

Social Confusion on the Road to Modernity: The Meaning of Violence and Crime in Ethnic Albanian Context

Jana Arsovska



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Jana Arsovska

Leuven Institute for Criminology (LINC), Belgium
Jana.arsovska@law.kuleuven.be

Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia
info@atamacedonia.org.mk
www.atamacedonia.org.mk

The views and interpretations presented in this report are those of the author and they do not represent any institution.

Notes on contributors in this project

Arsovska Jana (Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia)

Arsovska was the principal investigator and coordinator of this project. She is a Ph.D. researcher in criminology at the Catholic University Leuven in Belgium working on the role of cultural codes in the evolution of Albanian organised crime groups. She is coordinator of a working group within COST A21 on restorative justice and violent conflicts and guest lecturer in the New York University Skopje (Macedonia). She has previously worked for the European Forum for Restorative Justice, and she is associate-researcher for the Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia which administered this project. The Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia (EACM) is a non-governmental organization established in 1997 in Skopje, and it is a member of the Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA).

Demolli Haki (Kosovo Law Center)

The interviews in Kosovo were conducted under the supervision of Prof. dr. Haki Demolli and the Kosovo Law Centre (KLC). Demolli has been working as a Professor in Criminalistics at the Faculty of Law of the University of Prishtina since 1987. In the period from September 1999 to April 2003, he worked as a legal instructor at the Kosovo Police School. From May 2003 he is also the Director of the Kosovo Law Center (KLC) in Prishtina. KLC was established in 2000 as a local NGO by the OSCE Mission's in Kosovo Department of Human Rights and Rule of Law, in conjunction with local and international partners in compliance with its institution building mandate.

Starova Teuta (Albanian Center for Sociological Research - Albanian Viewpoint)

The interviews in Albania were conducted under the supervision of Prof. dr. Teuta Starova and the Albanian Center for Sociological Research – ‘Albanian Viewpoint’. Starova is a Professor in sociology at Tirana University in Albania and head of the department of sociology. She is also the director of the research institute ‘Albanian Viewpoint.’ The Center was founded in 1995 and it is offering both quantitative and qualitative research particularly in the following research fields: consumer marketing research; trade research; social surveys & assessments; and public opinion polls.

Fellegi Borbala (ELTE University Hungary)

Fellegi who was a project advisor, is a Ph.D. researcher at ELTE University (Hungary), working on the implementation of restorative justice in Hungary. She was coordinating a project on the possibilities for implementing restorative justice in Central and Eastern for Europe the European Forum for Restorative Justice. She is Chair of the Research Committee of the European Forum for Restorative Justice, and lecturer at ELTE University. She works as consultant for the Hungarian Central Office of Justice in the field of victim-offender mediation. She is a board member of the Hungarian Association of Mediators.

Philippe Verduyn (Catholic University Leuven)

Verduyn prepared the statistical analysis for this report. Verduyn is a PhD researcher at the Catholic University Leuven who studies time-related characteristics of emotions (e.g., duration of emotions, intensity profiles over time...). He teaches a number of statistical courses ranging from basic descriptive statistics to some more complex modelling techniques as ANOVA, regression analysis, factor analysis, multilevel modelling...

Executive summary

This paper analyses the effects of societal and demographic factors on the levels of interpersonal violence in ethnic Albanian context. It further explores the concept of intentionality which lies in the distinction between the intent to injure and the intent to 'use violence'. The paper starts with the postulation that violence is often culturally determined; and, in Albania, cultural specificity and tradition are sometimes given as justifications for particular social practices that perpetuate violence. By using person perception method, it examines in a methodical way to which extent cultural norms are nowadays responsible for the violent and criminal behaviour of various segments of the ethnic Albanian population. Is violence in Albanian context a structured phenomenon closely linked to the Albanian customary laws, e.g., the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini, or is it simply a product of social confusion, lack of norms and poverty? The research particularly looks at honour crimes linked to oppression of women and revenge killings. The conclusions drawn in this paper are empirically founded and based on a cross-national public survey with ethnic Albanian respondents from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia (N=864). The survey was carried out during 2006 and was supported by a grant from the CERGE-EI Foundation under a program of the Global Development Network.

Key words: Albania; Kosovo; Macedonia; Kanun of Lek Dukajini; cultural norms; revenge killing; honour crimes; gender subordination.

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1. Introduction

The notion of *social control* that deals with the treatment of right and wrong throughout the social universe includes phenomena such as litigation, violence, mediation, gossip, ostracism, psychotherapy, sorcery, sabotage, and suicide (Black 1993: xiii). From the seventeenth century onwards, there has been a widely shared conviction among scholars that culture and society must be regarded as mechanism of control¹. Culture and society have been equated with social mechanisms able to regulate and promote human behaviour. Men often have been presented as animals desperately dependent upon outside-the-skin control mechanisms, such as cultural programmes, for ordering their behaviour (Rossaldo 1989: 97; Arsovska and Craig 2006a). Matthew Arnold's arguments on culture and anarchy, attributed to Thomas Hobbes' (1644) philosophy, point out that without regulative norms people become pathologically violent. Durkheim (1997) further argued that, '[...]where interest is the only ruling force each individual finds himself in a state of war with every other since nothing comes to mollify the egos[...]there is nothing less constant than interest. Today it unites me to you; tomorrow, it will make me your enemy' (Rossaldo 1989: 99). Accordingly, people that behave 'violently' have been perceived as individualistic, interest-driven, primitive and to some extent, 'cultureless'. The use of violence has been seen either as a rational and functional choice of the actor, or as an arbitrary, meaningless, pathological or antisocial act (Arsovska and Craig 2006a).

From the second half of the twentieth century, scholarly work has concentrated on a single category of social control: *law*. As Black (1993: 2) explains, an emphasis on law – governmental social control – has been the focus of research for many scholars, most of whom have further narrowed their concerns to legal life in modern Western societies. However, to which extent Western legal norms apply in non-Western societies and how does law vary across socio-cultural space? Is it possible to approach social control as an independent variable that differs from one situation to another? Some attention has been given to the capital punishment debate (Dash 1997: 1353-1386; Radelet and Borg 2000: 42-61; Hood 2002) and the punitive harshness of *Sharia* law, including sanctioned Islamic honour killings (Ogbu 2003; Amanat 2001; Esposito 1998) nonetheless, policy makers and scientists have been inclined to disregard such questions because of their intricacy and sensitivity (Arsovska and Craig 2006a).

In Western Europe, for instance, it is regarded as a nearly cultural axiom that violence, 'honour' killings' and crime are morally bad, illegal and illegitimate. 'Aggressive' individuals have been depicted as 'bloodthirsty' tribesmen acting mainly upon personal emotional drive or self-interests (Allcock 2000: 388). According to the Western value system self-justice on the part of the victims is not only considered to be superfluous, but even appears dangerous, because the institutionalised right of the state to punish is thereby placed into question (Waldmann 2001: 435; Valians and Arsovska 2007). The wish to avenge is considered to be atavistic need and leftover of an archaic epoch (Jakoby 1985: 2ff; Waldmann 2001: 435). In western countries this era is considered to be over, because there are institutions for the discovery and prosecution of criminal acts. According to modern conception, it is the duty of the criminal justice authorities and the courts to combat crime. The forbidding of violent self-help has left deep tracks in the collective thinking of Western societies. People do not openly admit that they would like to harshly punish someone who has done them injustice. Such wishes meet with little understanding and are thus wisely kept to oneself. As Waldmann (2001: 435) explains, revenge (similar to envy, pride, shame and other emotions) is suppressed and often thought of as dirty.

However, to which extent this is the case in ethnic Albanian context? These interpretations seem to fail to consider meanings of violence as a cultural capital (Aijmer and Abbinik 2000; Arsovska and Craig 2006a), although there are strong arguments, one may claim, that criminal and violent activities might not be always due to the absence of cultural norms and regulations and that individual agency is not solely responsible for the apparent blatant disregard of conventional laws (Blok 1974; Black 1993; Lyman 1964; Orru 1990; Messner and Rosenfeld 2001: 11; Polk 1994; Krug *at al.* 2002; Karstedt 2001). Marvin E. Wolfgang, described as a

world leader in quantitative and theoretical criminology argued 'Like all human behaviour, homicide and other violent assaultive crimes must be viewed in terms of the cultural context from which they spring' (1967: 150). Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967: 153) argued that, for example, the appearance of a weapon in the hands of an adversary is stimuli differently perceived and interpreted by various categories of people. Social expectations of response in particular types of social interaction result in differential 'definitions of the situation.' In accordance with this reasoning, the sociology of knowledge postulate that scientific thought, particularly thought on social and political matters, does not proceed in a vacuum, but in a socially conditioned environment. It is influenced mainly by unconscious or subconscious elements. These elements, as Karl Popper explicate, stay concealed from the thinker's observing eye because they form the exact place which he inhabits, his social habitat. The social habitat of the thinker determines a whole system of values and theories which emerge to him as self-evident and unquestionably true (Popper 1993: 213).

For example, the use of violence in Albania and Kosovo traditionally has been seen as a structured phenomena representing archetype of social control. According to the Albanian customary laws, e.g., the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini, – regarded as the foundation of the Albanian culture, the ability to use violence and take justice in your own hands has been considered main criteria for assessing the value of the Albanian 'Man of Honour'. The notion of vendetta² – although very confusing for modern spectators – should not be equated with social disorder. Blood feud, many have argued, is a social mechanism that serves to prevent violence from spreading in all directions (Grutzpalk 2002: 117; Rosenthal 1966: 137). However, the question remains: to which degree this might be the situation today in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia? Where do vengeance, honour killings and modernity intersect? How the western perception of right and wrong has affected the Albanian social habitat and the behaviour of certain segments of the ethnic Albanian population? Is it the culture itself, or a kind of socio-cultural confusion that is to be blamed for the 'criminal' and 'violent' behaviour of a number of ethnic Albanians?

Many reports have been discussing the seriousness of problems related to revenge killings, honour-related incidents, and violence against women in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, but comprehensive systematic analysis of the phenomenon has not yet been done (Grutzpalk 2002; Oakes 1997; Schwandner-Sievers 1995, 1998). Hence, the link between the Albanian culture and the notions of violence, as well as crime, remains a vastly understudied topic. This research starts with the argument that cultural norms must be dealt with sensitively and respectfully in all prevention efforts – sensitively because of people's passionate attachment to their traditions, and respectfully because culture is often a source of protection against violence (Krug *at al.* 2002: 16). Then it tries to explain in a methodical manner the meaning of violence and crime in ethnic Albanian context, by assessing the role of cultural codes (mainly in relation to other societal factors such as politics and economy) in promoting and/or restricting criminal behaviour. Could one argue that nowadays the use of violence in Albanian context is a structured phenomenon, closely linked to ancient customary laws or is it simply based on personal emotional drive, dissatisfaction with economy and politics and/or self-interests? Is there any significant category of people, with certain demographic characteristics, that respects and understands the traditional laws and does justify honour killings? Can a better understanding of this susceptible socio-cultural phenomenon bring us more valuable solutions on how to effectively fight and/or prevent the problem? This study focuses primarily on four typical Albanian cultural elements strongly emphasised in the ancient Kanun laws – honour, revenge, hospitality and subordination of women – and it assesses their importance in modern times by measuring people's perception on topics that perpetuate violence.

2. Social relevance

Violence and crime have always constituted a part of the human experience. As the World Health Organisation explains in their world wide study on violence, the impact of violence can be seen, in various forms, all over the world (Krug *et al.* 2002). Statistically speaking, each year, more than a million people lose their lives, and many more suffer non-fatal injuries, as a result of violence. Violence seems to be among the leading causes of death worldwide for people aged 15–44 years. In 2000, an estimated 1.6 million people worldwide died as a result of self-inflicted, interpersonal or collective violence, for an overall age-adjusted rate of 28.8 per 100,000 population. The vast majority of these deaths occurred in low-to middle-income countries. Less than 10% of all violence-related deaths occurred in high-income countries. Nearly half of these 1.6 million violence-related deaths were suicides, almost one-third were homicides and about one-fifth were war-related. Violence exacts both a human and an economic toll on nations, and costs economies many billions of US dollars each year in health care, legal costs, absenteeism from work and lost productivity (Krug *et al.* 2002; Human Security Report 2005; Human Development Report 2005).

Within Albania, Kosovo and the respective Diasporas a history of intense violence, both official and unofficial, is readily identifiable but not necessarily understood from a Western perspective. There has been a widely shared view among scholars, policy makers and practitioners that in these Balkan countries illegality and violence are widespread in the society either because of poor governance and terrible economic conditions or because of ‘culture’. Various studies (Waldmann 2001; Schwandner-Sievers 1998; UN World Surveys 1992-2004; Bregu 2002; International Crisis Group 2000; Refugee Women’s Project 2001) have pointed out that the level of violence in Albanian context has been steadily rising since the fall of communism – particularly in the period between 1994 and 2003. In a report prepared by the World Health Organisation in 2002 Albania was listed fifth (from 75 countries) in the world regarding number of murders committed in the late 1990s (28 per 100,000). Only in 1997, the police reported 1,542 murders in Albania.³ When comparing murder rates for the Balkans as a whole the United Nations Mission in Kosovo reported that during 2002 Albania experienced the highest murder rate with around 12.2 murders per 100,000 people (about 470-480 deaths).

