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PRISONERS' 'LIFE AS A FILM'

SOPHIA TKAZKY

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

November 2017

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People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around... Stories, great flapping ribbons of shaped space-time, have been blowing and uncoiling around the universe since the beginning of time. And they have evolved. The weakest have died and the strongest have survived and they have grown fat on the retelling... And their very existence overlays a faint but insistent pattern on the chaos that is history. Stories etch grooves deep enough for people to follow in the same way that water follows certain paths down a mountainside. This is called the theory of narrative causality and it means that a story, once started, takes a shape. It picks up all the vibrations of all the other workings of that story that have ever been. This is why history keeps on repeating all the time...

This is a story about stories.

T. Pratchett, 'Witches abroad'

Abstract

Narrative is the way in which human beings organise and structure their view of themselves and the world (Bruner, 1986; McAdams and Pals, 2006). Narrative as a story told provides material to research a person's reality in terms of the one who knows it best – the narrator himself. From this perspective the offenders' accounts of what a film of their life would be are explored in this study. The main purpose is to evaluate the recently developed "Life as a Film" procedure for elicitation and interpretation of the narrative content (Canter and Youngs, 2015). This procedure was created specifically for use with offenders and is based on McAdams (1993) qualitative research methodology. This study also aims to reveal the implicit content and the structure of offenders' "Life as a Film" stories.

The "Life as a Film" descriptions were collected from 227 prisoners in four countries (Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland) together with demographic data. Their responses were analysed in terms of "Life as a Film" (LAAF) content framework.

In the first section the description of prisoners' narratives in general is provided. All studies in this section are carried out on a generic sample of 120 prisoners' interviews. In this sample each of the four nationalities in the research data pool is equally represented. This section consists of two studies. The first one describes the offenders' "life as a film" accounts in terms of the LAAF content dictionary. As the results show, incarcerated offenders' narratives are stories of controversy between a light optimistic and egocentric attitude and a harsh illogical world, from which the narrator still hopes to gain some support and a happy ending.

The second study in this section presents the exploration of the narrative structures, formed by a combination of LAAF content framework items. The distinct structures were identified in all three layers of the narratives: the implicit content, the processes that organise the story and the ways in which the protagonist of the story deals with the world. These structures outline a hybrid, complex picture of the stories and allow the making of inferences on the nature of the offenders' narratives. The findings accord with Frye's (1957) description of the narrative as a cyclical and moving structure. The results provide a good start for further studies on the incorporation of the episodes within the personal narratives. They also reveal the potential for the further development of a LAAF content dictionary.

The second section is dedicated to comparative analyses of the LAAF accounts collected from offenders with different backgrounds. The comparisons were conducted in terms of the original LAAF content dictionary items as well as in terms of the narrative structures described in the previous section (Chapter 7). The comparison between violent and non-violent offenders' narratives within the generic sample revealed strong similarities between these LAAF accounts: dominant themes of criminality, a light and optimistic tone, strong self-identity, declaration of empathy, recognition of the significance of others, reactive locus of agency and presence of moral justifications (in almost equal proportions in both groups). However significant differences were also revealed by this comparison. They are manifested in the general tone of the narrative, the protagonists' characteristics, the main message of the narrative and the relationship with others and with the world. The positive approach to the whole story, and not only to specific episodes in it, was found more often in the non-violent offenders' narratives. The violent offenders' narratives were more frequently about distress, danger and self-chosen loneliness, even antagonism with the outer world. The differences

were also found in the main message of the narrative, and in the types of roles assigned to other characters in the story.

In the second section the comparison between the prisoners' narratives collected in Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland is provided. The full sample of 227 responses was used for this study. In general offenders' narratives bear similar characteristics across all four countries: prevalence of the criminality theme, positive tone, happy ending, and reactive locus of agency. The LAAF accounts from different countries manifested similar, rather egocentric, messages, and were narrated in a euphoric emotional tone. Similarities were found also in the roles assigned to the protagonist and to others. Some significant differences between the samples were revealed in all LAAF content dictionary sub-groups and in the main narrative themes. Thus, narratives from Hungary can be characterised as nearly non-eventful personal credos, a calm and sad outline of the narrator's life philosophy with very few justifications for the protagonist's actions. British offenders' LAAF accounts are the most pessimistic and unhappy, and concentrated on a criminal life when compared to others. Most detailed and explicit are narratives collected in Italy: they present a story of an innocent confused person, who tries to survive in a cruel unfair world. Narratives collected in Poland, the least detailed and shortest among the national groups, can be summarised as a sad story of a lone and decent hero involved in crime almost against their will.

This study presents a major contribution towards the understanding of criminal thinking in narrative terms. The results show the coherence of the offenders' narratives across violent/non-violent groups and national samples and validate the use of data not directly related to crime for the study of criminality. The current study provides an important theoretical contribution by presenting the comparison between offenders' narratives collected in different countries. The success of the LAAF framework in exploring the narratives collected from offenders with different criminal and/or national backgrounds demonstrates methodological contributions. The study reveals the potential for further international as well as intra-national research and the validity of the LAAF approach across countries. The fact that in general offenders' narratives bear similar characteristics across various countries indicates that common treatment and rehabilitation adjustments can be made. As the results show, the LAAF content framework allows identification of both common and specific traits and characteristics of the narrative, thus providing the opportunity for personal adjustments of treatment and rehabilitation programmes. Overall the LAAF approach provides an important tool set for research on criminality relating to the offender himself.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late grandfather Solomon Mostinski. Granddad, you taught me to ask questions and look for more questions. You were the first to show me what a research is and what a research be – and you would laugh at this paraphrase of Terry Pratchett’s great line. You told me wonderful tales. You taught me about the power of words. Thanks to you, I probably learned to analyse information before I even learned the word “analyse”. I am sorry that I didn’t finish this work in time for you to see it. But I am sure you are keeping an eye on me even now.

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List of abbreviations

CBT – Cognitive-Behavioural therapy

COA – Coefficient of Alienation

CY-NEO - Canter-Youngs Narrative Experience of Offending protocol

HSD - Tukey Honestly Significant Difference test

ICON – International Comparison of Offenders’ Narratives project

IRCIP – International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology

LAAF – Life as a Film, elicitation and interpretation framework for analysis of offenders’ narratives

MDS – Multidimensional Scaling

NRQ – Narrative Role Questionnaire

NS – no significant association

SSA-I – Smallest Space Analysis, a multidimensional scaling method

TAT – Thematic Apperception Test

Part I

Introduction

Thesis roadmap

Part I of this thesis includes five chapters that introduce the readers to the definitions of the narrative that are be used in the present study, the rationale and research aim in general, the terms and issues crucial for this study and the specifics of the current research (Chapter 1), to the concepts most crucial for interpretation and analysis of the narratives and their application specifically to the research of offenders' personal accounts (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 describes the new methodology that was created in order to provide the much required syncretic approach: the "Life as a Film" (LAAF) elicitation and interpretation framework. Chapter 4 presents the rationale for the research, lists its potential theoretical, methodological and practical contributions, and outlines the ways in which the current study aims to extend the previous researches in the field. Chapter 5, the final chapter of the Part I of the current thesis, provides the description of the data collection (first part of this chapter), data pool and sampling process (second part of this chapter) and the content dictionary used for data analysis (third part of this chapter).

The brief descriptions of each chapter within Part I are as follows:

One of the criticisms of the narrative approach in general and its application to the study of offenders' narratives in particular is the definitional vagueness of the terms "narrative", "narrative identity", "life narrative" and "episode narrative" (Presser, 2009, Ward, 2012). The usage of these terms within the current study is therefore first and foremost clarified in Chapter 1. The main issues in the narrative studies are briefly outlined in Chapter 1 (and are discussed in more details in Chapter 2). Chapter 1 also provides a brief description of the research rationale, inspiration and aims (Chapters 2 and 3 provide more details on research

rationale and inspiration, while in Chapter 4 research aims are described in full). The specifics of this thesis as a part of the International Comparison of Offenders' Narratives (ICON) project, as a study on exclusively male narratives and as a study done on the secondary data are also outlined in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2 an overview of the concepts most crucial to the interpretation and analysis of the narratives and their application specifically to the research of the offenders' narratives in particular is provided. The following well-established concepts were chosen for the overview: narrative forms of redemption and contamination; thematic clusterings of agency and communion; internalised narrative scripts (imagoes); justifications; behavioural incentives and emotions. The significance of these concepts for the narrative research in criminology is outlined in the beginning of the second chapter. The chapter also outlines the gaps in the existing research, such as the lack of a syncretic approach (different narrative concepts are explored separately, and not in correlation with other narrative concepts); primary focus on crime episodes and not on neutral non-stigmatising accounts/life narratives; small research samples, collected exclusively in one country; lack of comparative analyses of the narratives of the offenders with the different types of the criminal past etc. The chapter is concluded by the suggestion that the syncretic approach that allows for the exploration of the neutral (and thus non-stigmatising) personal narratives in full and regardless of participants' criminal past and/or country of origin (for the purposes of the further comparative analysis) will allow for the bridging of the key gaps in the current research outlined in this chapter.

In Chapter 3 there is a description of the new methodology that was developed in order to expand the required syncretic approach to the "Life as a Film" (LAAF) framework.. The specific of the exploration of the offenders' narratives is outlined in this chapter together with the significance of the appeal to the offenders' life accounts. Such appeal has the potential for the exploration of offenders' personal experiences without the impact of labelling, and in a

way that makes sense to the narrator himself. The chapter provides an overview of both parts of the LAAF procedure: elicitation (semi-structured interview) and interpretation framework (content dictionary). Briefly, it can be described as follows: while the LAAF elicitation procedure provides the “material for analysis” - a short and reflective manifestation of self, enveloping the crucial life narrative points and characteristics (e.g. tone and theme, significant persons and ideas of future) as chosen by the narrator him/herself, the LAAF content framework provides the means for this analysis, as it includes the most crucial narrative themes and concepts. Although the elicitation part of the procedure was extensively used (e.g. Youngs et al, 2016; Piotrovski and Florek, 2015), the only major study that used the LAAF content dictionary was done on a relatively small and exclusively British sample of offenders (Carthy, 2013) and was not focused on the “Life as a Film” account. Thus the main focus of the current research is established in Chapter 3: the evaluation of the LAAF content framework.

The rationale for the research is to be found in Chapter 4, where the potential theoretical, methodological and practical contributions are listed. In addition, there is a description of the ways in which the current study plans to extend previous research. Thus, the main purpose of the current research is to explore the LAAF procedure and to study the content structure of the offenders’ LAAF accounts and the variations between them in different contexts (criminal or cultural). Also the list of the studies presented in the current thesis (with aims for each of the studies) is provided in this chapter.

In the first part of Chapter 5 thesis methodology is described: the Canter-Youngs Narrative Experience of Offending (CY-NEO) protocol and its usage (including ethical issues and measures that were taken to ensure that the participants’ rights, anonymity and confidentiality would not be breached in any way). The data collection procedure is described in general (to the full extent of the CY-NEO protocol) and, as the focus of the study is specifically on the

“Life as a Film” part of the protocol, the description of this part specifically together with the rationale for putting it in the research focus are provided. The specifics of the current study as being based on secondary data and translated material is also outlined in this part. The second part of the fifth chapter is dedicated to the description of data and provides a detailed demographic description of all four national data samples used for the current research (British, Hungarian, Italian and Polish) and the rationale for the sampling process used in this research in order to create generic sample, in which all four national data samples will be represented equally. Also in this chapter the extent of each of the national samples in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and educational level in the current prison population of each country is established. The third part of the fifth chapter provides a description of the LAAF content framework (as the current study aims to explore it): the four thematic subgroups (Psychological Complexity; Implicit Psychological Content; Explicit Processes Used to Organise the Content; and Nature of Agency in relation to others and the world, as in Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016) and the examples of variables within the subgroups. All the LAAF accounts used in the current study were coded in terms of the LAAF content dictionary (129 variables). The full list of the LAAF content dictionary variables is provided in Appendix II.

Part II of the current thesis is divided into two sections, each including two major studies. The first section is dedicated to the analysis of the offenders’ LAAF accounts in general (Chapter 6) and in terms of the inner structures of the narratives (Chapter 7). Both of these studies are based on the narratives of 120 male offenders from Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland represented in equal proportion. The second section consists of two comparative analyses’ studies. Thus, in Chapter 8 the comparison between the narratives of the offenders with different types of criminal past (violent versus non-violent) is provided, while Chapter 9 presents the comparison between the narratives of offenders from four

different countries (Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland). The generic sample mentioned previously was used for a comparison between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders, while for the comparative analysis of the narratives collected in different countries the full samples (as described in the Chapter 5) were used. Both comparative analyses are conducted in terms of the LAAF content dictionary and also in terms of the inner constructs established in this study (Chapter 7).

The overviews of each of the chapters within Part II of the current thesis are as follows: Chapter 6 represents the first in the line of explorations of the offenders' LAAF responses in the current thesis. It is intended to provide a general description of offenders' LAAF accounts in terms of the LAAF content framework in order to outline the traits and characteristics common to all offenders' narratives regardless of the narrator's criminal past and/or national background. It is also intended to explore the LAAF methodology on the general sample of offenders' narratives. The results of this study may be described as follows. Criminality was found to be the dominant theme of the narratives. The personification of the narrator could be outlined as a lonely hero. He is the victim of a merciless, contaminated world, who tried to fight and strive towards his happy ending. Relationships with others in offenders' narratives were found to be instrumental rather than empathic, and the only role given to others was that of supportive characters who help and care for the main hero. However, the relative scarcity of any imagoes – both those of self and of others, - categorised in narratives might signify the need for content dictionary adjustments. The findings supported the idea of the significance and psychological richness of offenders' responses to the argument and provided yet further proof that LAAF is especially suitable for such respondents (Canter and Youngs, 2015). The potential for further development of the LAAF content framework, such as the need for negative roles categories and the requirement for a distinction between types of Happy Ending (realistic versus utopian) are also described in the results.

The aim of the study described in Chapter 7 was to provide an in-depth morphological analysis of offenders' LAAF accounts in order to reveal the interrelations between the story elements, and to uncover the inner themes thus created. The results of the LAAF accounts' coding <done in terms of the LAAF content dictionary, as everywhere in this thesis> were subjected to the Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I). Each of the three LAAF sub-themes: the implicit psychological content of the narrative, explicit psychological processes that produce the storylines and agency vis-à-vis others and the world – were subjected to the SSA-I separately. That was done in order to reveal the inner themes and constructs within each of the levels of the narrative. Three implicit psychological content themes were found: the sad story of the Innocent Victim, the optimistic account of the Romantic Hero and the delinquency-oriented story of the Career Criminal. These stories represent the various approaches towards the unresolved conflict of the disagreeable reality of imprisonment, and the much wanted happy ending. Three movements that produce the storyline were distinguished: Prevailing Unity (focused on communion and redemption), Losing Loneliness (built around contamination and loneliness) and Heroic Winning (concentrated on satisfaction and fulfilment). The four ways of interactions with others and the world were outlined: Getaway, Help, Pleasure and Excuse. Socio-oriented stories of Getaway and Help created a pair of opposing ego-centric stories of Pleasure and Excuse. These four themes could also be described in terms of proactive (Help and Pleasure) versus reactive (Getaway and Excuse) attitudes towards the world. The results grasped the cyclical, moving nature of the narrative. They provided insight into the complicated structure of the stories and potentially equipped researchers with the material for the creation of quantitative methodology for narrative research. Also, the gaps in the current LAAF content framework together with the routes for future development were outlined in the results of this study.

The study described in Chapter 8 was intended to compare violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF stories and to outline the similarities/differences of the ways in which these offenders depict their lives. It was hypothesised that the differences between violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts can be found and would not be directly related to violence and aggression. The attribution of the participants to either the violent or the non-violent group was based on their self-reported crime histories. The comparison between the groups was done in terms of the LAAF items and in terms of the narrative composite structures derived in the current thesis (Chapter 7). Strong similarities were found between violent and non-violent offenders' narratives: the domination of criminality theme, the prevalence of an optimistic tone, the levels of psychological complexity and the described locus of agency. Similar composite constructs were prevalent in both narrative groups. However, significant differences were found in the more subtle traits of the narratives, such as the roles assigned to others and the implicit message of the story. Additionally, it was found that only non-violent offenders apply a positive tone to the whole story, while in the violent offenders' stories the same tone is usually used to describe exclusively crime, and the whole narrative is told in a more pessimistic and negative spirit. Notwithstanding the limitations of the study (relatively small and unequal group sizes, the low sensitivity of the composite variables, and the self-reported crime history) the results showed that both important similarities and meaningful differences between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders were grasped within the LAAF framework.

The aim of the study in Chapter 9 was to explore the offenders' narratives collected in different countries and to outline common and potentially country-specific traits in them and to explore the robustness and validity of the LAAF system when applied to the offenders' narratives collected in different countries (and therefore in different cultural and linguistic contexts). This study was also aimed at providing the noteworthy insight into national

specifics of the offenders' narratives by comparison between the psychological themes, traits and inner structures distinguished in the offenders' narratives collected in different countries. The following characteristics were found to be similar across all groups: prevalence of the criminality theme, positive tone, happy ending, reactive locus of agency, roles assigned to the protagonist and other characters, egocentric messages and euphoric emotional spectre in which the stories were narrated. All these characteristics were also found to be prevalent in the general sample (Section I, Chapter 6). However, significant differences between the groups were also revealed – in more subtle, less frequent characteristics. Thus, Hungarian narratives could be characterised as an almost non-eventful personal credo, a calm and sad outline of the narrator's life philosophy with very few justifications for the protagonist's actions. British LAAF accounts were the most pessimistic, unhappy and overly focused on criminal life. The most detailed and explicit Italian narratives represented a story of an innocent confused person. The least detailed and shortest Polish narratives could be outlined as a sad story of a lone and decent hero involved in crime almost against his will. The results demonstrated the coherency of the offenders' narratives across national samples and presented a comparison between offenders' narratives collected in different countries. The similarities in the psychological complexity of the narratives from different countries demonstrated that the LAAF procedure was not as sensitive to the issue of the interviewer's manner as might be feared.

Part III of the thesis consists of the thesis discussion and conclusion (Chapter 10) and the suggestion for the further studies (Chapter 11).

The first part of Chapter 10 includes a brief summary of the thesis results, while the second part is dedicated to the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of the current thesis, and the third part of this chapter outlines the limitations of the current study. The theoretical contributions of the current research include the validation of the use of data not

directly related to crime for the study of criminality, the provision of a general description of the offenders' LAAF narratives together with comparisons between the narratives of the offenders with different types of criminal histories and the provision of the noteworthy insight into the national specifics of offenders' narratives. The exploration and evaluation of the LAAF interpretation system, the outline of the LAAF strengths and weaknesses, together with the venues for the further development of this methodology and the validation of the translations of the LAAF protocols are the methodological contributions of this research. The ways in which the identification of neutral main themes and narrative composite constructs together with the exploration of the norms and common traits of the offenders' narratives, may be useful for adjustments to the treatment and rehabilitation programmes adjustments are also outlined. The following limitations of the current study are listed in the third part of Chapter 10: the relatively small and unequal sample sizes in the comparative analyses, the influence of the researcher's personality on the coding process, the cross-country differences (e.g. the differences in the prison regulations, in the judicial system, in the language etc) and the differences in the interviewing manners of the different groups etc.

Suggestions for further studies are described in Chapter 11. Among them are recommendations for further development of the LAAF interpretation system (e.g. categories that will allow for the grasping of negative roles and processes, such as manipulation; categories that will allow the description of the personal significance in the eyes of others as it is perceived by the narrator etc. The full list of the proposed categories is provided in the Appendix III). Suggestions for further studies also include the exploration of the story plot and the positioning of the story elements within the narrative; the establishment of the crime episode role within the life narrative of the offender; the potential appeal to folklore for further understanding of the national specifics of the offenders' narratives etc. Further development of the comparative analyses started in the current study (as it was done on

relatively small and unequal sized groups, the extrapolation of the results to a large population is impeded) is also discussed in this chapter.

This thesis also includes a number of Appendices. Appendix I is divided into two parts; part i includes Canter-Youngs Narrative Experiences of Offenders (CY-NEO) protocol selection “Life as a Film” technique (Canter and Youngs, 2015), while part ii consists of the CY-NEO protocol participant information sheet and consent form and also includes the IRCIP data agreement for IRCIP archive data signed by the current researcher and the data legal guardian Prof. D. Canter. In Appendix II the full LAAF content dictionary is provided, and Appendix III contains the categories recommended as additions to the LAAF content dictionary as the result of the current research.

Chapter 1: Narratives as a research agenda: main issues and terms, and the specifics of the current study

Laing (1967) argued that one’s personal experiences are the only evident thing. Kelly (1970) developed this idea and stated that although researchers cannot contact an interpretation- free reality directly, they can ask the best specialist on the personal experience of this reality – the person himself. Kelly also stressed the model of the “man the scientist”: individual’s main concern is to make sense of the world and to test the findings in terms of their predictive capacity (Kelly, 1963). The basic of this “making sense of the world and of personal lives” process is the continual detection of repeated themes, our segmenting of our world in terms of them (Kelly, 1963; Bannister and Fransella, 1971). Kelly argued that the man is a natural scientist and at the same time the main focus of the science (Kelly, 1963; Bannister and Fransella, 1971). Following the principle “the person is the best specialist on him/herself” Kelly recommended self-characterization as the best technique of a person’s assessment (Kelly, 1963) and frequently used it in the form of an invitation to the patients to portray themselves as a character in play (Bannister and Fransella, 1971). Overall, in these points

Kelly's personal construct psychology was a prefiguration of a more recent narrative approach.

1.1 The conceptualisation of the narrative

In 1938 Sartre said: "...a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it." (Sartre (1938/1965), p. 61) For several decades this view was adopted by social sciences. With self-characterization as one of the best techniques of individual assessment, personal narratives are seen as one of the most effective forms of such assessments. People are natural story-tellers and while telling stories of their own life they do season them, and modify them according to their tastes, and their perception of themselves and the world (McAdams and Pals, 2006). Furthermore, Bruner (1986) describes one of the natural modes of human thinking as the narrative mode, which creates a realistic representation of life in order to make sense of it or to establish coherence.

The definitional vagueness of the narrative and narrative identity concepts is one of the most famous criticisms of the narrative approach in general and the narrative studies in the criminology/forensic psychology in particular (Presser, 2009; Ward, 2012a). In order to avoid misunderstanding the following subchapters clarify the usage of the terminology within the current research: narrative and relationship between narrative and experience (1.1.1); definitions of the life narratives and event stories (1.1.1) and the concept of the narrative identity (as a concept differs from the narrative, although connected, but not interchangeable with it, see 1.1.2).

1.1.1 Narrative and experience

According to Laing (1967) an individual can only see others' behaviour and understand them through their own experience. According to Braid (1996) the underlying concept of a

narrative is coherent accounts of past experience as they were perceived, selected, interpreted and narrativised by the individual. The relationship between narrative and experience, albeit close, is problematic. The experience changes constantly, and so does the narrative, as, for example, when the story changes with the passage of time, when the individual re-evaluates their own experiences (Presser and Sandberg, 2015). The narratives are also influenced by current experiences, as they change with the circumstances in which they are told (Polanyi, 1985). The narratives are “recipient-designed” (Polanyi, 1985) and tailored to the purpose of the storytelling (Presser and Sandberg, 2015). The relationship between the experience and the narrative is traditionally conceptualized as 1) narrative as record, that gives an accurate description of the world, 2) narrative as interpretation of the world through the prism of the individual’s perception, and 3) narrative as a shaper of experience (Ricouer, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1988; Presser, 2009). When the first two conceptualisations represent narrative as epistemologically subordinate to experience (Presser and Sandberg, 2015): in the first one the narrative presents the historical record of the experienced events, the objective description; while in the second conceptualisation the narrative is seen as the subjective interpretation of past experience. The third conceptualisation offers the view of “an equal mutual relationship” between the experience and the narrative, as narrative does not play a subordinate role to experience. According to Presser and Sandberg (2015) “...the narratives produce experience even as experience produces narratives.”(p. 4).

Narrative is “a vehicle for self-understanding and as such an instigator to action” (Presser, 2009, p. 192), the form that allows storage of memories, self-reflection and the creation of meaning on the basis of personal experience. According to Labov and Waletzky, (1967) narrative is a temporally ordered description of the events experienced or the actions taken by one or more protagonists. Braid (1996) stated that the concept of the narrative is outlined by “...coherent, follow-able accounts of perceived past experience. When preformed, they

present selected, interpreted, and narrativised experience of an individual's coherent sequence of events..." (Braid, 1996, p. 6). McAdams (1988) described the narrative in general as a cultivator of personal identity over time and across circumstances. In order to provide the clarity for the use of the terms the following definitions will be adopted by the present study:

Life narrative refers to the selective account of various episodes and events that have occurred, are currently occurring, or might occur in the future in the life of the narrator (based on McAdams, 1993). As Presser (2009) stated: "The narrator can discuss different parts of a single self, including phased out, disowned or hypothetical parts, and can stand at a distance from all these parts." (Presser, 2009, p.180).

Event narrative refers to the narrative account of the specific event that occurred in the narrator's life (for example, the crime account given by the offender). This definition is reminiscent of the "situated story" term offered by McLean et al (2007). However, according to their definition the situated story is the one of the personal memory created within a specific situation, for a specific audience and with a particular point in mind (McLean et al, 2007). In order not to imply any specific meaning to the crime episode within the life narrative (as this subject has not been researched yet) the term of "event narrative" or "crime story" will be used instead of "situated story" in the current study.

1.1.2 Narrative identity

According to Erikson's psychological theory of identity, people reconstruct their memories in accordance to their own present and future – as they see it, identity is a biography under constant reconstruction (Erikson, 1959). The core of identity is lived social experience of the past and the present as well as the desired future (Presser, 2008). Such identity demands a narrative that will structure those experiences and connect them both logically and temporally (Gergen and Gergen, 1988; Linde, 1993; Presser, 2008).

Narrative is both the way in which human beings organise and structure their view of themselves and the world – and the method for modern personality research (see Bruner, 1986; Shover, 1996; McAdams, 2008) which allows one to see the inner structure, the underlying organisation of an individual's affects and cognitions, and also to find the connection between them and their behavioural patterns.

McAdams (1993) stated that people identify themselves through inner narrative. Thus the famous proverb “Stories tell people how to live and why” can be perceived literally: life narrative together with broad dispositional traits and contextualized characteristic adaptations (“personal concerns”, which includes coping styles, defence mechanisms, personal strivings etc) is one of the three conceptually and epistemologically independent layers of personality (McAdams, 1993). Together these three layers provide the full description of a person (McAdams, 1993). Overall the person's identity forms the inner narrative and at the same time is shaped by it.

Narrative identity is the way to organise our inner-selves, our different roles, to give them unity and purpose (McAdams, 1995). But at the same time every person plays more than one role in life, and every role can be seen as a potential character in a story. Thus arises a contradiction between many characters and one identity, and thus comes the resolution through the distinction between characters and one story “within which the characters are given the form, function and voice” (McAdams, 1993, p. 118). People need their stories in order to reconcile their past, present and future, and to unite all the multiple roles they play in their lives (McAdams, 2008). Although the life story told in specific circumstances might not contain all aspects of one's self-concept, it still shows the persons' beliefs about self (McLean et al, 2007).

1.2 Narrative approach in the studies of criminality

The concepts “narrative as an interpretation of reality” and “narrative as a shaper of experience” are crucial for the researcher, and especially in the field of the studies on offenders¹ narratives (Presser, 2008; Presser and Sandberg, 2015). The narrative researcher deals with individual perceptions of the part rather than with an accurate record of the event (“narrative as an interpretation”). From the narrative researcher’s point of view the interpretation of the event by the narrator becomes more crucial than the event itself. The researchers studying the offenders’ narratives explore “how narratives inspire and motivate harmful action and how they are used to make sense of harm” (Presser and Sandberg, 2015, p.1). For example, in the study by Maruna (2001) the form of the narrative (redemption sequence where negative events turn positive, or contamination sequence, where positive events turn negative) distinguishing characteristics between the stories of desistant and persistent offenders were found. Thus, the narratives were subjective interpretations of the actual experiences and events (and this interpretation influenced the chosen sequence of the narrative), and at the same time they played the role of the shaper of the experiences: in order to desist from crime ex-offenders created a coherent prosocial narrative identity (Maruna, 2001). The main focus of the narrative research of criminality is the exploration of the ways in which narratives inspire and motivate deviant behaviour; the ways in which the narratives are used to make sense of crime; and the ways in which the narratives can be used to instigate, sustain and effect desistance from crime (Presser and Sandberg, 2015).

¹ The current researcher uses the term “offender” <as a person who has committed a crime> as it was and is used in the field of forensic psychology and investigative psychology (e.g. Presser, 2008; Presser 2009; Presser and Sandberg, 2015; Maruna, 2001; Youngs and Canter, 2012, or the British Psychological Society Conference Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference 2018, where this term was used by all the participants – both academics and practitioners). As all the studies referenced in the current thesis used this term it remains here, and is used consistently throughout the thesis. The terms “violent offenders/non-violent offenders” when mentioned in the reference to the previous studies (e.g. Toch, 1969) are used in their original meaning (as in the studies to which the reference is made). The definitions of violent and non-violent offenders that were refined specifically for the purposes of the current study are provided in the chapters 5 and 8 where they are relevant and are consistent further throughout this thesis.

DeGregorio (2009) suggested that the narrative approach to understanding criminality allows the exploration of the deviant act through the interpretation of the person closest to it - the offender him/herself, the protagonist of the story. As Presser (2008) put it individual's self is always still in the making, and the narrative is the expression of this construction process, as it always has an evaluative point to make about the self. Presser and Sandberg (2015) highlighted importance of the narrative studies on criminality because, among other things, the narratives structure social experiences of the past, present and the desired future into coherent form (Gergen and Gergen, 1988; Linde, 1993; Presser, 2008). Thus, the narrative approach allows the exploration of the criminality through the reflection and the interpretation of the perpetrator him/herself (Presser, 2008, DeGregorio, 2009). The narrative interview also provides relief for the incarcerated offenders, as it gives them a way to express themselves beyond the cognitive boundaries imposed by the prison system (McKendy, 2006). McKendy (2006) argued that the prison system pressures the incarcerated offenders to take responsibility for their actions, and thus impedes their ability to talk freely about their lives and their current situation. "Not being able to talk directly about this means they are less likely to be able to think about it, which in turn means that they are less likely to see it as their responsibility." (McKendy, 2006, p. 473) At the same time the narrative (to a degree) benefits the offenders, as it allows them to reflect on their actions and then take responsibility (McKendy, 2006). Presser and Sandberg (2015) also highlighted the benefit of narrative research on criminality, as it allows the exploration of identity on the common conceptual ground with self-narratives, and without imposing a label or a stigma. The story or the self-perception are not emphasised as stigma (Presser and Sandberg, 2015), and the story told and listened to constructs the multi-dimensional self instead of a one-dimensional label (Garfinkel, 1956). Additionally, the narrative approach allows the exploration of many subjective aspects of human life (e.g. emotions, concept of self in past, present and future,

motivations, goals etc) frequently neglected outside it (Maruna, 2001; Presser and Sandberg, 2015). Overall the narrative approach to the research of criminality has great potential for understanding the phenomenon of deviant behaviours and the processes that lead to or from them.

This potential of exploring criminality through understanding offenders' personal narratives is being increasingly recognised in recent decades (Toch, 1969; Canter, 1994; Maruna, 1999; Presser, 2009; Sandberg, 2009; Presser and Sandberg, 2015). Canter (1994) argued that an individual's destructive narrative drives the individual to deviant behaviour and shapes the offending actions into specific patterns (*modus operandi*). The development of this theory brought about the creation of the empirical models of the offence styles for various kinds of offence (e.g. arson – Canter and Fritzon, 1998; terrorism - Fritzon et al, 2001; stalking – Canter and Ioannou, 2004b etc). A description of the ways in which offences emerge in terms of the story lines is to be found in Agnew (2006).. However, all of these studies and the vast majority of the other researches on the offenders' narratives are focused exclusively on the crime episodes, and tend to overlook the value of the offenders' life stories (Canter and Fritzon, 1998; Fritzon et al, 2001; Canter and Ioannou, 2004a; Agnew, 2006; Youngs and Canter, 2012 etc). Exploration of the life narratives of the offenders will create a situation in which the participants are allowed self-reflection in a non-judgemental, non-stigmatizing form and environment and without the forced discourse created by the prison system (McKendy, 2006; Presser, 2010). As Presser (2010) pointed out, the essential understanding of the offenders' life stories is impeded by the lack of a knowledge base for methodological approaches to elicit, interpret and analyse these narratives.

As described previously in this chapter, narratives are complex structures. They allow storage of memories, self-reflection and the creation of meaning on the basis of personal experience (Presser, 2009). Past memories and experiences include past behaviours, emotions and

motivations (as they are perceived and reflected upon by the narrator at the moment), and the narrative as a reflective story (Presser, 2008) include the goals and the concept of self in past, present and future. The consistency of the narrative may change with different environments and/or the audiences to which it is told, thus it becomes vitally important to explore the underlying psychological concepts within the narratives, as they will uncover stable features of the narrative identity (McAdams, 1993; Canter, 1994). Although many studies on the offenders' narratives were dedicated to the exploration of such concepts (e.g. Farmer, 2012; Fisher et al 1998; Maruna, 2001; Canter and Ioannou, 2004a; Youngs, 2006; Harkins & Beech, 2007; Youngs and Canter, 2012; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016 etc), usually these concepts were taken separately (e.g. emotions - Canter and Ioannou, 2004a; incentives – Youngs, 2006 etc) and not syncretically, in their relationships with other psychological concepts and narrative identity features. Thus, the lack of the syncretic approach to the research of the offenders' narratives together with the frequent focusing on the crime stories and not on neutral life narratives represent two major issues of the current narrative studies of criminality.

Another theme that was rather neglected in previous studies was comparative analysis of the narratives of the offenders with different criminal or cultural background. Thus, although the question of personality differences between offenders with various criminal histories (violent versus non-violent, crimes against person versus crimes against property etc) has been studied for decades, frequently comparison between these groups was carried out on traits that are attributed directly to the type of crime (e.g. comparison between violent and non-violent offenders based on the aggression traits - Baumeister, Bushman and Campbell, 2000). Most of these comparative studies were also based on the description of the crime personal experiences. Thus, comparisons between offenders who committed property crimes and offenders who committed crimes against the person were carried out based on the crime

narratives of the participants (Felson and Ribner, 1981; Henderson and Hewstone, 1984; Canter and Ioannou, 2004a). As mentioned previously, concentration on the crime narrative rather than more neutral episodes is one of the major issues in the current narrative studies of criminality². The narratives of the offenders from different countries are even more neglected. While there is a number of comparative studies of the personal experiences of different types of crime (e.g. crimes against the person versus property crimes - Henderson and Hewstone, 1984; Canter and Ioannou, 2004a etc), the question of the differences between the offenders' narratives collected in different countries, although raised in various theoretical publications (e.g. Fivush, Habermaas, Waters and Zamaan, 2011; Zipes, 2012; Kottler, 2015), is largely neglected in research. At the same time the vast majority of the offenders' narrative studies were carried out on samples collected in one country (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Carthy, 2013; Piotrovski and Florek, 2015; Fleetwood, 2015). The differences in the elicitation and interpretation methods used in previous studies impeded the potential for comparison of the results. Thus, while there is a number of comparative studies on modus operandi of offenders from different countries (e.g. Sarangi and Youngs, 2006; Sea, Youngs and Tkazky, 2017), the comparative analysis of their self-perception and personal stories is yet to be done.

The current research was inspired by the passion for exploration of the new syncretic research methodology designed expressly for the purpose of elicitation and interpretation of the offenders' life accounts, and by the passion for understanding the phenomenon of criminality. The gaps existing in the up to date research were briefly overviewed previously in this chapter, and are discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3. Although obviously the current study cannot provide a full understanding of criminality, it was carried out to fill the gaps in the research existing up to now by the following means: 1) exploring the new and not yet evaluated syncretic research methodology designed specifically for the study on the

² This matter is discussed further in the chapters 2 and 3

offenders' narratives drawing on international samples; 2) exploring the implicit content and structure of the offenders' narratives in their complexity, as the syncretic methodology allows the exploration of the relationships between the psychological concepts and underlying themes within the narratives 3) providing a comparison between the narratives of offenders with different criminal histories and from different countries (as the current study is based on the international sample). The aims of the current research are described in full in Chapter 4, as they draw on the review and analysis of the previous studies provided in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. However there are some specific points about the current research that should be outlined in advance.

1.3 The specifics of the current research

The general purpose of the current research is to evaluate the recently developed elicitation and interpretation methodology for the exploration of the offenders' narrative and to reveal the implicit content and the structure of these narratives, including the common and specific characteristics of the narratives collected in the different countries or from the offenders with different types of criminal history³. The emphasis of the current research is therefore put upon the concept of "a narrative as an interpretation of reality" (Presser, 2010). As the knowledge of the ways in which a person perceives reality provides the means to adjust this perception and thus shape the inner narrative and behaviour, the concept of "a narrative as a shaper of reality" is not entirely absent from the current research. By proxy, the findings of the current research add to existing knowledge of the ways in which offenders perceive reality and in so doing they offer some potential for adjustments to the treatment and rehabilitation programmes' <as described later in the thesis>. The current research is a part of the International Comparison of the Offenders' Narratives (ICON) project commissioned by the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (IRCIP), and as such is based

³ The aims of the current research are described in detail in chapter 4.

on secondary data. The data sample upon which this research is based consists of exclusively male participants. All these specific points were taken into account by the current research and are discussed further in this chapter one by one.

1.3.1 The current research as the part of the International Comparison of the Offenders' Narratives (ICON) project

This research represents a part of the International Comparison of the Offenders' Narratives (ICON) project, commissioned by the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (IRCIP). The ICON project explores the offenders' personal experiences: the identification of the narrative themes and the correlations between them within the offenders' narratives, the comparative analysis of the narrative themes in the personal accounts of the offenders with different types of the criminal past; different cultural background; or different crime experiences (when crime narratives, as opposed to neutral life accounts are analysed). The data used in the current research was collected as part of the ICON project, with the prospect of its further analysis in terms of the "Life as a Film" (LAAF) framework and for the purpose of the comparison between the samples collected in different countries. The main data collection tool for the ICON project as whole is Canter-Youngs Narrative Experience of Offending (CY-NEO) protocol – all the data used in the current research was collected with this tool (the full description of the CY-NEO protocol is provided in Chapter 5). Thus the unification of the data collection methodology is ensured. The current research is intended to explore and evaluate the LAAF methodology and to reveal the implicit content and structure of offenders' LAAF accounts. It is also intended to provide a comparative analysis of the LAAF narratives of offenders with the different types of criminal histories and the comparative analysis of the LAAF accounts collected in different countries. In this way the objectives of the current research meet the objectives of the ICON project as whole. To the best of the knowledge of the current author, this thesis is the first study of the comparison of

incarcerated offenders' personal stories collected in different countries carried out in terms of the LAAF content framework.

The current researcher is fully aware of the limitations⁴ of the international comparison of offenders' narratives. The variations in the judicial (e.g. variations in the definitions of crimes in different countries, e.g. Aebi et al, 2014) and penitentiary systems (e.g. different prison regulations influence the time and conditions of the interviewing process) of the different countries, the usage of the translated material (as all of the participants were interviewed in their native languages, and the coding and the analysis of the responses was carried out on the English translation of the anonymised interview transcriptions) the research results and the extrapolations of the findings on the general and country-specific populations could be affected. The current study is part of the meta-research (the ICON project), in which the data collection was conducted by different interviewing groups using the same methodology in different places. Although all of the interviewing groups received the same training (as described in Chapter 5) the interviewer's personal manner might still have influenced the interviewing process and, by proxy, the research findings.

Although as the part of the ICON project the current research bears some limitations inherited from the international nature of the project and the fact that the data was collected by different interviewing groups and in countries with different judicial and penitentiary systems, the international nature of the project also has a number of advantages. Thus, it allows comparisons of the narratives collected in different countries by the interviewing groups that consist of native speakers of the state language of each country⁵. The size of the interviewing groups (frequently large, e.g. 12 interviewers in the British interviewing group)

⁴ For a full description of the research limitations please see Chapter 10. Also the limitations of each of the studies in particular are discussed in the chapters describing those studies.

⁵ As described in Chapter 5 fluency in the state language is one of the inclusion criteria for the participants, while an inability to express oneself fluently in the state language is one of the exclusion criteria.

allowed to interview a large number of people (the whole data pool includes 235 participants, 227 interviews were used in the current research) must also be considered. The unified training of the interviewing groups and the common methodology (CY-NEO protocol) ensured the unification of the means of data collection. The same methodology (the LAAF content framework) was used for the content analysis of the data, and all the coding was applied by the current researcher in order to ensure the unification of the coding process as well.

Thus it may be concluded that, although the current research bears some limitations as an international project, it also has a number of advantages, such as the large international data pool, and a unified approach to data collection and data analysis. The purposes of the study (the exploration of the LAAF methodology, research on the implicit content and the structure of the narratives collected from offenders with different types of criminal past and from different countries) match the purposes of the ICON project and when fulfilled will make a new scholarly contribution to the field of investigative psychology and narrative research. The extent of this contribution is described further in this thesis (Chapters 2, 3 and 4).

1.3.2 The exclusively male research data sample and the use of gendered terminology within this thesis

The current study is based on an exclusively male data sample. The focus on male participants is due to the large proportion of the male offenders in the penitentiary system in general and specifically in the countries in question. Thus, in England and Wales 95.4% of all prison population is male (Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief, 2017c), in Italy and Poland male offenders represent about 96% of the prison population (Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief, 2017a, 2017b); and similar percentages are true for Hungary as well (92.42%, Somogyvári, Drexler and Sánta, 2015). Female participants are under-represented in the current research database even in comparison to the low proportion

of female offenders in penitentiary systems in general. Only Hungarian sample included eight female participants (and 93 male participants), while three other samples were exclusively male. Eight female participants present in only one of the four national groups could not be defined as a representative sample. It would constitute only 2% of the full sample (in comparison to the actual 5-8% of female offenders in the penitentiary systems of the countries in question). The current study aims to reveal the implicit content and the structure of the offenders' narratives in general and to provide comparative analyses of the narratives of offenders with different criminal and cultural backgrounds. The sample of the eight narratives collected in one country could not provide representative and comparable results that fit the purposes of the current study. Although Maruna (2001), in the study on the narratives of the desistant and persistent offenders, found only a few differences between the stories of the male and female participants, this could be due a small number of women in the sample used for that study. The inclusion of the disproportionately small number of female participants' narratives into the data base of this research will not provide the basis for universal aspects of the narrative, nor will it help the exploration of gender-specific narrative characteristics. The sample of eight responses could be defined as fit for the case studies; however the case studies of the female offenders' narratives are out of the scope of the current research and do not serve the main research purposes; therefore the responses of the female participants were excluded from the current study. However, the exclusively male sample used for this study somewhat limits the generalisability of its results. As the results of the current study are based on an exclusively male sample, they can be extrapolated to the male prison population only. Further studies, based on equal or at least proportionate, samples of female participants would be required in order to establish both universal and gender-specific patterns in the offenders' narratives.

A few words should be also said on the gendered terminology in this thesis. Although female participants are frequently overlooked in prison research (and the proportion of women is low in penitentiary systems in general), female narratives are frequently explored. Thus, the results of McAdams' narrative studies are applicable to both male and female participants (McAdams, 1988, 1993, 2012 etc). Some theoretical papers consider narratives in general, without a gender-specific division (e.g. Canter, 1994; Presser, 2009 etc). And although, as mentioned previously, the narratives of the female offenders are currently overlooked, some studies on offenders' narratives include both male and female participants (e.g. Maruna, 2001) or specifically female participants (e.g. Fleetwood, 2015; Miller, Carbone-Lopez and Gunderman, 2015 etc). Thus in the current research the double-gender term (e.g. "his/her", "he/she") is used when the matter in question is based upon a study which is not gender specific (e.g. Canter, 1994, the proposition that an individual's destructive narrative drives the individual to deviant behaviour and shapes the offending actions into specific patterns) or presents the results of the research conducted on both male and female participants (e.g. narrative concepts developed by McAdams, 1988, 1993, 2012). As the current study explores exclusively male participants' narratives, gender-specific terminology is used in the discussion of its results ("he", "his").

The results of the current research are based upon interviews collected from male incarcerated offenders in four different countries. The specifics of the research based upon secondary data are described in the following subchapter.

1.3.3 The research based on secondary data

The data for the current research represents the incarcerated offenders' transcribed responses to the "Life as a Film" semi-structured interview. These responses were collected by

interviewing groups in four countries: Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland⁶. Permission for the use of this data by the current researcher was given by the legal guardian of the data Prof. David Canter. “Raw secondary data” is the classification that Kervin used in 1992, and it is appropriate for the current study; the dataset was not collected by the current researcher, but, apart from translation, had not been processed, selected and/or summarised. The actual data used for the research analysis in the current study is not the raw data itself (interview transcriptions), but rather the results of the coding of these interviews. That coding was done in the terms of the “Life as a Film” content framework (described in Chapters 3 and 5, with a full content dictionary provided in Appendix II) and applied in full by the current researcher herself. Thus it can be said that although the secondary data was used in the study, the study itself does not and could not fit the definition of “secondary study” as the summary, collation and/or synthesis of existing research (as defined, for example, by Jugenheimer, Kelley, and Bradley, 2014). Although based on the secondary data, this research does not focus on summarising, collating or synthesizing of the previous studies, but on the original analysis of the research material. As Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) pointed out the use of secondary data in research allows a saving of both time and money, especially when the research in question is international and involves a large number of participants. Thus, although the use of secondary data might raise some issues, it also provides many opportunities. This data was collected in four different countries in four different languages by groups of native speakers of the state language. The current data set holds information on 227 participants. Gathering a database this large would be an impossible task for a single researcher. Not only would it be too time consuming, it would also be both legally and physically impossible, unless the researcher was fluent in four languages and held citizenship in all the states in question. The

⁶ The data collection process, the training provided to the interviewing groups, the precautions taken in order to ensure the participants’ anonymity and confidentiality as well as legal consent for the further use of this data for the ICON project are described in chapter 5.

size of some of the interviewing groups (e.g. the British group of twelve interviewers) allowed the individual interviewing of a large number of participants. The data was collected in four different languages in four national samples. Such data provides a unique opportunity for a comparative study. A somewhat unusual parallel can be drawn to archeological or anthropological studies, where records or artefacts collected by other people are used by one researcher for the purpose of comparison (e.g. Trigger, 2003) or to prove some enveloping theory.

The use of secondary data is known to have some disadvantages. However, the question of the appropriateness or otherwise of the data for the aims of the research, and the problem of the lack of control of the quality of that data⁷, were answered and overcome in the current study.. The data was collected as part of the ICON project, with a view to its further analysis in terms of the LAAF framework and for the purpose of comparison between the samples collected in different countries – therefore the use of this data for the current study is appropriate. The interviewers in all four countries received the same standardised training and instructions (as described in Chapter 5) therefore the quality of the data collection was ensured as far as possible.

Chapter 2: Offenders' narratives in research –the narrative approach in the study of criminality

This chapter provides an overview of the concepts most crucial to the interpretation and analysis of the narratives in general, and their application to the research of the offenders' narratives in particular. For the readers' convenience each of the concepts reviewed is

⁷ Inappropriateness of the data for the new research aims and lack of control over data quality are considered to be the main disadvantages of the secondary data use; see Denscombe, 2010; Sanders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009.

described in the separate subchapter titled after the concept reviewed in it. In each subchapter an overview of the concept in general and the critical review of the concept's application to the study of the offenders' narratives are provided. The chapter is concluded by a summary of the complicated material that has been reviewed and a critical discussion that outlines the gaps in the existing research – the gaps that will be addressed further in the current study.

Narratives as a research tool provide a psychologically rich source of data on so-called “lived experiences” through which people comprehend their life events and choices (Polkinghorne, 1988). The potential of exploring criminality through an understanding of offenders' personal narratives is being increasingly recognised in recent decades (Toch, 1969; Canter, 1994; Maruna, 1999; Presser, 2009; Sandberg, 2009; Presser and Sandberg, 2015). Thus, Canter (1994) argued that an individual's destructive narrative drives the individual to deviant behaviour and shapes the offending actions into specific patterns (*modus operandi*). Later, this theory was developed in the empirical models of offending styles for various offence types (e.g. arson – Canter and Fritzon, 1998; terrorism - Fritzon et al, 2001; stalking – Canter and Ioannou, 2004b etc). Agnew (2006) described the ways in which offences emerge in terms of story lines. Maruna (2001) distinguished the specific narrative of redemption that underpins the person's desistance from crime. A more recent study on child sex offenders mirrored the results of this research: desisting offenders had more positive narrative patterns, while the persisting ones demonstrated a more negative, contaminated scenario (Farmer, Beech and Ward, 2012). However, researchers still tend to overlook the value of the offenders' life stories as raw data in favour of statistical models and analysing datasets (Nee, 2004), and the studies on offenders' personal experiences (as one can see from the examples above and as it also will be demonstrated further in this chapter) are frequently focused

specifically on crime episodes, roles and/or storylines (e.g. Toch, 1969; Canter, Kaouri and Ioannou, 2003; Agnew, 2006; Youngs and Canter, 2012; O'Connor, 2015 etc). Research on the life narrative of offenders is relatively rare (e.g. Canter, 1994; Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2010; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2015). As Presser (2010) pointed out the essential understanding of the offenders' life stories is impeded by the lack of a knowledge base for methodological approaches to elicit, interpret and analyse criminal narratives. This chapter provides an overview of the most crucial concepts of the narrative research – their definitions, their significance for the study of the offenders' narrative specifically, the results of previous explorations of these concepts in application to the offenders' narratives and the limitations of these previous studies.

2.1 The psychological framework for the research of the life narratives

Reissman (2005) identified four forms of the narrative analysis that distinguish between considerations of what the narrative deals with (i.e. thematic analysis) and how it is dealt with in the narrative (the way the content of the narrative is organised, i.e. structural analysis). Presser (2010) in a further elaboration of this framework highlighted the importance of “themes of interest” (p. 439) generated from past research and the topics of concern. This chapter provides an overview of the “themes of interest” of the current research – the well-established concepts that were successfully applied to the narratives of the general population and to the offenders' narratives as well. The following concepts were chosen for the overview of the psychological framework for the research of life narratives: themes of redemption and contamination, agency and communion, imagoes, justification, behavioural incentives and emotions. While further in this introduction a short explanation of the importance of each of these concepts in the narrative research is provided, the concepts themselves are overviewed separately in the following subchapters.

2.1.1. The significance of the chosen concepts for narrative research in criminology

McAdams and his colleagues have worked for decades on the creation and development of a successful methodology for the elicitation and interpretation of the life narratives of members of general public, most frequently students or effective individuals (McAdams, 1993; 1995; 1996; 2012). For the current overview the themes of redemption (a narrative form in which negative events or circumstances lead to a positive outcome) and contamination (a narrative form in which positive events or circumstances lead to a negative outcome) and the themes of agency (the extent to which the narrator is autonomous and has power over his/her own life) and communion (the narrative encompasses the concepts of love, friendship, care, unity etc) were chosen. McAdams (2001) described these four themes as the different ways in which people organise their narratives in order to produce the storyline. The themes of redemption and contamination were found to be of particular relevance specifically to the offending population, as the study by Maruna (2001) demonstrated that the question of whether narrators perceive their lives as a path of redemption (from bad to good) or contamination (from good to bad) is crucial to their desistance/recidivism. McAdams (2001) argued that the themes of Agency and Communion are fundamental to the person's self-perception of his/her relationship with the world. The set of internalised scripts centred around the thematic clustering of agency and communion and formulated around the representation of the narrator <protagonist of the story> McAdams (1993) defined as imago – dominating character, personified and idealised concept of the self, personal myth, organised according to the themes of Agency and Communion. The results of the study by Youngs and Canter (2011) on the narrative roles in a criminal context (based on the McAdams research on imagoes, 1993) supported the idea that the offenders' narratives help to shape the criminal actions and outline the specific set of the thematic crime narrative roles, that as McAdams' imagoes (1993)

represent a personified concept of the self, “summary of the narrative” (Youngs and Canter, 2011, p. 239).

McAdams (1993) stated that people identify themselves through an inner narrative, and give meaning to their actions through it. The narratives imply some form of cognitive processing to give meaning to the actions (Youngs and Canter, 2011). Thus the research on the cognitive distortions, biases, “criminal thinking styles” (Youngs and Canter, 2011, p. 237) is highly significant for the study of the offenders’ narratives. Therefore the theme of justifications was chosen for this overview. It will include neutralisation techniques (coping strategies in order to neutralise the effect of internal conflict when it arises due to the fact that the individual is engaged in deviant behaviour, Sykes and Matza, 1957) and moral disengagement mechanisms (the gradual processes that allow the individual to avoid self-condemnation when his/her moral standards have been violated by his/her own behaviour, Bandura, 1990).

According to Social Cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; 1999) the behaviours are acquired/learned through exposure to social models and then the acquired behaviours are shaped by positive reinforcement relating to different combinations of fundamental human incentives that form a set of outcome expectations for a given behaviour. These incentives form a set of outcome expectations for a given behaviour. The successful application of Social Cognitive theory to the study of criminology (e.g. Youngs, 2004; 2006; Carthy, 2013) demonstrated the significance of the behavioural incentives theme to the importance of motivation (as perceived by the narrator himself) for the understanding of the offenders’ narratives.

As argued by a number of researchers (e.g. Katz, 1988; Canter and Ioannou, 2004a) considering the emotional aspect of deviant behaviour can bring a closer understanding of the crime as it is experienced by the offender him-/herself. Thus, the emotional content that

crimes create for those who commit them could be positive and even addictive (Katz, 1988), and the exploration of offenders' emotional experiences during the crime can provide a great insight into the forces that drive individuals into deviancy (Canter and Ioannou, 2004a). For that reason emotions were also included as the "theme of interest" in the current overview.

2.1.2 Redemption and Contamination

This subchapter covers the narrative themes of Redemption and Contamination: their definitions as the narrative forms in which negative events or circumstances lead to a positive outcome (Redemption) or the opposite, when positive events or circumstances lead to a negative outcome (Contamination) (based on McAdams, 1997; 2012; McAdams et al, 1997; Bauer, McAdams and Sakaeda, 2005 etc). The exploration of these themes in previous studies of offenders' narratives (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Carthy, 2013; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016) is also provided in this chapter together with a description of the limitations of these studies.

Two types of stories that people tell about their lives were identified by McAdams, Diamond, St Aubin and Mansfield (1997): contamination script and script of redemption. These scripts were derived on the basis of reoccurring themes in the life stories of American adults (contingently non-offending, "normal" population).

The redemption sequence is a narrative form in which negative events or circumstances lead to a positive outcome (McAdams, 2012). Such scripts can demonstrate, for example, how an individual makes productive changes in his/her life course, resulting in positive outcomes. This sequence is represented by the movement from bad to good, and demonstrates the

elements of agency and empowerment. For example, in the study by McAdams et al (1997) the narrators demonstrated how they took control over their lives and thus made positive changes. The general redemption theme can be manifested through a sequence of sub-themes. For example, in this type of script, the narrator enjoys a special advantage, or has "...clear and enduring values... confidence of early blessing and steadfast belief... bad events become transformed, or redeemed into good outcomes... bad things happen, but are often turned to good, whereas when good things happen they rarely turn to bad..." (McAdams, et al., 1997, p. 687). Further studies demonstrated that mature people living a "happy life" view their past experiences as the means and areas of personal growth (Bauer, McAdams and Sakaeda, 2005).

In the contamination sequence, positive events turn sour: negativity overwhelms, and previously good or at least acceptable things become spoiled, ruined or undone (McAdams, et al., 1997; McAdams, 2012). McAdams (2012) proposed to categorise the events that can be described in the contamination script in the following subthemes: victimization, betrayal, loss (of significant others, job, money, property or even respect), failure, illness or injury (physical or psychological), disappointment, disillusionment and sex (enjoyment turns to guilt, humiliation). McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten and Bowman (2001) found that contamination sequences in life narratives predict low levels of well-being among adults.

The exploration of the redemption and contamination sequences within the offenders' narrative has a lot to offer for the research on offending behaviour and the psychology of criminals. In some studies, negative or positive life events were referred to as antecedents to deviant behaviour or desistance: for example, upon marriage the offender exerts a new sense of identity and meaning of life, receives emotional support – and thus turns to the path of desistance (Sampson and Laub, 1995; Laub and Sampson, 2003). From the narrative approach point of view, the interpretation of the event by the individual is more crucial than

the event itself. When applied to research of offenders' narratives, the redemption and contamination sequences were found to be distinctive characteristics in both the narratives of persistent and desistant offenders (Maruna, 2001). Thus, the persistent criminal tended to show more contaminated script within their life story, while the redemptive script was more frequently embraced by desistant criminals. Maruna (2001) argued that "...offenders need to have a believable story of why they are going straight to convince themselves and that is the real change."(p. 86). He also described a number of components included in the redemptive script of the desistant offenders. Thus, the finding of the new "good self" comes with help and empowerment from an outside force; or finding of the old true "good self" was presented (Maruna, 2001). Additionally, ex-offenders were able to differentiate themselves from crime and, according to Maruna (2001) that allowed them to distance themselves from their deviant actions and ensure the desistance process. As for the contaminated script that persistent criminals tended to show within their narratives – the following components were found present in the participants' accounts: lack of opportunities other than criminal ones to make money, drug addiction and/or lack of hope for change (Maruna, 2001). Although this study was one of the major ones to explore the themes of redemption and contamination in the narratives of offenders, it did not address the sub-themes of either redemption or contamination narrative forms, such as special advantages, loss, disappointment, disillusionment etc (as described previously in this subchapter). Also as described by Maruna (2001) the research sample for this study was of mixed gender (55 men, 10 women) and with small and unequally sized groups for the comparative analysis (30 desisting, 20 persisting). The data for this study was collected in one country exclusively (Great Britain), and the ethnic minority groups were rather underrepresented (Maruna, 2001). The more recent studies (Carthy, 2013; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016) addressed some of these matters – they were carried out on larger samples (69 offenders and 120 participants from, presumably,

the non-offending population), and the topic of the sub-themes of redemption and contamination forms of the narratives was addressed. The findings of these more recent studies demonstrated that incarcerated offenders tend to show contaminated script in their narratives more frequently than do the non-offending population (Carthy, 2013; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016). However these studies were carried out on exclusively British samples, and on a mixed sample of offenders, in which both violent and non-violent offenders were present. At the same time the potential differences in the manifestations of the redemption and contamination narrative forms within the sample of offenders (e.g. between violent and non-violent offenders) were not addressed in these studies. Thus it can be concluded that the following gaps are present in the research of the themes of redemption and contamination in the offenders' narratives: the exploration of these themes and their subthemes (as defined by McAdams, 2012) in the life narratives of the offenders, the study of the manifestation of these themes on large samples and on samples that do not represent one country exclusively; and the comparative analysis of the manifestations of these themes in the narratives of offenders with different types of criminal past.

Maruna (2001) argued that apart from the differences in the narrative form (redemption versus contamination, as described previously here) the persistent group's narratives lacked elements of agency when compared to the desistant group's narratives. The narrative concepts of agency and communion are outlined in the following subchapter.

2.1.3 Agency and Communion

This subchapter covers the narrative themes of Agency and Communion: their definitions as thematic clusterings that articulate an individual's strivings, needs and desires for autonomy and the power to affect the individual's own life (Agency) or love, friendship and unity (Communion) (based on McAdams, 1988; 1993; 2012 etc). The subchapter also overviews

the exploration of these themes in the previous studies of the offenders' narratives (e.g. Farmer, 2012; Fisher et al 1998; Harkins & Beech, 2007; Youngs and Canter, 2012 etc) and discusses the limitations of these studies.

In his book "The stories we live by: personal myths and the making of the self" McAdams (1993) described personal narratives as organised around different modalities of the Agency and Communion themes. These two narrative thematic clusterings articulate an individual's strivings, needs, desires and goals (McAdams, 2012) and thus obviously the incorporation of these themes' features varies within the narrative contents of different people (McAdams, 2001). McAdams (2012) also provides the definitions of the pathways in which each of the themes can be developed in the narrative. The themes of agency and communion shape nadir points (life-history low points), peak points (high points, most wonderful and fulfilling moments) and turning points (experiences of significant life transition) within the narrative construct (McAdams, 1988; 2001).

Agency theme refers to the extent to which the narrator is autonomous, self-focused and has the power to affect his/her own life. Strong agentic character is described as "...individual's striving to separate from others, to master the environment, to assert, protect and expand the self." (McAdams, 1993, p. 71). Agency theme allows the exploration of such psychological concepts as empowerment, self-mastery, strength, control and responsibility. McAdams (1993; 2012) distinguished the following manifestations of the agency theme in the narrative content: self-mastery (the protagonist masters and/or improves the self), status/victory (the protagonist gains prestige amongst his/her peers or heightens his/her status), achievement/responsibility (the protagonist attains significant achievement in some task or

goal), and empowerment (the main character is made better through an interaction with something larger and greater than the self).

The theme of Communion encompasses the concepts of love, friendship, care, unity etc (McAdams, 2012). The narrative high in this theme explores the topics of reciprocal, non-instrumental dialogue, the provision of help or care, a general feeling of unity or togetherness with the others and the world, and, obviously, the concept of love and friendship (McAdams, 1993; 2012). The love/friendship theme can be manifested in the narrative in a form of the romantic love of the couple, or friendly feelings between peers; and should be distinguished from the care/help theme, that describes rather a nurturing, provisional relationship (e.g. “parent-child”) (McAdams, 1993, 2012).

Both Agency and Communion theme can help in uncovering motivations within the narrative. Thus, the protagonist can aim to reach the higher status through forceful action (Agency theme, status/victory) or a craving for love, affiliation and intimacy (Communion theme, love/friendship).

In recent decades the appeal to these two narrative modalities in offenders’ narrative studies has grown. For example, Farmer et al. (2012) drew a parallel between the Agency theme and the inner locus of control, a well-known predictor of desistance and offenders’ treatment success (Fisher et al 1998; Harkins & Beech, 2007). According to Farmer et al (2012) the desistance can be seen as a result of the belief of the ability to control one’s own life - high level of Agency theme. Youngs and Canter (2012) applied the Agency and Communion themes to the research on the crime narratives in order to outline the four roles offenders assigned to themselves in these event narratives. Such applications required a review and adjustment of the definition of the narrative themes. Thus, the Communion theme within the crime episode was defined as Intimacy - “...some form of interpersonal transaction with the

victim...” (Youngs and Canter, 2012, p. 236). The Agency theme within the crime episode was defined as Potency – “...the imposing of the offender’s will... the offender sees himself as taking charge and is focused on maximizing his gains” (Youngs and Canter, 2012, p. 236). Only an analysis of the crime episode requires such adjustments of the narrative theme’s definitions. The study of offenders’ life narratives can be done in the original terms of Agency and Communion. Potentially the exploration of the Agency and the Communion themes in the offenders’ life narrative might allow a comparison between the manifestations of these themes in the offenders’ life and crime accounts. However, both themes of Agency and Communion were rarely explored in the offenders’ life narratives, and their adjustments (Potency and Intimacy, Youngs and Canter, 2012) were studied exclusively on the crime narratives. Although Agency and Communion themes were touched upon in a few previous studies (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Youngs et al, 2016) in the offenders’ life narratives they were not analysed in depth. Thus, in the comparative analysis of the narratives of persistent and desistant offenders (Maruna, 2001) the theme of Communion (and its subthemes, as described, for example, by McAdams, 1993) was not addressed. No comparative analysis between the manifestations of these themes in the narratives of offenders with violent and non-violent criminal histories was done previously, although the aforementioned studies (Maruna, 2001; Youngs et al, 2016) used mixed samples that included the offenders with various types of criminal histories. All of the previous studies (Maruna, 2001; Youngs and Canter, 2012; Youngs et al, 2016) regardless of the chosen narrative material (life narrative or crime episode) were conducted on exclusively British offenders (Maruna, 2001; Youngs and Canter, 2012; Youngs et al, 2016). Thus it can be concluded that the following gaps are currently present in the research of the themes of agency and communion in the offenders’ narratives: the exploration of these themes and their subthemes (as defined by McAdams, 1993, 2012) in the life narratives of the offenders, the study of the manifestation of these

themes on the samples that do not represent one country exclusively; the comparative analysis of the manifestations of these themes in the narratives of offenders with different types of criminal histories.

