4. The Epistemological and Methodological Approaches: The Methodology of Local State and Peace Building through Life Stories

Introduction

The design for the implementation of the research is the main concern of this chapter. It begins by introducing the theoretical debates relevant for the present research, more specifically the debates on post-positivism, as well as the main critiques to positivism, that is, the third debate in international relations theory. The research takes a post-positivist, especially post-structuralist approach whose epistemological assumptions regarding truth, belief and meaning differ from positivist ones. The rational/positivist approach claims that valid scientific claims are based on knowledge and truth established through rigorous methodological guidelines, which distinguish science from belief. The second part of the discussion focuses on the post-positivist critique which rejects positivism as an uncritical approach to studying social phenomena. They claim that there are many things going on behind the data that are not being reported and are hence excluded from the scholarship. The sections below attempt to outline why the post-structuralist approach is chosen to study the post conflict reconstruction process in Kosovo. One of the main factors is that life stories try similarly to reveal uncovered messages. The narratives collected during the research as well as the resulting story seek also to destabilize common-sense understandings of post conflict reconstruction and to challenge "truths" that dominate the current discourses. The design aims to provide a broad understanding of post conflict reconstruction in Kosovo, covering most of the angles that the international civil servants and the local participants present.

The chapter also elaborates on the methodology of life stories, its importance and limitations for research in international relations. Seeking to expand the discourse analysis with this new methodological source, it describes in depth what life stories are, why they are used and what they add to the study of international relations. Most importantly, life stories are used for the first time to analyze the state and peace building processes. Thereafter, it will be clarified how interviews can be analyzed through grounded theory, which is a qualitative tool aiming to generate new theoretical approaches from qualitative data, and how the life stories as a methodological tool can be added more specifically to post-structuralist theory of international relations. Lastly, a twofold contribution is made by showing the importance of using for the first time life stories to deepen our understanding of state and peace building in Kosovo. Furthermore, I argue that adding life stories as a new source of analysis to traditional sources

such as open, structured or semi-structured interviews, newspapers, policy papers, official documents, archives, etc in international relations contributes to the search for new and hidden local meanings in political science, namely state and peace building theory. This interdisciplinary research based on life stories analysed through grounded theory, a historical and sociological methodological tool, was used to reveal dimensions of security challenges in post-conflict countries, as perceived by international and local individuals.

Post-Positivist Epistemology

Before moving to the specificities of the research design, it is necessary to clarify the relation between post-structuralist approaches and other key notions such as positivism and post-positivism, as well as differences between the latter. The present research takes a post-structuralist approach, which can be categorized as a post-positivist type of research. The following section borrows from different authors, including positivist, post-positivist and especially post-structuralists in order to illustrate the relevance of these theoretical debates.

Questions of knowledge, power and identity have been central to the discussions in international relations theory in the 21st century. The Third Debate, ranging since the mid-1980s and continuing until today, has made prominent the issues of science and disciplinary history in IR. The main concerns of this debate were the oppositions between explanation and understanding, positivism and post-positivism, or rationalism and reflectivism. Generally speaking, positivists claim that scientific research is characterized by systematic observation. Its origins can be traced back to the founding father of sociology, August Comte, who set the

> aim […] to develop a science of society, based on the *methods* of the natural science, namely observation. Its aim was to reveal the "evolutionary casual laws" that explained observable phenomena. His aspiration was that all sciences would have "a unified methodology" (S. Smith, 1996, p. 14).

Valid scientific claims must thus rest on "rigorous methodological guidelines" that allow us to distinguish between science and belief (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2013, p. 22). "Regular patterns" are of significant importance for providing both "causal analysis" and "empirical validation", and must consequently "avoid talking about 'realities' that cannot be observed" and stress upon "instrumental function of knowledge" (Dunne, Kurki, & Smith, 2010, p. 23).

By contrast, post-positivism rejects the assumptions of positivism. George explains the purpose and contribution of post-positivism by pointing out that it seeks

> to help us understand more about contemporary global life by opening up for questioning dimensions of inquiry which have been previously closed off and suppressed; by listening closely to voices previously unheard; by examining "realities" excluded from consideration under a traditional (realist) regime of unity and singularity. Its purpose, reiterated: the search for "thinking space" within an International Relations discipline produced by and articulated through Western modernist discourse (George, 1989, p. 269).

The present research follows this objective that pertains also to post-structuralist approaches which are categorized under both post-structuralist and post-modernist accounts. Most notably, post-structuralism engages critically with the concepts of identity, representation, power and knowledge, and interpretation (Campbell, 2010, p. 213). Science, objective knowledge and universality are questioned through a focus on language, culture and history (Campbell, 2010, p. 234). It is important to note as well that it "sees critique as an inherently positive exercise that establishes conditions of possibility for pursuing alternatives" (Campbell, 2010, p. 235).

In his Presidential address of 1998 to the International Studies Association, "*Two Approaches*", Robert Keohane reflects on the separation in IR theory between what he calls rationalist and reflective approaches, categories that largely correspond to positivism and post-positivism. According to Keohane there is a significant potential in the so-called "reflective approach" which focuses on the "impact of human subjectivities" and the "embeddedness of contemporary international institutions in pre–existing practices" (Keohane, 1988, p. 379). In other words, as Hansen points out, the approach stresses the "importance of identity, culture, norms, regimes and ideas" (Hansen, p.3). But Keohane also criticizes the reflective approach for failing to create a rigorous, empirical research agenda that could potentially synthesize with the rationalist framework. He thereby restates the critique that has traditionally been launched by positivists against post-positivist frameworks.

Many studies subscribing to the reflective approach present answers of political and theoretical questions through the analysis of "discourses". Discourse replaces the distinction between theory and practice, meaning that it "blurs the dichotomy between reality and its textual representations" (Griffiths, 1999, p. 205). Hansen describes the discourse as "framings of meaning and lenses of interpretations, rather than objective, historical truths" (Hansen, p.6). Richard Ashley, a prominent post-positivist and post-structuralist, criticized in his engagement with the positivist view of IR theory the "technical rationality" of science (Griffiths, 1999, p. 207). Ashley thus formulates a critique of modern epistemological assumptions on the rationality of science and the dominance of economic and realist frameworks. The main assumptions of science include the distinction between object and subject, the functioning of theory and its usage as an instrument of discovery. Reflective approaches also aim to move away from dichotomies '(e.g. facts against values, objective knowledge versus subjective prejudice, or empirical observation in contrast to normative concerns)' (Campbell, 2010, p. 228). The reflective, post-positivist approach suggests that knowledge is construed in relation to power and that facts can therefore be altered according to the needs of power.