According to UN and police data, in the period between 1998 and 2005 Albania had on average per year 150-250 convicts for committed intentional homicide (5-7 per 100,000); 150-350 convicts for attempted homicide; 150-200 convictions per year for intentional homicides committed by firearms (5-6 per 100,000) and additional 600-750 murder suspects. On average there are about 500-600 prosecutions per year for committed murders. All this puts Albania – according to UN statistics – among the worst countries in the world with highest homicide rates (UN World Surveys 1992-2004). According to the International Crisis Group (2000), the increase in violent crime in Albania has given rise to a number of disturbing social phenomena such as revenge or honour killings, ‘promoted’ by the Albanian customary laws. The police for example, for the period 1998-2004 have reported 1,994 murders of which 8.5% are blood feuds. In the period between 1992 and 1996, 9.5% of all murders were recorded as blood feuds (Tabaku 2007). However, one should be always careful with police data, since many examples have shown that numbers provided by the police in the Balkan countries do not reflect reality. Sometimes it is the inefficiency of the police and judiciary that is responsible for the low numbers, sometimes is the fear from revenge, and often is the fact that blood feuds do not give good image of the country – hence, the real numbers are not explicitly stated in police data and might be much higher.

The previous arguments are well illustrated by the fact that other sources, such as NGOs and international organisations, report much higher figures. According to the Albanian press, in 2005, 600 families with their 2,000 children are living in isolation to avoid the law of blood which dictates revenge (Chatelot 2005). The National Reconciliation Committee of Albania estimated that 1,370 families were self-imprisoned at home and that 711 children were prevented from attending school due to fear of revenge. One Albanian NGO, ‘MJAFT!’ estimated that blood

feuds are the reality for over 7,000 northern Albanians today. According to previous statistics, in December 1999 there were about 2,700 active feuds in Albania and more starting every day. Gendercide Watch, in their 2002 report, noted that 'from 1992 to 1996, press reports in Tirana spoke of more than 5,000 murders linked to vendettas in the past four years'. Also a survey conducted by the Law Faculty of Tirana University (March 2000) highlighted that 210,000 Albanians, or 6% of the total population, are 'affected' by blood feuds, including about 1,250 people locked in their houses for fear of being killed (*see* Elezi 2003; UK Home Office 2004).

Besides the blood feuds it is of crucial importance to mention problems linked to violence against women in Albania that – as several international organisations argue – must be analysed in the context of Albanian culture and traditions. According to these organisations the study of domestic violence is complicated, because this issue is supported by the traditional and patriarchal mentality deeply rooted in Albanian culture (UNICEF 1998, 2000, 2004; International Crisis Group 2000; Refugee Women's Project 2001, Amnesty International 2006). These international reports further explain that very often the Kanun is mentioned as the main source for the discriminated position of women in the Albanian society; however, this argument needs to be discussed and further analysed, as it is often founded on a speculative basis.

For a long time research and statistics on domestic violence were totally missing. In 1996 the women's NGO Refleksione organised the first national wide research on domestic violence. In this research they found that 64% (out of 849 females) of surveyed women revealed that they experienced physical, emotional, sexual abuse. According to the survey on violence prepared by the World Health organisation in the period 1992-1996, only in the city of Tirana 1200 women reported that they have been sexually abused. These results place Albania among the worst countries in the world regarding sexual abuse (Krug *et al.* 2002). Moreover, the Counselling Centre for Women and Girls in less than five years of existence has received more than 5,000 registered calls. From 1996 to 2000, more than 400 women have received face to face counselling. Another evidence of the frequency of the phenomenon is the number of clients treated in the Shelter for Abused Women and Girls. In less than two years 32 women and 40 children received treatment in this shelter, although the demand is much higher than its capacity (UNICEF 2000). Hence, it is obvious that violence against women does not happen incidentally, but it is a widespread phenomenon in Albania.

The situation in Kosovo regarding use of violence seems to be no better. According to Dukajin Gorani, director of the Human Rights Center at Pristina University in Kosovo – who blames the use of violence on a 'gun culture' resulting from lawlessness – explains 'You think twice before getting in an argument in Kosovo because someone always ends up dead. In this part of the world, there is a strong belief in customary law which means an eye for an eye [...] In our lifetime the rule of law has never achieved anything, only guns have provided a measure of justice. So you stick to your gun' (Farnam 2003). Linking this to the Kosovo conflict, statistics shows that the remaining Serb population of Kosovo had fled fearing revenge attacks (Human Rights Watch 1999; Barnett and Xharra 2007). According to Human Rights Watch (1999) a rash of killings of Serbs since mid-June 1999 has shown that such fears are not unfounded. Some reports also point out that minorities such as Roma, Turks and Bosniaks have been seriously abused by Albanians and driven out of their homes which have been later burned (Human Rights Watch 1999, 2001; Craig 2003). Most terrifying is the fact that as many as 1,000 Serbs and Roma have been murdered or have gone missing since 12 June 1999 (Human Rights Watch Report 1999, 2001; Nikolic-Ristanovic 2007). Hence, Kosovo has the potential for violence, and the March 2004 riots by ethnic Albanians in which at least 15 people died again shows the seriousness of the problem (Barnett and Xharra 2007: 28).

The Kosovo Law Centre (KLC) in one of their studies has reported that for the period 1999-2005, Kosovo, having a population of about 2,000,000 people, had the following numbers of offences: 954-1,103 murders; 2,146 aggravated/grievous assaults; 17,717 harassments/intimidations; 950 kidnappings; 570 rapes; 262 sexual assaults; 381 trafficking in persons; 3,436 domestic dispute; 7,092 illegal weapon possession; and, 7,740 other weapon related offences in

Kosovo. Regarding motivations for murders, 17.67% of all murders were linked to blood feud and revenge (Demolli 2006: 65).

The situation in Macedonia, a country with a considerable ethnic Albanian minority (25%), resembles to some degree the situations in Albania and Kosovo. Foreign embassies frequently report that most dangerous areas in Macedonia – where violent incidents and shootings occur commonly – are mainly those populated by ethnic Albanians. Macedonia, according to various newspapers and police accounts, regularly experiences revenge killings, kidnappings and trafficking of women for sexual exploitation done most often by ethnic Albanian perpetrators, and in 2001, it experienced many killings committed by Albanian paramilitary structures. Yet on another side, ethnic Albanians also feel suppressed by the Macedonian government and frequently complain of widespread official discrimination (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour 2006). Albanians in Macedonia for years have been living in isolation, without proper education and conditions for progress which makes the situation even more terrifying.

In general, human rights and other international reports have confirmed that impunity for police abuse, government failures to uphold the rule of law, corruption, revenge killings, extortions, kidnappings, rape, domestic violence, assassinations, trafficking in human beings, sexual exploitation, and widespread violations of children's and women's rights are just few among the many violent and criminal activities of the 'lawless' ethnic Albanians (Human Rights Watch 2003; UK Home Office 2004; Amnesty International 2006). As a result, Albanians have been often depicted as belligerent people without proper civil society and rule of law. Although they don't deny being restless individuals with a warlike spirit, they explain that this is their 'national character' that helped them preserve their national identity throughout the centuries (Prato 2004: 70). Governed for hundreds of years by dubious rulers and 'brutal' laws, they had to build up their own unofficial and equally harsh defensive mechanisms in order to survive. However, the question today is to which extent these violent mechanisms for 'doing justice' have remained part of the Albanian mindset and are to be held responsible – in addition to politics and economy – for the criminal behaviour of significant segments of the Albanian population?

3. Methodology

3.1. Definitions and typologies

Before embarking into any comprehensive criminological analysis of violence, we should define the various forms of violence in order to facilitate their scientific measurement. For this study we have used the definition put forward by The World Health Organization (Krug *et al.* 2002: 5):

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

The definition used by the WHO associates intentionality with the committing of the act itself, irrespective of the outcome it produces. It seems that one of the most complex aspects of the definition is precisely the matter of *intentionality*. According to WHO, the presence of an intent to use force does not necessarily mean that there was an intent to cause damage. Indeed, there may be a considerable disparity between intended behaviour and intended consequence. A perpetrator may intentionally commit an act that, by 'objective standards', is judged to be dangerous, but the perpetrator may not perceive it as such. A second sensitive issue related to intentionality – which is of great concerns for this research – lies in the distinction between the intent to injure and the intent to 'use violence'. Violence, according to Walters and Parke (1964) and many other scholars, is culturally determined. Some people mean to harm others but, based on their cultural backgrounds and beliefs, do not perceive their acts as violent (Krug *et al.* 2002).⁴ This is an aspect that we will further explore.

Finally, it is important to distinguish between the different levels of violence. The WHO typology divides violence into three broad categories according to the characteristics of those committing the violent act⁵: self-directed; interpersonal; and, collective violence (*see* annex 1). In this paper we are mainly concerned with interpersonal violence which is violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals and not with self-directed violence (Krug *et al.* 2002: 6). From the interpersonal level we might be able to draw some conclusions in relation to collective violence, i.e. the interethnic violence and revenge killings in Kosovo and Macedonia.

Besides the various types of violence, it is necessary to mention that understanding the phenomenon of violence [and crime] is an exceptionally difficult task. Research has shown that no single factor explains why some individuals behave violently toward others or why violence is more prevalent in some communities than in others. Violence is the result of the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors. Understanding how these factors are related to violence is very difficult but crucial in order to prevent further violence (Krug *et al.* 2002: 12).

Figure 1: Ecological model



Source: World Health Organization (Krug *et al.* 2002: 12)

In our study we took into great consideration the ecological model (*see* Figure 1) in order to understand the multifaceted nature of interpersonal violence; however, we have not been able to explore in depth all levels of the complex ecological model.⁶ The model explores the relationship between individual and contextual factors and considers violence as the product of multiple levels of influence on behaviour (*see* Figure 1). The first level of the ecological model seeks to identify the biological and personal history factors that an individual brings to his or her behaviour (primarily biological and demographic factors). In our study we are particularly interested in demographic factors such as age and gender. This level focuses on the characteristics of the individual that increase the likelihood of being a perpetrator of violence. The second level of the ecological model explores how proximal social relationships increase the risk for perpetration of violence. For example, peers, intimate partners and family members all have the potential to shape an individual's behaviour. The third level of the ecological model examines the community contexts in which social relationships are embedded – such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.⁷ Various studies show (*see* Krug *et al.* 2002: 13) that opportunities for violence are greater in some community contexts than others – for instance, in areas of poverty which we also took into consideration when conducting this research.

Although we acknowledge and refer to the different levels in the ecological model, our main focus in this research is the fourth and final level which examines the larger societal factors that influence perceptions of violence. Included here are those factors that create an acceptable climate for violence, those that reduce inhibitions against violence, and those that create and sustain gaps between different segments of society – or tensions between different groups or countries (Krug *et al.* 2002). According to the WHO, there are several larger societal factors, but for our study the most relevant are the following:

- cultural norms that support violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts;
- norms that entrench male dominance over women and children;

- norms that support the use of excessive force by police against citizens;
- norms that support political conflict.

In addition to these norms, societal factors also include educational, economic and social policies that maintain high levels of economic or social inequality between groups in society. The ecological framework highlights the multiple causes of violence and the interaction of risk factors operating within the family and broader community, social, cultural and economic contexts.

3.2. Research sample and hypotheses

This research aims to elicit underlining motivations (related to culture or to other factors) for committing violent and criminal acts derived from respondents' attitudes about specific situations. It analyses how ethnic Albanian people⁸ with different background perceive various offenders; do or do not justify 'criminal' acts; and, sympathise with victims.

It has been argued that one of the most effective methods of capturing immediate impressions of people is the person perception method. Previous research has documented the validity and utility of the person perception method in capturing people's automatic perceptions of behaviours (Asch 1946; Castañeda and Collins 1998; Jones 1979; McKinney, Sprecher and Orbuch 1987). Also when used as a complementary technique alongside other data collection methods this method is proven to be highly effective (Collins and Brief 1995; Hazel 1995; Hughes 1998; Hastorf, Schneider, and Polefka, 1970; Finch, 1987 Rayburn *et al.* 2003). In the typical person perception study, participants read a vignette (story). Following this, participants' immediate impressions are assessed by having them rate people in the story on bipolar adjective scales. In this study, participants were asked to rate targets (mainly offenders) on 7-point scales in terms of how good versus bad they perceive the targets.

Vignettes have been used to elicit cultural norms derived from the respondents' attitudes, as well as to explore participants' ethical frameworks and moral codes⁹ (Finch 1987; Wade 1999 *et al.*). In general, vignettes are especially useful for sensitive areas of inquiry such as violence and crime (Wade *et al.* 1999; Rahman 1996; Lawrence and Leather 2003). For the purpose of this study, we have used vignettes after the administration of a more personal questionnaire. The vignettes chosen were mainly based on true crime stories. Some of them described crimes related to the Kanun (altering various elements of the Kanun) and some describe profit oriented crimes or crimes resulting from emotional drive or a 'opportunity'. We examined the issue related to intentionality, i.e., the distinction between the intent to injure and the intent to 'use violence'. The research also explores to which extent peoples' perceptions of right and wrong are compatible with the official westernised legal system of their respective countries.