According to McAdams (1993) the thematic clusterings of Agency and Communion in the narrative outline the set of the centralised scripts. The script-forming aspects that McAdams defined as imagoes are outlined in the following subchapter.

2.1.4 Imagoes

This subchapter covers the theme of Imagoes: their definition as internalised scripts centred around the thematic clusterings of Agency and Communion and formulated around the representation of the narrator (based on McAdams, 1993), the types of imagoes (based on McAdams, 1993), the application of the imagoes' theme to the previous studies of the offenders' narratives (e.g. Youngs and Canter, 2012; Carthy, 2013; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016) and the limitations of these studies.

The idea that the number of possible story plots in fictional narratives is limited was studied for nearly a century (e.g. Propp, 1928; Frye, 1957; Brooker, 2004). This idea is also relevant for the narrative psychology. According to White and Epston (1990) the stories people tell about their lives are based on a centralised story plot where they present themselves as the protagonist (dominant narrative structure). In his research of the life-stories of non-criminal American adults, McAdams (1993) distinguished a set of internalised scripts centralised around the thematic clusterings of Agency and Communion. These scripts are formulated around the protagonist – the representation of the narrator. McAdams (1993) defined this script-forming aspect as imago – dominating character of the narrative, personified and idealised concept of the self, which forms in early adult years on the basis of social roles and

other divergent aspects of the self. There may be more than one dominant imago in one's life story (McAdams, 1993). Imagoes are different from social roles, but a social role can become an imago if, in the eyes of the individual, it becomes applicable to a wide range of life activities, an important aspect of the self (McAdams, 1993). As personal myths, imagoes reveal some aspects of one's identity, and in that quality they are closer to the conception of the ideal self.

McAdams (1993) described 15 imagoes organised according to the properties of the Agency and Communion narrative themes. There were Agentic imagoes, representing various strong characters. For example, the imago of a Warrior represents one who attains power over others, comes to battle with others and world; and the Traveller is the one who overcomes obstacles. Some imagoes represent an exclusively Communion theme, such as Lover (for the protagonist love is the main focus of life) or Friend (the protagonist is loyal, trustworthy and focused on life-long friends and friendship). There were imagoes strong in both Agency and Communion theme, such as Healer (the main character in the narrative concentrates on cures, health and well-being). The imagoes of Escapist and Survivor were described as low in both the Agency and Communion themes. The first of them describes the character who is unwilling to take responsibility for anything, and lives for diversion and amusement; and the second represents the protagonist who survives a harsh environment, injury, illness and/or tough circumstances.

According to McAdams (1993) all the imagoes he distinguished are positive types. Youngs and Canter (2012) argued that, due to the high presence of Communion themes within the imagoes, most of them will not be applicable in a criminal context. They also suggested that both imagoes of high Potency and low Intimacy theme, and imagoes low in both Potency and Intimacy would be presented in the crime narratives. Youngs and Canter (2012) proposed that on a fundamental level the crime role is in its core determined by the offender's self-

perception of his or her own strength (strong versus weak, theme of Potency), while the different levels of Intimacy might determine the role of others (victims) in the mind of the offender during the offence (others significant or non-significant, theme of Intimacy). Youngs and Canter (2012) distinguished four dominant roles of offenders' crime narratives. The first one, the *Revengeful Mission Role*, is defined by high levels of both Potency and Intimacy (the offender perceives him/herself as strong, others are significant) and a calm and negative emotional state. The second, *Professional on Adventure*, is characterised by high levels of potency and low of intimacy (narrator perceives him/herself as strong, others not significant), and by a calm emotional state. The third, *Tragic Hero (Low Potency, Low Intimacy)* pushed by fates perceives him/herself as weak, and doesn't see others as significant. "Adoption of this role is associated with an aroused but not entirely negative emotional state." (Youngs and Canter, 2012, p. 246). The fourth, *Victim within Irony* narrative sees himself as powerless and alienated from others who are significant to him (Low Potency, High Intimacy). He/she finds himself in an aroused negative emotional state during the offence.

The idea of dominating characters, distinguished by a set of internalised scripts centralised around the thematic clusterings of Agency and Communion, was successfully applied to the study of the offenders' stories. However, it was almost exclusively done on the accounts of crime, and not on the offenders' life narratives (e.g. Youngs and Canter, 2012). Thus, the recent study on comparison between offenders' and non-offenders' narratives demonstrated that similar dominant narrative roles were manifested in the deviant episodes' accounts in both groups (Carthy, 2013). However, even in this study the imagoes of the life accounts in their original form (as defined by McAdams, 1993) did not receive much attention (Carthy, 2013; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016), and the main focus was on the application of the narrative roles, but not on the original imagoes, described by Youngs and Canter (2012) on

the basis of the crime accounts to the life narratives as whole. Thus, it can be said that the imagoes (in their original form as defined by McAdams, 1993) of the offenders' life narratives are yet to be explored. The few studies that were done on the narrative roles (as described previously in this subchapter) were conducted on exclusively British samples (Youngs and Canter, 2012; Carthy, 2013; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016), and thus the extrapolation of their results to other countries is difficult. The manifestation of the imagoes in the narratives of the offenders with different criminal histories still remains an unexplored field.

According to Canter and Youngs (2015) the roles embedded in the narratives also indicate the types of justifications, neutralisations and minimisations in the narrator's thought process. The following subchapter addresses the matter of the justifications in the offenders' narratives.

2.1.5 Justifications

This subchapter covers the theme of Justifications: neutralisation techniques (based on Sykes and Matza, 1957), moral development (Kohlberg, 1984) and moral disengagements (based on Bandura, 1990; 2002), the previous studies on these themes in criminology (e.g. Stevenson et al, 2004; O'Connor, 2000; Youngs et al, 2015 etc) and the limitations of these studies.

Although not included in the original McAdams' framework on life stories, the question of offending behaviour justifications is important for the understanding of criminality and was not overlooked by the researchers. Thus, Feldman (1993) based his explanation of criminal behaviour on the assumption that the behaviour is largely governed by rational processes rather than irrational ones. He suggested that when a person is experiencing the internal conflict, it is easier to adjust cognitions instead of the behaviour, and that results in distorted

thinking patterns that are required to justify behaviour inconsistencies (Feldman, 1993). However this theory is largely based on the idea of rational decisions in criminal actions, while frequently the onset of deviant behaviour is influenced by intoxication, rage or other cognitive deficits. For example, as shown in the study by McMurrin, Hoyte and Jinks (2012) the triggers for criminal actions could be distress, desire for a fight and offence.

Another traditional appeal was made to the morals of the offender: the stage of moral development, or the way in which the perpetrator justifies his/her deviant behaviour from a moral point of view. For example, Kohlberg (1984) suggested that those who commit crimes exhibit the lowest, pre-conventional level of moral development. However Kohlberg (1984) also argued that highest level is characterised by the prevalence of personal norms and values over those of society– and studies show that many offenders demonstrate precisely this phenomenon (e.g. Stevenson et al, 2004; Youngs and Canter, 2012). Although Kohlberg's theory is still used in some studies, the results are at best controversial (e.g. Buttell, 2002; Wilson et al, 2002).

Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation theory is currently one of the most popular theories of criminal behaviour. This theory describes five neutralisation techniques that allow the individual to become engaged in the deviant behaviour. The central thesis of the neutralisation theory states that any individual is limited by his/her moral obligation and so creates coping strategies in order to neutralise the effect of internal conflict when it arises. These coping strategies/neutralisation techniques are denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of condemners, and the appeal to higher loyalties.

Bandura (1999, 2002) connected the deviant behaviour and the gradual process of moral disengagement. He distinguished three sets of moral disengagement practices. The first one is cognitive reconstruction of the harmful behaviour itself. It includes moral justification

(inhumane conduct portrayed as serving social or moral purposes), euphemistic labelling (usage of “verbally sanitised” language to describe an immoral action) and advantageous comparison (inhumane behaviour is compared to an even more inhumane one, to make it look better in comparison). The second set of disengagement practices aims to minimize the impact of the individual actions in the harm done. It includes displacement of responsibility; diffusion of responsibility; distortion of consequences (impact of behaviour is ignored, minimized, distorted or disbelieved). The third set of practices is directed on the victims of inhumane behaviour and includes attribution of blame (victims are viewed as if they brought sufferings on themselves) and dehumanization (victims of mistreatment are viewed as less than human). These disengagement practices are reminiscent of the neutralisation techniques described by Sykes and Matza (1957), and the whole theory is based on a similar thesis: the person needs a way to avoid self-condemnation when his/her moral standards have been violated by his/her own behaviour.

A more recent study by Stevenson et al (2004) clearly shows the application of both Kohlberg’s and Bandura’s theories, and provides a third view on the question of offenders’ reasoning. The comparison between the offending and the non-offending population showed that so called criminal sentiments are good predictors of offending behaviour, and law violation can be rationalised regardless of the sociomoral stage of development (which might be high with serious offenders or low with non-offenders) (Stevenson et al, 2004). Thus, the actual division between the offending and the non-offending population appears on the level of self-identification with criminal peers and attitudes toward justice and law: those who perceive themselves as criminal solve their problems by the means appropriate to their self-identification. This finding accords with the results of more recent comparisons of offenders’ and non-offenders’ life narratives (Youngs et al, 2015): in that study the theme of criminality was found to be the exclusive focus of offenders’ responses.

Nevertheless the exploration of the ways in which people justify their deviant actions remains an important area in psychology and specifically in research on criminality. Maruna and Mann (2006) stated that offenders who during treatment do use neutralisation techniques and do not blame themselves for crime committed have less chances to return to criminal life after treatment. The theme of justification was not neglected in the narrative research – both general and specifically on the criminal population. After all, one of the layers of personality described by McAdams is the layer of contextualized characteristic adaptations, or personal concerns, which includes personal principles, moral values, defence mechanisms and neutralisation techniques. Linde (1993) suggested that due to the fact that the narrative is created after the event, the narrator gets the chance to present him-/herself as moral even he/she is not. O'Connor (2000) described the justification techniques used by offenders in the descriptions of the crimes they committed. Some studies showed that the type of neutralisation technique can be associated with the type of the offence described: offenders who committed property crimes usually provided excuses for their actions, but those who committed violent offences tried to justify their deeds (Felson and Ribner, 1981; Henderson and Hewstone, 1984).

The types of neutralisation techniques the offender uses in his/her neutral life account can reveal important information as to how the narrator perceive him-/herself in reality, how important it is to acquit him-/herself – and in which way. Yet again, the studies on behavioural justifications in the narratives are usually done on specific stories (e.g. crime - Felson and Ribner, 1981; Henderson and Hewstone, 1984; O'Connor 2000; Tognato, 2015; imprisonment – Ugelvik, 2015), and not on life narratives. In a recent study Carthy (2013) proposed that the less moral a person is, the more justifications he/she will use in the narrative. In her research on various episodes <crime, significant event and life narrative> described by offenders in semi-structured interviews Carthy (2013) distinguished two types

of contaminated scripts featured among other traits by specific types of neutralisation strategies: “victim of circumstance” and “quest for honour”. The first one represents a life story, in which the main character was frequently mistreated, betrayed, suffered loss and/or injury. The second script is focused on a hostile reaction to others, and the narrator expresses the need for power and extensively uses the external blaming systems through cognitive distortions and neutralisation strategies. However, as the researcher herself pointed out “the variations in the contamination script may not be presented as clear-cut for all offenders as it is in the examples provided; more research is necessary with a larger sample of offenders to explore the range in the level of contamination offenders show in their life-story.” (Carthy, 2013, p. 229). Additionally, this study was done on an exclusively British sample and the potential differences of the justifications described by the offenders with different types of criminal histories were not addressed although the sample did include both violent and non-violent offenders. However as previous studies (Felson and Ribner, 1981; Henderson and Hewstone, 1984) showed the neutralisation techniques chosen by the narrator can be correlated with the type of crime described in the narrative (as mentioned previously - offenders who committed property crimes provided excuses for their actions, while those who committed violent offences tried to justify their deeds). It can be concluded that the following gaps are currently present in research of the behavioural justifications in the offenders’ narratives: the exploration of the justifications within the life narratives of offenders is almost non-existent in current academic studies, as the justifications and neutralisation techniques are usually explored in the crime accounts or imprisonment description experiences. Additionally recent studies on justifications were carried out on relatively small samples (the sample of 60 in the study by Carthy, 2013, was one of the largest – and, as quoted previously, was not considered as sufficiently large by the researcher herself), - and on samples that were collected in one country only (e.g. Carthy, 2013). The

question of the differences of the justifications in the narratives of the offenders with different types of the criminal histories was also not addressed in any recent studies (two publications on the subject that were mentioned previously are more than 30 years old - Felson and Ribner, 1981; Henderson and Hewstone, 1984).

The justifications in general describe how an individual tends to justify the behaviour in the situation of cognitive dissonance, when an individual's behaviour is inconsistent with their beliefs and/or standards. But why is the individual engaged in such behaviour? The question of behavioural incentives is outlined in the following subchapter.

2.1.6 Behaviour incentives

This subchapter covers the theme of behaviour incentives. There is a brief description of Social Cognitive Theory (positive reinforcements relating to the combinations of fundamental human incentives together shape the behaviours learned through exposure to social models; Bandura, 1986; 1999). The development of this theory in application to criminology (Youngs, 2006) and specifically in application to the offenders' narratives (Carthy, 2013) is also overviewed in this subchapter, and a critical overview of these studies is provided.

According to Social Cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; 1999) the behaviours are acquired/learned through exposure to social models: people observe a model performing specific behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour, and they remember the sequence of events and use this information to guide their own actions. According to this theory, the acquired behaviours are shaped by positive reinforcement relating to different combinations of fundamental human incentives (Bandura, 1986; 1999). These incentives form a set of outcome expectations for a given behaviour. Youngs (2004) stated that, although seven different fundamental incentives can be described for a full set of human behaviours (Primary

incentives, Sensory incentives, Social incentives, Monetary incentives, Activity incentives, Power/Status incentives and Self-Evaluative incentives), only three of them can be covered in the range of criminal acts. These incentives are Power/Status, Sensory and Monetary/Material ones. Power/Status incentive refers to the principal goal of obtaining control over others. Sensory incentives motivate through the desire for novel, pleasant and stimulating experiences and the avoidance of aversive ones (e.g. boredom). In Bandura's research (1986, 1999) monetary incentive refers to acquiring the ability to obtain whatever the person's heart desires. Youngs (2006) extended this definition, suggesting that monetary incentive may also refer to material gain in a symbolic, emotional or physical sense. The incentive-based model of crime style differentiation created in this study demonstrated how these three incentives: monetary, power/status, and sensory ones - are particularly relevant for the exploration of the crime narratives (Youngs, 2006). In the recent study by Carthy (2013), this new Material incentive, together with the Sensory one, were significantly associated with the incarcerated offenders' life stories when compared to the life accounts of a nominally non-offending sample. However, there were no studies on the variations of the incentives within offenders' life narratives. Neither of the aforementioned researches (Youngs, 2006; Carthy, 2013) addressed the question of the variations of the incentives within the life narratives of the offenders with different types of the criminal histories and/or from various countries (both studies were conducted on exclusively British samples). Both studies were also conducted on relatively small samples, and an application of behavioural incentives to a larger sample of offenders' narratives would be required in order to ensure the generalizability of the results. Based on the study by Carthy (2013) it could be proposed that, if the incentive-based differentiation model was successful in the study on crime experiences, and if the specific types of incentives were found to be more typical for offenders' narratives than for those of non-offenders, then the significant differences in incentives can be found also in the life

scripts of offenders. Such differences will be important for further understanding of offenders' personal stories as motivations shaping the narrative. In addition to that, the data on norms of the life incentives within the criminal population will be important for the practitioners involved in offenders' treatment programmes. Furthermore, a study of how different behavioural incentives interact with other important parts of narrative, such as identity, justifications and emotions, might provide an opportunity to uncover the ways in which these functions form the narratives. The themes of justifications, roles and behavioural incentives have already been described in this chapter, while the following subchapter provides an outline of the theme of emotions.

2.1.7 Emotions

This subchapter covers the theme of emotions. The significance of the theme of emotions for an understanding of deviant behaviour is outlined in this subchapter (based on Katz, 1988; Canter and Ioannou, 2004a). This subchapter also provides a description of the exploration of the emotions in the studies on the offenders' narratives (e.g. Youngs and Canter, 2011; Carthy, 2013) and an overview of the limitations of these studies.

Katz (1988) argued that considering the emotional aspect of deviant behaviour can bring researchers closer to understanding the crime as it is experienced by the offender him-/herself. He also outlined the emotional content that crimes create for those who commit them as positive and even addictive. Canter and Ioannou (2004a) proposed that the exploration of offenders' emotional experiences during the crime provides a great insight into the forces that drive individuals into deviancy. In this study, Canter and Ioannou (2004a) indicated a range of emotional responses that were experienced across different types of crime. Thus, during interpersonal crimes offenders were more likely to experience negative emotions, while for

the property crimes respondents more frequently described a positive emotional background (Canter and Ioannou, 2004a). In this study, Russell's emotion circumplex (Russell, 1997) was used to outline the range of emotions during the crime.

In Russell emotion circumplex (1997), the variety of emotions is described by polarising facets of arousal (aroused versus non-aroused) and pleasure (positive versus negative, or high pleasure versus low pleasure). The range of emotions fit within each modality: high arousal plus high pleasure can outline happiness, excitement, exaltation etc. In the recent study, Youngs and Canter (2011) demonstrated how four dominant narrative roles presented by the offenders were associated with four different emotional states. The four emotional categories described in this study were elation (high arousal and high pleasure), calm (low arousal and high pleasure), distress (high arousal and low pleasure) and depression (low arousal and low pleasure) (Youngs and Canter, 2011). Thus, in the *Revengeful Mission* script emotional states of calm and displeasure were presented. In the story of the *Tragic Hero* aroused and neutral emotional states were shown. The *Professional* presented calm and neutral emotional states, and the *Victim* demonstrated aroused emotional state and displeasure. The four themes of crime narrative experiences described more recently by Ioannou, Canter and Youngs (2016) supported these findings. The study by Youngs and Canter (2011) is one of the few in which the various narrative concepts (as described previously – agency and communion themes, imagoes, justifications, emotional background) were taken syncretically. The crime roles distinguished in this study were described on different levels: from the manifestations of agency and communion themes (in their adjusted forms of potency and intimacy) to the justifications and emotional background of the crime accounts provided. However such syncretic approach is relatively rare, and in the vast majority of the studies only a few narrative concepts are explored (e.g. Canter and Ioannou, 2004a; Youngs, 2004; 2006 etc).

As shown in this overview, these studies addressed the emotions within the crime narratives exclusively (Canter and Ioannou, 2004a; Youngs and Canter, 2011; Ioannou et al, 2016), thus leaving the emotions within the life narrative under-researched. A more recent study on the comparison between the life narratives of offenders and non-offenders showed that aroused negative emotions were significantly associated with the offenders' narratives (Carthy, 2013). The contaminated script of the offenders' narratives in general was outlined by the negative emotional content among other traits. However, this study was conducted on an exclusively British and relatively small sample, and that impedes the extrapolation of its results to other populations. Although, as described previously, this study did not address the variations within the offenders' group, the sample included both violent and non-violent offenders, and, as shown in previous studies, there are differences in emotional background associated with the type of crime, at least within the crime narrative (Canter and Ioannou, 2004a).

2.2 Chapter summary

The following well-established concepts were outlined in this chapter: narrative forms of redemption and contamination; thematic clusterings of agency and communion that articulate an individual's strivings; imagoes – the dominating characters of the narrative, personified and idealised concept of the self; behaviour justifications and incentives and emotions. As the studies overviewed in this chapter demonstrated, all of these concepts are important for understanding the offenders' narratives. Thus, Maruna (2001) found redemption and contamination sequences to be distinctive characteristics in both the narratives of persistent and desistant offenders: the persistent criminal tended to show more contaminated script within their life story, while the redemptive script was more frequently embraced by desistant criminals. Youngs and Canter (2012) adjusted the themes of Agency and Communion to enable their application to the crime narratives in order to outline the four roles offenders assigned to themselves in these event narratives. This research brought closer the

understanding of the processes that instigate and sustain deviant behaviours (Canter and Youngs, 2012). The idea of dominating characters, distinguished by a set of internalised scripts centralised around the thematic clusterings of Agency and Communion (imagoes), was also successfully applied to the study of the offenders' stories. Thus, the four crime narrative roles distinguished by Canter and Youngs (2012) represent the application of McAdams' imagoes (1993) to a crime narrative context. A more recent study on comparison between offenders' and non-offenders' narratives demonstrated that similar dominant narrative roles were manifested in the deviant episodes' accounts in both groups (Carthy, 2013).

The question of offending behaviour justifications was also found to be important for the understanding of criminality: five neutralisation techniques that allow the individual to become engaged in deviant behaviour (Sykes and Matza, 1957) and moral disengagement mechanisms that provide a way for individuals to avoid self-condemnation when their moral standards have been violated by their own behaviour (Bandura 1999, 2002) represent the theories most well-known and important for today's criminology studies. The theme of justifications was not neglected in the narrative research in criminology. Some studies showed that this type of neutralisation technique can be associated with the type of offence described (Felson and Ribner, 1981; Henderson and Hewstone, 1984). In a recent study, Carthy (2013) distinguished two types of contaminated scripts featured, among other traits, by specific types of neutralisation strategies: "victim of circumstance" (the main character was frequently mistreated, betrayed, suffered loss and/or injury) and "quest for honour" (the narrator expresses the need for power and extensively uses external blaming systems).

McAdams (1993) proposed that the concept of imagoes is similar to Bowlby's (1969) suggestion of the existence of "goal-directed blueprints". The question of goal, motivation, and behaviour incentive was found to be important for narrative research in criminology.

Thus, Bandura (1986, 1999) stated that a series of psychological incentives motivate behaviour. Youngs (2006) demonstrated that specifically monetary, power/status and sensory incentives are particularly relevant for the offenders' personal crime experience accounts. Youngs (2006) also extended the definition of the monetary incentive, suggesting that it may also refer to material gain in a symbolic, emotional or physical sense (Material incentive). Carthy (2013) argued that material and sensory incentives were one of the distinguishing characteristics between the narratives of offenders and those of a nominally non-offending sample, as they were found to be significantly associated with the incarcerated offenders' narratives.

Katz (1988) argued that considering the emotional aspect of deviant behaviour can bring researchers closer to understanding the crime as it is experienced by the offender him-/herself. The application of the Russell's emotion circumplex (Russell, 1997) was proven to be productive for the exploration of the offenders' narratives. Thus, significant differences in the emotional background of the crime narratives were found between interpersonal and property crimes (Canter and Ioannou, 2004a). The different types of emotional background were found to be associated with different crime roles (Youngs and Canter, 2011; Ioannou et al, 2016).

However as the review demonstrated there are questions that were not explored in the current research. The key gaps that are most relevant for the current thesis were outlined in this chapter. The key gaps that are most relevant for the current thesis were outlined in this chapter. Briefly, they can be described as follows. At present, the offenders' crime stories receive more research attention than do their life narratives. This notion remains true for most of the concepts outlined in this chapter. Thus, the concepts of imagoes, justifications, emotions, behaviour incentives, agency and communion were almost exclusively studied when applied to the crime narratives or to imprisonment stories (e.g. Felson and Ribner,

1981; Henderson and Hewstone, 1984; O'Connor 2000; Tognato, 2015; and, for imprisonment, Ugelvik, 2015), but rarely if ever, to the life narratives. McAdams (1993, 2012) described subthemes of the major narrative forms of redemption and contamination, and thematic clusterings of agency and communion. However these subthemes remained out of the scope of the offender narratives' studies (e.g. Maruna, 2001). Most of the studies of offenders' narratives are based on small (e.g. Maruna, 2001) or relatively small (Carthy, 2013) samples collected in only one country, and that impedes the extrapolation of their results to large populations and/or different countries. Comparative analysis of the manifestations of the narrative concepts in the stories of offenders with different types of criminal histories was rarely, if ever, carried out. The vast majority of the comparative analyses was conducted on exclusively crime narratives (e.g. Canter and Ioannou, 2004a; Youngs and Canter, 2011; Ioannou et al, 2016), and such results provide knowledge limited to crime experiences only. However as mentioned previously, crime narrative does not define the narrative identity of the participant as whole.

As outlined previously in this thesis, another major gap in current research is the lack of the syncretic approach, the inability to explore the various narrative concepts in their correlations with each other within the narrative. Although some studies succeed in such "unified" analyses (e.g. Youngs and Canter, 2011; Carthy, 2013), they are relatively rare and more frequently done on exclusively British samples (e.g. Carthy) and/or crime narratives (e.g. Youngs and Canter, 2011). Carthy (2013) highlighted the importance of the syncretic approach to research on the offenders' life narratives, as an exploration of the combinations of the important psychological components could help in the improvement of treatment programmes focused on emotional regulation and on changing unhelpful patterns in cognitions and behaviours (e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy is widely used in prisons). Thus, the syncretic approach that allows for the exploration of the neutral (and thus non-

stigmatising) personal narratives in full and regardless of the participants' criminal past and/or country of origin (for the purposes of the further comparative analysis), becomes even more important, as it will allow for the bridging of the key gaps in the current research outlined in this chapter. This new methodology that was built with these purposes in mind is outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: The “Life as a Film” approach as a new methodology for researching offenders’ narratives

3.1 Offenders’ life narratives in focus

As was outlined in the previous chapter, the majority of the studies on the subject of the offenders’ narratives is focused predominantly on crime episodes and experiences. Although this approach is undoubtedly fruitful and interesting, this almost exclusive concentration on crime episodes leads to a number of difficulties. For example, the lack of a point of comparison impedes the understanding of the place of crime in the life of the offender. McAdams (1993) argued that the dominant character of the life narrative differs from the social role or roles of the same individual, unless he/she defines him/herself through this social role. But how many people do define themselves through the crime they committed, and/or their social role of offender? Without the outline of the life narrative of the person, the prediction of the specific episode’s place becomes impossible. At the same time some research demonstrates that an appeal to life episodes (non-criminal ones) leads to a better understanding of the pathways to criminality. Thus, Messerschmidt (2000) explored the factors that lead adolescents to violence by studying the stories they told about different episodes of their lives. His findings represented a fruitful exploration of the paths and the differential use of violence as a resource for "doing masculinity", the exploration done on the basis of the life history rather than “crime episode” research.

The appeal to the life story rather than exclusively to a crime episode is also more “participant-friendly” methodology. The recollection of the crime episode can be a stressful experience for the participant, and the fact that he/she is asked only about the crime episode or episodes might ensure the further consolidation with the self-identification as a criminal. The importance of the role of self-identity in criminality is well-established in criminology. According to labeling theory, the person assigned with the “label” (such as “offender”) becomes the very thing: the label becomes the part of the self-identity and influences further psychological development and behaviour patterns (Matza, 1969). Bernburg, Krohn and Rivera (2006) argued that the formal label (classification of the offence) enhances the stigma of the criminal status and positively affects the involvement in the delinquent actions. Becker (1973) pointed out that, as a reaction to condemning society that applies the stigmatic label, the deviant actors⁸ use the same stigmatic label to justify the deviant actions: “...instead of the deviant motives leading to the deviant behaviour, it is the other way around, the deviant behaviour in time produces the deviant motivation.” (Becker, 1973, p. 26) Although the labelling theory was criticized for identifying criminals as the passive victims of labeling done by others (e.g. Marsh, Melville, Morgan, Norris and Walkington, 2006), the influence of labeling itself was not dismissed completely. Some studies showed that the process of labeling correlates with deviant behaviour (Farrington, 1977). In a more recent publication, Maruna and Copes (2004) argued that the attribution of one’s problem to fatal circumstances or difficult situations might be good predictor of desistance: “Those who cling most tightly to excuses may be the least likely to persist in criminality, because this would counter their images of themselves as innocents” (Maruna and Copes, 2004, p. 53-54). Recent findings by Farmer, McAlinden and Maruna (2016) and McAlinden, Farmer and Maruna (2017) support this proposition. Thus it can be said that the exploration of the deviant actors’ narratives done

⁸ The term “deviant actor” was used by Becker himself (see Becker, 1973)

on “non-criminal” stories, on the narratives that are not descriptions of crimes committed accords with the postulation of the labelling theory, and is very beneficial for research into identity in criminology. The narrative approach has the potential to extend the labelling theory by exploration of the labelling impact as it makes sense to the individual who was the object of the labelling. At the same time an appeal to the life experiences and life story, rather than exclusively to the crime narrative allows the avoidance of additional labelling and stigmatization. It is especially important for research on the incarcerated population. As Bernburg, Krohn and Rivera (2006) proposed incarceration itself acts as a reinforcement to the “criminal” label. Thus, the appeal to the offenders’ life accounts has the potential for the exploration of offenders’ personal experiences without the impact of labelling, and in a way that makes sense to the narrator himself. It will also ensure opportunities of comparison between the narratives of offenders and the supposedly non-offending population (as the recent research by Carthy, 2013 showed, the participants from the non-offending sample described deviant actions from their past – and these were not very different by those described by incarcerated offenders). As previous studies demonstrated, such parallels are fruitful both theoretically (e.g. Maruna and Copes, 2004) and practically (e.g. Carthy, 2013). If the narrative identity is crucial for desistance then there is a requirement for a form of research that would grasp its complexity (Vaughan, 2007).

3.2 Life narrative elicitation and interpretation procedure for the general population

The life narrative elicitation procedure and content framework developed by McAdams and colleagues (McAdams, 1988; McAdams, 1993; McAdams, 1995; McAdams, 2012) allowed them to obtain and interpret detailed accounts of the individuals’ lives and key episodes as they see them. The interviewing was often extended to many sessions (McAdams, 2001), and that gave participants enough time to describe their lives in detail, frequently in terms of the book – with distinct chapters and scenes. This procedure provided a rich framework for

significant and thorough responses, thus giving the material for further content analysis. The interpersonal context of the interview adds special significance to the narrative (Presser, 2010) and permits the individual to reflect on his-/her own narrative and to convey the message within the interaction (Sandberg, 2009).

The narrative approach in criminal psychology is a relatively new etiological perspective and as such encounters many theoretical and practical challenges: from the lack of a knowledge base for methodological approaches to elicit, interpret and analyse criminal narratives (Presser, 2010) to the simple, practical restrictions of time-limits for prison interviews, the low verbal ability of the participants (Canter and Youngs, 2015) and their rather defensive but understandable attitude towards the interviewer.

In 2015 Canter and Youngs published the new framework for elicitation and interpretation narratives of offenders – the “Life as a Film” procedure for exploring offenders’ narratives. This framework was developed in order to embrace different aspects of narrative focusing on the following primary areas: McAdams (e.g. 1993) life-stories’ themes, Bandura’s (1986, 1999) incentives and Sykes and Matza’s (1957) neutralisation theory. As a whole, the elicitation procedure includes the semi-structured interview, during which the participant is asked about significant events in his/her life, crime/deviant act that he/she has committed and life in general. However the “life” question, or, to be more precise, “Life as a Film” part of the semi-structured interview presents the most significant interest for the current research.

The importance of the exploration of offenders’ life accounts has already been outlined in the current thesis. The brief theoretical overview of both elicitation and interpretation procedures in LAAF methodology is presented further.

3.3 Life as a Film elicitation procedure

The general LAAF technique to elicit narrative-relevant content consists of a list of open-ended questions asked in one individual interview. The participants are invited to describe

their life as a film: what will the film be, what will happen in it, what will be the main scenes and characters, how it might end (Canter and Youngs, 2015). This technique is based on McAdams' "Life story interview" (McAdams, 1993; McAdams, 1995). In the original interview McAdams (1995) asked the participants to describe their lives as a book with chapters, critical events (peak and nadir experiences, turning points, significant episodes of various ages etc), life challenges and themes, and alternative futures. As Canter and Youngs (2015) pointed out the "life as a book" form might tend to generate an "autobiography" style narrative structured by social milestones (getting married, starting a job etc) rather than by the events that are intrinsically significant to the narrator. The objective of the creation of the new elicitation procedure (LAAF) was to find the way to explore the narrative in terms of the participant: the story that the offender⁹ can articulate (Canter and Youngs, 2015). The result of the "Life as a Film" interview is a compressed version of a life story, an outline of a life narrative. It does not require external signposts (e.g. critical events) and does not represent a biography. This response can be viewed as a short manifestation of self, enveloping the crucial life narrative points and characteristics (e.g. tone and theme, significant persons and ideas of future). "Life as a Film" responses require some sort of an outcome, a conclusion to the life story rather than a simple emphasis on past events (Canter and Youngs, 2015). Overall, the response to the "Life as a Film" question can be perceived as an ultimate explanation of self and identity, in which the respondent chooses even the form and genre of the story.

The LAAF elicitation process is a narrative methodology adapted and adjusted for the needs of the targeted population (offenders). As highlighted by Canter and Youngs (2015), the pilot study during the development of the LAAF procedure showed that many offenders did not understand the notion of life as a book, as used in the original McAdams' methodology. The

⁹ As the LAAF procedure was originally created for the research on the offenders' narratives.

film parallel was found to be much more clear and suited to the frequently low educational level and verbal ability of the participants. According to the results of the recent comparative analysis of the LAAF accounts of offenders and non-offenders the LAAF procedure indeed is especially suitable for criminal population (Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016). In this study offenders generated more events with more characters; their accounts had clearer structure and more roles for characters than the responses of non-offenders (Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016).

The neutrality of the “life as a film” question helps to avoid additional stigmatization and labelling. The participants are asked neutral questions (as shown in Appendix I (i) crime, or anything connected to criminality are not even mentioned in any of the “Life as a Film” interview questions). The form of the interview also allows the participants to reflect upon their lives and to choose even the form and the genre of the story they are about to tell. The neutrality of the LAAF question also helps to prevent the defensive attitude and discomfort of the participant during the interview. Prisoners or offenders on probation may fear that their answers and/or comments during the interview might later be used against them. Thus a method that allows the avoidance of justificatory focus in the interview is crucial for the successful elicitation of data.

As mentioned previously, the direct and absorbing LAAF elicitation procedure allows the interviewer to collect narrative material that reveals the dynamic unfolding outline of life as perceived by the narrator rather than a historical “autobiography” structured by social “milestones” (Canter and Youngs, 2015). The whole LAAF process is related to the classical projective techniques, specifically the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT, Murray, 1938). In TAT, participants are asked to describe the ambiguous pictures of people. Their descriptions are later analysed for themes of power, achievement, affiliation and status. As the proponents of this method argue, in these narratives people reveal their underlying motives, concerns,

and the way they see the social world. Unlike TAT, LAAF gives more connection with the personal narrative that guides action. At the same time, like TAT, LAAF responses require some imaginative leaps, and, as Bamberg (2011) pointed out, the revelations of self and identity are more likely to emerge if the provided framing inspires imagination. The pilot study demonstrated that participants found the LAAF interviewing procedure an interesting and engaging activity (Canter and Youngs, 2015).

As part of the meta-research project “International Comparison of Offender Narratives”, the LAAF elicitation procedure was used in many countries (Poland, Hungary, Italy, Great Britain, Turkey etc). As the studies show, the procedure allows the collection of rich detailed material more than sufficient for psychological interpretations (e.g. Youngs et al, 2016; Piotrovski and Florek, 2015 etc). However, the interpretation procedure, the integral part of the LAAF methodology, still received less academic attention.

3.4. Life as a Film interpretation procedure

As was demonstrated in the review of the literature on narrative research, a number of key psychological elements based around identity, emotion and cognitive interpretations can be uncovered through the exploration of the stories people tell about their lives. Although the vast majority of the narrative research has been derived from non-criminal samples, the studies on offenders’ narratives demonstrate the usefulness of the narrative approach for the understanding of criminality (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2009; Youngs and Canter, 2011; Carthy, 2013). However, exploring with offenders the stories of their lives as they see them requires a special procedure – one that will allow the examination of a number of psychological components together as they occur within the context of the narrative.

Presser (2009) paraphrased the classic Ricouer’s (1984) and Polkinghorne’s (1988) three conceptualizations of the relationship between narrative and experience in order to categorise

criminologists' work with stories. She described these conceptualizations as 1) narrative as record, 2) narrative as interpretation, and 3) narrative as a shaper/constitutive of experience. In both "narrative as a record" and "narrative as interpretation" the ability to describe the past is valued; however in the "narrative as interpretation" the researcher deals with individual perceptions of the past rather than with an accurate record of the event.

Presser (2010) emphasized the importance of the context in which the story is told for the interpretation and analysis of it. As Canter and Youngs (2015) pointed out, for the LAAF procedure the context is the freedom to describe the life as the individual wants to see it. Thus the emphasis of the LAAF interpretation procedure is put on "interpretation of reality" as one of the ways to conceptualize the narrative (Presser, 2010). However by proxy the role of information collected in analysed by the means of the LAAF system is within the "narrative as a shaper" of experience and behaviour: the knowledge of how person perceives the reality provides the means to adjust this perception and thus shape the inner narrative and behaviour.

In order to provide the tools for the syncretic and unified narrative analysis (one that would allow the application of the large number of themes to all the LAAF accounts analysed, and would ensure that all the accounts were checked for the presence of the same list of themes) the list of "themes of interest" (Presser, 2010, p. 439) was developed for the LAAF interpretation process (Canter and Youngs, 2015). This framework was based on the existing and well-established narrative psychology theories and concepts (e.g. themes of redemption and contamination, imagoes etc, McAdams, 1993) and psychological concepts identified in the recent offenders' narrative studies (e.g. narrative message, Sandberg, 2009). Three main psychological issues shaped the LAAF content framework: psychological complexity, explicit processes used to organise the content, and the nature of agency in relation to others. The brief overview of each of these issues is provided in this chapter, while a more detailed

one is given in Section I, Chapter 5, “5.3. “Life as a Film” (LAAF) content dictionary framework” and in Appendix II where the full LAAF content dictionary is provided.

The psychological complexity provides the basis on which to analyse the accounts in terms of the richness of the generated story. It refers to substantive and formal aspects of the account, such as the number of distinct events, the number of distinct psychological ideas in the account or account length (in words), the presence of a distinct structure etc. The pilot study demonstrated that procedure generates more distinct psychological ideas than people (Canter and Youngs, 2015). These findings were later supported in the first major study that used both LAAF elicitation and interpretation procedures together (Carthy, 2013). These results show that the LAAF approach is an effective methodology for exploring offenders’ ways of thinking (Canter and Youngs, 2015).

The explicit processes used to organise the content of the narrative refer to the ways in which the storyline of the response is produced. These “themes of interest” envelop the psychologically active components that shape the narrative, the processes that produce the connections and movements between the components of the story and form the storyline. This issue encompasses the concepts of agency and communion themes, as well as the paths of redemption and contamination – the range of psychological structuring processes identified by McAdams (1993, 2001).

The “Nature of agency in relation to others” or “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” sub-theme of the LAAF interpretation procedure embraces the concepts relevant to the ways in which the individual deals with the world as a whole and with the people around him/her. It includes emotional background of the narrative, described in terms of Russell’s emotion circumplex (aroused versus non-aroused and positive versus negative); straightforward categories of the interpersonal relationship style (empathy versus hostility); strength of self-

identity in the narrative (strong versus weak) and more complicated concepts, such as the roles assigned by the narrator to him/herself and others (imagoes)..

The theme of cognitive distortions was not overlooked in the LAAF interpretation procedure plan. The behaviour justifications and moral disengagement mechanisms were included as the themes of interest in this content framework. Due to the violation of moral values and judgment that is displayed in criminality, moral disengagement strategies and behaviour justifications are expected to be frequently present in offenders' narratives. As pilot study demonstrated, the justifications that were incorporated in offenders' narratives provide one of the key areas for psychological differentiation between offenders' responses and those collected from the members of general public (Carthy, 2013).

3.5 The chapter conclusion

Vaughan (2007) pointed out that there is a need for a methodology that will allow the grasping of the offender's narrative identity in all its complexity. The result of the LAAF elicitation procedure presents the researchers with an outline of a life narrative, one that does not represent a biography. "Life as a Film" responses require some sort of an outcome, a conclusion to the life story rather than a simple emphasis on past events (Canter and Youngs, 2015). The form of the question ensures a neutral non-judgmental approach (participants are not asked about crimes, offending and are given to choose the content, the form and the genre of their story). While the LAAF elicitation procedure provides the "material for analysis" - a short and reflective manifestation of self, enveloping the crucial life narrative points and characteristics (e.g. tone and theme, significant persons and ideas of future) as chosen by the narrator him/herself, the LAAF content framework provides a means for this analysis, as it includes most crucial narrative themes and concepts. Thus, McAdams (1993) defined agency and communion narrative themes as fundamental to the understanding of how people perceive themselves in the world. Maruna (2001) highlighted the particular relevance of the

contaminative and redemptive narrative scripts to the persistence/desistance of the offenders. These concepts, together with incentives, imagoes, justifications and categories of emotional spectre – all the themes that were outlined previously as important for the narrative analysis, are taken syncretically in the LAAF content framework. The fact that the “themes of interest” (Presser, 2010, p. 439) for this framework were derived from an extensive narrative framework and include neutral categories ensures the neutrality and non-judgmental orientation of the interpretation procedure, and thus prevent the labeling and stigmatization processes during the LAAF elicitation procedure. The neutrality of the LAAF content framework and the fact that it is based on previous extensive narrative research and well-established concepts makes the LAAF interpretation methodology useful for the exploration of the various populations and for comparative studies (e.g. Carthy, 2013 – comparison between offenders and a nominally non-offending sample in terms of the LAAF content framework). Overall the LAAF interpretation procedure provides a tool for a syncretic and unified analysis of these accounts – the opportunity to apply a large number of the important “themes of interest” at once to all the narratives in question and to make this application sufficiently unified for comparative analysis. The importance of a procedure that will allow the exploration of the neutral (and thus non-stigmatising) personal narratives was outlined previously in this thesis. The methodology that could be applied to the non-stigmatizing neutral narratives of the offenders from different countries and/or with various types of the criminal past will allow for the bridging of key gaps in the current research (as described in Chapter 2 of this thesis). The LAAF methodology was built with such a purpose in mind. However, the LAAF interpretation methodology itself has yet to be evaluated.. While the elicitation part of the procedure was extensively used (e.g. Youngs et al, 2016; Piotrovski and Florek, 2015), the only major study that used the LAAF content dictionary was done on a relatively small sample of offenders (Carthy, 2013; 69 incarcerated offenders in the sample)

and was not focused on the “Life as a Film” account. The sample in this study was strictly British, and the criminal background of the participants was mixed – the possible variations in the narratives between offenders with different criminal histories were not taken into account. Thus, although theoretically the LAAF is a complex framework that can produce detailed and interesting results on the “Life as a Film” accounts, and can grasp the variations between offenders of different criminal or cultural backgrounds, these features of the LAAF approach were never put to the test. The main focus of the current research is the evaluation of the LAAF content framework.

Chapter 4: Rationale for research

In the last few decades, the potential for understanding offenders’ personal narratives has been increasingly recognised. Exploring the stories of their lives with the offenders requires a special procedure, one that will be non-judgmental and that will fit for the participants with the low level of education (statistically most of the incarcerated criminal offenders have low educational level, e.g. Berman, 2013; Hawley, Murphy and Souto-Otero, 2013 etc). Such a procedure should inspire the imagination of the participants, as in that case the revelations of self and identity are more likely to occur (Bamberg, 2011). As mentioned previously, this procedure should avoid the justificatory focus in order to avoid a defensive attitude and the discomfort of the participants during the interview. The LAAF procedure was developed with a view to all these requirements. The LAAF interview ensures a neutral, non-judgmental approach (participants are not asked about crimes, offending and are permitted to choose the content, the form and the genre for their story) and the procedure stimulates the participant’s imagination. “Life as a Film” responses require some sort of an outcome, a short and reflective manifestation of self, a conclusion to the life story rather than a simple emphasis on past events (Canter and Youngs, 2015). Within the frameworks of the ICON project, the

“LAAF” elicitation procedure was used for data collection in many countries (USA, Poland, Italy, Turkey, Hungary etc). The LAAF interpretation framework was developed, together with the elicitation procedure, in order to provide a means for the analysis of the LAAF accounts. It includes most crucial narrative themes and concepts. However, the “Life as a Film” methodology for the interpretation of the narrative content was used in only one major study (Carthy, 2013) for the purposes of comparison between the narratives of incarcerated and non-incarcerated participants (considered non-offending population). The present study aims to explore the LAAF approach itself for evaluation and development purposes. It also aims to extend the existing studies on offenders’ narratives (e.g. Carthy, 2013) by 1) drawing on international samples; 2) exploring differences and similarities of the narratives of offenders’ with violent and non-violent criminal history; and 3) comparing the narratives of offenders from different countries.

Few empirical studies have systematically used the recently developed “Life as a Film” procedure for the elicitation of offenders’ life accounts. Fewer still have used the LAAF procedure further, for the interpretation of the collected responses. Although the LAAF elicitation procedure was applied to offenders’ narratives collected in different countries, the comparative analysis between these groups has yet to be done. This will also apply to the comparison of responses collected from offenders with differing criminal histories – such comparisons have not yet been done in terms of life accounts. The present research offers the following contribution to the study of criminality. The first is in the form of theoretical contributions. Through the exploration of the offenders’ “life as a film” descriptions, it validates the usage of data not directly related to crime in the study of criminality. Through the comparison between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders, it develops further understanding of common traits and important differences in the offenders’ narratives.

By comparing the narratives' traits and details across different countries, this research provides an important insight into national specifics of offenders' narratives.

In the form of the methodological contribution, this study offers the evaluation of the recently developed LAAF methodology. The LAAF methodology is based on life-story models and adjusted to the specifics of the prison population and the study of criminality. The current study is one of the few that uses the LAAF content framework to explore the inner structure and to elicit the contents of the offenders' narratives. It is also the first study to employ the new, improved version of LAAF that contains additional items of implicit psychological content. All this will add to the body of the current literature on the narrative approach to research on criminality.

And finally, this study also offers a practical contribution. It aims to identify neutral main themes in the offenders' narratives, and to explore the norms and common traits of these accounts. Such results are valuable for future narrative treatment development and adjustment. The results of the comparison between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders, and between the narratives of the offenders from different countries can open an opportunity for the further adjustment of treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

4.1. Research aims

The current research is focused on the evaluation of the "Life as a Film" methodology, - and on the study of the content structure of the offenders' LAAF accounts. It aims to extend the previous study on the subject (Carthy, 2013) by the following means:

- 1) drawing on the generic sample, that includes equal numbers of the participants from the different countries
- 2) concentrating on the in-depth analysis of the "Life as a Film" story exclusively

- 3) uncovering composite constructs within the different structural levels of the narrative
- 4) providing a comparison between the narratives of offenders with different criminal histories (violent versus non-violent)
- 5) providing a comparison between the narratives of offenders from different countries.

Thus, the main purpose of the current research is to explore the LAAF procedure and to study the content structure of the offenders' LAAF accounts and the variations between them in different contexts (criminal or cultural). The aims of each study in particular were as follows:

Study 1, Section I, Chapter 6:

- To draw out the main psychological themes and traits of the offenders' "life as a film" accounts; to provide the general description of offenders' LAAF accounts.
- To explore the LAAF methodology on the general sample of the offenders' LAAF narratives.

Study 2, Section I, Chapter 7:

- To provide an in-depth morphological analysis of offenders' narratives in order to reveal the interrelations between the story elements, and to describe the inner themes and constructs thus uncovered. The present study is the first to explore the inner constructs within three layers of the narrative separately.

The LAAF content framework in both of these studies is applied to the generic sample, in which equal numbers of incarcerated offenders from each country in the research pool are represented. That ensures the internationality of the sample – as described in the previous chapters, the vast majority of the studies of the offenders' narratives was done on the samples

collected in one country exclusively, and that impeded the extrapolation of the study results to the populations of different countries.

Study 3, Section II, Chapter 8:

- To examine if similar narrative themes and constructs can be found in the LAAF accounts of violent and non-violent offenders.
- To explore the differences between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders in terms of the LAAF content framework. It is hypothesised that the differences between violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts can be found and would not be directly related to violence and aggression.
- To explore if there are any differences in the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders in terms of the composite themes and inner narrative structures distinguished in the Study 2 (Section I, Chapter 7).

Study 4, Section II, Chapter 9:

- To examine what psychological themes, traits and inner structures can be found across the offenders' narratives collected in different countries.
- To provide the insight into national specifics of the offenders' narratives by comparison between the psychological themes, traits and inner structures distinguished in the offenders' narratives collected in different countries. This study is the first to use the LAAF content framework in a comparative analysis of narratives collected in different countries.
- To explore the robustness and validity of the LAAF system in application to the offenders' narratives collected in different countries (and therefore in different cultural and linguistic contexts).

Chapter 5: Thesis methodology

5.1. Data collection

5.1.1. CY-NEO protocol

The Canter-Youngs Narrative Experience of Offending (CY-NEO) protocol was used to collect data for this study. This protocol was developed by researchers from the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (IRCIP). For the last decade, the protocol was frequently used as a data collection tool for both incarcerated offenders and the general population (e.g. Carthy, 2013). The results of previous studies demonstrated sufficient reliability and validity of the CY-NEO protocol as a tool for enucleating the narrative implicit traits and characteristics (e.g. Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016; Youngs and Canter, 2012; Canter, Kaouri and Ioannou, 2003). At the time of data collection for this thesis the first version of the CY-NEO protocol was used.

The CY-NEO protocol consists of 3 parts: qualitative data collection in the form of semi-structured interview; quantitative data collection (battery of tests); and demographic information collection. The qualitative element of the data as a whole, and specifically the “Life as a Film” part of the semi-structured interview, is based on life-story narrative interviews (e.g. McAdams, 1993). Originally, McAdams’ life-story extraction method was long, complex and time-consuming. The CY-NEO protocol adapted this method in a form that allowed more time-efficient data collection without losing the richness and complexity of the narratives in question. The semi-structured interview is composed of three main parts. First, participant is asked to describe significant events in his/her life. Following that, the participant is asked to describe a situation when he/she demonstrated deviant behaviour (crime in the case of incarcerated offenders, a socially unacceptable event for the non-offending/non-incarcerated population). Finally, the participant is asked to describe his/her life in terms of the film. Each of these three parts represents a battery of questions rather than

a single question. Thus the interviewer is provided with a structured guide through the process of obtaining information from the participant. When data collection is performed by large groups of researchers (as in this case), a detailed interview structure provides insurance for acceptable consistency of the process. At the same time, the questions are designed to guide the narrator, and not to achieve full rigidity and uniformity in all answers (Crossley, 2000a). The data provided by semi-structured interviews is not only rich in information on self and personal identity (Crossley, 2000a; Crossley, 2000b; McAdams, 1993), but also allows the use of a wide range of analysis methods (Silverman, 2011; Willig, 2001).

This study was aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the incarcerated offenders' personal life accounts and therefore only the "Life as a film question" responses were used for analysis.

5.1.2. "Life as a Film" question in focus

The "Life as a Film question" is the one asked in the final part of the semi-structured interview. The technique is based on McAdams' "Life story interview" (McAdams, 1993; McAdams, 1995), adapted and adjusted to the needs of the targeted population. In the original interview, McAdams (1995) asked the participants to describe their lives as a story, with chapters, critical events (peak and nadir experiences, turning points, significant episodes of various ages etc), life challenges and themes, and alternative futures. In the "Life as a Film" part of a semi-structured interview in the CY-NEO protocol, participants are asked to describe their life as a film: what the film will be, its genre and main events, significant characters, its plot development and ending. Thus the LAAF elicitation procedure reveals the psychological narrative, which does not require external signposts (chapters, critical events, significant episodes of various ages etc) and does not represent a biography (as in McAdams'

methodology). The full list of questions asked during the “Life as a Film” part of the interview is provided in Appendix I.

The result of the “Life as a Film” interview is a compressed version of a life story, an outline of a life narrative. It is important to note that the response to a “Life as a Film” question does not represent the life narrative in full. This response can be viewed as a short manifestation of self, enveloping the crucial life narrative points and characteristics (e.g. tone and theme, significant persons and ideas of future). At the same time the “Life as a Film” question allows us to grasp these narrative traits in the relatively short interview. The form of the question “Describe your life as a film” helps to adjust the original “Life story” interview, not only to time limitations, but also to the level of education of the targeted population. Canter and Youngs (2015) argued that “Life as a Film” responses require some sort of an outcome, a conclusion to the life story rather than a simple emphasis on past events. That assists in the exploration of respondents’ life trajectories (as they understand them) and their self-concepts. Overall, the response to the “Life as a Film” question can be perceived as an ultimate explanation of self and identity, in which the respondent chooses even the form (for example, from an infinite number of events to an absolutely uneventful philosophical credo) and genre of his film-story. As the results of the previous study showed, the participants provide rich, detailed and informative responses (Carthy, 2013; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016).

All the aforesaid characteristics of the LAAF account led to the choice of this account specifically as the subject of the current study. The LAAF response provides a psychologically rich outline of life narrative that does not require formal signposts, but rather elicits some sort of conclusion/outcome and overall elicits a future orientation (Canter and Youngs, 2015). As Canter and Youngs (2015) pointed out, the LAAF procedure provides an overarching perspective that reveals the dynamics of an unfolding story and allows the participants to choose their own story focus, to concentrate on their own personal concerns in

life. The film framework elicits a future orientation rather than the past one (Canter and Youngs, 2015). This fact makes the results of the exploration even more important from both an academic and a practitioners' point of view. Such an orientation assists in the exploration of the respondents' understanding of their lives and future (Canter and Youngs, 2015), and as such contributes to further understanding of their personal self-concept (for academic purposes) as well as, potentially, for treatment and rehabilitation programmes adjustments (for practitioners' purposes). The LAAF interview (purely the "Life as a Film" part) provides the respondents with an opportunity for self-reflection and at the same time allows them to avoid any feeling that they need to justify their behaviour (Canter and Youngs, 2015). The researcher is provided with a LAAF content framework that allows for a non-judgemental and unified approach to all the responses collected. Altogether, this option provides the current researcher with a psychologically rich neutral material for the exploration of the offenders' narratives.

The limitation of the research material to one and only one question out of the whole interview provides an opportunity for an in-depth analysis of the responses, and the application of all the LAAF categories and their analyses within the LAAF content dictionary subgroups. It should be emphasised that originally the LAAF content framework was created specifically to be applied to the LAAF accounts. Although in the final chapters of the current research the idea of the LAAF content dictionary adjustments required for the application of this framework to other parts of the CY-NEO interview is raised, the LAAF framework in its current state is best to be applied to the LAAF accounts only. That fact strengthened the current researcher's decision to limit the data used for the study exclusively to the LAAF accounts. The exclusion of the rest of the interview materials (the responses on the crime and significant event questions) ensures the neutral non-judgemental approach of the current researcher during the coding and interpretation process. As the only response that was

analysed (and even read) in each case was the neutral reflective LAAF account, it can be safely said that neither the participants' criminal history (partially disclosed in the response to the question about crime), nor his personal memories (those that were not mentioned in the LAAF response, but were described in the interview as a personal significant event) influenced the current researcher coding and analysis¹⁰. This choice was made in order to achieve as clear and independent analysis of the LAAF accounts as possible and to ensure that neither the other responses nor the demographic data of the participants influenced the coding process in any way.

5.1.3. Demographic questions

The list of demographic questions is included in the CY-NEO protocol (see Appendix I). The purpose of these questions is to elicit information on the general background of the participants. Each participant was asked to fill in the form and thus provide basic information about himself: age, ethnicity, educational level (and courses obtained in prison) and family background (e.g. parents' occupation). Also, participants were asked about their criminal history: age of first warning, age of first conviction, number of previous convictions and their nature, nature of current conviction (index offence) and length of current sentence. Taken as a whole, this allows us to grasp the background of participants' in full, and to establish their criminal history (persistent criminals or one time offenders, violent or non-violent etc). For the purposes of this study it also allowed us to make the sampling process most effective – the information on age and educational background provided information vital for establishing a uniform sample.

¹⁰ It should be emphasised that, when for the purpose of one of the studies the sample was divided into violent and non-violent offenders in accordance with the self-reported criminal histories (for full definition see chapter 8), that division was made after the full coding procedure was finished, and it was made blind (the researcher did not and could not see the responses and/or the results of the coding at the time the self-reported histories were checked). This was also done to ensure the purity and clarity of the coding and the analysis.

5.1.4. CY-NEO protocol: active research

The data collected with the CY-NEO protocol was used for a number of research publications (e.g. Ioannou, Canter and Youngs, 2016; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016; Youngs and Canter, 2011; Canter, Kaouri and Ioannou, 2003). The protocol was successfully used with mentally disordered offenders (Spruin, 2012). It was also the main data collection tool for the International Comparison of Offenders' Narratives (ICON) project commissioned by the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (IRCIP). However, to the knowledge of the current author, this thesis is the first study of comparison of incarcerated offenders' personal stories collected in different countries carried out in terms of the LAAF content framework.

5.1.5. Data collection process

The data was collected by four teams of researchers in four European countries: Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland. All the researchers had an academic background in Psychology and were trained in the use of interview protocol and in conducting interviewing processes prior to the data collection. The training was provided by the IRCIP staff and the developers of the CY-NEO protocol, Prof. Canter and Dr Youngs. During the training the members of the interviewing teams received instruction on the use of the interview protocol, the information sheet and the consent forms (provided by the IRCIP and attached to the CY-NEO protocol to ensure that all the participants were fully and equally informed). The members of the interviewing team were also reminded that they needed to provide a means of contact to the participants (as described in the Chapter 5.1.6. "Research ethics and participants' confidentiality") and to ensure that the participants had the knowledge and the means to get help and psychological support in case the intervention upset them. In addition, the written instructions were distributed among the members of the interviewing teams. In

case further questions and/or clarifications were required, the contact emails of the CY-NEO protocol developers were provided to the members of the interviewing team. All the interviewers were native speakers of the state language in which the interviews were conducted; for example, all the researchers interviewing British participants were native English speakers. The CY-NEO protocol in full was translated into the state languages of the research teams.

All the interviews took place within the prison facilities and, if required, in presence of the prison psychologist on duty. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. In order to remain within ethical guidelines and to ensure that the participants felt comfortable during the interview, they were informed that they could opt out of audio recording. In those cases the interviewer, with the permission of the participant, took notes. In those cases, some of the information may have been lost due to the difficulty of writing down detailed notes while listening to the participant's response. This can impact on quality of the data obtained, in the interview and influence the interpretation of it during the analysis.

All demographic responses were recorded in the questionnaire pack.

The data was collected by means of the CY-NEO standard protocol. However there are some points to note with regard to this methodology. All demographic information was only self-reported. Thus, the issue of participants' truthfulness is as relevant in this study as in any other research based on self-reported measurements.

Presser (2010) described all narratives as the social interactions in the social context. The influence of the surroundings is inevitable, and the narratives collected in prison facilities ultimately will be the stories of incarcerated offenders. Thus the extrapolation of the results of current research on the general population of offenders will be unreliable.

Although all the interviewers were trained in the application of the CY-NEO protocol, their individual manner as shown, for example, in the “raw scripts”¹¹ of the interviews varied sometimes even within the research groups, and definitely between national research groups. For example, Polish researchers conducted interviews in a somewhat restrictive manner, while in the Italian group a much more flexible approach was preferred. The information on the interviewing manner was obtained from the interviews’ raw scripts (Italian and Polish groups) or from the interviewers in person (British group). No data on the interviewers’ personal manner was obtained for the Hungarian database. As is described further in the results, the variations in the manner of conducting the interviews did influence the participants’ responses, but at the same time provided proof that the interviewing system is not as sensitive to these issues as might be feared.

5.1.6. Research ethics and participants’ confidentiality

The data was collected within the ICON project framework. All data collection was performed in full compliance with research ethics regulations and in accordance with the SREP permissions for the ICON project in full and as specific parts (e.g. the interviewing groups outside Great Britain had to apply for their SREP permissions, while the permission for the ICON project as whole, including use of the archive data, was obtained within Great Britain). Although the current researcher did not participate in the collection of the data used in this research, she studied the procedure in full to ensure that the data used was fit for the current research, could be used in the current research and that the participants’ rights, anonymity and confidentiality would not be breached in any way.

¹¹ The expression “raw script” in the current research refers to the full, albeit already anonymised transcriptions of the interviews that included both participants’ responses and the full speech of the interviewer. Such raw scripts allow the judgement of the individual manner of each interviewing group (as the interviews are fully anonymised, the names of the interviewers were omitted from all scripts as well as any personal data of the participants).

In the recruitment process only incarcerated criminal offenders no younger than 18 years old and capable of providing informed consent (as defined by the psychologist in charge) were approached. The sample of the information sheet and the consent form were provided by the IRCIP team together with the CY-NEO protocol to each of the interviewing group prior to the recruitment of the participants. This was done in order to ensure that all the participants would be equally informed of the purposes of the research, the interventions they would be involved in during the data collection, the measures taken to ensure their anonymity and confidentiality at every stage of the data collection, transcription and safe-keeping, their rights as research participants (including withdrawal of consent at any time before the interviewing, during the interviewing and three months after the interviewing was completed in each group). The information given in the information sheets and consent forms was adapted to the literacy levels of the potential participants. Potential participants who were illiterate in the state language (as defined by the psychologist in charge and/or members of the prison staff) were excluded from the study. Samples of the participants' information sheets and consent forms (as provided to the interviewing teams) are attached to this thesis and may be found in Appendix I (ii).

Every participant who signed the consent form received a personal number. This number was further used for identification purposes rather than a name. The only copy of the list that correlated participants' names and numbers was kept securely by the interviewing team under lock and key, and was destroyed three months after the interviewing in the group was finished.

All participants were repeatedly (by the means of the information sheet, the consent form and the briefing prior to the interview) informed on the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw consent to participate at any time prior to interview, during the interview or within three months of the completion of interview. The three-month period was

decided because this was the duration of the time the lists would be kept.. Three month after the data collection was completed in the group, the group list was destroyed to ensure the participants' confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were informed that withdrawal of consent would not affect them in any way.

All the interviewing groups were instructed to provide a means for the participants to contact them in case those participants needed to ask questions or required clarification about the research procedure, the intervention process, or to withdraw their consent. The best way to provide such means was discussed and agreed in each case with members of the prison staff. If the participants in question had Internet access, the email address of the interviewing research team was provided. If the participants had no Internet access, the contact details of the member of the prison staff <prison psychologist> in charge were provided, and the participants were instructed to address their questions or requests (e.g. the withdrawal of the consent) through him/her.

The participants were informed that the data (fully anonymised) would be further used not only by the members of the immediate interviewing team, but also by the members of the IRCIP in Great Britain. This information was provided to the participants by means of the information sheet, an oral briefing before the interview and was also put as a separate point on the consent forms (signed prior to the interview). In the consent form the participants were asked if they consented to their anonymised interview transcripts and demographic information being stored in the IRCIP archives and used for further study and research purposes. Only data from the participants who gave such consent was used in the current study. To ensure that all participants had the same information the consent form and the information sheet samples were provided to the interviewing team as part of the CY-NEO protocol. In addition, the head of each interviewing team signed a memorandum of agreement with the IRCIP in which it was clearly stated that the data is collected not only for the

purposes of the research done by the immediate interviewing team, but also with a view to the further research performed by members of the IRCIP in Great Britain. This further research could be done only if the following conditions were fulfilled:

1) the participant in full knowledge <ensured by the means described previously> granted his consent for the data he/she provided to be used for further research by the members of the IRCIP in Great Britain. The data from the participants who did not give this specific consent, but nevertheless agreed to participate in the interview, was not submitted to the IRCIP and was kept exclusively for research done by the immediate interviewing team.