The reflective approach thus aims to open new boundaries for a more diverse research agenda. In contrast to the rational approach, it avoids creating barriers, maintaining its initial demand to allow new research questions in opposition to Keohane's suggestion to clarify and

agree upon one research agenda. However, Keohane's criticism on the lack of rigor has been taken into account by creating and refining scientific methods (one good example, discussed below, is Hansen's discourse analysis method to analyze foreign policy issues). This type of approach is consequently not "anti-science", but rather opposed to a "positivist" conception of science. According to Campbell, post-structuralism has been marginalized within IR as its claims have been misunderstood by positivists who have been concerned about the consequences of following this type of critical theoretical questioning (Campbell, 2010).

In addition, Ashley uses mainly the method of "deconstruction" to uncover approaches that through power/knowledge discourses create dichotomous categories and supposedly suppress opposition (Griffiths, 1999). Ashley thus seeks to undermine the (modern) hegemonic discourses of power/knowledge rather than replace them, with the following possibilities emerging:

> practices might be resisted or disabled; boundaries might be put in doubt and transgressed; representations might be subverted, deprived of the presumption of self-evidence, and politicised and historicised; new connections among diverse cultural elements might become possible; and new ways of thinking and doing global politics might be opened up (Ashley, 1998, p. 254)

Another important goal of post-structuralists such as Ashley is to find the "structural/epistemological practices" that increase problems, calling to confront structures rather than permit them to structure and restrict possible answers (Griffiths, 1999, p. 252). They support consequently an agenda that would determine the causes of problems, confront these practices and surpass the limitations that characterize the solutions offered by positivist frameworks. The book *Discourses of Global Politics* (1994) by Jim George offers an account of such a critical approach to IR. His analysis of the discipline through a Foucauldian framework calls into question the discipline's overreliance on realism, showing its many errors, silences and omissions. Similarly, such an approach can be applied in the research on contemporary post-conflict reconstruction, its challenges and practices, highlighting the limitations of its solutions and identifying the errors made by dominant approaches such as realism. This thesis also inquires the dividing practices *between* local and internationals, and separately *within* international and local groups, aiming to identify such dividing practices and legitimate authorities, as well as to trace the historical evolution of state and peace building in Kosovo. Lastly, the structure and dynamics of state and peace building are assessed.

This sort of research can similarly be explained by reference to Andersen's notion of an *epistemologically over-determined* approach. Just like reflective approaches, this represents a critical perspective focused on the ways of knowing. According to Andersen, this type of research "is concerned with the observation of how the world comes into being as a direct result of the specific perspectives held by individuals, organizations, or systems" (Andersen, 2003, p. xiii). Epistemologically over-determined approaches claim that the world can be compre-

hended "as it is". The goal is to ask questions through analytical strategies - not methods – and to look at the "observation of observations as observations", as well as "to question presuppositions, to de-ontologise" and identify "which analytical strategies will enable us to obtain knowledge, critically different from the existing system of meaning" (Andersen, 2003, p. xiii). As in Foucault's work, Andersen suggests that deconstruction can reveal "deeper" answers on international relations practices. But in fact, epistemologically over-determined research transcends any particular discipline as it "question[s] the evolution of different fields, their communicative closure on their own functions, the limited reflective ability of the individual fields, and their attachment with and detachment from other fields" (Andersen, 2003, p. xi). This sort of approach thus aims to contribute to the broadening of the discipline, in this case IR, by drawing on other disciplines. An interdisciplinary perspective to IR, borrowing especially from social theory, has firmly established itself even beyond post-structuralism, as can be seen in constructivist theorizing.

Finally, an important difference exists between the various approaches on the perspectives they take on the state. Realists and liberal IR scholars, especially in their "neo" versions, focus on the structure and dynamics of the international system. Realists consider the state to be the central actor in global affairs, while liberals acknowledge the decreasing importance compared with institutions (though not usually abandoning the unitary conceptions of the state). Post-structuralists however focus on the ontological and epistemological questions, calling into questions assumptions in IR scholarship. They are therefore more critical of the state, looking at "how the state came to be regarded as the most important actor in the world politics, and how the state came to be understood as a unitary, rational actor" (Campbell, 2010, p. 216). Adopting a post-positivist approach, Biersteker and Weber look at the state "as an identity or agent, and sovereignty, as an institution or discourse, as mutually constitutive and constantly undergoing change and transformation" (Biersteker & Weber, 1996, p. 11). Statecraft is consequently "not primarily about relations between different state units, but about the construction and reconstruction of the units" (Biersteker & Weber, 1996, p. 5). Neorealists hold therefore "a reproductive, but not a transformative logic" whereas shifting the focus to "the social construction of sovereignty would allow a richer analysis of the changing nature of sovereignty over time" (Biersteker & Weber, 1996, p. 6). In addition, "all components of state sovereignty – not only recognition, but also territory, population, and authority – are socially constructed and combined in specific historical contexts" (Biersteker & Weber, 1996, p. i). Finally, post-structuralists are concerned with "state's historical and conceptual production, and its political formation, economic constitution, and social exclusions" (Campbell, 2010, p. 217). Following this framework, one of the central problems of uncritically assuming a unitary conception of the state is that things are going on "behind the data", which are not being reported and thus excluded from the analysis. Thus special attention is paid to the study of

meaning and beliefs in social processes in order to unfold the "deep meaning" below the surface and by the observation of reality (Dunne et al., 2013, p. 23).

Aiming to identify the *taken for granted assumptions*, deconstruct the "common sense" views on state building, and give voice to excluded accounts during the process, this thesis will follow the tenets of a post-structuralist analysis to the issue of state and peace building in Kosovo. The methodology reflects the post-positivist concern for meanings and beliefs essential to the study of social processes and seeks to uncover new and so far hidden findings. To operationalize the approach, life stories analysed through grounded theory have been chosen as a methodology. The narratives collected during the fieldwork and the resulting story seek to destabilize established understandings of state and peace building and challenge assumptions that continue to dominate the current discourses of state and peace building.

To conclude, the post-positivist and post-structuralist approaches will be applied in this thesis to the phenomenon of state and peace building in Kosovo using interdisciplinary tools. The more common approaches to the analysis of state and peace building, that is, IR theory and legal studies, are complemented by sociological and historical methodological tools which provide data from the field and specific tools for analysis (namely grounded theory and life stories). The latter represents an interdisciplinary and original research approach. The links of post-structuralism to this methodology will be discussed in the sections below.

Introducing Life Stories

To start with a simple question: *what is a life story and what is its methodology?* A straightforward but preliminary answer might be that a life story is

> the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8).

Similarly, Titon understands the life story as "person's story of his or her life, or of what he or she thinks is a significant part of that life" (Titon, 1980, p. 276). The life story helps to understand the role the individual life "plays in the larger community" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 7). It is a personal narrative, a story of personal experience, and thus a subjective view of one's life. Furthermore it "consists of all the stories and associated discourse units, such as explanation and chronicles, and the connections between them, told by an individual during the course of his/her lifetime" (Linde, 1993, p. 21). According to Atkinson, it consists of "important events, experiences and feelings" of life and covers "the time from birth to the present or before and beyond" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8). Finally "the life story is fairly complete narrating of one's entire experience of life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8).