For the purpose of the study, we conducted a cross-national survey (interviews) with 864 ethnic Albanian respondents from three countries with large ethnic Albanian population: Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo/UNMNIK. We used cluster sampling¹⁰; structured questionnaire¹¹; and, extensive face-to face interviews. Before proceeding with the main research (August 2006 - January 2007) with 726 respondents, a pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted (June - July 2006) with 138 respondents. The results of the pilot questionnaire were almost identical with the results of the main study regarding answers to same questions and same behavioural patterns could be observed in both studies. This points out to the validity and reliability of this research. Hence, in our analysis we refer both to the main study, and the combined study (pilot and main together).

The criteria for selection of the research sample were based on previously identified hypotheses. The sample is not representative of the whole ethnic Albanian population because the aim is not to generalise the findings to the whole population, but to make comparisons between various sub-groups. Individual respondents from different households were taken as sampling units and they were selected randomly per district/area until they meet a previously specified quota. As Wolfgang (1967: 151) stated: '[...] deviant behaviour is not evenly distributed throughout the social structure. There is much empirical evidence that class position, ethnicity,

occupational status, and other social variables are effective indicators for predicting rates of different kinds of deviance.’ Hence, the key demographic variables for the selection of our sample were: country, sub-culture (Gheg/Tosk), area (rural/urban), age, gender, socio-economic status and education.¹²

Basing our assumption on prior research¹³, we started with the postulation that cultural factors such as the *Kanun of Lek Dukagjini* will play significant role in shaping the ethnic Albanians’ perceptions of violence, crime and honour. Since research shows that the traditional Kanun is mainly associated with the Albanian ethnic subculture, Gheg – populating north of Albania, Kosovo and parts of Macedonia – we anticipated to find significant differences in perceptions and beliefs between Albanian Ghegs and Albanian Tosks. We also expected that Ghegs from Kosovo will have similar attitudes to Ghegs from north Albania, but will differ slightly from Ghegs from Macedonia, again as a result of the Kanun laws [and socio-political context]. In general we postulated that older Ghegs from the rural areas of north Albania and Kosovo, know the Kanun better and will support more offenders that have committed traditional ‘honour’ crimes than other types of crime; whereas, younger Ghegs and Tosks who only know the laws superficially will be the category that justify various crimes – ‘honour-related’, profit-oriented and others –, using the Kanun laws as a shield. We also postulated that Tosks will be more supportive of profit-oriented crimes than of honour crimes.

Although today in Albania there is not any clear dividing line between the two sub-cultures, the demographic makeup of the country shows that Ghegs live mainly in the north and Tosks in the south of the country (*see* Map 1). Therefore, the sampling frame in Albania is divided in two regions (strata), north and south. As shown in our hypothesis above, besides sub-cultural differences, we expected to see differences in perceptions among people from rural and urban area, as well as age differences. In general, we assumed that older people (above 45 years old in our sample) will be most familiar with the original Kanun laws and will justify crimes done according to the Kanun, whereas less educated younger people will use the laws as justification for committing criminal acts, without knowing or following the content well. In Kosovo and Macedonia the same sampling method was used with only one difference – the sub-cultural division. Since Kosovo is almost entirely populated by Ghegs we interviewed only Ghegs, but ensured representativeness regarding area of living, age, gender, education and socio-economic status. In Macedonia, most of the respondents are Ghegs; however, there is a certain percent of Tosk population which lives in the south-western part of the country. Hence, our sample also contains Macedonian-Albanian Tosks.

Finally we also postulated that there will be significant differences in perceptions between the respondents from the three countries in relation to dissatisfaction with economic and political situation within the respective countries. To sum up this part, we assumed that generally speaking ethnic Albanian people have not forgotten the violent mechanisms for ‘doing justice’ and still remember cultural elements like blood feuds, importance of guests, besa (word of honour) and subordination of women, but do not know the specific details of the Kanun, nor they have read it. Hence, we hypothesised that the main reason for committing various criminal acts might be after all linked with political/economic dissatisfaction, social confusion and seeing no possibilities for personal prospects, whereas the Kanun is used as ‘a front-line’ rationalisation of behaviour in order to neutralise the devastating consequences of the crime/violence.

4. Three-way loyalty system: state, religion and culture

Most of the Albanians consider themselves descendants of the Illyrians, who were the original inhabitants of the western Balkan Peninsula. While the population of Albania is almost entirely (over 90%) ‘Albanian,’ they are divided into two major groups, Ghegs and Tosks, according to which Albanian dialect they speak. The Ghegs live north of the Shkumbin River – which runs through the community of Elbasan – while the Tosk live south of the river (*see* annex 2). The two dialects differ slightly in vocabulary and pronunciation. In the 1950's it was decided that the Tosk

dialect would be used in all Albanian publications, since it was the one most widely spoken in Albania (Stoianovich 1994: 471). It is estimated that in Albania there are 2,900,000 principally Tosk speakers and 300,000 Gheg speakers (Grimes 1996; McClear 2001). The majority of Gheg speakers live in Kosovo (between 1,400,000 – 2,000,000). In Macedonia, there is small percentage of Albanian Tosks living in the south-west parts of the country; however, the dominant Albanian population is Gheg (approximately 242,250) (Grimes 1996). In addition to differences in dialect, the Gheg and the Tosk also have many social differences – according to public perceptions. The Gheg are thought to be very stern and courageous people; while the Tosk are known to be friendly, lively, and talkative. In general, Tosks are considered more ‘modern’ and open-minded, in comparison to the traditional Ghegs.



Map 1: Sub-ethnic division in Albania

Source: Wikipedia Encyclopaedia

In general, Albania is a country with many isolated areas. Over the centuries, this produced a wide variety of regional lifestyles and settlement patterns. During the early stages of the Ottoman Empire a large Muslim aristocracy developed in the south of Albania, each with its cohort of Tosk peasants. Elez Biberaj, the Albanian born head of the Voice of American Albanian service, notes that ‘because of extended periods of foreign occupation and dominations Albanians in general, but particularly these southerners, came to view central authorities with great distrust, essentially considering them as foreign’ (Biberaj 1995: 246). During the Ottoman Empire many Albanians were converted to Islam by the Ottoman Turks.

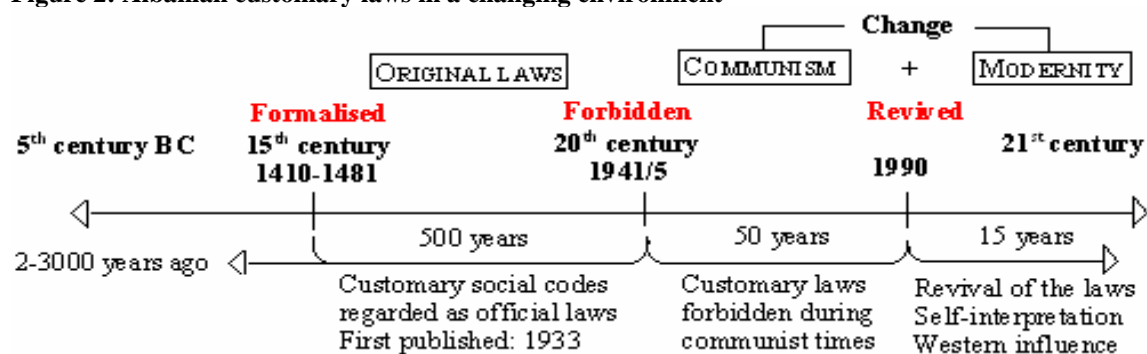
Prior to the changes introduced by the Communist regime in the 1940's, Albanians were tribal people who lived in extended family units called fis. In the north the extended families were grouped into clans with hereditary chiefs (bajraktars) (McClear 2001). The fis in particular had many old traditions, such as the vendettas. However, when the Communist regime began in 1944, the traditional lifestyles also began to change drastically. Communist political authorities believed that the way to achieve national unity was to abolish differences of tribe and religion. Already in 1967, Albania declared itself as ‘the world's first atheistic state,’ closing its borders to any influence from the outside world. Many of the Gheg Albanians professed to be Catholic; however, it was – and still is – nominal, and superficial. The collapse of the Communist regime in 1991 brought numerous rapid changes in Albania, leaving the people with an identity crisis – lost in a so-called three way loyalty system (towards state, religious and cultural laws). Angry, and confused, it seems that nowadays ethnic Albanians are struggling to find their identity.

In recent years, with the process of globalisation, new laws emerging from the Western value system were also steadily imposed on Albania, Kosovo and the Balkan region. They did not

emerge naturally from within society. In contrary, they were implemented top down, as were the laws during communism or Ottoman Empire (or Serbian domination in Kosovo). As a result, the gap between the people and the ‘state’ remained wide (Valinas and Arsovska 2007). The governments have been ratifying laws in order to initiate the integration process and to bring the region in the EU; however, neither the government nor the civil society seems to understand clearly the values behind those laws. After the fall of communism people also started going back to religion as a sign of frustration, but also nationalism. Religion became important element for people in the whole region because it clearly showed the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ – Christians and Muslims – although, in reality people did not follow ‘true’ religion. During 1990s, religious practices have been encouraged as an antidote to the crime wave and various reports show that Muslims from the Middle East have been attempting to ‘re-evangelise’ Albania by sending missionaries, supplying financial aid, and building mosques.

The situation was somewhat similar with the revival of the cultural codes in Albania and Kosovo. These codes were forbidden during the fall of communism, but in general, in a lawless society such as Albania, people naturally tended to associate themselves with various laws in order to avoid anarchy. However, the Albanian customary laws do not go in line with the state [or religious] laws, leaving the people bewildered. Nonetheless, it seems that many ethnic Albanians prefer to ignore perplexing official state laws in favour of an interpretation of the ancient creeds that have been omni present in their society for centuries (Arsovska 2006b). These customary laws have helped them survive in hard times; hence, they seem to be valued and respected more than other laws. The cultural codes have existed centuries before the communist regime and have set up the basis of the Albanian culture, representing the fundamental customary laws in Albania. However, culture is not a static phenomenon. It changes and adapts over time and it accepts elements from other cultures/regimes. There are three most important time periods that can explain the modification and transformation of the ‘Albanian culture’ (see Figure 2). We are mainly concerned with the relevance of the customary laws in modern times and the self-interpretation of ancient laws according to individual needs.

Figure 2: Albanian customary laws in a changing environment



Arsovska, J. (2007)

5. The traditional Kanun Laws

According to various sources, the *Kanun of Lek Dukagjini* [and few other very similar codes¹⁴] sets up the rules upon which the Albanian culture is based, primarily focusing on the concept of honour, hospitality and the word of honour, *besa*, (principle of unity, reconciliation and inviolable trust). Lek Dukagjini (1410-1481), a lord of a powerful northern Albanian family, was a contemporary of the Albanian hero Skanderbeg. It is often said that ‘Skanderbeg’ evokes the Albanian dream, ‘Dukagjini’ the Albanian soul (Camaj 1989: xiv). Dukagjini formalised and standardise the oral laws regulating the Albanian community life in the 15th century. Nevertheless, the practice of these codes potentially dates back from 2000 to 3000 years ago (it may be possibly of Illyrian origin going back to the 5th century BC) and presents the fundamental

customary law employed in the Middle Ages in almost all areas of Albanian settlement (Fox 1989: xii).

The laws applied equally to Albanian Christians and Moslems. The influence of the Kanun among the ethnic Albanians has been enormous; although the impact has been somewhat greater among Ghegs (north Albania and Kosovo) than among Tosks (south Albania). According to Durham, for the ethnic Albanians, 'Lek said so' obtains far more obedience than the Ten Commandments. 'The teachings of Islam and of Christianity, the Sharia and Church law, all have to yield to the Canon of Lek[...]For all their habits, laws, and customs, the people, as a rule, have but one explanation: it is in the Canon of Lek' (Durham 1994: 25). Martin Camaj, a professor of Albanian studies, further explains that for the clans of northern Albania, the maxims of the Kanun took precedence over all laws in the country (1989: xiv).

The Kanun has been described as an expression of the independence and de facto autonomy particularly of the northern Albanian clans during the Ottoman Empire (Camaj 1989; Hasluck 1954: 14). Syrja Pupovci, the writer of the preface of the Kanun (1972), explains that the preservation of customary law was one of the most important elements in helping the Albanian people to maintain their individuality (Vickers 1997: 21; McClear 2001). The Kanun was an oral tradition and no written form existed until 1913 when a Franciscan priest, Stjefën Gjecov from Kosovo started codifying the laws. The complete Kanun was published for the first time in 1933. The 1262 articles of the Kanun regulated every aspect of the social lives of the Albanians: economic and family life, hospitality, brotherhood, clan, boundaries, marriage, land, local government, settlement of disputes, and so on (Alibali 1977; Hasluck 1957: 381; International Crisis Group 2000; Arsovska and Craig 2006a).

Regarding content, the Kanun is a formal expression of the deeply felt concept of honour of the Albanian people (Malcolm 1998: 18).

The foundation of it all is the principle of personal honour. Next comes the equality of persons. From these flows a third principle, the freedom of each to act in accordance with his own honour, within the limits of the law, without being subject to another's command. And the fourth principle is the word of honour, the *besë* (def.: *besa*), which creates a situation of inviolable trust.