2) The legal guardian of the data kept in the IRCIP archive, Prof David Canter agreed that this data could be used by the researcher. This permission was given to each member of the IRCIP involved in the form of a written contract that clearly states the permitted use of the data, the length of time during which the data might be used by the researcher, and the precautions that the researcher must take to ensure the safe-keeping of the data. The mandatory conditions of the safe-keeping are encrypted password protected disk. No paper data and/or recordings could be shared with the IRCIP members. Thus the members of the IRCIP have no access to the original recordings, signed consent forms, lists of participants etc. The only data that is accessible to the members of the IRCIP is the archive files: the transcribed and fully anonymised interviews, questionnaire responses and demographic data. All archive files, in accordance with the contract signed by the data guardian and the member of the IRCIP, are kept only on an encrypted password protected disk and should be destroyed upon the end of the research project clearly defined in the contract. The data agreement for the use of the IRCIP archive data for the current project (as signed by the legal guardian of the IRCIP archive and the current researcher) is attached to this thesis and may be found in Appendix I (ii).

To ensure participants' confidentiality all interviews were fully anonymised during transcription. All personal information was effectively removed from the interviews and questionnaires. The documents that contained participants' names (consent forms) and/or data on correlation between participant's name and personal number given for the purposes of identification (list of participants) were kept separately from interviews, interview transcriptions and questionnaires at all times. The data collected outside Great Britain (Italy, Poland and Hungary) was transcribed and fully anonymised before it was sent to the IRCIP archive. Only the data from the participants who consented to share their interviews with the IRCIP was sent to the IRCIP archives, however their personal identifiable information (such as the signed consent forms, list of the participants correlating their names and interview numbers, voice recordings of the interviews) was at all times kept separately from the interview transcriptions and never sent to the IRCIP archives. The same regulations were applied to the data collected in Great Britain. Only the data from the participants who consented to share the interviews with the IRCIP members outside the immediate interviewing team was submitted to the archives and used in the current research. All the personal identifiable information of the British participants was kept separately from the transcriptions of the interviews. It was never shared with any of the IRCIP researchers including the current one, and was destroyed after the consent period had elapsed.

As mentioned previously, although the current researcher did not participate in the original data collection, she made it her duty to study the procedure in full to ensure that the data could legitimately be used in the current research and that the participants' rights, anonymity and confidentiality were not breached in any way in the research. The choice of the research methodology (the LAAF narrative interpretation procedure) was another crucial decision made by the current researcher. This choice ensured a neutral, non-judgemental interpretation

of the material (as described in the previous chapter a non-judgemental neutral approach is one of the strong points of the LAAF methodology).

5.1.7. Data translation

All transcriptions were carried out by the native speakers of the language in which the interview was conducted. The interviews that were not originally in English were translated into that language only after anonymisation and transcription. The translation was carried out by the professional translator (Polish sample) or native language speaker (Italian and Hungarian samples).

5.1.8. Current research

The data in full was obtained by the current researcher from the archives of the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (IRCIP) with the permission of Prof. David Canter, the head of the IRCIP. The current researcher personally applied the LAAF coding to each and every one of the LAAF accounts used in this study. As the results of the coding rather than the responses per se were the data used in the current research, it can be said that although the secondary data was used in the study, the study itself does not and could not fit the definition of the “secondary study” as the summary, collation and/or synthesis of existing research (as defined, for example, by Jugenheimer, Kelley, and Bradley, 2014).

In Kervin’s classification (1992) the data used in the current study should be defined as “raw secondary data” – the dataset was collected by someone other than the current researcher, but was not processed, selected and/or summarised. The fact that the current researcher did not take part in the actual data collection and used only secondary data raises some issues; however at the same time it provides an opportunity. As Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) pointed out the use of secondary data in the research allows saving of both time and money,

especially when the research in question is international and involves a large number of participants. The data was collected in four different countries in four different languages by groups of native speakers of the state language. The current data set holds information on 227 participants. For a single researcher the task of collecting a database of a comparable size would be unfeasible. Such data collection would be both physically and legally impossible for a single researcher. A researcher who needed to conduct interviews in the countries in question (Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland) would have to be fluent in four languages and to hold citizenships in all these states. In addition, the size of the data sample (227 participants) would make the interviewing too time consuming for a single researcher, whilst it was manageable for the research groups. For example, the British interviewing group consisted of 12 people. That allowed a large number of participants to be interviewed individually. The data collection was conducted in four different languages in four national samples. Such a rare comparative study opportunity calls to mind a somewhat unusual parallel to archeological or anthropological studies. In such studies a researcher uses artefacts or records collected by other people in order to prove some enveloping theory or for the purposes of comparative analysis (e.g. Trigger, 2003).

The use of secondary data is known to have some disadvantages. However, the main disadvantages of this situation – inappropriateness of the data for the aims of the research and lack of control over data quality, - were successfully overcome in the current study. The quality of the data collection was ensured as far as possible by means of the standardized training and instructions provided to the interviewing groups in all four countries. The original data collection was intended for use in the ICON project: with view to further analysis in terms of the LAAF content dictionary, and for the purpose of a comparative analysis of the samples collected in different countries..

5.2. Data description: participants and sampling process

5.2.1. Data pool

All the participants involved in this research were incarcerated criminal male offenders (serving prison sentence, post trial exclusively) over the age of 18. The research materials (interviews) were drawn from large databases collected in four countries: Great Britain, Italy, Hungary and Poland. All the interviews were conducted within the respective prison systems, and all the participants were recruited using an opportunity sampling method. The interviews were conducted in the local language (in Hungary, Italy and Poland an authorized translation of the CY-NEO interview protocol was used), and an ability to express oneself fluently in that language was one of the inclusion criteria during the recruitment process. Both violent and non-violent offenders were interviewed in every country. The majority of the participants had committed more than one crime. Thus the index offence, or the offence for which the participant was incarcerated during the interviewing, was chosen for the demographic description of the sample. In the rare cases where there was more than one index offence (the participant was incarcerated for more than one specific crime at the time of the research intervention) the most serious one was used for the demographic description.

Further in the text these national samples might be addressed as “British sample”, “Hungarian sample”, “Italian sample” or “Polish sample”. Although the participants from each sample were recruited in individual prisons (for example, all the participants in the British sample were from Liverpool prison), naming samples by nationality was perceived as more precise. Furthermore, there are both Roma and Magyar in the Hungarian sample, and the majority of participants in the British sample described themselves as White/White British (which does not necessarily mean English). So in this research all samples are addressed by nationality.

A full account of each database is provided, followed by the sampling procedure and current study sample description.

5.2.2. Great Britain

69 male incarcerated offenders aged between 21 and 61 (Mean 34, Median 31, Mode <multiple modes> 24, 26 and 31). The majority of the participants were of white ethnic background (74%, n=57), 8% (n=6) - of Black Caribbean ethnic background, 2% (n=2) - of Indian and Pakistani origin, and the rest defined their ethnic background as "Other". 60% (n=41) of the participants did not state their qualification level, and for the rest the most frequent level of education was GCSE. 87% (n=60) of all participants claimed they do not have A-levels, one participant did not answer the question, and only 12% (n=8) declared they possessed any A-levels.

According to Berman (2013) 81% of the prison population in England consists of males aged 18 or older, 75% of all male inmates are 21 or older. The vast majority of them are criminal offenders, while only 1.3% are non-criminal (Berman, 2013). Only 4% of the prison population are adults over 60 years old, and the largest age groups are 30-39 (28%, n=23 043), 40-49 (18%, n=14 862) and 25-29 (18%, n= 15 332) (Berman, 2013). 73.9% of all incarcerated offenders were White, and only about one quarter of the prison population belonged to different minority ethnic groups. Thus, 13.1% described themselves as Black or Black British, 7.9% as Asian or Asian British, 3.9% declared they are of mixed ethnic background, and 1.2% belonged to Chinese or Other ethnic groups (Berman, 2013). Overall, participants in the current study represent the current prison population in England well in terms of gender, ethnicity and age.

Most of the participants received their first warning from the police in their adolescence: age 14 – 17% (n=12) or 12 – 12% (n=8). The youngest was 8 years old at the time of his first warning, and the oldest one was 60. Three participants gave age intervals instead of a precise age in response to this question (e.g. age 14-15 or 11-12), thus the average age of a first warning can be given only approximately – 16. Most participants (n=25, 36%) were under 16 when first found guilty of a crime in court, and only 4% (n=3) were more than 40 when first convicted.

The number of convictions varied from one to more than a hundred (two participants did not respond to this question). A majority of respondents (28%, n=19) declared that they had 10 to 20 convictions, 16% (n=11) said they have 1-2 convictions, and an equal number of people reported 30-40 convictions (15%, n=10) or more than 50 convictions in their past (15%, n=10).

As shown in Table 5.1, drug dealing was the most frequent index offence in the British sample (n=14, 20%); followed by robbery (n=12, 17%) and murder/manslaughter/attempted murder (n=10, 14%). Even taken together, property offences, such as burglary, theft, fraud or handling of stolen goods represent only 16% (n=11) of all index offences (see Table 5.2). Offences against the person are much more frequent (55%, n=38). The second most frequent index offences are those of neither person nor property type (n=20, 29%), such as drug dealing, drunk driving, possession of illegal weapons, breach of order etc.

Table 5.1: Index offences – British sample		
Index offence	Number of people	Percentage in the sample N=69
Drug dealing	14	20%
Robbery	12	17%
Murder/manslaughter/attempted murder	10	14%
Assault / affray	8	12%
Burglary	5	7%
Sex crimes	4	6%

Grievous bodily harm	4	6%
Theft	3	4%
Breach of order	2	3%
Drunk driving	2	3%
Fraud	1	1%
Possession of illegal weapons	1	1%
Handling and receiving of stolen goods	1	1%
Evasion of duty	1	1%
Hoax phone calls	1	1%

Table 5.2: Index offences by type – British sample		
Type of offence	Number of people	Percentage in the sample N=69
Offences against person	38	55%
Offences against property	20	29%
Neither person nor property offences	11	16%

5.2.3. Italy

Thirty five incarcerated White male offenders aged from 25 to 69 (Mean=46, Median=46; Mode=35). All participants were of white ethnic background. The majority of participants finished junior high school (43%, n=15) or have a high school diploma (34%, n=12). Overall, the educational level in this sample varies from elementary school (9%, n=3) to bachelor's degree (11%, n=4). One participant described his educational level as "other". 24 (67%) participants declared that they have professional qualifications, 2 didn't answer this question. 46% (n=16) of participants served in the military, 3 did not answer this question. 71% (n=25) attended prison courses.

The age of receiving a first official warning from the police varies from 12 to 53 in this group (Mean=26, Median=20, Mode=17; 3 participants did not provide this information). The average age of a first conviction was 31 (Median=26), the youngest was 14 at the time of his first conviction and the oldest was 68. Most participants received their first conviction at the age of 20 (13%, n=5) or 19 (9%, n=3). Two participants did not respond to this question. The number of previous convictions varies from 1 to 35 for this group. The vast majority of

participants declared that they have one (34%, n=12), two (20%, n=7) or three convictions (14%, n=5).

As shown in Table 5.3, sex crimes (rape, production of child pornography, sexual assault) were the most frequent index offences in the Italian sample (n=6, 17%). Murder (this category includes also manslaughter and attempted murder) was the index offence for 5 participants (14%), and 4 of the participants in the Italian sample were incarcerated for theft (11%). Other index offences were even less frequent (for full data see Table 5.3). Three participants did not provide information about the offence for which they were incarcerated at the time of the interviews.

Index offence	Number of people	Percentage in the sample N=35
Sex crimes	6	17%
Murder/manslaughter/attempted murder	5	14%
Theft	4	11%
Drug dealing	3	9%
Fraud	3	9%
Criminal enterprise	2	6%
Bankruptcy	2	6%
Possession of illegal weapons	2	6%
Handling and receiving of stolen goods	2	6%
Grievous bodily harm	1	3%
Extortion	1	3%
Inchoate offences/Conspiracy	1	3%
<i>No response</i>	3	9%

As shown in Table 5.4, the proportion of crimes against property, crimes against person and crimes that are neither of those types in the Italian sample is nearly 1:1:1. However 37% of all index offences are those committed against the person (murder, manslaughter, sex offences, extortion¹², grievous bodily harm etc). 2%

¹² Although legally extortion is classified as offence against property, from the psychological point of view it can be perceived as an offence against the person. The extortion of obtaining something through force and/or

Table 5.4: Index offences by type – Italian sample		
Type of offence	Number of people	Percentage in the sample N=35
Offences against person	13	37%
Offences against property	11	31%
Neither person nor property offences	8	30%

According to the Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief (2017a) 95.8% of the prison population in Italy are males, and 99.2% of all incarcerated offenders in the prison system are 18 or older. 65.4% of the prison population are convicted offenders (34.6% are pre-trial detainees or remand prisoners). According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (2017) non-nationals residing in Italy on 1 January 2015 represent only 8.3% of the total resident population. In the penitentiary system the number of foreign nationals is unexpectedly high - 34.1% (Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief, 2017a); however no further data is given on the ethnic background of incarcerated offenders. Still one can say that our sample represents the current Italian prison population well enough in terms of age and gender, and sufficiently in terms of ethnicity.

5.2.4. Hungary

The Hungarian sample (101 participants) originally included both male (n=93) and female (n=8) incarcerated offenders. To ensure the homogeneity of the research sample, the female participants were excluded. Unfortunately it was not possible to include female participants, as only eight were to be found, and those eight were present in only one of the four national groups. They could not, therefore, be defined as a representative sample. The case studies of the female offenders' narratives are beyond the scope of the current research, while the application of the LAAF interpretation procedure to such a small sample would not provide

personal threats includes verbal and sometimes even physical abuse and definitely personal contact with the victim. Thus for the purpose of this study, concentrated on psychological rather than legal aspects of crime, extortion is classified as an offence against person and not against property.

representative and comparable results. . It has to be emphasised that the prison statistics for each of the four countries in question showed the vast majority of the criminal incarcerated offenders are males (81% in England, Berman, 2013; 95.8% in Italy, Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief, 2017a; 92.42% in Hungary, Somogyvári, Drexler and Sánta, 2015; and 96.4% in Poland, Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief (2017b). Thus the exclusion of the small number of female participants from the current research makes the sample more representative. Further demographic data is based on the exclusively male sample (n=93). The age of the participants varied from 19 to 67 (Mean=33, Median=29, Mode=28). The educational level is given in years and varies from 1 to 17 (Mean=9, Median=8, Mode=8). Most of the participants were Hungarian Magyar (60%, n=56) or Roma (29%, n=27), the rest defined themselves as Arab (2%, n=2) or Half Roma (8%, n=7). 1 participant did not state his ethnic background.

The age of receiving their first warning by the police varied from 7 to 63, with the average 21 (Median=16) and most frequent 14 (16%, n=15). The average age of the first conviction is 24 (Median=20) and most frequent 15 (11%, n=10). The youngest was 14 at the time of their first conviction and the oldest one was 63.

The number of convictions varied from 1 to more than 50. A majority of respondents (23%, n=21) declared that they have 1 conviction, 15% (n=14) said they have 2 convictions, and one person claimed no memory of the number of previous convictions.

The vast majority of index offences in the Hungarian sample are offences against the person (see Tables 5.5 and 5.6). They comprise 65% of all index offences in the sample (n=60), and include assault (n=24, 26%), robbery (n=19, 20%), murder/manslaughter/attempted murder (n=8, 9%), sex crimes (mainly sexual assault, n=5, 5%), grievous bodily harm (n=3, 3%) and domestic violence (n=1, 1%). Offences against property comprise 34% of the whole sample

(n=32) and include theft (n=19, 20%), fraud (n=7, 8%) and burglary (n=6, 7%). Only one index offence could not be defined as either offence against property or against person – drug dealing (n=1, 1%).

Table 5.5: Index offences – Hungarian sample		
Index offence	Number of people	Percentage in the sample N=93
Assault	24	26%
Theft	19	20%
Robbery	19	20%
Murder/manslaughter/attempted murder	8	9%
Fraud	7	8%
Burglary	6	7%
Sex crimes	5	5%
Grievous bodily harm	3	3%
Domestic violence	1	1%
Drug dealing	1	1%

Table 5.6: Index offences by type – Hungarian sample		
Type of offence	Number of people	Percentage in the sample N=93
Offences against person	60	65%
Offences against property	32	34%
Neither person nor property offences	1	1%

According to a recent review on Hungarian prison statistics (Somogyvári, Drexler and Sánta, 2015), 92.42% of the entire prison population are males, and only 7.39% are juvenile (in Hungary “juvenile” is defined as “14-21 years old”). The average age of a prisoner is 36 years 9 month (Somogyvári, Drexler and Sánta, 2015), and most of the incarcerated offenders are either 30-39 or 40-49 years old (31.22% and 24.55% respectively). Almost half of the inmates are first time offenders (45.58%). Less than 4% of all incarcerated offenders are of foreign nationality, but no information on the ethnic background of the prison population is provided. According to a recent census (Index Mundi 2016) Hungarians/Hungarian Magyars represent 85.6% of the country population, Roma – 3.2%, Germans – 1.9%, while 14.1% did

not specify their nationality (percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to identify more than one ethnic group). 55.82% of all male prisoners and 54.17% of all female prisoners finished only elementary school (8-10 years of education, according to “Just landed” Expatriate Guides, 2017). Thus it can be concluded that in terms of gender, age, educational level and to some extent ethnic background our sample sufficiently represents the Hungarian prison population.

5.2.5. Poland

The Polish sample consisted of 30 interviews of male incarcerated offenders. The age of the participants varied from 19 to 42 (Mean 28.2, Median 27, Mode 23). 33% (n=10) of the participants finished junior high school, 27% (n=8) finished basic vocational school, 6 (20%) finished high school and 6 (20%) ceased their education at primary school level. No data on ethnic background or the age of first official warnings was collected. 60% (n=18) of all participants declared that this was their first conviction, 40% (n=12) described themselves as recidivists without providing information on the number of previous convictions.

As shown in Table 5.7, the most frequent index offences in the Polish sample are violent ones – robbery and assault (n=7, or 23% of the sample in both cases). Data provided in Table 5.8 supports the idea of violent crimes/crimes against the person being prevalent in the Polish sample (n=18, 60%).

Index offence	Number of people	Percentage in the sample N=30
Robbery	7	23%
Assault	7	23%
Drug dealing	3	10%
Fraud	3	10%
Theft	2	7%
Murder/manslaughter/attempted murder	2	7%

Driving offences (e.g. drunk driving)	2	7%
Burglary	2	7%
Sex crimes	1	3%
Grievous bodily harm	1	3%

Table 5.8: Index offences by type – Polish sample		
Type of offence	Number of people	Percentage in the sample N=30
Offences against person	18	60%
Offences against property	7	23%
Neither person nor property offences	5	17%

According to the Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief (2017b) 94.5% of the Polish prison population are convicted offenders (7.5% are pre-trial detainees or remand prisoners), 96.4% are males, and 99.6% are 18 years or older. Unfortunately neither the Institute of Criminal Policy Research nor the Polish Ministry of Justice (Ministerstwo Sprawiedliwosci) provide statistical data on educational levels or the previous criminal history of the prisoners. Thus one can conclude that our sample is sufficiently representative only in terms of age and gender.

5.2.6. Sampling procedure

In order to create a homogeneous sample, in which every country is represented equally, 30 participants were taken from each national data pool.

Only male offenders – both violent and non-violent, - were included in the final sample. The focus of males is due to the large proportion of males in the penitentiary systems, both in general and specifically in all participating countries. In England and Wales 95.4% of all the prison population are males (Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief, 2017c), in Italy male offenders represent 95.8% of all prison population (Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief, 2017a), similar numbers are true for Hungary and Poland (92.42%

(Somogyvári, Drexler and Sánta, 2015) and 96.4% (Institute of Criminal Policy Research Prison Brief, 2017b) respectively.

The participants' educational level was taken into account during the sampling process in order to create a more representative and reliable sample. Participants whose educational levels were significantly higher or significantly lower than average in the sample (e.g. bachelor's degree or elementary school only) were excluded from the sample.

Another variable that influenced the sampling process was the participants' age. According to McAdams, life narrative and identity form in late adolescence and young adulthood: people begin to view their lives from a historical perspective at that age (McAdams, 1996). Singer et al (2007) argues that after the age of 50 people narrate their lives in a more positive tone and with greater integrative meaning (the comparison was made with college students aged between 17 and 22). Following these findings, and to ensure that only fully developed life narratives from an age-homogenous group were chosen for the sample, age frame was defined as "21-60", with strong preference given to those closest to the average (28-45). However, each nationality in the sample should be present in equal proportions (30 participants from each country). Thus it lowers the level of choice in the Italian sample (35 people). Also the whole Polish pool consists of only 30 participants and had to be included in full. All this made it necessary to change the age limits in the sample, defining the lower age limit as 19, and the upper age limit as 57. According to Arnett (2000) the movement through the narrative developmental period is shaped by education; thus a high educational level prolongs the narrative developmental period, while a low level of education shortens it. It can therefore be safely proposed that for the prison population, with its generally low educational level, offsetting this age limit is justifiable.

Only the parameters described previously were taken into account during the selection process. After the selection of participants for the data pool was made based on their age, educational level and gender, the sampling process was randomized and not influenced by any other information. All data on interview responses, including full interview transcriptions, was kept separately from demographic data, and did not influence the selection process. The Polish group was included in full in the final sample due to the fact that there were only 30 Polish participants – but even that sample was checked for age, education and gender parameters to fit the study requirements. Participants were chosen regardless of the offences they committed, but later analysis showed that both violent and non-violent offenders were included in the sample.

5.2.7. Research Sample

Hundred and twenty offenders from 4 countries (Great Britain, Hungary, Poland and Italy) were chosen randomly from a large data pool based on previously described criteria: gender (exclusively males), age (between 21 and 60 years old) and educational background (as close to average – middle or high school - as possible). The youngest participant was 19, and the oldest one – 57 years old (Mean = 33, Median = 30, Mode = 29). 25% of all participants were between the ages of 19 and 27, 75% - were younger than 36 years old.

Both violent and non-violent criminals were included in the sample. The type of criminal history (violent versus non-violent) was defined by the self-reported data on previous convictions – participants were asked to write what their previous convictions were for. Thus offenders who mentioned at least one violent crime in their list were referred to further as violent offenders, and those who did not mention any violent crimes in their past were defined as non-violent ones. In order to avoid difficulties in definition of the violent/non-violent nature of crime, the simple lexical definition of violent crime rather than any form or

variation of the legal definition was used. Thus, for the purpose of this study, violent crime is any crime in which the perpetrator uses or threatens to use force on the victim (e.g. murder, manslaughter, robbery, grievous bodily harm etc). Crimes in which the perpetrator does not use or threaten to use violence (e.g. theft, handling and receiving stolen goods, fraud etc) were defined as non-violent. In cases where the nature of the offence described is not clear (e.g. “child pornography production” can be violent crime, if the person is involved in actual filming, and can be non-violent crime if the person copies and sells films already made) the participant was excluded completely from the comparative study. 65% (n=78) of the participants can be described as violent offenders, 33% (n=40) as non-violent, and for 2% (n=2) – the nature of the crime cannot be defined.

5.3. “Life as a Film” (LAAF) content dictionary framework

The LAAF content dictionary is a thematic coding-framework designed to be used together with the CY-NEO protocol (Canter and Youngs, 2015), and primarily on its “Life as a film description” part. The LAAF content framework covers a wide range of the narrative “themes of interest” (Presser, 2009) and represents a syncretic approach that allows the exploration of the psychological complexity of the narratives, the explicit processes that organise the narrative content. It also reveals the implicit content of the narratives (psychological content rather than biography, personal concerns rather than biographical events). The LAAF content framework additionally uncovers the nature of the relationships between the narrator and the others and/or world as whole – as the narrator perceives it. The methodological unity (same content dictionary applied to all responses in the same way) facilitates the current study (as it includes comparison between the narratives of offenders with various criminal histories and the narratives collected in different countries). In addition it allows a direct comparison with the materials of future research (e.g. narrative samples collected in other countries as part of

the ICON project). However, the LAAF interpretation methodology was never itself evaluated. Although theoretically LAAF has all the features described previously, these features were never put to the test. The main focus of the current research is the evaluation of the LAAF content framework.

The LAAF coding framework for analysing interview responses is divided into four thematic subgroups: Psychological Complexity; Implicit Psychological Content; Explicit Processes Used to Organise the Content; and Nature of Agency in relation to others and the world (Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016). The LAAF content dictionary in full is provided in Appendix II.

Categories of Psychological Complexity include variables that describe both substantive (e.g. number of people cited, number of events cited) and formal (e.g. length of the response in words) responses' complexity aspects. The categories of this sub-group provide information on the formal complexity and structure of the response: presence of a distinct beginning, middle and end; presence of contingent type sequences, number of distinct psychological ideas cited etc. Previous findings showed that offenders' responses obtained and analysed in terms of the LAAF procedure have all the components of the narrative, and generate a notable number of distinct psychological ideas (Canter and Youngs, 2015; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2016).

Narratives' implicit psychological content can be described in terms of the events mentioned, the main message of the story and the general tone. All categories that describe specific events (e.g. "Relationship problem", "Birth", "Death" etc), variations of the narrative tone (passive or proactive, negative or positive) are included in the "Implicit Psychological Content" subgroup of LAAF (Youngs et al, 2014). The events that are included in the LAAF framework are of both crime-related (e.g. "Doing crime", "Imprisonment" etc) and non-

related to crime (e.g. “Birth”, “Relationship success”) nature. Together with them, this subgroup contains categories of film genre – comedy, tragedy, crime etc. All participants were asked to define the genre of their “life as a film”. During the content analysis, only genres that are clearly named (e.g. “My life would be a comedy” or “My life is like “Snakes on a plane”¹³) were marked as present. No attempts to work out to which genre the story belongs were made during content analysis in order to preserve the clear data on cases where participants preferred not to define their life-films in terms of genre. The resolution of the narrative varies from narrator to narrator. Hankiss (1981) described four narrative forms in terms of the narrative resolution: dynastic (from good past to good present), antithetical (from bad past to good present), compensatory (from good past, to bad present) and self-absolutory (from bad past to bad present). In the LAAF framework, only the ending of the narrative is in focus (happy ending versus sad ending). The new, updated version of LAAF was used in this study. In this version, the Implicit Psychological Content subgroup includes also “Message” variables. Based on Sandberg’s (2009) study on the stories of stigmatized people in search of respect, these variables include both messages of conventional discourse (“It was my own choice”, “I am decent” and “We are the same”) and more egocentric ones (“I am interesting”, “I am dangerous” and “I am smart”).

“Explicit processes used to organise the content” subgroup of LAAF categories includes variables that describe psychologically active components in the narrative, that is, processes that produce the storyline. The categories that describe the explicit forms of life narratives in the LAAF content framework were derived from the extensive work of McAdams (1993, 2001). McAdams (1993, 2001) distinguished main themes in which people organise their life stories as themes of Agency (“...individual’s striving to separate from others, to master the environment, to assert, protect and expand the self.”, McAdams, 1993, p. 71) and

¹³ The name of the film allows the researcher to define its genre, in that case – a thriller

Communion (desire for love and intimacy). Various agentic and communal items are included in the “Explicit Processes” subgroup of LAAF. Both Communion and Agency themes in LAAF are derived from McAdams’ study (2012). Agency themes in LAAF are represented by the variables “Self-mastery”, “Status - victory” (highlighted status among peers in the narrative, interpersonal and implicitly competitive context), “Achievement/Responsibility” (narrative focused on success in achieving tasks/taking responsibility) and “Empowerment”. Communion themes in LAAF are represented by variables “Love/Friendship”, “Dialogue”, “Caring/Help” and “Unity/Togetherness”. Maruna (2001) established the particular importance of redemption and contamination vectors in offenders’ personal narratives. Both themes are included in “Explicit process” LAAF subgroup as generic variables (“General redemption”, “General contamination”) and as specific subthemes, adjusted from Foley Centre for the Study of Lives coding system (2009a, 2009b). Classic narrative themes (“Fate”, “Revenge”, “Impotence/Hopelessness”, “Overcoming obstacles/struggles/mission” etc.) also belong to this subgroup.

The “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” subgroup of LAAF describes the variations of ways in which the individual deals with the world as a whole and with people around him/her. This subgroup includes 58 various variables: from straightforward categories of the interpersonal relationship style (empathy versus hostility) and strength of self-identity in the narrative (strong versus weak) to more complicated concepts, such as imago categories. The concept of imago, presented by McAdams (1993) is included in the LAAF content framework. As personal myths, imagoes reveal some aspects of one’s identity, and as personal myths they are closer to the concept of the ideal self. McAdams (1993) built 15 types of imagoes, organised according to the properties of the Agency and Communion themes. Although according to Youngs and Canter (2012) only six of them might be applied to a crime narrative, all fifteen of them were included in the LAAF content framework and

applied to offenders' "life as a film" stories. The roles can be assigned not only to oneself, but to others; thus all imago categories in LAAF are separately applied to the protagonist and to others mentioned in the story (e.g. "Warrior as self-imago" and "Warrior as imago of other" are two categories). Russell (1997) classified emotions into positive (aroused versus non-aroused, or excitement/calm) and negative categories (aroused versus non-aroused, or stress or anxiety/displeasure). These emotional quadrants are also included in the LAAF content framework.

To highlight the motivation of the actions, the LAAF content framework draws on Bandura's findings (1986) on incentives. The categories of incentives also belong to the "Agency vis-à-vis others and the world" subgroup.

From the general theory of crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990), the idea that the level of self-control is in correlation with criminality was developed by many researchers. Nowadays the general venue of research in that field goes with the idea of the locus of control. As was suggested by Maruna and Copes (2004), locus of control is one of the outward expressions of self-concept. In the LAAF framework the element of locus of control is assessed by categories of avoidant/confronting behaviours described in the narrative (Carthy, 2013; Canter and Youngs, 2015; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2015).

In addition to that, the "Agency vis-à-vis others and the world" subgroup contains categories of justifications (e.g. denial of injury, denial of responsibility, dehumanisation, appeal to higher loyalties etc). These items were derived from Sykes and Matza's (1956) study on coping strategies for moral conflict and Bandura's (1990) research on moral disengagement techniques.

Overall, the LAAF content dictionary includes 129 variables. The majority of them follow a dichotomous format: 0 – absence of item, 1 – presence of item. Items that do not follow this

format include: length of the response in words, number of people cited, number of events cited and number of distinct psychological ideas. All these variables belong to a Psychological Complexity subgroup, and all were coded using a scale format.

PART II

SECTION I

Chapter 6: “Life as a Film” narratives of offenders – general description and inner structure

Chapter 6 overview

The study is the first in the line of explorations of the offenders’ LAAF responses in the current thesis. It is intended to provide a general description of offenders’ LAAF accounts in terms of the LAAF content framework in order to outline the traits and characteristics common to all offenders’ narratives regardless of the narrator’s criminal past and/or national background. It is also intended to explore the LAAF methodology on the general sample of offenders’ narratives.

The narratives of 120 male offenders from British, Hungarian, Italian and Polish nationalities represented in equal proportion in the sample were subjected to content analysis in terms of LAAF framework.

In short the results of the current study can be described as follows: criminality was found to be the dominant theme of the narratives. The personification of the narrator could be outlined as a lonely hero, the victim of a cruel, contaminated world, who tried to fight and strive towards his happy ending. The epic nature of his laughter and comedy bear some resemblance to the classic depictions of the funeral feasts of the Vikings.. Relationships with

others in offenders' narratives were found to be instrumental rather than empathic. The only role given to others was that of supportive characters who help and care for the main hero. However, it must be said that the relative scarcity of any imagoes – both those of self and of others - categorised in narratives might indicate a need for content dictionary adjustments.

The findings supported the idea of the significance and psychological richness of offenders' responses to the argument, and provided yet further proof that LAAF is especially suitable for such respondents (Canter and Youngs, 2015). The significant psychological complexity of the narratives demonstrated that the participants put a lot of thought and experience into their responses and provided accounts that focused on the key issues of their lives. The rarely mentioned justifications supported the idea that LAAF methodology meets the need to avoid a justificatory focus in the narrative procedure. The potential for further development of the LAAF content framework, such as the need for negative roles categories and the requirement for a distinction between the types of Happy Ending (realistic versus utopian) are also described in the results.

The findings provide a new interpretation of previous research into Unresolved Dissonance (Youngs et al, 2016) as a controversy between light optimistic and egocentric attitudes and a harsh illogical world, from which the narrator still hopes to get some support and a happy ending.

For the readers' convenience, the study results are presented within the LAAF content dictionary subgroups (Psychological Complexity, Implicit Psychological Content, Explicit Processes to Organise Content and Agency vis-à-vis Others and the World). In order to guide the reader through the findings, additional subheadings were developed in accordance with the LAAF item subcategories within the subgroups (e.g. as described in Chapter 3, Chapter 5

and in Appendix II Implicit Psychological Content includes subcategories of Genre, Events, Messages etc)¹⁴.

6.1 Description of offenders’ “Life as a Film” accounts

Narrative is both the way in which human beings as “natural scientists” organise, structure their view of themselves and the world – and the method for modern personality research (e.g. Shover, 1996; McAdams, 2008) which allows us to see the inner structure, the underlying organisation of an individual’s affects and cognitions, and also to find the connection between them and their behavioural patterns.

In 1994, Canter suggested that the narrative approach provides a unique opportunity to understand the meaning of offending behaviour during the crime for the perpetrator him/herself (Canter, 1994). Since then, the field of investigative psychology research on offenders’ narratives has advanced a lot, but was mainly focused on offenders’ personal experiences of crime: from narrative roles during the crime (Canter et al, 2003; Youngs and Canter, 2012) and crime specific action patterns (arson (Canter and Fritzon, 1998), terrorism (Fritzon et al, 2001)) to emotions experienced by the offender during and after the crime (Canter and Ioannou, 2004a; Ioannou et al, 2016). Although the vast majority of previous studies was concentrated mainly on crime episodes, recent research on the deconstruction of offenders’ life narratives (Carthy, 2013) by means of the Life as a Film methodology captured the essence of offenders’ narrative specificity: generally negative tone, focus on criminality, concern on materialistic aims and matters and significant yet troublesome relationships with others.

¹⁴ As the Psychological complexity subgroup has no subcategories within it, this part of the chapter was not divided.

In the present chapter, the Life as a Film framework is implemented in order to explore “Life as a Film” narratives of a group of incarcerated offenders from four nationalities: British, Hungarian, Italian and Polish – represented in equal proportion in the sample of 120. The aims of the current study are to draw out the main psychological themes and traits of the offenders’ “life as a film” accounts; to provide a general description of offenders’ LAAF accounts and to explore the LAAF methodology as it applies to the general sample of the offenders’ LAAF narratives..

6.2 Method

Hundred and twenty incarcerated offenders’ descriptions of their life as a film were subjected to content analysis in terms of the LAAF methodology in this study.

Content analysis as methodology was previously successfully used on interviews of participants from both offending and non-offending populations (McAdams, 1988; Canter, 1994; Maruna, 2001; Sandberg, 2009). The “Life as a Film” content dictionary (LAAF) was published in 2012 and since then has been applied to interviews taken from incarcerated offenders and the non-offending population sample (e.g. Carthy, 2013; Youngs, Canter and Carthy, 2014). The LAAF process includes coding verbal material (interview transcripts) in terms of implicit psychological content, explicit processes to organise this content, psychological complexity, imagoes etc. The main aim of the process is to preserve the richness and the detail of the narrative material and at the same time allow comparison between sample groups.

The brief descriptions of each of the LAAF categories’ sub-groups are provided in the beginning of the description of the results (for each sub-group respectively) in this chapter. For a detailed description of the LAAF interpretation procedure, please refer to Part II, Chapter 3 (3.4 “Life as a Film interpretation procedure”) and Chapter 5 (5.3 “Life as a Film

(LAAF) content dictionary framework”). The full LAAF content dictionary is provided in Appendix II.

Transcribed and, where necessary, translated interviews were coded in terms of the LAAF content framework. Four independent raters applied the coding on a sample of 15 interviews. In order to assess the inter-raters’ reliability Fleiss’s Kappa was calculated for each part of the sample. Fleiss’s Kappa is a statistical measure for assessing the reliability of agreement between a fixed number of raters. It was calculated according to standard instructions (as provided by Elliot and Woodward, 2007). Established Kappa for the data set showed that the agreement between the inter-raters was between fair (0.21-0.4) to almost perfect (0.8-1) (as recommended by Landis and Koch, 1977).

Frequencies of appearance of each variable in the narratives are presented further in this chapter in thematic groups. Narrative verbatim is used to illustrate the variables of the LAAF framework. All verbatim is marked in italic, additionally long quotes are labelled by a code of a national sub-group (BR for British, IT for Italian, HP for Hungarian and PL for Polish) and case numbers.

6.3 Results

6.3.1 Psychological complexity

The psychological complexity sub-group of the LAAF variables provides a basis for interpretation of the narratives in terms of their richness (Youngs et al, 2016). It includes both formal (e.g. length of the LAAF account in words, presence of contingent type sequences etc) and substantive (e.g. number of distinct psychological ideas mentioned in the narrative, number of people cited in the narrative etc) complexity aspects of the accounts (see Chapters 3 and 5 for the detailed description and Appendix II for a full list of the categories in this subgroup). As Youngs et al (2016) pointed out, the psychological complexity categories

provide an internal validation of the LAAF procedure, as they show to what extent participants incorporate their experiences into their responses and how much thought they have put into their storylines.

As shown in Figure 6.1 in the general sample length of the response to the “Life as a Film” question varies from 29 to 2604 words (Mean= 427; Median=223; Mode=55; Sd. Deviation=526).

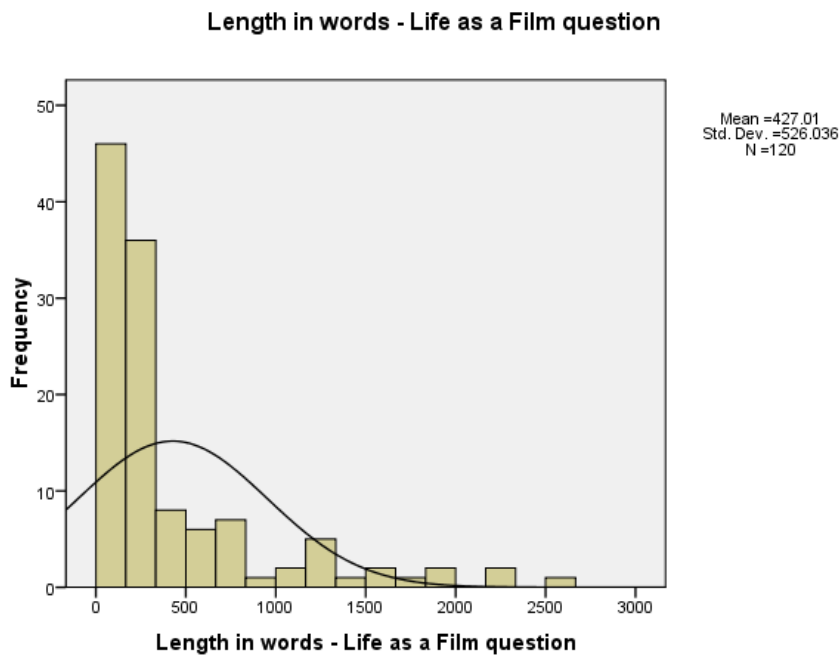


Figure 6.1: Length of the LAAF account in words – general sample, 120 participants

The number of people cited (Figure 6.2) in the response varies from 0 to 17 (Mean and Median= 2; Mode=0; Sd.Deviation=2.5). In the LAAF coding system only persons mentioned separately (“my mother”, “mate”, “son” etc) are taken into consideration, and not groups (e.g. “my family”, “my mates”, “children”), thus numbers show only persons mentioned separately, by family function, relationship or name. As shown in Fig.6.2, 30

participants (out of 120) did not mention anyone significant to them in the LAAF accounts. However, even those who did mention one or more individual personally important to them, in most cases did not assign any roles to them. The presence of distinct roles for characters was registered in 36% of all cases (n=43).

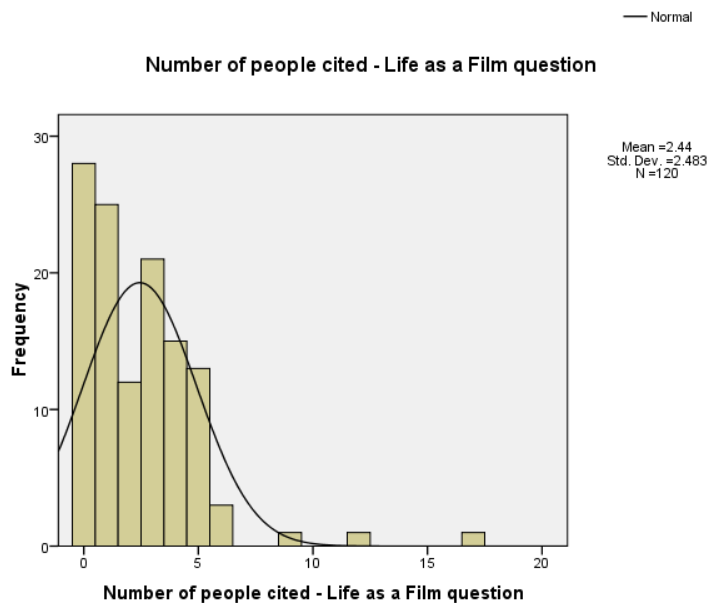


Figure 6.2: Number of people cited in the LAAF account– general sample, 120 participants

Number of distinct events cited in Life as a Film question varies from 0 to 21 (Mean= 5; Median=5; Mode=2 and 7; Sd. Deviation=3.6). This distribution (see Figure 6.3) is close to normal.

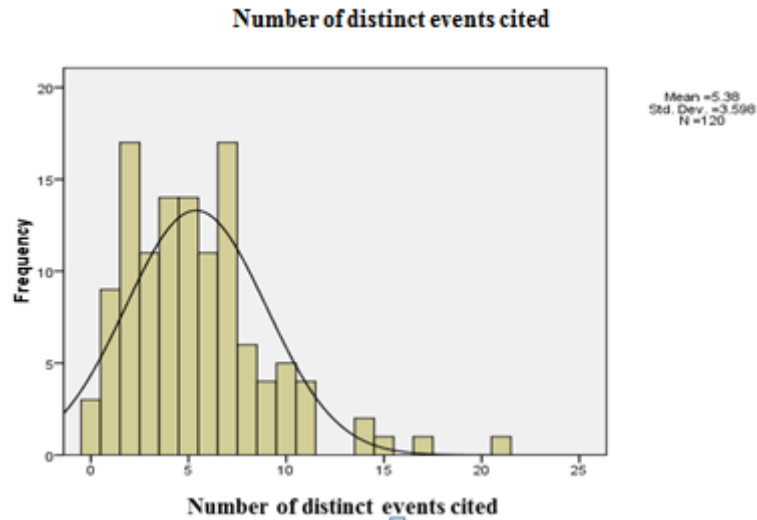


Figure 6.3: Number of distinct events cited in the LAAF account– general sample, 120 participants

Number of distinct psychological ideas cited in Life as a Film question varies from 0 to 11 words (Mean= 3; Median=3; Mode=2; Sd. Deviation=1.8). This distribution (see Figure 6.4) is also close to normal.

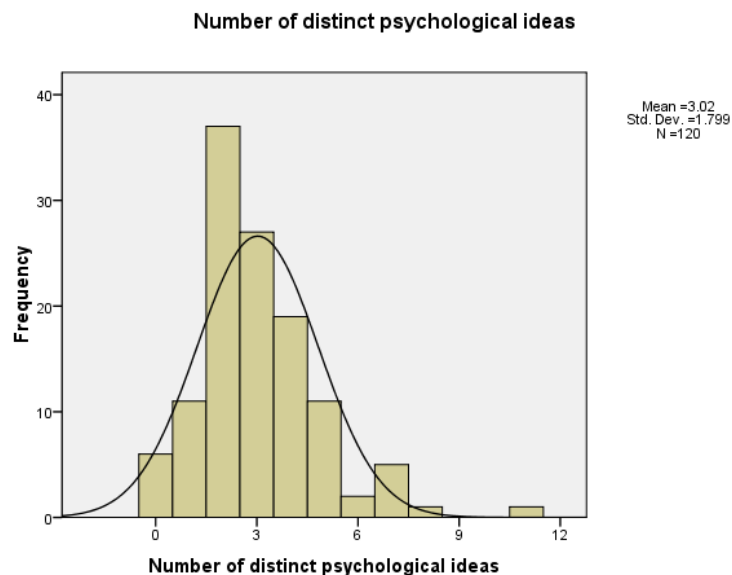


Figure 6.4: Number of distinct psychological ideas in the LAAF account– general sample, 120 participants

Presence of distinct roles for characters was found in 43 cases (36%). Most of the narratives in the sample were relatively well structured (presence of distinct beginning, middle and end components: 53%, n=64) and quite detailed: contingent sequences were present in 72 responses (60%). The presence of coherent theme/themes was registered in the vast majority of the narratives – 83% (n=100).

6.3.1.1 Psychological Complexity - summary

The participants presented psychologically rich, well-structured and detailed responses that contain coherent theme or themes, but not many distinct roles for characters (although significant person or persons were mentioned in the majority of the responses). Overall these findings support the idea of the significance and psychological richness of offenders' responses to the argument and provide yet further proof that LAAF is especially suitable for such respondents (Canter and Youngs, 2015). These results accord with the conclusions of the previous study done on an exclusively British sample (Youngs et al, 2014). As the psychological complexity categories are the “LAAF internal validation” tool (Youngs et al, 2014), the results show that the participants put a lot of their thought and experience into their storylines and indeed provided the accounts that focused on the key issues that characterise their lives.

6.3.2 Implicit psychological content

The “Implicit psychological content” sub-group of LAAF categories allows the review of the narrative on the basis of what a person describes in it. The implicit content is not explicitly used to structure the narrative and does not represent a specific storyline. However the implicit psychological content (this heading offered in the original publication on the LAAF methodology, Youngs et al, 2016) is revealed by a generic presentation of the LAAF (all

participants are asked to describe their life as a film, and to name the specific genre of this film). The narrative's focal content is outlined in the events mentioned by participants (e.g. categories "Doing crime", "Imprisonment", "Relationship success" etc. For the full list of the categories and the coding rule, please, refer to Appendix II), while its narrators use a variety of tones in describing their life as a film. Frye (1957) described important variances in the literary forms of the narratives as proactive/passive and negative/positive. The narrative approach in Investigative Psychology grew partially from literary criticism, and specifically from Frye's works (Canter, Kaouri and Ioannou, 2003); therefore this terminology (passive/proactive and negative/positive tones) was inherited by the LAAF methodology. In its description of narrative resolution, LAAF focuses on the ending of the story (happy versus sad) and on the goal that the narrator seeks to achieve (implicit messages, e.g. "I am decent", "I am dangerous" etc).

6.3.2.1 Implicit Psychological Content - Events

The results of the content analysis for the "Events" sub-group in Implicit Psychological Content categories are presented in Table 6.1. The most popular events described in the Film narrative were Imprisonment, Relationship Success and Doing Crime (57%, 48% and 44% respectively). All the other events were mentioned far more rarely. The fourth most frequent category - Relationship Problem, - was present only in 31% of all narratives, and the rest are even less frequent (for the full list of categories and frequencies, see Table 6.1). One can find an interesting parallel with the study by Stevenson et al (2009) on criminal sentiments (such as self-identification with criminal others), which provides a better differentiation between criminal and non-criminal population than, for example, do moral values and development. It is interesting to note that the justification most frequently mentioned in offenders' "Life as a Film" narratives was "Assuming role of a victim to one's self" (see Table 6.17).

Table 6.1: Implicit psychological content – events’ frequencies in general sample		
Events	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Doing crime	44	53
Imprisonment	57	68
Victim of crime	22	26
Birth	20	24
Death	21	25
Material success	20	24
Relationship problem	31	37
Relationship success	48	58

It is also interesting to note that being a victim of crime was not only a relatively popular event mentioned in offenders’ narratives (22%), but also assuming the role of victim was a frequent justification (23%).

6.3.2.2 Implicit Psychological Content – Tone and Ending

As may be seen in Table 6.2, the following implicit psychological themes were found to be the most popular: Happy Ending (59%), Positive tone (51%), Passive tone (40%). Thus the theme of a happy ending is as popular as the Imprisonment theme (59% and 57% respectively). In most cases the happy ending of their narratives was more “Happy cinema-style ending”; unrealistic and/or not detailed. For example: “*The film would have a happy ending with me walking off into the sunset.*”; “*It would be like ‘Rocky’ and I’d be the champion, everyone would get up and start clapping*”). Sometimes the Happy Ending is also not entirely innocent: ‘*It would end with a good ending; we get away with everything <robbing a copper mine mentioned previously> and live happily ever after.*’, “*It would be me and my 3 lads sailing off into the sunset, I would have just done my last job <respondent refers to crime> and it would be it, over and done with.*”. This also accords with the fact that the most frequent narrator’s imago in offenders’ narratives was Escapist (31%, see part 6.3.5 of this chapter, Table 6.11) – in McAdams definition someone who lives for diversion and amusement and is unwilling to take responsibility (McAdams, 1993).

Taken together, the positive and passive tone of the narrative Happy Ending gives a picture of dreaming about a distant wonderful future. Some cautious parallel can be drawn with the results of the recent study on outcome-oriented moral judgments of terrorists (Baez, Herrera, García, Manes, Young & Ibáñez, 2017). This study showed that terrorists are fixated on the utopian visions of the future, on the idealized “happy ending”. It proposes the connection between the moral judgments based on the ideal outcome, and the belief that any action can be justified by this future “happy ending”. With some reservations, it can be argued that the expectation of the idealized unrealistic happy ending is the common trait across the narratives of all offenders (regardless to their previous criminal history). At the same time, reformed narratives (Presser, 2008) or desistance narratives (Maruna, 2001) can be also “happy ending” oriented – after all, it is only natural for a human being to wish the best for himself. Further studies would be required to explore whether the realism of the anticipated “happy ending” of the personal story is a trait of the desistance narrative, or whether there is any correlation between a fixation on an idealized, unrealistic “happy ending” and recidivism.

	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Happy ending	59	71
Sad ending	8	10
Positive tone	51	61
Negative tone	28	34
Passive	40	48
Pro-active	38	45

6.3.2.3 Implicit Psychological Content – Genres and Messages

One can describe the Film narrative of the offenders in general as a comedy – Comedy (23%, n=28) and Action (19%, n=23) were most frequently chosen to describe life as a film, while the genres of Thriller and Romance were the least popular (4%, n=5 each) (as shown in the results in Table 6.3). Occasionally it is even criminal comedy – although Crime as a genre

was not overly frequent in the respondents' LAAF accounts (8%, n=9), the popularity of the Action genre together with the frequency of the "Doing Crime" event in the participants' narratives (44%, n=53, Table 6.1) is quite significant.

Genre	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Comedy	23	28
Romance	4	5
Crime	8	9
Action	19	23
Tragedy	8	10
Thriller	4	5

"Type of message" group of categories (Table 6.4) was unexpectedly more frequent than the categories from the genre group. The most popular messages in the general sample were "I am decent" (39% of the general sample, n=47), "I am interesting" (28% of the general sample, n=34) and "It was my own choice" (16% of the general sample, n=19). Thus if the most frequently mentioned genre is Comedy (and, as mentioned previously, possibly a criminal comedy), the presence of such messages makes it a comic story of a decent character, who makes their own choices and rightfully impresses the listener. There is no paradox – such stories and characters are well known in literature: Till Eulenspiegel (both folklore character and de Koster's literature adaptation), Nasreddin, Robin Hood and so on – all heroic characters in comic circumstances.

Although the specific categories of genre (Comedy (23%) and Action (19%)) and types of message ("I am decent" (39%), "I am interesting" (28%) and "It was my own choice" (16%)) were frequent in the participants' narratives, the frequency levels of most of them were far from those of Happy Ending (59%), Positive tone (51%), Passive tone (40%) or Imprisonment (57%), Doing Crime (44%) and Relationship Success (48%) events. The only exception is the message "I am decent" (39%) – its level of frequency is close enough to other most popular variables. Thereby the "decent and impressive character in a comic story"

content outline described previously can be defined as present, but definitely not prevalent (due to the relatively low frequencies of all the variables that outline it). At the same time the popularity of the message “I am decent” shows the importance of this particular theme for a significant number of participants. Two out of the three most frequent narrative messages (“I am decent” and “It was my own choice”) belong to the group that Sandberg (2009) defined as conventional discourse – they are utilized in claims of morally decent self (Presser, 2004; Sandberg, 2009). Overall the prevalence of the conventional discourse (messages “I am decent” and “It was my own choice”) over what Sandberg (2009) defined as “gangster discourse of the violent street culture” demonstrates another manifestation of the “drift” between mainstream and subcultural discourses” (Sandberg, 2009, p. 506). In the current study the “drift” obviously took a turn towards a more mainstream conventional discourse. It could be due to the influence of the context (as Sandberg, 2009 pointed out, narrative search for respect is critical for a person in a marginalised position, and imprisonment can be defined that) and/or to the influence of the interviewer. As Sandberg pointed out (2009) in his original study, the research participants were in doubt as to how to define their interviewers (old white and well-educated, but “hanging out at a drug scene and not trying to convince them to stop dealing” (Sandberg, 2009, p. 504)). In the current study the interviewers’ position was different – they were psychologists (both men and women, and not necessarily white or old) who came to prison to interview the participants after both oral and written briefings. Therefore it is possible that a social desirability bias (Furnham, 1986), the participants’ wish to ascribe to themselves traits that are socially desirable (and they would not doubt that the interviewers belonged to “conventional discourse”) made the “mainstream discourse” messages prevalent in the participants’ LAAF accounts.

Table 6.4: Type of message, general sample		
Message (Sandberg 2009)	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
It was my own choice	16	19
I am decent	39	47
We are the same	11	13
I am interesting	28	34
I am smart	5	6
I am dangerous	8	9

6.3.2.4 Implicit Psychological Content – summary

The analysis of the implicit psychological content of the offenders' narratives in terms of the LAAF content framework revealed the picture of a rather positive, optimistic and even humorous life, where imprisonment is a temporary impediment on the road to a happy ending (frequent items "Happy Ending", "Positive tone", "Imprisonment", genre "Comedy"). The prevalence of the descriptions of relationship success over failure in the narratives adds to the positivity of the picture and contradicts the results of the previous study (Youngs et al, 2015), in which relationship failure was frequently mentioned in the offenders' narratives. The frequent presence of the Passive tone in the narratives gives a suggestion of fatalism to this overall rather optimistic picture.

Presser (2010) described all narratives as social interactions in social context. Through the use of this definition, Youngs, Canter and Carthy (2016) explained the prevalence of crime and prison motives in offenders' narratives. Thus preoccupation with themes of imprisonment, passivity and crime is not unexpected, and in fact accords with previous findings (Youngs et al, 2016). It could be proposed that the preponderance of an optimistic approach and a happy ending is another result of the influence of the environment – the individual in a hard and uncontrolled situation would indulge himself in dreams and plans for

a better life. A previous study on comparisons between offenders' and non-offenders' life stories (Carthy, 2013) supports this conclusion – the “happy ending” theme was found to be predominant in offenders' narratives, but not in those of non-offenders.

Two out of three messages that were found most frequently in the offenders' LAAF accounts (“I am decent” and “It was my own choice”) belong to the group that Sandberg (2009) defined as conventional discourse (claims of morally decent self). The prevalence of the conventional discourse over the non-conventional one (messages “I am dangerous”, “I am interesting” and “I am smart”) indicates a new turn of the “drift between mainstream and subcultural discourses” (Sandberg, 2009, p. 506): the one that flows towards a more mainstream conventional discourse. According to Sandberg, 2009, any form of drift indicates a search for respect – offenders “should neither be seen as altogether conventional, nor as isolated in a subculture... Drifting is always restrained by cultural discourses, and takes place continuously in an active and artful search for respect.” (Sandberg, 2009, p. 506). Sandberg (2009) stated that the shift “between conventional and gangster discourse” (Sandberg, 2009, p. 504) could be the result of the participants' being in doubt as to how to define researchers due to the influence of both the researchers' social standing (old, white and educated, as Sandberg described it) and the surroundings (“hanging out at the drug scene, and not trying to convince them to stop dealing, we could also be seen as friends they wanted to impress”, Sandberg, 2009, p. 504). Following this argument, the prevalence of the “conventional discourse” messages in the results of the current study could be explained by the influence of the context (imprisonment) and/or to the influence of the interviewer, the participant's wish to aspire to traits that are socially desirable and which would fit the “conventional discourse” in which the interviewer was probably classified.

The analysis of the Implicit Psychological Content items of the LAAF content framework revealed a potential for the development of this subgroup of the LAAF categories. At present,

the LAAF interpretation system allows only the Happy Ending in the narrative without any distinction between the realistic and utopian Happy Endings. A recent study (Baez, Herrera, García et al 2017) suggested a connection between moral judgments based on an ideal outcome, and the belief that any action (in this particular study, terrorism) can be justified by a future “happy ending”. However the stories of desistance (reformed narratives, as in Presser, 2008; desistance narratives, as in Maruna, 2001) could also be “Happy Ending” oriented. Further studies would be required in order to explore whether the realism of the anticipated “happy ending” of the personal story is a trait of the desistance narrative, or whether there is any correlation between a fixation on an idealized, unrealistic “happy ending” and recidivism. Further development of the LAAF framework that will explore a distinction between realistic and utopian Happy Endings in coding is required.

6.3.4 Explicit processes used to organise content

The “Explicit psychological processes” subgroup of LAAF variables describes the psychologically active components of the narrative that define the connections and movements to produce the storyline. The content categories of this subgroup draw on the core themes of Redemption and Contamination. The personal narratives of both persisting and desisting offenders centre around these two story plots, according to Maruna (2001). General narrative themes, and those of Agency and Communion, also appear in this subgroup, alongside Redemption and Contamination..

6.3.4.1 Explicit processes to organise the narrative – Agency and Communion themes

Agency themes were relatively rare in the general sample of offenders’ narrative (24% was the highest frequency, the Self-mastery theme; Table 6.5). Communion themes were far more popular (the Unity/Togetherness theme was found in 44% of all narratives; Love/Friendship theme – in 28%; Table 6.6).

Table 6.5: Agency themes, general sample		
Agency themes	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Self-mastery	24	29
Status/Victory	20	24
Achievement/Responsibility	16	19
Empowerment	8	9

Table 6.6: Communion themes, general sample		
Communion themes	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Love/Friendship	28	34
Dialogue	2	2
Caring/Help	22	26
Unity/Togetherness	44	53

Despite this somewhat pastoral picture of love, care, friendship and unity, the Dialogue theme was rarely found any of the participants' narrative (2%, or 2 responses). As McAdams (1993) described it, Dialogue is a reciprocal, non-instrumental and non-hostile form of communication with another person or group of others, viewed as an end in itself or as an intention to help other/others. The low frequency of this theme, in combination with the declared low levels of both empathy and hostility (17% and 9% respectively), together with the declared high levels of the significance of others (69%) gives us a picture of a rather indifferent person, for whom others are significant as a means for the achievement of some purpose rather than as people with their own needs and wishes. It is worth remarking that the most popular imagoes of other characters in offenders' narratives were Caregiver (17%) and Lover (8%), while all the other roles were significantly less frequent, if present at all. This topic is further discussed in the following part of this chapter "Nature of Agency vis-à-vis others and the world".

6.3.4.2 Explicit processes to organise the narrative – Redemption and Contamination

Frequencies for Redemption and Contamination themes are presented in Tables 6.7 and 6.8. In accordance with previous findings (Youngs et al, 2014), Contamination was found to be a more popular theme than Redemption in a general sample of offenders' narratives (48% and 38% respectively). It is interesting to note that, despite the relative popularity of the General Redemption theme, only two participants declared that they enjoyed some special advantage (Advantage 2%), and the most popular redemption themes were Development (23%) and Suffering¹⁵ (15%). At the same time, the most popular contamination theme was Failure (28%). In the light of these findings, the optimistic picture given in terms of Remit categories changes. The road to an inevitable happy ending is more hope against hope, a dream pursued despite everything around going sour. Thus the happy ending becomes even more unreal – and is yet frequently present in the story.

Table 6.7: Redemption theme, general sample		
Redemption	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
General redemption	38	46
Advantage	2	2
Suffering	15	18
Development	23	27
Repeated negative	10	12
Prosocial	13	15

Table 6.8: Contamination theme, general sample		
Contamination	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
General contamination	48	57
Victimisation	12	14
Betrayal	13	16
Loss of significant	8	9

¹⁵ Narrator described as he/she witnessed suffering or injustice in lives of others in childhood (Foley Centre for Lives, 2009b).

other		
Failure	28	32
Illness/Injury	3	3
Disappointment	11	13
Disillusionment	5	6
Sex guilt/Humiliation	8	9

6.3.4.3 Explicit processes to organise the narrative – classic narrative themes

The frequencies for the classic narrative themes are provided in the Table 6.9. The prevalence of the “Fulfilment/satisfaction” theme(41%), closely followed by the rather heroic “Overcoming Obstacles and Struggles”, “Wrong done them/theirs” and “Masculinity/Bravery” (25%, 24% and 21% respectively) gives a picture of a strong potent character, a fighter. The relatively frequent themes of Fate (21%) and Impotence/Hopelessness (20%) provide a tragic undertone to the story of strength and bravery.

HP15: “The story is about a man who left his country trusted himself to be successful however it failed. Although he is trusting in the success. My relatives and friends would play roles in the film and the conclusion would be a great victory.”

BR26: “I had an eye operation at twelve so I’ve been physically and mentally bullied. I’ve also self-harmed. All the worst things a human can do to their self I’ve done it or considered it. Everyone’s probably been a bully or been bullied so they know what it’s like. They’d probably see an animal who should be caged. All I want for the future is to be released and be another guy who goes about his business with my family. All I’ve ever wanted is to fit in with the crowd, not to be just that guy who stands out in thousand people.”

Narrative themes	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Overcoming Struggles/Obstacles/Mission	25	30
Wrong done to them/theirs	24	29

Impotence/Hopelessness	20	24
Effectiveness/Skills/Competencies	13	16
Victory/ Proving Self/ Success	16	19
Revenge	2	2
Fate	21	25
Tangible Rewards/ Acquisitions	10	12
Masculinity/Bravery	21	25
Compulsion	4	5
Confusion/Misunderstanding	7	8
Fulfilment/Satisfaction	41	49

6.3.4.4 Explicit processes to organise the narrative – summary

Analysis of the explicit processes to organise the narrative changed a rather optimistic picture outlined by the categories of the Implicit Psychological Content. The offenders' LAAF accounts showed a contaminated, rather than a redemptive script. The road to an inevitable happy ending is more hope against hope, a dream pursued despite everything around going sour. The participants' LAAF accounts are frequently organised by strong, potent themes ("Overcoming Obstacles and Struggles", "Wrong done them/theirs", "Masculinity/Bravery"). Together with the popular "Fulfilment/satisfaction" theme they give a picture of a strong, potent character, a fighter. The relatively frequent themes of Fate and Impotence/Hopelessness provide a tragic undertone to the story of strength and bravery. At the same time, the vast majority the offenders' narratives included Communion themes, even more frequently than most of the Agentic or classic narrative themes (e.g. "Unity/Togetherness" – 44%, "Love/Friendship" – 28%, "Caring/Help" – 22%; while "Self-mastery", the most frequent Agentic theme is only 24%). Despite this somewhat pastoral picture of love, care, friendship and unity, the Dialogue (reciprocal, non-instrumental and non-hostile forms of communication with another person or group of others, viewed as an end in itself or as an intention to help other/others) theme was rarely found any of the participants' narrative.

6.3.5 Nature of agency vis-à-vis others and the world

The “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” or the “Nature of Agency” subgroup of LAAF categories describes the ways in which an individual deals with the world as a whole and with the people around him. This sub-group of the content dictionary includes the roles assigned by the narrator to himself and to others (imagoes), emotional quadrants (based on Russell’s (1997) work on the circumplex of emotions), categories of empathy/hostility towards others and interpersonal behaviours described in the narrative, together with categories of moral justifications and behavioural incentives (for detailed descriptions see Chapter 3 and Chapter 5.3; for the full list of the items within this subgroup see Appendix II). This part of the LAAF content framework outlines the interactions between the characters in the narrative, and the protagonist’s motives, emotions and personal aims.

