

# Victims and offenders in criminological research: Disconnected populations ???



- Introduction: Victims and offenders as subjects of criminological research
- The ideal victim
- Victim-offender overlaps
- Recent findings from ISRD3 data for the Balkan region
- Conclusions

# Introduction: Victims and Offenders as Subjects of Criminological Research

- Starting point:  
High prevalence and incidence of victim experiences of offenders and their impact well documented since the rise of research into rehabilitation of offenders in the 1950/60s
- Similar patterns of involvement in crime, and exposure to crime
  - Non-offenders – occasional offenders – multiple offenders – chronic offenders
  - Non-victims – occasional victims – multiple victims – chronic victims
- Some criminological theories can help to explain both: offending and victimization, e.g.,
  - » interactionist approaches
  - » lifestyle approaches
  - » situative approaches

- Interconnections have been widely neglected
  - Attention to prior victimization as an excuse for individual offenders?
- The purpose is to seek for interdependencies which might help to explain possible impact of prior victimization on offending behaviour (and vice-versa)
  - Traditional theories mostly focus on explanations for deviant behaviour (offending)
  - General theory of crime (Gottfredson/Hirschi) is based on a different approach
    - » Focus on norm-obedient behaviour (non-offending)
    - » Key factors: attachment, commitment, involvement, belief
    - » Victimization may have a – negative – impact on any of these variables

- Potential problematic aspects of victim experience (victimization as a life event)
  - Victimization and its circumstances
    - » Type and circumstances of the victimizing event
    - » Direct/indirect, immediate/long term consequences
  - Dissatisfaction with treatment experienced as a victim, by
    - » police
    - » criminal justice system
    - » social environment (family, friends, etc.)
    - » society
    - » media
    - » etc.
    - » and, not to forget: offender (→ post-crime behaviour)
- Effects on confidence in the legal order, and its binding character

# The Ideal Victim

- Victims are widely perceived to be
  - Vulnerable
  - Weak (e.g., female, young, old, handicapped or sick)
  - Respectable
  - Blameless
    - » confronted with unknown or non-related offender
    - » without any connection to or complicity with crime and the criminal (under-)world
- Socially acknowledged victims vs. "undeserved"/"rejected" victims whose legitimate victim status is denied
- Political activists and the mass media further promote this picture of the "innocent" victim and produce, and constantly re-produce, such simplified, one-dimensional, artificial stereotype



- Victim blaming in the media
  - Sensationalist interests
    - » crime sells
  - Selective reporting about crimes and their victims
  - Focus on stereotypes
  - Implicit or even explicit blaming of victims who do not meet the (rigid) public expectation(s)
    - » suspicious
    - » Stockholm syndrome
    - » Natascha Kampusch (3,096 days held in captivity in Austria)
    - » *Eva Mozes Kor (Auschwitz survivor, victim suffering from Mengele's twin experiments)*

- Victim policies are – explicitly or implicitly – also selective
  - Quite often, victims with personal links to crime are exempt from victim services
  - and/or not eligible to receive financial support from state compensation schemes
  - Exclusion criteria may include
    - » victims with prior criminal records
    - » victims involved in the crime scenario which resulted in the actual victimization
    - » victims directly involved in criminal activities
    - » victims indirectly related to criminal activities or groups (e.g., in Italy: family members of persons involved in Mafia activities)

- Produces – implicit – bureaucratic barriers for research
  - Data protection standards
  - E.g., in Germany no access for researchers to the criminal records data base with the purpose to seek for data on non-offenders
  - Victims presumed to be non-offenders
  - Systematic search for both groups impossible
- Access only through survey-based research

# Victim-Offender Overlaps

- Occasional overlap of victim and offender roles
  - Interchanging roles in a concrete crime scenario
    - e.g., excessive self-defense
    - e.g., provoking behaviour resulting into a quarrel or group fight,  
formal roles often coincidental: the one setting the first punch will be considered as the offender, no matter if the – alleged – victim has initiated the escalation
- Situational role changes
  - Individuals acting alternately as offenders and victims
    - e.g., longitudinal gang or group rivalries

- Victim-offender sequence, non-recurring
  - Offending following one-time or multiple prior victimization
    - e.g., revenge, retaliation, "self-help"
- Victim-offender career
  - Multiple offending following one-time or multiple prior victimization
    - e.g., serial property or violent crimes
    - e.g., domestic violence, harassment
    - e.g., (political) radicalization

- Offender-victim sequence, double role
  - Offenders / ex-offenders victimized
    - e.g., (hard) drug users pickpocketed, ripped off or mugged
    - e.g., gang/mafia members 'disciplined' or killed
    - e.g., prisoners exposed to inmate violence

Table 2: Victimization of offenders and non-offenders

Victimization...	Share of victims (%) among ...		
	Non-offenders without any conviction	Offenders in population survey	Offenders in prison population
... of any crime	25.9	52.9	43.1
... of petty crime	23.1	42.7	24.2
... of severe crime	2.8	10.3	18.8
Number of observations	892	68	1.239

*Data:* German Crime Survey and German Inmate Survey (GIS). Descriptive statistics are for adult non-pupils (age  $\geq 18$ ).