It means the entirety of rules according to which a person can protect his own community against the attacks of third parties. This protection includes the moral obligation to apply violence and retaliatory attacks, until the honour of one's own group has been re-established. The Kanun states: 'There is no fine for an offence to honour. An offence to honour is never forgiven. The person dishonoured has every right to avenge his honour; no pledge is given, no appeal is made to the Elders, no judgment is needed, no fine is taken. The strong man collects the fine himself' (2-600). One who meets these revenge obligations from the Kanun is taken to be cleansed white, whereas one who does not fulfil it is labelled unclean and must suffer all humiliations on the part of the village community (Waldmann 2001: 440; Schwandner-Sievers 1998: 80). However the original Kanun also includes very specific clarifications of the manners of retaliatory killings for restoring honour to the offended when the laws are disobeyed (Valinas and Arsovska 2007). The *Kanun* further specifies: an offence to honour is not paid with property, but by the spilling of blood or by a magnanimous pardon (through the mediation of good friends).

Moreover, the Kanun comprehensively elucidates the concept of hospitality which involves uncompromising protection of a guest, even one with whom the host is in a state of blood feud. The Kanun stipulate that the house of the Albanian belongs to god and the guest and the life of the guest should be placed before your own life (Kadare 2003; Fox 1989: Article XCVIII). The Kanun states, 'An offence against a father, a brother, and even a cousin without heirs may be forgiven, but an offence against a guest is not forgiven' (Fox 1989: 136; Kadare 2003: 78). The Kanun also places great attention to the submissive role of the women in the Albanian society. Albanian society has a long patriarchal history in which women are taught to obey their husbands. Such male domination can be seen clearly in the Kanun (Baban 2004; Hopkins 2003;

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights 1996). According to the Kanun, a man has the right to beat and publicly humiliate his wife if she disobeys him and he can kill her for two reasons: infidelity and betrayal of hospitality (Baban 2004; Arsovska 2006b). If the wife does not 'conduct herself properly toward her husband' the man is expected to cut his wife's hair, strip her nude, expel her from the house in the presence of relatives and then drive her with a whip through the entire village. The Kanun further provides: If a husband beats his wife, he incurs no guilt ... and her parents may not make any claims on him because of the beating. If a man beats his wife bloody, and she complains to her parents, the men must give an explanation (UNICEF 2000). One of the notorious articles states: a woman is known as a sack, made to endure as long as she lives in her husband's house (Fox 1989: Article XXIX). Additionally the value of the woman has been seen as equal to half a man or a dog (Baban 2004).

During the communist period (1944 – 1991) the ruling party prohibited the use of the Kanun and the blood feuds as a means of resolving disputes. Also problems of domestic violence were considered as taboos and nobody dared to make them public. They were considered nonexistent (UNICEF 2000). Therefore, in order to be able to understand the Albanian mindset today, we need to examine the role of the Kanun laws on one side, and the influence of the harsh communist regime, on the other. The communist leader Enver Hoxha (1944-1985) described the blood feud as a legacy of feudalism, and officially outlawed the use of the Kanun. Under his regime it was strictly forbidden to 'defend the honour of the family.' Anyone practicing the customs was severely punished; murderers were condemned to death and their families driven into isolated areas of the Prokletije Mountains (Jolis 1997: 30). During this period the state demanded total obedience, or rather fear, of its institutions. Nevertheless the communists themselves often used 'Kanun-type' reasoning when doing 'justice' since the punishments were aimed as much at a man's family as at the man himself (McClellan 2001; Carver 1999: 305). Also the Albanian secret service Sigurimi, which was the ultimate agent of social control with its all-pervasive and secret nature, had a huge impact on the everyday life of Albanians (Minnesota Lawyers 1992: viii; O'Donnell 1995). Although during the Enver Hoxha's regime Albania did move forward in its economic and educational spheres, these 'gains' were overshadowed by the legacy of repression and multiple social problems (Biberaj 1995). The oppressive communist regime did not allow any cultural development, especially when compared to Western countries.

The situation in Kosovo and Macedonia was somewhat different to that of Albania during communism. Towards the end of the 1960s under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito the Yugoslav policy towards Kosovo changed from repressive to more tolerant. The period between 1966 and 1981 was a period in which the rights of the Albanians have been widely guaranteed, while the autonomy of Kosovo within Yugoslavia strengthened. Under the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, Kosovo became an autonomous province within Serbia (Janjic 2003: 5; Robertson 1999: 2; Malcolm 1998). Albanians had their own education systems and own government as autonomous province within Yugoslavia. Vesna Nikolic-Ristanovic (2007) explains that in Kosovo 'leftovers' of old the tradition were very much alive during communism (Sahiti 1985:17). The Kanun laws were also often used by parts of the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia because they used to live in remote isolated areas secluded from central government law. Hence, they needed their own 'legal system' to deal with everyday issues that were not properly dealt by the state. They did not associate themselves with the state laws or with the Macedonian government but acted as a state within a state. Yet in comparison with the Albanians from Kosovo, the Macedonian Albanians seriously lacked education due to the self-isolation.

6. The Kanun and modernity: analysis of results

After the downfall of the communist regime – accompanied by a general decline of the state authority – the 'Kanun morality' experienced an upward revaluation in many areas populated with ethnic Albanians (Waldmann 2001: 440). It seemed that even though the forty-five years of hard communism caused 'mass amnesia' in some parts of the population, certain segments of the ancient creeds remained part of the Albanian mindset (Neza 1997: 108; Mortimer and Toader

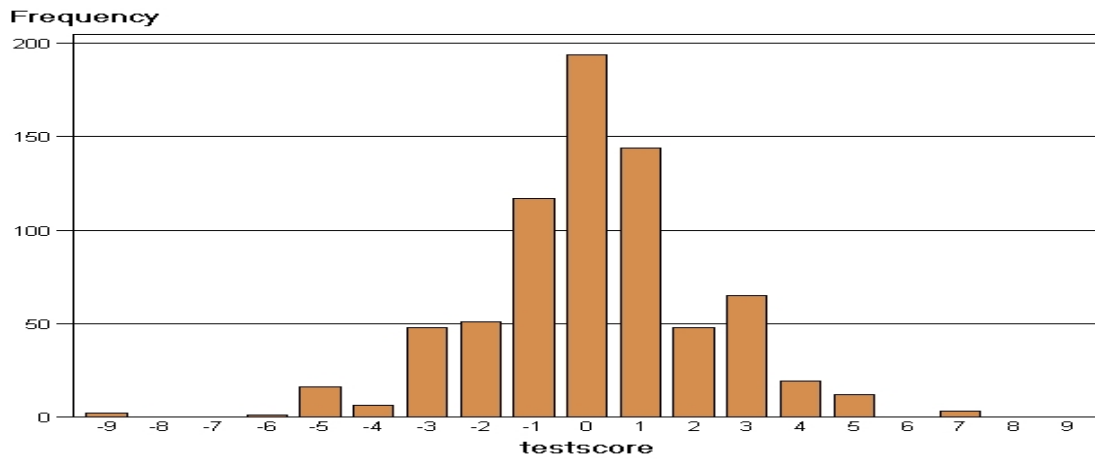
2005). Nonetheless, our research points out that many original elements of the *Kanun* today have been forgotten, or simply degraded to the level of mere reflexes of 'self-defence'. The effects that the harsh communist regime – as well as the Western value system – had on the 'Kanun morality' can not be ignored. This research shows that in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia the ethnic Albanians are acquainted to some degree with the general contents of the code from oral tradition – although only very few have actually read it and know the laws properly. This naturally leads to various self-interpretations of the laws that can be used for justifying criminal behaviour (Mortimer and Toader 2005; Arsovska 2006b). Moreover, technology, social changes and the process of 'modernisation' are additional factors that have seriously affected the traditional practice of the Kanun. Hence, the current wave of violence in ethnic Albanian context seems to be primarily a product of great social confusion, and to some extent political dissatisfaction, poverty and 'culture'. The Albanian society is undergoing a period of enormous change. Traditional cultural values have been severely weakened, while new ones have not yet emerged to take their place (Bregu 2002; Durkheim 1997). Although it is clear that self-selected elements of the Kanun – such as the exaggerated sense of honour, gender subordination and revenge killings – remained part of the Albanian mindset, they are not explicit factors for violent and criminal behaviour. The results of this research support the 'social confusion hypothesis' and clearly assesses the genuine importance of the Kanun laws among ethnic Albanians.

6.1. Knowledge about the Kanun

In this study the ethnic Albanians respondents were very supportive of tradition and traditional norms, and 79.4% stated that tradition is important for them. Since the Kanun laws are considered to be the foundation of the Albanian culture, we tried to assess the respondents' actual knowledge of these laws in order to see how familiar they are with their 'traditional norms'. First we asked the respondents direct questions about their knowledge on the Kanun. In the main study 89.9% of the respondents stated that they have heard about the Kanun (652 out of 726). The results of both the pilot test and the main study together showed that 90.2% of all respondents heard about the Kanun (779 out of 864). In the main study 23% have read the Kanun (167 out of 726) and 77.4% have not read the Kanun (540 out of 726). Similarly, in both studies together 22.8% have read the Kanun (197 out of 864). In the main study 69.7% of the respondents knew the Kanun from oral tradition (506 out of 726). When we look at the results in both the pilot and the main study together, 70.6% of the respondents said that they know the Kanun from oral tradition (610 out of 864). In the main study, only 10.2% of the respondents said that they respect the laws (74 out of 726); whereas 72% said they don't (523 out of 726). Also there was a significant group that could not decide (124 out of 726). When combining the two studies the results were again similar: 10.9% stated that they respect the laws (94 out of 864). When asked whether they will take revenge in the name of the Kanun, again only 10.2% stated that they will take revenge (74 out of 726) and 16.8% could not decide (122 out of 726). In both studies together, 11.6% said that they would take revenge (100 out of 864) and 16.4% could not decide (142 out of 826).

We also provided the respondents with 'knowledge' test in order to measure their 'real' knowledge of the Kanun (*see* graph 1). The respondents were given 9 statements taken directly from the Kanun and were asked to state whether these statements – in their opinion – are true or false according to the Kanun. The statements were reflecting various important cultural elements, such as honour, hospitality, revenge, violence, compensation, gender subordination and other elements.

Graph 1: Score on the 'Kanun' test, distribution of testscore



Correct answer = 1 point

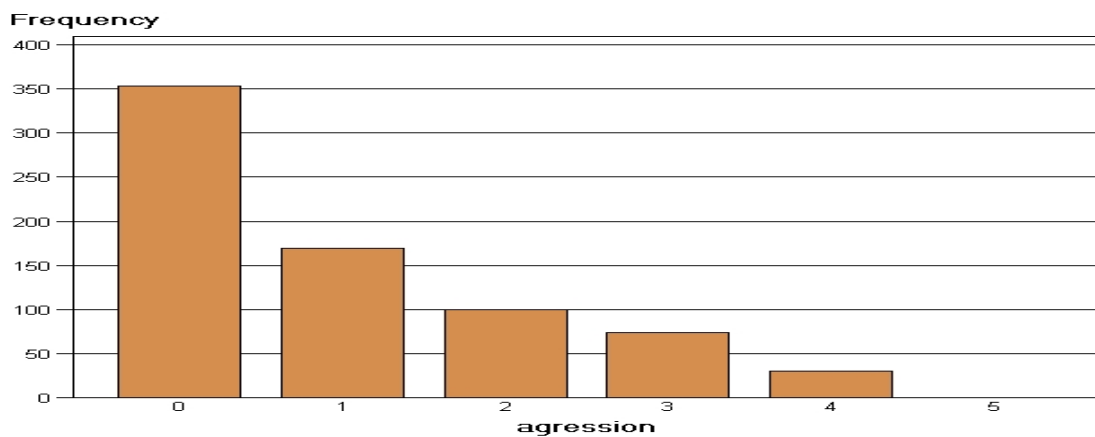
Incorrect answer = -1 point

Don't know = 0 points

From the test we can observe that scores are more or less normally distributed around point zero suggesting that the knowledge of the Kanun is quite poor. Therefore it would not be appropriate to predict the testscore and conduct regression analysis, since in this way we would probably only predict random luck instead of real knowledge of the Kanun. However, we did one simple test comparing the test results of the people who have read the Kanun vs. people who have not read. The results indicate that the knowledge of both groups is poor (*see annex 3*). It seemed that it did not matter if people have read the Kanun or not since the true/false answers of both groups are almost equally distributed around point zero.

People in this study were also asked if they personally agree with the same statements from the Kanun, irrespective of the fact whether the statements are true or false according to the Kanun (*see graph 2*). Five of these statements were explicitly promoting violence and highly aggressive behaviour according to Western value system. Nonetheless, we had a significant part of the sample that agreed with at least 1 or more of the violence-promoting statements.¹⁵ Point 0 indicates the number of respondents that did not agree with any of the statements (350 out of 726). There were 160 respondents that agreed with one of the statements, and 200 respondents that agreed with 2 or more of the statements.