6.3.5.1 Nature of agency vis-à-vis others and the world – self in the narrative

The picture of a fighter described in previous parts of the study, the hero who overcomes obstacles and strives towards his happy end despite the contamination that surrounds him becomes more controversial when one comes to the results of the “nature of agency vis-à-vis others and the world” group. As expected, the identity of such a character is significantly stronger than others in the narrative (80% of all interviews, see Table 6.13). At the same time the nature of his interaction with the world is rather reactive (Reactive 51% vs. Proactive 33%, see Table 6.10).

Locus of Agency	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Proactive	33	39
Reactive	51	61
Avoidant of others	13	16
Confronting others	18	22

Despite the rather heroic nature of the narrative in general the predominant self-*imago* is not a Warrior or a Traveller (14% and 13% respectively, Table 6.11), but an Escapist (31%) and a Caregiver (21%).

HP 52: "I love my family. The film wouldn't be interesting. It would be totally prosy <sic>. Of course I have messy things, too. I would highlight my attitude to my family."

HP62: "I would be the main character. There would be shootings; it would be a mafia film with car chase with police. There would be bank robberies. <End> I'm rich, I visit a nice island, I don't get caught by the police."

Table 6.11: Self-imagoes, general sample		
Imago	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Healer	2	2
Teacher	3	4
Counsellor	3	4
Humanist	8	10
Arbiter	2	2
Warrior	14	17
Traveller	13	16
Sage	3	3
Maker	3	4
Lover	8	10
Caregiver	21	25
Friend	5	6
Ritualistic	9	11
Escapist	31	37
Survivor	22	26

6.3.5.2 Nature of agency vis-à-vis others and the world – others in the narrative

As shown in Table 6.15, others were more frequently described as significant than as non-significant in the offenders' narratives. However, this finding taken together with the most prevalent *Imagoes* of Others (Caregiver 17% and Lover 8%, Table 6.12) give a strong image of rather instrumental attitude towards others rather than anything else – others are supporting characters, serving the needs of the main hero, and are significant only in that role. There is

neither empathy nor hostility towards others (see Table 6.14). They are not important enough to be advisors of any kind (0 frequencies of Counsellor and Arbiter categories, Table 6.12).

Table 6.12: Characterization of others in Imagoes, general sample		
Imago	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Healer	2	2
Teacher	5	6
<i>Counsellor</i>	0	0
Humanist	2	2
<i>Arbiter</i>	0	0
Warrior	2	2
<i>Traveller</i>	0	0
Sage	2	2
Maker	1	1
Lover	8	10
Caregiver	17	20
Friend	7	8
Ritualist	3	4
Escapist	1	1
Survivor	1	1

Table 6.13: Self-identity, general sample		
Self-identity	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Stronger than others	80	96
Weaker than others	8	9

Table 6.14: Attitude towards others, general sample		
	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Empathy towards others	17	20
Hostility towards others	9	11

Table 6.15: Significance of others, general sample		
	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Others significant	69	83
Others non-significant	23	28

A parallel can be drawn with Propp's study on folk tales (1928) – characters are set around the main hero, and their only functions are to help or to harm him/her (Villain, Donor, Helper, Prize etc). In offenders' narratives these functions are reduced to one: Helper. For example: *“We are not like that, we have been mates for years, our mums are friends, and we have grown up together. He is just wild with loads of scars everywhere, he is worse than me. But my girlfriend loves him; he will do anything for anyone. We all look after each other's*

girlfriends when one of us is in jail. But yesterday I saw the last one of us on B wing; he was the only one outside and was giving my girlfriend £100 per week. We are all inside now” (BR10; index offence: grievous bodily harm). The similarity with the structure of the folk tale is enhanced by the fact that in the vast majority of offenders’ narratives the story is focused on the narrator himself (Self-identity stronger than others – 80%). The heroes of these narratives are neither avoidant nor confrontational (Avoidant of others – 13%, Confronting others – 18%); others are merely supporting characters whose purpose is to provide for the hero or to emphasize some main character’s trait or talent.

The absence of negative characters may be explained by the lack of antagonists’ imagoes. In both in the original McAdams’ list of imagoes and in the LAAF content framework, all the roles of self and of others were deliberately created as neutral or positive. At the same time, in some narratives the antagonist or villain is present. For example, in this story the ex-partner is a villain, an evil genius who always brought out the worst in the narrator and got him into trouble:

BR33: “The ex was constantly nagging, wanting to go on holidays with the family and phoning all the time – she would be wrecking my head. I needed some space and would tell her to go out with her mates. But if I went out with her I’d get into fights with guys looking at her. If she was out with her mates she’d phone me and tell me some guy had pawed her and I would race over to her and fight the guys. I think she liked the idea of me fighting for her. Like in the movies, typical women spending all the man’s money. The audience would think I was lucky to get rid of her.”

The absence of a villain character is also meaningful – and much more frequent in offenders’ narratives. For example:

PL4: We sit by the cell, the guards indulge in luxury. <film begins?>With a picture of men who were wrongfully convicted. At the moment the sentence is pronounced. Transport to

prison, the men try to get away; they don't want to go there because they know there has been a mistake... The wrongfully convicted guys are taken to prison, taken away from their homes, jobs and everyday duties. They stand before the committee. They are assigned cells. Their daily life is shown: walks, meals, conversations.

In this story, although a hint is given that there are some villains who “indulge in luxury” and imprison the innocent man, the actual role of a villain is not assigned to anyone. The evil is just *monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens*¹⁶, it has no personification or form. As mentioned previously, the offenders’ personal stories are focused on themselves. Currently, the LAAF content dictionary does not include any “antagonist role categories”, although the situation with no antagonist can be described in LAAF terms. Further studies are required to explore the antagonist characters in personal narratives.

6.3.5.3 Nature of Agency vis-à-vis others and the world – emotional spectrum, justifications and incentives

As shown in Table 6.16 the offenders’ LAAF accounts were more frequently narrated in the positive emotional spectrum - aroused (31%, n=37) and non-aroused (28%, n=33) inclusively.

Table 6.16: emotional spectrum, general sample		
Emotions	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Aroused positive	31	37
Aroused negative	15	18
Non-aroused positive	28	33
Non-aroused negative	22	26

As shown in the Table 6.17 justifications were rarely mentioned in the narrative – most of them have frequencies of less than 10%, and the most frequent one “Assuming the role of the victim” was present in only 28 cases (23%). This supports the idea that the LAAF

¹⁶ Lat. “horrible, shapeless, vast monster” (Virgil (Publi Vergili Maronis), “Aeneidos”, Liber III)

methodology meets the need to avoid a justificatory focus in the narrative procedure, as was suggested by Canter and Youngs (2015).

Justifications	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Denial of responsibility	10	12
Denial of injury	1	1
Denial of victim	2	2
Condemnation of the condemners	4	5
Appeal to higher loyalties	2	2
Displacement of responsibility	4	5
Diffusion of responsibility	3	4
Distorting the consequences of an action	3	4
Dehumanising the victim	1	1
Assuming the role of victim for oneself	23	28

No prevalent theme was found among Incentives (see Table 6.18). Offenders are equally concerned about material success and sensory gain in their stories (17%), and far less interested in power or status gain (5%).

Incentive (Bandura 1986)	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
For material/financial gain	18	21
For sensory gain	18	21
For power/status gain	5	6
For social (approval/advancement) gain	11	13

6.3.5.4 Nature of Agency vis-à-vis others and the world – summary

The analysis of the Nature of Agency vis-à-vis Others and the World subgroup of the LAAF content framework revealed the protagonist of the narrative: a person of strong presence, but a somewhat escapist character (most frequent self-imagos “Escapist”). The majority of the LAAF accounts in the sample were narrated in the positive emotional spectre (either aroused or non-aroused). This finding contradicts previous descriptions of the offenders’ LAAF responses (Youngs et al, 2015), in which a negative undertone was found to be typical for

offenders' LAAF accounts. Also the current research shows that offenders' narratives are less concerned with the material gain ("Incentive: for material/financial gain" 18%) than was thought to be the case (Youngs et al, 2015).

Justification is rarely mentioned in the narratives ("Assuming the role of the victim" justification was found to be the most frequent one – 23%; others hardly reached 10%). This finding demonstrates that LAAF methodology indeed meets the need to avoid a justificatory focus in the narrative procedure (Canter and Youngs,2015).

The nature of the interaction between the protagonist and the world is more reactive than proactive and his attitude towards others can be described as indifferent (although others are frequently described as significant in the narratives, the narrators rarely assigned any roles to them). Others are frequently only supporting characters, serving the needs of the protagonist, and their significance is limited to that role. A parallel was drawn to Propp's study (1928) on folk-tales: according to Propp (1928) in the folk tales the characters are set around the main hero, and their only functions are to help or to harm him/her.

The parallel with Propp's study (1928) brought up one of the issues of the LAAF content framework. While in the folk tales (and, as this study shows, in the LAAF accounts as well) the other characters may help or harm the protagonist, the LAAF framework in its current state does not include any negative roles either for others or for the main character of the story. Both the LAAF content framework and the original McAdams' list of imagoes (1996) on which this part of the LAAF dictionary is based were deliberately created to include only positive or neutral roles. Further studies are required to develop the "negative roles" categories for the LAAF framework. The current study presents two possible categories – the Villain and the Non-Personified Evil (see Appendix III for the definitions). Both could be applied as Self-Imagoes or as roles assigned to others in the narratives.

6.4 Chapter summary and conclusion: new vision of unresolved dissonance

The aims of this study were to draw out the main psychological themes and traits of the offenders' "Life as a Film" accounts and to explore the LAAF methodology on the general sample of the offenders' LAAF narratives. In the conclusion of this chapter, an outline of the themes and traits of the offenders' LAAF accounts is provided, and the results of the LAAF methodology exploration are summarised.

In general, the main character, the personification of the narrator in offenders' stories, can be described as a lonely hero with no equal, the victim of a cruel, contaminated world. He has no choice other than to react, stand and fight, and strive towards his happy ending. His laughter and comedy are of a rather epic nature ('tis but a scratch') and bear resemblance to depictions of Vikings' funeral feasts. Parallels can be drawn with the fairy-tale description given by Zipes (2012): "It tells us what we lack and how the world has to be organised differently so that we receive what we need."(p. 14).

Relationships with others in offenders' narratives are instrumental rather than empathic. The only role given to others is that of supportive characters who help and care for the main hero. Although it must be said that the relative scarcity of any imagoes – both those of self and of others, - categorized in narratives might signify the need for content dictionary adjustments. Original definitions of imagoes were created by McAdams (1993), and were based only on interviews of non-offenders. McAdams himself described those imagoes as exclusively positive, containing good and desirable attributes. Thus, the lack of definitions' adjustments may provide false negative results (lack of marked categories in the interviews where these imagoes were present) and an inability to grasp the full richness of the narrative provided.

Overall, the main characteristics of the offenders' narratives distinguished in the current study (apart from the criminality theme) are a positive tone, a happy ending, a heroic protagonist and a somewhat instrumental relationship with others, to whom the mainly

supportive roles of lover and caregiver are assigned. Taken together, these characteristics form something suspiciously close to a fairy tale – as most people nowadays know them¹⁷. Fairy tales are instructive, according to the definition placed upon them by Zipes (2012). Specifically, they demonstrate the failings of the hero, and how those failings may be overcome in order to make him more fit for the world. In this way, the listener or reader learns of his own failings as he identifies with the hero, and may see a way in which to improve his own situation.. The stories told by prisoners are reminiscent of such fairy tales, hence the results show narratives built around the conflict between imprisonment and happiness. It might also explain why the happy ending shown in the stories is so frequently not described at all, or is unrealistic.

The results of the current study compared to the findings of the previous comparative analysis of the LAAF accounts of offending and non-offending population (Youngs et al, 2016) outline some interesting tendencies. Some of the characteristics that were described as distinguishing for the offenders' narratives in the previous study were found frequent in the current research as well. For example, the following variables show similar levels of frequency in both samples of offenders: "Happy Ending" (53% in the previous study, 59% in the current one), "Material gain" (26% in the previous study, 18% in the current one), "Doing crime" (54% in the previous study, 44% in the current one), "Imprisonment" (48% in the previous study, 57% in the current one) etc. Overall it can be said that in terms of the criminality as the dominant aspect of identity and the concern with the materialistic within the narrative the results of the current study support the findings by Youngs et al (2016). However, the comparison between the findings of the previous (Youngs et al, 2016) and of the current study show that the generally negative undertone and high presence of the

¹⁷ Originally fairy-tales did not necessarily end happily (e.g. the oldest version of the Little Red Riding Hood story ends with both the heroine and her grandmother being eaten by a wolf, not by their miraculous salvation). But for centuries these original versions of the stories have only been read by specialists. The vast majority of fairy-tales published and read by recent generations end happily.

“Relationship problem” event described as the distinguishing characteristic of offenders’ narratives might not be as specific to the offenders’ LAAF accounts as it thought to be. The relationship success was found to be prevalent over relationship failure in the current study (48% and 31% respectively). Although the theme of General Contamination was nearly equally frequent in the offenders narratives in both previous and current studies (38%, n=23 and 48%, n=57 respectively) in all the other variables that outlined the generally negative undertone of the narrative the results of the current study are more similar to those of non-offending sample in the research by Youngs et al (2016). Thus, only 8% (n=10) of all participants in the current study chose Tragedy as their “Life as a Film” genre – much less, than participants from the offenders’ sample (20%, n=12) in the study by Youngs et al (2016) and closer to the results of the non-offending sample in the same study (3%, n=3). 28% of all participants in the current study narrated their LAAF accounts in the negative tone (“Negative tone” variable) – the results are similar to those of non-offending sample (20%, n=22) in the previous study (Youngs et al, 2016) and are significantly lower than those of offenders’ sample (57%, n=35) in the same study. Mentioning of the physical or psychological illness and/or injury in the response was found distinguishable characteristic between the offenders’ and non-offenders’ narratives (10%, n=6 and 1%, n=1 respectively) in the previous study (Youngs et al, 2016). The results of the current study (“Illness/Injury” – 3%, n=3) question that finding.

In the previous study the model of the meta-narrative of the Unresolved Dissonance that sustains offending was built (Youngs et al, 2016). This model was characterised by the following: focus on criminality, negative undertone and the conflict between the need for rewarding personal relationships and the focus on material gain (Youngs et al, 2016). The results of the current study partially support the outcome of the previous research – the offenders’ narrative is dominated by the theme of criminality. And yet this analysis provides

a new vision of Unresolved Dissonance (Youngs et al, 2016) – not as a dissonance between the need for rewarding relationships with others and the focus on material gain, but as a controversy between light optimistic and egocentric attitudes and a harsh illogical world, from which the narrator still hopes to get some support and a happy ending.

The current research was also aimed at exploring the LAAF methodology. As the results showed, the LAAF accounts provided by the participants were psychologically rich and detailed. The analysis of the psychological complexity variables, the “LAAF internal validation” tool (Youngs et al, 2014), demonstrated that the participants put a lot of their experience and thought into the storylines and provided accounts that focus on the key issues of their lives. These findings provided yet further proof that LAAF is especially suitable for the criminal offenders’ population (Canter and Youngs, 2015). The rarity of justifications in the responses (“Assuming the role of the victim” was found in 23%, others had frequencies 10% or less) supported the idea that the LAAF methodology meets the need to avoid a justificatory focus in the narrative procedure, as was emphasised by Canter and Youngs (2015). Overall, the LAAF interpretation system allows the simultaneous analysis of narrative traits, processes and characteristics. The LAAF account as it was described previously represents a compressed version of a life story, an outline of a life narrative. External signposts (e.g. critical events) are not required in the LAAF account, and it does not represent a biography. As the results showed the LAAF methodology provides a tool to analyse this short manifestation of self, enveloping the crucial life narrative points and characteristics (e.g. tone and theme, significant persons and ideas of future).

However as the findings of the current study demonstrate, the LAAF interpretation system does not yet grasp all the necessary traits and characteristics and requires some development. Apart from the previously mentioned requirement for the imagoes’ definitions to be adjusted, the absence of some categories was also mentioned in the results of the current study. The

lack of negative imagoes impedes the analysis and impedes the opportunity to reveal the “dark side” of the narrative. As the results showed, negative roles (such as Villains or Non-Personified Evil) were definitely present in the participants’ responses. The LAAF content framework (“Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” subgroup, Self-Imagoes and Imagoes of Others) is based on the McAdams’ study of imagoes (1996) – and those were deliberately created to include only positive or neutral roles. The “negative roles” categories in the LAAF framework require further research and development.. Two potential LAAF items were presented in the current study - the Villain and the Non-Personified Evil (see Appendix III for the definitions). Either of these could be applied as self-imagoes, as well as to the roles that might be assigned to others in the narratives..

The role of the “Happy Ending”, desired goal/outcome was stated in previous researches. Thus, both “reformed narratives” (Presser, 2008) and the desistance narratives (Maruna, 2001) could be “Happy Ending oriented”, and this orientation is the important part of the desistance story. At the same time the recent study by Baez et al (2017) emphasised the influence of the utopian vision of the future, the idealised “happy ending” on recidivism. Baez et al (2017) argued that there is a connection between the moral judgments based on the ideal outcome, and the belief that any action <in the study - terrorism> can be justified by this future “happy ending”. The results of the current study showed that the offenders’ LAAF responses are frequently “Happy Ending” oriented. However LAAF at its current state does not allow the perception of the difference between realistic and utopian Happy Endings – although both kinds are present in the responses. LAAF currently does not even allow a distinction between the Happy Ending that is socially oriented versus the one that is criminally oriented (and those were present too, as shown by the examples in the Chapter 6, Part 6.3.5.1). Further development of the LAAF content framework is required in order to build the categories that will allow a distinction between different Happy Endings. Such a

development would contribute towards further understanding of the rich narrative material. It would also help in the exploration of the questions as to whether the realism of the anticipated “happy ending” of the personal story is a trait of the desistance narrative, or whether there is any correlation between a fixation on an idealized, unrealistic “happy ending” and recidivism.

Chapter 7: Uncovering inner structures of the narrative

Chapter 7 overview

The aim of this study was to provide an in-depth morphological analysis of offenders’ LAAF accounts in order to reveal the interrelations between the story elements, and to uncover the inner themes thus created.

The narratives of 120 male offenders from British, Hungarian, Italian and Polish nationalities represented in equal proportion in the sample were coded in terms of the LAAF content framework. The results of the coding were subjected to the Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I). In order to reveal inner themes and constructs within each of the levels of the narrative, the SSA-I was applied to each of the three LAAF sub-themes separately..

Three implicit psychological content themes were found: the sad story of the Innocent Victim, the optimistic account of the Romantic Hero and the delinquency-oriented story of the Career Criminal. These stories represent the various approaches towards the unresolved conflict of the disagreeable reality of imprisonment, and the much wanted happy ending. Three movements that produce the storyline were distinguished: Prevailing Unity (focused on communion and redemption), Losing Loneliness (built around contamination and loneliness) and Heroic Winning (concentrated on satisfaction and fulfilment). The four ways of interactions with others and the world were outlined: Getaway, Help, Pleasure and Excuse. Socio-oriented stories of Getaway and Help created a pair opposing ego-centric stories of

Pleasure and Excuse. These four themes could also be described in terms of proactive (Help and Pleasure) versus reactive (Getaway and Excuse) attitudes towards the world.

The results grasped the cyclical, moving nature of the narrative. They provided insights into the complicated structure of the stories and potentially equipped researchers with the material for the creation of a quantitative methodology for narrative research. Also, the gaps in the current LAAF content framework, together with routes for development, were outlined in the results of this study.

For the readers' convenience, the study results are presented in the same order as the LAAF sub-groups (it is consistent throughout the current thesis): implicit psychological content, then explicit processes to organise the content and finally agency vis-à-vis others and the world. In order to guide the reader through the huge amount of findings additional subheadings were developed in accordance with the composite constructs and themes revealed in each of the LAAF content framework sub-groups. Short summaries of the findings within the LAAF subgroups are provided in the end of the subchapters.

7.1. Hidden themes of the incarcerated offenders' narratives

Propp (1928) underlined the importance of motifs (repeated story elements) in the tale and how together they build the structure of the narrative. The previous study revealed specific story elements within the narrative. The aim of this study is to provide an in-depth morphological analysis of offenders' narratives, in order to reveal the interrelations between the story elements, and to describe the inner themes thus uncovered. The analysis was done in terms of LAAF sub themes: the implicit psychological content of the offender's personal story, and its explicit psychological content and agency vis-à-vis others and the world as described in the offenders' narrative. Each sub theme is analysed separately.

The most direct way to reveal the hidden morphological structures of the narrative, to uncover the connections between the items of each narrative subtheme was to represent the relationships between these items as distances in a spatial configuration. This procedure is central to multi-dimensional scaling (MDS), and for that reason the MDS process of the Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I) was chosen for the current study to be used separately on each of the narrative sub-themes outlined in the LAAF. SSA-I computes the association coefficients between all the variables. These coefficients are used to form a spatial representation of items with points representing the variables. The more highly correlated the two variables are the closer the points representing them will be on the plot. Thus, subtheme categories specific to one type of narrative are hypothesised to be closer together on the plot than those characteristic of different types of narratives. The smaller the correlation between variables' intercorrelations and their corresponding spatial distances measured by the coefficient of the alienation, the better is the fit. Guttman's suggested coefficient of alienation is smaller than 0.15 (Guttman, 1965). An examination of the patterns of the variables in the spatial representation allows the delineation of the thematic structures between the variables. SSA-I was run in the Hebrew University Data Analysis Package (HUDAP) according to standard procedures as described in the HUDAP manual by Amar R. and Toledano S. (2001).

Although frequency analysis was assessed in a previous chapter, there it was done only as a general description of offenders' narratives. In the current chapter, frequency analysis is conducted with the aim of examining whether the variables' frequency occurrence accords with their placement within the geometric space of every SSA-I plot. The variables are displayed in three frequency groups: high - items that occurred in more than 55% of the sample groups; medium - items that occurred in 35-54% of the sample; and low - items that occurred in less than 34% of the sample. Items of zero frequency were excluded completely from SSA-I.

Further on in this chapter, each content pattern found in every SSA-I is described separately, and is illustrated by verbatim narrative. All verbatim is marked in italics and labelled by a code of a national sub-group (BR for British, IT for Italian, HP for Hungarian and PL for Polish), together with a case number.

7.2. Implicit psychological content in offenders' narratives: thematic analysis

The “Implicit psychological content” sub-group of LAAF categories allows the review of the narrative on the basis of what a person describes in it. The narrative’s focal content may be described in events mentioned by participants (e.g. categories “Doing crime”, “Imprisonment”, “Relationship success” etc), while its implicit content may be revealed by a generic presentation of the LAAF (all participants are asked to describe their life as a film, and to name the specific genre of this film). Narrators use a variety of tones in drawing their life as a film. Important variances in the literary forms of the narrative in terms of proactive/passive and negative/positive were described by Frye (1957).. The narrative approach in Investigative Psychology grew partially from literature criticism, and specifically from Frye’s works (Canter, Kaouri and Ioannou, 2003), thus this terminology (passive/proactive and negative/positive tones) was inherited by LAAF methodology. When it comes to the description of the narrative resolution, LAAF focuses on two important points: the ending of the story, as in whether it is happy or sad; and the goal the narrator seeks to achieve, with its implicit messages, such as “I am decent”, “I am dangerous”, etc..

A monotonicity co-efficient was used to establish the SSA-I structure for the LAAF Implicit Psychological Content variables in Film episode. Table 7.1 shows the frequencies of all the variables in this group, in descending order:

Table 7.1: Implicit psychological content – events’ frequencies in general sample		
Events	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Happy ending	59	71
Imprisonment	57	68

Positive tone	51	61
Relationship success	48	58
Doing crime	44	53
Passive	40	48
I am decent	39	47
Pro-active	38	45
Relationship problem	31	37
I am interesting	28	34
Negative tone	28	34
Comedy	23	28
Victim of crime	22	26
Death	21	25
Birth	20	24
Material success	20	24
Action	19	23
It was my own choice	16	19
We are the same	11	13
Sad ending	8	10
Tragedy	8	10
Crime	8	9
I am dangerous	8	9
I am smart	5	6
Romance	4	5
Thriller	4	5

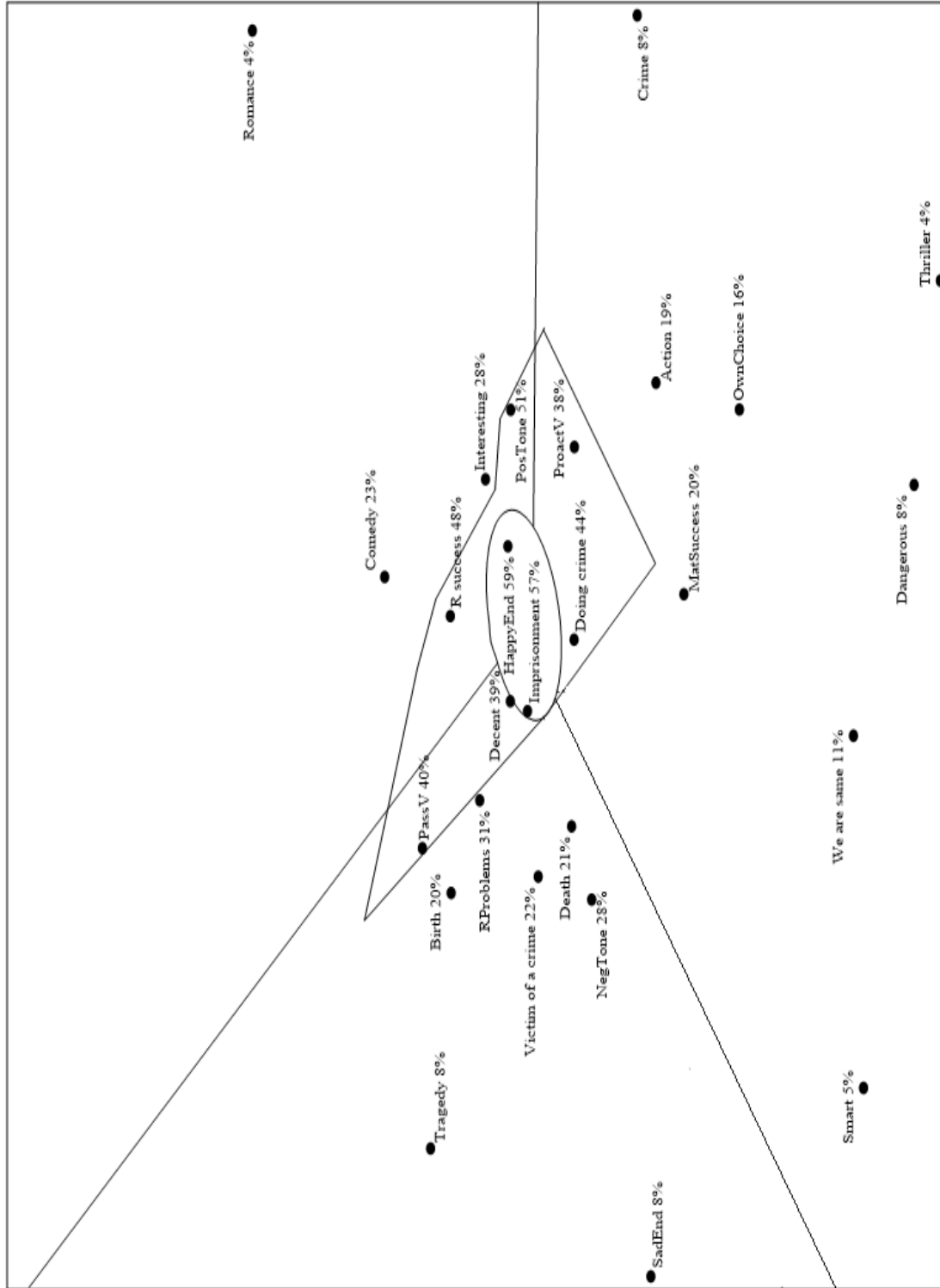
7.2.1 Thematic structure and frequency analysis

The content themes of the offenders' personal narrative revealed by SSA-I is presented in Figure 7.1. The Coefficient of Alienation (COA) was 0.23 for 26 variables in this group. The labels are brief summaries of 26 variables that describe the implicit psychological content of the narrative and their frequencies. The structure of the relationships between variables is reflected in the regions of the plot space, and represents the main psychological content patterns of the narratives. As shown on SSA-I (Plot 7.1) three concentric circumplexes accommodate three degrees of items' frequency (from the most popular variables in the centre of the model to less popular further towards the borders of the plot).

High frequency variables "Happy ending" and "Imprisonment" are in the centre of the plot. They are present in more than half of all the narratives. Variables of medium frequency: "Positive tone", "Relationship success", "Doing crime", "Passive", "I am decent" and "Pro-

active” form the next concentric circumplex, while low frequency variables (e.g. “Relationship problem”, “I am interesting”, “Negative tone”, “Comedy”, “Victim of crime” etc, Table 7.1) form the last, and closest to borders circumplex.

Figure 7.1: Implicit Psychological Content - frequency and thematic structure of LAAF variables for multinational incarcerated offenders, 26 variables from 120 cases of “Life as film” interview response. Axis 1 vs. 2. Coefficient of alienation 0.23



The contrast between the reality of imprisonment and the desirable but not always realistic happy ending is in the focus of offenders' narratives. The "Circles of frequency" of the variables diverging from this focal point of the plot represent various approaches to this conflict in the offenders' life stories – from the most common to the less frequent, and thus more salient and personal ones.

Altogether ordered (levels of frequency) and non-ordered (thematic) facets shape the radex structure (as per Lingoes' definition, 1979). A visual examination of Figure 7.1 reveals a differentiation into three distinct groups of variables that can be recognised as three approaches to the focal narrative conflict "Imprisonment versus desired happy ending". These approaches are labelled "Innocent Victim", "Romantic Hero" and "Career Criminal".

7.2.1.1 The Innocent Victim approach

The variables in the upper left part of the plot describe a sad story of someone decent ("Decent"), who helplessly watches the tragic events of his own life ("Passive Voice", "Death", "Victim of crime", "Relationship problems", "Negative tone"), and who perceives his life as a tragedy ("Tragedy"). It is interesting to note that the variable "Sad ending", although rare (8%, n=10), is entirely appropriate to this part of the plot. This part of the plot is the closest one to the "Imprisonment" variable. Although it concentrates most of the Event sub-group of variables (4 out of 8, "Birth", "Death", "Relationship problems", "Victim of crime"), when taken together they give an impression of an overwhelmingly eventful and yet sad life, when things – mainly bad things, - happen to the narrator. Even the possibly happy event of birth turns sad and sour in this context and highlights the idea of the helplessness and passivity of the narrator (one is absolutely helpless about one's own birth – and in the totally male sample there is only a small chance that any participant had much influence in someone's else birth). The message of the narrative "I am decent" aggravates the story – all these misfortunes fall on a decent person who does not deserve them. Overall, life for this

narrator is a row of nadir experiences (low points, McAdams, 1988); he is powerless and unlucky in relationships. Parallels can be drawn with the Victim role in crime narrative (Canter and Youngs, 2009) – character low in potency, or power, and craving intimacy.

PL30: It would be a drama film about my life. I would move a lot with my sister and our mother. In times of anger, she would blame us for not finishing school and being nobody. The father would be somewhere there, in the background, after he left us when we were little. We would only see him at weekends and on the occasion of some big important events. <main characters?>I, my mother, sister and father. And my mother's new boyfriends. <film ends?>With a strong feeling of loneliness.

Generally, we keep on moving from one city to another and my mother breaks up with her boyfriends... We leave my mother's boyfriend because he had a huge problem with alcohol and he abused us physically... We run out, run across the back yard, get into the car and go to our grandmother. That man's children are there as well, more or less our age. But apart from that, it is only him, my mother, me and my sister. I am terrified. <you feel...?>Fear that we might not be able to get away. And relief when we make it.

7.2.1.2 The Romantic Hero approach

The upper right part of the plot reveals the much more optimistic and positive character of a Romantic Hero. This life story is told in a positive tone and is defined as a comedy by the narrator himself (“Positive tone”, “Comedy”). The main focus of this story is a happy ending rather than temporary obstacles on the way to it (the “Happy Ending” variable is much closer to this area of the plot) – and indeed the narrator is happy, at least in his relationships (“Relationship success”, “Romance”). The implicit message of this story is “I am interesting”. It is also worth remarking that all the positivity of the story does not exclude some resemblance to the previous sad narrative – both are relatively passive: not a single

active variable (e.g. “Own choice”, “Proactive Voice” etc) can be found in this area. Things happen to this optimistic hero as well – although in his case they are good, - and he happily accepts what befalls him.

HP61: This film would be such as the film „Szulejmán”. Riches would be there. Like a comedy, „gipsy style”. There would be the all family, lot of quarrels, tomfooleries, lot of music, dance, romantic scenes. I’m poor and a girl is rich, I can’t get her. I would get together with the girl, and I would elope she.

7.2.1.3 The Career Criminal approach

The lower right part of the plot shows the character who – with some risk of over-interpretation, - can be described as a Career Criminal. The equal proximity of this area to both the “Imprisonment” and “Happy Ending” variables reveals that the narrative behind it is about someone who equally – and probably calmly, - accepts both events. His story is about crimes committed (“Doing Crime”) and profits (“Material Success”). But the narrator here does not embrace everything that comes to him – he is strong and active (“Proactive Voice”, message “It was my own choice”/“Own choice” variable), even dangerous (message “I am dangerous”). His life story genres of choice support this description: “Action”, “Crime” and “Thriller”. The narrator accentuates that such a life is commonplace rather than something out of the ordinary (variable “We are same”, 11%, n=13). At the same time, the message “I am smart” is more rare (5%, n=6). Thus it can be presumed that, in the eyes of the Career Criminal narrator, criminal life is normal rather than demanding special talents.

BR24: It would be like the ‘Simpsons’ or the ‘Jungle book’, like Mogli, because he was a man cub with the rules of the jungle. Then he took his wings and there was a happy ending. I don’t want no sad ending. He turns from a man cub into a full grown man. Start off innocent then there are dilemmas. Instead of crying, he turns his life around and it was a blessing in

disguise. Instead of jail being a bad place, think of it as a college where you can use your time positively. Instead of thinking of the world as negative, think big, there is hope. I've just got to make sure that I don't come back here. There is a pot of gold at the end. The film needs to be useful so that the kids can watch it. There would be jokes for everyone.

7.2.2 Implicit psychological content thematic structures – summary

The Implicit Psychological Content items of the LAAF framework were applied to 120 LAAF accounts of incarcerated criminal offenders and then subjected to the Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I). The SSA-I revealed the thematic structures of the psychological content of the narratives. The focal point of the incarcerated criminal offenders' LAAF responses was found to be the contrast between the reality of imprisonment and the desirable but not always realistic happy ending. The "Circles of Frequency" of the variables diverging from this focal point of the plot represented various approaches to this conflict – from the most common to the less frequent, and thus more salient and personal ones. Three main thematic constructs were revealed by a visual examination of the SSA-I plot. They represent three different approaches to the conflict between imprisonment and desirable happy ending. These approaches were labelled as Innocent Victim, Romantic Hero and Career Criminal. The Innocent Victim theme represents a sad story of someone decent, who helplessly watches the overwhelming number of tragic events of his own life, and who perceives his life as a tragedy. In the conflict between imprisonment and happy ending, this story focus drifts towards imprisonment. Overall, parallels may be drawn with the low in Potency and craving Intimacy crime character of a Victim revealed in a previous study (Canter and Youngs, 2009). Further studies are required in order to explore the potential connection between these narrative themes.

The Romantic Hero was found to be a more positive and optimistic story when compared to the Innocent Victim. Although this is also a story of passivity - things happen to the protagonist (not a single active item was found in the region), - these are more frequently positive events. The focus of this story drifts more towards a happy ending than to imprisonment, and overall the protagonist is a happy character.

In the narrative of the Career Criminal (the third theme revealed in the study on Implicit Psychological Content) the protagonist accepts both imprisonment and happy ending. The main character of this story is strong, active and concentrated on the crimes committed and the profits taken. Parallels may be drawn to the role of the Professional revealed in the crime narratives in a previous study (Canter and Youngs, 2009); however further research is required in order to explore the potential connections between these roles – and the potential connections between the psychological content themes of the crime stories and the LAAF accounts.

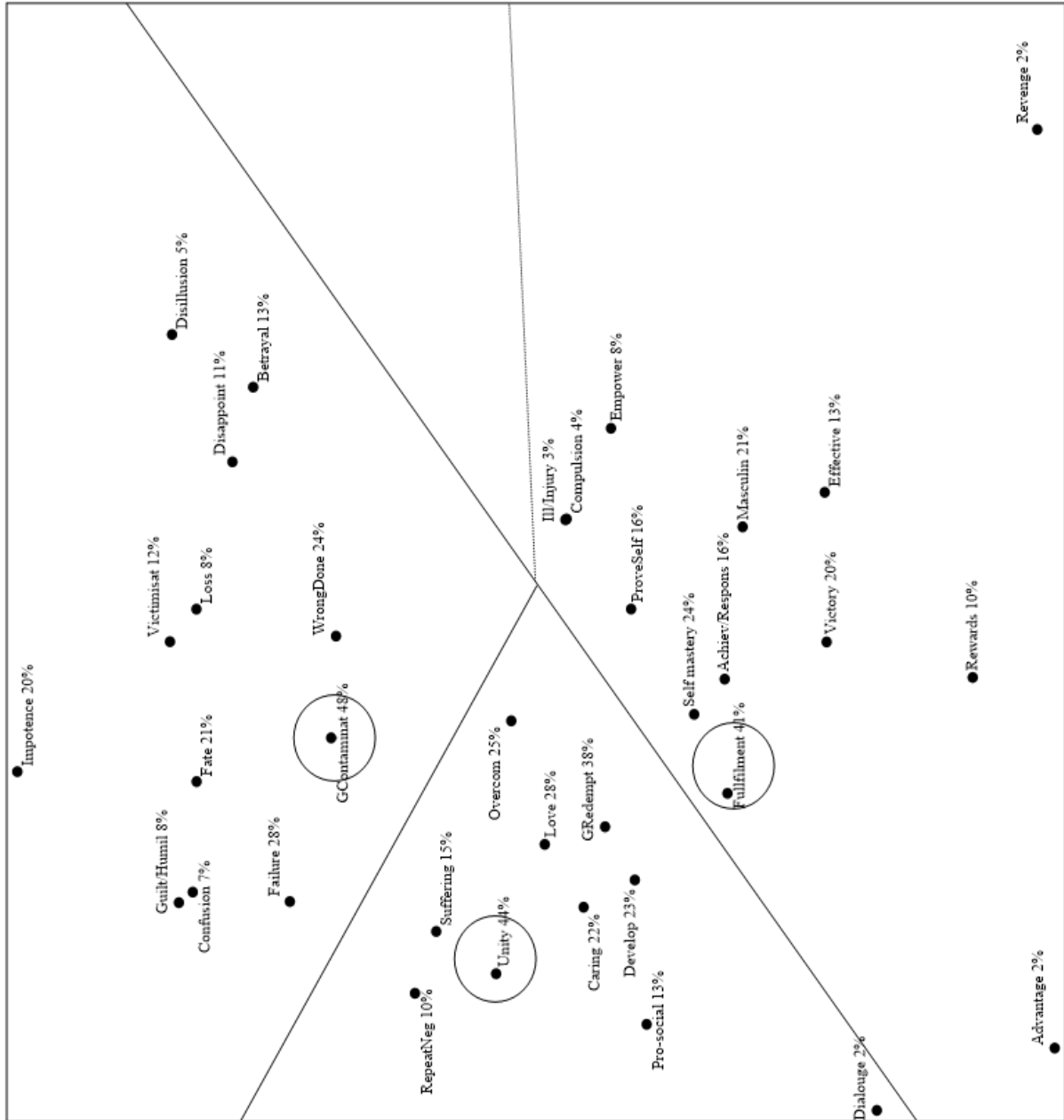
7.3 Explicit psychological processes to organise the narratives: thematic analysis

The “Explicit psychological processes” subgroup of LAAF variables describes psychologically active components of the narrative. If “implicit psychological components” variables show what the story was about, as well as the events, tone and aims of the narrative, the explicit psychological processes describe how it is done, and the connections and movements that produce the storyline. The content categories of this subgroup draw on the core themes of redemption and contamination. According to Maruna (2001), these two themes are the core story plots in the personal narratives of both persisting and desisting offenders. Alongside Redemption and Contamination, general narrative themes and themes of Agency and Communion are included in this subgroup.

A monotonicity co-efficient was used to establish the SSA-I structure for the LAAF Explicit Psychological Processes variables in Film episode. Table 7.2 shows the frequencies of all the variables in this group, in descending order:

Processes	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
General contamination	48	57
Unity/Togetherness	44	53
Fulfilment/Satisfaction	41	49
General redemption	38	46
Love/Friendship	28	34
Failure	28	32
Overcoming Struggles/Obstacles/Mission	25	30
Wrong done to them/theirs	24	29
Self-mastery	24	29
Development	23	27
Caring/Help	22	26
Masculinity/Bravery	21	25
Fate	21	25
Status/Victory	20	24
Impotence/Hopelessness	20	24
Achievement/Responsibility	16	19
Victory/ Proving Self/ Success	16	19
Suffering	15	18
Betrayal	13	16
Effectiveness/Skills/Competencies	13	16
Prosocial	13	15
Victimisation	12	14
Disappointment	11	13
Repeated negative	10	12
Tangible Rewards/ Acquisitions	10	12
Empowerment	8	9
Loss of significant other	8	9
Sex guilt/Humiliation	8	9
Confusion/Misunderstanding	7	8
Disillusionment	5	6
Compulsion	4	5
Illness/Injury	3	3
Dialogue	2	2
Advantage	2	2
Revenge	2	2

Figure 7.2: Explicit processes used to organise narrative content –frequency and thematic structure of LAAF variables for multinational incarcerated offenders, 35 variables from 120 cases of “Life as a film” interview response. Axis 1 vs. 3. Coefficient of alienation 0.14



7.3.1 Thematic structure and frequency analysis

The structure of the offenders' personal narratives is revealed by SSA-I, presented in Figure 7.2. The Coefficient of Alienation (COA) was 0.14 for 35 variables in this group. The labels are brief summaries of 35 variables that describe the explicit psychological processes of the narrative and their frequencies. The structure of the relationships between variables is reflected in the regions of the plot space, and represents the main organisational patterns of the narratives. SSA-I Fig. 7.2 represents the projection of vector 1 against vector 3. Although the projection of axis 1 against 2 is usually preferred by researchers, there are studies in which the projection of vector 1 against 3 is presented (e.g. Rafaeli and Kluger, 2000). In this particular case it was chosen as this projection provided a clearer picture of the thematic regions. There were no variables of high frequency (55% or more) in this sub-group, thus no single focal point on the plot. At the same time, the four most frequent variables in this subgroup represent three centres of three thematic SSA-I regions. Overall, that provides a cylindrex structure, while each cross-section of the cylinder is a radex – one for each thematic region of the plot. As the LAAF variables' subgroup represented in this plot outlines the explicit processes to organise the narrative, each of the regions depicts a thematic process. The regions were labelled “Losing Loneliness”, “Prevailing Unity” and “Heroic Winning” – in all cases the gerund form of the verbs was chosen to highlight the idea of the narrative process in its continuous unfolding form. The presence of the empty space between two regions on the plot is discussed separately as a possible theme of “Falsified Unity”¹⁸ (Part 7.3.1.4 of this chapter).

7.3.1.1 The Losing Loneliness explicit processes' construct

The upper region of the plot represents the process of Losing and the theme of Loneliness. Its focal point is the General Contamination (variable labelled “GContaminat”, 48%, n=57),

¹⁸ This form of the verb in the label is chosen to highlight the fact that the region represents a process to organise the narrative.

process in which everything good turns bad and sour (McAdams, 1995). All the processes in this narrative are subdued by this idea: the narrator suffers failure, wrong is done to him or to those close to him (variables “Failure” and “Wrong Done”), he was betrayed, lost his significant other, was disappointed in something important in his life and victimized (variables labelled “Betrayal”, “Loss”, “Disappoint”, “Victimisation”). The main character in this story is confused and helpless against fate (variables “Confusion”, “Fate” and “Impotence”), he long ago lost hope and any illusions about life (“Disillusionment”), and even his pleasure turns to pain and his enjoyment to guilt and humiliation (“Guilt/Humil”). Most of the variables in this region describe specific forms of general contamination (as described in the LAAF content dictionary), but some show simple classic non-contaminated narrative themes, such as “Wrong done to them/theirs”, “Impotence”, “Fate” and “Confusion”. This narrative is stripped of any communal theme (no variables from the Communion sub-group are present in the region) – the hero is alone and helpless. It is also worth remarking that one specific form of contamination (variable “Illness/Injury”, reminiscence of physical or psychological illness or injury in the narrative) is not in this region and can be found in the lower left part of the plot (the “Winning heroic” region that will be described further).

The story of Italian participant can be a good example of the “Losing Loneliness” process in offenders’ narratives:

IT12: ...it can start with, childhood, when the memory I have of this, that this child of twelve, thirteen year old who is in the countryside and is there to do nothing practically. Already with the gun in his hand, which, they shoot the sparrows, with his uncle who tells him how to do it, In short, it begins like this. Then he is given a horse, new-born, he is given a horse to look after. Yes, it was called Fox, who grows, grows up, until the kid is, let’s say 15 years and he is told, he is ... because it is already there are some customs that must, in short, my father

was inside, as I have explained ... And then give him a gun, after that this horse was raised, following him around... it was always with him, in the remote countryside... He was always with us, like his brother basically. He'd speak to him; he spent all day with him riding. That is, until it's time that gave him the gun: "You must kill him." So there's this whole scene, that there's the gun, they look at him, he looks at the horse, and you do not know what to do and you suffer, no? you say, "But... what do I have to do?" You do not want to do it, but at the same time you have to do it to show that you are strong, you want to be like them, like because your uncles were your reference point right? And then you're there, what to do, what not to do and at the end you do it. And from there you just totally change everything, you become cold, because even there, you want cry but you cannot cry, because you are a man for them, right? Fourteen, fifteen years are a man, so you don't dare cry in front of them. And from there it changes everything, because it's as if he was a friend, from then on I no longer believed I could have another friend, to build something with someone because, that is, you'd lose it anyway...

This narrative serves as an excellent example of Losing Loneliness as an explicit processes¹⁹ construct that structures the storyline. After one tragic event, one betrayal and disillusionment, the whole life of the narrator spiralled down the abyss: "I no longer believed I could have another friend, to build something with someone because, that is, you'd lose it anyway." The killing of the pet horse (or rather friend-horse) is the turning point of the story, the event that changes, that contaminates everything from then on (*"from there it changes everything"*). A parallel may be made with Carlson's definition of the nuclear scene involving negative affect (1981): it also "captures the individual's most urgent and unsolved problems and that continue to grow by recruiting ever more thought, feeling, and action" (Carlson, 1981, pp. 502-503). The past tragedy of the loss/murder of the pet horse is magnified through

¹⁹ It is a process, hence the gerund form in the name of the label – "Losing Loneliness" rather than "Loss and Loneliness"

the detection of parallels and similarities in further life episodes²⁰ (*“And from there it changes everything, because it's as if he was a friend, from then on I no longer believed I could have another friend, to build something with someone because, that is, you'd lose it anyway”*). This narrative is indeed focused on the general theme of contamination – and the contamination plays the role of a whirlpool in the narrator's life outline: from this episode his LAAF account is subdued by the process of Losing Loneliness.

7.3.1.2 The Prevailing Unity explicit processes' construct

The left region of the plot represents the theme of Prevailing Unity. It is focused on togetherness, the communal idea of being part of a group, a sense of oneness and solidarity (variable “Unity”, 44%, n=53). The life of the character in this story is not easy - life processes he describes are those of overcoming obstacles and suffering (variables “Overcome” and “Suffering”). But overall his story is a story of redemption, movement from negative to positive (variable “GRedempt”). The main processes in this narrative are specific forms of redemption (e.g. hero sets prosocial goals for himself or develops a sense of moral steadfastness, variables “Pro-social” and “Develop”) or community (love, caring and, although rare, dialogue).

PL07: Probably a drama film, but it would be difficult to make. Work, home, children, raising them to be decent people. No stimulants: no drugs, coffee, alcohol. I have cut myself off from my mates... This thing: how I destroy my family relationships because of my mates. But I cut myself off. And I will raise my children to be decent people. With no dysfunction. <end?>Happy scenes which last a lifetime. <set?>In England because I live there. It depicts my everyday life: work, home, family, children. There are my colleagues, family, children. I work with my colleagues; I try to spend as much time as possible with my family and children. I leave Poland in search of work... I work in Poland and I suddenly lose my job. I

²⁰ As defined by Carlson, 1981

cannot find a place for myself here so I go abroad. I leave my family [to come here], but they follow me later and stay for good. At one point, I fall in with a bad crowd, I have no choice, my mates hem me in. I neglect my home and family. <you in the film?>A good one. I am no wife-batterer, I am calm, I bring up my children, I don't abuse my woman. <you like...?>My family, because I respect them and they respect me... I have changed. I used to give people a hard time. I have changed for the better. I have changed a lot about my life: job, I have amounted to something, started a family, mended my ways.

7.3.1.3 The Heroic Winning explicit processes' construct

The lower region of the plot represents the process of Heroic Winning. The most frequent variable here, the focal point of the region, is Fulfilment/Satisfaction (variable "Fulfilment", 41%, n=49). The protagonist in this story assumes responsibility for other people and takes charge (variable "Achiv/Respons"), masters his better self and even enhances control over his destiny ("Self-mastery"), attains a prestigious status among his peers ("Victory"), and his impact on others is described as strong and powerful ("Empowerment"). The region is mainly formed by Agency variables (all four of them are found here) and classic narrative theme variables, and the processes of redemption and contamination are nearly absent from it. The hero is described in terms of classic narrative themes as masculine, effective and successful (variables labelled "Masculin", "Effective" and "ProveSelf"), one who enjoys tangible rewards ("Rewards") and is no stranger to compulsion and revenge ("Compulsion" and "Revenge").

BR38: 'Sin City' – action adventure. Thefts and robberies. Crazy weekends, cocaine, good though. Going out and getting off your head with the lads and a few girls, good times. I'm just that sort of person all the time. I have a good sense of humour and enjoy having a laugh. My friends say that too, it's good to laugh. Doing a heist for millions and then lying on a yacht. I'd be the brains behind the heist but also get involved because I want to see what

happens. After the heist I'd set off with a gorgeous woman and go fishing, go away with the money and lady. Audience would talk about the way it was planned, choreographed and put together, the minor crimes and big crimes. Audience would like me because I wasn't wicked, the way I portrayed myself. I wasn't devious or sneaky I was a man of my word. Friends would say I was funny – 'made me laugh', 'was a character'. I see myself as others see me, I am what I am. Me mates would be the other significant characters, my best mate. Do things for me, when I was younger we had a pact to look after each other for ever. I will always be the same; don't feel older, just wiser. Always have expectations in life... Everyone has two sides. One is the one you think. I believe what is going to happen will happen.

It is worth noting that some Redemption and Contamination motives are also present in this story, although both are quite rare. Thus, in 2% (n=2) the narrator mentions that he enjoyed special advantages (“Advantage”, specific form of redemption) and in 3% (n=3) the narrator described his physical or psychological illness or injury (“Ill/Injury”, specific form of contamination). The presence of both themes in this region, as well as their rarity, may be explained by the specifics of the original sampling process. Only incarcerated offenders from conventional prisons were invited to take part in this research; thus anyone with physical disability or mental issue – both temporary and permanent - would not be in the picture (hence the low percentage of those describing physical or psychological illnesses or injuries). At the same time, the overall situation of imprisonment does not facilitate concentration on the special advantages that were enjoyed in the past (hence the low percentage of special advantages mentioned in the narratives).

7.3.1.4 The potential construct of the Falsified Unity

As shown in Figure 7.2, the Heroic Winning region is not attached to the Losing Loneliness region. The empty space between these two regions is too large to be neglected. The most

probable explanation for its presence is that LAAF does not yet cover the whole range of narrative variables. However, one of the advantages of SSA-I methodology is that it allows inferences about the type of data missing from the present sample. It is logical to propose that the information in the missing region will represent a continuity related to the regions adjacent to it. Losing Loneliness stories are stories of contaminated script, of good things turned contaminated and rotten for someone weak and helpless, while Heroic Winning narratives are those of triumphal manifestations of strength and prowess, of an Agency narrative theme. At the same time, the region opposite to the empty space is the one of both Communion and Redemption narrative themes: bad things turn out well, *ad majorem hominis gloriam*²¹ for one who is loving, caring and united. It would be logical to propose that the missing region will be part of the continuity on the cylinder axis of the story movement (from despair to fulfilment). Based on all this, it is proposed that the missing variables forming this region represent another passage from despair to fulfilment, a way to redeem oneself - not through unity but through manipulation. It is indicative that the variables closest to the empty region are “Disillusionment”, “Disappointment” and “Betrayal” (Losing Loneliness region) and “Compulsion” and “Empowerment” (Heroic Winning region). Altogether, these variables hint at a process of organizing the narrative around a rather mistrustful and forceful personality. The “Story movement” axis described previously is not a vector, and the direction is not necessarily from despair to fulfilment. The proposition is that the empty space on the plot belongs to a story of “false unity”, of manipulation and force. A strong parallel can be drawn with Dark Triad, or, more specifically, with Machiavellianism – a deceiving, manipulative personality. The fact that a measure of Machiavellianism was found invariably positively correlated with Agency variables and negatively – with Communion ones (Jones and Paulhus, 2011; Gurtman, 1992; Wiggins and Broughton, 1985), - further strengthens this

²¹ For the greater glory of men (Latin)

parallel. On the plot, the region of “Falsified Unity” and manipulation is opposite the main Communion theme (Prevailing Unity) and adjacent to the Agentic region of Heroic Winning. In Dark Triad, only Machiavellianism describes rather the process or way of interaction with the outer world than the personality itself. And although Machiavellianism per se, if ever described in terms of LAAF, would rather belong to the “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” variables’ subgroup than to the “Explicit processes”, manipulation can be a process to connect events in the storyline. Currently, the LAAF content dictionary does not include any categories to describe manipulation. Themes that shape the narrative: Potency and Intimacy – are obviously not enough to provide a full description. Potency is a theme of direct brutal force and conquest rather than a cunning approach, while Intimacy, the theme of love and of understanding the significance of others, represents a concept somewhat opposed to manipulation. Although manipulative persons may perceive the significance, or, rather, the usefulness of others, they definitely would not be warm and loving, or searching for Unity. Unfortunately, the narrative approach as whole was built mainly on positive, socially acceptable narrative material – stories of non-offending, integrated into society individuals (e.g. McAdams, 1997). Thus current research literature does not describe manipulation or anything close to it as a narrative theme. Further research into more negative, socially unacceptable parts of personal stories is desired.

7.3.2 Explicit psychological processes to organise the narrative: thematic analysis summary

As described previously, the explicit psychological process variables in LAAF describe how the story is produced, and the movements and connections in it. The 35 variables of the “Explicit Psychological Processes to organise the Narrative” subgroup of the LAAF framework were applied to 120 LAAF accounts of incarcerated criminal offenders and then subjected to the Smallest Space Analysis (SSA-I). As there were no variables of high

frequency (55% or more) within this subgroup, the SSA-I plot did not have a single focal point. However the three variables most frequent within this subgroup formed centres of three thematic SSA-I regions, and that provided a cylindrex structure, while each cross-section of the cylinder is a radex (one for each thematic region of the plot). These three thematic regions of the plot, three explicit processes' composite constructs were labeled: Losing Loneliness, Prevailing Unity and Heroic Winning.

The focal point of the Losing Loneliness story is the contamination theme, and all the processes within this construct are subdued by the idea of good things turning bad and sour. Most of the themes within this construct represent different forms of contamination, and at the same time the theme of communion is absent from the Losing Loneliness region on the SSA-I plot. In the narrative organised by the Losing Loneliness composite construct the hero is alone and helpless.

The construct of Prevailing Unity is focused on togetherness, the communal idea of being part of a group, a sense of oneness and solidarity. Although the life processes described in the narratives of Prevailing Unity are not easy (overcoming obstacles and suffering), overall it is a story of redemption, of movement from negative to positive. The main processes that build this narrative construct are specific forms of redemption or communion themes.

Heroic Winning is the construct that produces a storyline focused on the theme of Fulfilment/Satisfaction. This construct is mainly formed by the Agency themes and strong, potent classic narrative themes (Masculinity, Effectiveness and Success). The process of change from good to bad (themes of contamination) or from bad to good (themes of redemption) rarely appear in this construct. The storyline of Heroic Winning is produced by the themes of strength and potency and concentration on contentment.

The story movement (between despair and fulfilment, between Loneliness through Unity and Victory) plays the role of the axis of the cylinder, connecting all the three thematic regions. To continue the well-established tradition of reference to literary criticism, and specifically to Frye's theory (e.g. Canter, Kaouri and Ioannou, 2003) – parallels can be drawn with Frye's interpretation of the Great Chain of Being, the metaphor of human desire and frustration, or the movement between fulfilment and misery (Frye, 1957). Frye (1957) pointed out the cyclical nature of myth and archetype. In his description, literature represents the natural cycle of birth, growth, death, resurrection, rebirth, and the repetition of the cycle. Similar processes are revealed by SSA-I (Fig. 7.2), although without univocal directionality: from total loss through unity or manipulation one can reach fulfilment, but also it can be said that unity and trust bring loss and contamination, and then manipulation becomes the only choice etc. Axis "Story Movement" does not provide directionality, only a connection between the radex regions of the plot.

As the results of the current study show, the LAAF content framework in its current state does not cover the whole range of narrative variables. Inferences were drawn about the data missing from the scope of the present framework. In order to accord with the SSA-I specifics, the missing region should represent a continuity with the regions adjacent to it. It was proposed that the missing variables represent another passage from despair to fulfilment – not through unity, but through mistrust, manipulation and force. The proposition was made that the explicit processes' construct formed by currently missing variables would represent the theme of Falsified Unity, and the narrative storyline in that case would be produced by the processes of force and manipulation. At present, the LAAF content framework does not include any variables that could outline the theme of manipulation, and overall the current studies on the narratives neglect the manipulation theme within personal stories. Further

development of the LAAF content framework, and further studies on the more negative, socially unacceptable parts of personal stories are required.

7.4 Agency vis-à-vis others and the world in offenders' narratives: thematic analysis

The “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” or the “Nature of Agency” subgroup of LAAF categories describes variations of the ways in which an individual deals with those around him, and with the world as a whole. This sub-group of the content dictionary includes the roles assigned by the narrator to himself and to others (imagoes), emotional quadrants (based on Russell’s (1997) work on the circumplex of emotions), categories of empathy/hostility towards others, interpersonal behaviours described in the narrative, together with categories of moral justifications and behavioural incentives (as described in full in Chapter 5.3). As a whole, this subgroup describes the interactions between the characters in the narrative, and the protagonist’s motives, emotions and personal aims.

Table 7.3 shows the frequencies of all the variables in this group in descending order. All variables with zero frequency were excluded from this analysis and thus are absent from Table 7.3 (a full frequency analysis that includes these variables is presented in Chapter 7.1). Due to SSA specifics, mutually exclusive categories (e.g. “Others significant”/“Others non-significant”; “Self-identity stronger/weaker than others”) are also excluded from SSA-I analysis and are not represented in Table 7.3.

This subgroup of categories is the largest in the LAAF content dictionary. Some measures were taken for ease of comprehension of the data described in terms of these categories. To provide a clear distinction between the roles assigned by the narrator to himself (protagonist’s imagoes) and those assigned to others (imagoes of others), the latter are marked with the word “Others” before each role in the table and with a capital “O” further on the plot (Fig.

7.3). Also in Table 7.3 categories of moral justifications were marked with “just.” in brackets after each variable, while categories of incentive were marked with “inc.”.

Table 7.3: Nature of Agency - categories' frequencies in general sample		
Categories	Frequencies (%)	Number of people
Reactive behaviours	51%	61
Proactive behaviours	33%	39
Escapist	31%	37
Aroused positive emotions	31%	37
Non-aroused positive emotions	28%	33
Assuming role of victim to oneself (just.)	23%	28
Survivor	22%	26
Non-aroused negative emotions	22%	26
Caregiver	21%	25
Financial (inc.)	18%	21
Aroused negative emotions	15%	18
Confronting	18%	22
Others Caregiver	17%	20
Empathy	17%	20
Warrior	14%	17
Traveller	13%	16
Avoidant	13%	16
Sensory (inc.)	11%	21
Social (inc.)	11%	13
Denial responsibility (just.)	10%	12
Ritualistic	9%	11
Hostility	9%	11
Humanist	8%	10
Lover	8%	10
Others Lover	8%	10
Others Friend	7%	8
Friend	5%	6
Power/Status (inc.)	5%	6
Others Teacher	5%	6
Condemnation of the condemners (just.)	4%	5
Displacement (just.)	4%	5
Diffusion (just.)	3%	4
Distortion (just.)	3%	4
Maker	3%	4
Teacher	3%	4
Council	3%	4
Others Ritualistic	3%	4
Sage	3%	3
Others Warrior	2%	2
Arbiter	2%	2
Healer	2%	2
Others Humanist	2%	2

Others Sage	2%	2
Others Healer	2%	2
Appeal to higher loyalties (just.)	2%	2
Denial victim (just.)	2%	2
Others Escapist	1%	1
Others Maker	1%	1
Others Survivor	1%	1
Dehumanisation (just.)	1%	1
Denial injury (just.)	1%	1

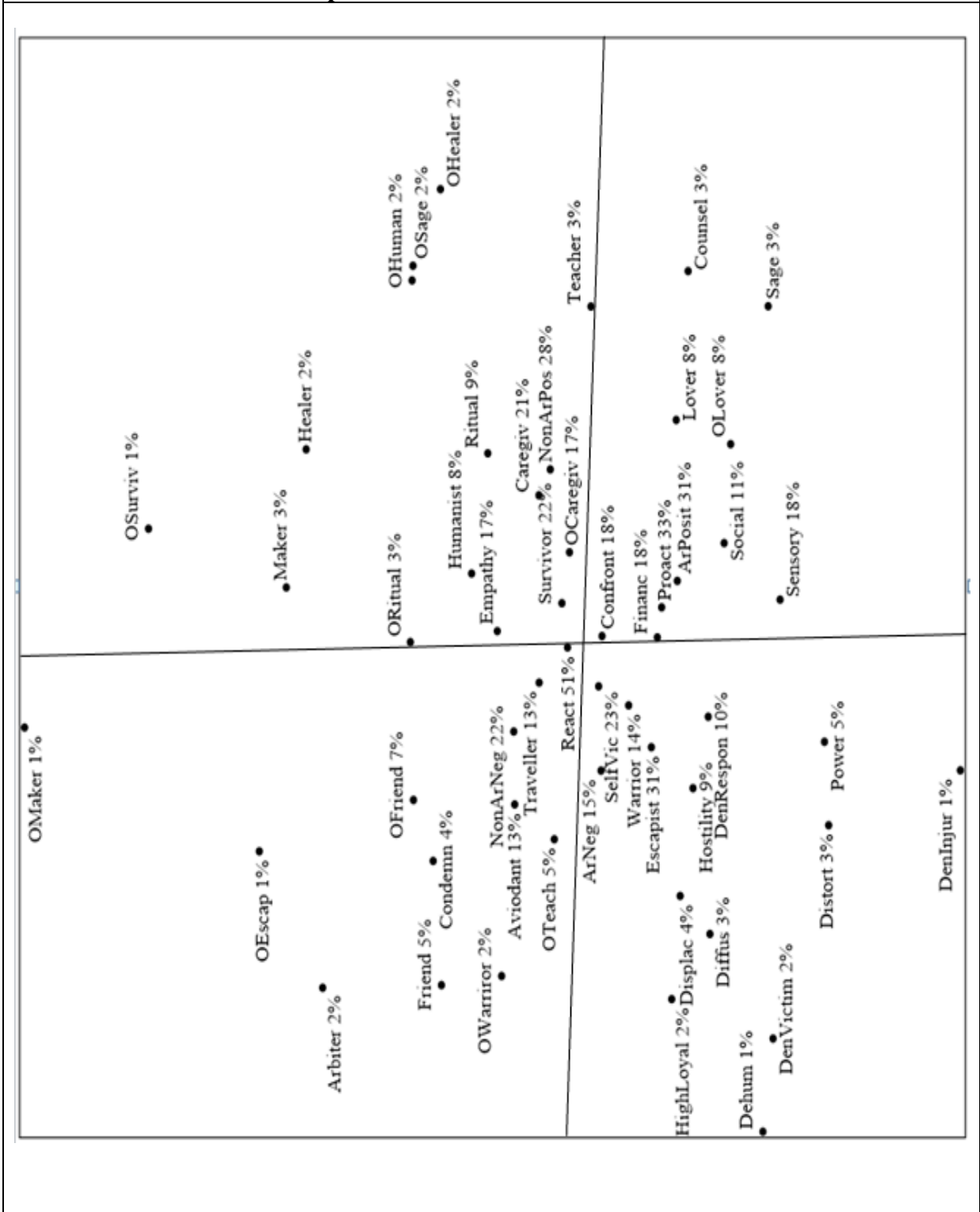
7.4.1 Thematic structure and frequency analysis

The correlations between variations of the ways in which protagonists in offenders' narratives deal with the world are depicted by SSA-I in Figure 7.3. The Coefficient of Alienation (COA) was 0.2 for the 51 variables in this group. Although this COA is higher than recommended, 0.15 (Guttman, 1965), it is still acceptable. The labels are brief summaries of the 51 variables that describe the explicit psychological processes of the narrative, and their frequencies. The structure of the relationships between the variables is reflected in the regions of the plot space, and represents the main organisational patterns of the narratives. SSA-I Fig. 7.3 represents the projection of vector 1 against vector 2 in Dimensionality 2. Only one variable reached a relatively high level of frequency ("Reactive behaviours", 51%, n=61). This variable is present in slightly more than half of all the responses in the sample, and forms the centre of the radex (Fig. 7.3). Variables of medium frequency (e.g. "Non-aroused negative emotions", "Non-aroused positive emotions", "Proactive", "Self-Victim", "Escapist" etc) represent the next concentric circumplex, while low frequency variables (e.g. "Condemnation of the condemners", "Others Friend", "Maker", "Healer", "Lover", "Hostility" etc) comprise the last, and that most close to the borders, circumplex.