*Source:* Entorf 2013



Table 3: Offending by victims and non-victims

Type of offense	Share of offenders			
	.... in non-victimized subsample	... in victimized subsample	... among victims of severe crime	... among victims of petty crime
Any crime	4.6	13.5	21.9	12.3
Property crime	2.2	6.7	9.4	6.4
Violent crime	1.4	3.0	6.3	2.6
Other crime	1.3	4.5	6.3	4.3
Number of observations	693	267	32	235

*Data:* German Crime Survey. Descriptive statistics are for adult non-pupils (age  $\geq 18$ ). Note that columns do not sum up to marginal values because some respondents had convictions for more than one crime.

*Source:* Entorf 2013

## Recent Findings from ISRD3 Data from the Balkan Region

# International self-report delinquency study (ISRD3)

- Third edition of the international data collection
- Ongoing research study on delinquency, victimisation, and substance use among 7th, 8th and 9th graders
- Countries:
  - Croatia
  - Bosnia and Herzegovina
  - Serbia
  - Kosovo
  - Macedonia
- City-based sampling strategy (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

# ISRD3 findings - victimization

	Life time %	Last year %
<b>Robbery</b>	8.70	5.50
<b>Assault</b>	7.90	5.40
<b>Theft</b>	25.90	20.20
<b>Hate crime</b>	4.70	3.60
<b>Cyber bullying</b>	17.90	14.80
<b>Physical punishment</b>	30.50	20.10
<b>Parental maltreatment</b>	6.50	4.00

# ISRD3 findings - victimization

	<b>Croatia</b>	<b>BiH</b>	<b>Kosovo</b>	<b>Macedonia</b>	<b>Serbia</b>
<b>Robbery</b>	5.4	7.5	11.5	8.2	13.7
<b>Hate crime</b>	2.5	3.5	1.5	7.7	3.4
<b>Physical punishment</b>	30.5	34	14.7	22.8	45.7
<b>Parental maltreatment</b>	7.3	6.8	1.7	5.5	9.4

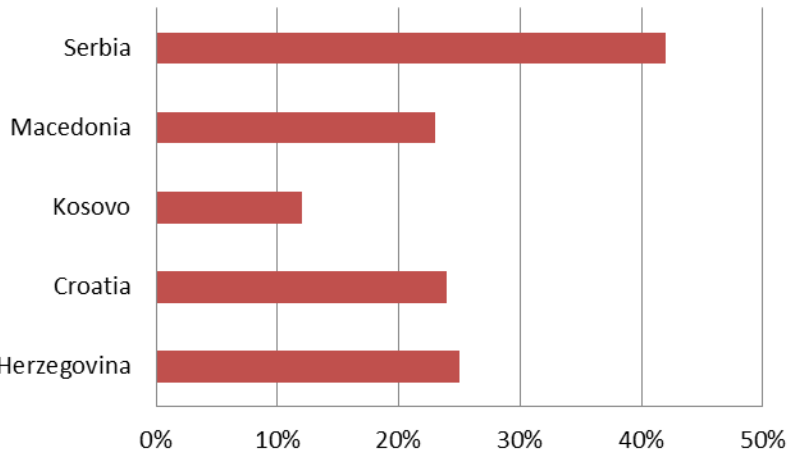
# ISRD3 findings - victimization

	<b>female %</b>	<b>male %</b>
<b>robbery</b>	30	70
<b>assault</b>	43	57
<b>theft</b>	49	51
<b>hate crime</b>	35	65
<b>cyber bullying</b>	56	44
<b>physical punishment</b>	51	49
<b>parental maltreatment</b>	51	49

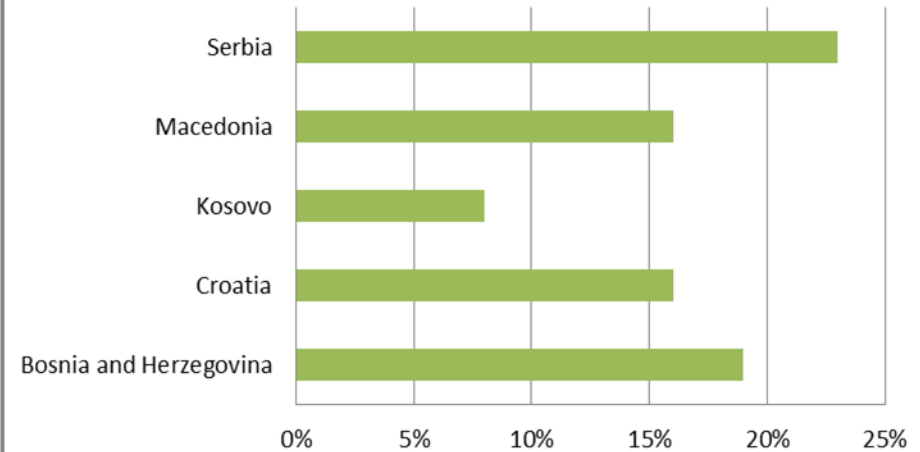
- *"Perhaps big self-service shops- which create plenty of opportunities for theft- are not as numerous in some of these countries; or maybe shops tend to be smaller, thereby increasing social control." (Junger-Tas et al., 2012)*
- *"Countries differ in the levels of informal social control and surveillance of exercised on young people. For example, greater geographical mobility (more mopeds, scooters, motorcycles, and so on), could decrease effective social control more so in Western Europe than in Post-Socialist countries." (Junger-Tas et al., 2012)*

