to the role of wartime and cultural legitimacies, such as mainstream black market perceptions and gung culture, in performing a conventional self, to how 'cultural scripts of femininity' (Fleetwood, 2015: 61) work in women's stories of deviance, and to the fashion women immersed their feminine, non-deviant self in the illicit world of possibilities (and its hierarchies and interactions), revealing a fragile relationship between offending and vulnerability.

The last chapter will now summarise the project, outline its conclusions and explain where it stands different from previous studies. Lastly, it will suggest

further areas of research, which may further increase our understandings of women's relationship to crime and of their deviant profiles.

2.   Thesis conclusions

This project has studied the particular cultural contexts and discourses upon which the narrators have drawn to perform themselves – how women merged cultural and subcultural narrative repertoires, what discourses they have brought up and their associated values, how they connected action and reflection narratives and their subsequent multiple selves, what interactions, relations and hierarchies they narrated and how they dealt with them, how they (re) negotiated their positions within long-term shifting post-war environments (especially when private settings may require a different story from the existing cultural/institutional discourse), and how they employed their deviant roles and coping strategies within their stories in order to construct a self-narrative that enables them to accomplish their gendered identity.

The thesis concludes that elements of agency can be found in stories with considerably limited agency when analysed from the material factors or doing gender perspective. Such agency lies within the ability of women to creatively use similar discourses for different purposes and outcomes when furthering their action story into a reflection narrative. For instance, in her action story, Nevena made use of disadvantaged and vulnerable positions (i.e. being coerced to engage in illicit activities) in an attempt to stress her ability to cope with such coercion and adjust to the extraordinary wartime conditions that demanded particular subcultural traits, such as toughness and risk-taking, to survive. The same discourse had been used in her broader reflection narrative, however, to highlight her vulnerability due to her dependence on external circumstances.

It is evident that her subcultural traits in her action story do not derive from masculine discourses of criminality, where offending is an act of demonstrating masculinity (i.e. hegemony, independence), but from disadvantage and vulnerability discourses which fit into her wider reflection narrative and ultimately enable her to construct a feminine, non-deviant self without nonetheless, downplaying her offending activity. This complex interaction between the conventional and subcultural is something that stories, which derive

from institutional settings fail to illustrate, as conformity into conventional norms becomes their priority.

Similarly, Darja had drawn upon disadvantage and cultural discourses (unemployed husband, motherhood - family caring and survival) without overlooking her ability to risk-taking in order to grasp opportunities in environments where, according to her, it was difficult for a woman – a narrative that would have largely been discouraged in institutional settings.

The private environment has given Darja the opportunity to challenge parts of the cultural discourse she had drawn upon – something that she might not have felt obliged to do if her story was told in the public, for instance in reconciliation programmes. Darja, as the family's wartime breadwinner – merely due to her illicit activities – had often bullied her husband and pressurised him to join the army. Her narrative fits into the public discourse of brave women intimating men to do their 'duty' and broader discourses of state nationalism.

However, in the private settings, Darja may have felt the need to re-evaluate her story due to the perceived suffering she caused to her family (she forced her husband who was wanted by the Croatian authorities to stay in Krajina and fight). But, despite challenging part of the mainstream discourse, her narrative remains highly conventional, one of Darja being in a disadvantaged position, where the need for survival had led her to deviance; committed to the feminine trait of motherhood, where she performs a devoted mother, as she provided for her family; and victimised by her husband's actions due to his paramilitary action and inability to provide for the family. Therefore, Darja succeeds to maintain a feminine, non-deviant identity in spite of her bullying and offending activity.

Similarly to existing literature, the project illustrates that women narrate offending in a fashion that enables them to accomplish their gender (female, non-deviant) and make sense of their actions. However, it differs from existing studies that draw on stories largely influenced by institutional agendas in terms of women's ability of merging gender norms of femininity and subcultural masculine values when constructing a feminine, non-deviant self. For example, Nevena has successfully combined cultural discourses of disadvantage and vulnerability (i.e. survival, being forced to join illicit activities by her father, lack of control over her life) with subcultural values of excitement, smartness and risk

taking. Particularly, Nevena spoke about being able to escape from and deceive the police; she showed excitement when she described how she smuggled bullets successfully and furthered involvement in illicit activities without her father's acknowledgment.