According to Lingoe's definition (1979), both ordered (levels of frequency) and non-ordered (thematic) facets shape the structure of the radex. Four regions, representing four ways to

address the world are shown in the SSA-I analysis of “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” subgroup of variables (Fig. 7.3).

Figure 7.3: Agency vis-à-vis others and the world - frequency and thematic structure of LAAF variables for multinational incarcerated offenders, 51 variables from 120 cases of “Life as a film” interview response. Axis 1 vs. 2. Coefficient of alienation 0.2



7.4.1.1 The Getaway theme

The upper left part of the plot represents the theme of Getaway. The protagonist in this story is displeased with the world (“Non-aroused negative emotions”) and prefers avoidant behaviours (“Avoidant”). His roles of choice are of fast-paced explorer (“Traveller”), and friend (“Friend”) for those chosen to whom he gave the roles of friend or mentor (“Others Friend”, “Other Teacher”). His only justification of his own faults or failures is the idea that others are no better (“Condemnation of the condemners”). Overall, this is the story of a despairing striver. It is remarkable that this type of story has all the traits of the quest (mutual friendship, travel, protagonist’s teacher etc) but no aim – not a single incentive category can be found in this region of the plot. Thus it can be said that it is a story of Getaway rather than a story of pursuit. The presence of “Condemnation of the condemners” justification category (the one and only variable from this group in the region) adds to the picture of despair. The following narratives provide a good illustration:

BR26: ...The main events of the past are the birth of my children. I want to see my children grow up and turn out like their mum and not like me. Me family and kids, me father and mother, sisters and brothers. The other main person would probably be my partner. Me father is sixty-two; he worked for the gas board from an early age, he was buried alive so had to retire early. He’s been there for me every time I’ve been in court etc. If it wasn’t for him people would say I have no morals but spending time with my dad and talking about his past, being paid the minimum wage, trying to guide me, working respectably, trying to give me family values, to respect my elders, not talking with my mouth full, to always be polite. He’s a tower of strength. If it wasn’t for him I’d be dead by now. I don’t ask him for money ‘cause he taught me to take responsibility for myself. He likes to be active. I am a grafter. I’ll try anything once. Unfortunately I’ve never put these values into practice. The audience would be pretty disgusted. There would be some sympathy; I had an eye operation at twelve

so I've been physically and mentally bullied. I've also self-harmed. All the worst things a human can do to their self I've done it or considered it. Everyone's probably been a bully or been bullied so they know what it's like. They'd probably see an animal who should be caged. All I want for the future is to be released and be another guy who goes about his business with my family. All I've ever wanted is to fit in with the crowd, not to be just that guy who stands out in thousand people.

*PL27: Someone would plant a bomb under a city. I, my brother and my mate. <main event?>Planting this bomb, preferably under this prison. <end?> Everyone would die, only I would survive. We manage to place the bomb. It seems that someone might catch us, but luckily we make it. <set?> In sewers under the building. We walk in these dirty sewers and try to figure out where to plant it. My brother and my mate are also there... I manage to get out of here. <between the initial part and the main scene>I decide to pay back for the damage I have suffered, that is why once I get out of here, I and my brother will find a way to blow this f***king sh*thouse up. Preferably with some big quantity of flammable materials, maybe some bomb. We manage to get the building plan and find sewers to break into.*

It is worth noting that in the second story the protagonist's actions are virtually pointless and are motivated purely by revenge on the world rather than on someone in particular (“*once I get out of here, I and my brother will find a way to blow this f***king sh*thouse up*”). It underlines the previously described characteristic of this plot region – Getaway is aimless. It also might mean that the LAAF content dictionary lacks an additional category of incentive: revenge, - because current incentives (sensory, material or status gain) do not grasp the motive of vengeance as shown in this and some other narratives.

It is indicative that this region is also the richest in roles assigned to others – qualitatively. Although second in the number of this type of variables (5 imagoes attributed to others in

comparison to 6 in the adjacent region), it is the most diverse in the range of imagoes. Here, others are allowed to play, not supporting characters, but equals (“Others Friend”, “Others Warrior”), neutrals (“Others Escapist”), or even higher authorities (“Others Teacher”). In McAdams’ terms (1997) the imagoes found in this region belong to all four possible types: purely Communal (“Others Friend”), both Agentic and Communal (“Others Teacher”), purely Agentic (“Others Warrior” and “Others Maker”) and those low both in Communion and Agency themes (“Others Escapist”). Quite rare (less than 3%) but still belonging to this region are the self-imagos of Arbiter, and the other characters’ roles of Warrior, Escapist and Maker. The low frequencies of these variables make them nevertheless significant - in accordance with principle of salience (Youngs and Canter, 2006), they provide information on individual traits of the narrative within the range of this story theme.

7.4.1.2 The Help theme

The upper right part of the plot represents the theme of Help. The tone of the story here is calm (“Non-aroused positive emotions”), and the protagonist is the one who survived a harsh environment, and now takes care of the others and makes it possible for them to perform (imagoes “Survivor” and “Caregiver”). He is empathic (“Empathy”) and ready to accept help from others (“Others Caregiver”). In most cases, it is a story of reciprocal caring relationships with the world and the people in it. The protagonist takes care of those around him, upholds good past traditions and works for social change (“Ritualistic”, “Humanist”) – and the world responds to him equally. Rarely in this story do others play more important roles than simply supporting characters (“Others Caregiver”), but even then the roles are within the same range of help and social values (“Others Teacher”, “Others Humanist”, “Others Sage”, “Others Healer”). One of the narrators even described a significant other as a survivor, but that is an exception, although within the range of the Help region and in accordance with the idea of upholding moral values in even a harsh environment. It is indicative that, in the Help

narrative again, strength can be assigned not only to the main character, but to significant others as well, although not too frequently. In terms of McAdams (1997), most of the imagoes attributed to others and found in this region are purely Agentic (e.g. “Others Sage”) or both Agentic and Communal (“Others Teacher”, “Others Humanist”, “Others Healer”). Yet the theme of Communion prevails here – Communion imagoes like “Others Caregiver” and “Others Ritualistic” are more frequent (17% and 3% respectively, while each of the Agentic imagoes is found in 2% of the narratives).

HP52: I love my family. The film wouldn't be interesting. It would be totally prosy <sic>. Of course I have messy things, too. I would highlight my attitude to my family. About me, that I am an ambitious and strong, and it would be also about sports and about my partner. The end of it would be happy: child, family, happiness. What else could people ask for?

PL23: ...There are many people there. I suffer and they help me. Then I live with them. Sometimes I am lucky and sometimes I am not, so it is basically connected with that... <film begins?>When I am 12 years old. Things are difficult at home, so basically that is why I feel happiness one moment and unhappiness the next moment... I have a soft heart and I am tough, I am often devoted to others. I love the wrong people and it's my fault, when I help them. You cannot like everybody so probably I don't like someone. People understand that you cannot like everybody and they see me as such a person... I change under the influence of events, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. But I learn from my mistakes. Yes, learning from your mistakes is important.

It is worth noting that some of the stories are about not-so reciprocal relationships with the world, for example the previously quoted story PL23, or the following one:

HP55: It wouldn't be an ordinary firm, because there are diversities. It would be coloured. There would be good and bad things, too. It would be about the goodness, the assistance.

Always the good people go away, because you shouldn't wait good for good things you've done. The end would be a big disappointment, because people would take advantage of my good faith. I was taught in the jail the friends are friends until they are next to you. I would be alone in the end.

As was mentioned previously in Chapter 6, the current LAAF categories do not cover the range of negative roles either for the protagonist, or for others in the narrative. As the current study showed, the LAAF content framework also does not include the items that would allow us to grasp the nature of the negative, non-reciprocal relationships with others and the world. Further development of the LAAF content framework would be required in order to cover the range of this dark, pessimistic side of the personal stories.

7.4.1.3 The Pleasure theme

The lower right part of the plot is the region of the Pleasure theme. The protagonist here is engaged in proactive, rather than reactive, behaviours (“Proactive behaviours”), has no scruples about confronting others (“Confronting”), and feels excitement (“Aroused positive emotions”). This region includes all the incentive categories. The actions described in the narrative are taken for financial gain, social approval or sensory pleasure (“Financial”, “Sensory”, “Social”), and are not aimless, as are those described in the Getaway narratives. The Story of Pleasure might be also a story of love (self-imag “Lover”). The only role assigned to the significant other in this story is that of a love subject (“Others Lover”, exclusively Communion theme), while the protagonist himself can also take roles of Counsel and Sage (although he rarely does so) – both strong in the Agency theme.

HP14: If somebody would shot a movie about my life, it would be a love-story because I'm a romantic person. The story would be like this: there's a handicapped young boy from a poor family. He cannot even go to school. One day he sees a young girl on the playground and

they were getting to know each other. The girl is rich; her family wants to help the poor family of the boy, so the boy can go to school. Slowly the love evolves within the boy and the girl. The boy cannot tell the girl that he is in love with her, but the girl can. They grow up, get married and have a lot of kids.

*PL20: It would be either a romance film or... I don't know. Up until the age of 28 or 29, it is mainly about parties, women. With time, one settles down, thinks about life; and the things from the past come back to haunt you... <end?> Me being released from prison, wedding, normal life and hypothetical children. As I said already, this film would be a romance film, so probably some sex. I hit on a piece of a** at a disco, she looks older, but then I wonder if she is legal, 16 years old. So that I don't run afoul of the law, you know? <set?> Some random room. We have sex after the party...*

BR70: ...When I was successful I had A LOT of money. I'd rather not say but it was ridiculous. Me and girlfriend had an apartment in Liverpool town centre. Every Sunday without fail we'd go out in the day, spend five to six hundred pounds on clothes, have tea, go out...

7.4.1.4 The Excuse theme

The lower left part of the plot represents the theme of Excuse. It is a story of one running from responsibility (“Escapist”), a story characterized by stress and anxiety (“Aroused negative emotions”). The protagonist tries to forcefully engage others (“Warrior”) in order to protect himself (“Assuming role of victim to oneself/Self-victim”) or in an attempt to achieve some power/status gain (“Power/Status”). It is significant that “Warrior” is the only role given to anyone in this narrative. No roles are assigned to others, and the overall attitude towards the outer world is hostile (“Hostility”). Most of the variables in this region are various behaviour justifications, as if the focus of the story was to justify hostile behaviour by

any means – from assuming the role of the victim himself to denial of the victim or harm done.

BR33: This must have been fate (ending up in prison) because I was getting into trouble a lot with my mates. I was going to the gym, watching cage fights, working security and neglecting the kids. I wasn't getting on with my ex and didn't get on with her mother and father. I beat up her father once. The ex was constantly nagging, wanting to go on holidays with the family and phoning all the time – she would be wrecking my head. I needed some space and would tell her to go out with her mates. But if I went out with her I'd get into fights with guys looking at her. If she was out with her mates she'd phone me and tell me some guy had pawed her and I would race over to her and fight the guys. I think she liked the idea of me fighting for her. Like in the movies, typical women spending all the man's money. The audience would think I was lucky to get rid of her... Some might feel sorry for me but now I've met a new girl. But she'll stop doing lap dancing. Gone up and down. Can't wait to go to court with my ex bird on one end who ratted me out and my new bird on the other end. When I get out I have a fresh start – I will seek custody of my kids and have a new bird. I will go back to work and go on.

PL14: Being arrested by the police, shock, great shock. Then return to work, the police again and eventually I get detained... I mainly work but also meet with friends and mates. In fact, the whole detainment is their fault. There are managers from the company I work for in England. They wonder why I don't come to work because they have not received a phone call about this case. Generally, I am in great shock. I worry what will happen as I don't go to work. <your feelings?>Horror. Because I need to have a serious talk with the English, some explaining to do. Even more so because I don't feel guilty...The beginning is highly optimistic. I make different plans for the future and then the violent change, and everything is

upside-down... I go to England, there I meet a woman, we get married. Now she was a wife already, but she sent me the divorce papers because of this situation. I work, we lead a peaceful life, but my mates and colleagues have a bit of destructive influence on my marriage. Then I get arrested by the police and then what I already said. <you are...?> Decent, respectable, even though I make bad decisions sometimes. It is just what it is. I did not do harm on purpose, someone else explained it and made the decision... I certainly know today that my friends did not want to help me, they wanted to hurt me.

7.4.1.5 Agency vis-à-vis others and the world: axis partitions of the plot

It can be argued that the distinct regions in the space of “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” can be defined in terms of Social/Self-Centred orientation (upper half of the plot versus lower one, horizontal axis partition) and Reactivity/Proactivity (left part of the plot versus right one, vertical axis partition). It is worth noting that although the “Reactive” variable is the closest to the centre of the SSA-I plot radex, it is not in the precise centre either from the graphic (see Fig. 7.3) or the frequency points of view (the frequency of this variable is only 51%). Reactive behaviours are mentioned in slightly more than half of all the narratives (51%, n=61); thus it can be concluded that reactive behaviours belong more to the left part of the plot – the regions of the Getaway and Excuse themes. Both themes could be described as Reactive: in the Getaway story the protagonist’s reaction to the cruel unpleasant world (“Non-aroused negative emotions”) is avoidance (“Aviodant”, role of the Traveller etc); while the story of the Excuse outlines the character that reacts with hostility (“Hostility”) to the outer world and reacts to it with every possible justification of his own behaviour (“Assuming the role of the victim to oneself”, “Denial of the victim”, “Denial of the responsibility”, “Diffusion of the responsibility”, “Distortion of the consequences” etc).

The themes of both Getaway and Help have a Social focus, a concentration on the community (hence the large number of roles assigned to others, and these roles are of different types: others can be perceived as equals or even betters, e.g. “Others Teacher”; “Others Sage”, “Others Healer”, “Others Friend” etc). This focus produces differing reactions within the Getaway and Help themes. Thus, in the Getaway story, the protagonist demonstrates a reactive attitude towards the world, while in the Help story the protagonist is proactive – the main character does not run away, but gets out into the world in order to help others.

The themes of Pleasure and Excuse should be described as Self-Centred (therefore roles of any kind are rarely (as in the Pleasure theme), if ever (Excuse theme), assigned to others), and respectively Proactive (go out in the world to claim any pleasure one wishes, as in the Pleasure theme) or Reactive (the protagonist wants to protect himself from a hostile world and to justify his own hostile reactions towards it by any means, as in the Excuse theme).

7.4.2 Agency vis-à-vis others and the world: thematic analysis summary

The Smallest Space Analysis applied to the 51 variables of the “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” subgroup of the LAAF content framework revealed four composite narrative constructs representing four ways in which others and the world may be addressed by the narrator. These four constructs were labelled: Getaway, Help, Pleasure and Excuse.

The Getaway story is one of the despairing striver, who prefers to avoid the world rather than confront it. The theme of Getaway bears all the traits of the quest; however, unlike a quest, it is aimless. Although roles are rarely assigned to others within the offenders’ narratives (as the current study showed), the Getaway stories concentrate the vast majority of these roles – both quantitatively (the highest concentration of the imagoes assigned to others) and qualitatively (the imagoes of others within this region belong to all four types described by McAdams,

1996; thus others are assigned roles of Agency/Strength, Communion; both Agency and Communion or “neither Agency nor Communion” type).

The Help construct represents a caring, and in some cases reciprocal, relationship with others and the world. The tone of the Help narrative is calm, and the protagonist is the one who survived a harsh environment, and now takes care of others. He also is ready to accept help from others (“Others Caregiver”). It is indicative that, in both Help and Getaway narratives strength can be assigned not only to the main character, but to significant others as well, although infrequently. The theme of Communion prevails in the Help story. However, as the study demonstrated, the Help story is not necessarily about reciprocal help and relationships. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the LAAF framework in its current state does not cover the full range of negative roles – either of the self or of those significant others mentioned in the narrative. As the current study shows, LAAF does not cover the range of “negative”, non-reciprocal relationships and attitudes towards others and the world (or directed to the protagonist from others and the world). Further development of the LAAF content dictionary in that theme would allow a more detailed study of this dark, pessimistic side of the personal stories.

In the Pleasure story, the protagonist is engaged in proactive, rather than reactive, behaviours, has no scruples about confronting others, and feels excitement. He follows nearly all the incentives covered by the LAAF content framework – financial/material, sensory, social gain. The story of Pleasure might be even the story of love – the one and only role assigned to others within the Pleasure theme is Lover.

The fourth way to address others and the world discussed in this study was labelled Excuse. The Excuse story is about the one running from responsibility. This story is characterized by stress and anxiety. The protagonist tries forcefully to engage others in order to protect himself

(as he perceives himself as the victim) or in an attempt to gain some power or status (the only incentive found within this theme). Only one role is assigned to the protagonist within the Excuse story, and this is the role of the Warrior. No roles are assigned to others, and the attitude to the outer world is hostile. The focus of this story is to justify the hostile behaviour of the protagonist by any means – from assuming the role of the victim himself to denial of the victim, or of harm done to the victim.

The thematic constructs revealed in this study can be defined in terms of the story focus: Social versus Self-Centred; and the general attitude towards the world: Reactive versus Proactive. Thus the theme of Getaway was defined as Social and Reactive, the theme of Help – Social Proactive, and the themes of Pleasure and Excuse were defined Self-Centred Proactive and Self-Centred Reactive respectively.

7.5 Chapter summary and conclusion

The intention of this study was to provide an in-depth morphological analysis of offenders' narratives in order to reveal the interrelations between the story elements (the LAAF items), and to describe the inner themes and constructs thus uncovered. The analysis was conducted separately on each the three levels of the narrative outlined by the LAAF content framework: implicit psychological content, explicit processes that organise the narrative content and agency vis-à-vis others and the world. Meaningful composite constructs were discovered on all three levels.

Three main implicit content themes were found: the sad story of the Innocent Victim, the optimistic account of the Romantic Hero and the delinquency-oriented story of the Career Criminal. These stories represent the various approaches towards unresolved conflict of the disagreeable reality of imprisonment, and the much wanted happy ending.

Three main themes were found among the movements and connections that produce the storyline (“Explicit processes to organise the narrative”): Prevailing Unity (focused on communion and redemption), Losing Loneliness (built around themes of contamination and loneliness) and Heroic Winning (concentrated on satisfaction and fulfilment, strong Agentic theme).

The four main ways of interactions with others and the world that were found in this study were: Getaway, Help, Pleasure and Excuse. Socio-oriented stories of Getaway (aimless acting out of frustration, quest without the aim) and Help (caring and usually reciprocal relationship with others and the world) create a pair opposing rather ego-centric stories of Pleasure (interactions based on enjoyment and excitement) and Excuse (focused on the ways to justify hostility towards the world). These four themes can also be described in terms of proactive (Help and Pleasure) versus reactive (Getaway and Excuse) attitudes towards the world.

Some parallels were drawn to the previous studies on the offenders’ roles and narratives; for example, the theme of revenge in Getaway interaction accords with the Revengeful Mission crime narrative described by Youngs and Canter(2012). The description of the Innocent Victim approach to the unresolved conflict of the narrative reminds us of the Victim crime role (Canter and Youngs, 2009). However, both of these previous studies on the offenders’ roles and narrative themes were done on the crime roles and personal crime experiences exclusively, while these results provide the application of narrative themes and roles on different part of the offenders’ personal stories – their description of life. McAdams (1995) asserted that the narrative identity is the way to organise the inner-selves, to give unity and purpose to all the different roles of the individual. The parallels between the LAAF accounts inner constructs and composite crime roles found in the current study could provide a starting point for future studies on the correlations between crime roles and constructs of the life

stories, and on the place of crime episodes within the offenders' personal stories and their perception of the world.

The results of the study also showed further venues for LAAF content dictionary improvement. Current LAAF categories do not cover the range of mistrustful, manipulative attitudes towards the world and/or negative roles, either for the protagonist, or for other characters in the story. Themes of revenge and manipulation are neglected, although such additions will be useful when taking into account the fact of the strong association between Machiavellianism in preference to deception and manipulative tactics and antisocial behaviours (e.g. Sakalaki, Richardson and Thepaut, 2007; Kashy and DePaulo, 1996; Ghosh and Crain, 1995). Bringing the "Dark Triad", or, more specifically, Machiavellianism, into the LAAF content framework might bridge the current gap in this narrative interpretation system. As there is a number of researches on Machiavellianism and/or traits of the Machiavellian personality, references to them might serve as a basis for the development of the LAAF items that would cover a range of the narratives themes of deception and manipulation. For example, according to Dahling et al (2009), Machiavellianism can be described by the following traits: 1) tendency to distrust others, 2) willingness to engage in amoral manipulation, 3) a desire to accumulate a status for oneself, 4) a desire to maintain interpersonal control. In future studies these characteristics might be adopted as categories for the LAAF content dictionary. The presence of qualitative measurement (Machiavellianism Personality Scale by Dahling et al, 2009) that includes sub-scales corresponding to the proposed items of the LAAF content framework would ensure the validity of this framework adjustment.

Frye (1957) described the cyclical, moving nature of the story. The results of separate exploration of LAAF sub-themes grasped this nature of the narrative and provided deeper and more detailed descriptions of personal stories. To continue the famous analogy with the

Munsell circle (Canter and Youngs, 2009), not only does such an exploration provide a detailed range of the themes; it also offers more combination possibilities. Although the number of the combination possibilities is large enough to cover vast range of themes and narrative structures, it is not infinite (three implicit psychological content structures by three explicit processes constructs by four composite themes of agency vis-à-vis others and the world). Each story is described on three narrative levels, and these “primary colours”, these themes, help to make sense of hybrid, more complex narratives – and to make inferences on the nature of the offenders’ narratives. Even the manifestation of the same composite constructs on one of the narrative levels would be different, if shaped by the different constructs and processes on other structural levels:

BR1: ...There would be convicts and working families with the odd person doing crime on the side. I had a good friend before 1998 but since then I've been by myself as our friendship got chucked back in my face. I was nicked on charges that I wouldn't have been and since then I find it hard to trust people and now I only have acquaintances... When my family broke up when I was 3-7 years old then 7-13 my family was back together but there were lots of drinkers and it was always disrupted. My step-father would send me out to play and would sexually abuse my sisters. He was always having a crack at me too. I was always trying to get my family back together but I ended up in care. I got back in touch with my dad at 16 but he died in 1997 and my ma died in 1998. I ended up cutting my wrists and every relationship since has been chaotic. I'm still in touch with my little sister but she doesn't come to see me. At home I stay with friends but they are all drug users so it's back to stage 1, I've asked for some help with drugs but I haven't heard anything yet and I'm out in 4 weeks... I am an honest person, but if someone did something to me I would retaliate but not violently.

BR23: The film would be hard to explain. I'm 26, I have five kids, and one on the way. I had my first kid when I was only 14. I've lived a mad life, some good times, some bad, and some

very bad. I can't really put it into a film. Significant people would be my mate but he's dead. We were so close people used to mistake us for each other. We used to talk to each other dead fast and others wouldn't understand – things like that. Everyone commented on how close we were. My kids, I spend a lot of time with them, I live for them. If I didn't have them I wouldn't have anything. Because I'm so negative I can see myself going down like him. I want to be in the same place as him, I know that's selfish because I have kids but I just keep thinking, 'why wasn't it me?' People would probably end up crying at the film.

Both narratives are relatively similar in their psychological complexity. Both narratives have the prevalent Innocent Victim implicit content theme. Both are shaped mainly by the Losing Loneliness Process. But the first story shows a clear theme of Excuse as the main force of Agency with the outer world, while in the second one the relationship with the world is shaped mainly by Getaway. The protagonist in the first story is focused on explaining and excusing his current state and even his potential future misfortunes by any means necessary („I was nicked on charges that I wouldn't have been and since then I find it hard to trust people and now I only have acquaintances”, „At home I stay with friends but they are all drug users so it's back to stage 1, I've asked for some help with drugs but I haven't heard anything yet and I'm out in 4 weeks”, “I am an honest person, but if someone did something to me I would retaliate but not violently”). In the second story, the narrator is fully concentrated on his lost significant other and his unfulfilled desire to get away from the cruel world („Significant people would be my mate but he's dead... Because I'm so negative I can see myself going down like him. I want to be in the same place as him, I know that's selfish because I have kids but I just keep thinking, 'why wasn't it me?'”).

The “Life as a Film” stories can unarguably be described in the archetypal themes of potency and intimacy, as was suggested by Youngs and Canter (2012). Even some of the composite constructs derived in the current study can be described in terms of these archetypal themes.

Thus, the theme of Help could be outlined as a theme of high Potency and high Intimacy (the protagonist's character is strong, others are significant), while the "Excuse" theme is low in both Potency and Intimacy (weak protagonist's character, others are insignificant). Pleasure is a strong, high in Potency, but low in Intimacy theme, and Getaway is high in Intimacy, but low in Potency. The parallels between some of the "agency vis-à-vis others and the world" composite constructs described in this study and the crime narrative roles derived in the previous research (Youngs and Canter, 2012) were also drawn in this chapter. Thus, the Getaway theme is somewhat reminiscent of the Victim role in the narrative of Irony: the protagonist is powerless and alienated from others who are significant to him, as described by Youngs and Canter, 2012. This parallel is, however, inadequate to describe the full range of the "agency **vis-à-vis** others and the world" themes that are covered in the current study.. The Getaway theme per se is not necessarily dedicated to non-reciprocal relationships and alienation; it also describes the rare bond with those significant few who represent ideal and/or higher authorities. And the narrative in full is formed by the agency vis-à-vis others and the world themes, the psychological complexity, the explicit narrative processes and the implicit psychological content. As shown in the examples above, the manifestation of the same "agency vis-à-vis others and the world" theme will be different, if shaped by the different themes and processes on other structural levels, and such differences are difficult to describe only in terms of Potency and Intimacy, or by using exclusively the existing system of the four narrative roles (Youngs and Canter, 2012).

The education of the main composite constructs in terms of the LAAF content dictionary subgroups equips researchers with the material with which to build a quantitative methodology – in parallel with the Narrative Roles Questionnaire (NRQ) built based on the roles found in offenders' crime stories (Youngs and Canter, 2012). Such measurement would allow the application of the narrative approach to larger samples than any interviewing group

could handle – and would also facilitate offenders’ treatment adjustments within the narrative approach framework.

Section II

Chapter 8: Violent and non-violent offenders LAAF accounts: a comparative analysis

Chapter 8 overview

This study aimed to compare violent and non-violent offenders’ LAAF stories and to outline the similarities/differences of the ways in which these offenders depict their lives. It was hypothesised that the differences between violent and non-violent offenders’ LAAF accounts could be found and would not be directly related to violence and aggression.

The attribution of the participants to either a violent or a non-violent group was based on their self-reported crime histories. All responses were subjected to the LAAF content analysis. The comparison between the groups was done in terms of the LAAF items and in terms of the narrative composite structures derived in the current thesis (Chapter 7). The Phi test was conducted to indicate the significance of the association between the LAAF items/composite structures’ variables and the type of criminal past (violent versus non-violent). For the variables of ratio scale (e.g. length of the response in words), the regression and the Mann-Whitney test were used.

Strong similarities were found between violent and non-violent offenders’ narratives: the domination of criminality theme, the prevalence of an optimistic tone, levels of psychological complexity and the described locus of agency. Similar composite constructs were prevalent in both narrative groups. However, significant differences were found in more subtle traits of the narratives such as roles assigned to others and the implicit message of the story. Additionally it was found that only non-violent offenders apply a positive tone to the whole

story, while in the violent offenders' stories the same tone is usually used to describe exclusively crime and the whole narrative is told in a more pessimistic negative spirit.

Notwithstanding the limitations of the study (relatively small and unequal group sizes, the low sensitivity of the composite variables, and the self-reported crime history) the results showed that both important similarities and meaningful differences between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders were grasped within the LAAF framework.

8.1 Comparison of violent and non-violent offenders' responses in terms of LAAF content framework

The idea of offenders' narrative norms raises the question of the distinction between personal stories of violent and non-violent offenders. The question of personality differences between violent and non-violent offenders has been researched for decades. However, the comparisons between two groups, or descriptions of violent personality, were frequently done on traits that are attributed to aggression (e.g. Toch, 1969; e.g. Baumeister, Bushman and Campbell, 2000). Life as a Film methodology allows for the seizing of the substantive nature of the narrative without implying a direct bond between aggression and violence.

This study is focused on the comparative analysis of violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts. The study aims are:

- To examine whether similar narrative themes and constructs can be found in the LAAF accounts of violent and non-violent offenders.
- To explore the differences between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders in terms of the LAAF content framework. It was hypothesised that the differences

between violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts could be found and would not be directly related to violence and aggression.

- To explore whether there are any differences in the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders in terms of the composite themes and inner narrative structures (distinguished in the previous study, Chapter 7).

8.1.1 Methodological approach

For the purpose of this study, the full previous criminal history self-reported by the participants was taken into account while establishing a violent-non-violent division within the sample. The expression “criminal history” refers to the self-reported demographic data collected from all the participants (as described in Chapter 5), or, to be more specific, the responses to the question: “What do you have convictions for? Please write all the different types of convictions that you have”. This question is part of the demographic data collection within the CY-NEO protocol used for data collection for the current study. The responses were exclusively self-reported and were not checked against the participants' prison records. As mentioned previously the data for the current study was collected in four different countries. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) the definitions for specific crime types vary between different countries. In order to prevent difficulties of the distinction between the violent/non-violent nature of crime, the simple lexical definition of violent crime rather than any form/variation of the legal definition were used. Thus, for the purpose of this study violent crime is any crime in which the perpetrator uses or threatens to use force on the victim (e.g. murder, manslaughter, robbery, grievous bodily harm, assault, extortion). Crimes in which the perpetrator does not use or threaten to use violence were defined as non-violent (e.g. theft, handling and receiving stolen goods, fraud, tax evasion). Thus, the participants who reported at least one violent crime in their past were attributed to violent offenders' group, while those who did not report any violent crimes, were assigned to

the non-violent offenders' group. In cases where the nature of the offence described was not clear (e.g. "child pornography production" can be violent crime, if the person is involved in actual filming, and can be non-violent crime if the person copies and sells films already made), the participant was excluded from the comparative study. 65% (n=78) of the participants can be described as violent offenders (based on the fact that they mentioned one of the following crimes in their self-reported criminal histories: assault, murder, manslaughter, grievous bodily harm, robbery). The participants who did not mention any violent offences in their self-reported criminal histories (33%, n=40) were defined as non-violent. For 2% of the participants (n=2) the nature of the crime cannot be defined due to a lack of the information on the nature of crime (as in the previous example of the production of child pornography as the only crime mentioned in the self-reported criminal history). The comparison was made between violent and non-violent offenders' responses exclusively, and thus the sample for the comparative analysis includes 118 participants (as 2 cases in which nature of the reported crimes cannot be defined were excluded from the comparison). The results for the full generic sample (N=120) are presented in this chapter in order to enhance and clarify the picture. All the participants' responses were coded prior to the assignment of these responses to either the violent or the non-violent group and the researcher was unaware of the participants' criminal histories (or any other demographic data collected). This was done in order to improve the objectivity of the results and avoid the possible influence of the demographic data (especially the information on the previous criminal history of the participants) on the coding process.

While in the violent offenders' group the ratio of different nationalities is nearly one to one (19 British, 23 Polish, 16 Hungarian, 20 Italian), in the non-violent group Polish participants are under-represented (11 British, 6 Polish, 14 Hungarian, 9 Italian). The question about crime is a necessary part of the CY-NEO interview protocol. Participants

are asked to talk about the crime they remember. A strong positive association was found between reported previous criminal history (violent or non-violent) and the type of crime described during the interview ($\Phi=0.5$, $p<0.000$). Although only data from British, Hungarian and Italian samples was used to establish this association (Polish interviews were not transcribed in full, therefore there was no data on their response to the interview crime question), it shows that the participants' accounts of their criminal past are consistent with their interview responses, and that in future in the absence of demographic data participants' own stories can be safely used to establish their criminal past.

The unequal sizes of the groups, relatively small size of one of the groups and the low frequencies of many items prevented use of Chi-square test, as it is not recommended for use on unequal and small samples, or items of low frequency (e.g. Gingrich, 1992). To indicate if there is significant association between LAAF content dictionary items and the violent/non-violent nature of a criminal past the Phi test was conducted. The Phi test is the measure of association that adjusts Chi square statistics by the sample size and is fit for use on unequal samples and/or items of low frequency (Gingrich, 1992). For the variables of ratio scale (length of the response in words /number of people cited/ number of distinct psychological ideas/ number of events cited/ number of words in the response), the multiple regression and the Mann-Whitney test were used. The Mann-Whitney test was chosen as an alternative to the independent sample t-test, as the independent sample t-test assumptions were not met in the current research data. The Mann-Whitney test was used to compare the parameters of the narrative psychological complexity for the LAAF accounts of violent and non-violent offenders. Multiple regression is an extension of simple linear regression, a statistical tool that models the relationship between the explanatory variables (in the current study – length of the LAAF account and the nature of the criminal history: violent versus non-violent) and a response variable (in the current study – various parameters of the narrative complexity).

Both multiple regression and Mann-Whitney procedures can be used on the samples of unequal size (Dancey and Reidy, 2011). Both procedures were run in accordance with standard SPSS instructions (Dancey and Reidy, 2011).

8.1.2 Results

The tables presented further in this section illustrate the content of the LAAF coding framework disclosed by both the violent and non-violent offenders. The tables are presented according to content dictionary thematic groups. Each table displays the frequency of every variable in the whole sample (both number of cases and percentage) and the frequency of each variable in the violent and non-violent offenders' groups separately. If an association was found between the character of the criminal past and the specific narrative characteristic, this information is also included in the table. Variables with a significant association to either violent or non-violent offenders are highlighted in every table. Narrative verbatim is used to illustrate the variables of the LAAF framework. Verbatim from the violent offenders' group is marked by a "V", while the marker "NV" is used to represent quotes from non-violent offenders' responses. For the variables on ratio scale (Psychological Complexity group: length of the response in words/number of people cited/number of distinct events/ number of distinct psychological ideas), the relevant plots are provided.

8.1.3 Psychological complexity

The length of the response varied from 29 to 2604 words in the sample of violent offenders (Mean=442, Median=232, Mode=55), while in the sample of non-violent offenders the shortest response was 29 words and the longest was 1967 words (Mean=394, Median =178, no Mode). The number of people cited varied from 0 to 17 (violent offenders, Mean=3, Median=2, Mode=0) or from 0 to 6 (non-violent offenders, Mean=2, Median=3, Mode=3).

The largest number of distinct events mentioned in the narratives of violent offenders was 21 (Mean=5, Median=5, Mode=7), non-violent offenders described no more than 15 distinct events in their stories (Mean=5, Median=4, Mode=4), while the smallest number for both groups was 0. The number of distinct psychological ideas varied from 0 to 11 for violent offenders (Mean=3, Median=3, Mode=2), and from 0 to 8 for non-violent ones (Mean=3, Median=3, Mode=3 and 4).

Since the groups of violent and non-violent offenders in the study are of a significantly unequal size, and, as is shown in Part II, Chapter 6, the distribution of data is skewed, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to check the correlation between the type of the offences committed and the parameters of psychological complexity that belong to the ratio scale (length of the response, number of distinct events, number of distinct psychological ideas, number of people cited). No significant differences were found between the violent and non-violent offenders groups in any of the Psychological Complexity parameters, although some of these parameters demonstrated a potential tendency for such differences. The results show close to significant differences between violent and non-violent offenders' groups in the length of the narrative ($U=803.5$, $p=0.06^{22}$) and in the number of distinct events cited ($U=812.5$, $p=0.07$). The groups used for the study were relatively small and of unequal size, so it is difficult to establish whether the results could be extrapolated to the normal population.

Multiple regression was calculated to predict the complexity of the narrative (for following parameters separately: number of people cited/number of distinct event/ number of distinct psychological ideas) based on the length of the response in words and the nature of the crimes committed in the past, according to the participants' self-report (violent versus non-violent).

²² Exact Sig. was used to establish the significance of the test, as recommended for small samples and unbalanced data, or data that does not meet the assumption of normality (Dancey and Reidy, 2011).

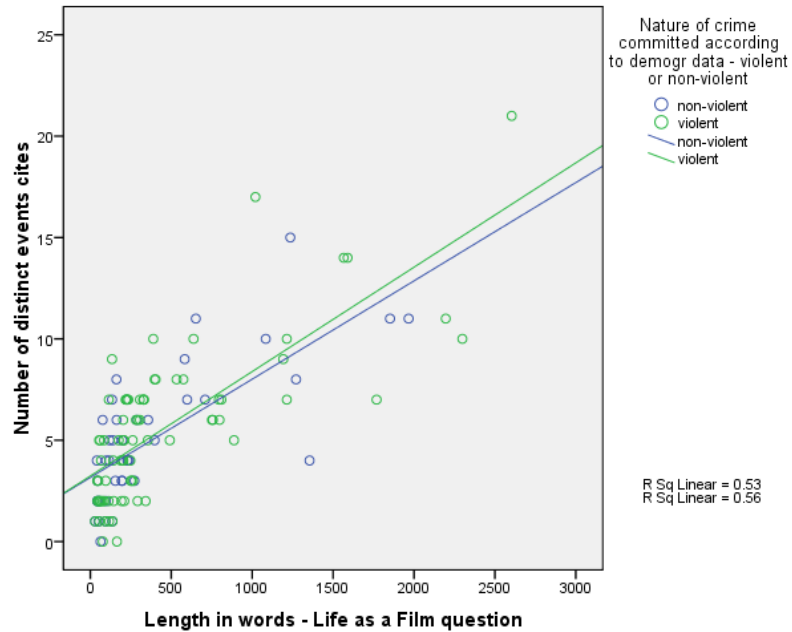
The results show that the length of the narrative is a good predictor of its complexity in all parameters (see Table 8.1).

Dependent Variable	F (2; 117)	R square	p
Number of distinct events	71	0.54	<0.000
Number of distinct psychological ideas	9.98	0.15	<0.000
Number of people cited	20.4	0.26	<0.000

In all three regressions confidence limits were narrowed to 95%.

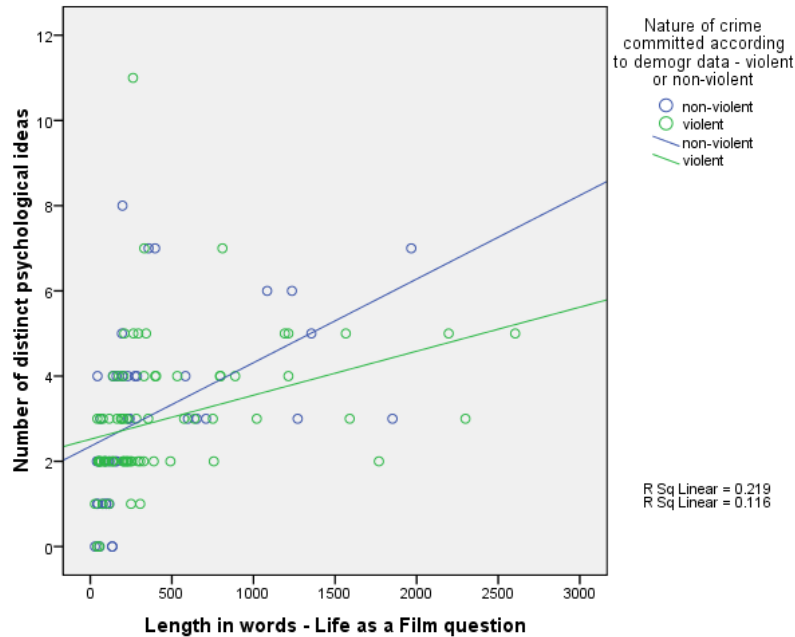
Although the length of the response is the main influence factor for each complexity of the narrative variable, this positive correlation varied in strength between violent and non-violent offenders in some of the parameters. Thus, the number of distinct events cited in the response increased almost at the same rate in both groups, although slightly faster in violent offenders' responses (see Figure 8.1). At the same time, the number of distinct psychological ideas grew more rapidly with the length of the response in non-violent offenders' narratives (see Figure 8.2). As shown in Figure 8.3, the number of people cited increased more quickly with the length of the response in the violent offenders' group.

Figure 8.1: Regression plot of length in words and nature of crime against the number of distinct events cited in the response



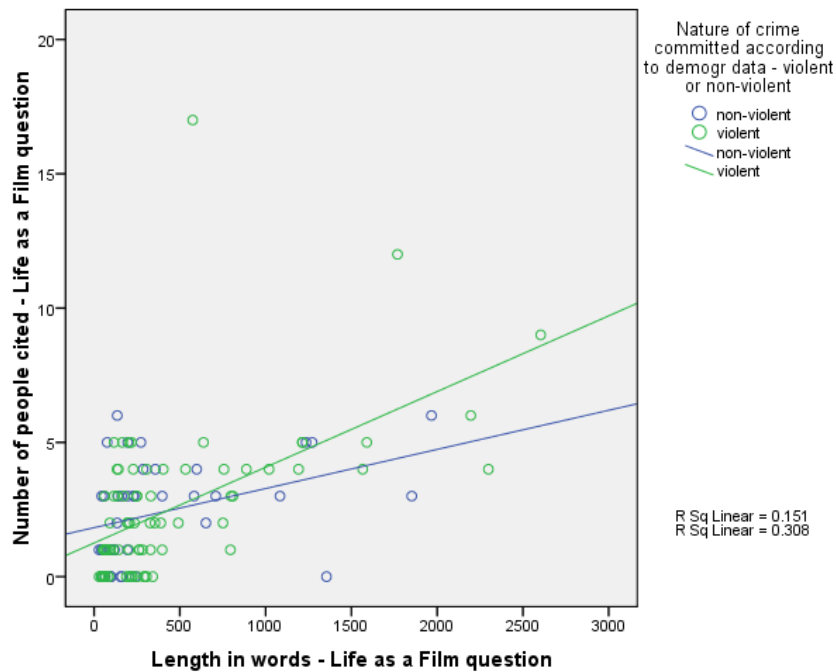
In 54% of all cases, the increase in the number of distinct events in the narrative can be predicted by both the length of the narrative and the nature of the crime described (violent offenders cite more events in their stories in comparison to non-violent ones; $R^2=0.54$). The length of the response was found to be a significant predictor of the number of events cited in it ($F(2, 117) = 71, p < .000, R^2 = 0.54$).

Figure 8.2: Regression plot of length in words and nature of crime against the number of distinct psychological ideas in the response



In only 15% of all cases can an increase in the number of distinct psychological ideas in the narrative be predicted by both the length of the narrative and the nature of the crime described (violent offenders cite more people in their stories in comparison to non-violent ones; $R^2=0.15$). These variables demonstrated a statistically significant prediction of the number of distinct psychological ideas, $F(2, 117) = 9.98, p < .000, R^2 = 0.15$. The length of the response was found to be the main significant predictor of the number of distinct psychological ideas in it ($p < .000$).

Figure 8.3: Regression plot of length in words and nature of crime against number of people cited in the response



In only 26% of all cases could an increase in the number of people cited in the narrative be predicted by both length of the narrative and nature of crime described (violent offenders cite more people in their stories when compared to non-violent ones; $R^2=0.26$). These variables statistically significantly predicted the number of people cited in the life narrative, ($F(2, 117) = 20.4, p < .000, R^2 = 0.26$). The length of the response variable was found to be the main statistically significant predictor of the number of people cited in the response ($p < .000$).

As represented in Table 8.2, no significant differences were found between violent and non-violent offenders' responses in any Psychological Complexity parameters.

Table 8.2: Psychological complexity - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders					
Psychological complexity	Frequencies (%)	Number of people, N=120	Violent (number of people), N=78	Non-violent (number of people), N=40	Association
Presence of distinct roles for 'characters'	36	43	27 (35%)	16 (40%)	NS
Presence of contingent sequences	60	72	49 (63%)	22 (55%)	NS
Presence of distinct beginning, middle and end components to story	64	53	44 (56%)	18 (45%)	NS
Presence of coherent theme	83	100	63 (81%)	35 (88%)	NS

8.1.3.1 The comparison between the violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts in terms of psychological complexity: summary

The comparison between the variables of psychological complexity in the narratives of the violent and non-violent offenders revealed no significant differences between either substantive (e.g. number of people cited in the response, number of distinct psychological ideas etc) or formal (e.g. length of the response in words, presence of contingent type sequence etc) parameters. The length of the response was found to be a good predictor for the complexity of the narrative in both the violent and non-violent samples – the longer the response, the more complex and detailed it became. However, this positive correlation varied in strength between violent and non-violent offenders in some of the parameters. Thus, the number of distinct events cited in the response increased almost at the same rate in both groups, although slightly faster in violent offenders' responses. At the same time, the number of distinct psychological ideas grew more rapidly with the length of the response in non-violent offenders' narratives. The number of people cited increased more quickly with the length of the response in the violent offenders' group.

Although no significant differences between the violent and non-violent offenders' samples were found in this study in any of the parameters of the psychological complexity, some of the variables (length of the narrative and the number of distinct events cited) demonstrated a tendency towards such differences. However, the required level of significance was not reached in both cases. The groups used for the study were relatively small and of unequal size. Further studies would be required in order to establish whether there is indeed an association between the type of criminal history (violent versus non-violent) and some of the narrative psychological complexity parameters (length of the narrative and number of distinct events cited). As the current study demonstrates, participants with both violent and non-violent criminal histories provided equally rich and detailed "life as a film" descriptions.

8.1.4 Implicit psychological content

The "Implicit psychological content" sub-group of LAAF categories allows a review of the narrative on the basis of what a person describes in it. As shown in Tables 8.3-6, the following variables of the implicit psychological content subgroup were found to be in significant association with either violent or non-violent offenders' personal stories: genre "Crime", message "I am dangerous" and "Positive tone". Although Crime was not the most popular genre in the offenders' narratives, moderate association ($\Phi=0.2$, $p<0.005$, Table 8.3) was found between the type of crime and the choice of this genre for one's life as a film description. Thus, non-violent offenders described their life as a Crime film significantly more frequently (Table 8.3).

<p>Table 8.3: Implicit psychological content, genre - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime</p>

type and event)					
Genre	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Comedy	23	28	21 / 27%	6 / 15%	NS
Romance	4	5	2 / 3%	3 / 8%	NS
Crime	8	9	3 (4%)	6 (15%)	Moderate negative association, Phi=0.2, p=0.03
Action	19	23	15 (19%)	8 (20%)	NS
Tragedy	8	10	8 (10%)	2 (5%)	NS
Thriller	4	5	3 (4%)	1 (3%)	NS

At the same time, a positive tone to the narrative was strongly associated with the non-violent offenders' group (Table 8.4). Crime is not serious; it is comic in their stories (Comedy being most popular genre in both violent and non-violent offenders' responses), part of the funny nuisance on the way to a happy ending, and it is given an almost positive connotation.

NV HP64: "The film would be about my life, as the film „Ghetto Millionaire". It will introduce joy and sorrow. It would be there action, crime. Marriage with my girlfriend."

	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Happy ending	59	71	45 (58%)	24 (60%)	NS
Sad ending	8	10	8 (10%)	2 (5%)	NS
Positive tone	51	61	31 (40%)	29 (73%)	Strong negative association, Phi=-0.31, p=0.001
Negative tone	28	34	26 (33%)	8 (20%)	NS
Passive	40	48	31 (40%)	16 (40%)	NS
Pro-active	38	45	29 (37%)	16 (40%)	NS

It is interesting to note that, although Crime was not the most popular genre of choice in the sample (see Table 8.3), it is almost always associated with a positive tone in both the violent and the non-violent offenders' narratives (the presence of a positive tone was registered in 2 out of 3 (violent sample) and 5 out of 6 (non-violent sample) of the cases of those who chose Crime as their "Life as a Film" genre). One can find an interesting parallel with a study by Stevenson et al (2009) on criminal sentiments. A positive tone when speaking about crime might be intrinsic to offenders, but only participants with a non-violent criminal history spread it over their life story as a whole. At the same time, in violent offenders' stories a positive tone is directed only at criminal episodes.

NV HP4: "The film would be a comedy with a lot of actions. The story is a little bit similar to the story of Bonnie and Clyde without murders, romance, girls, love, laughing, joking, and burglaries... The main events would be the burglaries, loves and jokes. In the end of the film I'd have my new family... I'd have a good work, I'd be an entrepreneur with a good income."

V HP11: "Gangster, action movies hmm...I 'am a hero. A little bit torture, bitches, violence. Bitches would work in flats, luxury flats. I would have a lot of money and I would like to live with my bitches together in Thailand. Every day I would have enough cocaine, alcohol, money, happiness, party and freedom. I would be successful."

No significant association was found between the type of criminal history (violent versus non-violent) and the events mentioned in the LAAF accounts (Table 8. 5).

Table 8.5: Implicit psychological content, events - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and event)						
Events	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general	of in	Violent N=78	Non-violent	Phi

		sample, N=120		N=40	
Doing crime	44	53	38 (49%)	14 (35%)	NS
Imprisonment	57	68	45 (58%)	21 (53%)	NS
Victim of crime	22	26	20 (27%)	6 (15%)	NS
Birth	20	24	15 (19%)	8 (20%)	NS
Death	21	25	18 (23%)	7 (18%)	NS
Material success	20	24	18 (23%)	6 (15%)	NS
Relationship problem	31	37	28 (36%)	9 (23%)	NS
Relationship success	48	58	34 (44%)	23 (58%)	NS

A moderate positive association was found between the message “I am dangerous” and the violent type of crime committed by participants ($\Phi=0.21$, $p<0.00$, Table 8.6). This message itself was found only in the narratives of violent offenders, as was to be expected.

V HP11: “Gangster, action movies hmm...I ’am a hero. A little bit torture, bitches, violence. Bitches would work in flats, luxury flats. I would have a lot of money and I would like to live with my bitches together in Thailand. Every day I would have enough cocaine, alcohol, money, happiness, party and freedom. I would be successful.”

V HP62: “I would be the main character. It would be there shootings, it would be a mafia film with car chase with police. There would be bank robberies.

End: I’m rich, I visit a nice island, I don’t get caught by the police.”

Table 8.6: Implicit psychological content, message (Sandberg, 2009) - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and event)					
Message (Sandberg 2009)	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
It was my own choice	16	19	12 (15%)	6 (15%)	NS
I am decent	39	47	31 (40%)	14 (35%)	NS

We are the same	11	13	9 (12%)	4 (10%)	NS
I am interesting	28	34	21 (27%)	13 (33%)	NS
I am smart	5	6	4 (5%)	2 (5%)	NS
I am dangerous	8	9	9 (12%)	0	Moderate positive association, Phi=0.21, p=0.03

8.1.4.1 The comparison between the implicit psychological contents of the violent and non-violent offenders' narratives: summary

Overall, there are more similarities than differences between the implicit psychological content of violent and non-violent offenders' "Life as a Film" stories. The items of the Implicit Psychological Content that were frequent in the general sample (as described in Chapter 6), were equally frequent in violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF responses, for example: genres Comedy and Action; "Happy Ending", events "Doing Crime", "Imprisonment" and "Relationship success"; messages "I am decent", "I am interesting" and "It was my own choice". No significant association was found between the type of criminal history (violent versus non-violent) and the events mentioned in the LAAF accounts.

The differences between the implicit psychological content of the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders were found in more subtle, less frequent content items. Thus, non-violent offenders described their life as a crime film significantly more frequently than violent ones. A positive tone to the narrative was found to be strongly associated with the non-violent offenders' group. However, only non-violent offenders spread the positive tone over their LAAF response as whole, while in the violent offenders' stories the positive tone was directed exclusively at crime. Only the narratives of violent offenders included the message "I am dangerous". This message can be viewed as manifestations of violence supportive cognitions and beliefs (Toch, 1969). However it can be argued that although the

previous studies focused on differences between violent and non-violent offenders' that can be defined through aggression-related traits (e.g. Baumeister, Bushman and Campbell, 2000),, the current research results support the hypothesis that some differences (those in overall tone of the narrative and the life perception) are not directly related to aggression.

8.1.5 Explicit processes to organise the narrative content

The “Explicit psychological processes” subgroup of LAAF variables describes the psychologically active components of the narrative, the connections and movements that produce the storyline. The content categories of this subgroup draw on the core themes of redemption and contamination, as well as on the general narrative themes and the themes of Agency and Communion.

As shown in Table 8.7, no significant differences were found between the violent and non-violent offenders' narratives in terms of the Agency themes. The relatively frequent in general sample themes of “Self-mastery” (24%, n=29) and “Status/Victory” (20%, n=24) occurred frequent in both violent (27%, n=21 and 21%, n=16 respectively) and non-violent (18%, n=7 and 20%, n=8 respectively) samples, and the rare <in general sample> theme of “Empowerment” (8%, n=9) was equally infrequent in the responses of both violent (9%, n=7) and non-violent (5%, n=2) offenders.

Table 8.7: Explicit processes used to organise the content – Agency themes frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)

Agency themes	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Self-mastery	24	29	21 (27%)	7 (18%)	NS
Status/Victory	20	24	16 (21%)	8 (20%)	NS
Achievement/Responsibility	16	19	12 (15%)	7 (18%)	NS
Empowerment	8	9	7 (9%)	2 (5%)	NS

The themes of Communion were similarly manifested in the narratives of both violent and non-violent offenders (as shown in Table 8.8). Thus, the “Unity/Togetherness” theme remained prevalent in both samples (44%, n=34 in violent offenders’ sample and 45%, n=18 in non-violent offenders’ sample), and (as shown in Chapter 6, and in Table 8.8) it was the most frequent “Explicit process” subgroup theme in the general sample (44%, n=53). Other Communion themes that were relatively frequent in the general sample remained equally frequent in the violent and non-violent offenders’ samples. The theme of “Dialogue”, which was rare in the general sample (2%, n=2) remained equally rare in both violent and non-violent offenders’ narratives (1%, n=1 in each sample). Thus the characteristics found on the basis of the general sample: declared love, care and friendship and at the same time rarely mentioned any reciprocal, non-instrumental and non-hostile form of communication²³ - are equally true for both violent and non-violent offenders’ narratives.

Table 8.8: Explicit processes used to organise the content – Communion themes frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)					
Communion themes	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Love/Friendship	28	34	21 (27%)	13 (33%)	NS
Dialogue	2	2	1 (1%)	1 (3%)	NS
Caring/Help	22	26	17 (22%)	9 (23%)	NS
Unity/Togetherness	44	53	34 (44%)	18 (45%)	NS

As shown in Tables 8.9 and 8.10, the themes of , Redemption and Contamination were similarly expressed in the narratives of both violent and non-violent offenders, and the main tendencies found in the general sample (such as contaminated rather than redemptive script) remained the same in both violent and non-violent samples. Thus, the theme of General

²³ The definition of the “Dialogue” item of the LAAF content dictionary in short is “reciprocal, non-instrumental and non-hostile form of communication”. For full definition, please, see Appendix II,

Redemption remained as frequent in both violent (50%, n=39) and non-violent (40%, n=16) offenders' responses as it was in general sample (48%, n=57). However, one variable was found in association with the type of crime: in the sub-theme of Redemption, "Advantage" – non-violent offenders described how they enjoyed some special advantage in life.

NV IT14: "I have 10 long months of detention that have rocked my life, and then I realized virtually, that's it, I grow up I wanted to do something and someone, I have a nice family, who loves me, two children and then my life l 'I did, if I had to do a puzzle, I would start right from the beginning at 17 years, a boy who was good, who had everything from his dad, always had money in his pocket, he had already learned to drive with the car under the house so nothing was missing, and this is a good and a bad thing, because friends loved you for who you were but some hated you because you had it and they did not and that too in the village counts. I could get everything and the others couldn't, even with the girls, I was always a winner because I had grown up a lot, even at age 14 I was really tall as well, so I had money in my pocket, then of course my mother had made me a bit 'cute so all of it could do me good no? And then there was a little 'envy of my friends, but I always had a good relationship, which I currently still have got with my old mates."

It is interesting to note that the special advantages showered on the hero of the story in such abundance take a course of recursion – even imprisonment is perceived as some sort of advantage by the narrator, because it gave him an opportunity to reflect, and to realize what he wants and what he has.

<p>Table 8.9: Explicit processes used to organise the content – Theme of Redemption frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders</p>

(with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)					
Redemption	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non- violent N=40	Phi
General redemption	38	46	31 (40%)	14 (35%)	NS
Advantage	2	2	0	2 (5%)	Weak negative association, Phi=-0.18, p=0.046 (p<0.05)
Suffering	15	18	12 (15%)	5 (13%)	NS
Development	23	27	18 (23%)	8 (20%)	NS
Repeated negative	10	12	7 (9%)	4 (10%)	NS
Prosocial	13	15	11 (14%)	4 (10%)	NS

Table 8.10: Explicit processes used to organise the content – Theme of Contamination frequencies in the general sample and in the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)

Contamination	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non- violent N=40	Phi
General contamination	48	57	39 (50%)	16 (40%)	NS
Victimisation	12	14	8 (10%)	6 (15%)	NS
Betrayal	13	16	6 (8%)	3 (8%)	NS
Loss of significant other	8	9	11 (14%)	5 (13%)	NS
Failure	28	32	22 (28%)	8 (20%)	NS
Illness/Injury	3	3	3 (4%)	0	NS
Disappointment	11	13	6 (8%)	7 (18%)	NS
Disillusionment	5	6	4 (5%)	2 (5%)	NS
Sex guilt/Humiliation	8	9	7 (9%)	2 (5%)	NS

No significant differences were found between the violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts in the classic narrative themes (Table 8.11). The themes relatively frequent in the general sample (e.g. "Overcoming obstacles" 25%, n=30; "Wrong done to them/theirs" 24%,

n=29; “Masculinity/Bravery” 21%, n=25) remained on similar levels of frequency within the violent and non-violent offenders’ samples(e.g. “Overcoming obstacles” 27% in the violent sample and 20% in the non-violent one; “Wrong done to them/theirs” 23% in the violent sample and 28% in the non-violent one; “Masculinity/Bravery” 24% and 15% respectively). The theme of “Fulfilment/Satisfaction” prevalent in the general sample (41%, n=49) remained equally prevalent in the violent (39%, n=30) and non-violent (45%, n=18) offenders’ narratives. Thus, the main characteristics of the offenders’ narratives found in the general sample (prevalence of the strong, potent themes) were found in both violent and non-violent offenders’ responses in equal proportions.

Table 8.11: Explicit processes used to organise the content – classic narrative themes’ frequencies in the general sample and in the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)

Narrative themes	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Overcoming Struggles/Obstacles/Mission	25	30	21 (27%)	8 (20%)	NS
Wrong done to them/theirs	24	29	18 (23%)	11 (28%)	NS
Impotence/Hopelessness	20	24	16 (21%)	8 (20%)	NS
Effectiveness/Skills/Competencies	13	16	12 (15%)	4 (10%)	NS
Victory/ Proving Self/ Success	16	19	14 (18%)	5 (13%)	NS
Revenge	2	2	2 (3%)	0	NS
Fate	21	25	17 (22%)	8 (20%)	NS
Tangible Rewards/ Acquisitions	10	12	7 (9%)	5 (13%)	NS
Masculinity/Bravery	21	25	19 (24%)	6 (15%)	NS
Compulsion	4	5	4 (5%)	1 (3%)	NS
Confusion/Misunderstanding	7	8	5 (6%)	2 (5%)	NS
Fulfilment/Satisfaction	41	49	30 (39%)	18 (45%)	NS

8.1.5.1 The comparison between the violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF account in terms of the explicit processes that construct the narrative: summary

Overall the same explicit processes that produced the narratives' storylines in the general sample were found in both violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF responses: contaminated rather than redemptive script, a focus on the satisfaction/fulfilment of one's wishes/dreams ("Fulfilment/Satisfaction"), relatively high frequencies of the strong potent themes, such as the classical narrative themes of "Overcoming obstacles", "Wrong done to them/theirs" and Agentic themes (e.g. "Self-mastery"). The prevalence of the Communion themes, especially "Unity/Togetherness" found in the general sample was also found in both violent and non-violent offenders' samples, and just as it was in the general sample the reciprocal, non-instrumental and non-hostile form of communication rarely found in either the violent or the non-violent offenders' narratives. However, a difference was found in one of the Redemption sub-themes: only non-violent offenders described how they enjoyed some special advantage in life. As this particular motive was relatively rare in the general sample, it may be concluded that in general the explicit processes that construct narratives are similar in the responses of violent and non-violent offenders, and the characteristics that were found to be typical in the general sample can be equally applied to both violent and non-violent offenders' samples.

8.1.6 Nature of agency vis-à-vis others and the world

The "Agency vis-à-vis others and the world" describes variations in the ways in which an individual deals with those around him, and with the world as a whole. Genreally speaking, this subgroup describes the interactions between the characters in the narrative (including roles assigned to oneself or to others), the protagonist's emotions, justifications and personal aims.

Although overall the emotional background of the offenders' personal stories is positive rather than negative (Table 8.12), a negative non-aroused emotional state was more characteristic of violent offenders' personal stories than of non-violent ones ($\Phi=0.284$, $p<0.00$). This difference in the emotional state is the only significant one that was found in the "Nature of Agency" subgroup of parameters.

Table 8.12: Emotions in the narrative - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)					
Emotions	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Aroused positive	31	37	20 (27%)	16 (40%)	NS
Aroused negative	15	18	12 (15%)	6 (15%)	NS
Non-aroused positive	28	33	20 (27%)	13 (33%)	NS
Non-aroused negative	22	26	23 (30%)	2 (5%)	Moderately strong positive correlation; Phi=0.284, p=0.002

Both violent and non-violent offenders declared empathy rather than hostility towards others (Table 8.13); both described others to be significant rather than insignificant (Table 8.14) and both violent and non-violent offenders focused their LAAF responses on themselves ("Self-identity to be stronger than others", Table 8.15). Overall the same tendencies that were found in the general sample (declared empathy rather than hostility towards others, focus of the narrative on the narrator's self and the description of others as significant persons) were found in both violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF responses.