# ISRD3 findings - delinquency

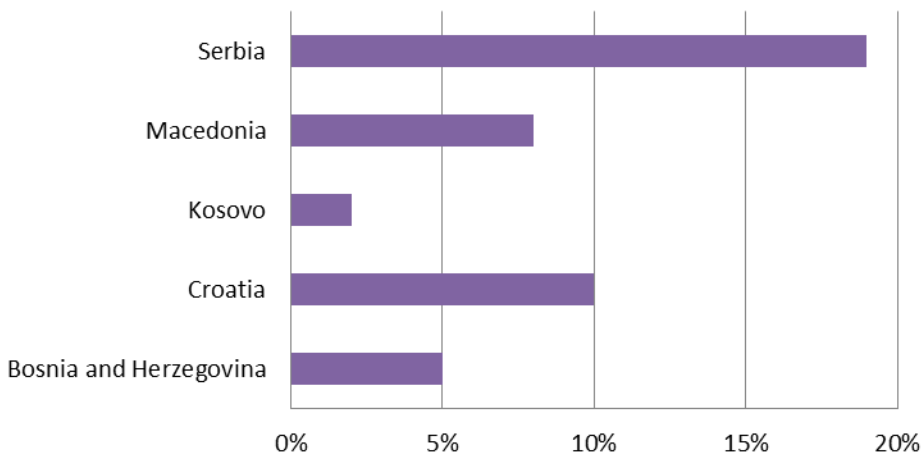
## Last year delinquency prevalence



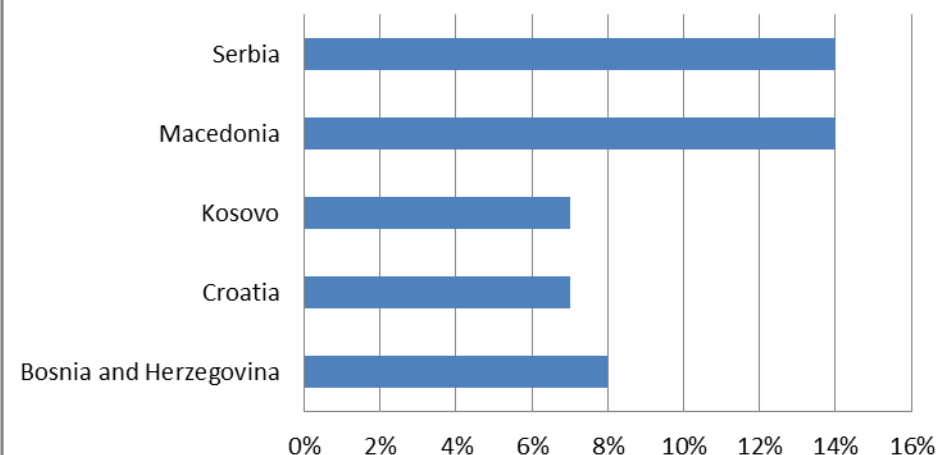
## Last year vandalism prevalence



## Last year property prevalence



## Last year violence prevalence





# ISRD3 findings - family control

- Based on the Social Control Theory, Hirschi 1969
- The bonds that persons have with society that determine whether they will respect society's behavioural norms and values
- Family control:
  - My parents know **where I am** when I go out
  - My parents know **what I am doing** when I go out
  - My parents know **what friends I am with** when I go out

	Family control				
	weak		strong		
	1	2	3	4	5
	(N=105)	(N=594)	(N=2353)	(N=4433)	(N=705)
<b>Has reported offences</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>11%</b>

## Scale delinquency

<b>Robbery</b>	12.2
<b>Assault</b>	10.4
<b>Theft</b>	35.3
<b>Hate crime</b>	6.7
<b>Cyber bullying</b>	23.5
<b>Physical punishment</b>	43.4
<b>Parental maltreatment</b>	9.9

# Conclusions

- Currently two separate scientific "worlds" (Entorf)
- Theoretical assumptions and empirical findings indicate the existence meaningful interconnections between exposure to victimization and offending
- Importance of victim support, victim protection, and crime prevention (→ victim prevention)
- More research required

**Hvala – Thank you.**