In fact, life stories express "our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way… how to claim or negotiate group membership… and touch on widest social constructions, since they make presuppositions about what can be taken as expected, what the norms are, and what common or special belief systems can be used to establish coherence" (Linde, 1993, p. 3). Life stories are pieces that one chooses to retell about everyday actions, behavior and words of a play in the garden or a theater, a party, a funeral or other events. Thus in wider societal context, life stories express "personal and collective pasts" bringing them into the present context "with each act of our lives [as] memories, experiences and collective values" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8). Life stories uncover and express social experiences as well as the surrounding relationships and identify what shapes individuals and what constitutes their commonalities and differences. They have a deeply human element and foster an understanding of the self, both subjectively and objectively. Life stories urge us to recognize environments, revealing possible patterns of transformation, sometimes even fostering transformation processes and new responsibilities (Atkinson, 1998, pp. 25–26).

Narratives have a central place in "the search for fresh approaches to knowing and teaching" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 129). Stories "speak to us on a fundamentally human level" as they move beyond the personal into the collective reality (Atkinson, 2001, p. 122). They articulate at the same time "individual and collective, private and public, structural and agentic and real and fictional worlds" (Goodley et al., 2004, p. x). Life stories have the potential to occupy a central place in the generation of knowledge as the notions of identity are revealed in the situations of empowerment or alienation. However, so far life stories are often either taken-for-granted "truths" and thus ignored by the official discourse or they are replaced by the official discourse with "stories of a seemingly more plausible nature" (Goodley et al., 2004, p. x). Some grand narratives have been challenged though by local and personal narratives in the last decades.

Atkinson argues in this vein on the importance of life stories and local narratives that

> We become fully aware, fully conscious, of our own lives through the process of putting them together in story form. It is through story that we gain context and recognize meaning. Reclaiming story is part of our birthright. Telling our story enables us to be *heard, recognized, and acknowledged by others*. *Story makes the implicit explicit, the hidden seen, the unformed formed, and the confusing clear* ((Atkinson, 2001, p. 125), authors emphasis).

In addition, Atkinson describes that the stories bring order into life: "It is a way to understand the past and the present more fully and a way to leave a personal legacy for the future" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 126). Life stories become complete when one succeeds in understanding the most important experiences over time and identify threads and links that connect different parts of life. Other life story researchers point out that

> stories fundamentally capture the diverse and changing nature of individual and social lives at the start of the twenty-first century. Narratives are always politicised, structured, culturised and socalised. Questions remain about the political, structural, cultural and social arte-facts within life stories and their telling. Narratives may be our best hope of *capturing structures that continue to shape, divide and separate human beings* ((Goodley et al., 2004, p. x) authors emphasis).

Thus the aim of the life story is to capture the socially constructed nature of experiences, the language of the wider culture and the implied understandings of states, identities and political cultures. The approach is therefore often applied because dominant "political and cultural narratives are under attack by personalized and localized narratives" (Goodley et al., 2004, p. x). Life stories, their context, purpose and their telling, are thus an empirically rich but at the same time open-ended methodology. They belong to the category of qualitative research, and more specifically to narrative research and are mainly used when representing the experience of marginalized groups such as indigenous people, racial and ethnic groups, as well as women. As explained in the Introduction, the life stories are used also for the local elites since on a global scale they may be viewed as marginalized actors when compared to the international hegemony. The next section elaborates further on the disciplinary spread of life stories.

Historical Traces

The following subsection seeks to explain the evolvement of the narrative-biographical turn in the social sciences (Chamberlayne, Bornat, & Wengraf, 2002). The term life stories dates back to the beginning of 20th century (Linde, 1993). It has its origins in oral history, life history, and other ethnographic methods (Atkinson, 2001, p. 123). Life stories have been used across different disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, international relations, sociology, and transitional justice (Goodley et al., 2004, p. 56,88). Their spread started with studies in psychology and then it was traced in the folkloristic studies in late 1960s (Atkinson, 2001; Richard M Dorson, 1971; Kikhia, Hallberg, Bengtsson, & Savenstedt, 2010; Komulainen, 1999; Titon, 1980). A few studies in anthropology and sociology began employing the method at the beginning of the 1980s (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984; Dossa, 1994; Hutchison, 2010; Rubenson, Höjer, Johansson, & others, 2005; Schachter, 2010). In the late 1980s, there were some pioneering studies by feminist scholars using life stories in the field of international relations (Elshtain, 1987). They were also used for understanding war and causes of war (Alexander & McGregor, 2004; Anders, 2009; Elshtain, 1987; Herzog, 2004; Steans, 2008). While the usage of life stories decreased in the social sciences in the mid- and late 1980s, a renewed increase could be noted in the early 1990s and on, for instance in research on transitional justice on the mothers of Srebrenica and their dealing with the past (Phendla 2004; Sangster 1994; Leydesdorff 2007). Life stories as methodology utilized in the transitional justice literature advocate a bottom-up approach to the field such as creating collective mem-

ories outside court rooms through victims stories (Dembour & Haslam, 2004) and dealing with the past (Leydesdorff, 2007). In socio-legal research, there is an avocation for the usage of life stories on human rights discourse (Schaffer & Smith, 2004), especially in victims and ethnic conflict, minority rights (Engel & Munger, 2003), hate speech (Matsuda, 1989) and anti discrimination issues where there is a plea to acknowledge the importance of narratives from the members of a "majority race" (Delgado, 1987) . The creation, temporary rise and fall, and the final gradual and continuous establishment of life stories in narrative research as of the late 1980s deserves further attention.

A pioneering field using life stories has been psychology. Allport used personal documents of patients for instance to analyze personality development (1942). Murray also turned to life narratives to understand better personality development (2007). It is also believed that Sigmund Freud used life stories for his interpretations of psychoanalytic studies (Freud, 1957). In 1958, Erikson studied the lives of Luther and Gandhi connecting psychology with history and the evolution of ethics, specifically in analyzing how Gandhi mobilized politically and spiritually the Indian population (Erikson, 1975; Erikson, 1970). More recently, Polkinghorne and Atkinson have reintroduced the method of life stories, particularly in looking at the development of individual identity through different phases of life cycle (Atkinson, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Traces of life stories can also be found in folkloristic studies. Richard Dorson, a prominent folklorist called his observations during his fieldwork in Indiana and East Chicago a "personal history" (Dorson, 1982). He opened debates within the discipline such as if personal history is a part of traditional oral genre, and called for collection of more stories from life experiences in general. A decade later, the interest in collecting the experiences of ordinary people grew in the US, "especially blue-collar workers, racial and ethnic minorities, and women" (Titon, 1980, p. 276). Monographs and oral history contributed to the so-called "documentation decade" in 1980s. In addition, biographical research has been conducted on historical transition from socialism to post socialism in Eastern and Central Europe (Humphrey, Miller, & Zdravomyslova, 2003). According to Titon, however, many life stories were in this early stage more the work of the editor or interviewer who arranged the story (answers) according to the writing purposes. In other words, the informant only answered a series of questions while the author took "editing liberties" on specific elements for writing purposes that can result on "false claims" (Titon, 1980, p. 283). A story is however not a history which is why Dorson categorized these studies as "history of folk" (1982). Folk history relies on the interpretations of the personal documents and oral traditions. Another angle was taken back in the 1980s, as an attempt was made to define and develop life stories as *self-contained fiction* (Titon, 1980, p. 288).