Graph 2: Agreement with aggressive statements, distribution of scores



0= no agreement with violent statements

4=4 agreements with violent statements

After trying to predict the levels of justification of the offender's behaviour by using regression analysis with quantitative as well as categorical predictors, the most significant relations that we found were between political dissatisfaction and aggression; and, country differences regarding justification of aggression (*see* Table 1). In this test we were controlling for poverty, economic and political (dis)satisfaction, corruption, age, gender, area of living, ethnicity, education, country, and knowledge of the Kanun laws. In general, the more respondents agreed with the statement that the political situation in their country has been very bad in the last 5 years, the more they supported violence. The greatest differences could be observed between countries (*see* annex 4). Ethnic Albanians from Albania supported violence to the largest extent. Kosovo Albanians supported violence the least, and the attitudes of the Albanians from Macedonia felt in between the two other groups. Nevertheless, it could be pointed out that people who have read the Kanun did not support violence more. The results between those who read the Kanun and those who didn't did not differ significantly in relation to support of violent behaviour.

Table 1: Quantitative and qualitative predictors for aggression

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	p-value
Poverty	1	1.48001737	1.48001737	1.19	n.s.
Economy	1	2.21021074	2.21021074	1.77	n.s.
Politics	1	5.45740976	5.45740976	4.38	<.05
Age	1	0.03466995	0.03466995	0.03	n.s.
Corruption	1	0.01575196	0.01575196	0.01	n.s.
Norms	1	2.28667765	2.28667765	1.83	n.s.
Education	1	1.10878454	1.10878454	0.89	n.s.
Gender	1	2.59717902	2.59717902	2.08	n.s.
Read_Kanun	1	2.89257425	2.89257425	2.32	n.s.
Urban/Rural	1	1.26147513	1.26147513	1.01	n.s.
Country	2	73.32828788	36.66414394	29.41	<.0001
Ethnicity	1	2.44807494	2.44807494	1.96	n.s.

However, when we replaced the predictor 'Have you read the Kanun (CLD)' with the predictor 'Do you respect the Kanun' and controlling for all other variable listed above, we observed very significant differences in answers between people who respect the Kanun and those who do not. The role of political (dis)satisfaction was no longer significant; however, the respect for the Kanun played a highly important role in shaping people's attitudes and it is a good predictor for this study. People that stated that they respect the Kanun supported more violence and aggressive behaviour. The role of the country factor also remained important and the differences between countries were significant (*see* annex 5).

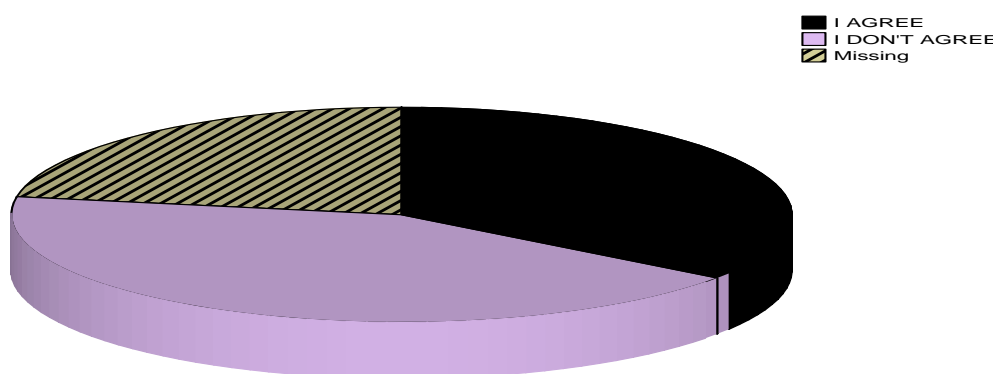
Table 2: Aggression with 'Respect Kanun' as predictor

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	p value
Politics	1	1.39871287	1.39871287	1.15	n.s.
Country	2	58.18612416	29.09306208	23.91	<.0001
Respect_Kanun	1	20.02172247	20.02172247	16.45	<.0001

From all the Kanun statements presented to the respondents, the highest level of agreement was with the following statement: *'There is no fine (financial compensation) for an offence to honour. An offence to honour is never forgiven and blood must be taken (opinion)'*. 35% of all respondents agreed with the statement (254 out of 726). 22.3% did not provide answer to this agree/disagree question (162 out of 726). 42.7% of all respondents disagreed with the statement. In general, this is a statement taken directly from the Kanun, and it explicitly promotes revenge killings (honour killings). Hence, although people are not very much familiar with the Kanun, in general they support some of the values behind it and they have not forgotten the overall violent mechanisms promoted by the Kanun.

Graph 3: Agreement with statement promoting revenge killings

There is no fine (financial compensation) for an offence to honour. An offence to honour is never forgiven and blood must be taken (opinion)



In addition to this statement promoting 'honourable' violence, a significant number of people were also supportive of various others violence-promoting statements. 129 respondents out of 726 (17.8%) agreed with that a woman who has committed adultery should be killed and no one should ever avenge murder of adulterous woman. 154 people (21.2%) did not provide answer to this question and 443 (61%) disagreed. On the statement: *A man has the right to beat and publicly humiliate his wife if she is disobedient. He can cut her hair, strip her nude, expel her from the house and drive her with a whip through the village (opinion)*, 12.7% agreed and 68.6% disagreed. 18.7% did not provide answer. Respondents were also asked whether they agree that crime can be re-compensated with blood: *if someone threatens you, or beats you for no reason and you kill him you don't incur his blood and you are not considered guilty (opinion)*. 176 out of 726 respondents agreed (24.2%), whereas, 166 respondents did not provide answer. 52.9% disagreed with this statement.

In conclusion to this part, we can observe that in general people do not know the Kanun laws nor they have read them; however, some of them claim that they respect the laws. Despite the fact that the knowledge of the Kanun is very weak, there is a significant percent of people who support highly aggressive and violent behaviour. These people assert that they respect the laws, but the test scores show that they do not know them well. Mostly ethnic Albanians from Albania [and then Macedonia] were the main supporters of violent and aggressive behaviour. There were no significant differences regarding ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status or education.

6.2. Hospitality

In our research respondents were given two similar crime stories (vignettes) which describe one particular robbery. The respondents were asked to evaluate the offender and to state how justifiable the offender's behaviour was in their opinion. The difference in the stories was mainly the outcome of the crime and the setting in which the robbery was conducted. In the first story, which was an exchange office robbery¹⁶, there was a seriously wounded person and use of firearms. The reason for committing the crime was poverty and unemployment. In this story the offender took 4,000 Euros. The second story was a 'simpler' house robbery¹⁷ in which there were no victims and no direct assault. The offender took 3,300 Euros from his guests and his motivation was extreme poverty and sick child. Yet the setting of the second story involves a very important cultural element – being a guest in a house (robbing your guests). As noted previously, according to the Kanun, the house of the Albanian belongs to god and the guest and guests are highly respected in Albanian context. Hence, indeed more respondents justified the offender in the first story (11.8% justify/totally justify; 9.5% were undecided; 77.6% do not justify) than in the second (7.3% justify/totally justify; 7.3% are undecided; 83.9% do not justify) despite the fact that the impact of the crime in the first story is much more serious than in the second.

Table 3: Predictors for office robbery (*see annex 6 for more details*)

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	p value
Poverty	1	0.00188586	0.00188586	0.00	n.s.
Economy	1	0.00062918	0.00062918	0.00	n.s.
Politics	1	1.49418500	1.49418500	0.58	n.s.
Age	1	7.79215146	7.79215146	3.02	<.10
Corruption	1	0.56758374	0.56758374	0.22	n.s.
Education	1	6.01150288	6.01150288	2.33	n.s.
Gender	1	5.92812190	5.92812190	2.30	n.s.
Urban/Rural	1	14.09892936	14.09892936	5.47	<.05
Country	2	19.15237351	9.57618675	3.72	<.05
Read_Kanun	1	0.00307791	0.00307791	0.00	n.s.
Ethnicity	1	76.32369585	76.32369585	29.63	<.0001
Norms	1	1.66911706	1.66911706	0.65	n.s.

Blue = suggestive evidence (<.10) Red = evidence (<.05) n.s.=not significant

When conducting regression analysis, the most significant differences could be found between Ghegs and Tosks when controlling for all other variables presented in the table above. In general, Ghegs justified profit-oriented crimes less than Tosks (*see annex 6 and 7*). Also there were very significant differences between the different countries; hence, we tested whether these differences are significant (*see annex 6*). A significant difference was found between Macedonia and Kosovo. The Macedonian Albanian respondents supported profit-oriented crimes at the greatest level. Also the Albanian respondents were more supportive of the robbery when compared to Kosovo Albanian respondents. The difference was also statistically significant. However, there were no significant differences in answers between the Macedonian and the Albanian respondents. When it came to purely profit oriented crimes we also observed that people from villages justify profit-oriented crime to lesser extent, when compared to respondents from urban

areas. We also have suggestive evidence that there are differences between the different age groups. Older people are, less supportive they are of profit-oriented crimes.

Controlling for all the factors listed above, we also tried to predict the level of justification in the second ‘House robbery’ story. The regression analysis showed similar results regarding predictors for committing the crime (*see* Table 4).

Table 4: Predictors for house robbery (*see* annex 8 for more details)

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Poverty	1	6.55367402	6.55367402	3.44	<.10
Age	1	8.98311207	8.98311207	4.71	<.05
Urban/Rural	1	7.61616310	7.61616310	4.00	<.05
Country	2	31.89242656	15.94621328	8.37	<.001
Ethnicity	1	20.12491000	20.12491000	10.56	<.01

Blue = suggestive evidence (<.10) Red = evidence (<.05) n.s.=not significant

In the second story we could observe again age differences with the same pattern of behaviour as in the first story: older people justified less the offender; whereas younger people were more supportive of this profit-oriented crime despite the cultural elements it contains. We could also see significant differences between people from urban and rural areas. People from urban areas tended to justify the offender significantly more than people from rural areas. Similarly to the results of the pervious story, we observed significant differences between countries (*see* annex 8). There were significant differences between respondents from Kosovo and Albania, and between respondents from Kosovo and Macedonia; however, there are no significant differences between people from Macedonia and Albania. In general, Macedonians and Albanians were the most supportive of this crime, followed by the Kosovars. Furthermore, there was also suggestive evidence regarding differences between people who assessed themselves as rich and those who assessed themselves as poor. In general, rich people were less supportive of the offender’s behaviour in the second story than poor people. We also observed significant differences between Ghegs and Tosks. Ghegs were less supportive of this crime than Tosks similar to the findings in the first story (*see* annex 9).

Hence, the results pointed out that in general Tosks with lower economic status from urban areas who are younger in age and come from Macedonia or Albania are most supportive of profit-oriented crimes, particularly when the motivation to commit crime is poverty. Moreover, ethnic Albanians justified the exchange office robbery more than the house robbery, despite the fact that in the first story there was a victim and use of weapons.

6.3. Blood feud

In this study we asked the respondents to tell us how justifiable/honourable the behaviour of a person who has committed revenge killing¹⁸ was. We presented a story to the respondents in which a person commits a murder and runs away while the brothers of the victim search for him in order to avenge the murder. Fearing that he might be discovered, the killer knocks at the first door he finds, asking for besa (protection; word of honour). The head of the house, who is in fact the father of the victim (but does not recognise the killer of his son), welcomes the visitor. When the victim’s brothers return, they recognise the killer and immediately shoot their guest—killer. This is a story that includes three very important cultural elements: besa, hospitality and revenge killings. However, the murder in the story, culturally speaking, should not be justified. In Albanian culture hospitality is something highly valued and besa creates a situation of inviolable trust. Hence, if besa is given, revenge cannot be taken. The guest should be treated well under

any condition, since the Kanun stipulates that the life of the guest comes before the life of relatives or family. Hence, according to the Kanun the murder could only have been justified if it had happened outside the house, before the killer was granted besa.

In our study most of the respondents stated that besa has a very significant meaning for them (82.1%, 596 out of 726). In the combined study (main and pilot) with 864 respondents even 84% stated that besa has very significant meaning for them. Only 9-10% of all respondents stated that besa was not important for them. Nevertheless, in this revenge story many respondents chose revenge before besa. We could not find any significant difference in the level of justification between people who said that besa had very significant meaning for them and those who said that it doesn't (see table 5). Hence, the word of honour, as many other elements is emphasised by a significant percent of ethnic Albanians but not valued in practice. 121 of 726 respondents (16.6%) justified or totally justified the offender's behaviour and 108 remained undecided (14.9%). 487 out of 726 did not justify the behaviour. If we look at the results of both the pilot and the main study together 154 respondents justified the behaviour out of 864 (17.8%) and 122 (out of 864) remained undecided (14.1%). These results also show that the knowledge and compliance to the Kanun laws are rather superficial.