Such attributes are discouraged in women's stories that come from institutional settings, as they are associated with feelings of shame and do not fit into a script of a conformed to feminine norms, non-deviant self. This is not to say that Nevena's story did not support such an identity, yet her narrative shows a more complex self that combines and indeed enjoys a spectrum of attitudes and behaviours. If Nevena's story had been told in institutional settings, this complexity in behaviour and experience would have probably been stripped off. An illustrative example is that of Nevena's story about the Srebrenica massacre. Such a story would have probably been silent or overlooked within institutional settings of reconciliation, as the cultural narrative remains one where women have merely been victims of expulsion and displacement or witnesses of killings.

This project also values the potential of narrative criminology to incorporate integral approaches to Balkan criminology. Indeed, Balkan criminology has been externalised into broader criminological debates through studies on terrorism and global security, international criminal justice, and transnational organised crime. Yet, the very particularities of the war, and specifically women's stories of their wartime experiences in illicit environments, remains a research area within the regional boundaries of the Balkans. However, narrative criminology has stretched Balkan criminology into wider criminological forums that point out that attention needs to be given to women's stories in order to further our understandings of criminality.

Indeed, Balkan criminology lacks attention to women's agency in wartime illicit environments, thus obscuring our understandings of their criminal profiles in the region and beyond – as their activities are often transnational. As we can see, Darja and Nevena had not pursued a career in these networks and need not seek respect from their colleagues, as their involvement in these environments was rather temporary. As such, the participants might have been more comfortable to talk about their experiences without the need to present a certain image, as women with careers in these groups often do.

This project has shown the interplay between conventional feminine and subcultural masculine values within women's stories; and the war has provided those discourses where such interplay can fit into women's feminine and non-deviant self-narrative. Cultural discourses of the Yugoslav breakup may show that women's criminal involvement falls into the broader wartime chaotic conditions that favoured the flourishing of black markets, but women's stories have gone beyond that to show how these phenomena had become integral parts of their lifestyles and their selves, how women embraced such opportunities and mastered such upcoming circumstances.

Miller et al. (2015) highlight that 'criminologists have long been interested in the narratives of offenders even though there has been considerable variation in *how* such narratives have been used' (p. 70). However, Fleetwood observes that 'research on women and crime has yet to employ a narrative approach' (2015: 43), essential in bridging the gap between "women of discourse" and "real women" (p. 43). She also notes that 'building on Sykes and Matza's techniques of neutralisation, research in this vein has mainly explored narrative in the construction of deviant or desisting identity' (2015: 42) and that institutional requirements placed on women to narrate certain stories of deviance impose constraints in their narrative construction.

In her article *In search of respectability*, Fleetwood concludes that women sentenced for drug smuggling who participated in her study 'had little to gain by including their offences in their narratives, and much to gain by describing themselves in terms of normative femininity', tending 'to suggest passive subject positions encountered by the institution' (2015: 61).

This project has attempted to use narratives as gendered performances to provide insights into how gender and women's wartime/post-war circumstances shape women's stories of deviance. As the project is concerned with women's stories of wartime offending and their distinct wartime/post-war circumstances, it has enabled extending narrative criminological discourses beyond institutional stories of desistance or recovery. Also, as the project treats experience as discursive, it has sought to bridge the gap between discourse and 'reality', and the importance of doing so in terms of offering women the opportunity to occupy

gender and other identities in their fluid sense and in more flexible and creative manners.

The project diverged from prevalent perspectives within studies on women's wartime experiences, such as the material factors (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2009; Women in Black 2013) and doing gender approaches (Arsovska & Begum, 2014), seeking agency within the complex dynamics of the conventional and the subcultural and the interplay between vulnerability, risk-taking thrill and opportunity as emerging in women's stories of wartime deviance.

Additionally, existing studies on integral approaches in European Criminology have yet to incorporate women's unique wartime experiences of deviance into broader criminological forums. However, Darja's and Nevena's wartime accounts have brought the particular context of Balkan criminology into broader criminological debates, since their stories delve into the very fabric of self-narrative construction.