According to folkloristic studies, the fieldwork of life stories involves "talking to people and finding out about their life" (Titon, 1980, p. 276). Attempts were made to distinguish life stories from other historical formats such as the biography, oral history, and personal history, or life history as it is used in anthropology (Titon, 1980, p. 280). However, life histories and life stories are used interchangeably in literature (Miller, 2011). A distinction made "between a life story and an oral history is usually emphasis and scope" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 125). Oral history focuses on specific events or issues whereas life story inquire the complete life of a person.

There has also been some employment in the fields of anthropology, sociology, business, and specific themes such as education and gerontology. In anthropology, life stories have been presented in different contexts, for instance in research on Yukon territory (Cruikshank, 2000), stories of China's bottom social class (Yiwu, 2009), indigenous life histories from Native Americans (Ramírez & De, 2007). Life stories sometimes referred to as life histories date back to James Spradley's work (Spradley, 1979). Similarly, in sociology they have been used to describe social change, individual identities, subjectivities and others (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984; Bruner, 2004; Kidder, 1992; Rice, 1992). In sociological studies, narratives such as life stories are not the only tool advocated, they also advocate the usage of biographical narratives (Bertaux, 1981; N. K. Denzin, 1989). The historical field produced several works of oral history similar with life stories (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991; Geiger, 1990; Norquay, 1990; Sangster, 1994). Recently in entrepreneurship, marketing and leadership research, there has also been some advocacy for the usage of life stories (Popp & Holt, 2013; Ryan, 2001; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Watson, 2009). Life stories have been prevalent in researching specific themes such as *education* from different perspectives. For instance, the academics on life stories looked at the underrepresentation of women in computing courses (Cox, Dickinson, & Parsons, 1994), the impact of children telling life stories as an educational method for efficient communication in classrooms (Higgins, 2012) and biographical approaches to education (Erben, 1998). They have been used also for the life review of elderly people, describing and transferring their experience and knowledge through stories (Blix, Hamran, & Normann, 2013; Coleman, 1999). The field of migration studies has also seen an increasing amount of ethnographic life stories to study different angles of migration. For instance, there has been analysis of the concept of autonomy in female Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands (Buitelaar, 2007), relations of gender and ethnicity (Lawson, 2000), or Jewish immigrant life stories in the United States (Mihuailescu, 2012).

In *international relations*, life stories have so far not been used in the state building literature, but in more general contexts such as identity loss and recovery of veterans and causes of war (P. Coleman & Podolskij, 2007; Suganami, 1997), particularly by post-positivist scholars (Ackerly & True, 2006) and feminist researchers (Elshtain, 1987). More specifically, story-

telling has been used to tackle questions that escape any immediately plausible answer, as for instance the causes and motives of war. Feminist IR scholar Maria Stern has used the method of life history through narratives or text in analyzing the experiences and struggles of Mayan women (Stern, 2005). Elshtain employs life stories to provide a feminist account of women and war in international relations (Elshtain, 1987). Her research methodology includes narratives in which she tells to the reader her life story. These authors introduced the ideas of how personal narratives are important when looking at broader historical arguments. In *Women and War*, Elshtain explains through life stories the exchange of "the terrain between particular lives and loyalties and public duties" (Elshtain, 1987, p. 42).

More recently, Inayattulah edited a book called *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR*, which introduces an autobiographical approach to international relations (Inayatullah, 2010). Personal narratives are therein being linked to the larger context of world politics, culture and history. In other words, the book illustrates how individual stories influence theoretical standpoints. The contributors advocate strongly for more frequent usage of autobiographical methods since there is a high divergence between theory and practice and an imminent need to link both, as the forward of the book emphasizes:

> These essays are autobiographical, but focused on the academic aspect of authors' lives. Specifically, they are set within the domain of international relations/global politics. They are theoretical, but geared to demonstrate that theoretical decisions emerge from theorists' needs and wounds. The theoretical precision, rather than being explicitly deduced, is instead immanent to the autobiographical and the historical/cultural narrative each author portrays. And, these essays are framed in historical/cultural terms, but seek to bind together theory, history, culture, and the personal into a differentiated and vibrant whole (Inayatullah, 2010, p. i).

Like Elshtain and most of the contributions in Inayattulah's volume, this dissertation uses a post-structuralist framework for analysis. This methodology has been employed in wider post-structuralist approaches such as feminism and post-colonial theory. The contributors building on these theoretical frameworks have welcomed the use of life story as a means to close the gap between theory and practice (human experiences).

For research purposes, life stories can be used from other researchers as primary or secondary sources depending on the writing approach of life stories. They can be used for different research purposes. The benefit of this sort of short autobiographical approach is that one can find large amount of diverse data. Life stories therefore have a dual-usage purpose and are interdisciplinary as seen above (Atkinson, 1998, p. 2). Stories are universal, they have meaning, carry common elements and motives, understanding the essence of all humans by identifying common patterns (Atkinson, 1998, p. 5). Furthermore they focus on conflicts, resolutions, change and growth, important events and the shared values and beliefs (Atkinson, 1998,

p. 11). New elements for the individual's success and failures might emerge and most likely new themes related to larger issues might emerge as there are

> submerged stories within life stories-those elements that could tell us more about the individual; specific theme or issues that relate to the larger issues of gender, class, and culture and whether there are any patterns that emerge or gender, class, and cultural underpinnings in the narrative (Atkinson, 1998, p. 20).

In fact, for the research in political science, they can explain, confirm or improve the models offered so far on political processes and other areas like people and groups attitudes, public policies, relations between NGO, states or international organizations, effective aid policies, foreign policies in pre conflict, conflict and post conflict era, etc. In legal sciences, it can be used for identifying new legislation needs, the gaps on the implementation of the legislative acts and possible solutions to the enforcement of legislative acts, the impact on the international criminal justice, the impact of hybrid judicial systems, the impact of tradition in legal system, on the possibilities of creation of responsibility and ethics on political class toward citizens and other areas depending on the research questions.