Table 8.13: Themes of Empathy and Hostility towards Others - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)					
	Frequencies (%)	Number of	Violent	Non-	Phi

	in general sample	people in general sample, N=120	N=78	violent N=40	
Empathy towards others	17	20	13 (17%)	7 (18%)	NS
Hostility towards others	9	11	8 (10%)	3 (8%)	NS

Table 8.14: Significance of Others - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with correlation between crime type and LAAF variables)

Others	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Significant	69	83	52 (67%)	30 (75%)	NS
Non-significant	23	28	20 (27%)	7 (18%)	NS

Table 8.15: Self-Identity - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)

Self-identity	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Stronger than others	80	96	61 (78%)	33 (83%)	NS
Weaker than others	8	9	8 (10%)	1 (3%)	NS

The justifications were used in nearly equal proportions in both violent and non-violent offenders' narratives (Table 8.16). Just as it was in the general sample, justifications were rarely used by the participants with either type of the criminal history. The most frequently used justification was "Assuming the role of victim for one's self" – such was the situation in the general sample (23%, n=28, Table 8.16 or Chapter 6) and so it was in both violent and non-violent offenders' responses (28%, n=22 in the violent offenders' sample, 15%, n=6 in non-violent offenders' sample). Other justifications were rarely used by either violent or non-violent offenders (see Table 8.16) – again the same tendency was found in the general sample

(see Table 8.16 and Chapter 6). Thus it can be concluded that the LAAF indeed provides a non-judgemental approach to the offenders' narratives study regardless to the participants' criminal history.

Justifications	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Denial of responsibility	10	12	8 (10%)	4 (10%)	NS
Denial of injury	1	1	1 (1%)	0	NS
Denial of victim	2	2	2 (3%)	0	NS
Condemnation of the condemners	4	5	3 (4%)	2 (5%)	NS
Appeal to higher loyalties	2	2	2 (3%)	0	NS
Displacement of responsibility	4	5	4 (5%)	1 (3%)	NS
Diffusion of responsibility	3	4	2 (3%)	2 (5%)	NS
Distorting the consequences of an action	3	4	2 (3%)	2 (5%)	NS
Dehumanising the victim	1	1	1 (1%)	0	NS
Assuming the role of victim for one's self	23	28	22 (28%)	6 (15%)	NS

The distribution of the locus of agency is also quite similar between the violent and non-violent samples and shows the same tendencies that were found in the general sample: proactive rather than reactive and neither an avoidant nor a confrontational locus of agency (Table 8.17).

Table 8.17: Agency – Locus of Agency frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and

LAAF variables)					
Locus of Agency	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Proactive	33	39	25 (32%)	14 (35%)	NS
Reactive	51	61	40 (51%)	19 (48%)	NS
Avoidant of others	13	16	12 (15%)	3 (8%)	NS
Confronting others	18	22	15 (19%)	7 (18%)	NS

The self-imagoes that were found most frequently in the general sample were found to be almost equally frequent in both violent and non-violent offenders' responses (see Table 8.18). Thus, "Escapist", the role that was most frequently assigned to the narrator himself in the general sample (31%, n=37, Table 8.18 and Chapter 6), was found equally frequently in the narratives of both violent (30%, n=23, Table 8.18) and non-violent (35%, n=14, Table 8.18) offenders – and it remained the most popular imago.

Table 8.18: Self-Imagoes - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)					
Imago	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Healer	2	2	2 (3%)	0	NS
Teacher	3	4	1 (1%)	3 (8%)	<i>Phi=-0.16, p=0.08</i>
Counsellor	3	4	3 (4%)	1 (3%)	NS
Humanist	8	10	6 (8%)	4 (10%)	NS
Arbiter	2	2	1 (2%)	0	NS
Warrior	14	17	13 (17%)	4 (10%)	NS
Traveller	13	16	8 (10%)	8 (20%)	NS
Sage	3	3	3 (4%)	0	NS
Maker	3	4	3 (4%)	1 (3%)	NS
Lover	8	10	4 (5%)	6 (15%)	<i>Phi=-0.168, p=0.07</i>
Caregiver	21	25	18 (23%)	7 (18%)	NS
Friend	5	6	4 (5%)	1 (3%)	NS
Ritualistic	9	11	8 (10%)	3 (8%)	NS

Escapist	31	37	23 (30%)	14 (35%)	NS
Survivor	22	26	14 (18%)	11 (28%)	NS

As the results showed (Table 8.19), roles were rarely assigned to others in the narratives of both violent and non-violent offenders – a feature distinguished in the general sample as well (see Chapter 6). And just as it was found in the general sample, the participants regardless to the type of their criminal history (violent versus non-violent) most frequently assigned to others the supportive roles of Lover and Caregiver (Table 8.19).

Table 8.19: Imagoes of Others - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)

Imago	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Healer	2	2	2 (3%)	0	NS
Teacher	5	6	3 (4%)	3 (8%)	NS
Counsellor	0	0	0	0	NS
Humanist	2	2	1 (1%)	1 (3%)	NS
Arbiter	0	0	0	0	NS
Warrior	2	2	1 (1%)	1 (3%)	NS
Traveller	0	0	0	0	NS
Sage	2	2	1 (1%)	1 (3%)	NS
Maker	1	1	1 (1%)	0	NS
Lover	8	10	4 (5%)	6 (15%)	<i>Phi</i> = -0.168, <i>p</i> = 0.07
Caregiver	17	20	10 (13%)	10 (25%)	<i>Phi</i> = -0.154, <i>p</i> = 0.095
Friend	7	8	4 (5%)	3 (8%)	NS
Ritualistic	3	4	3 (4%)	1 (3%)	NS
Escapist	1	1	1 (1%)	0	NS
Survivor	1	1	1 (1%)	0	NS

However, there may be an association between the type of crime and a few of the Imago categories (both Self-Imagoes and Imagoes of Others, Tables 8.18 and 8.19). Although the associations between the type of criminal history and the self-imagoes of Teacher and Lover, as well as “Lover” and “Caregiver” roles attributed to others, were not significant in relation

to the standard alpha level of 0.05, the p-value in all the cases was less than 0.1. Thus, the possibility of a negative association exists between Lover and Teacher as self-imagoes (Phi=-0.16 and Phi=-0.168 respectively, $p < 0.1$, Table 8.18) and Lover and Caregiver as imagoes of someone else in the story and in the violent offenders' narrative (Phi=-0.168 and Phi=-0.154, respectively, $p < 0.1$, Table 8.19). One can say that there is some tendency in the violent offenders' stories for the "lone wolf" motif, hence the narrator in these stories rarely accepted any responsibility and/or close relationship with someone else (roles of Teacher and Lover), and equally rarely accepted love and care from anyone (Other as Lover or Caregiver) or allowed any warmth into his personal story. It is interesting to note that, although imagoes of "Other as a Lover" and "Other as Caregiver" were to be found most frequently in the offenders' narratives, the proportion of these imagoes' presence in violent and non-violent offenders' narratives was found to be nearly incomparable (Table 8.19). Narrators with a non-violent criminal history allowed others to play supportive characters in their stories, while those with a violent past denied these roles to others in their narratives.

NV IT5: "Children who are an important part, that make you think that life goes on. And that we must go forward. And you have to start from scratch. And also to convince and persuade them that life is not made up only of money, but is also made of more. Of particular sacrifices... I go out from <prison> and look into the sky... I breathe. With my woman."

NV IT29: "...My maternal grandmother, the one who raised me.... I was the favourite grandson because she knew that I was the weakest..."

V HP15: "It would be a dramatic film. The story is about a man who left his country trusted himself to be successful however it failed... My relatives and friends would play roles in the film and the conclusion would be a great victory."

The insufficient level of significance of any of these associations might be the result of the small sample and the unequal group size. Additionally as was shown in Section I, Chapter 6 of this study, Imagoes – especially those of others, - were relatively rare in the offenders' narratives overall. Further studies on larger and equal samples of the violent and non-violent offenders would be required to explore this phenomenon.

As shown in the Table 8.20, no significant associations were found between the type of criminal history (violent versus non-violent) and the type of incentive in the LAAF response. As in the general sample, the participants with both violent and non-violent criminal histories relatively frequently mentioned material/financial gain (18% in both groups, 18% in the general sample) or sensory gain (17% in the violent offenders' sample, 20% in the non-violent offenders' sample, 18% in the general sample) as their incentive. However even these aims were relatively rare in both the general sample and in violent and non-violent offenders' samples.

Table 8.20: Incentives - frequencies in general sample and in narratives of violent and non-violent offenders (with the association between crime type and LAAF variables)					
Incentive (Bandura 1986)	Frequencies (%) in general sample	Number of people in general sample, N=120	Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
For material/financial gain	18	21	14 (18%)	7 (18%)	NS
For sensory gain	18	21	13 (17%)	8 (20%)	NS
For power/status gain	5	6	5 (6%)	1 (3%)	NS
For social approval/advancement	11	13	9 (12%)	4 (10%)	NS

) gain					
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8.1.6.1 The comparison between the violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts in terms of the nature of agency vis-à-vis others and the world: summary

The comparison between the violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts in terms of the nature of agency vis-à-vis others and the world revealed that there are more similarities than differences between these samples, and that the main traits found in the general sample remain valid in both violent and non-violent samples. Thus, both violent and non-violent offenders declared empathy rather than hostility towards others, and described others as significant. Both violent and non-violent offenders' narratives were focused on the narrators themselves. The distribution of the locus of agency was also quite similar: reactive rather than proactive and neither avoidant nor confrontational. Both violent and non-violent offenders used justifications in equal proportions, and, just as it was in the general sample justifications were rarely used. The potential difference, a tendency rather than an actual association, was found between the type of s criminal history and some of the roles attributed to oneself and to others. Thus, non-violent offenders more frequently assigned the roles of Lover and Teacher to themselves and the roles of the Caregiver and Lover to others. It should be emphasised that although roles of any kind were only rarely assigned to others in both violent and non-violent offenders' responses, the proportion of such roles is incomparable between the groups – the participants with a history of violent crime assigned roles to others far more rarely than did the participants with a non-violent criminal history. One can say that there is some tendency in the violent offenders' stories for the "lone wolf" motif, hence the narrators denied roles to others in their narratives, and did not assign the supportive roles of Lover and Teacher to themselves. Based upon the same findings, it could be suggested that non-violent offenders could be more prone to admit close, responsible and emotional

relationships with others, when compared to the violent ones. However, as was mentioned previously, that association did not achieve the required level of significance – possibly due to the small size of the non-violent offenders’ sample and unequal group sizes. Further studies on larger and equal samples of violent and non-violent offenders would be required in order to explore this tendency.

8.2 Composite structures in the violent and non-violent offenders’ responses: a comparative analysis

Ten narrative themes and composite structural items were derived based on the LAAF subgroups of categories within the general sample of prisoners’ narratives (Part II, Section I, Chapter 7). Three main implicit content themes were found: the sad story of the Innocent Victim, the optimistic account of the Romantic Hero and the delinquency-oriented story of the Career Criminal. These stories represent the various approaches towards the unresolved conflict of the disagreeable reality of imprisonment, and the much wanted happy ending. Three main themes that were found among the explicit processes to organise the narrative content are: Prevailing Unity (focused on communion and redemption), Losing Loneliness (built around themes of contamination and loneliness) and Heroic Winning (concentrated on satisfaction and fulfilment, a strong Agentic theme). The four main means of interacting with others and the world were: Getaway, Help, Pleasure and Excuse. Socio-oriented stories of Getaway (aimless acting out of frustration, quest without the aim) and Help (caring and usually reciprocal relationship with others and the world) as opposed to ego-centric stories of Pleasure (proactive behaviours, interactions based on enjoyment and excitement) and Excuse (focused on hostility towards the world and ways to justify it). These four themes may also be described in terms of reactive (Getaway and Excuse) versus proactive (Help and Pleasure)

attitudes towards the world. The aim of this study is to compare the manifestation of these themes within the stories of violent and non-violent offenders.

8.2.1 Methodology

For the purpose of this study, all the results within the specific narrative theme were summed up. Thus a score was assigned to each participant in every theme based on how many items of this theme were present in the response. For example, the theme “Innocent Victim” includes variables “Passive voice”, “Decent”, “Relationship problems”, “Negative tone” etc. The presence of each of these variables gave the score +1, the absence of any of them – “0”. Finally, all the scores were remade into dichotomous variables: “Presence of <the theme> significant/non-significant”, where the level of significance was sufficient if the score was equal or higher than 2. Only variables that clearly belong to the theme region (as described in Chapter 7) were included into scores – all variables that formed the centre of the radex model and had a frequency of higher than 52% were removed from the calculation and from this study. The results are presented by the LAAF subthemes and in the same order as previously.

8.2.2 Implicit psychological content themes

The following three implicit psychological content themes were derived in the current study: “Innocent Victim” (the story of the decent, but unfortunate, person who is helplessly watching his own tragedy), “Romantic Hero” (the protagonist perceives life as a comedy and concentrates mainly on an inevitable happy ending) and “Career Criminal” (the main character is focused on crimes and on the profits gained from them, and perceives criminal life as normal).

The results of the comparison between manifestations of these themes in the stories of violent and non-violent offenders are represented in the Table 8.21.

Table 8.21: Implicit psychological content themes - observed and expected frequencies within violent and non-violent samples				
Implicit psychological content themes		Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Innocent Victim	Observed	47 / 60%	20 / 50%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	44	23	
Romantic Hero	Observed	33 / 42%	24 / 60%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	38	19	
Career Criminal	Observed	36 / 46%	20 / 50%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	37	19	

No significant association was found between any of the implicit psychological content themes and the types of the criminal past of the narrators. In all three themes the observed values of each variable were close to the expected ones, and in every group each theme was manifested in about 50% of all the narratives.

8.2.3 Explicit processes to organise narrative content – composite constructs

The three composite constructs of the processes to organise the narrative found in this study (Part II, Section I, Chapter 7) were as follows: Prevailing Unity, Losing Loneliness and Winning Heroic. The story organised by Prevailing Unity is focused on a sense of togetherness and solidarity that helps to overcome obstacles, communal idea of being part of the group, and redemption (movement from negative to positive). The opposite processes organise stories built around Losing Loneliness: these are the stories of loss, betrayal, disappointment and contamination (movement from positive to negative). The stories of Winning Heroic are organised around the process of taking control over destiny. These are the stories of strength and fulfilment.

As shown in Table 8.22 no significant association was found between any of the explicit processes composite constructs and the types of criminal past of the narrators. In all three

constructs the observed and expected values were found to be similar, and in both violent and non-violent offenders' responses each theme was manifested in about 50% of the narratives.

Explicit processes' constructs		Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Prevailing Unity	Observed	41 / 53%	20 / 50%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	40	21	
Loosing Loneliness	Observed	41 / 53%	19 / 48%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	40	20	
Winning Heroic	Observed	46 / 57%	18 / 45%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	45	17	

8.2.4 Agency vis-à-vis others and the world composite themes

Four themes of relations with others and the world were described in the previous chapter of this study (Part II, Section I, Chapter 7). They were labelled as “Getaway”, “Help”, “Pleasure” and “Excuse”. In the “Getaway” story the protagonist is displeased with the world and rarely accepts relationships with others – but these chosen few are seen as higher authorities, or at least as equals. His own behaviours are justified by the notion that, no matter how bad he is, people in general are no better. It is the story of despair and aimless strive.

The story of “Help” is the story of assistance and care (not always reciprocal, but the protagonist always plays the active part). The protagonist in this story upholds moral values even in harsh environments.

The story of “Pleasure” shows a successful pursuit of world's pleasures of any kind: sensory or material, even love. The Lover is the only role given to others in this narrative. At the same time, the protagonist's repertoire is richer, and is concentrated not only on the Communal, but also on the strong Agentic characters.

The story of “Excuse” is focused on running from responsibility. It is a story of stress and anxiety. Others do not play any significant roles in this story. The main description of the protagonist’s attitude towards the world is hostility. The focal point of this narrative is to justify the protagonist’s decisions and behaviours by any means.

As shown in Table 8.23 no significant association was found between the agency vis-à-vis others and the world themes and the types of criminal past of the narrators. The most popular theme of “Pleasure” is slightly more prevalent in the stories of non-violent offenders. That finding accords with the phenomenon already described in this study: non-violent ones demonstrate a positive approach to their stories as whole, not just to the specific episodes, as violent offenders do. The least frequent theme of Getaway is nevertheless slightly more popular in the stories of non-violent offenders. That again accords with the characteristics previously described in this study: violent offenders’ narratives more frequently contain the message of self-chosen loneliness and antagonism to outer world.

Table 8.23: Agency vis-à-vis others and the world – observed and expected themes’ frequencies within violent and non-violent samples				
Agency vis-à-vis others and the world themes		Violent N=78	Non-violent N=40	Phi
Getaway	Observed	16 / 21%	4 / 10%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	13	7	
Help	Observed	27 / 35%	17 / 43%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	29	15	
Pleasure	Observed	29 / 37%	20 / 50%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	32	17	
Excuse	Observed	24 / 31%	8 / 20%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	21	10	

8.2.5 The comparison between the violent and non-violent offenders’ LAAF accounts in terms of the narrative composite structures: summary

The comparison between the violent and non-violent offenders’ LAAF accounts was made in terms of the ten narrative composite structures derived in the current thesis (Section I,

Chapter 7). For the purpose of this comparison the special dichotomous variables were created for each composite construct based on the scores each narrative received within this construct. These dichotomous variables were labelled “Presence of <the theme> significant/non-significant”, and the level of significance was sufficient if the score was equal or higher than 2.

Although some themes were found more frequently within the narratives of the specific sample (e.g. themes of Pleasure and Getaway in the narratives of the non-violent offenders), the comparison between the violent and non-violent offenders’ LAAF accounts in terms of the narrative composite structures revealed no significant association between the type of the criminal history (violent versus non-violent) and any of the narrative composite structures. It can be concluded that all the narrative themes and composite constructs were equally manifested in the stories of both violent and non-violent offenders. An insufficient level of significance of any of the associations might result from the small, unequal sizes of the groups used for comparison. It might also be the result of the insufficient sensitivity of the variables themselves. Further research on larger and equal samples of violent and non-violent offenders would be required in order to explore the phenomenon observed in the current study.

8.3 Chapter summary and conclusion

The aims of this study were: 1) to examine if similar narrative themes and constructs can be found in the LAAF accounts of violent and non-violent offenders; 2) to explore the differences between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders in terms of the LAAF content framework - the differences that would not be directly related to violence and aggression; 3) to explore if there are any differences in the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders in terms of the composite themes and inner narrative structures (distinguished in the previous study, Section I, Chapter 7).

Overall, strong similarities rather than many differences were found between violent and non-violent offenders' narratives. The main narrative composite constructs and themes were equally represented in the stories of both violent and non-violent offenders. The theme of criminality – in the form of crime as genre and imprisonment as the story event – was predominant for both violent and non-violent offenders' narratives. The prevalent tone of both violent and non-violent offenders' stories was rather light and optimistic. This phenomenon might be produced by a combination of prison context and psychological defence mechanisms. Nonetheless, such similarities between violent and non-violent offenders' narratives give an interesting perspective for treatment and rehabilitation work. An important addition to this perspective is represented by the finding that only non-violent offenders apply a positive tone to the whole story, while in the violent offenders' stories the same tone is usually used to describe exclusively crime.

The narratives in both groups were found to be similar in their psychological complexity and in the described locus of agency. Both violent and non-violent offenders' stories were generally about a hero who perceives life as a comedy and a nuisance, and who chooses to stand and fight, to strive towards the almost inevitable happy ending. At the same time, close examination showed some variations in the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders. For example, non-violent offenders more frequently described the protagonist as enjoying some special advantage in life. The message of the violent offenders' stories is frequently "I am dangerous". Despite the similar levels of declared empathy and significance towards others, non-violent offenders more frequently assign them some recognizable roles in their "Life as a Film".

Notwithstanding the relatively small size of the sample and the unequal group sizes, the LAAF system allowed the grasping of both important similarities and significant and

meaningful differences between the narratives of those who have at least one violent crime in their previous criminal history and those who committed only non-violent crimes.

Evans et al (2007) argued that offenders' memories of violent crime committed are distressing and intrusive. As the present study shows, violent offenders rarely describe their life as a crime film when compared to non-violent offenders. The offenders' "Life as a Film" story in general can be described as positive, optimistic, pro-active and rather self-centred (Section I, Chapter 6), with dominant themes of criminality. At the same time, the comparison in terms between stories of violent and non-violent offenders shows subtle but significant differences between them. Thus the positive approach to the whole life story is mainly a trait of the non-violent offenders' narratives. In addition to that, non-violent offenders more frequently define their life through crime ("Crime" as the chosen genre of the "life film"). The narratives of the violent offenders are, rather, of a negative and pessimistic nature. Their main message is distress, danger and self-chosen loneliness, even antagonism with the outer world. Although in general, relationships with others in offenders' narratives can be described as instrumental rather than empathic (Section I, Chapter 6), these findings show a potential difference between violent and non-violent offenders' approach to this matter: non-violent offenders are more prone to admit close, responsible and emotional relationships with others, than are violent ones.

The identification of the similarities between violent and non-violent offenders' "Life as a Film" stories, along with the number of significant differences, supports the validity of the LAAF approach. The results offer a potential venue for offenders' rehabilitation and treatment programme adjustments.

As argued by Canter and Youngs (2012): "...framing the therapeutic intervention within the narrative perspective is less threatening and invasive for offenders than a direct confrontation over thought patterns..." (p. 272). Further studies will overcome the present research

limitations, such as the small and unequal group size, the low sensitivity of the composite variables, and the self-reported crime history used to define type of offender. Further studies will also allow to address the differences in cultural approaches to violence in different countries (such as described, for example, in Krug et al, 2002) – the theme that was not addressed in the current research.

Chapter 9: Incarcerated offenders’ “Life as a Film” accounts collected in different countries: a comparative analysis

Chapter 9 overview

This study aimed to explore the offenders’ narratives collected in different countries and to outline common and potentially country-specific traits in them and to explore the robustness and validity of the LAAF system when applied to offenders’ narratives collected in different countries (and therefore in different cultural and linguistic contexts). This study was also aimed to provide the insight into national specifics of the offenders’ narratives by comparison between the psychological themes, traits and inner structures distinguished in the offenders’ narratives collected in different countries.

The comparison between the prisoners’ narratives collected in Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland (sample of 227 responses, unequal groups’ sizes) was made in terms of the LAAF content dictionary and the composite constructs derived on its basis.

The following characteristics were found to be similar across all groups: prevalence of the criminality theme, positive tone, happy ending, reactive locus of agency, roles assigned to the protagonist and other characters, egocentric messages and the euphoric emotional spectre in which the stories were narrated. Although significant differences between the groups were revealed in the more subtle and less common characteristics, these main ones were found to

be prevalent in the general sample (Section 1, Chapter 6).. Thus, Hungarian narratives could be characterised as an almost non-eventful personal credo, a calm and sad outline of the narrator's life philosophy with very few justifications for the protagonist's actions. British LAAF accounts were the most pessimistic and unhappy, and were overly focused on criminal life. The most detailed and explicit narratives came from the Italian sample, and represented a story of an innocent and confused person. The least detailed and shortest narratives were Polish. They could be described as the sad story of a lone and decent hero involved in crime almost against his will.

The results demonstrated the coherency of the offenders' narratives across national samples and presented the first comparison between offenders' narratives collected in different countries done in terms of the LAAF interpretation system. The similarities in the psychological complexity of the narratives from different countries demonstrated that the LAAF procedure was not as sensitive to the issue of the interviewer's manner as might be feared.

For the readers' convenience, the study results are presented in the same order of the LAAF sub-groups (consistent throughout the current thesis): implicit psychological content, then explicit processes to organise the content and finally agency vis-à-vis others and the world. In order to guide the reader through the huge quantity of findings, additional subheadings were developed in accordance to the composite constructs and themes revealed in each of the LAAF content framework sub-groups. Short summaries of the findings within the LAAF subgroups are provided at the end of the subchapters.

9.1 Comparison of the LAAF accounts collected in different countries in terms of LAAF original content framework

The national differences in various psychological aspects were studied for decades (e.g. depression – Kleinman and Good, 1986; approach to violence - Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg and Zwi, 2002; ways that determine social behaviour – Triandis, 1986; etc). The question of national specifics of the narratives, although raised in various theoretical publications (e.g. Fivush, Habermaas, Waters and Zamaan, 2011; Zipes, 2012; Kottler, 2015), was largely neglected in research. The studies of offenders’ narratives were usually carried out on the samples collected in one country (e.g. Carthy, 2013; Piotrovski and Florek, 2015; Fleetwood, 2015) – and the differences in the elicitation and interpretation methods impeded the comparison between the results.

The current study aims to explore the offenders’ narratives collected in different countries and to outline common and potentially country-specific traits in them, and thus to provide the insight into national specifics of the offenders’ narratives by comparison between the psychological themes, traits and inner structures distinguished in the offenders’ narratives collected in different countries. This study was also intended to explore the robustness and validity of the LAAF system in application to the offenders’ narratives collected in different countries (and therefore in different cultural and linguistic contexts). It is the first time that the LAAF content framework was used for a comparison of the narratives collected in different countries.

9.1.1 Methodology

A study on the “country-specific” traits of the offenders’ “Life as a Film” narratives is presented in this chapter. The responses from the full national samples, as described in Part I, Chapter 5 (5.2.1-5.2.5), were coded in terms of the LAAF content dictionary and analysed for

this study. Thus the whole sample included of 227 male violent and non-violent incarcerated offenders divided into four national subgroups: Hungarian (N=93), British (N=69), Italian (N=35) and Polish (N=30). A full description of each national sample is given in Part I, Chapter 5 (5.2.1-5.2.5).

All the results are represented in comparative tables divided into LAAF sub-themes (e.g. Implicit Psychological Content, Explicit Processes etc). Each table contains information on the frequency and percentage of this trait within each national group, as well as the results of an association test carried out for the purpose of a comparison between the narratives collected in different countries.

Narrative verbatim is used to illustrate the variables of the LAAF framework. All verbatim is marked in italics; additionally, long quotes are labelled by a code of the national sub-group (BR for British, IT for Italian, HP for Hungarian and PL for Polish) and the case number.

To reduce possibility of both Type I and II errors due to the sampling process, comparisons were made between full national groups, and not between each group and the general sample of 120 chosen participants previously described. The Chi Square test was used on nominal variables to check for significant differences between national groups. In cases when the reliability of the Chi Square test was in doubt (expected frequency in more than 25% of cells was less than 5), the Freeman-Halton exact test was used instead. The Freeman-Halton test extends the well-known Fisher's exact test (Fisher, 1922; Fisher, 1954) and is recommended specifically for cases in which the variables in question have zero frequency in some of the samples involved in the comparative analysis (Freeman and Halton, 1951). The Freeman-Halton test was run in accordance with the standard procedure (Landau and Everitt, 2004). All the Freeman-Halton exact test results are presented in the tables in the same column as Chi-square results, and are marked by a footnote.

As was shown in the previous study on the general sample of participants (Part II, Chapter 6), the distribution of all interval variables (length of response in words, number of people cited, number of events cited, number of distinct psychological ideas) is not normal. For that reason, the one-way Anova, together with the Welch statistic and the more conservative post-hoc Tukey Honestly Significant Difference test (HSD) were chosen for this sub-group of variables. The one-way Anova was chosen as a test robust to violations of normality, even if the groups' sizes are not equal (Laerd Statistics, 2018b). The Welch statistic, also called Welch's t-test or unequal variances t-test, is an adaptation of a well-known Student's t-test developed specifically for samples of unequal variances and/or unequal sizes (Welch, 1947; Ruxton, 2006); it does not assume an equality of populations' variances and is more suited to unequal groups in the current study. The Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference test (HSD) is a post-hoc test based on the studentized range distribution (Deviant, 2016) and in the current study it was run in order to clarify the results of the one-way Anova test (as the Anova test demonstrates whether or not the differences are significant, but does not provide information on where these differences occur). All three tests are appropriate for the cases in which the distribution of the interval scale variables was found to be abnormal (see Chapter 6). All three were run in accordance with the standard SPSS instructions (Dancey and Reidy, 2011; Laerd Statistics, 2018a; 2018b).

The results are presented by the LAAF subthemes and in the same order as in all previous chapters.

9.1.2 Psychological complexity

The psychological complexity sub-group of the LAAF variables provides a basis for the interpretation of the narratives in terms of their richness (Youngs et al, 2016) and at the same time it plays the role of the internal validation tool for the LAAF procedure by indicating to

what extent the participants incorporate their experiences in their responses (Youngs et al, 2016). The Psychological Complexity subgroup of the LAAF content framework includes both formal (e.g. length of the LAAF account in words, presence of contingent type sequences etc) and substantive (e.g. number of distinct psychological ideas mentioned in the narrative, number of people cited in the narrative etc) aspects of the accounts (see Chapters 3 and 5 for the detailed description and Appendix II for full list of the categories in this subgroup).

There was a statistically significant difference in the length of the responses in words between the national groups, as determined by the one-way Anova (Welch's $F(3, 69.6) = 114.9, p < .000$). The Tukey post hoc test revealed that the response in words was statistically significantly longer in the Italian sample (Mean=1160, SD=581) than in the British (Mean=236, SD= 208, $p < .000$), Hungarian (Mean=76, SD=38, $p < .000$) or Polish (Mean=257, SD=66, $p < .000$). Responses in the Hungarian sample (Mean=76, SD=38) were found to be significantly shorter than those in the British (Mean=236, SD=208, $p < .01$) or Polish samples (Mean=257, SD=66, $p < .01$). No significant difference in the length of the response was found between the Polish and British samples. The length of the response in words is the only LAAF category that could be directly influenced by translation. At the same time, the differences found here cannot be attributed exclusively to translation. According to various translation specialists, the standard text contraction after Italian into English translation is no more than 15% (Kwintessential, 2016), while after Polish into English translations the text expands in length by 5% to 15% (Andiamo, 2013). Due to lack of information on standard expansion/retraction of text lengths after translation from Hungarian into English, 21 randomly chosen original responses from the Hungarian sample were subjected to comparison with their English translations. The length of the texts was measured in words. It was found that, in translation, these texts expanded in length by 33% on average

and by a minimum of 29%. This phenomenon can be explained by grammatical differences. While the Italian, English and Polish languages are of the Indo-European language family, Hungarian belongs to the Uralic one. Unlike Indo-European languages, Hungarian is inflected. Suffixes in Hungarian perform the same function as prepositions in English. Thus in translation the necessary addition of prepositions expands the word count. The influence of the translation only partially explains the brevity of the Hungarian participants' responses – after all, the originals were even shorter. However, significant differences in length between the Polish participants' responses and those of the British and Italian ones cannot be explained by a translation at all. The length of the response can be also influenced by the manner of the interviewer - encouraging or otherwise. However, the similarities in length (and as it will be shown further – in some other details as well) between the British and Polish narratives show that the interview procedure is not as sensitive to the issue of the interviewer's manner as might be feared. Another possible, yet only theoretical, explanation for the observed drastic differences in length across samples from different countries is the acceptable length of speech in this particular language. It seems that currently this theme is neglected in linguistic studies. Further research on conventional length of speech in across national groups is needed.

The standard deviations for the length of the responses are quite sizable in each sample (e.g. in Italian group $SD=581$, while $Mean=1160$; in British one $SD= 208$, while $Mean=236$ etc). This may be explained by various factors: from the variations in respondents' mood (it could be suggested that participants who for some reason are in the mood to share their experiences will probably say more) to the dispersion of the personal preferences within the sample (it could be suggested that different people have different personal preferences when it comes to the lengths of the stories told and to the number of experiences shared). Further studies that

will be focused on factors creating this drastic dispersion in speech length even within national groups are required.

In order to reach a clearer general picture of the situation with the structural complexity of the narratives across the national samples a new variable was built on the basis of the existing LAAF parameters. This structural complexity variable represents the score that summarizes all the dichotomous variables of the “Psychological complexity” subgroup. The presence of each variable adds 1 to the score, thus minimal score each participant can receive is “0” (none of dichotomous psychological complexity variables were present in the narrative) and the maximal possible score is “4” (all of the variables were found in the narrative). Then the scores were divided into groups by levels: low structural complexity (scores 0-1), medium structural complexity (score 2, due to the fact that median was the same for all four samples 2) and high structural complexity (scores 3-4). Table 9.1 shows both the observed and the expected count for each national sample in each score. There were significant differences across the national groups in the scores of the narratives’ structural complexity ($\chi^2=32.6$, $p<0.000$). More than half of the Polish and Italian responses were of high structural complexity level (60%, $n=18$ and 54%, $n=19$ respectively), and less than 30% in each of these samples received scores of 0-1 in structural complexity (see Table 9.1). At the same time, the Hungarian responses were far less complex in structure (low level of structural complexity in 52%, $n=48$; only 16% of all sample received scores 3-4 in this parameter). The distribution of the scores in structural complexity in the British sample was relatively close to the expected numbers (see Table 9.1).

Structural complexity		Low	Medium	High
British N=69	Observed	22 / 32%	15 / 22%	32 / 46%
	<i>Expected</i>	26	18	26
Hungaria n	Observed	48 / 52%	30 / 32%	15 / 16%
	<i>Expected</i>	34	24	34

N=93				
Italian	Observed	9 / 26%	7 / 20%	19 / 54%
N=35	<i>Expected</i>	13	9	13
Polish	Observed	5 / 17%	7 / 23%	18 / 60%
N=30	<i>Expected</i>	11	8	11

Statistically significant difference between national samples in the number of people cited in the responses was defined by the one-way Anova (Welch's $F(3, 80.6) = 18, p < .000$). The Tukey post hoc test revealed that the number of people cited in the response was significantly higher in the Italian sample (Mean=4, SD=3) when compared to the British (Mean=3; SD=2, $p < .01$), Hungarian (Mean=1; SD=1, $p < .000$) and Polish (Mean=1, SD=2, $p < .000$) samples. British participants mentioned more people in their responses (Mean=3; SD=2) in comparison with the Hungarian (Mean=1; SD=1, $p < .01$) and Polish (Mean=1; SD=2, $p < .01$) participants. No significant difference was found between the number of people cited in responses in the Polish and Hungarian groups.

There was a statistically significant difference in the number of distinct events cited in the responses between national groups as determined by the one-way Anova (Welch's $F(3, 83.8) = 20.2, p < .000$). The Tukey post hoc test revealed that the number of distinct events mentioned in the response is significantly higher in the Italian sample (Mean=8; SD=4) in comparison to the British (Mean=4; SD=3, $p < .000$), Hungarian (Mean=3; SD=2, $p < .000$) and Polish (Mean=6; SD=2, $p < .01$) samples. Polish participants tended to mention a significantly higher number of events (Mean=6; SD=2) in their responses than Hungarian participants (Mean=3; SD=2, $p < .01$). No significant difference in the number of distinct events cited was found between British and Polish and British and Hungarian groups.

A statistically significant difference in the number of distinct psychological ideas in the responses between the national groups was determined by the one-way Anova (Welch's $F(3, 90.6) = 26.2, p < .000$). The Tukey post hoc test revealed that the number of distinct psychological ideas was higher in the Italian (Mean=4; SD=1) sample in comparison to the

Polish (Mean=2; SD=1, $p < .01$) and Hungarian (Mean=2; SD=1, $p < .000$) ones. A significantly larger number of distinct psychological ideas was found in the responses of the British participants (Mean=3; SD=2) in comparison to Hungarian ones (Mean=2; SD=1, $p < .000$). No significant differences were found in the number of distinct psychological ideas between the British and Italian sample and between the British and Polish sample.

All the original dichotomous LAAF variables of the psychological complexity sub-group were subjected to the Chi-square test. The results for the nominal variables of psychological complexity of the narrative are represented in Table 9.2. Significant differences between national samples were found in every parameter. Although in all samples rich and detailed narratives are provided, the responses in the Italian sample are significantly more detailed and elaborate in every way (80% of the interviews include contingent sequences, in 54% distinct roles for characters are provided, 77% of Italian responses are well-structured and 87% of the narratives have coherent themes). One can describe the British interviews as significantly less structured (only 35% of the interviews have distinct beginning, middle and end; the lowest number in the comparison), but still richly detailed (49% of British narratives have distinct roles for characters, 61% include contingent sentences and in 64% a coherent theme is present). The Hungarian interviews can be described as significantly less detailed in comparison to all the other national groups – only 13% of all Hungarian narratives include distinct roles for characters, and only 18% of the stories have contingent sequences.

The LAAF accounts of the Hungarian participants can be described as mainly abstract philosophical discourses rather than a stories with plots – the presence of a coherent theme in this sample is the highest (82%, $n=76$). For example:

HP96: “Every genre would be in it, so colourful, everything would be in it. I’m 40 years old, my life’s dilemma is what if I can go to the college then. I wouldn’t undo anything in my life,

now I only long for peace and family. I needed this 20 years prison to realize it. Action and porn would be in it too.”

Although not a single event is mentioned in this story there is quite a description of character. The responses of the Polish participants were significantly better structured in comparison to the Hungarian and British samples (77%, n=23), and contingent sequences are present in their responses more frequently than in the Hungarian ones (60%, n=18 in the Polish sample; 18%, n=17 in the Hungarian sample). At the same time, the responses of the Polish participants were the most formal and the least detailed (only 13% include distinct roles for characters, and in not one of the interviews is a coherent theme present).

The dramatic differences between the Italian and the Polish interviews (the most detailed and rich versus the least detailed ones) can be partially attributed to the differences in interviewing manners. For example, as the raw scripts²⁴ show, the Italian interviewer was somewhat less formal in comparison to the Polish one, although both followed the same interview protocol. The Psychological Complexity sub-group of the LAAF content dictionary categories is probably most obviously influenced both by translation (length of the response) and by the interviewing manner. At the same time, the significant differences found between all four samples cannot be explained only by the influences of translation and the manner of the interviewer. These findings provided noteworthy insight into possible national specifics of the narratives, and demonstrated the value of LAAF as a methodology that allowed the understanding of the important structural features of the narratives.

Table 9.2: Psychological complexity – frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Psychological Complexity	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Distinct roles for	34 / 49%	12 /13%	19 /54%	4 / 13%	38.6

²⁴ The definition of the expression “raw script” is provided in Chapter 5.

characters					p<0.000
Contingent sequences	42 / 61%	17 / 18%	28 / 80%	18 / 60%	53.5 p<0.000
Distinct structural components	24 / 35%	45 / 48%	27 / 77%	23 / 77%	24.9 p<0.000
Coherent theme	44 / 64%	76 / 82%	31 / 87%	0	20.4 p<0.000

9.1.2.1 The comparison between the offenders' LAAF accounts collected in different countries in terms of the psychological complexity: summary

As the comparison between the LAAF accounts collected in the different countries demonstrated, participants in all four samples provided rich and psychologically complex responses. However, the comparative analysis revealed a number of significant differences between the LAAF accounts collected in different countries. Thus, the narratives collected in Italy were found to be the longest and most detailed (largest number of people cited, largest number of events mentioned, and largest number of psychological themes), and overall the most elaborate in every way (highest presence of distinct roles for characters, highest presence of contingent sequences, distinct structural components and coherent themes) in comparison to the other samples. The British LAAF accounts were somewhat less structured (first and foremost in comparison with the Italian narratives), but still richly detailed and elaborate. The responses of the Polish participants were the most formal and the least detailed in comparison to the other samples, although well structured. The Hungarian LAAF accounts were the shortest and were significantly less detailed in comparison to all the other national groups and overall the responses within the Hungarian sample could be described as mainly abstract philosophical discourses rather than as stories with plots (lowest number of events mentioned, lowest presence of the contingent sequence, rarely any distinct roles assigned to the characters within the narrative, however the presence of a coherent theme was the highest in comparison to the other samples).

As discussed, the drastic differences in length of the responses between the samples cannot be explained exclusively by the influence of the translation. The expansions/contractions of the texts after translation from Italian or Polish into English are not drastic, while in case of the Hungarian responses (the shortest ones in comparison to the other samples) the originals were even shorter, and expanded significantly after translation due to the specifics of the Hungarian as an inflected language. One of the possible, yet only theoretical, explanations for the observed drastic differences in the length of the responses across the samples from different countries is the acceptable length of speech in each language in particular. However this theme is currently neglected in linguistic studies, and requires further research. Further research is also required into the phenomenon of the sizable standard deviations in length of the narratives within the groups – the factors that produced this phenomenon are currently unknown, and may vary from the respondent's mood at the time of the interview to the personal length of speech preferences.

The similarities in the psychological complexity parameters found in the narratives collected in different countries (e.g. no significant differences in the length of the British and Polish LAAF accounts, no significant differences in the number of people cited in the Polish and Hungarian responses, contingent sequences equally present in British and Polish responses etc) demonstrated that the LAAF methodology is less sensitive to translation and to the interviewers' personal manners as might be feared. As the LAAF “internal validation tool” (Youngs et al, 2016), the parameters of psychological complexity in this study demonstrated the robustness of the LAAF methodology across the samples collected in different countries. At the same time the significant differences found between these samples provide the important insight into possible national specifics of the narratives, and demonstrated the value of LAAF as a methodology that allows the understanding of the important structural features of the narratives.

9.1.3 Implicit psychological content

The “Implicit psychological content” sub-group of LAAF categories allows the review of the narrative on the basis of what a person describes in it: focal content, generic presentation, implicit messages, tone, ending of the story etc (for the full list of the categories and the coding rules, see Appendix II). The implicit content is not explicitly used to structure the narrative and does not represent a specific storyline (Canter and Youngs, 2015; Youngs et al, 2016).

For the readers’ convenience in the current subchapter the description of the similarities between the samples is provided first, followed by the description of the differences between the samples.

Overall the picture of the implicit psychological content of the offenders’ life narratives remains unchanged when compared to the study of the general sample (described previously in Chapter 6). As shown in Tables 9.3-8, the majority of the most frequent in general sample categories. Thus the genres that were found most frequently in the general sample (see Chapter 6): “Comedy”, “Action”, - were found to be the most frequent in each of the national samples, without any significant differences between them (see Table 9.3).

Table 9.3: Genre - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Genre	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Comedy	18 / 26%	15 / 16%	10 / 29%	6 / 20%	NS
Romance	1 / 1%	10 / 11%	2 / 6%	1 / 3%	NS
Crime	19 / 28%	4 / 4%	1 / 3%	0	30.6, p<0.000
Action	14 / 20%	11 / 12%	4 / 11 %	5 / 17%	NS
Tragedy	11 / 16%	5 / 5%	3 / 9%	2 / 7%	NS
Thriller	2 / 3%	5 / 5%	2 / 6%	1 / 3%	NS

Some of the events that were found to be most frequent in the general sample (“Relationship success”, as shown in Chapter 6) were found to be equally frequent across all four samples in this comparative analysis (Table 9.6), while others, although they occurred frequently in all four groups (“Doing Crime” and “Imprisonment”, Table 9.6) also demonstrated some significant differences across the samples (these differences are discussed later in this chapter).

No significant differences were found among the tone and ending LAAF variables that were found to be most frequent in the general sample: “Happy ending”, “Positive tone” and “Passive” (Chapter 6). As shown in Table 9.4 they were found equally frequently in every national sample.

Table 9.4: Tone of the narrative - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
	British	Hungarian	Italian	Polish	χ^2
	N=69	N=93	N=35	N=30	df=3
Happy ending	37 / 54%	57 / 61%	14 / 40%	20 / 67%	NS
Sad ending	7 / 10%	14 / 15%	5 / 14%	3 / 10%	NS
Positive tone	34 / 49%	49 / 53%	10 / 29%	12 / 40%	NS
Negative tone	26 / 38%	15 / 16%	14 / 40%	7 / 23%	12.7 p<0.01
Passive	27 / 39%	27 / 29%	15 / 43%	11 / 37%	NS
Pro-active	31 / 45%	28 / 30%	15 / 43%	9 / 30%	NS

As described previously (Chapter 6) three messages were found to be the most frequent in the general sample of offenders’ narratives: “I am decent”, “I am interesting” and “It was my own choice”. As shown in Table 9.7 the message “I am interesting” was found to be equally frequent (and is still one of the prevalent messages) across all four national samples.

Overall the description of the implicit psychological content of the offenders’ narratives as positive, optimistic and even humorous, with the prevalence of descriptions of relationship

success and a preoccupation with the themes of imprisonment, doing crime and, to some extent, passivity (as outlined in Chapter 6) remained generally unchanged and can be equally applied to each of the four samples in this comparative study. Thus it can be concluded that the characteristics derived in the study on the general sample describes the international traits of the offenders' "Life as a Film" narratives.

Significant differences between the samples were found mainly among the traits that were less popular in the overall general sample. Thus, "Crime" as a chosen genre was relatively rare in the general sample and was found to be significantly more popular in the British group in comparison with the other national samples (28% in comparison to 4% in the Hungarian group, 3% in the Italian, and 0 in the Polish, $\chi^2=30.6$, $p<0.000$, Table 9.3). As mentioned in the previous study (Section II, Chapter 8), this genre was significantly more popular in the narratives of non-violent offenders. All the national samples, except for the Hungarian one, include violent and non-violent offenders' narratives in a proportion close to 1:1. In the Hungarian sample, the proportion is closer to 2:1, with majority being violent offenders' responses. Thus the significant prevalence of the same genre in the British narratives cannot be explained by the prevalence of the non-violent offenders in the British sample in comparison to the other national groups.

Two genres that are not included in the LAAF content dictionary were mentioned relatively frequently only in Hungarian responses: family movie and documentary/biographical. For example:

HP58: "It would be a thought-provoking biographical film."

HP76: "It would be a documentary film."

HP81 "It would be melodrama and an autobiographic film"

HP83 “It would be a biographical movie”

HP95: “It would be a report film, a documentary, we shouldn’t be idealized like Robin Hood.”

It is interesting to note that these genres were found to be popular in more abstractly philosophical Hungarian “Life as a Film” stories than in any others. The family movie as a genre was mentioned only by some respondents from the Hungarian sample, but never by participants from any other group. 10 (11% of the Hungarian sample) participants in the Hungarian sample chose the “documentary/biographical” genre while describing their life as a film. At the same time this genre was mentioned only by 3 Polish participants (10% of the Polish sample), 2 British ones and only 1 Italian (3% of each sample in both cases). The diversity between the groups in this parameter was not found to be statistically significant; however, the results still indicated some interesting differences. Further additions to the LAAF content dictionary might be needed – although it is hard to tell whether this particular trait is or is not exclusively national.

In order to check if there were any significant differences in the types of events mentioned in the responses, two generic variables were built based on existing LAAF categories. The variables were named “Crime related events mentioned in the narrative” and “Non-related to crime events mentioned in the narrative”. Both variables were dichotomous. The “Crime-related events” variable registered the presence of at least one of the following events in the response: “doing crime”, “imprisonment” and “victim of crime”. The “Non-related to crime events” registered the presence of at least one of the following variables: “birth”, “death”, “material success”, “relationship problem” and “relationship success”. As shown in Table 9.5, significant differences were found across national samples in both the “Crime related events mentioned in the response” ($\chi^2=30.2$, $p<0.000$) and the “Events non-related to crime mentioned in the response” ($\chi^2=8.7$, $p<0.05$) variables. Thus, the Italian narratives contain

the largest number of events of both a crime-related (97%, n=43) and a non-crime-related nature (91%, n=32). The Hungarian responses are lowest in the number of crime-related events mentioned (n=47, 51%), while in the Polish narratives events non-related to crime are mentioned more rarely in comparison to the responses of the other groups (n=18, 60%).

Variable	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Crime-related events	54 / 78%	47 / 51%	43 / 97%	20 / 67%	$\chi^2=30.2$, p<0.000
Non-related to crime events	50 / 73%	68 / 73%	32 / 91%	18 / 60%	$\chi^2=8.7$, p<0.05

The comparison between specific events mentioned in the responses also provided interesting results (see Table 9.6). Thus, doing crime was mentioned more frequently by Italian and British offenders (57% and 54% respectively, $\chi^2=14.3$, p<0.01). Also Italian offenders described the situation when they were victims of crime significantly more frequently than did the participants of any other nationality ($\chi^2=26.8$, p<0.000). Hungarian offenders' narratives are significantly less concentrated on unpleasant events: imprisonment, although still quite popular, and relationship problems are mentioned in them less frequently than in any other national sample ($\chi^2=34.6$, p<0.000 and $\chi^2=10.4$, p<0.05 respectively).

Event	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Doing crime	37 / 54%	28 / 30%	20 / 57%	9 / 30%	14.3 p<0.01
Imprisonment	39 / 57%	30 / 32%	31 / 89%	18 / 60%	34.6 p<0.000
Victim of crime	11 / 16%	5 / 5%	15 / 43%	5 / 17%	26.8 p<0.000
Birth	10 / 15%	9 / 10%	8 / 23%	5 / 17%	NS
Death	15 / 22%	17 / 18%	11 / 31%	5 / 17%	NS

Material success	12 / 17%	17 / 18%	11 / 31%	3 / 10%	NS
Relationship problem	21 / 30%	17 / 18%	16 / 46%	10 / 33%	10.4 p<0.05
Relationship success	28 / 41%	46 / 50%	18 / 51%	10 / 33%	NS

The message “I am decent”, one of the most frequent in the general sample, showed significant differences between national samples (Table 9.7). Although it was found to be the most popular in the “Narrative message” subgroup in the general sample (39%, n=47), its frequency varied significantly across national groups ($\chi^2=9.3$, p<0.05). Thus, in the Italian and Polish groups, the message “I am decent” was by far more popular in the life narrative (n=18 (51%) and n=14 (47%) respectively) in comparison to the Hungarian and British samples (n=31 (33%) and n=17 (25%) respectively).

Table 9.7: Message (based on Sandberg, 2009) - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Message	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
It was my own choice	7 / 10%	11 / 12%	11 / 31%	1 / 3%	13.4 p<0.01
I am decent	17 / 25%	31 / 33%	18 / 51%	14 / 47%	9.3 p<0.05
We are the same	10 / 15%	2 / 2%	4 / 11%	2 / 7%	9 p<0.05
I am interesting	15 / 22%	23 / 25%	14 / 40%	10 / 33%	NS
I am smart	5 / 7%	7 / 8%	6 / 17%	0	NS
I am dangerous	6 / 9%	3 / 3%	4 / 11%	2 / 7%	NS

It is worth noting that the message of decency was most popular in the narratives of people from two of the most religious European countries. According to Eurobarometer 73.1 (European Commission, and European Parliament, 2010), 79% of Polish respondents and 74% of Italians replied positively to the question “Do you believe in god?”, while only 5% and 6% respectively denied any religious belief. The same poll in Great Britain and Hungary

showed much lower results (37% and 45% respectively declared belief in God, 25% and 20% denied any religious belief). It can be proposed that for a religious person, the message “I am decent” implemented in the life narrative is significantly more important, but further studies are required in order to support or to reject this proposition.

It is worth noting that, out of six message categories, only three more prosocial ones (“I am decent”, “It was my own choice” and “We are the same”) showed a significant difference across nationalities, while two out of the three least social ones (“I am dangerous” and “I am smart”) were equally unpopular across the samples. In order to clarify and enhance this finding, all the pro-social message variables (“I am decent”, “It was my own choice” and “We are the same”) were combined into one “Socially-oriented message” variable, and subjected to the Chi square test. The results presented in Table 9.8 enhance the previously proposed idea of a strong association between nationality and the narrative pro-social message. Socially-oriented messages are significantly more frequent in the Italian (69%, n=24) and Polish (53%, n=16) narratives in comparison to the British (39%, n=27) and Hungarian ones (41%, n=38, $\chi^2=10.1$, $p<0.05$). As shown in Table 9.8, no significant differences were found across national samples in the variable combined of the three less social/more egocentric messages (“I am interesting”, “I am dangerous” and “I am smart”).

Table 9.8: “Message type” generic variables - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Combined “Message type” parameter	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Socially-oriented message	27 / 39%	38 / 41%	24 / 69%	16 / 53%	$\chi^2=10.1$, $p<0.05$
Egocentric message	22 / 32%	28 / 30%	19 / 54%	12 / 40%	NS

9.1.3.1 The comparison between the offenders' LAAF accounts collected in different countries in terms of the implicit psychological content: summary

As the results of the comparison between the offenders' LAAF accounts collected in different countries demonstrated the majority of the LAAF accounts' implicit psychological content characteristics that were found to be frequent in the general sample can be applied equally to all four of the national samples in question. Even the items "Doing Crime" and "Imprisonment", although demonstrating some significant differences across the samples, at the same time occurred frequently in all four groups. Thus the description of the implicit psychological content of the offenders' narratives as positive, optimistic and even humorous, with a prevalence of descriptions of relationship successes and a preoccupation with the themes of imprisonment, doing crime and to some extent passivity (as outlined in Chapter 6) remained generally unchanged and can be equally applied to each of the four samples in this comparative study. It can be concluded that the characteristics derived from the study on the general sample describe the international traits of the offenders' "Life as a Film" narratives.

However some significant differences between the narratives collected in different countries were found in the implicit psychological content of the LAAF accounts – although these differences were found mainly, but not exclusively, in more subtle, less frequent narrative themes. Thus, British narratives were found to be more concentrated on Crime as a genre. This result accords with the findings of the previous study by Youngs et al, 2015, which was done on an exclusively British sample. A negative tone was found to be prevalent in the British and the Italian responses. The message "It was my own choice" was found to be prevalent in Italian stories, and almost completely absent in the Polish ones. The message "I am decent" was found most frequently in the Italian and Polish responses, possibly due to the high religious levels of these two countries (according to European Commission, and European Parliament, 2010). It can be proposed that for a religious person, the message "I am

decent” implemented in the life narrative is significantly more important, but further studies would be required in order to support or to reject this proposition. Differences were found also in the events described in the responses. Thus, the Italian narratives were found to be the richest in both crime related and non-crime events. In the Hungarian responses the events related to crime were rarely found in comparison to other groups, while in the Polish narratives events that are not related to crime were relatively rare in comparison to other groups. The comparison between the specific events mentioned in the LAAF accounts also provides interesting results. “Doing crime” was mentioned more frequently by Italian and British offenders. Also the Italian participants described situations in which they were victims of crime significantly more frequently than the participants of any other nationality. The Hungarian responses were found to be significantly less concentrated on unpleasant events: imprisonment (although it was still quite frequently mentioned), victimhood and relationship problems were mentioned in them significantly less frequently than in any other national sample.

Overall it can be stated that in general the LAAF responses of all four samples bear similar characteristics, and the description of the implicit psychological content derived from the general sample (Chapter 6) can be equally applied to all four samples collected in different countries. However, the LAAF content framework allows an understanding of the significant and meaningful differences in more subtle, less frequent characteristics of the narratives.

As the results of the current study demonstrate, the LAAF content framework does not yet cover all the required range of the implicit psychological content themes. Thus, two genres that are not included in the LAAF content dictionary were mentioned relatively frequently only in Hungarian responses: family movie and documentary/biographical. The current study results’ did not demonstrate any statistically significant differences between the samples in either of these categories. Further additions to the LAAF content dictionary are required,

together with the further research that would provide the information as to whether this particular choice of the genre is or is not exclusively national.

9.1.4 Explicit psychological processes

The “Explicit psychological processes” subgroup of LAAF variables describes psychologically active components of the narrative that define the connections and movements to produce the storyline. The content categories of this subgroup draw on the core themes of redemption and contamination, together with the general narrative themes and the themes of Agency and Communion (the full list of variables within this subgroup is provided in Appendix II).

Although some significant differences were found in a few of the Agency and Communion narrative themes between national samples (Tables 9.9 and 9.10 respectively), all the variables most frequent in the general sample (“Self-mastery”, “Status/Victory” of the Agency themes, “Love/Friendship”, “Caring/Help” and “Unity/Togetherness” of the Communion themes) remained equally frequent across national samples. Therefore it can be said that, in general, explicit psychological processes to organise the offenders’ narratives remain similar across different countries, although LAAF allow grasping of the subtle differences in the less frequent narrative themes. Thus, the theme of empowerment (the least frequent in the Agency theme subgroup in the general sample, 8%, n=9, see Chapter 6, Table 6.5) was absolutely absent from the Hungarian narratives, while present in all the other national groups (FH=14.5, p<0.01, Table 9.9).

Agency themes	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Self-mastery	15 / 22%	18 / 19%	11 / 31%	8 / 27%	NS
Status/Victory	17 / 25%	14 / 15%	3 / 9%	8 / 27%	NS
Achievement/Responsibility	11 / 16%	16 / 17%	10 / 29%	3 / 10%	NS

Empowerment	8 / 12%	0	4 / 11%	3 / 10%	14.5 ²⁵ , p<0.01
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There was also a significant difference in the theme of Dialogue across the national samples – although extremely rare in the general sample (2%, n=2, see Chapter 6, Table 6.6), it was completely absent in the British and Polish samples and was rarely found in the Hungarian one (1%, n=1 out of 93, Table 9.10); however it had a relatively significant presence in the Italian sample (9%, n=3; FH=6.7, p<0.05, Table 9.10).

Table 9.10: Communion themes - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Communion themes	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Love/Friendship	25 / 36%	21 / 23%	9 / 26%	6 / 20%	NS
Dialogue	0	1 / 1%	3 / 9%	0	6.7 ²⁶ p<0.05
Caring/Help	15 / 22%	15 / 16%	11 / 31%	5 / 17%	NS
Unity/Togetherness	29 / 42%	41 / 44%	16 / 46%	10 / 33%	NS

The Agency and Communion theme variables were combined into two generic categories: “Presence of Agency theme” (presence of at least one Agency theme variable) and “Presence of Communion theme” (presence of at least one Communion theme variable). No significant differences were found across the national samples in either the “Agency theme” or the “Communion theme” generic variables.

The results for the themes of Redemption and Contamination are presented in Tables 9.11 and 9.12 respectively. The theme of “General contamination”, most frequent in the generic / multinational sample (see Chapter 6), varied significantly in popularity across the national groups. Thus, it was the rarest in the responses of the Hungarian participants – significantly so in comparison to other samples ($\chi^2=34.6$, p<0.000; Table 9.12). Another significant

²⁵ Freeman-Halton exact test

²⁶ Freeman-Halton exact test

difference was found between the Hungarian and other national groups in the theme of General Redemption ($\chi^2=10.3$, $p<0.05$; Table 9.11) – and again this theme is least frequent in the Hungarian narratives. Taken together with the previously described findings of the most negative and rather abstract philosophic tone of the Hungarian participants' responses, it provides a picture of a sad thinker, who is mainly concerned with ideas and spiritual experiences rather than with events and changes in life. This picture gains further support from the findings on significant differences between the Hungarian sample and all the other national samples in the themes of “Overcoming struggles” and “Wrong done to them/theirs” (Table 9.13). Both variables were among the most frequent in the general sample in this thematic subgroup, and both were on the lowest frequency in the Hungarian sample ($\chi^2=10.6$, $p=0.01$ and $\chi^2=8.9$, $p<0.05$ respectively).

Despite the generally philosophic nature of the Hungarian narrative, personal development (variable “Development”, Redemption subgroup) is significantly rarely mentioned there in comparison to the Italian and Polish narratives – and the same is true for the British sample, where this theme is also quite rare ($\chi^2=17.2$, $p<0.01$, Table 9.11).

Table 9.11: Redemption - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Redemption	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
General redemption	32 / 46%	24 / 26%	11 / 31%	15 / 50%	10.3 $p<0.05$
Advantage	0	1 / 1%	1 / 3%	0	NS
Suffering	15 / 22%	13 / 14%	6 / 17%	6 / 20%	NS
Development	7 / 10%	9 / 10%	11 / 31%	10 / 33%	17.2 $p<0.01$
Repeated negative	10 / 15%	5 / 5%	3 / 9%	4 / 13%	NS
Prosocial	7 / 10%	6 / 7%	7 / 20%	5 / 17%	NS

Although as described previously, the theme of Contamination was frequent in offenders' personal narratives (in the general sample and in most of the national samples alike), there were significant differences in the sub-themes of Contamination across national samples. Thus, the theme of victimisation was comparatively rarely mentioned in the stories of the Hungarian and Polish participants ($\chi^2=11.7$, $p<0.01$, Table 9.12). Themes of Failure, Disappointment and Disillusionment were more frequent in the Italian sample than in any other national group ($\chi^2=37$, $p<0.000$, $\chi^2=8$, $p<0.05$ and 7.6 , $p<0.05$ respectively, Table 9.12). In comparison to all other national samples, significantly more participants in the British group mentioned humiliation/sex guilt in their stories ($FH=13.7$, $p<0.01$, Table 9.12).

Contamination	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
General contamination	26 / 38%	19 / 20%	26 / 74%	16 / 53%	34.6 $p<0.000$
Victimisation	13 / 19%	3 / 3%	5 / 14%	2 / 7%	11.7 $p<0.01$
Betrayal	4 / 6%	6 / 7%	3 / 9%	4 / 13%	NS
Loss of significant other	10 / 15%	6 / 7%	6 / 17%	4 / 13%	NS
Failure	9 / 13%	8 / 7%	19 / 54%	8 / 27%	37 $p<0.000$
Illness/Injury	5 / 7%	0	1 / 3%	1 / 3%	NS
Disappointment	7 / 10%	4 / 4%	7 / 20%	2 / 7%	8 $p<0.05$
Disillusionment	0	3 / 3%	4 / 11%	1 / 3%	7.6^{27} , $p<0.05$
Sex guilt/Humiliation	9 / 13%	0	2 / 6%	1 / 3%	13.7^{28} , $p<0.01$

Among the classic narrative themes outlined in the LAAF content framework (Table 9.13) the theme of Fate was found very frequently in the general sample (as described in Part II, Chapter 6, 41%, $n=49$, see Table 6.9). It showed significant differences across national

²⁷ Freeman-Halton exact test

²⁸ Freeman-Halton exact test

samples, and was found to be more frequent in the Italian (34%, n=12) and British (26%, n=18) groups in comparison to the Hungarian (14%, n=13) and Polish (13%, n=4) ones ($\chi^2=8.7$, $p<0.05$, Table 9.13). The theme of Confusion/Misunderstanding was significantly more frequent in the Italian narratives (FH=12.3, $p<0.01$, Table 9.10). The Italian narratives, as shown previously, were also significantly more detailed and explicit – as if the narrator was overwhelmed by the flow of past events and life experiences and pours it into his story in attempt to overcome his confusion.

The theme of Fulfilment/Satisfaction was the most frequent in the classic narrative themes' subgroup in the general sample (41%, n=49). Although still popular across national groups, it was significantly less frequent in the British narratives (22%, n=15) in comparison to all other samples ($\chi^2=8.4$, $p<0.05$, Table 9.13).