Table 5: Predictors for revenge killings (see annex 10 for more details)

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	p value
Poverty	1	12.1670671	12.1670671	3.84	<.05
Politics	1	8.8811853	8.8811853	2.80	<.10
Age	1	1.8102653	1.8102653	0.57	n.s.
Corruption	1	8.5646479	8.5646479	2.70	<.10
Education	1	5.9337118	5.9337118	1.87	n.s.
Gender	1	9.4929862	9.4929862	3.00	n.s.
Urban/Rural	1	6.5718992	6.5718992	2.07	n.s.
Country	2	130.2559617	65.1279809	20.55	<.0001
Read_Kanun	1	6.6641548	6.6641548	2.10	n.s.
Ethnicity	1	7.4628738	7.4628738	2.36	n.s.
Cultural Norms	1	20.0654618	20.0654618	6.33	<.05
Besa	1	2.5452597	2.5452597	0.79	n.s.
Economy	1	13.8085360	13.8085360	4.36	<.05

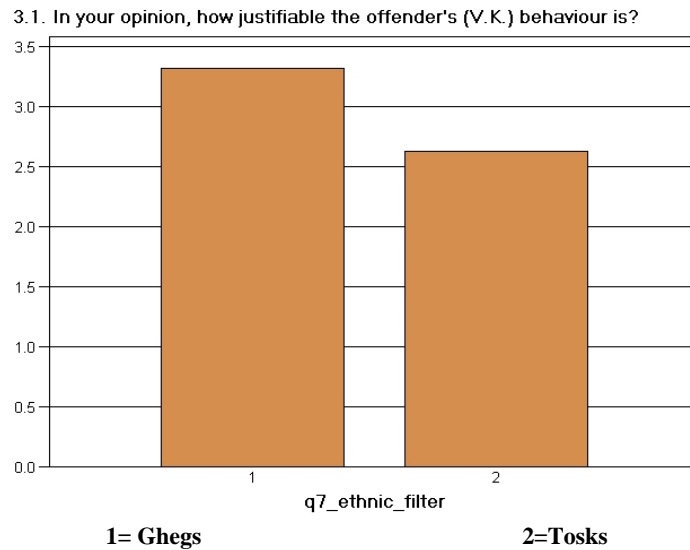
Blue = suggestive evidence (<.10) Red = evidence (<.05) n.s.=not significant

Similarly to the previous stories we conducted regression analysis and we found evidence that richer people justified less revenge killings and there were significant differences in answer between poor and rich respondents. Also we could observe suggestive relation between revenge and dissatisfaction with the political situation, as well as with corruption. People that justified more revenge killings were more frustrated with the political situation in their country and thought that the government was highly corrupt. However, we came across some unexpected results regarding the respondents' satisfaction with the economic situation in their country. Oddly, the more respondents were satisfied with the economic situation the more they justified the offender's behaviour in this story. Before we included the 'besa' predictor (when using the same predictors as in the previous stories) we found suggestive evidence that there was additional link between the different genders and justification of revenge killings. While controlling for all

other variables, we could observe that men justified more the offender than women; however, when we included the ‘besa’ predictor the gender predictor was no longer important. The other significant predictors remained significant.

As in all other stories, the country of origin again played a very important role in shaping perceptions. There were significant differences between the three countries. The lowest justification for the offender’s behaviour came from the Kosovo Albanians in this crime story, whereas Albanians from Albania justified the offender mostly (*see* annex 10, 11). Ethnicity appeared to have no overall relation with the degree of justifying. However, when we focused on the effect of ethnicity in Albania where the sub-cultures are comparable, Ghegs justified this crime more than Tosks, and the difference between Ghegs and Tosks is significant ($p < .001$) (*see* Graph 5). In the other two countries the sub-cultural groups are not comparable because of the small sample size of Tosks, so we can not bring any firm conclusions.

Graph 5: Opinions of Ghegs (1) and Tosks (2) in Albania



Interestingly, the support for the revenge killing was not related to the reading of the Kanun; however, it was closely linked to their statements regarding the importance of traditional and cultural norms. Respondents who said that traditional norms were very important for them were more supportive of the offender than those who said that tradition and culture were not important for them. Hence, although this story goes against some core traditional values such as breaking a besa and harming a guest, it simultaneously supports other traditional values such as avenging a murder and defending family’s honour. It is obvious that significant part of the population believes in some ‘traditional norms’, but does not know these traditional norms well. This could be possibly a result of many rapid socio-cultural changes to which Albanians have been trying to adapt over the decades. Nevertheless, we do acknowledge the complexity of this topic; hence these are merely postulations that require further research.

Respondents were also asked what they believe was the main motivation for the offender to kill the murderer of his brother. 330 respondents out of 864 stated that he had to respect the Kanun laws and avenge the death of his brother (38.2%). If we look at the results only in the main study, 258 respondents out of 726 stated that the Kanun was the reason for the murder (35.5%). Most of the other respondents (approximately 44% in both studies) stated that the act was based solely on personal emotional drive. Hence, the opinions of the respondents were basically divided in these two main categories.

One further interesting observation could be noted in respect to our last question in this section of the questionnaire. We asked further the respondents how justifiable the behaviour of the offender would have been if the murder had happened outside the house before besa was

granted to the guest-killer by the father. As mentioned previously, this revenge killing would have been done in accordance with the Kanun laws. The support for this ‘Kanun revenge’ killing was greater than in the first version (*see* annex 12). 185 respondents out of 726 stated that the offender behaviour is justifiable/totally justifiable (25.5%) and 155 remained undecided (21.3%). 371 respondents did not justify the behaviour. Similar pattern could be observed in the pilot testing as well. 227 people out of 864 stated that the behaviour was justifiable (26.3%) and 177 remained undecided (20.5%).

In conclusion, we can observe that male Ghegs with somewhat lower economic status, particularly from Albania, have been the most supportive of revenge killings. The lowest support came from Kosovo Albanians. The ethnic Albanians that supported the killings were basically unhappy with the political situation in their country, and they believed their government was highly corrupted. Most importantly these people highly valued traditional norms and believed that culture had very significant meaning for them. Nevertheless, supporting the offender in this story shows that they were not very familiar with their traditions and their knowledge about traditional norms is superficial. Also the knowledge test of the Kanun supported this argument.

6.4. Intimate partner violence

Moreover, in this study respondents were also asked to read a vignette – in which a husband killed his wife because of infidelity¹⁹ – and to rate the behaviour of the offender. The Kanun provides that, under certain conditions, a man may kill his wife with impunity for two acts, (she can be shot in the back or be left), for adultery and for betrayal of hospitality. For these two acts of infidelity the husbands kills his wife without requiring protection or truce and without incurring a blood feud, since the parents of his killed wife received the price of her blood, gave him a cartridge and guaranteed her conduct on the day of her wedding (UNICEF 2000). However, even if the killing of the wife was permitted, there are certain rules that have to be followed which were not specified explicitly in our story. For example, according to the Kanun, the husband should have killed the woman during the act itself from behind, with one bullet. These specific elements were not mentioned. Nonetheless, generally speaking, this story could be considered in accordance with the Kanun laws.

In our study, 153 respondents out of 726 (21.1%) stated that the behaviour of the offender is justifiable or totally justifiable. The offender in this story has received the highest support when compared to the offenders in the other 3 original stories. In addition, 63 respondents (8.7%) remained undecided, and 68.6% did not justify the killing. Interestingly, from the respondents that justified the offender’s behaviour, most of them stated that the behaviour was totally justifiable. When asked, if they think his behaviour was honourable, 27.3% (198 out of 726) of the respondents stated that it is very honourable and 14.7% (107) remained undecided.

If we compare these results with the dataset that contains both the pilot and the main study the results are again very similar. 21.6% (186 out of 864) stated that the behaviour was justifiable or totally justifiable and 8.9% (77 out of 864) remained undecided. 27.3% (236 out of 864) stated that the behaviour was very honourable, and 15.9% remained undecided (137 out of 864).

Table 6: Predictors for killing a woman (*see* annex 13 for more details)

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	p value
Poverty	1	6.9442323	6.9442323	1.78	n.s.
Economy	1	2.3969854	2.3969854	0.61	n.s.
Politics	1	3.4991965	3.4991965	0.89	n.s.
Age	1	10.9505993	10.9505993	2.80	<.10
Corruption	1	11.2258614	11.2258614	2.87	<.10

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	p value
Education	1	15.7154743	15.7154743	4.02	<.05
Gender	1	65.9269661	65.9269661	16.86	<.0001
Urban/Rural	1	1.0571033	1.0571033	0.27	n.s.
Country	2	282.2628479	141.1314239	36.09	<.0001
Read_Kanun	1	0.0007389	0.0007389	0.00	n.s.
Ethnicity	1	0.1135436	0.1135436	0.03	n.s.
Cultural norms	1	33.6011472	33.6011472	8.59	<.01

Blue = suggestive evidence (<.10) Red = evidence (<.05) n.s.=not significant

From our further analysis we could observe that there is suggestive evidence pointing out that there is a significant difference in the level of justification of the crime in relation to age. Older people were more supportive of the offender, whereas, younger people were less supportive. There was also suggestive evidence showing that the more a respondent agreed with the statement that the government is highly corruptive, the more he/she supported this crime. However, in this gender-related crime the main predictors were education, gender, country and respect for traditional norms. People that had higher education justified the gender related crime less, and females also justified the crime less. Both of these differences were significant. By doing a simple crosstabulation it appeared that men and women almost equally justified this crime; however, when controlling for a number of variables, we could observe significant difference between the gender groups.

Similarly to all other stories, there were very significant differences between countries. The highest support for gender related crime came from Macedonian Albanians, both Tosks and Ghegs, and the lowest from Kosovo Albanians (*see* annex 13). As in the blood feud story, ethnicity appeared to have no overall relation with the degree of justifying. However, when we focus on the effect of ethnicity in Albania where the sub-cultures are comparable because of their considerable sampling size, we could observe that Ghegs were more supportive of this gender-related crime; however the difference was only marginally significant ($p=.12$). In the other two countries the sub-cultural groups are not comparable because of the small sample size of Tosks, so we can not bring any firm conclusions. Moreover, as mentioned also in the previous story, there was a real significant difference between people who valued tradition and cultural norms and those that did not. The more important traditional and cultural norms were for a respondent, the more he/she justified the offender's behaviour.

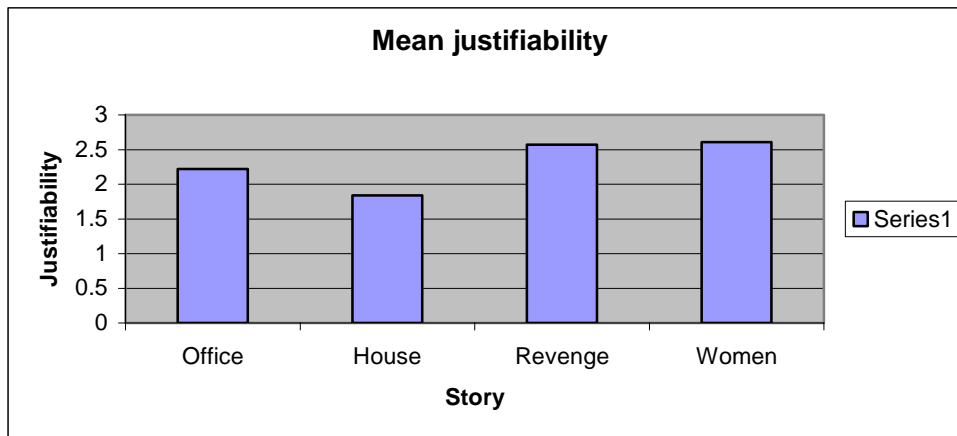
Finally, people were asked what was the motivation – in their opinion – for the husband to kill his wife, and in the main study 33.7% (245 out of 726) stated that he had to respect the Kanun laws and defend his honour. 60.2% (437 out of 726) argued that it was an act based solely on personal emotional drive and jealousy. Again when compared to the combined dataset, 35.3% (305 out of 726) stated that it was because of the Kanun, whereas, 60.1% (519 out of 864) stated that it was based on emotional drive.

Hence, we can summarise that people, who supported mostly gender-related honour crimes were the older, less educated ethnic Albanian males, primarily from Macedonia, but also from Albania. These respondents were to some extent dissatisfied with the political situation in their country, arguing that the government was highly corruptive. Interestingly, these people also claimed that culture and tradition were very important for them although we presented at the beginning of our analysis that they were not very familiar with their culture. We also observed that a significant number of respondents justified the offender's behaviour in the name of the Kanun, despite the fact that these respondents did not know the Kanun in details.

6.5. General overview

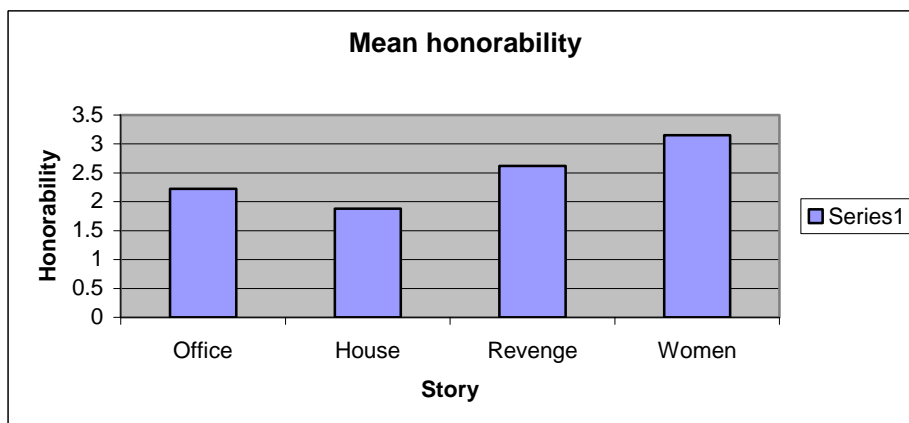
The overall analysis of the people's perceptions on the four stories showed that in general people still remember some cultural elements like hospitality, revenge and gender subordination, but do not know the particularities of their cultural norms. The graph below shows that despite the fact that story 2 (simple house robbery with no victims) had no serious consequences, it received the lowest level of support from the respondents. In story 3 and 4 where we presented real murders the offenders received the highest justification, and story 1, in which there was a seriously wounded person, remained in the middle. Significance tests (contrasts with a Tukey-Kramer correction) showed that all differences between the stories are real ($p < .0001$) except between story 3 (Revenge) and story 4 (Gender crime) ($p = .9666$). In the last two stories the respondents similarly justified the offender's behaviour (see annex 14).