To conclude, one can see that life stories have been used across disciplines and that life story research can be used in different fields. This source can be adjusted to different research themes and needs. However, in political science and legal discourse it has been not used so frequently, even though there are many potential benefits. The benefits for the research are many as life stories have dual usage of primary and secondary documents, contain high and diverse amount of data compared to other research tools and provide new insights for the larger issues by understanding the diverse and changing personality of individuals and their social lives. There are also benefits for using life stories for the subject, such as fostering an understanding of the self, leaving behind a legacy, recognizing environments, revealing possible patterns of transformation, and sometimes even fostering new responsibilities, as well as giving a voice to the storytellers from marginalized groups. Life stories therefore include many important benefits not only for the storyteller but also for the research (Atkinson, 2001, p. 122).

The Methodology

Belonging to the wider methodological category of ethnography, life stories usually imply immersing oneself within the culture under investigation. The result is usually a narrative starting from the beginning of the life until the present as explained earlier. Generally the researcher's methodology follows an idiographic approach, which tackles the private, individual, and subjective aspects of phenomena rather than the public, general, and objective one. It can therefore be regarded as a hermeneutic, not a positivist approach, preoccupied with cap-

turing the meanings provided by a culture or person rather than measuring the presumably observable aspects of an individual.

The following questions are analyzed further in depth: What are the international experiences and narratives about conditions, actions/interactions and consequences of international state and peace building and to what extent do they correspond and differ from established academic frameworks? In other words, keeping in mind the general research question and the theoretical questions explained in the introduction, the following questions are analyzed further in depth: What are the local experiences and narratives about conditions, actions/interactions and consequences of international state and peace building and to what extent do they correspond and differ from established academic and policy framework, and how do they compare with the international experiences? The main methodological and substantive innovations of this thesis were guided by the following research sub-question: What do the experiences of local people in Kosovo as reflected in their biographies tell us about the process and the limitations of state and peace building?

A total of 62 interviews have been conducted for this project. The basis for the analysis of the international perspective on state and peace building in Kosovo are 34 interviews, conducted with current or former international civil servants mostly during the summer of 2012 (a few took place in 2013). The interviews were semi-structured, with the questionnaire included in Appendix A. For researching local perspectives to state and peace building leading to the identification of new factors and causalities, which have not yet been covered by the established state and peace building literature which is mostly concerned with the international perspective. The empirical material (28 life stories: 12 senior political officials and 16 NGO activists, religious movements officials, academics, retiree's, businessmen's, lawyers and diaspora) was used as a basis for an alternative and challenging account to state and peace building as a process. During the rest of the chapter, I refer to Atkinson's use of life stories to elaborate on the specificities of the life story method. The following section discusses in greater detail the data collection procedures through initial and theoretical sampling and data analysis through grounded theory.

Data Collection and Analysis through Grounded Theory

In developing novel understandings of the state and peace building phenomenon, this research pursues what Glaser and Strauss originally called "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It's purpose is developing a theory through constant comparative method. It is the idea of developing theory on the basis of qualitative data. Unlike logically deduced theories, grounded theory methods "consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Following the "constructivist grounded theory" of Charmaz (2006, p. 131), this

research seeks to ensure that "researchers and participants co-construct the data through interaction" (Charmaz, 2011, p. 366) in order to create a local understanding of the practices of state and peace building.

While the collection of data is largely unproblematic in grounded theory, there has been some debate on the place of the literature review in the research process. Criticizing Glaser and Strauss' original emphasis on grounded theory as a "tabula rasa" inquiry, Bulmer (1979, p. 667) argued that it is practically impossible to approach a given topic without previous conceptualizations. "Constructivist" grounded theorists have nowadays departed from the view that the process of data collection requires "theoretical innocence" on behalf of the research, proposing "theoretical agnosticism" as an alternative (Charmaz, 2011, p. 366). In the present case, the research includes in this vein the study of literature on international and local state and peace building throughout the research process. The theoretical categories and explanations were put to "rigorous scrutiny" (Charmaz, 2011, p. 366) not only for methodological reasons (that is, to accommodate the demands of grounded theory) but also to meet the research objectives and revise established conceptions of state and peace building. Furthermore the data collected in this research are qualitative and the aim is to create possibly an emergent theory of local state and peace building, therefore grounded theory is the most suitable methodology for this research design.

Data Collection

The Life Story Interview Process

Recounting life stories requires the collection of qualitative data through in-depth interviews. Similarly, grounded theory also necessitates intensive interviewing which is "open-ended but directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet flexible approach" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29). The participants are informed, in the beginning and at the end of the interview, about the research objectives, methodologies, outcomes and the drafting of their life story. Each participant is met around one to two times depending on each storyteller for two to three hours, spread over a period of two or three months. However, there can be as many sittings as needed until all stages of life and state and peace building are covered. Literature states that interviews can last to two or three dozen hours, but then they usually are a written assisted auto-biography (Atkinson, 2001, p. 132). The first interview session began with unstructured interviewing to gain the trust and explore interests and concerns, asking general questions about origin, education, health, career, war, relationships, important life events and turning points. Rather than suggesting specific ideas, informants were invited to speak freely about their most important life phases. In next sessions, the discussion was guided to the relevant elements of participant's life for the research question that were revealed during their most important life phases. The last session tested the participant's view on the means, ends and challenges to state

and peace building as suggested by the established theory. However, the author made no suggestions on the relation between state and peace building and their turning points of life. The final meeting gave the possibility to reflect freely on the concepts of state and peace building scholarship and research.

The participants were advised to tell as much as possible about their lives and to provide a full and a true story. There were three main stages of life stories interview: (1) planning (preparing how and why the story can be beneficial); (2) conducting the interview (guiding the person while telling and recording), and (3) transcribing and interpreting the data (Atkinson, 2001, p. 131). Regarding the first stage, for the interviews, Atkinson provides a template of 200 questions that can be asked during these sessions, which are meant to be adjusted to the research theme. Some of these questions and guidelines for the interviews were employed in the research questionnaire adopted for the current research in Appendix III. The researcher could also adopt different *time frames*, depending on the particular research. Thus in researching state and peace building in Kosovo, a division was made between the periods before, during and after the war in 1999. The primary focus lied on the period after the war, which was separated in four further stages: (i) after the intervention; (ii) after the Ahtisaari plan; and (iii) after independence and (iv) after the political dialogue. However, an interviewer must remain flexible to adapt to specific circumstances (Atkinson, 2001, p. 130) and can transform the structure to the specific needs of the research. The aim was to create informal and conversational interview settings in which participants can express their views and engage the interviewer and her conceptions. Therefore, the interviewer added meanings and interpretations of their own that enrich the research process (Atkinson, 2001, p. 131). During the interviews, the storytellers retold their life story without interruptions according to time frames that allowed the most salient issues to arise form their own life understanding regardless time.