Narrative themes	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Overcoming Struggles/Obstacles/Mission	21 / 30%	10 / 11%	9 / 26%	8 / 27%	10.6 p=0.01
Wrong done to them/theirs	22 / 32%	12 / 13%	9 / 26%	8 / 27%	8.9 p<0.05
Impotence/Hopelessness	13 / 19%	14 / 15%	10 / 29%	6 / 20%	NS
Effectiveness/Skills/Competencies	14 / 20%	6 / 7%	3 / 9%	4 / 13%	NS
Victory/ Proving Self/ Success	11 / 16%	8 / 9%	6 / 17%	3 / 10%	NS
Revenge	2 / 3%	0	0	1 / 3%	NS
Fate	18 / 26%	13 / 14%	12 / 34%	4 / 13%	8.7 p<0.05
Tangible Rewards/ Acquisitions	11 / 16%	9 / 10%	3 / 9%	1 / 3%	NS
Masculinity/Bravery	14 / 20%	8 / 9%	6 / 17%	8 / 27%	NS
Compulsion	4 / 6%	2 / 2%	2 / 6%	2 / 7%	NS
Confusion/Misunderstanding	3 / 4%	0	5 / 14%	2 / 7%	12.3 ²⁹ p<0.01

²⁹ Freeman-Halton exact test

Fulfilment/Satisfaction	15 / 22%	34 / 37%	12 / 34%	15 / 50%	8.4 p<0.05
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9.1.4.1 The comparison between the offenders' LAAF accounts collected in the different countries in terms of the explicit processes that organise the narrative: summary

The results of the comparison between the offenders' LAAF accounts collected in different countries demonstrated that there are more significant differences than similarities in the processes that produced the storylines of the participants' narratives. The vast majority of the similarities between the narratives collected in the different countries was found in the themes of Agency and Communion. Thus no significant differences between the national groups were found in the Agency and Communion processes that were found to be most frequent in the generic sample. Just as it was in the general sample, in all the national samples the respondents frequently organised their stories around the theme of becoming more wise, strong or mature ("Self-mastery") or around gaining higher status and/or prestige among their peers ("Status/Victory"). As it was in the general sample, in all the national samples the vast majority of the Communion themes was frequently present: the narrators described the sense of unity, harmony and belonging ("Unity/Togetherness"), talked about love and friendship ("Love/Friendship") and care and help they provided to others or received from them ("Caring/Help"). However, even in the Agency and Communion themes some differences between the national samples were found. Thus, the Hungarian narratives were found to be completely devoid of the theme of Empowerment (main character is made better through an interaction with something larger and greater than the self, possibly even through an aggressive impact on others). The relatively strong presence of the Dialogue theme (a reciprocal, non-hostile and non-instrumental form of communication) was found in the Italian narratives.

Significant differences were found in some of the Redemption themes across the national samples. The theme of General Redemption, although relatively common in all four samples and also in the general sample (as shown in Chapter 6), was significantly more frequent in the Polish sample and significantly less frequent in the Hungarian one. The participants in both British and Hungarian samples rarely described how they developed a sense of the moral steadfastness (“Development”, one of the Redemption subthemes).

The process of the Contamination (“General Contamination”) was found to be one of the most frequent movements to produce the storylines in the general sample (Chapter 6). Although the presence of this theme was still significant in all four samples, it was found more frequently in the responses of the Italian participants and relatively rarely in the responses of the Hungarian ones. Significant differences were also found in most of the Contamination subthemes. The Polish and Hungarian participants rarely mentioned having from abuse or being victims of crime or cruelty (“Victimisation”). The Italian participants significantly more frequently described disappointment, disillusionment or failure in their responses in comparison to all the other groups, while the British participants more frequently narrated how their enjoyment turned into guilt and/or humiliation (“Sex guilt/Humiliation”).

Some significant differences were also found in the manifestation of the classic narrative themes in the narratives collected in the different countries. That statement is true even for the themes that were found to be most common in the general samples. For example, the theme of fulfilment/satisfaction, most frequent found in the general sample (Chapter 6), was significantly more prevalent in the narratives of the Polish respondents. At the same time, the narratives from this national sample were found to be the least detailed when compared to other samples.. The strong themes of “Wrong done to them/theirs” and “Overcoming obstacles” were rarely present in the Hungarian LAAF accounts. Although rarely found in the general sample, the themes of Fate and Confusion/Misunderstanding were found to be

significantly frequently in the responses of the Italian participants (in comparison to all other national samples). At the same time the theme of Confusion was absolutely absent from the Hungarian LAAF accounts.

It can be concluded that there are more differences than similarities between the LAAF accounts collected in the different countries in the explicit processes that organise the narratives' storylines. Thus, Hungarian narratives were found to be not only nearly uneventful philosophical credos rather than stories with plots, but also the processes that organise these narratives are rarely focused on any change (redemption and contamination alike), and almost never around any strong, potent themes. Taken together with the previously described findings of the most negative and rather abstract philosophic tone of the Hungarian responses, it provides a picture of a sad thinker, who is mainly concerned with ideas and spiritual experiences rather than with changes in life – either self-instigated or thrust upon him. The Italian narratives were found to be frequently built around the movement from good to bad: failure, disappointment, disillusionment; sad themes of fate, confusion and misunderstanding. And at the same time the Italian LAAF accounts are more frequently than any others focused on a non-hostile, non-instrumental, reciprocal form of communication. The least detailed (in comparison to other samples) Polish narratives were found to be most frequently built around the movement from bad to good (redemptive script) and theme of satisfaction, while in the British responses the typical (as was found in the general sample) movement of contamination frequently took the form of humiliation and guilt.

9.1.5 Nature of Agency vis-à-vis others and the world

The “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world” or the “Nature of Agency” subgroup of LAAF categories describes the ways in which an individual deals with the world as a whole and with

the people around him. This sub-group of the content dictionary includes the roles assigned by the narrator to himself and to others (imagoes), emotional quadrants (based on Russell's (1997) work on the circumplex of emotions), categories of empathy/hostility towards others, interpersonal behaviours described in the narrative, together with categories of moral justifications and behavioural incentives (for detailed descriptions see Chapter 3, Chapter 5.3; for the full list of the items within this subgroup see Appendix II).

Results for nature of agency vis-à-vis others and the world are presented in Tables 9.14 to 9.25. No significant difference was found in the presence of a reactive locus of agency (most frequent in general sample) between national groups of offenders. Preference for avoidance of others was significantly more frequent in the Italian narratives (31%, n=11) in comparison to all other national samples ($\chi^2=13.4$, $p<0.01$, Table 9.14). The theme of Confronting Others, although relatively rare, was significantly more frequent in the Italian (31%, n=11) and Polish (30%, n=9) life stories ($\chi^2=18.2$, $p<0.000$, Table 9.14).

Locus of Agency	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Proactive	27 / 39%	23 / 25%	13 / 37%	9 / 30%	NS
Reactive	29 / 42%	35 / 38%	20 / 57%	18 / 60%	NS
Avoidant of others	6 / 9%	4 / 4%	9 / 26%	3 / 10%	13.4 $p<0.01$
Confronting others	12 / 17%	5 / 5%	11 / 31%	9 / 30%	18.2 $p<0.000$

In order to understand the general tendencies in the choice of self-imagoes across national samples, LAAF self-imago variables were combined into new categories based on their original definitions (McAdams, 1997). McAdams (1997) organised imago types according to the properties of communion and agency. Thus, the most powerful or Agentic imagoes were those of the Warrior, the Traveller, the Sage and the Maker. Highly loving or Communal

imagoes were those of the Lover, the Caregiver, the Friend and the Ritualist. Imagoes high in both Agency and Communion themes were those of the Healer, the Teacher, the Counsellor, the Humanist and the Arbiter. Imagoes of the Escapist and the Survivor were defined as those low in both Agency and Communion themes (McAdams, 1997). For the purpose of this study, new dichotomous variables were built based on these original imago groups. The presence of at least one Imago of the specific group (e.g. “Warrior” as imago of the Agency group) was registered as “Presence of the Agency imago in the narrative” (score 1). The absence of any imagoes of the specific group gave score “0” and was registered as a total absence of the imagoes of this type in the narrative. The results are presented in the table 9.15.

Table 9.15: Self-imagoes by theme groups – observed and expected count in national samples and comparison between samples						
Self-Imagoes by theme groups		British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Agentic- Communion Imagoes	Observed	5 / 7%	18 / 19%	10 / 29%	4 / 13%	$\chi^2=8.8,$ $p<0.05$
	<i>Expected</i>	11	15	6	5	
Agency Imagoes	Observed	22 / 32%	17 / 18%	17 / 49%	8 / 27%	$\chi^2=8.8,$ $p<0.01$
	<i>Expected</i>	20	26	10	9	
Communion Imagoes	Observed	14 / 20%	28 / 30%	18 / 51%	11 / 37%	$\chi^2=11,$ $p<0.05$
	<i>Expected</i>	22	29	11	9	
Low Agency, Low Communion Imagoes	Observed	15 / 22%	39 / 42%	22 / 63%	13 / 43%	$\chi^2=17.6,$ $p<0.01$
	<i>Expected</i>	27	37	14	12	

As shown in Table 9.15, there were significant differences in all four types of imagoes between samples from different countries. The Agentic-Communion imagoes, although not very frequent in all samples, were least frequent in British responses in comparison to other groups (n=5, 7%) and significantly more frequent than expected in Italian narratives (n=10,

29% - nearly twice more than expected count; $\chi^2=8.8$, $p<0.05$). Strong Agency imagoes were significantly more rare in Hungarian responses ($n=17$, 18%; $\chi^2=8.8$, $p<0.01$), and much higher than expected in Italian narratives ($n=17$, 49% in comparison to expected count of 10). Italian narratives were also rich with both “Communion” and “Low in both Agency and Communion” types of imagoes ($n=18$, 51% and $n=22$, 53% respectively), and this differed significantly from other national samples ($\chi^2=11$, $p<0.05$ and $\chi^2=17.6$, $p<0.01$). And in both of these imago groups their presence in British responses was significantly lower than expected ($n=14$, 20% - expected count 22 for Communion imagoes and $n=15$, 22%, expected count 27 for low in both Communion and Agency themes imagoes).

Further analysis of original LAAF imago categories enriched these results with interesting details. The majority of Self-Imago variables (Table 9.16) that were most frequent in general sample did not show any significant differences and were equally popular in national groups (“Caregiver” and “Escapist”). At the same time there were few exceptions. Thus, “Survivor”, variable with high frequency in general sample in this thematic subgroup (22%, $n=26$) was extremely rare in British narratives (4%, $n=3$) and very frequent in Italian ones (37%, $n=13$; $\chi^2=19.6$, $p<0.000$, Table 9.16). “Warrior” (14%, $n=17$ in general sample) was significantly more popular self-imago in Italian (23%, $n=8$) and Polish (20%, $n=6$) narratives in comparison to British (10%, $n=7$) and Hungarian (7%, $n=10$) ones ($\chi^2=8.7$, $p<0.05$, Table 9.16).

Table 9.16: Self-Imagoes - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them

Imago	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Healer	0	0	1 / 3%	1 / 3%	NS
Teacher	3 / 4%	12 / 13%	2 / 6%	0	NS
Counsellor	2 / 3%	1 / 1%	0	2 / 7%	NS

Humanist	0	11 / 12%	7 / 20%	2 / 7%	13.3 p<0.01
Arbiter	1 / 1%	0	1 / 3%	1 / 3%	NS
Warrior	7 / 10%	6 / 7%	8 / 23%	6 / 20%	8.7 p<0.05
Traveller	12 / 17%	12 / 13%	9 / 26%	2 / 7%	NS
Sage	2 / 3%	0	3 / 9%	0	7.1 ³⁰ p<0.05
Maker	6 / 9%	0	2 / 6%	1 / 3%	8.9 ³¹ p=0.01
Lover	3 / 4%	10 / 11%	5 / 14%	3 / 10%	NS
Caregiver	10 / 15%	17 / 18%	11 / 31%	6 / 20%	NS
Friend	3 / 4%	3 / 3%	4 / 11%	0	NS
Ritualistic	0	3 / 3%	7 / 20%	6 / 20%	14.9, ³² p<0.000
Escapist	13 / 19%	27 / 29%	12 / 34%	6 / 20%	NS
Survivor	3 / 4%	14 / 15%	13 / 37%	7 / 23%	19.6 p<0.000

Significant differences were found between the samples from different countries in the variables less frequent in general sample. British participants never described their own role as one working for social change (“Humanist”, $\chi^2=13.3$, $p<0.01$, Table 9.16). Italian participants significantly more frequently described their effort to learn and to conquer the environment (“Sage”, $FH=7.1$, $p<0.05$, Table 9.16). Role of Maker, one who seeks achievement rather than power, was significantly more popular in British offenders’ narratives (9%, $n=6$, $FH=8.9$, $p=0.01$, Table 9.16) and absolutely absent from Hungarian ones. While application of old traditions to new situations (“Ritualistic”) was relatively important in Italian (20%, $n=7$) and Polish (20%, $n=6$) narratives, it was rare in Hungarian (3%, $n=3$) and absent from British ones ($\chi^2=23.9$, $p<0.000$, Table 9.16).

As described in Section I, Chapter 6, not many roles are assigned to the others in offenders’ personal narratives. So the same decision to create new variables by combining imagoes into type groups that was applied to self-imagoes became necessary in the case of the imagoes of

³⁰ Freeman-Halton exact test

³¹ Freeman-Halton exact test

³² Freeman-Halton exact text

others. The principle of grouping and the dichotomy of each new variable were identical to those of the self-imagoes (as described previously). The Chi square could not be applied to the combined “Imagoes of others” categories due to the fact that for all these categories the expected count was less than 5 in more than 25% of cases. The only exception is the variable that combines all the Communion Imagoes of Others. For the rest of the “Imagoes of Others” theme variables, the Freeman-Halton exact test was used. The results are presented in Tables 9.17 and 9.18.

Table 9.17: Presence of communion imagoes of others in the narrative – frequencies in national samples and comparison between them						
Imagoes of others by theme groups		British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Communion Imagoes	Observed	21 / 30%	9 / 10%	23 / 66%	2 / 7%	$\chi^2=50,$ $p<0.000$
	<i>Expected</i>	17	23	9	7	

Table 9.18: Presence of imagoes of others in the narrative by theme group – frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Imagoes of others by theme groups	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	Freeman-Halton exact test
Agentic and Communion Imagoes of Others	3	2	6	0	10.2, $p<0.01$
Agentic Imagoes of Others	0	1	3	1	6.8, $p<0.05$
Low in both Agency and Communion Imagoes of Others	0	0	2	0	5.9, $p<0.05$

As shown in Tables 9.17 and 9.18, the Italian narratives were found to be significantly richer in all types of imagoes than the others. The observed count for the variable “Presence of Communion imagoes” in the British participants’ responses was close to the expected one

($n=21$, expected count 17, Table 9.17), while in both the Hungarian and Polish responses these numbers were significantly lower than expected ($n=9$, expected count 23 and $n=2$, expected count 7 respectively, Table 9.17). It is also worth noting that overall the Communion imagoes of others, roles of love, care and friendship were found to be most frequent in all the narratives. Even in the responses of the Polish participants, where hardly any roles of any other type were assigned to others (see Table 9.18), Communion imagoes were found relatively frequently – although not as frequently as in other national samples (Table 9.17). It is also noticeable that even partially Communal characters (those of Agentic-Communal type) were more frequent overall in comparison to strictly Agentic characters or those low in both Agency and Communion themes. Thus it can be said that others were assigned only literally supportive roles in the narratives. Although sometimes these supportive characters were also strong ones (e.g. Other as Healer or Teacher), they still remain Communion characters, while pure roles of strength were more rare, and characters that are neither strong nor supportive (low in both Agency and Communion theme) almost non-existent. This tendency was clearly shown in the responses of the Italian participants, significantly richer in all details, including in the presence of roles for others.

The results for the comparison of the particular roles assigned to others are presented in Table 9.19. It is interesting to note that others in the roles of Healer, Counsellor, Traveller, Sage, Maker, Escapist and Survivor were non-existent or close to non-existent in the offenders' stories. Others were allowed only supporting parts in the personal narrative. The role of Lover was still the most popular among the Imagoes of Others, and appeared equally frequent across the national groups (Table 9.19). Significant differences were found in some Imagoes of Others' variables between the Italian and all the other national samples. Thus, in the Italian responses, others are given the roles of Teacher (14%, $n=5$, $\chi^2=16.6$, $p<0.01$, Table 9.13); Warrior (6%, $n=2$, $FH=5.9$, $p<0.05$, Table 9.19), Friend (20%, $n=7$, $\chi^2=16.3$, $p<0.01$, Table

9.13) and are even allowed to apply old traditions to new situations (Ritualistic, 14%, n=5, FH=14.9, $p<0.000$, Table 9.19). All these imagoes of others are close to, if not literally, non-existent in all the other national groups. Even the role of Caregiver is significantly more frequent in the Italian narratives in comparison to others ($\chi^2=35.8$, $p<0.000$, Table 9.19). At the same time, the Hungarian narratives provide most interesting examples of absence of others – even in situation where they are necessary characters.

HP75: "It would be a romantic film. I am family-centred, so it would be about the child rearing, working, and that we don't cheat on each other. We would love each other forever, so it would end like this, with "l'amour" forever." – love story without an actual partner in love.

Table 9.19: Imagoes of Others - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Imago	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Healer	0	1 / 1%	1 / 3%	0	NS
Teacher	3 / 4%	0	5 / 14%	0	16.6 $p<0.01$
Counsellor	0	0	0	0	NS
Humanist	0	2 / 2%	1 / 3%	0	NS
Arbiter	0	0	0	0	NS
Warrior	0	0	2 / 6%	0	5.9 ³³ $p<0.05$
Traveller	0	0	0	0	NS
Sage	0	1 / 1%	1 / 3%	0	NS
Maker	0	0	0	1 / 3%	NS
Lover	5 / 7%	7 / 8%	5 / 14%	1 / 3%	NS
Caregiver	13 / 19%	1 / 1%	13 / 37%	1 / 3%	35.8 $p<0.000$
Friend	5 / 7%	2 / 2%	7 / 20%	0	16.3 $p<0.01$
Ritualistic	0	0	5 / 14%	0	14.9 ³⁴

³³ Freeman-Halton exact test

³⁴ Freeman-Halton exact test

					p<0.000
Escapist	0	0	1 / 3%	0	NS
Survivor	0	0	1 / 3%	0	NS

Most of the offenders' narratives were found to be focused on themselves ("Self-Identity stronger than others"). At the same time, a significant difference was found between the Hungarian group and all the other national samples in this variable ($\chi^2=25.4$, $p<0.000$, Table 9.20). The Hungarian narratives, described previously rather as philosophical essays or credos than as personal stories, were found to be also significantly less concentrated on the narrator personally.

Table 9.20: Self-Identity - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Self-identity	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Stronger than others	44 / 64%	54 / 58%	32 / 91%	29 / 97%	25.4 p<0.000
Weaker than others	8 / 12%	7 / 8%	2 / 6%	0	NS

Empathy towards others, although a relatively rare variable both in the general sample and across national groups, was described more frequently in the responses of the Italian participants (37%, $n=13$, $\chi^2=29.6$, $p<0.000$, Table 9.21). At the same time others were described as significant more frequently in both the British and Italian narratives in comparison to the Hungarian and Polish ones ($\chi^2=16.3$, $p<0.01$, Table 9.21). However, as was shown previously (Table 9.19) only in the Italian narratives others were others given an abundance of functions and roles.

Table 9.21: Significance of others and attitudes towards others - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Significance of others	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Others significant	48 / 70%	43 / 46%	28 / 80%	16 / 53%	16.3 p<0.01

Others non-significant	11 / 16%	20 / 22%	7 / 20%	11 / 37%	NS
Empathy towards others	8 / 12%	2 / 2%	13 / 37%	6 / 20%	29.6 p<0.000
Hostility towards others	9 / 13%	2 / 2%	4 / 11%	3 / 10%	NS

Most of the stories in the general sample were narrated in a positive, even euphoric, emotional spectre (“Aroused positive”, in general sample 31%, n=37). As shown in Table 9.23, this is also true for all the national samples – emotions from the aroused positive spectre (e.g. excitement) are equally frequent in all the groups. The Hungarian personal stories are significantly more frequently told in a non-aroused positive calm tone ($\chi^2=8.5$, $p<0.05$, Table 9.22).

Table 9.22: Emotional spectre - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Emotions	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Aroused positive	16 / 23%	31 / 33%	10 / 27%	9 / 30%	NS
Aroused negative	11 / 16%	8 / 9%	7 / 20%	5 / 17%	NS
Non-aroused positive	16 / 23%	39 / 42%	8 / 23%	8 / 27%	8.5 p<0.05
Non-aroused negative	13 / 19%	14 / 15%	10 / 29%	8 / 27%	NS

Differences in justifications were checked on both macro-³⁵ and micro³⁶ levels. The generic variable “Presence of justifications in the response” registered whether any of the justification variables were found in each narrative. This included denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of the condemners, appeal to higher loyalties, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distorting the consequences of an action, dehumanizing the victim and assuming the role of victim for oneself. As shown in table 9.23, most of the Italian participants mentioned at least one of these justifications in

³⁵ Presence of at least one justification regardless of the type checked as described further in the text.

³⁶ Presence of the each specific justification checked as described further in the text.

their stories (n=17, 49%), while in the Hungarian responses the justifications were mentioned significantly less frequently (n=8, 9%, $\chi^2=26.5$, $p<0.000$).

Variable		British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Presence of at least one justification	Observed	22 / 32%	8 / 9%	17 / 49%	10 / 33%	$\chi^2=26.5$, $p<0.000$
	<i>Expected</i>	17	23	9	8	

The comparison on a micro level, within each justification category in particular, was somewhat less productive due to the fact that some of these reasonings were mentioned far less frequently than others. However, some significant differences were found between the national samples even on this level. Assuming the role of victim to oneself was the most popular justification in the general sample (23%, n=28, see Chapter 6, Table 6.16). Although still the most popular across national groups, this justification was significantly more prevalent in the Italian participants' stories ($\chi^2=21.4$, $p<0.000$, Table 9.24). Significant differences between national groups were found in other justification variables as well. Thus, the appeal to higher loyalties and condemnation of the condemners are used more frequently to justify their actions in the Italian narratives ($\chi^2=16.7$, $p<0.01$ and $\chi^2=16.8$, $p<0.01$ respectively, Table 9.25). Denial of Responsibility was almost non-existent in the Hungarian sample ($\chi^2=8$, $p=0.05$, Table 9.24), even though the Hungarian group was the largest in this study.

Justifications	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Denial of responsibility	8 / 12%	1 / 1%	3 / 9%	2 / 7%	8 $p=0.05$
Denial of injury	1 / 1%	1 / 1%	0	0	NS

Denial of victim	2 / 3%	1 / 1%	1 / 3%	1 / 3%	NS
Condemnation of the condemners	0	0	4 / 11%	2 / 7%	16.8 p<0.01
Appeal to higher loyalties	0	0	3 / 9%	0	16.7 p<0.01
Displacement of responsibility	3 / 4%	0	1 / 3%	2 / 7%	NS
Diffusion of responsibility	2 / 3%	0	2 / 6%	2 / 7%	NS
Distorting the consequences of an action	5 / 7%	1 / 1%	1 / 3%	1 / 3%	NS
Dehumanising the victim	1 / 1%	1 / 1%	0	0	NS
Assuming the role of victim for one's self	16 / 23%	7 / 8%	15 / 43%	6 / 20%	21.4 p<0.000

Material/financial profit and sensory gain were the two most popular incentives in the general sample (18%, n=21 each, see Chapter 6, Table 6.17). Across the national groups a significant difference was found in material/financial gain motive – it was more prevalent in the British (26%, n=19) and Italian (23%, n=8) participants' responses, while quite rare in the Hungarian sample and almost absent from the Polish one (3%, n=1; $\chi^2=13$, p<0.01, Table 9.25). No significant differences were found in other incentives across the national samples (Table 9.25).

Table 9.25: Incentive (based on Bandura, 1986) - frequencies in national samples and comparison between them					
Incentive	British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
For material/financial gain	19 / 26%	10 / 11%	8 / 23%	1 / 3%	13 p<0.01
For sensory gain	14 / 20%	16 / 17%	4 / 11%	4 / 13%	NS
For power/status gain	5 / 7%	1 / 1%	1 / 3%	1 / 3%	NS
For social (approval/advancement) gain	9 / 13%	6 / 7%	4 / 11%	1 / 3%	NS

9.1.5.1 The comparison between the offenders' LAAF accounts collected in different countries in terms of the agency vis-à-vis others and the world: summary

The comparison between the offenders' LAAF accounts collected in different countries revealed both similarities and significant differences in the themes of agency vis-à-vis others and the world. Just as it was in the general sample (Chapter 6), most of the narratives in the national samples demonstrated a somewhat reactive locus of agency, and were narrated in a positive emotional spectre. The attitude towards others in the narratives was usually neither empathic, nor hostile (as it was in the general sample), although the empathy towards others was more frequently present in the responses of the Italian participants. The majority of Self-Imago variables that were found to be most frequent in the general sample were equally common across the national groups ("Caregiver" and "Escapist"). As was the case in the general sample, others were assigned mainly supportive roles in the offenders' narratives – if they were assigned any roles at all. Thus, the main characteristics of the offenders' LAAF accounts distinguished in the current study were found to be equally applicable to the national samples.

The differences between the national samples were found mainly, but not exclusively, in the less frequent characteristics of the narratives. As mentioned previously, the vast majority of the LAAF accounts across all four samples was narrated in a positive tone; however only in the Hungarian responses a calm <as opposite to aroused, euphoric> positive tone was prevalent. Although most of the offenders' narratives were found to be concentrated on the narrator himself, the responses of the Hungarian participants were not, and that strengthened the previously given description of the narratives within this sample as rather abstract philosophical essays. Other people were more frequently described as significant in the LAAF accounts of the Italian and British participants; however only the Italian participants assigned a large variety of roles to others. Differences were found also in the roles assigned

to the narrator himself and to others. For example, strong Agency self-imagoes were rare in the Hungarian responses but frequent in the Polish and Italian narratives (“Warrior”) and in the British ones (“Maker”). While the application of old traditions to new situations (“Ritualistic”) was relatively important in the Italian and Polish narratives, it was rare in the Hungarian and absent from British ones - this phenomenon could be explained by high levels of religiosity in both Italy and Poland, especially in comparison to Great Britain and Hungary (according to Eurobarometer, 2010). The self-imagoes of every type (in McAdams terms, 1997) were present in the Italian responses. The Italian LAAF accounts were also found to be the richest in the roles assigned to others – both qualitatively (variety of the imagoes, the others were given roles that were not exclusively supporting characters) and quantitatively (frequency of the imagoes presence in comparison to the other national samples), although the number of roles assigned to others remained low when compared to the roles assigned to the narrator himself across all the national samples.

Justifications were relatively rarely mentioned in any of the samples, except for the Italian one, in which the assuming role of the victim justification was found to be prevalent in comparison to the other samples – although in either the general sample or in each of the national samples this particular justification was found to be the most frequent one. Although the Hungarian group was the largest in this study, it was found that justifications of any type were rarely mentioned in the responses of the Hungarian participants. Incentives of any kind were also rarely mentioned in the LAAF account of the Hungarian respondents. At the same time the material/financial gain motive (most frequent in the general sample) was found to be significantly more popular within the British and Italian narratives.

It can be concluded, that both significant differences and important similarities of the agency vis-à-vis others and the world in the offenders’ narratives were captured by the LAAF methodology. The similarities between the national samples and in comparison with the

general sample demonstrated that the main characteristics of the offenders' LAAF accounts distinguished in the current study are equally applicable across the national samples. The differences outlined in the agency vis-à-vis others and the world narrative subtheme were found to be consistent with the differences found on the other levels of the narrative structure (e.g. Hungarian narratives as philosophical essays rather than stories with plot, change and/or characters).

9.2 Narrative themes in the country-specific samples: comparative analysis

In the study described in Chapter 7 the main narrative themes and composite structural items were derived from the LAAF subgroups of categories within the general sample of incarcerated offenders' narratives. The aim of this study was to compare the manifestations of these themes and structures across the national samples.

9.2.1 Methodology

Narrative themes and processes found in thematic analysis (Chapter 7 in Section I of the Part II) were also subjected to comparison between national samples. All variables based on narrative themes and thematic processes were built as dichotomous (precise procedure described further in this chapter). The same methodology as described in Section II, Chapter 8.2 was used for the purpose of this study. A score was assigned to each participant within the specific narrative theme based on the number of items that belonged to this theme and that were present in the narrative. Thus, the presence of each of these variables gave the score +1, while the absence of the item gave "0". Finally, all the scores were remade into dichotomous variables: "Presence of <the label of the theme> significant/non-significant", where the level of significance was sufficient if the score was equal to or higher than 2. As previously (Section II, Chapter 8.2) only those variables that belong to the theme region (as described in Section I, Chapter 7) were included in the scores – all the variables that formed

the centre of the radex model and had a frequency higher than 52% were removed from this study.

The same methods of analysis that were applied to the LAAF original variables were used for those as well: the Chi square test and, if its results were doubtful, - the Freeman-Halton exact test. For the readers' convenience the results of this comparison of the narrative themes are presented in the same order as previously (Psychological Complexity, then Implicit Psychological Content, followed by Explicit Processes and Agency vis-à-vis others and the world).

9.2.2 Implicit psychological content themes

Three implicit psychological content themes were found in the previous study: “Innocent Victim”, “Romantic Hero” and “Career Criminal”. The first one represents the story of a decent person, who helplessly watches the unfolding tragedy of his own life. The story of the Romantic Hero is the story of an energetic person, who perceives life as a comedy, concentrates mainly on the inevitable happy ending, and accepts what befalls on him on the road to it. The “Career Criminal” story focuses on crimes committed and profits taken. In this narrative, criminal life is described as a normal way of life.. The results of the comparison between national samples done on these implicit content themes are presented in Table 9.26.

Implicit psychological content themes		British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Innocent Victim	Observed	37 / 54%	43 / 46%	26 / 74%	19 / 63%	9, p<0.05
	<i>Expected</i>	38	51	19	17	
Romantic Hero	Observed	33 / 48%	45 / 48%	14 / 40%	12 / 40%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	32	43	16	14	
Career		40 / 58%	34 / 37%	25 / 71%	9 / 30%	19.2,

Criminal	Observed					p<0.000
	<i>Expected</i>	33	44	17	14	

No significant differences were found in the manifestation of the “Romantic Hero” theme across the samples from different countries – this role was equally popular in all four of them. The “Innocent Victim” theme was the most popular one within the Italian narratives (n=26%, 74%), and significantly less frequent in the Hungarian responses (n=43, 46%) than in any other national group ($\chi^2=9$, p<0.05). The story of the “Career Criminal” was significantly more popular within the Italian participants’ responses (n=25, 71%), and far less frequent in the stories of the Hungarian (n=34, 37%) or Polish participants (n=9, 30%) than in the Italian and British samples ($\chi^2=19.2$, p<0.000).

9.2.3 Explicit processes to organise the narrative - composite constructs

Three general processes of organising the content of the narrative were found in the previous study (Chapter 7): “Prevailing Unity”, “Losing Loneliness” and “Winning Heroic”. The story organised by the “Prevailing Unity” theme is focused on togetherness, the communal idea of being part of a group, a sense of oneness and solidarity that helps to overcome struggles and obstacles. It is a story of redemption, movement from negative to positive. The stories of “Losing Loneliness” are organised around the opposite process, the process of contamination, or movement from positive to negative. It is a story of loss, betrayal, disappointment and helplessness. The story of “Winning Heroic” is the one of taking control over destiny, the story of strength, responsibility and fulfilment.

The results of the comparison between the manifestations of the explicit processes’ themes in the national samples are presented in Table 9.27.

Table 9.27: Explicit processes to organise the narrative – themes’ frequencies in national samples and comparison between them						
Explicit processes: thematic variables		British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Prevailing	Observed	44 / 64%	41 / 44%	17 / 49%	14 / 47%	NS

Unity	<i>Expected</i>	35	48	18	15	
Loosing Loneliness	Observed	31 / 45%	25 / 27%	28 / 80%	16 / 53%	30.5, p<0.000
	<i>Expected</i>	30	41	15	13	
Winning Heroic	Observed	30 / 44%	27 / 29%	16 / 46%	13 / 43%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	26	35	13	11	

No significant differences were found across the national samples in the themes of “Prevailing Unity” and “Winning Heroic”. However, the far less positive theme of “Loosing Loneliness” was found significantly more frequently within the Italian participants’ responses (n=28, 80%) and was significantly less popular within the Hungarian sample (n=25, 27%, $\chi^2=30.5$, $p<0.000$). As shown in Table 9.27, for the British and Polish group the observed count in this variable did not differ much from the expected one.

9.2.4 Agency vis-à-vis others and the world composite themes

The four main themes of relationships with others and the world were found in a previous study (Chapter 7). They were labelled as “Getaway”, “Help”, “Pleasure” and “Excuse”. The protagonist of the Getaway story rarely builds relationships and is generally displeased with the world. The few people chosen as significant others are perceived at least as his equals, if not as higher authorities. He justifies his own behaviour with the presumption that people in general behave no better than he does.. The story of Getaway demonstrates despair and a lack of purpose.

In the story of Help, the protagonist is true to his moral principles even in difficult circumstances. It is a story of care and support. The protagonist is always active in his assistance, although the world doesn’t necessarily treat him in a reciprocal manner.

The story of “Pleasure” shows rather a successful pursuit of the world’s pleasures – from sensory and material gains to love. The only role that is given to others in it is the role of the

Lover. At the same time, the protagonist's repertoire is richer, and concentrates not only on Communal, but also on strong Agentic characters.

The story of "Excuse" is focused on running from responsibility, and is characterized by stress and anxiety. No roles are assigned to others, and the main description of the protagonist's attitude towards the world is hostility. The focal point of this story is the justification of the protagonist's decisions and behaviours by any means.

The results of the comparison between the manifestations of these agency themes in the national samples are presented in Table 9.28.

Agency vis-à-vis others and the world themes		British N=69	Hungarian N=93	Italian N=35	Polish N=30	χ^2 df=3
Getaway	Observed	10 / 15%	5 / 5%	13 / 37%	3 / 10%	19 ³⁷ , p<0.000
	<i>Expected</i>	9	13	5	4	
Help	Observed	16 / 23%	28 / 30%	20 / 57%	12 / 40%	13.1, p<0.01
	<i>Expected</i>	23	31	12	10	
Pleasure	Observed	31 / 45%	32 / 34%	15 / 43%	11 / 37%	NS
	<i>Expected</i>	27	37	14	12	
Excuse	Observed	21 / 30%	7 / 8%	13 / 37%	9 / 30%	20, p<0.000
	<i>Expected</i>	15	21	8	7	

No significant differences were found across the national samples in the "Pleasure" theme – it was found to be equally popular in all the groups. All the other themes showed significant variations across the national samples, although in the case of the "Getaway" theme the Freeman-Halton exact test was used instead of the Chi-square lack of reliability (25% of the cells had an expected count of less than 5). All three themes were found to be significantly more frequent in the Italian participants' responses (see Table 9.28). This might be explained by the higher structural complexity of these responses, together with the fact that they were

³⁷ Freeman-Halton exact test

found to be the richest in detail in comparison with the other national samples. It is worth noting that the Hungarian narratives were found to be significantly different from all other the national samples in the themes of “Getaway” and “Excuse” ($n=5$, 5%, $FH=19$, $p<0.000$ and $n=7$, 8%, $\chi^2=20$, $p<0.000$ respectively) – both themes were unexpectedly unpopular in the Hungarian participants’ responses.

9.2.5 The comparison between the offenders’ LAAF accounts collected in different countries in terms of the narrative composite structures: summary

The comparison between the offenders’ LAAF accounts collected in different countries was done in terms of the narrative composite structures, and revealed both the similarities and the significant differences in the composite structures of all three levels of the narrative. Thus, the “Romantic Hero” theme (Implicit Psychological Content), the processes of Prevailing Unity and Winning Heroic (Explicit Processes to Organise the Content) and the theme of Pleasure (Agency vis-à-vis Others and the World) were found to be equally frequent across all the national samples in question. All the other themes were found to be significantly more frequent in the Italian sample (Innocent Victim and Career Criminal of the Implicit Psychological Content; Losing Loneliness of the Explicit Processes to Organise the Content; Getaway, Help and Excuse of the Agency vis-à-vis Others and the World). The Hungarian LAAF accounts were (in comparison to the other samples) significantly lower on the themes of the Innocent Victim and Career Criminal; on the process of the Losing Loneliness and on the Getaway and Excuse ways to address others and the world. The theme of Career Criminal was found significantly more frequently in the British sample, and rarely in the Polish sample. Overall the differences that were found between the samples are consistent with the previous findings: the most detailed Italian narratives were found to have prevalence in most of the themes and constructs derived in this study, while the abstract, although still rich

Hungarian narratives were found to contain fewer composite constructs in comparison to the other samples.

9.3 Chapter summary and conclusion

This study was intended to explore the offenders' narratives collected in different countries and to outline common and potentially country-specific traits in them, and thus to provide the insight into national specifics of the offenders' narratives by comparison between the psychological themes, traits and inner structures distinguished in the offenders' narratives. This study also aimed to explore the robustness and validity of the LAAF system in application to the offenders' narratives collected in different countries (and therefore in different cultural and linguistic contexts).

The results of the comparison of the personal stories collected from incarcerated offenders in different countries show that in general the offenders' narratives bear similar characteristics across various nations. In all four samples, similarities were found in the implicit narrative content, the explicit processes that organise the narratives, and in relationships with others and with the world. Thus, across all four samples the most popular events mentioned in the narrative were "Doing crime" and "Relationship success". In all four samples the "Life as a Film" stories were most frequently told in the comedy or action genres, in a positive tone, and with an inevitable happy ending. The most frequent message of the response in all four samples was "I am interesting", and overall the rather egocentric messages ("I am interesting", "I am smart" and "I am dangerous") were found to be equally frequent in all four samples. Similarities were also found in explicit psychological processes to organise the offenders' narratives. Thus, the most frequent variables in the general sample (themes of "Self-mastery", "Status/Victory", "Love/Friendship", "Caring/Help" and "Unity/Togetherness") remain equally frequent across the samples from different countries. The respondents in all four samples described a somewhat reactive locus of agency in their

stories. The Self-Imago variables that were found most frequently in the general sample (“Caregiver” and “Escapist”) were equally popular in all four national samples. As in the general sample, in all four samples from different countries the vast majority of significant others was assigned the supportive roles in the narratives. For example, the role of Lover was still the most popular among Imagoes of Others and was equally frequent across national groups. Overall, the majority of imagoes of others in the narratives were those of Communal or Agentic-Communal types. Regardless of the national sample, the vast majority of all offenders’ narratives were rather self-focused (“Self-Identity stronger than others”). Most of the stories in all four samples are narrated in a positive, even euphoric, emotional spectre. There were no significant differences between national samples in the manifestations of the “Romantic Hero” and “Pleasure” narrative themes. The processes of the “Prevailing Unity” and “Winning Heroic” were also found to be equally popular across all four groups. Overall, it may be concluded that most of the typical characteristics found in the generic sample in this study (Part II, Section I, Chapter 6) can be applied to the more specific national samples of the offenders’ “Life as a Film” narratives.

At the same time, some significant differences between the samples collected in different countries were found, mainly in the traits and items that were less popular in the general sample. Taken together these differences produced the outlines of the country specifics of the offenders’ LAAF accounts. Thus the Hungarian narratives can be described as nearly non-eventful character descriptions or personal credos, life philosophy, calm and sad (“Non-aroused positive emotions” and “Negative tone”), with very few justifications for the protagonist’s actions. In 1994 Eco said that “...life is certainly more like “Ulysses” than like “The Three Musketeers” – yet we are all more inclined to think of it in terms of “The Three Musketeers” than in terms of Ulysses” (as quoted in Laszlo, 2008, p. 126). The stories of the

Hungarian respondents resemble the stories of people who perceive their lives as “Ulysses”, or even a philosophical tractate: low in event, but full of thought.

The stories of the British offenders were found to be the most pessimistic, unhappy and concentrated on criminal life in comparison to the others. There was a prevalence of the variables “Crime”, “Doing crime”, “Humiliation/sex guilt”, “Fate”, “Denial of responsibility”, “Material/financial gain”, “Sensory gain”, and there is a low presence of the “Fulfilment/satisfaction” motive, giving a picture of someone seeking pleasures or profit and not gaining them, someone who describes life through crime, and at the same time denies responsibility for it. The generic theme of the Career Criminal was found to be significantly more popular in this sample. The pessimistic tone of the narratives collected in Britain brings on the parallel with the results of the recent study by Youngs et al (2016), in which negative undertone was found typical for the offenders’ responses. As in the current study this trait was found specifically in the responses of British offenders, it would be logical to propose that the negative undertone is in fact one of the national-specific traits, as the study by Youngs et al (2016) was based on the data collected in Great Britain exclusively. Further studies are required to understand whether the gap in tone of the narrative (negative versus positive) between offenders’ and non-offenders’ LAAF responses described by Youngs et al (2016) is present in the British narratives only.

The most detailed and explicit Italian stories, when compared to the other national LAAF accounts, look like the story of an innocent and confused person (“Victim of crime”, “I am decent”, “Failure”, “Confusion/Misunderstanding”), who tries to survive in a cruel and unfair world (“Fate”, “Disappointment”, “Disillusionment”, Imagoes “Warrior”, “Ritualistic” and “Survivor”), and who is sometimes ready to perceive others as significant independent persons (“Dialogue”, Imagoes of Others “Warrior”, “Teacher”, and relatively more popular imagoes “Friend” and “Caregiver”). The themes of “Innocent Victim” and “Losing

Loneliness” were found to be significantly more popular within this sample in comparison with the others. However, nearly all the other themes – “Career Criminal”, “Getaway”, “Pleasure”, “Help”, - were also found frequently in the stories of the Italian respondents. It also should be said that in many cases the Italian narratives showed the same tendency as all the narratives collected in other countries. The LAAF items that were frequent in all the samples were significantly more frequent in the long Italian responses. For example, the “assuming the role of victim to oneself” justification was the most popular in the general sample, and remained frequent in all the national samples. But even then it was significantly more frequent in the Italian responses. The fact that the Italian responses are the highest in structural complexity and richest in details might blur the picture. The results of the previous study (Tkazky, Canter and Youngs, 2015) showed that the complexity of the response is steadily increasing with its length. It might be that the longer the responses are the more details of every kind and type are added to them by the narrators. That raises the question of the optimal length of the response and the linguistic and cultural norms of the speech length. The richness and complexity of the Italian narrative might be its core trait, its national specifics. Further studies of this topic are required.

Polish narratives, although the least detailed and shortest among the national groups provided an unhappy story of a lone hero, decent and traditionalistic (“I am decent”, “Negative tone”, “Ritualistic”, “Warrior”). At the same time, the events mentioned in the responses of the Polish participants were significantly more frequently crime-oriented (e.g. “Doing crime”, “Imprisonment”, “Victim of crime”). Taken together with the fact that the theme of Career Criminal was found significantly less frequently in the Polish participants’ responses, it gives a picture of someone involved in crime almost against his will, a strong and decent character in unhappy circumstances.

The small size of both the Italian and Polish samples, and some variations in interviewing' approach in these groups, make it difficult to decide whether or not the differences found in this study can be extrapolated to the whole population.

Although the theme of national differences in offenders' behaviours has been widely researched in recent decades, the comparison between the personal stories of offenders from different countries has been largely neglected as a research subject. This study presents the insight into the general similarities and the subtle but important differences between the "Life as a Film" narratives of the offenders from four European countries. These results provide the basis for further exploration of this topic. The study results also reveal the potential for the future cross-cultural studies. The similarities found between the narratives of offenders from different countries also provide the basis for future international research, and adjustments in the offenders' treatment programmes.

This study was the first to use the LAAF interpretation system in a comparative analysis of offenders' narratives collected in different countries. As the findings of this study show, the LAAF system presents an adequate methodology for research across different countries. It draws upon well-established themes and concepts (e.g. the themes of Agency and Communion, imagoes etc) that are not culture specific. It also allows an expansion of the studies of the similarities and the differences between the narratives collected in different countries. As was also demonstrated by the study results, the LAAF methodology was less prone to the influence of the translation and/or the differences in the interviewing manner than might have been feared.

However it should be emphasised that, should the results of the current study be extrapolated to the country-specific populations, caution must be exercised. The current research was done as meta-research, in which the data collection was conducted by the different interviewing

groups using the same methodology in the different places. All the data collections were conducted in the prisons (one prison in each country). However, the results of the study might have been influenced by the differences in the prison regulations across countries (e.g. different prison regulations that might affected the visiting patterns of the interviewing team and the ways in which the participants were accessed by the research teams) and the differences in the judicial systems between various countries. As was described, for example, by Aebi et al, (2014) the definitions of the specific crimes, the length of the prison sentence for the same crime and the strictness of it might differ in different countries, and this might have influenced the research results. Although the current research used only the crime histories self-reported by the participants, these self-reports might have been affected by the legal definitions accepted in the specific country. Additionally, it should be emphasised that the current research was conducted on the translations of the original responses. Although these translations were done by professional translators and/or native speakers of the language from which the translations were made, there might have been themes and/or traits that were lost in the translation process. Further comparative studies, in which the data will be analysed by native speakers of the language, are required. Further studies are also required in order to clarify the possible influence of the translation of the LAAF elicitation methodology on the results. Although the current research presents the significant insight into the comparative analysis of the offenders' narratives collected in different countries, its findings, and any extrapolations into country-specific populations, must be treated with caution.

Part III

Chapter 10: Thesis discussion and conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusion and discussion of the current thesis. The first part of the chapter provides a brief overview of the thesis as whole (10.1.1), followed by an overview of the results: the general description of the offenders' LAAF accounts (Part 10.1.2 of this chapter), the resemblance between the offenders' LAAF accounts and the fairy-tales (specifically, the presence of unrealistic, "fairy-tale style" happy endings in many narratives (Part 10.1.3 of this chapter)), and the composite narrative structures revealed in the current study in the implicit psychological content of the narratives; in the explicit processes that produce the storyline of the narrative; and in the agency vis-à-vis others and the world outlined in the narrative (Part 10.1.4 of this chapter). In Part 10.1.5 a brief overview of the comparative analysis' findings is presented. The common characteristics and significant differences of the violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts are outlined in Part 10.1.5.1, while Part 10.1.5.2 is designated to the results of the comparative analysis of the narratives collected in different countries. In Part 10.1.5.3 the significance of the comparative analyses' results is discussed.

The second part (10.2) of this chapter is designated to the contributions of the current thesis: the theoretical (Part 10.2.1), methodological (10.2.2) and practical (10.2.3) ones. Thus, the validation of the use of data not directly related to crime for the study of criminality, the provision of a general description of the offenders' LAAF narratives together with comparisons between the narratives of the offenders with different types of criminal histories and the provision of a significant insight into the national specifics of offenders' narratives are listed among the theoretical contributions of the current research. An exploration and

evaluation of the LAAF interpretation system, an outline of LAAF strengths and weaknesses together with the suggestions for the further development of this methodology and the validation of the translations of the LAAF protocols are the methodological contributions of this research. The ways in which the identification of neutral main themes and narrative composite constructs, together with an exploration of the ways in which the norms and common traits of the offenders' narratives could be useful for adjustments to the treatment and rehabilitation programmes, are outlined as practical contributions.

Finally the third part of the current chapter (10.3) outlines the limitations of the current study, such as the relatively small and unequal sample sizes in the comparative analyses, the influence of the researcher's personality on the coding process, the cross-country differences (e.g. the differences in the prison regulations, in the judicial system, in the language etc) and the differences in the interviewing manners of the different groups etc.

For the readers' convenience each of the three parts of this chapter includes a "roadmap" <overview> of its contents.

10.1 The research findings

This subchapter provides a brief overview of the results. Firstly, an overview of the studies in the current thesis is provided (10.1.1). The description of the thesis findings then proceeds as follows: a general description of the offenders' LAAF accounts (10.1.2); and the resemblance between the offenders' LAAF accounts and fairy-tales (specifically, the presence of unrealistic, "fairy-tale style" happy endings in many narratives (10.1.3). They are followed by an overview of the composite narrative structures that were revealed in the narrative psychological content, the explicit processes that organise the content, and the agency vis-à-vis others and the world (10.1.4). . A brief overview of the comparative analysis' findings is presented in Part 10.1.5. The common characteristics and significant differences between the

violent and non-violent offenders' LAAF accounts are outlined in Part 10.1.5.1, while Part 10.1.5.2 is designated to the results of the comparative analysis of the narratives collected in different countries. The significance of the comparative analyses' results is discussed in Part 10.1.5.3.

10.1.1 The studies within the thesis

In this part the results of the current thesis are overviewed. The studies presented in this thesis were aimed to provide in an depth analysis of the offenders' LAAF accounts, including the drawing out of the main psychological themes and traits of the narratives, their general description, morphological analysis, and an examination of the similarities and differences between the LAAF accounts of the offenders with different types of criminal history (violent versus non-violent) and from different countries (Great Britain, Hungary, Italy and Poland). This thesis was also intended to explore the LAAF methodology in its application to the general sample of offenders, and in its application to the criminal history and country-specific samples. Thus, the first study in this thesis provided a general description of the offenders' LAAF accounts, and the main psychological themes and traits of these narratives; the second one revealed the interrelations between the story elements, and provided a description of the inner themes and constructs thus uncovered. The morphological analysis in the second study is based upon the results of the exploration of the inner narrative structures formed by the combination of the psychological themes and traits described in the first study. The third and fourth studies presented in the current thesis provide a comparison between the LAAF accounts of violent and non-violent offenders and between the LAAF accounts collected in different countries. These comparative analyses were done in terms of the themes and composite structures revealed in the first two studies.

In parallel with that, the first study provides an exploration of the LAAF methodology to the general sample of the offenders' narratives (created regardless of their previous criminal history, and with equal representation of the participants from each of the four countries in the research). The results of this study demonstrated the strengths and the weaknesses/routes for development (e.g. lack of the negative roles that could be assigned to oneself and/or others in the narrative) of the LAAF methodology. In the second study, the ability of the LAAF "themes of interest" (Presser, 2010, p. 439) to envelop the composite structures of the narratives was explored, and found to be sufficient to grasp the moving, cyclical nature of the narrative. However, it was also found that the lack of negative themes within the LAAF content framework impedes the revelation of the composite processes that outline such themes within the narratives. The third and the fourth studies explore whether the LAAF methodology could be successfully applied to the narratives of the offenders with different criminal histories and/or from different countries. The results demonstrated that the LAAF methodology would be adequate for the exploration of the narratives of offenders from different countries and/or with different types of criminal histories and is less prone to the influence of the interviewer's manner as might have been feared.

The current research extended the previous studies on the subject by drawing on the generic sample that included equal numbers of participants from the different countries. As the findings demonstrated this development allows the clarification of the main themes and traits of the offender narratives. For example, the negative undertone found frequently in the offenders' LAAF accounts in the previous study (Youngs et al, 2016) was prevalent only in the narratives of the British offenders (the sample in the previous study was exclusively British), while much less frequently in the general sample of the offenders' LAAF accounts. The exploration of the general sample, in which the participants from different countries were present in equal proportion, allowed a new outline of the Unresolved Dissonance - not a

dissonance between the need for rewarding relationships with others and a focus on material gain (as in Carthy, 2013; Youngs et al, 2016), but as a conflict between a light, optimistic and egocentric attitude and a harsh illogical world, from which the narrator still hopes to get support and a happy ending.

The current research was the first one to concentrate on an in-depth analysis of the LAAF accounts and on the exploration of the LAAF methodology. It was also the first to provide an analysis of the morphology and composite structures within the narratives in terms of the LAAF content framework. As described previously in this study, the LAAF content framework is based on the existing and established psychological concepts (imagoes, McAdams, 1993; justifications, Bandura, 1990; Sykes and Matza, 1957 etc), or studies on a specifically offending population (type of message, Sandberg, 2009). Thus the current study was the first to apply a large number of “themes of interest” at once in order to reveal the hidden composite structures existing in the different layers of the narrative (implicit psychological content, explicit processes that organise the content and agency vis-à-vis others and the world). The current study also provides the first comparative analysis of violent and non-violent offenders’ narratives that does not imply that the differences would be directly related to violence and aggression (as the categories used for the analysis were neutral or positive only). In addition to that the current study provides a comparison between the offenders’ LAAF accounts collected in different countries, and in this way – the insight into the potential national specifics of the narratives. Further subchapters of this part of the chapter (10.1.2 “Offenders’ LAAF accounts: general description”; 10.1.3 “Life as a film – and a fairy-tale”; 10.1.4 “Narrative structure” and 10.1.5 “The offenders’ life as a film stories – common traits and subtle differences”) provide a more detailed outline of the findings of the current study.

10.1.2 Offenders' LAAF accounts: general description

This study presents a detailed description of the offenders' LAAF accounts, and also provides a vital basis for further studies in the field of offenders' narratives across different countries and societies.

Overall, the offenders' "Life as a Film" narratives are dominated by the theme of criminality. The prevalence of this theme in the neutral "Life as a Film" descriptions suggests that it is an integral part of the offender's self-perception. The previous comparison between the "Life as a Film" responses of prisoners and the non-incarcerated population (Carthy, 2013) supports that finding.

The offenders' narratives are instrumental in tone. The roles assigned to the protagonists are relatively rare, and those given to other character are scarce. The "Life as a Film" stories are rather focused on the conflict between disagreeable reality and the narrator's craving for happiness. The main point of these narratives is a controversy between a light, optimistic and egocentric attitude and a harsh illogical world, from which the narrator still craves to obtain the idealised future "happy ending".

10.1.3 "Life as a Film" – and a fairy-tale

The identification of prevalent, common traits in the narratives of offenders from different cultural and criminal backgrounds offers a way to perceive the patterns in which prisoners see themselves and their lives.

The main characteristics of the offenders' narratives distinguished in the current study (apart from the criminality theme) are a positive tone, a happy ending, a heroic protagonist and a somewhat instrumental relationship with others, to whom the mainly supportive roles of lover and caregiver are assigned. Taken together, these characteristics form something suspiciously

close to a fairy tale – as most people nowadays know them³⁸. According to Zipes' (2012) definition, fairy tales are instructive – they show what the hero (and, by proxy, the listener) lacks, or how he is unfit for the world and how things can change so that this problem may be overcome. The results of the current study show that the offenders' narratives are built around the conflict between imprisonment and happiness. That brings to mind the classical structure of fairy tales (as described by Zipes, 2012). This finding also might explain the fact that the happy ending in offenders' narratives is recurrently not described at all or is outlined in a "cinema-style" unrealistic way.

It might be said that people who are asked to provide a "Life as a Film" account give it a "happily ever after", or Hollywood-style, ending because they misunderstand the question. But the same abstract or unrealistic happy-endings were popular in all the samples collected in the different countries – so the majority of the participants understood the question in the same way. Such accounts provide important and meaningful data about an individual's self-perception, dreams and ideas of happiness. In 1994 Eco said that "...life is certainly more like Ulysses than like the Three Musketeers – yet we are all more inclined to think of it in terms of The Three Musketeers than in terms of Ulysses" (p. 117). The results of the current study show that, although prisoners show tendencies quite similar to the one described by Eco, they turn rather to the oldest genre in the world – the fairy tale. To paraphrase Burkert's remark (1979) on tales, these "Life as a Film" stories are fundamental verbalizations of a person's inner reality, and the primary way to speak (and even outline) the many-sided problems of this reality. As the results of the current study show, the major problem of the respondents' personal world was the conflict between the reality of incarceration and the craved happy ending. Frequently, the desired happy ending was not only unrealistic, but also

³⁸ Originally fairy-tales did not necessarily end happily (e.g. the oldest version of the Little Red Riding Hood story ends with both the heroine and her grandmother being eaten by a wolf, not by their miraculous salvation). But for centuries these original versions of the stories have only been read by specialists. The vast majority of fairy-tales published and read by recent generations end happily.

not entirely innocent (some of the participants described “getting away with crime” as their happy ending).

Thus it can be said that at least some of the narratives are not just reminiscent of fairy-tales, they also describe a particular fantasy, the dream of the perfect crime that will bring the “happily ever after” time. As was beautifully put by Pratchett (1996) in “Hogfather”: “...he got away with it and lived happily ever after without so much as a guilty twinge about what he had done. Which proves that you can be excused just about anything if you’re a hero, because no one asks inconvenient questions.” (Pratchett, 2013, p. 25).

The implicit content themes distinguished in the current study represent possible venues for an approach to the major conflict of the narrative. This conforms with Brockmeier’s argument (2001) that life shaped in the narrative appears as a development towards a certain goal. The finding that the “certain goal” in many offenders’ narratives is, although happy, highly improbable, and possibly even criminal, the happy ending provides a new understanding of the offenders’ narratives. In the study conducted by Baez et al (2017) it was shown that terrorists were fixated on a utopian vision of the future, on the idealized “happy ending”. This finding suggests a connection between moral judgments based on an ideal outcome, and the belief that any action may be justified by this future “happy ending”. This hypothesis accords with the corner stone of the Good Lives Model (e.g. Ward, 2012b): the idea that people offend because they want to secure some valued outcome in their life, but manifest this desire in antisocial and harmful behaviours. As the current study demonstrates, the desired goal (happy ending) could be not only a utopian one (as Baez et al, 2017, described), but also not quite prosocial and possibly even criminal (as shown in the examples in Chapter 6, it could be getting away with crime and/or living by crime and staying unpunished). At the same time as previous studies of the narratives of ex-offenders show, the reformed narratives (Presser, 2008) and the desistance narratives (Maruna, 2001) could also

be happy ending oriented. Further studies are required in order to explore the differences between the realistic versus utopian happy ending oriented narratives. Further research is required to explore whether the realism of the anticipated “happy ending” of the personal story is a trait of the desistance narrative, or whether there is any correlation between a fixation on an idealized, unrealistic “happy ending” and recidivism (as could be proposed based on the study by Baez et al, 2017).

10.1.4 Narrative structure

Three main implicit content themes that were distinguished in the offenders’ responses represent three ways in which the main conflict of the story is accessed. The controversy between cruel reality and desired happiness can be approached in the helpless and sad way of the Innocent Victim, the optimistic way of the Romantic Hero, or the delinquency-oriented way of the Career Criminal. The storylines are produced by one of the following themes: Prevailing Unity (focused on communion and redemption), Losing Loneliness (built around themes of contamination and loneliness), and Heroic Winning (concentrated on satisfaction and fulfilment, strong Agentic theme). The main motives of relationships with others and with the world can be described in terms of a positive or a negative attitude towards the world. Thus, stories of Getaway (aimless acting out of frustration, quest without the aim, reactive behaviours) and Help (caring and usually reciprocal relationship with others and the world, proactive behaviours) represent a socio-oriented approach to relationships. They create a pair of opposing rather ego-centric stories of Pleasure (proactive behaviours, interactions based on enjoyment and excitement) and Excuse (reactive behaviours, focused on hostility towards the world and ways to justify it).

The “Life as a Film” stories can unarguably be described in the archetypal themes of potency and intimacy, as was suggested by Youngs and Canter (2012). Thus, it can be said that the

theme of Help is both a high Potency and a high Intimacy theme (protagonist's character is strong, others are significant), while Excuse can be described as low in both Potency and Intimacy (weak protagonist's character, others are non-significant). Pleasure is a strong, high in Potency, but low in Intimacy theme, and Getaway is the theme high in Intimacy, but low in Potency. The sub-themes that were found in the "Agency vis-à-vis Others and the World" narrative layer can be seen as somewhat reminiscent of the previously described narrative roles. For example, parallel can be drawn between the Getaway theme and the Victim role in the narrative of Irony (the protagonist is powerless and alienated from others who are significant to him, as described by Youngs and Canter, 2012). However, this parallel does not cover the full range of "Agency vis-à-vis Others and the World" themes' expressions described in the current study. The attitude towards others in the Getaway theme cannot always be categorised as indifferent/alienating. The relationships might be reciprocal. The Getaway theme describes a rare bond with a few significant others, who represent higher authorities and/or aspirational models. The narrative in full is formed not only by the "agency vis-à-vis others and the world", but also by its complexity, its implicit content, and the explicit processes that organise the content. Therefore the manifestation of the same "agency vis-à-vis others and the world" construct will differ when shaped by different constructs and themes on other structural levels. As was demonstrated in Chapter 7, the existing system of the four narrative roles (Youngs and Canter, 2012), or the exclusive use of the terms Potency and Intimacy will impede the description of such differences between the narratives.

The new findings provide a less polarizing description of the offenders' stories. Frye (1957) pointed out the cyclical, moving nature of the story. The results of a separate exploration of LAAF sub-themes brought forward this nature of the narrative, and provided a deeper and more detailed description of the personal stories. The combination of the themes distinguished in the current research determines the nature of the narrative. The dynamics of

the interaction between the various layers of the story provides a rich and yet finite number of combinations between narrative themes and processes.

10.1.5 The offenders' "Life as a Film" stories: common traits and subtle differences

It should be highlighted that the main characteristics of the offenders' narratives apply to both violent and non-violent offenders' narratives and to all the national samples as well, while differences are found among the less frequent traits and characteristics. The following traits were prevalent in both violent and non-violent offenders' stories and in the responses collected from the different countries: criminality theme, rather positive and optimistic tone of the narrative, and the almost inevitable happy ending. The differences between the compared groups are outlined further in this chapter.

10.1.5.1 The "Life as a Film" stories of the violent and non-violent offenders

The following traits were found to be common in both violent and non-violent offenders' stories: the theme of criminality, the prevalent tone (rather light and optimistic), the protagonist's traits, strong self-identity, a declaration of empathy, and recognition of the significance of others. In both the violent and non-violent offenders' narratives the main character is usually a hero who perceives life as a comic nonsense, and chooses to stand and fight, to strive towards a happy ending. The common traits of the offenders' narratives in general are truly common for both violent and non-violent offenders' stories. Both violent and non-violent offenders' stories provided richly detailed, structured "Life as a Film" descriptions. In both groups, empathy, the significance of others, and a reactive rather than a proactive locus of agency were manifested. In both groups, justifications were used in almost equal proportions. All the narrative themes and composite constructs that were revealed in the current study were found to be equally frequent in both groups' responses.

At the same time, several differences were found between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders. For example, a positive approach to the whole story, and not only to specific episodes in it, was found more often in the non-violent offenders' narratives. Despite the generally high popularity of the optimistic tone in both groups, the violent offenders' stories were more frequently of a negative, pessimistic nature. The main message of the violent offenders' narratives was also found to differ from the message of the non-violent offenders' narratives. It was usually about distress, danger and self-chosen loneliness, even antagonism with the outer world. Despite the description of others as significant, non-violent offenders relatively frequently assigned roles to the others in their story – and violent offenders rarely did that. Overall, these findings could be incorporated into offenders' treatment and rehabilitation programmes in order to make these programmes more adjusted to the specific needs of the patient.

10.1.5.2 The “Life as a Film” stories collected in different countries

The narratives of the offenders from different countries have even more in common than the narratives of the offenders with different criminal histories. Similarities were found in all four sub-groups of the LAAF content framework. Thus, apart from the previously mentioned common narrative characteristics (e.g. prevalence of the criminality theme, positive tone, happy ending etc), the stories collected in different countries manifested similar rather egocentric messages, and the narratives were generally self-focused. In all four groups the locus of agency in the narrative was rather reactive. Most of the stories in all four samples were narrated in a positive, even euphoric, emotional spectre. Similarities were found in the roles assigned to the protagonist and to others. Thus, the Self-Imago variables that were found most frequently in the general sample (“Traveller”, “Caregiver”, “Escapist”) were equally popular in all four national samples. Just as in the general sample, in all four samples from different countries the vast majority of significant others was assigned the supportive

role in the narratives (e.g., “Lover” and “Caregiver”). Overall, the majority of the imagoes of others in the narratives from all four countries were those of Communal or Agentic-Communal type.

Some significant differences (mainly in the less frequent narrative traits and characteristics) between the national samples were found in the current study. Taken together, they produced an outline of the country-specific narrative motives. Thus, the Hungarian responses could be described as almost non-eventful character descriptions or personal credos, life philosophy, calm and sad, with very few justifications for the protagonist’s actions. The stories of the British participants were somewhat pessimistic and unhappy, and concentrated more on criminal life when compared to the others. The pessimistic tone of the narratives collected in Great Britain brings to mind the parallel with the results of the recent study by Youngs et al (2015), in which a negative undertone was found to be typical for the offenders’ responses (that study was based on exclusively British sample). The most detailed and explicit Italian stories, when compared to the other national LAAF accounts, appeared to be the story of a person who was overwhelmed by the flow of past events and life experiences, and poured it into his narrative in an attempt to overcome his confusion. The Italian narrators were more frequently ready to perceive others as significant independent persons (in comparison to the other samples). The Polish narratives, although the least detailed among the national groups, provided an unhappy story of a lone hero, decent and traditionalistic. Altogether these narratives frequently depicted someone involved in crime almost against his will, a strong and decent character in unhappy circumstances, who nevertheless hoped that bad things would turn to good.