Graph 6: A visual comparison of the four stories



When we conducted the same test for honourability – ‘*Is the behaviour of the offender honourable*’ – the results were similar but the differences were even more significant. When testing for honourability we found significant differences between the four different stories ($p < .0001$), and even between story 3 (Revenge) and story 4 (Woman) ($p < .0001$). People considered the husband who killed his wife to be very honourable, and then the offender who avenged the death of his brother.

Graph 7: A visual comparison of the four stories (see annex 14)



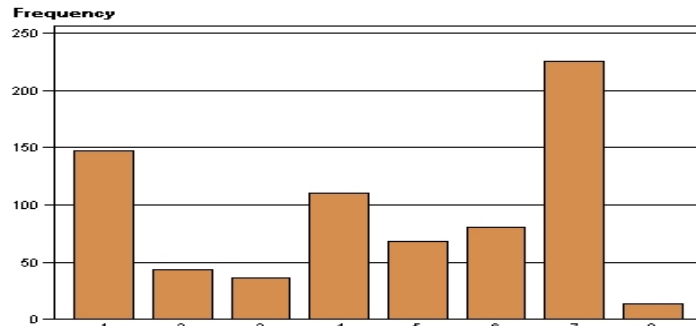
6.6. Social confusion

The social confusion - besides in the absolute division in opinions regarding violence, murder, crime and motives for committing crime - can also be observed in questions related to value

systems and norms. Interestingly, 51.5% of the respondents (374 out of 726) agreed or strongly agreed that their country needs a strong dictator and harsher prison sentences in order to fight criminality. An additional 15.2% (110 out of 726) remained undecided and 30.7% (225 out of 726) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Graph 8: Need of a dictator - Distribution of the score

‘Our country needs a strong dictator and harsher prison sentences in order to fight criminality’



Our country needs a strong dictator and harsher prison sentences in order to fight criminality

Rate opinion on scale 1 to 7: 1 = strongly disagree; 4= undecided; 7 = strongly agree; 8 N/A

In general we wanted to predict the score and see what the main variables responsible for such attitudes were. While controlling for all the predictors listed below, we could observe that country, politics, economy, corruption, area of living, and subcultures (ethnic division) played a very significant role in shaping behaviour.

Table 7: Prediction of score (see annex 15 for more details)

Source	DF	Type III SS	Mean Square	F Value	Pr > F
Poverty	1	2.34704136	2.34704136	0.53	n.s.
Economy	1	32.15830817	32.15830817	7.30	<.01
Politics	1	77.42624036	77.42624036	17.57	<.0001
Age	1	0.78564253	0.78564253	0.18	n.s.
Corruption	1	23.26343635	23.26343635	5.28	<.05
Education	1	0.21391756	0.21391756	0.05	n.s.
Gender	1	0.75504036	0.75504036	0.17	n.s.
Urban/Rural	1	25.66938447	25.66938447	5.82	<.05
Country	2	86.04543653	43.02271827	9.76	<.0001
Read_Kanun	1	0.43154697	0.43154697	0.10	n.s.
Ethnicity	1	17.76977181	17.76977181	4.03	<.05
Norms	1	2.15058122	2.15058122	0.49	n.s.

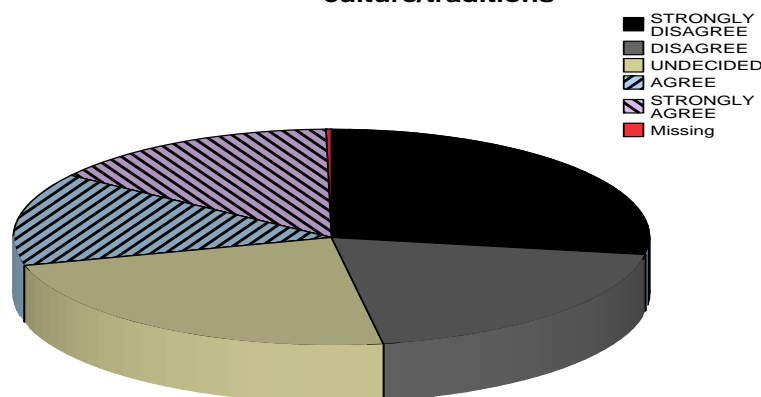
Blue = suggestive evidence (<.10) Red = evidence (<.05) n.s.=not significant

In general, the more dissatisfied people were with the economy in their country, the political system and the level of corruption, the more they supported the idea of having a dictator and harsher prison sentences in order to fight crime. In a simple crosstabulation Albanians from Albania and Macedonia were the least satisfied with the political and economic situation in their countries and saw no prospects for economic growth. 275 out of 352 Albanians from Albania, 135 out of 193 Macedonian Albanians and 81 out of 173 Kosovars stated that the political situation in their country has been very bad in the last 5 years. Similar numbers could be also observed regarding economy. Moreover, 179 out of 350 Albanians, 98 out of 195 Macedonians and 20 out of 173 Kosovars stated that they do not see any future prospects for personal economic growth in their country. Regarding corruption, 220 out of 350 Albanians, 145 out of 186 Macedonians, and 81 out of 166 Kosovars stated that the government in their country is highly corruptive. However, when controlling for different variables; we could observe that the Macedonian Albanians were mostly in favour of a dictator (144 out of 193) and there were significant differences between their answers and the answers from the Albanians from Albania and Kosovo ($p < .0001$). Furthermore, people that came from villages were more in favour of a dictator and harsh prison sentences, than people from urban areas. Ghegs were much more in favour of a dictator than Tosks. This latter point is consistent with the public perception of Ghegs as more rigid, traditional and strict people within the Albanian society.

Similar division in opinions and hesitancy could be observed also in the question asking the respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: *The democratic legal system of the 'Western world' can not be model for our country since it is incompatible with our culture/traditions.* From a total of 726 respondents 210 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (28.9%) and 170 remained undecided (23.4%). A total of 344 respondents disagreed (47.3%) which constitutes less than half of the sample (see Graph 9). The highest level of agreement with the statement came again from Macedonian Albanians (97 out of 197).

Graph 9: Incompatibility with Western value system

The democratic legal system of the 'Western world' can not be model for our country since it is incompatible with our culture/traditions



When respondents were asked whether in order to achieve development in their country, it was important that the everyday citizens express their opinions and influence government's policies via different channels (e.g., elections, the media, community meetings, etc.), 184 out of 726 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Surprisingly 28.7% (208 out of 726) remained undecided and only half of the sample agreed with this statement. Respondents were also asked if it would have been useful to build the Kanun laws into the legal structure of their country. Although the majority disagreed (58%), there was a large proportion of the sample that remained

undecided 27% (196 out of 726). Moreover, respondents were asked how important tradition and traditional norms were for them, and 324 out of 726 stated that they were important or very important, whereas 252 stated that they were moderately important for them. Only 20.7% (150 out of 726) stated that traditional norms were not so important for them (*see* annex 16). Regarding religion - although almost all respondents selected one religion and only 5.9% stated that they were atheists - when asked if they practiced their religion, 39.5% said yes (287 out of 726), 48.1% said no (349 out of 726) and 11% did not know (80 out of 726). Examples like this show the general confusion within the society and indecisiveness of people who, in general, seek for harsh and strong leaders to take them out of the chaotic situation in which they found themselves after the fall of communism. Hence, throughout the survey we could observe uncertainty on many questions to which one would expect that respondents will have very clear straightforward answers.

7. Limitations and implications for further research

Findings of the pilot study and of the main study showed almost the same results on same questions. This shows the validity and reliability of this study. However, the study itself has certain limitations as well. Since our main aim was to compare different sub-groups within the ethnic Albanian population, the sample of 864 respondents was not representative for the whole ethnic Albanian population. Hence, we could not generalise our results and bring firm conclusions about Albanians in general. Nonetheless, we tried to ensure representativeness within the sub-groups that makes the results of this survey quite strong and reliable, so they might serve as indicators for further research. As noted previously, we consider the ecological model for understanding violence to be one of the most appropriate models that aim to grasp the complex nature of violence and crime. However, due to financial and time constraints, we were not able to analyse all elements presented in the model. Therefore, further research is certainly needed to broaden and deepen our knowledge on the topic.

One interesting, but unexpected outcome of our research was the very low support of Kosovo Albanians for any type of crime, as well as their general satisfaction with the economy and politics of their country (Kosovo/UNMIK). If we measure these results against various international reports we will observe great contrast. Usually, Kosovo is presented as the most corrupt region in the Balkans, with non-existent economic development, high levels of unemployment, and high level of political insecurity. Also, a great number of report shows that in practice revenge killings as well as profit-oriented crimes are common in this region. Hence, despite the fact that Kosovo is depicted in media and reports as the 'darkest' region in the Balkans, the results show that people were generally satisfied with their country more than Albanians from Albania and Macedonia. However, there could be several factors that should be certainly taken into consideration in order to possibly clarify this paradox. Firstly, the interviews were conducted during a highly sensitive period. 2006-2007 in general was the period where the international community was deciding on the Kosovo independence issue. Therefore, the results might have something to do with the independence of Kosovo and the wish to present a good image of the country in front of the international community. Secondly, Kosovo is a place where a large number of internationals live and operate; hence, ethnic Albanians have been used to participate in various surveys and as a possible consequence, they might present a slightly better image of their country to the international community in order to successfully 'advocate' for their independence. Thirdly, the Kosovo sample in comparison to the Macedonian and Albanian sample had slightly more educated people which could also be a potential reason for the more positive results. Nonetheless, these are just postulations that one might take into account when looking into the results of this project.

Moreover, it might be of great interest to conduct similar study in a Western context in order to be able to compare the different perceptions and attitudes of people that live in totally different socio-cultural systems. It might be also interesting to observe whether the 'social confusion hypothesis' applies to various other types of crimes, such as for example organised crime and

collective violence which are very high on the political agendas of all European countries. In the last decade there has been delimitation of the content of the Kanun laws; hence these laws no longer apply only to traditional elements such as gender subordination and blood feuds, but also to issues linked to prostitution, racketeering and extortion, revenge killings between criminal clans, secrecy within criminal organisations and so on. Various reports have pointed out that Albanian criminal organisations have greatly profited from their so-called 'culture of violence, honour and secrecy'. These groups have made use of various self-selected cultural elements (besa, hospitality, oppression of women, revenge, honour) in order to take over criminal markets in Europe and beyond (Arsovska 2007). Hence, further research is highly required.

8. Conclusions

Although we stated at the beginning of this paper that violence and crime have always been part of human experience, they are not inevitable. We can do much to prevent such phenomena. However, first of all we need to thoroughly understand and acknowledge the underlining causes of the problems being addressed. It is a mere fact that we can not fight these hideous phenomena only as a law enforcement problem, because they are often deeply embedded in society at large.

This paper has been arguing that among the various factors promoting and restricting violent and criminal behaviour, culture and social norms deserve a great attention; hence, they must be dealt sensitively and respectfully in all prevention efforts. There have been numerous indications that the Albanian 'culture of violence' and the customary Kanun laws have been some of the key reasons for the involvement of a number of ethnic Albanians in violent and criminal acts. Although, this might be true only to certain extent, this research shows that such conclusions are a mere simplification of the reality and have not been scientifically founded.

The results of this public survey based on interviews point out that it is a kind of social confusion, rather than culture which has caused the increase in violent and criminal activities among the ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. The survey illustrates that almost all the Albanians have heard about the Kanun from oral tradition and know its very basic principles; however they have not read the laws properly. The knowledge-test shows that they are completely unfamiliar with the specificities of the Kanun; although they remember elements such as revenge, blood feuds, besa, and others. Albanians in general believe that culture and tradition are very important for them, but obviously do not know the foundation of their traditional norms. This could partially be a result of the 45 years harsh communism that tried to ban social and cultural differences within the society as well as religion. However, one should also take into consideration the conflicts in the Balkans, the influence of the Western world, the general symptoms of globalisation and many other societal factors that could be also potential factors leading to this anomaly in values. Also, these inconsistencies in the 'identity-searching process' of the ethnic Albanians can be also an outcome of their history, during which Albanians were always ruled by other regimes; hence, a 'healthy' image about their identity could not be developed. The collapse of stable value systems, the rapid changes in the recent past together with the unexpected access to liberty all can increase the value of the ancient traditions (becoming a kind of 'myth' in the nation), even if their 'followers' do not know the laws in details.