In the process of transcription, the interviewer's questions and comments were left out (Atkinson, 2001, p. 131), meaning that only the respondent's story was transcribed. The respondents have had a look at the transcript for purposes of review. The story is to remain as authentic as possible, relying on the wording of the interview. As suggested by Atkinsons, during the process of editing, repetitions and non-related comments need to be deleted to ensure the coherence and flow of the text. The transcripts were used for the state and peace building theory, introducing the stories and interpretation, and were then coded ("Data Analysis", see next sub-section).

Furthermore, this research aims to capture the voices and experiences of people whose agendas are often ignored by researchers. However, the researcher still tried to have no hand in writing of their stories but tries "to authentically capture their stories in meaningful and accountable ways" (Goodley et al., 2004, p. 59). Therefore the introductory piece was written by the researcher and approved by the storyteller, whereas the transcript was afterwards ana-

lyzed by the researcher. On the topic, the main emphasis in this research lies in the significance of a number of experiences of local people labeled as bureaucrat and non bureaucrat citizens, the ones involved in the process of state and peace building as well as persons experiencing it from the "outside".

In the doing of life stories, the researcher guided the participant with questions about his or her life stories. The life story questions were used while maintaining a flexibility for different storylines and settings. According to the general life stories approach, the researcher is not "in control" of the story, and must accept that the storyteller is sometimes not willing to disclose information or does not provide the desired coherence. In Atkinson's words, "[t]he storyteller has the final say in telling the story" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 135). The researcher does not intervene during the interview situations but interprets afterwards the individual's choice of the type of story. The process of "hearing, understanding, and accepting without judgment" another's story can be transformative (Atkinson, 2001, p. 126). If the interviewee recounts a certain inconsistencies in the story, the researcher asks questions and interprets it. Still, according to Atkinson, it is pertinent to give the person a chance to tell the story in the way the storyteller choses. This provides more data than one might use but it provides a broader foundation of data to draw upon. This led to the data collection process which is based on grounded theory based on two phases, respectively initial and theoretical sampling, as well as snowball sampling and several other criteria based on population, involvement with the international community and others that are explained below.

Initial and Theoretical Sampling

While this research employed theoretical sampling during the fieldwork, it was necessary to be clear about the "initial sampling", that is, the "point of departure" for the inquiry (Charmaz, 2006, p. 100). Several techniques and criteria are employed in the initial sampling phase such as snowball sampling technique, population criteria, life story criteria and access ones which are discussed in depth below. To start with, snowball sampling method was used to identify the "hard to reach populations" (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010, p. 369) and it allows to accommodate the sensitivity of the topic (Browne, 2005, p. 47). In this case, the technique was used to approach participants initially and identify possible life stories. Snowball sampling makes use of the participants' network to recruit other participants that might usually be hard to reach because they are either hidden, for example individuals who did not fit to the governmental profile and have thus been excluded in state and peace building process. It is a culturally sensitive technique that gives access to certain groups that are reluctant to give information because of the social and political consequences (Sadler et al., 2010, p. 369). In the present case, it was suitable to identify individuals involved in state and peace building since many of them had not been interviewed for academic purposes before. Snow-

ball sampling has also been referred to as "semi-self –directed, chain referral recruiting mechanism" (Sadler et al., 2010, p. 370).

The *snowball sampling technique* has advantages and limitations. Among the disadvantages is that the sampling is not random. Hence any conclusion reached might not be generalizable. However there are other advantages of snowball sampling technique especially for the sensitive topic at hand it can "help researchers to identify study participants where there are multiple eligibility requirements; this is particularly so when the study's eligibility criteria involve characteristics that some people consider to be very private" (Sadler et al., 2010, p. 370). It also can "shorten the time and diminish the cost required to assemble a participant group of sufficient size" (Sadler et al., 2010, p. 370). One of the most useful advantaged for the current research through life stories is that

> if one eligible person is identified, that person often can identify and recruit others to the study. A particular advantage of snowball sampling is its cultural competence and the inherent trust it engenders among potential participants. This helps to increase the likelihood that the identified person will agree to talk with the researcher or program coordinator (Sadler et al., 2010, p. 370).

Random sampling cannot be reconciled with the life stories method due to the danger of high refusal rates, the sensitivity of the research, and the fact that the result might be a sample that features less the marginalized voices which are particularly interesting in the present context. Furthermore, random sampling methods are usually required where large-N samples are the object of interest, whereas the interpretative research uses small-N, as is the case of this research. In this particular study, the snowball sampling has an advantage of identifying individuals suitable for the state and peace building research, who are likely to speak and more likely to disclose information about the reconstruction process which through random sampling would be impossible. As we explained earlier, this was the easiest the best way to reach individuals for the research purpose given the sensitivity of the topic, geographic location and political, social and economic consequences.

For instance, in a study on surgeons at the American College of Surgeons, Hoffman, an ethnographer had difficulties in *gaining access* to her interviews in the clinical department in question. In the initial phase, she received only superficial information from the informants. She subsequently altered her approach, using her husbands network (a surgeon himself) to have better access to information (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 48). Hoffman (1980 in Hammersley & P. Atkinson 2007) in a research with local elite on members of board of hospital directors in Quebec' selected informants on the basis of social ties, beginning with direct personal contacts, and then asked those acquaintances to refer her to other informants. This strategy, she concludes, produced "more informative and insightful data" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 48). The usage of *facilitative relationships* and also *gatekeepers* (the first

people which grant one access to the informants) are common in ethnographical research. They have also been employed in this research to access the relevant data.

The research aims to be representative and inclusive of different local viewpoints. Hence the choice of biographies is based on a number of different *population* categories. The focus lies on local actors to enable a comparison between the perceptions of different groups, involved and affected by state and peace building on the ground. The target group is divided equally between ethnical, gender and regional lines. Gender is less represented on the local life stories due to the low number of women involved in public life and the snowballing technique that provided for less women than men participants (5 out of 28 participants). Firstly, they are ten individuals involved in the process of state and peace building, respectively in decision-making, and another eighteen outside the system as such not involved in decision making to ensure diversity. The individuals within the system are based in national institutions, and embodied therefore an "insiders" experience as is commonly held by administrators, politicians, bureaucrats, translators, secretaries and commanders. Individuals outside the system are common people who experienced the results of state and peace building process, including for example retirees, teachers or farmers. However due to the weak influence of NGO's, university and religious movement in the reconstruction process, they are considered as falling outside the governmental system as well. Secondly, their *life history shows a change or development,* as for instance in changes of their positions within the structure. The third criterion concerns the *frequent interaction of the local individual with internationals* only for the half of the interviewed group that are part of the system involved in the state and peace building process. Fourthly, the local individuals work on the issues that are addressed in this research directly, or have been impacted from these issues such as outsiders. The choice of individuals is also based on availability and willingness to participate in the research. The combination of these criterions brings about more diverse findings.