10.1.5.3 The significance of the common narrative traits and characteristics

A vast number of similarities was found between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders, and between the offenders’ narratives collected in different countries on both

narrative traits and themes and composite constructs levels. That is a valuable finding. It shows that the core of the narrative construction remains relatively constant regardless of the narrator's criminal and/or cultural background. It also validates LAAF as a methodology. The current research findings demonstrate that the LAAF approach allows for the collection of rich and detailed personal accounts from a rather difficult and vulnerable population. The LAAF approach provides the tools for the meticulous analysis of the collected material. It also allows to grasp, not only the common traits of the narratives, but also the subtle and yet important differences between them.

Each of the respondents was incarcerated at the time of the interview. That fact can act as a reinforcement for the theme of criminality that is so frequent in the narratives. As Bernburg, Krohn and Rivera (2006) pointed out, formal criminal intervention (in this case imprisonment) affects the individual's social network, and thus increases the probability of further involvement in deviance. It accords with the findings by Stevenson et al (2004) – the major difference between offenders and the nominally non-offending population found in that study was in criminal sentiments. The criminal sentiments are the attitudes and beliefs that support criminal behaviour, and they represent three constructs: negative attitudes toward the justice system, tolerance for law violation (neutralisations), and identification with other criminals (Andrews & Wormith, 1984). Without implying the causality (stigma of the criminal status caused the criminal sentiments, or the set of beliefs that support criminal behaviours created the situation that caused the stigma), it may be said that the prevalence of the theme of criminality in offenders' personal stories is a clear manifestation of the important place the criminality has in their self-identity. This provides a new angle to the theory brought up by Maruna and Copes (2004). As they argued, the attribution of the individual's problem to fatal circumstances or difficult situations might be a good predictor of desistance – the person distances himself from the deviant acts committed in the past and

thus takes a step towards building a new “non-criminal” self-identity. According to White and Epston (1990), the personal story retold and reconstructed during the narrative therapy allows the individual to change the habitual thinking and “the life script”, to externalise the problematic behaviours, and to distance himself from them. Thus it can be said that the narrative that preserves the dominant criminality theme demonstrates the preservation of habitual criminal sentiments and self-identification with criminality. Based on the present research findings, adjustments to current treatment programmes could be made in order to reduce the offenders’ self-perception as criminals.

The fact that the theme of contamination was frequently manifested in the offenders’ narratives accords with the previous study by Carthy (2013). At the same time, the prevalence of the happy ending and the overall positive tone of the story are inconsistent with previous findings and show a new perspective. The offenders’ narratives as shown in the current study results are closer to the stories of the nominally non-offending population (as described in Youngs et al, 2014). The dominant theme of criminality becomes a more distinctive trait of the offenders’ narratives than does the negative tone and the problematic nature of the relationship with others (as in Youngs et al, 2014).

10.2 The contributions of the current research

In this part of the chapter the contributions of the current thesis are described. The theoretical contributions are described in Part 10.2.1, the methodological ones in Part 10.2.2 and practical ones in Part 10.2.3. The theoretical contributions include the validation of the use of data not directly related to the crime for the study of criminality, the provision of the general description of the offenders’ LAAF narratives together with the comparisons between the narratives of offenders with different types of criminal histories and the provision of the important insight into the national specifics of offenders’ narratives. This study is the first to

use the LAAF content framework for comparative analysis of the samples collected in different countries. The methodological contributions include the exploration and the evaluation of the LAAF interpretation system, the outline of the LAAF strengths and weaknesses (together with the venues for the further development of this methodology), and the validation of the translations of the LAAF protocols. The practical contributions include the ways in which the identification of the neutral main themes and narrative composite constructs, together with the exploration of norms and common traits of the offenders' narratives, may be useful for adjustments to the treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

10.2.1 Theoretical contributions

The LAAF approach offers offenders an opportunity to play an agentic role in self-reflection. This would enable the person closest to the crime – the perpetrator himself - to gain an insight into his actions, motives and thoughts. This perspective would allow the further development and better understanding of offenders' personality, motivation and perception. The use of the LAAF approach, and the life-story model in previous studies, has demonstrated what psychologically rich and useful data can be extracted by this methodology from members of general “non-offending” population (Carthy, 2013; Youngs et al, 2016). The present study shows that such an approach could further expand and enrich academic literature on criminality. By drawing upon an international sample that included an equal number of participants from different countries the current study succeeded in describing the traits and characteristics of the offenders' narratives that were common to the stories of participants with different types of criminal past and from different countries. By exploring the relationships between “themes of interest” within the LAAF accounts the current study revealed the composite structures of the narratives. By exploring the implicit content and the inner structures of the narratives in different contexts (participants with different types of

criminal past or from different countries) the current study explored the variations that might be associated with these contexts.

Although the narrative approach to the studies on offending behaviour and motivation has been gaining popularity during the last decades, the vast majority of research on the subject has been concentrated on the crime itself: roles during the crime (e.g. Canter et al, 2003; Youngs & Canter, 2012), crime specific action patterns (e.g. Canter & Fritzon, 1998; Fritzon et al, 2001), emotions during the crime (Ioannou, 2004; Ioannou et al, 2016) etc. Through exploration of the offenders' "life as a film" descriptions, this study provides the validation to the use of data not directly related to the crime for the study of criminality.

Although the question of personality differences between offenders with various criminal histories (e.g. violent versus non-violent) has been studied for decades, the comparison between these groups has frequently been carried out on traits that are attributed directly to the type of crime (e.g. Baumeister, Bushman and Campbell, 2000). The current study takes the substantive nature of the common traits and the differences between the narratives of the offenders with violent and non-violent criminal pasts without implying that the differences would necessarily be expressed in violent/aggressive themes within the narrative. Although the theme of offenders' narratives, their traits and characteristics recently gained academic attention (e.g. Maruna, 2001; Youngs et al, 2014; Tognato, 2015; Brookman, 2015), studies on that topic are but few. This research develops further understanding of common traits of offenders' narratives. The idea of national specificity of plots and patterns in oral storytelling is not new (Zipes, 2012); however, it has long been neglected in the narrative studies in psychology. By comparing the narratives' traits and details across different countries, this research provides an important insight into the national specifics of offenders' narratives.

10.2.2 Methodological contributions

This study demonstrates the usefulness and importance of the LAAF approach in criminal research. The information revealed by the content analysis of offenders' narratives contains descriptions of personal lives, motives, emotions, dreams and plans, even philosophical credos. All that goes far beyond data that can be obtained through case records or psychometric tests. According to McAdams (1993), the life-story approach uncovers information about the individual that extends far beyond the identification of traits. It allows seeing the inner structure, the underlying organisation of an individual's affects and cognitions, the interactions between various parts of a personal story – and the narrator's own perception of these interactions.

The LAAF, both as the interviewing and content analysis framework, provides a strong methodological approach to eliciting offenders' narratives. As the results show, the data collected and analysed in terms of LAAF is significant, detailed and psychologically rich. Both the request to describe one's life as a film and the LAAF content dictionary are neutral. The LAAF interview ensures a non-judgmental data collection process, purified from any notion of a correct or desirable answer, while the LAAF content dictionary provides a neutral and impartial analysis framework. The LAAF framework offers prisoners an opportunity to talk about general aspects of their lives, rather than focusing on their exclusively criminal actions. It eases the process of the interviewing for both the respondent and the interviewer, and provides a more positive, or at least neutral, approach to problematic themes and behaviours. The neutrality of the data collected by the CY-NEO protocol as whole, and the LAAF question in particular, provides a great opportunity for comparison of the prisoners' responses with the responses collected from the non-incarcerated population (Carthy, 2013). The results of the current study provide the validation of the translations of the CY-NEO protocol into the Polish, Italian and Hungarian languages. They also validate the use of

LAAF methodology in different countries. The data collected in these countries is equally rich and detailed, and yet the national specific of the narratives is preserved.

Presser (2010) highlighted the lack of systematic methods for the collection and analysis of the offenders' narratives. While the LAAF as an interview was aimed at an un-intrusive method of further exploring narrative structure, character roles, self-reflective elements and emotions, the LAAF content analysis offers a tool for a structured systematic analysis of the psychological themes manifested in the personal narrative. This framework was developed from extensive research, and provides a detailed content dictionary that allows the analysis of the narrative in terms of the implicit psychological content, explicit processes to organise the content, the psychological complexity of the story, and the relationship with others and the world as manifested in the narrative. The present study is one of the few that employs the LAAF framework in order to elicit the inner content of the offenders' narratives and to explore their structure. The present study is also the first to employ a new, improved version of LAAF that contains additional items of implicit psychological content. The results of the structural analysis of the narratives in terms of LAAF demonstrate the internal consistency of thematic constructs. The LAAF content framework allowed the successful application of neutral and informative categories on a relatively large international sample. The successful elicitation of common themes and traits in offenders' narratives gave a detailed picture of common traits and characteristics of the offenders' narratives, as well as the inter-correlation between narrative implicit elements (narratives' morphology). The fact that such results were obtained within the LAAF content framework on the translated material supports the robustness of the LAAF procedure. The identification of narrative common traits and norms provides essential material for further narrative studies, including the creation of a quantitative methodology based on the narrative traits and themes found in the current research. Previous studies done on the crime narrative material showed the success and

usefulness of this methodology: the elicitation of crime themes and roles in offenders' descriptions of crime brought about the creation of the Narrative Role Questionnaire (NRQ), which has been productively used ever since (e.g. Youngs and Canter 2012; Carthy, 2013).

By focusing not only on a general sample of the prisoners' stories, but also on a comparison between violent and non-violent offenders' narratives, a description of traits distinctive for the narratives of prisoners with a specific criminal history is provided. The identification of a number of significant differences, along with many similarities across the violent and non-violent offenders' narratives, supports the validity of the LAAF approach.

Although offenders' narratives have been widely researched for decades (e.g. Toch, 1969; Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2008; Youngs and Canter, 2012), the comparison between such narratives collected in different countries as a research subject was largely neglected. The current study demonstrates that the LAAF framework is stable enough to be applied on the narratives of offenders from different countries. The narrative norms and themes – general and group-specific, - provided in this study will serve as a basis for future research and the development of the LAAF methodology.

The current study demonstrated that the LAAF methodology provides a neutral, non-judgemental framework that allows the application of many well-established psychological concepts at once and is adequate for research into the narrative morphology, and for the studies of the narratives collected from the offenders with different types of the criminal histories and/or from different countries. The exploration of the LAAF interpretation methodology in the current study also discovered weaknesses in the current LAAF methodology and suggested ways for its further development. Thus, the current study shows, the LAAF framework in its current form does not grasp the negative side of the narrative, as it does not include negative roles that could be assigned to the narrator and/or to others in the

response. The lack of negative themes within the LAAF content framework also impedes the study of the Manipulation theme that is present in some of the narratives. The LAAF framework in its current form also accepts the significance of others in the eyes of the narrator, but not in the mutual (and possibly negative) relationships between the narrator and others, nor in the ways in which the narrator perceives the attitudes of others towards him. The current study revealed that the “happy ending” in the LAAF response could be either realistic or utopian. However, the LAAF framework in its current form does not register the differences between these two subtypes of the happy ending, and thus it is impossible to grasp this important characteristic of the narrative. The current study demonstrates that one of the differences between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders is the way the positive tone applied to the whole narrative (non-violent offenders’ responses) or to the crime within the response exclusively (violent offenders’ responses). This finding proves the importance of the position of the specific item within the narrative (as suggested, for example, by Propp, 1938). However the LAAF framework in its current form does not address the issue of the item’s position within the response, only the presence/absence of each item. All this provides a basis for the further development of the LAAF interpretation methodology. It should be added that as the LAAF content framework is ultimately a qualitative method of analysis, it is prone to the influence of the researcher’s personality. Although precautions were taken to reduce this influence (e.g. the coding was done so the researcher was unable to see, to which country and/or type of criminal history each narrative belongs; the inter-raters were invited and the inter-raters’ reliability was checked and was found to be sufficient), it cannot be said that the influence of the researcher’s personality was completely removed from the equation. A qualitative measurement is required, and the results of the current study provide the basis for the creation and adjustment of the LAAF quantitative measurement.

10.2.3 Practical contributions

The narrative provides a tool to uncover and explore reality as perceived by one person (Bruner, 1991). The narrated descriptions of behaviours, emotions and life episodes are an essential part of therapy practice (Angus and McLeod, 2004). In such practices, the role of the therapist is to help the patient in constructing the narratives that will help to perceive the new, meaningful reality (McAdams, 2005). The capability of the offender to re-construct his/her inner narrative is closely related to the capability to change that treatment requires. Thomas-Peter (2006) highlighted the need of the appropriate methodologies for understanding offenders' treatment needs and the potential response to treatment. Maruna and Copes (2004) argued the importance of bringing the approach to offenders' treatment closer in standards and logic to the approach to treatment for the non-offending population. The identification of neutral main themes in offenders' narratives, and the exploration of norms and common traits of these stories provide the basis for future narrative treatment developments and adjustments. Thus, for example, the identification of the structures and themes within the narrative, together with the elicitation of common and rare traits and characteristics, suggests that treatment and rehabilitation strategies could be adjusted specifically to suit each narrative reality.

The main themes and roles distinguished in the implicit content of the narratives, in the explicit processes to organise the stories, and in the interactions with others and the world allow considerable structural combinations within the story. For example, the narrative of the Innocent Victim redeeming himself through Help and building his story around the Prevailing Unity theme differs from the story of the Innocent Victim in desperate Getaway from Losing Loneliness. At the same time, the number of combinations is not infinite, and not even very large. This opens an opportunity for the typology to classify the offenders, based on the content and structure of the narratives they used when describing their life as a film. Each

combination presents a different set of psychological needs, and therefore would benefit from different therapy types. For example, the Innocent Victim who builds his story around Help and Prevailing Unity themes might benefit from group therapy and mutual support, especially if the group were to be gathered on the basis of personal narrative similarities. Individual Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, which is designed to restructure the thought process, would be a better choice for the Career Criminal, who organises his narrative around the themes of Heroic Winning and Excuse. The results of the comparison between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders, and between the narratives of offenders from different countries, open an opportunity for further adjustment of treatment and rehabilitation programmes – both to national specifics and to the personal criminal history. The fact that the typology is based upon a neutral, reflective story, rather than upon criminal episodes, eases its application for treatment and rehabilitation purposes.

The themes revealed by the separate exploration of the LAAF sub-themes grasped the cyclic changing nature of the narrative. Thus the typology based on these results will allow following the changes in the narrative, and in this way the changes in personality that are required by treatment.

10.3 The limitations of the current research

This part of the chapter outlines the limitations of the current study: the relatively small and unequal sample sizes in the comparative analyses, the influence of the researcher's personality on the coding process, the cross-country differences (e.g. the differences in the prison regulations, in the judicial system, in the language etc) and the differences in the interviewing manners of the different groups etc.

10.3.1 The description of the current research limitations

Despite the relatively large overall sample size, and the noteworthy findings, there are several limitations that may have impacted the results. Differences in the manner of the interviewers during data collection may have had an effect on the participants' responses. The data was collected by different interviewers' groups in each country, and therefore the difference increases. However, the fact that the data collection was conducted only by native language speakers in each country allows a cross-cultural comparison between the offenders' narratives. The use of the same CY-NEO manual and protocol for the interviewing process should have avoided the most drastic variations. The similarities in psychological complexity between responses from different national samples (e.g. British and Polish) showed that the interview procedure is not as sensitive to the issue of the interviewer's manner as might be feared.

It is important to highlight that the stories analysed for the current research are the stories of incarcerated offenders, prisoners, rather than simply the stories of offenders. The penitentiary environment and the effects of imprisonment influence the respondents' personalities and their narratives. No study done on the incarcerated population can be free of this influence, and thus the results of all such studies, including the current one, can be cautiously extrapolated to all offenders. The results can only be applied to the incarcerated population, the population influenced by the same imprisonment factor.

Although overall the sample size is quite large for the narrative research (227 responses in the full sample), the small and unequal sizes of national groups might have impacted on the study results. Thus, the Polish group included only 30 respondents, while the Italian sample consisted of just 35. The results from these two national samples can be extrapolated only with caution. The effect of the small sizes of some groups, and inequality in the sizes of all groups, was partially neutralized by the choice of the methods of analysis. Additionally, it is

worth noting that these groups' sizes allowed an in-depth analysis of the narratives, and the application of all 129 LAAF content framework variables to each narrative.

The attribution of the respondents to the national groups for the purpose of the comparison between the narratives was done based on their formal nationality definition (citizenship) and their native language, not on the basis of the participant's ethnicity. For example, the Hungarian sample included respondents with Magyar and Roma ethnical backgrounds. This method of attribution has both practical and theoretical merits. It allows a simple and clear-cut attribution, and relatively easy application of the results. Kottler (2015) argued that people are both formed by the stories they hear or watch, and form those stories. He also highlighted differences between adaptations of the universal themes in various countries (Kottler, 2015). Potentially, the results of the study will be applied within state/national penitentiary systems. Thus the exploration of national specifics of the prisoners' narratives, based on their formal nationality and native language, becomes an important feature for the future practical use of the current study results. The current study provides a significant insight into the question of the national specifics of the narratives in general, and offenders' narratives in particular. However, further studies are required in order to explore this question, studies that will use the same or an improved system of the attribution into national groups within the research pool.

The current study is a qualitative research, and thus it bears the limitations of qualitative research. The coding process is influenced by the researcher's personal understanding of the narratives, and currently there is no method to verify the results objectively by a quantitative method. The first limitation is partially reduced by the inter-raters' reliability check. As demonstrated in Chapter 6 the agreement between four independent raters was between fair to almost perfect. The fact that the all the coding was done blindly, and neither the current researcher nor the inter-raters had any information about the participants prior to coding

process (apart from the fact that the participants were criminal offenders) also partially enhanced the objectivity of the current research. The current study results offer an opportunity for the creation of a quantitative method. Such a method will, in future, allow verification of the narrative quantitative studies – as did the Narrative Role Questionnaire built on the basis of qualitative research.

As the data collection for the current study was conducted in different countries (one prison in each of the four countries in question), the results of the current study could be extrapolated to both general and country specific populations, albeit with caution. Although the representativeness of the samples collected in different countries was established in this study and was found to be sufficient (Chapter 5, Section 5.2) the findings still might have been influenced by the cross-country differences in the penitentiary systems (e.g. variations in the prison regulations that might affected the visiting patterns of the interviewing team and the ways in which the participants were accessed by the research teams), by the differences in the judicial systems (according to Aebi et al (2014)), by the definitions of the specific crimes, and by the length of the prison sentence for the same crime because of the variations in the strictness of sentencing in different countries). Self-reported criminal histories were used in the current research to define the nature of the criminal past of the participants, and these self-reports might have been affected by the legal definitions accepted in the specific country.

As mentioned previously the current research was conducted on the translations of the transcribed interview responses, rather than on the original transcriptions (except in the British sample, as the participants there were native English speakers). Although all the translations used in the current research were done by professional translators and/or native speakers of the language from which the translations were made, there might have been themes and/or traits that were lost in the translation process. Further studies are required to overcome this limitation, and to ensure the full understanding of the narrative themes and

constructs in the native language of the participants. The possible influence of the translation process on the accuracy of the LAAF elicitation process is not entirely clear, and further research is necessary. Although the current research presents the important insight into the comparative analysis of the offenders' narratives collected in different countries, its findings should be taken carefully and should only be extrapolated to both general and country-specific populations with caution.

Chapter 11: Suggestions for further research

11.1 The LAAF content framework development

The LAAF content framework covers a great range of narrative traits and characteristics. However the results of the current study show, that some important narrative themes cannot be described in terms of the LAAF framework in its present state. The "Documentary" as the genre of the "life-film" definition given by the participants was registered too frequently at least in some groups to be ignored. In addition to that some more significant changes in the LAAF content framework are recommended.

11.1.1 Interpersonal relationships within the narrative

The interpersonal relationships within the narrative in the LAAF content framework are described by the categories from the "Agency vis-à-vis others and the world" subgroup. At present, this sub-group covers the range of positive to neutral themes of the narrative. The whole range of negative roles for either protagonist or other characters, although clearly present in the responses, cannot be described in terms of LAAF due to lack of terms in the framework. The majority of the items in the "Agency vis-à-vis others and the world" subgroup is based on the work of McAdams (e.g. all imagoes). Although McAdams (1996) argued that imagoes might be positive or negative, nearly all the imagoes described by him

(and adjusted for the LAAF framework) are positive imagoes, containing good and desirable attributes. The only exception might be the “Escapist” imago. It describes someone unwilling to take responsibility for anything, a person living only for diversion and amusement. Although this imago might not be defined as containing good and desirable attributes, it hardly covers the whole possible range of the less desirable traits that might be found in the narrative.

The creation of LAAF items that form the negative, rather than the exclusively positive, roles will allow for the study of the dark side of the personal stories. The inspiration for such adjustments can be taken from the study on the characters in the folk tales for negative roles (e.g. Propp, 1938).

11.1.2 The antagonists’ roles in the narrative

As the results of the current study show, there are narratives that contain the role of Villain (using Propp’s terminology) assigned to others. This Villain can be either a person, or an abstract, non-personified Evil. Further studies to develop and study negative roles within the narrative will allow for a better understanding of the relationship with others, the respondents’ perceptions of evil outside or within. After all, negative roles might be assigned not only to others, but also to oneself. In accordance with the study by Maruna and Copes (2004), it could be proposed that such negative self-perception might act as a reinforcement of criminal thinking, and by proxy of future recidivism.

11.1.3 Machiavellianism in the narrative

The results of the current study on the explicit processes to organise the narrative allowed the proposition that the LAAF content framework misses the variables that represent the way to redeem oneself through “false unity” or manipulation. This gap can be amended by bringing

the “Dark Triad”, or, more specifically, Machiavellianism, into the LAAF content framework. Machiavellianism can be defined as a personal tendency to deceive and manipulate others. According to Dahling et al (2009), Machiavellianism can be outlined by the following traits: 1) tendency to distrust others, 2) willingness to engage in amoral manipulation, 3) a desire to accumulate a status for oneself, 4) a desire to maintain interpersonal control. These characteristics can be adopted as the categories for the LAAF content dictionary. The presence of qualitative measurement (Machiavellianism Personality Scale by Dahling et al, 2009) that includes sub-scales corresponding to the proposed LAAF items will ensure the validity of this framework adjustment.

Dahling et al (2009) argued that there is a link between high scores on the Machiavellianism Scale and a low propensity to trust – a generalised expectation of the extent to which others can be trusted. Thus with bringing in the whole theme of Machiavellianism and manipulation a new question arises –is there any correlation between Machiavellianism and the perceived significance/non-significance of others? If others cannot be trusted, but only manipulated – are they important to the narrator? The theme of significance or insignificance of others in the eyes of the narrator currently can be described in terms of the LAAF. By adding the categories for the lack of trust, a new insight can be found on the agency vis-à-vis others and the world in the narratives.

11.1.4 Significance in the eyes of others

At present state the LAAF content framework allows to characterise the significance or insignificance of others in the eyes of the narrator. But the narrator himself – does he perceive himself as significant in the eyes of others? Strain theories state that strains or stressors increase the likelihood of crime (e.g. Cohen, 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Agnew, 1992). Agnew (1992) described strain as “relationships in which others are not

treating the individual as he or she would like to be treated” (p. 48). Elliot, Kao and Grant (2004) suggested that individuals who act in socially undesirable or even deviant ways might be doing so in order to gain some significance in the eyes of others.

In 1981, Rosenberg and McCullough suggested the concept of mattering – the person’s own perception of him-/herself as significant in the eyes of others. Rosenberg & McCullough, (1981) argued that mattering is one of the primary motivators for the self-esteem. Although the concept of mattering has existed for decades, studies on the subject are numbered, and usually carried out on the adolescent population (e.g Marshall, 2001; Rayle and Myers, 2004; Rayle, 2005). In the narrative research, the theme of mattering has been neglected. The addition of the Mattering theme to LAAF will provide a better understanding of the offenders’ perception of the outer world. As the association was found between deviant behaviours and low levels of mattering, the manifestation of this theme in the narrative might provide an additional differentiating factor for the narratives of the desisters.

According to Elliot, Kao and Grant (2004), there are three component of mattering: 1) awareness (the person is recognized as an existent individual at all), 2) importance (the person is an object of someone's interest and concern) and 3) reliance (the person matters to others because they look to that person for the satisfaction of their needs or wishes). These components can be used as a basis for new LAAF categories. The existing qualitative measurements (e.g. Mattering to Others Questionnaire by Marshall, (2002) or Elliot’s Mattering Scale (2004)) can be used to validate the addition of these new categories to LAAF.

It can be proposed that there will be a specific association between different manifestations of mattering and the narrative themes described in the current research. For example, Innocent Victim in the story of Help might manifest reliance, but also lack of importance in the eyes of

others. However, the theme of mattering might be completely absent in the more hostile narrative of Excuse, even with the same Innocent Victim character.

A list of the proposed categories with definitions is provided in Appendix III of the current study.

11.2 Narrative plot structure

Linde (1993), argued that structural characteristics of narrative aid in establishing and maintaining a unified sense of self. The topic of the story plot, narrative stages and changes developing within the narrative was previously addressed in various studies (e.g. Agnew, 2006; Labov and Waletzky, 1967). However, usually the narratives in question were exclusively those of crime (e.g. Allen and Goodwill, 2012), and only one beginning of the story line (strain as in Agnew, 2006; or trigger as in Day and Marion, 2012; or McMurrin, Hoyte and Jinks, 2012) was addressed. As the current study results show, in more than half of the cases the offenders' narratives are well structured. According to Propp (1938), functions (basic units of the plot – actions or events) of the story are defined by their position in the sequence of events. Thus the same function (or, in case of the LAAF framework, the same content dictionary item) will have different morphological values depending upon its place in the story. Unfortunately, at present the LAAF content framework does not provide tools to address the development of the plot - only to register the presence or absence of the distinct beginning, middle and end parts in the story.

The exploration of the story plot and the positions of the plot units within the narrative will allow further understanding of the narrative structure and dynamics. It will provide more information on the narrative peak and nadir points and their places in the story (currently

described to some extent only by Redemption/Contamination categories), emotional changes and the unfolding of the narrative plot.

11.3 “Life as a Film” and the role of crime within the narrative

As can be seen in the results of the current study, the prevalent theme of the offenders’ stories is criminality (two out of three most popular events described in the Film narrative were Imprisonment (57%) and Doing Crime (44%)). As a previous study (Youngs et al, 2014) shows, the LAAF approach underpins is the importance of the role of criminality in the offenders’ life story. But what is the actual role of the crime episode in the life narrative?

Narrative identity is the way to organise individual’s inner-selves, all individuals’ different roles, to give them unity and purpose (McAdams, 1995). Every person plays more than one role in life, and every role can be seen as a potential character in a story. The distinction between these many characters and one story “within which the characters are given the form, function and voice” (McAdams, 1993, p. 118) is very important. The CY-NEO protocol, in addition to the “Life as a Film” account, allows the collection of personal narratives on crime committed by the narrator and the event that is significant for the narrator. Recently the crime episodes as described by offenders themselves received the most research attention (e.g. Canter and Ioannou, 2004a; Youngs and Canter, 2011; Youngs and Canter, 2012; Allen and Goodwill, 2012; McMurrin, Hoyte and Jinks, 2012). However, the data collected using CY-NEO protocol is yet to be taken syncretically. This syncretic approach might allow the exploration of the place of a crime episode within the personal narrative.

According to McLean et al (2007), every story one tells about oneself represents a different aspect of self-concept. That includes even stories in which a person’s behaviour is exceptional and not characteristic (Rice & Pasupathi, 2006, quoted in McLean et al, 2007).

Singer and Blagov (2004) describe situated stories and how they are shaped by life story consistent patterns. For example, a new negative experience can become the situated story of redemption, if redemption is the consistent pattern of one's life story (Singer and Blagov, 2007). According to the CY-NEO procedure, the crime story is told in the response to the request "Tell me about the crime you committed and remember best". At the same time it can be taken as a situated story, not just a "factual" one – it was built into the life narrative as one, and for that reason, according to McLean et al (2007) self-process model, remembered.

The LAAF content dictionary allows to grasp the specific characteristics of the significant event and "Life as a Film" response (as done by Carthy, 2013). Taken together, they can be viewed as a general description of life as perceived by the respondent and as a reference point (significance of the episode – and the manner of this significance). Most of the LAAF framework categories can be adjusted to a crime episode (although some adjustments of the CY-NEO protocol interview questions might be needed as well). That will provide means to compare this situated story of crime with the life description in general and the exceptional/significant episode of that life in particular. The current study provides in depth analysis of the characteristics and inner structure of "Life as a Film" offenders' stories. Further studies can explore the place and characteristics of crime episodes within the offenders' narratives using "Life as a Film" research results for reference and comparison.

11.4 Violent and non-violent offenders' stories

The comparison between the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders was done on the basis of self-reported criminal history. Thus, if the respondent preferred to conceal his past and not share the information of the true nature of the crime or crimes he committed, there was no way for the researcher to discover the truth and to attribute the narrative to the correct group. However, the main focus of the current study is the self-perception of the offenders, and thus the self-report is a vital form of information. Stevenson et al (2004) argued that the

criminal's sentiments (and among them identification with criminal others) are good predictors of offending behaviour. This finding accords with the proposition of Maruna and Copes (2004): "Those who cling most tightly to excuses may be the least likely to persist in criminality, because this would counter their images of themselves as innocents" (Maruna & Copes, 2004, p. 53-54). It can be proposed that the identification with violent or non-violent offenders, or distancing from violence, can be important for the self-perception of the offender – and by proxy for the treatment process. Further studies are required to explore this proposition.

The associations between narrative traits and the type of crimes committed by the narrator (violent versus non-violent) did not, in some cases, reach the required level of significance. There are relatively few significant differences found between the violent and non-violent offenders' narratives. It could be the true picture, or the result of a small sample and unequal group size. Further studies on larger and equal samples of violent and non-violent offenders are needed in order to understand the tendency.

The comparison between violent and non-violent offenders' narratives was done exclusively on a general sample that included equal number of participants from each country. Thus the cultural differences in approach to violence described in previous studies (e.g. Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg and Zwi, 2002) were not, and could not be, addressed. The current study provides only a general picture of the differences between violent and non-violent offenders' "Life as a Film" stories. Further researches on equal in size single-nationality samples of violent and non-violent offenders are required to address the potential cultural differences in the perception of violence.

11.5 Prisoners' stories and the traditions of story-telling

The results of the current research show a vast number of significant similarities in major characteristics and themes of the narratives. At the same time, the narratives collected in different countries vary in length, psychological complexity and the subtle, less frequent traits and characteristics. All stories are shaped by the cultural background, by genres and plots that are common in this particular culture (Gergen, 1992; Maynes et al, 2008). However, the theme of national or cultural differences in offenders' personal stories as a research subject was mainly neglected. The current study only provides a basis for the future exploration of this topic. Further research can overcome the limitations of the present one – small and unequally sized national samples, and the inability to address the cultural differences in approaches to violence. Further studies can also address the factors that create the drastic dispersion, for example, in speech length, between participants from different national samples. Research in the adjacent fields of sociology and socio-linguistics is required to explore the acceptable length of speech in different countries.

The current study presents the noteworthy insight into the differences in the offenders' narratives collected in different countries. The narrative norms and themes distinguished in it can serve as a basis for future explorations of the narratives national/cultural specifics. They can also be a first step in the adjustment of the LAAF content framework and the upcoming LAAF quantitative measurement to the specifics and requirements in different countries. Taken together with the fairy-tale parallel, frequently brought up within the current research, the findings provide a new perspective on the study of the personal narrative.

According to Kottler (2015), people choose and form the stories they tell about themselves – and at the same time these stories are formed and influenced by the narratives people absorb from books, television, and society. Thus the stories of the prisoners are also formed by their cultural background, by the narratives they have been used to since childhood. Risky but

logical suggestions can be made about the influence of “cultural background” narratives on the personal “Life as a Film” stories. Thus, the relatively depressive (in comparison to other samples) tone of the British narratives can be in relation to the Shakespearean background. After all, even the comedies of Shakespeare usually include a tragic story or two – and some of them, like “The Merchant of Venice”, the integral part of a GSCE programme, can hardly be distinguished from a genuine tragedy. Overall, the description “a tragedy with a note of humour” can well fit the good part of English literature as it is given in the GSCE programme, where depressive books like “An Inspector calls”, “Animal farm”, “Wuthering heights” etc take up a good part of the list. The overwhelming detalisation of the Italian narratives in the current research can be paralleled with classical Italian literature. Boccaccio, Dante or the less famous Masuccio and Straparola filled their books with stories within stories, side plots and details.

However, such parallels are risky and difficult to draw. Due to complicated historical processes it is hard to define the most influential Polish and Hungarian writers – after all, both countries were frequently divided and their regions were assigned to their powerful neighbours. Additionally, it would be rather an amplification to declare that poorly-educated offenders are highly influenced by their national literature. The chance that British prisoners at some point of their life saw at least some movies based on Shakespeare’s plays are higher than the chance that Polish prisoners were well aware of the oeuvres of Mikołaj Rej, “the father of Polish literature”, or even of the more popular Adam Mickiewicz.

In this case, the appeal to folk tales becomes most useful. Folk tales are known to everyone. They accompany humans from childhood to death – bedtime stories, allusions in adult books and movies (what is “Pretty woman” if not another version of “Cinderella”?), urban legends, advertisement motives. Modern writers and scriptwriters often turn to tale motives (e.g. “Star Wars”) or even create a new folklore (e.g. Tolkien).

According to Zipes (2012), tale patterns and sequences of events are similar in different cultures, while the relative versatility of folk tales is reached by culture-specific customs and beliefs. Stories about turnskins are well-known around the world, but the differences between the werewolves of European tales and, for example, the “were-foxes” <kitsune> of Japanese stories are dramatic. Due to the instructive nature of the tales, they are influenced greatly by local culture, its conditions and requirements. For example, the same story of the competition for the local beauty’s hand in marriage is quite similar in major patterns and sequences of events across various cultures. In European countries, in the Far East, and in African countries this story will include the announcement of the competition itself (or the “Difficult Task” function in Propp’s terminology, 1938). During the competition, one and only one candidate completes the task or tasks successfully, and therefore wins the lady’s hand in marriage. Such evolution of the story plot is quite common across different countries. However, culture-specific customs and beliefs can make a great difference within the story plot common to different cultures and nations. Thus, a good part of European fairy-tales includes the story of the brave knight who accepts the challenge for the lady’s hand in marriage – and kills the monster in a fair, or relatively fair, fight for his love. However, in the story of the people of Bura (Cameroon and Nigeria), the girl is given in marriage, but not to the man who won the competition. The task was catching the deer alive and bringing it back to the village. The man who decided to quit the task, because it’s too hot to run, and there are many other pretty girls around, was thought more reasonable for that decision – and therefore more fit to be awarded the local beauty’s hand in marriage (“Книга о судах и судьях” [The book of judges and judgments], 1975). The Bura story goes against most of the romantic ideas of the European world, and against the usual laws of European tales. Such differences can be explained by the dissimilarities of the local cultures. After all, hunting and fighting were privileges of the noble classes rather than everyone’s pastime in old Europe, while in

Cameroon and Nigeria hunting is not a privilege, or even a profession. Culture-specific customs shape the inner logic of the fairy-tale, making the outcome of the story logical for those exposed to the same culture, but drastically unexpected to outsiders. The values of freedom and individualism are deeply rooted in American stories, while in Asian ones more weight is given to collectivism and self-sacrifice for the greater good and happiness of all the people (Kottler, 2015).

And yet comparisons between folk-tales in order to discover common characteristics and culture-specific traits is rather neglected in academic studies. Further studies will allow in-depth research of culture-specific traits of the narrative – whether it is the folk fairy tale or the personal “Life as a Film”, which is rather reminiscent of the fairy tale. An embrace between folk mythology studies and narrative research in psychology might prove to be fruitful. The identification of culture-specific traits of the offenders’ narratives might benefit the further understanding of their criminality and will allow a better adjustment of the offenders’ assessment, treatment and rehabilitation programmes.

Several areas were identified for future research. However, that does not disadvantage the findings of the present study. This study is a unique attempt to explore the structure of offenders’ “Life as a Film” stories, and to identify the traits and themes common in the narratives of violent and non-violent offenders and in the stories collected in the different countries. These areas, highlighted for future research, only enhance the meaning of the present study findings and show how under-researched is this topic in psychology. People identify themselves through their narratives. As the current study shows, the offenders’ narratives are focused on the conflict between the disagreeable reality and the narrator’s craving for happiness, and are shaped by the theme of criminality. All these traits are

manifested, regardless of the narrator's country of origin or criminal past. The findings of the present study will be useful both in further academic research and in the field practice of offenders' treatment and rehabilitation. The "Life as a Film" approach provides a way to collect and explore data on criminality in a neutral unstigmatizing way that makes sense for both the researcher and the person closest to the subject – the offender himself.

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Appendix I (i)

Canter-Youngs Narrative Experiences of Offenders protocol selection

“Life as a Film” technique (Canter and Youngs, 2015)

If your life were to be made into a film, what type of film would it be?

What would happen?

Who would the main characters be?

What would the main events that might happen in the film?

How do you think it might end?

The Main Scene of the Film

What happens in the most exciting scene in the film?

Where is it?

What is going on?

Who else is there? What are they doing?

How are you acting?

How do you feel?

How the Film opens

When does the film start?

What is going on?

What are you like then?

Now tell us in as much detail as you can what happens between this Opening scene and the Main Scene

You in the film

What sort of person are you?

Who you have good feelings about and why?

Who do you have bad feelings about and why?

What do other people think about you?

What mistakes do you make?

How do you change during the film?

Demographics

Now please tell me about yourself....

Male _____ or Female _____

How old are you? _____

What ethnicity are you? Please tick below.

White	Black-Caribbean	Black-African	Indian	Chinese	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other Please say what

What qualifications did you get at school? (GCSEs/ O levels/ CSEs)

Do you have any A-Levels? Yes_____ No_____

Write down any other qualifications or training that you have? (Things like NVQs or military training or sports skills)

What courses/ sessions have you attended in prison if any?

How old were you when you were first given an official warning by the police?

How old were you when you were first found guilty of a crime in court?

What was this for? _____

About how many convictions have you got in total (include everything)?_____

About how many times have you been up in court?_____

What do you have convictions for? Please write **all the different types** of convictions that you have.

What are **most** of your convictions for?

What was your **first** conviction?

Do either of your parents or step-parents have convictions? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what for? _____

Have you been to a prison or a Young Offender's Institution before?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, how long were you away for before? _____ months

How long was the sentence you were given (this time)? _____ months

How much of this have you served so far? _____ months

Have you been on probation before? Yes _____ No _____

As a child did you live? (If you lived in different places please tick all those that apply) :-

with my Mum and Dad - _____

with just one of my parents - _____

with my Mum and step-Dad - _____

with my Dad and step-Mum - _____

with other relatives - _____

with foster parents - _____

in a Children's or Community Home - _____

Other (please say) - _____

Did any brothers or sisters (or step brothers or step sisters) live with you?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, how many lived with you? - _____

What ages are they now?

Do they have any criminal convictions? Yes _____ No _____

If so, what are these for?

If you know, please tell me what job your parents (or step-parents) do.

If they are unemployed tell me about their most recent job:-

Father/ Step-father: What is the job called? _____

What do they do? _____

Full time or Part time? _____

Are they unemployed now? Yes _____ No _____

Mother/ Step mother: What is the job called? _____

What do they do? _____

Full time or Part time? _____

Are they unemployed now? Yes _____ No _____

Appendix I (ii)

CY-NEO Protocol Participant Information Sheet

Sample

We are <INTRODUCTION HERE>. We would like to invite you to take part in our study on personal experiences of offending actions. Before you decide to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If you find something is not clear or if you would like more information, please do not hesitate to ask one of our research team. If we are not near, you may ask a member of staff to pass your question to us <IN CASES WHEN THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN THE PARTICIPANTS AND THE RESEARCH GROUP, E.G. EMAIL, PLEASE, PROVIDE EMAIL ADDRESS OF THE RESEARCH GROUP HERE>.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of the study is to look at personal experiences of offenders. It is done for better understanding of association between the personality traits and criminal actions and will provide necessary information for improvement and personalisation of rehabilitation and treatment programmes.

Do I have to participate?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be free to withdraw your consent at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect you in any way.

If I will take part what will happen to me?

Taking part in the research will include an audio recorded interview where you will be asked to describe 2 episodes of your life: an event that is significant for you and a crime that you committed and remember well. Then you will be asked to describe your life as a film –what film your life will be, what will happen in that film. We will ask you to answer a set of questionnaires relating to each event you described.

In addition to the interview you will be asked to complete an information sheet on your background. This is to obtain general information about each participant such as age, gender and family situation.

How this study will be conducted?

Interviewing is a very personal process, and will take place in a special room on the <ORGANISATION/PRISON/PROBATION TRUST NAME HERE> premises. Date and time of the interview will be made convenient for you and fit with your time-schedule.

Usually it's face to face between you and one of our research team. If you would prefer a chaperone to be present, please, tell us, and we will provide one. To keep your confidentiality

members of <ORGANISATION/PRISON/PROBATION TRUST NAME HERE> will not be present at the interviews even as chaperones.

The whole interviewing will last up to an hour and a half. If you feel tired, you can take a break and continue after some rest. Option of two same day meetings will be provided in cases where one long meeting might not be well fit with your personal time schedule.

All interviews will be audio recorded. The audio recording of the interview will be transcribed for an analysis - at this point the researcher will omit any information which may allow your identification or identification of any other persons mentioned in the interview.

For the purpose of the research your personal file kept in <ORGANISATION/PRISON/PROBATION TRUST NAME HERE> might be reviewed by one of the research team. It will happen only on <ORGANISATION/PRISON/PROBATION TRUST NAME HERE> premises. No documents will be taken outside. All the notes taken during review will be absolutely anonymised, all personal and identifiable information omitted.

What are the benefits of taking part?

During the interview you will be able to tell your story, to share your experiences and emotions with good empathic listener, who is interested in your point of view and opinion. Your participation in this study will provide important scientific information for further improvement and personalisation of rehabilitation and treatment programmes.

What are my risks if I decide to take part?

During the interview we will ask you about your life and your personal experiences – events you find significant, crime you have committed. The whole process (interviews and questionnaires) will take up to an hour and a half. This experience might be distressful for you.

We are concerned about your well-being, so if at any moment during your participation in the study you feel distress, you can withdraw from the study and appropriate support will be provided for you, if need be. You don't have to give any reason for your withdrawal.

Withdrawal from the study will not affect you in any way. Any data collected from you will be destroyed after your withdrawal and will not be used in the study.

How will my information be kept confidential?

All the data gathered will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential.

The data obtained from the interviews will remain confidential throughout the process of the research and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet within the research centre. Only qualified researchers involved in the study will have access to this data. Members of <ORGANISATION/PRISON/PROBATION TRUST> will know that you are taking part in the study, but even they will not have access to the information you have given.

Personal information provided in the interview will be kept anonymous and confidential. At the same time you should be aware that there are limits to confidentiality. If you tell us about your intentions to harm yourself or others, we are under obligation to report this to a member of the staff. If you disclose to us details of past offences for which you were not convicted, or

offences you are currently involved in, or plans for future offences, we must report it to a member of the staff and to appropriate authorities.

If I decided to participate, what I need to do?

If you wish to take part in this project, please, tell us so personally or via email: <EMAIL HERE>. If we are not near and you don't have Internet access, please, contact a member of <ORGANISATION/PRISON/PROBATION TRUST> and he/she will pass this information to us.

What if I don't want to take part in the study or later change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw from the research at any moment during the interviewing and three months after completing the interview. To do so, please, contact a member of staff and tell him/her that you would like to withdraw. You will also need to tell a member of staff your unique identification number (in the box at the top-right of the sheet). You do not have to give a reason for your withdraw; however this should be within three month of taking part in the interview. A member of staff will send an email titled 'withdraw' to <EMAIL HERE>. After that all information you provided to us will be withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

What will happen with the results of the study?

The primary use of the data will be for the current < PROJECT TITLE>; however it also will be used for future research by the team at the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (IRCIP), Great Britain.

If you give permission, once the current research < PROJECT TITLE> is finished, the anonymised interview transcript obtained from this interview will be stored in the archives at the IRCIP for additional study and research purposes by the members of IRCIP team. If you do not want your interview protocol to be stored after the current project is finished please state so on the consent form.

The results of the study will be provided to the <ORGANISATION/PRISON/PROBATION TRUST NAME HERE> in a form of report. No personal information or data will be given. Also project results might be published in professional peer reviewed journals and presented at professional conferences by the members of the current research team and/or by the members of the IRCIP research team.

Researcher contact details: This research is conducted by <NAMES; UNIVERSITY>. The project is supervised by <NAMES>.

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, please, call <PHONE NUMBER> or send us an email / contact a member of staff and ask him/her to email: <EMAIL HERE>.

**CY-NEO Protocol Consent Form
Sample**

Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything you do not understand or if you would like more information. It is important that you

understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate.

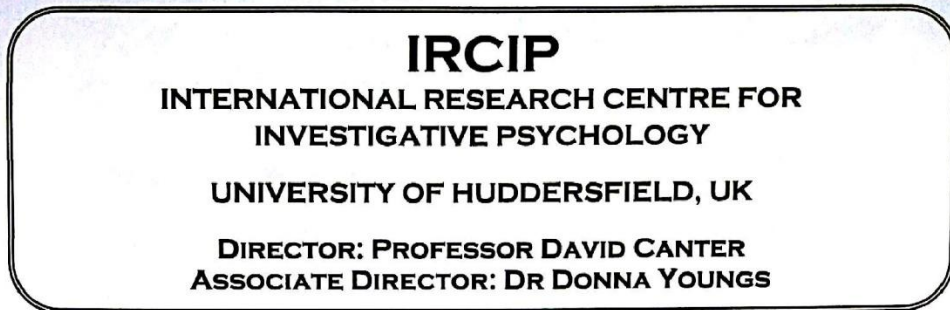
- I have read “Participant Information Sheet” and I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research. I understand that participation in this study will not affect the way I am treated in any way.
- I consent to taking part in this study.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time during the interviewing process and three months after it without giving any reason and this withdrawal will not affect the way I am treated in any way. I understand that if I withdraw from the project my data will not be used in the study in any way.
- I am aware that if during my participation in the study I experience distress or personal difficulties, I can withdraw from the study and receive appropriate help and support.
- I understand that my name will only appear on this consent form, and this will be kept separate from the material obtained from my interview.
- I understand that the personal information provided in the interview will be kept anonymous and confidential.
- I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my identification or identification of any person mentioned by me will be included in any study. I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym).
- I am aware that there are limits to confidentiality and acknowledge that if I express intentions to harm myself or others, the researchers are under obligation to report this to a member of staff.
- I am also aware that that if during the interview I disclose information on the past offences for which I have not been convicted or the offences I am currently involved in, or the plans for future offences, the researchers must report it to a member of staff and to appropriate authorities.
- I understand that by agreeing to partake in the study, I am also giving my consent for the researchers to access and review my personal file held by <ORGANISATION NAME HERE>. I understand that all notes taken during review will be strictly anonymised.
- I understand that all the information collected will be kept in secure conditions for a period of ten years at the International Research Centre of Investigative Psychology (IRCIP), Great Britain.
- I understand and agree that the members of the IRCIP team may use the strictly anonymised data I provided for the further research purposes and publications.

- I understand that only people that will have access to any information obtained from the interview will be qualified researchers.

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please print and sign below. By signing this document you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____	Signature of Researcher: _____
Print: _____	Print: _____
Date:	Date:

(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)



DATA AGREEMENT FOR IRCIP ARCHIVE DATA

Name: *Sophia Tkazky*
Organisation/ University: *University of Huddersfield*
Occupation: *PhD candidate, researcher*

Purpose of study: *comparative analysis of prisoners' narratives (cross-national study)*

Data type (please provide full details of data requested from archives, each different data type should have separate request form):

CY-NEO data collected in European countries

Please discuss how you will protect against anonymity whilst using this data:

*All data is already transcribed and anonymised. The list of the participants' names and any identifiable information is stored separately, not requested and not covered by this agreement.
 Data to be stored in electronic form, securely and encrypted, on password protected devices only (e.g. password protected computer).
 Only assigned researcher will have access to this data.*

After this study is finished the data in full will be returned to the IRCIP for further storage in the IRCIP archive.

Estimated time of use and return date:

Till 30.09.2017 (estimated submission date of my PhD project).

Terms and conditions of use:

I agree to use the data for the intentions of the purposed research only.

Dissemination of the data, apart from use with the named researcher and direct research team, will only be done with written permission from IRCIP director or Associate director only.

Data must be returned to IRCIP, in its original condition, by the date stated above, a written request for extension of use must be provided.

Any publications from the data are to be reviewed by IRCIP team, unless agreement not to do so has been granted by the director or associate director only.

Work with IRCIP directors and staff on publications and cite directors as co authors on publications and presentations.

Data can be used for unpublished student work, including PhD, MSc and undergraduate theses.

IRCIP reserve the rights to revoke the data at anytime.

If you agree to the terms and conditions please sign and date below.

Sign: *[Signature]*

Date: 04.03.2016

Consent to use IRCIP archive data ^{*} (to be signed by the above named director or associate director ONLY).

Sign: *[Signature]*

Date: 04.03.2016

* For clarity this agreement refers to all data collected with the LAAF as part of the CY-NEO Project
[Signature]

Appendix II

“Life as a Film” Content Framework

All the categories are in accordance with the list in the original publication by Canter and Youngs (2015). All the definitions were created by the current researcher for the purpose of this study based on the original publication and the sources to which it referred.

Psychological Complexity

- Length in words – number of words in the response. The interviewer’s questions and/or remarks should not be included. For the translated responses, only the length of the translation is taken into account.
- Number of people cited - number of people mentioned in the response. Only distinct mentions should be counted (e.g. “My brother, my son, my girlfriend”), not the groups (e.g. “My brothers, my mates”).
- Presence of distinct roles for characters - characters in the response are given distinct roles/functions (e.g. “My mother is my hero”) (Yes/No)
- Number of distinct events cited - number of clear separate events described or even mentioned in the response (e.g. “My wedding, the birth of my son” – two distinct events; “All my troubles” – 0 events).
- Number of distinct psychological ideas - number of clear separate ideas, such as thoughts, beliefs, emotions
- Presence/number of contingent sequences - sequence of events where 2nd (or 3rd) event happened because of 1st (Yes/No)
- Presence of distinct beginning, middle and end components to the story - the response has distinct beginning, middle and end components (Yes/No)

- Presence of coherent theme -the coherent, consistent theme is raised in the response
(Yes/No)

Remit: Implicit Psychological Content

All the categories are dichotomous, only the presence of each item in the response is registered.

Genres:

Any genre should be marked as present only if it was clearly stated in the narrative (e.g. “It would be a comedy action really”, “My film genre is a tragedy”) or if the participant mentions the name of the existing film (e.g. “It would be a gangster film something like ‘Menace to Society’ – genre “thriller”). Genre should not be worked out if not named in the response or if at least the title of the existing film is not given. “Genre” items include:

- Comedy
- Romance
- Crime
- Action
- Tragedy
- Thriller

Events:

Any event should be marked as present only if mentioned in the narrative. E.g. “I have the support of my family and people in here” – relationship success described. “I had a breakdown of my marriage and I ended up in here” – relationship problem and imprisonment. “Event” items include:

- Doing crime (event)
- Imprisonment (event)

- Victim of crime (event)
- Birth (event)
- Death (event)
- Material success (event)
- Relationship problem (event)
- Relationship success (event)

Message

All the categories in the “Message” subgroup are based on the study by Sandberg (2009) on conventional and non-conventional narrative discourses. This subgroup includes following six items:

- “It was my own choice” – in the narrative the respondent directly or indirectly proclaims that his/her actions and decisions were his/her own. The narrator does not point to any external factors that influenced him (e.g. peer pressure, social or personal problems) and/or highlights that whatever were the circumstances the decision was his own choice.
- “I’m decent” – the narrator stresses the goodness and decency of his/her “real self”, speaks about his/her moral values, care for others, moral reasons for his/her actions, even declares being moral by upbringing or by being religious.
- “We’re the same” – the narrator claims that people are all the same, and that everyone commits some illegal actions, so there is no difference between him/her as a criminal and the so called “non-offending population”, between offenders and the mainstream society.
- “I am interesting” – the participant tries to present him/herself as interesting, by exaggerating parts of the story and/or by telling the story in a way that he/she expects

will be more interesting for the interviewer (e.g. BR47 “*I seem to be full of contradictions so I guess you never know. I am studying psychology now – I want a master. That is something I have done for myself. It is not easy though since England is punishing me. It is out of balance. The police is – they need to get their priorities straight.*” – the respondent knows that the interviewer is a forensic psychologist, and makes the response more interesting for his audience).

- “I am smart” – the narrator presents him/herself as intelligent, competent and knowledgeable.
- “I am dangerous” – the narrator presents him/herself as dangerous, violent, hard and/or vengeful.

Happy ending – the ending described in the response is a happy ending
Sad ending – the ending of the “Life as a Film” response is a sad ending

Positive tone – in general the tone of the response is positive.

Negative tone - in general the tone of the response is negative.

Passive – the protagonist in the response accepts what is happening to him/her without resistance.

Pro-active – the protagonist in the response takes the initiative.

Explicit Processes Used to Organise the Content

All the categories are dichotomous, only the presence of each item in the response is registered.

Agency Themes

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by McAdams (1993, 1995, 1996, 2012).

- Self-mastery - the narrator describes how he/she attained new and important insights into him/herself. The insight may be seen as a new level of self-awareness, new, deeper self-understanding, realisation of new goals or life missions, even possible enhanced control over destiny. The respondent explains how he/she became more wise or more mature as the result of some experience.
- Status-victory - the protagonist gains a higher status in the hierarchy or attains prestige among his/her peers (e.g. wins a competition, gets a promotion, earns respect in the company). The context in such story is compulsory, interpersonal and implicitly competitive.
- Achievement/responsibility – the narrator describes how he/she achieved substantial success in some activities (tasks, jobs, assumption of responsibilities). The protagonist feels proud and confident in meeting significant challenges or in reaching some important instrumental goal in life. The protagonist may also take responsibility for other people or assume charge over some things or people.
- Empowerment – the main character is made better through an interaction with something larger and greater than the self. The protagonist makes a strong impression and has an impact on other people or events in the story. This impact may even be aggressive (physically or verbally). The protagonist is effective in exerting his/her own will to change things (the change can be negative or positive).

Communion themes

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the study by McAdams (2012).

- Love/Friendship - the protagonist experiences an enhancement of love or friendship towards another person. A relationship between people becomes warmer or closer. This category does not include parent/child relationship (or any other rather nurturing

relationship), however it does include the relationship between peers. According to McAdams (2012) even if the end of relationship is described in the narrative, this category should be marked as present if the love/friendship was mentioned.

- Dialogue – the narrator describes reciprocal, non-hostile and non-instrumental form of communication with another person or group of others. It can be a conversation about some intimate topics or even a friendly chat about “the weather and everybody’s health”. This conversation is viewed as justified for its own sake, so instrumental conversations that are taken for non-communal reasons do not qualify for Dialogue. Hostile arguments do not qualify for Dialogue.
- Caring/Help - the narrator describes that he/she provides care, help and/or assistance, for other or others. Receiving such care from others also qualifies for this category.
- Unity/Togetherness – this theme captures the idea of belonging, being part of a larger community. The narrator describes a sense of unity, harmony and/or solidarity with others (that could be a group of people or even humankind as whole).

Redemption themes

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by McAdams (1993, 1995, 1996, 2012).

- General redemption – the story moves from negative to positive, something good emerges out of bad.
- Advantage – the narrator describes that he/she enjoyed some special advantage.
- Suffering – the protagonist witnesses suffering or injustice in the lives of others.
- Development – the narrator describes how he/she developed the sense of moral steadfastness

- Repeated negative – the protagonist repeatedly encounters negative events that are transformed into redemption.
- Prosocial – the narrator sets forth pro-social goals.

Contamination themes

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by McAdams (1993, 1995, 1996, 2012).

- General contamination – the story moves from positive to negative; good event turns sour.
- Victimization – the protagonist suffers from abuse (physical or verbal), becomes a victim of crime, cruelty, fate.
- Betrayal – the narrator describes how he/she was betrayed (e.g. unfaithful partner , friend who betrayed friendship etc).
- Loss of significant others – this category includes both the loss of a significant person (e.g. death of the partner, friend or parent) and significant quality/property. According to McAdams (1996), in this narrative category the loss of a job, money, property, self-respect, respect for another should be included.
- Failure – the narrator describes his/her failure (e.g. in sports, job, education. courtship).
- Physical or psychological illness or injury – the narrator describes how he/she suffers from physical/psychological illness or injury.
- Disappointment – in the story things do not turn out as expected by the narrator, things go wrong.
- Disillusionment – the protagonist loses his/her positive illusions about the world, corrects his/her previous positive misperception about the world as whole.

- Sex guilt, humiliation – the narrator tells how enjoyment turned to guilt and/or humiliation.

Classic Narrative Themes

Presence of the following ideas:

- Overcoming struggles/obstacles/mission
- Wrong done to them/theirs - participant describes wrongs that were caused to him/her or his/hers.
- Impotence/Hopelessness
- Effectiveness/Skills/Competencies
- Victory/Proving Self/Success
- Revenge
- Fate
- Tangible Rewards/Acquisitions
- Masculinity/Bravery
- Compulsion
- Confusion/Misunderstanding
- Fulfilment/Satisfaction

Agency vis-à-vis Others and the World

All the categories are dichotomous, only the presence of each item in the response is registered.

- Self-Identity stronger than others- narrative is focused on the narrator's self.
- Self-Identity Weaker than others – narrative is focused on others.

- Others are significant to the narrator
- Others are non-significant to the narrator
- Empathy for Others
- Hostility towards Others

Behaviours described by the interviewee:

- Proactive - behaviours of gaining control by taking initiative
- Reactive - actions in response to something
- Avoidance of others
- Confronting others

Imagoes

All the imago categories should be applied separately to the protagonist and the other characters in the story (Self-Imago versus Imagoes of Others). The definitions of the roles remain the same. All the categories based on the study by McAdams (1993).

- Healer – the character concentrates on cures, health and well-being.
- Teacher – the character is focused on passing on knowledge and skills to younger or less experienced.
- Counsellor – the character guides others, solve problems for them.
- Humanist - the character works for social change and humanistic values.
- Arbiter – the character makes crucial decisions about right and wrong.
- Warrior – the character forcefully engages other, attains power over them.
- Traveller – the character progresses over terrain as explorer.
- Sage – the character is engaged in efforts to learn, to understand the world or to conquer the environment.
- Maker – the character focused on achievement rather than power.

- Lover – love as a main focus of the character’s life.
- Caregiver - the character cares for others, sacrifices self for others.
- Friend – loyal, trustworthy, with main focus on the life-long friends and friendship.
- Ritualistic – the character keeps traditions, applies old traditions to new situations.
- Escapist – the character is unwilling to take responsibility for anything and lives for diversion and amusement.
- Survivor – the character survives harsh environment, injury, illness, tough circumstances.

Emotions

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by Russell (1997) and Canter and Youngs (2011).

- Emotions from aroused–positive quadrant – excitement
- Emotions from aroused–negative quadrant – stress, anxiety
- Emotions from non-aroused-positive quadrant - calm
- Emotions from non-aroused-negative quadrant – displeasure

Justifications

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by Sykes and Matza (1956) and Bandura (1990).

- Denial of responsibility – the narrator explains his inhumane conduct or harmful actions by circumstances completely beyond his/her control.
- Denial of injury – the harm caused by the narrator’s actions is completely denied and disregarded.

- Denial of the victim – the narrator claims that the victim deserved whatever harm was caused to him/her.
- Condemnation of the condemners – the narrator claims that those who condemn him/her have no right to do so and are only trying to shift the blame from themselves (e.g. BR47 “*My skills are wastes by society. Society did miss out with me. They did not use my skills – so it is their own fault I am a criminal. You know – if somebody hit me I will hit them back. That’s all I did! Crime is my revenge on society. I was over-intelligent for my role in society – it is pure rebellion.* ”).
- Appeal to higher loyalties - some inhumane conduct is described as serving a high social or moral purposes, justified by the “greater good”.
- Displacement of responsibility – the participant claims that everything that happened is someone else’s fault.
- Diffusion of responsibility – the participant explains that he/she is not the only person to blame for his/her mistakes.
- Distortion – the narrator distorts the consequences of his/her actions, the impact of the behaviour is minimised, ignored or disbelieved.
- Dehumanising the victim - the victim of mistreatment is described as less than human.
- Assuming the role of victim for oneself – the narrator declares him/herself the main or even the only victim in the situation.

Incentives

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the study by Bandura (1986).

Behaviours conducted by the protagonist in the story were for:

- For material\financial gain

- For sensory gain - pleasure gain, sensation, stimulation, boredom avoidance
- For power\status gain
- For social (approval\advancement) gain

Appendix III

Recommended additions to the LAAF content framework – in accordance with the content dictionary subgroups

Implicit Psychological Content

Genre

Documentary – as a significant number of the participants mentioned that they would describe their life as a documentary film (see Part II, Section II, Chapter 9), the additional genre category is required.

Explicit Processes to Organise the Narrative Content

Manipulation themes

These categories are based on Machiavellianistic traits as described by Dahling et al (2009). This subgroup is required in order to outline the proposed process of the “False Unity/Manipulation” (as described in Part II, Section I, Chapter 7).

Distrust – the story moves around the theme of the protagonist’s distrust of another person or people in general. The motive of the narrative is a cynical view of others’ intentions and motives, the suspicion that others intend to harm the narrator.

Manipulation – the main character in the story is engaged in the manipulation of another person or group of people. The narrator reports that he/she manipulated someone in order to achieve his/her own goals and/or has a willingness to do so. The protagonist values the behaviours that benefit him/her at the expense of others.

Desire: status – the story is organised around the accumulation of success indicators or a desire for success at the expense of others.

Desire: control - the main theme of the story is the acquisition of power and dominance over situations at the expense of others.

Unlike the category that currently exist in the LAAF content framework (subgroup “Agency vis-à-vis others and the world”, Incentive “For power/status gain”), the proposed items “Desire: status” and “Desire: control” describe the main theme around which the narrative is organised and not the aim of the protagonist. This will be especially useful for the narratives in which behaviours and/or events are not described (as outlined in the current research a significant number of the responses represents the non-eventful philosophical credo of the narrator rather than a description of the behaviours). The two proposed items are also divided between the search for control (power and dominance) and the search for status (success and demonstration of success).

Agency vis-à-vis others and the world

Imagoes

Villain – the personified evil of the story, the evil character (based on Propp, 1938). This category can be applied both as a self-imago and as an imago of others. As the “self-imago” the narrator acknowledges his/her own bad deeds or intentions, and describes his/her “sordid

past”. Motive of remorse and repentance may be present (e.g. BR26: “*All the worst things a human can do to their self I’ve done it or considered it. Everyone’s probably been a bully or been bullied so they know what it’s like. They’d probably see an animal who should be caged.*”). As the role assigned to others, the narrator describes the evil character who struggles with the protagonist. For example, BR33: “*The ex was constantly nagging, wanting to go on holidays with the family and phoning all the time – she would be wrecking my head. I needed some space and would tell her to go out with her mates. But if I went out with her I’d get into fights with guys looking at her. If she was out with her mates she’d phone me and tell me some guy had pawed her and I would race over to her and fight the guys.*”

Evil world – the narrator describes a depersonalized and abstract evil. The role of the Villain is not assigned to any specific character, and yet the protagonist is surrounded by evil power or lives in an evil world (e.g. PL4: “*We sit by the cell, the guards indulge in luxury. <film begins?> With a picture of men who were wrongfully convicted. At the moment the sentence is pronounced. Transport to prison, the men try to get away, they don't want to go there because they know there has been a mistake... The wrongfully convicted guys are taken to prison, taken away from their homes, jobs and everyday duties. They stand before the committee. They are assigned cells. Their daily life is shown: walks, meals, conversations.*”).

Mattering – the narrator describes him/herself as important and significant in the eyes of others (based on Rosenberg and McCullough, 1981).