Today older people, particularly Ghegs from rural parts of Albania and Macedonia justified the most honour-related crimes that are done in accordance with the Kanun. Younger Albanians, particularly Tosks from urban parts of Albania and Macedonia, justified more profit-oriented crimes. In general, Tosks, principally from Albania, have been more open to foreign influence, than the traditional Ghegs, so it is possible that for some of them [those who justified crime] profit comes before honour and revenge. Ethnic Albanians from Macedonia, who are sometimes out of reach of the central-government [and are fairly less educated than those from Kosovo and Albania] tended to support criminal behaviour at a very high level [similar to the Albanians from Albania]. These people were also one of the most unsatisfied groups regarding quality of life in the country, politics, corruption and economy. On the other hand, these respondents valued

tradition and traditional norms more, most likely because they naturally search for a set of norms to regulate their everyday life within a dysfunctional state. However, as shown on several occasions, the Macedonian Albanians, as well as all other groups represented in our sample, do not know the traditional norms well; hence, significant segments of the sample have replicated the old cultural attitude model in a form of exaggerated sense of honour and more aggressive behaviour. Again, it is not the culture *per se* to be blamed for these hideous developments.

Moreover, many Albanians, particularly Ghegs, were in favour of dictator and harsh prison sentences, and the public was equally divided in their opinions on this question. The same could be observed when people were asked whether their tradition is compatible with the Western value system. People were also divided on this point. In general people from urban cities, usually Tosks have been more in favour of Western democratic norms, than Ghegs from rural area. However, the overall results show that people are indeed very confused and indecisive regarding highly important questions. They are not sure whether to support tradition or modernity, since they obviously do not clearly know the values behind the two approaches. As noted at the beginning, it seems that the traditional cultural values have been severely weakened, while new ones have not yet emerged to take their place. And the weak states are also to be blamed greatly for this social confusion. It was also shown that building a strong civil society and influencing the leadership of their countries with bottom-up processes do not have a high priority in respondents' eyes, either.

In general, it often appears that the Balkan countries and particularly Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia need agencies and networks dedicated to providing support for family units and civil society. However, various international reports show that at the moment, state agencies are either powerless or frightened to act, while civil organisations are more interested in fundraising than anything else. Hence, psychologist Zyhdi Dervishi explains: 'These crimes will continue to rise until society mobilises to confront the underlying causes' (Bregu 2002). This report tackles some of these highly complex underlying causes that perpetuate violence. Consequently, it calls for long-term diversified strategies that promote integration and cooperation, rather than isolation and seclusion in various spheres in order to help ethnic Albanians find their place in these hyper-dynamic times.

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Notes

¹ There are more than two hundred definitions of culture in the literature of the social sciences (Karstedt 2001: 288). These definitions centre around three key problems: first, is there an autonomous realm of culture that is at least partially independent of structural and institutional arrangements of society? Second, is homogeneity, integration and high consensus a necessary requirement of a concept of culture? Third, how is culture related to the concept of values? In an effort to answer these questions, minimal common elements are identified in the recent conceptualisations of culture: culture is therefore often defined as set of meanings, values and interpretations that forms a specific social force independently of and partially autonomous of social structure and institutional contexts (2001: 288). This allows for a more precise conceptualisation of the relation between culture, structure and actors: cultural patterns originate from and result in typical environmental constraints and patterns of social structure. They are embedded in the social system as much as in the minds of people. Like structural conditions and institutional arrangements they are a though distinct set of shared restraints on behaviour.

² In this paper, blood feud, blood vengeance, vendetta and revenge killings are considered synonyms.

³ Which were closely linked to the fall of the Pyramid Schemes

⁴The definition used by the World Health Organization, however, defines violence as it relates to the health or well-being of individuals. Certain behaviours – such as hitting a spouse – may be regarded by some people as acceptable cultural practices, but are considered violent acts with important health implications for the individual.

⁵This initial categorisation differentiates between violence a person inflicts upon himself or herself, violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals, and violence inflicted by larger groups such as states, organised political groups, militia groups and terrorist organisations. These three broad categories are each divided further to reflect more specific types of violence.

⁶First introduced in the late 1970s (Garbarino and Crouter 1978; Bronfenbrenner 1979), this ecological model was initially applied to child abuse and subsequently to youth violence. More recently, researchers have used it to understand intimate partner violence (Chaulk and King 1998; Heise 1998).

⁷ A high level of residential mobility (where people do not stay for a long time in a particular dwelling, but move many times), heterogeneity (highly diverse population, with little of the social 'glue' that binds communities together) and high population density are all examples of such characteristics and each has been associated with violence. Similarly, communities characterised by problems such as drug trafficking, high levels of unemployment or widespread social isolation (for example, people not knowing their neighbours or having no involvement in the local community) are also more likely to experience violence.

⁸The term 'ethnic Albanian' refers to ethnic Albanians from Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and other parts of the world, and not just to Albanian nationals. ⁸According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993: 5) 'ethnicity has to do with group identification and emerges through social situations and encounters, and through people's way of coping with the demands and challenges of life.' In social anthropology ethnicity refers to 'an aspect of social relationship between agents who considered themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have minimum or regular interaction.' (1993: 12). The main common features that comprise ethnicity are: descendance, language, culture, traditions, religion, as well as politics, organisational aspects and symbolic features

⁹ Finch (1987) explores the merits of tapping into the general imagery of respondents, especially when using more than one vignette and varying the story with respect to age, gender, ethnicity, etc. Wade (1999), for example, used vignettes to explore the ethical frameworks informing children's thinking about issues such as family. Neale's (1999) research into post-divorce family life used vignettes as a useful way of exploring people's moral codes and their contingent status within different contexts (see Wade *et al.* 1999).

¹⁰ The population was divided in clusters or units and then into successively smaller subunits. At each level, the units and the subunits are randomly selected. This is a less costly alternative to simple random sampling (Raymond 1996: 117).

¹¹ The questionnaire given to the respondents was available in Albanian and English and it was slightly adjusted to each country. The interviewers came from the respective countries and spoke the respondents' dialects (Gheg and Tosk).

¹² We tried to ensure diversity of the research sample and several variables are representative of the general sample. 420 respondents (48.6%) of the sample come from Albania, 206 respondents came from Kosovo (23.8%) and 238 respondents came from Macedonia (27.5%). Regarding sub-culture, similar number of Ghegs came from the 3 countries: 195 Albanian Ghegs, 177 Kosovo-Albanian Ghegs, and 162 Macedonian-Albanian Ghegs. We also ensured that equal number of Ghegs and Tosks will come from Albania; hence in our sample we have 198 Albanian Tosks. In addition, there are also 57 Macedonian-Albanian Tosks and 12 Kosovo-Albanian Tosks. In the sample, 45 people did not choose any of the two sub-ethnicities. In addition, we ensured that there will be equal number of people (both Ghegs and Tosks) that come from rural and urban areas. Of the total sample, 444 respondents came from urban area (51.4%), and 420 (48.6%) came from rural area. We divided further our sample on two main age groups, people below (46.5%) and above (53.5%) 35 years of age. In general we are interested in 4 main age groups: between 15 and 25 (23.9%); between 26 and 35 (22.6%); between 36 and 45 (22.5%); and, above 45 (31%). The sample has also equal representation of males and females: 428 males (49.5%) and 436 females (50.5%). Regarding education, the sample has similar number of educated and uneducated people. In the sample 260 respondents (30.1%) have elementary or no school; 357 (41.3%) have secondary school; and 244 respondents (28.2%) have university diploma or higher. If we look at the education criteria cross countries, in Macedonia the distribution between the 3 categories is equal. However, Albania when compared to Kosovo has slightly bigger category of people with no education than with education; whereas Kosovo has slightly bigger category of people with high school or university than with no education. We also ensured that the people in the sample are coming from different economic backgrounds and have different economic status. 385 people identified themselves as employed (44.6%); 206 people stated that they are not employed (23.8%); 108 said they are housekeepers (12.5%); 84 are student (9.7%) and 62 are retired (7.2%). When asked to make a self-assessment of their own position on a poverty scale, 22.7% of the respondents said that they are poor or very poor; 49.9% stated that they are average; and 27.2% said that they are wealthy or very wealthy. Regarding religion majority of the population is Muslim (83.4%). Only 6.3% reported that they are Catholics, 2.7% Orthodox Christiana, and 5.9% atheists.

¹³ Statistical accounts point out the importance of the Kanun laws for 'ordinary' Albanians. ORT (funded by a U.S. A.I.D. Democracy grant) did a nation-wide survey with 1500 respondents in late 1997. They found that the Kanun is still very much alive and widely practiced. A recent survey on the Kanun by the Independent Social Studies Centre, Eureka, has estimated that over 50% of teenagers polled said that they respected the rules of the Kanun and would be willing to take revenge in the name of the Kanun. The report also highlights the fact that thousands of male children are being locked inside their homes because of the fear of revenge (females are exempt from revenge killings) (International Crisis Group 2000) At the time of a conference organised in 2003, the deputy Neritan Ceka estimated that 'around 10,000 people would have to undergo the misdeeds of the Kanun'. In an interview with the BBC World Service, Ismet Elezi, professor of law and specialist in the *Kanun*, explained that he had conducted a survey which shows that today few people under 35 know the exact wording of the *Kanun* – yet many invoke it as an excuse to kill or be abusive (Mortimer and Toader 2005). According to Ardian Visha, Director of Foreign Affairs in the Prosecutor's Office in Tirana, the importance of the *Kanun* to the ordinary life of Albanians is hard to quantify, other than that it has been a part of the culture for centuries. Visha explains that many people in Albania do not wish to talk about the *Kanun* laws directly, yet its existence can be felt in their everyday lives.

¹⁴ The Albanian customary criminal law is encoded in the following canons: The Code of Lekë Dukagjini (collected and codified by Shtjefën Gjeçovi), Shkodër, 1933; The Canon of Skenderbeu (collected and codified by Dom Frano Ilia), Milot, 1993; The canon of Labëria (Codified and prepared for edition by dr. Ismet Elezi), Tiranë 2006; The canon of mountains (this canon was applicable in the 9 mountains of the Malësia e Madhe e Mbishkodrës until the Gjakova Highlands, Malësia e Madhe and the Kosovo Field) and other special canons (For more see: Elezi, I. (2003), Knowledge on the Pan-Albanian customary law, Pristina).

¹⁵ (1) There is no fine (financial compensation) for an offence to honour. An offence to honour is never forgiven and blood must be taken; (2) A crime can be re-compensated with blood: if someone threatens you, or beats you for no reason and you kill him you don't incur his blood and you are not considered guilty; (3) A woman that has committed adultery should be killed and no one should ever avenge murder of adulterous woman; (4) A man has the right to beat and publicly humiliate his wife if she is disobedient. He can cut her hair, strip her nude, expel her from the house and drive her with a whip through the village; (5) According to the Kanun all males in the family of the murderer incur the blood feud during the first year following the murder.

¹⁶ An exchange office in Tirana was robbed yesterday. The offender J.A. had a weapon when he entered the office and demanded cash from the cashier. During the robbery the situation went out of control and the offender seriously wounded one person (T.R.) that wanted to stop the robbery. He managed to take 4,000 Euros from the office and run away. Later that day he was arrested by the police. The offender is unemployed male with no previous criminal record. He has a wife and 2 kids. During the investigation he reported that he was desperately trying to find a job in Albania in the last 4 years but he was unsuccessful. His family always had serious financial difficulties to meet basic needs. He had to do something for his hungry children.

¹⁷ Few days ago in the village of Mirdite in Albania a very rich couple (N.A. and F.A.) that was travelling in the North of the country was robbed while they were staying as guests in the house of Z.G. The money and jewellery they were carrying with them were taken. The value of the stolen goods was approximately 3 300 Euros. No one has been hurt and no other damages have been done. After 2 days of investigation the police found and arrested the robber Z.G., who was the owner of the house. The robber is the couple's very poor and unemployed friend Z.G. who invited them as guests in the house the night of the robbery. Z.G. has a wife and a sick child. He reported that unable to find a job for already few years, he couldn't think of any other way to pay the expensive doctor's bills and medicines. So, he decided to take advantage of the situation and rob the couple. He didn't have any previous criminal record.

¹⁸ A man was killed in broad daylight in Shkoder. The victim's brothers went immediately to search for the killer (E.H.). Fearing that he might be discovered, the killer E.H. knocked at the first door he found, asking for besa (protection). The head of the house, who was in fact the father of the victim (but did not recognise the killer of his son), welcomed the visitor. When the victim's brothers returned, they recognised the killer E.H. The oldest brother (V.K.) immediately shot their guest—killer. After this incident V.K. was arrested. The second killer (V.K.) explained that he was just revenging the murder of his younger brother according to the customary laws of his country. None of the parties had previous criminal record.

¹⁹ One man (R.R.) was detained by police after allegedly murdering his wife (S.R.) because of infidelity. The offender found his wife together with her lover in the house. He immediately killed her. Police described the attack as an act of jealousy. The offender explained that according to the Albanian customary laws (Kanun) a man has the right to kill his wife for two reasons: infidelity and betrayal of hospitality. Therefore, according to him it was his duty to kill his wife in order to defend his honour. The offender had no previous criminal record.