Furthermore, life story criteria are employed also in the initial sampling phase. Linde describes two criteria that the researcher needs to take into account (1993). The first one, an evaluative point, requires the storyteller to have reflective points about the lived life by the storyteller, thus it should not be a story with general points about the way the world is. (Linde, 1993, p. 21). The second criterion called, extended reportability, refers to events told by the storyteller, which need to be rare or run counter to societies expectations. Linde argues "An event is not reportable if it is something that happens everyday; to be turned into a story, an event must be either unusual in some way or run counter to expectations or norms" (Linde, 1993, p. 22).

As pointed out by Bryman, the improved version of grounded theory entails a specific set of procedures (Bryman, 2008, p. 541). One of those is "*theoretical sampling*" which refers to "seeking pertinent data to develop your emerging theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96) until no

new theoretical insight can be gained ("theoretical saturation"). Grounded theory suggests, unlike random sampling that takes place prior to data collection, to pursue theoretical sampling as a continuous process by which samples are chosen:

> Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating *theory* whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45).

In other words, theoretical sampling is a form of "purposive sampling" where samples are selected strategically in order to be relevant for tackling the research question (Bryman, 2008, p. 415). According to Charmaz, the researcher needs to "aim their data-gathering towards explicit development of theoretical categories derived from analysis" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 102).

The data was gathered by means of qualitative "unstructured" *interviews* which have the advantage of "giving insight into what the interviewee sees as relevant and important" (Bryman, 2008, p. 437). Using theoretical sampling to detect where data can be collected most effectively, grounded theory conducts in-depth interviewing "to explore, not to interrogate" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29). More specifically, this means that questions must be "sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences as well as narrow enough to elicit and explore the participant's specific experience" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29). In line with the general approach in grounded theory, concepts and categories that have emerged from the data are incorporated in the questions in later interviews.

In fact, the initial sample is based on a general perspective of the research area, which is in this case the difference or convergence of international state and peace building theories from local state and peace building theories. Initially the first samples of life stories are coded, and the direction of the emerging local theory of state and peace building was developed. However if new categories emerge out of data for local state and peace building, then these categories are included in the results as well to complement and represent an accurate understanding of local state and peace building. If negative cases, specifically data not corresponding to the developed theory, are found out of data, the theory is revised and the data collection continues until "theoretical saturation" has been reached. The dilemma is therefore to identify whether "theoretical saturation" has been achieved (as mentioned earlier, saturation refers to the situation where no new or other information are received from the participants; see Sadler (2010, p. 370)). According to the theory, the data collection process ends when there is enough qualitative data to provide insights into the research question, meaning when there is no need for additional participants or information. The process of data collection stops at this point, and the process of data analysis starts. This method is justified in the present case as the research is not geared to generalizing findings to a population, but to question established theories empirically.

In this context, the selection of life stories was particularly relevant. To meet the research objectives, this study used 28 stories from Kosovo, a country in which the state and peace building process has lasted for more than a decade with the assistance of different international organizations, reflecting a variety of dimensions of state and peace building from different perspectives. Each life story has its distinct relevance for a better understanding of the policy and process of the state and peace building. Initially the sample of the stories was "kept open" as suggested by the theoretical sampling (Mason in Chambers, 2005, p. 98). Drawing on Chambers (2005) study sample of older widows, in the end 28 stories were chosen because of the large amount of data each story contains and the process of permission with the storytellers, the diversity of the stories, and no new data emerged, therefore there was no need to collect new stories (Chambers, 2005, p. 99). Enough stories revealing similar patterns were collected to reflect the diversity of people and places (Yanow & Shea, 2006, p. 324). A state of theoretical saturation was achieved, when no new data emerged. The stories offered authentic thick descriptions, namely details about events, interaction, relationships and characters. 28 life stories were selected on the ground and in the diaspora since it is common in qualitative research to conduct in depth interviews in small numbers (Small 2009). Only the life stories that stood out for their ability to transfer the main threads across all other stories, and which were rich in details, were selected to be used in the subsequent chapters. Such exemplary life stories contain key elements of the main themes and create an emergent alternative based on local voices. The qualitative data was gathered in extensive fieldwork. Each story is introduced when it is referred to for the first time with a description of storyteller biographies and how those stories and their interpretation emerged. Other materials have been incorporated as well, as for example information gathered in newspapers, documents and other observations.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In processing of collected data, this project draws on the method of "coding" as described in the "grounded theory" methodology. "Coding" of the data refers in this context to "reviewing transcripts and/or field notes and giving labels to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or that appear to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied" (Bryman, 2008, p. 542). The process of coding is thus the "pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46), beginning with "line-by-line coding" and leading to the development of theoretical concepts and then categories. The researcher has to make sure by "constant comparison" between the data and concepts/categories that the theoretical notions are a true product of the empirical data. The resulting theoretical categories and concepts can be used to develop a new theory. The Coding Level Pyramid (see Figure *1*) illustrates this process graphically. After the process of putting together the story lines and recurring categories for the purpose of theory generation,

novel outcomes can emerge. The software toolkit NVIVO was used to analyze and code the data.

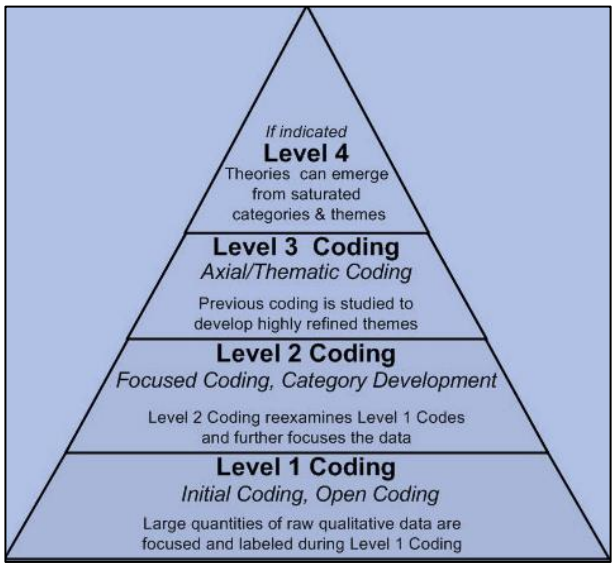

Figure 1: Coding Level Pyramid (Trochim, 2000)

Coding comprises three main phases of labeling relevant data with regard to the *research questions*. The first phase, *initial coding* aims to reduce the data. It codes *line by line* the statements of the participants in order to stay close to the meaning of the data and away from the preconceived notions. The coding focuses on verbs/gerunds ('ing') that reflect actions and processes and *invivo* (participants special expressions). The following questions are primarily taken into account: "What is this data a study of?, What does the data suggest? Pronounce? From whose point of view? What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate?" (Glaser and Charmaz in Charmaz, 2006, p. 47). During the line-by-line coding, Charmaz suggests to ask the following questions to separate the data into categories and thus reveal the pertinent processes: "What process is at issue here? How can I define it? How does this process develop? How does the research participant act while involved in this process? What does the research participant profess to think and feel while involved in this process? What might his or her observed behavior indicate? When, why, and how does the process change? What are the consequences of the process?" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 51). Concepts are applied from the literature only if they fit, hence they should not be forced onto the data. Grounded theory tries to shift away from the existing conceptual framework. The initial coding stage results in an initial codebook with different labels.