3.   Further Areas of Research

The study relays the details of the interviewees' stories and by no means does attempt to state that it is representative of all women's experiences in illicit activities at wartime. The project is a work of quality, not quantity; it understands women's engagement in wartime illicit activities and their narrative construction through valuing subjectivity, and as such it cannot quantify. According to O'Connor, 'personal narratives by criminals reveal the lives behind the statistics of other kinds of research. They do not replace quantitative studies' (2015: 199). The project involves narratives that respond to the perceived 'underworld' settings of former Yugoslavia. Such activities have rather been seen as phenomena comprised of social relationships than solely illegal enterprises.

Nikolić-Ristanović (1998) refers to a wartime shadow economy in former Yugoslavia that provided alternative employment and its associated offending activities largely remain non-punishable. The region of former Yugoslavia is one where organised crime groups, may not be necessarily and always as secretive, 'professional' and sophisticated as it has often been argued (see Arsovska, 2014), but often have come to dominate illicit activities within Europe, drawing on regional particularities.

Arms trafficking increase may have been associated with the 1990s conflicts, but there still is a high demand for small arms (and other 'forbidden' goods) in the region (see Arsovska, 2014); and popular perceptions of the shadow economy as beneficial (or even as a means to survival) to the ordinary people are still prevalent. Socio-economic conditions (underdevelopment, unemployment) remain bad (although it is argued that now there is a stronger political commitment to fight organised crime in the region on a local and European scale) and many wartime legacies unchallenged.

As such, the Balkans remains a heaven for criminal groups (Arsovska, 2014); some maintain continuity and evolve, while others dismantle and create new ones with same or similar actors (and/or structures). As the groups are not clearly defined or organised, it would be hard to consider that some of the women's experiences do not match with aspects of current circumstances for women in illicit activities. Darja, and possibly Nevena, may have felt less restricted to speak than women who are currently involved in such activities, and as such their stories should not be neglected.

This is a study about women whose experiences incarnate narrative engagements in Balkan criminology. None of the participants appear to still be active in illegal activities or developed a contact network with illicit groups. An interesting topic for narrative analysis might be found in the examination of narratives of women who have been involved in illicit activities and have maintained contact with certain illicit groups or are still active in them. Such narratives may as well explore the fascination, excitement and risks of continuing crime from wartime to the present.

The project's participants highlighted that they have been involved in illicit activities, but they are not necessarily authentic offenders. They spoke about a very particular side of their lives, which encouraged a criminal environment. The framework of the Yugoslav breakup gave the participants access to the narrative potential of doing illicit acts without the stigma of being an authentic (or on-going) offender. Also, the persistent use of presenting their offending selves in the past tense enabled them to avoid such stigma. However, what can the stories of women who are still involved in such activities (or evolved their wartime activities) be?

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

To provoke storytelling, narrative interviews began with an open-ended question about participants' region/place and what they remember from that. Additionally, this project made merely use of the *how* questions on women's wartime experiences, avoided using the 'why' questions that might be interpreted to encompass judgmental attitudes or obscure the interviewee from becoming an 'information-processing subject' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008: 308). However, questions 3-8 were asked (as well as other questions, such as 'what happened then?) only at the end of the narrator's story and only when the researcher felt that more information on certain experiences was needed.

Question wording was important with words of negative connotation (i.e. illegal) having been avoided. Also, I did not include words such as 'black market' so that respondents were able to provide such information in their own terms.

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Date 15/4/2013   P Kyprianou

                                                 Bartolome House
                                                 Winter Street
                                                 Sheffield
                                                 S3 7ND
                                                 United Kingdom

Dear Sir/Madam

Research's objectives

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me about the 'Women's experiences of the Yugoslav breakup' project, supervised by Professor P Knepper.

Despite the vast research on wartime violence against women and their experiences in conflict, little is known about women's diverse wartime stories narrated in long-term post-war settings. My research will explore women's multiple experiences of the Yugoslav conflicts and how they are narrated with the benefit of distance; their stories, perceptions, and beliefs.

Its aim is to talk with women about their wartime stories, ideally women with a range of experiences, to learn how these relate to current discourses; women who were residents but also women from outside the region who would have worked there.

I would like to ensure that your participation is voluntary and inform about your right to avoid questions that might distress you; your answers will be anonymous and confidential. You also have the right to withdraw at any time without giving reason and to ask for further information on particular questions or the interviewing process.

If you need any further information, please contact me by email at pkyprianou1@sheffield.ac.uk or by phone at +44 (0)7909005707.

Yours sincerely

Voula Kyprianou