The second phase, *focused coding* is more "directed, selective, and conceptual" where "the most significant or frequent initial codes" turn into categories to structure large parts of the data. The analytical frameworks (categories) are created only if they are relevant to the research question, literature and data, thus if they "make the most analytical sense to categorize

your data incisively and completely" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). In fact, new categories can be created based on the patterns of the data and repetitions on social reality. As a result, a code scheme emerges with main categories and subcategories. It is important to compare the data in order to define the codes properties. Thus this phase is concerned more with organizing the codes into categories and subcategories and defining their properties.

The third one, *axial coding* has the purpose "to sort, synthesize, integrate and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after open coding" (Creswell in Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). It aims to create the structure by (i) possibly *identifying the major category*, (ii) linking and *showing the relation of the categories with subcategories* and (iii) *defining the properties and dimensions*. In axial coding the following questions are most pertinent: "when, where, who, why, how, and with what consequences" which describe the experience fully (Strauss & Cordin in Charmaz, 2006, p. 60).

In ordering the codes, Charmaz suggests not to employ any further set of specific terms as the relations of categories become visible from the data. Charmaz suggests thus a flexible and simple approach to data analysis, following the clues given by the empirical data. After initial and focused coding, she looks at (i) main dilemmas evolving around studied phenomena that the participants expressed in many interviews, (ii) identify the categories that represent these dilemmas, (iii) define the properties of these categories through comparing data that represent the same type of experiences, events, actions (when defining the categories keep in mind the 6 questions: what, when, where, who, why, whereby), (iv) the definitions might reveal new codes which can then be used to recode the data and look for if when, why and how and discover the new theory.

However Strauss and Corbin, and Kelle, suggest to use few questions "to make links between categories visible" (Strauss & Corbin in Charmaz, 2006, p. 61; Kelle, 2005). A scheme of statements is therefore created to classify them, link the categories and develop a theory of action: phenomena (what the study is about, the central question) that reflect the research questions; conditions ("circumstances or situations that form the structure of the studied phenomena") reflect questions on why, where, how come and when; actions and interactions (participants routine or strategic responses to issues, events or problems to deal with the phenomena) reflect by whom and how; consequences (results of the actions and interactions of the phenomena) what happens because of these actions and interactions and solutions (Strauss and Corbin in Charmaz, 2006, p. 61; Kelly in Mortelmans, 2011). However the suggested questions put forward an analytical frame that may limit the discovery. The research employs the latter option due the large amount of data analyzed.

Most importantly in axial coding, *definitions* need to be devised for each category and subcategory to refine the categories, find links and develop the new theory. The definitions of categories and subcategories include indicators, properties/dimensions, relationships to other con-

cepts, subcategories, and other remarks. The definitions need to answer six general questions: what, when, where, who, why, whereby (Mortelmans, 2011). After the definitional scheme, it is suggested to look at the phenomena (what the study is about, the central question) and identify the patterns of construction of meanings, conditions, actions and interactions, consequences and solutions.

The last stage, theoretical coding is another step that is suggested by Glaser, helping to "move your analytical story into a theoretical direction" by presenting several coding families to connect the data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63). This method has risks as it might lead to an over-reliance on categories that do no necessarily represent participants' intentions, mainly since Glaser provides the coding families. However the ones that are relevant for the current research like agency, power, networks, narratives and biographies are not present in his coding families (Charmaz, 2006, p. 66). Therefore in theoretical coding Charmaz approach is employed. She suggests using theoretical codes that emerge from the data to deepen the analysis rather than predetermined theoretical codes. Charmaz herself uses a theoretical framework that reflects the data. This research verifies at a later stage if theoretical codes emerge which reflect a specific *theoretical model* already present in political, international relations or other literatures, but does not rely on a predetermined theoretical framework.

Initial Coding: Sentences lead to Codes *Focused Coding*: Codes lead to Categories *Axial Coding*: Defining and linking categories and subcategories, identification of a Central Category and development of a new theory (through conditions, actions/interactions and consequences of the main pattern) *Theoretical Coding*: Usage of theoretical codes that emerge from the data

Table 5. Main Grounded Theory Developments on Different Stages

The *comparative method* is essential to all the stages. It involves an analytical processes of comparing different parts of the data for their similarities and differences (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54) and "strengthens your assertions about implicit meanings" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 68). To gain analytical insights, comparing similar or dissimilar events may define patters and significant processes (Charmaz, 2006, p. 53). Comparisons are suggested between similar and dissimilar statements, incidents, events, interviews, happenings, experiences, situations and other relevant elements to the research. In order to enhance the comparison, it is necessary to look for "close-in" comparisons (concerning the boundaries of the comparators), "far out" (take two different phenomena and compare) and ask reversed questions (what would happen if it something did not exist) (Mortelmans, 2011). During the *focused coding* stage, comparisons

help identifying codes that might be "potential indicators of phenomena" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 420). In *axial coding*, the comparison facilitates the identification of the major category, linking the categories and subcategories and defining their impacts and intensity. At the end to control the quality of the research, several issues are taken into account such as searching for negative evidence that contradicts the results. If found, "close in" and "far out" comparisons are used to assess whether alternative explanations exist.

In relation to a key feature of *life stories is* the exclusive right of the storyteller to have a final say about it. In order to keep the meaning of the story, have accurate generation of knowledge and for the application of research, the story is introduced and approved by the storyteller. The storyteller and the readers can interpret the story according to their experience and perspectives, as personal interpretations can be very important (Atkinson, 2001, p. 135). Furthermore, as suggested by Atkinson, during the interpretation of the stories, there is a need to think back to the story, on "what it mean[s]' and what one can learn from it. The next step is to identify the patters that are found in stories and "that are also found in the universal pattern" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 63), to met out the "connections, meanings and patters that exist in the story itself" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 64), and to identify the storytellers explicit and implicit statements (Atkinson, 1998, p. 65). Put simply, a good understanding of stories is "important for recognizing patterns and themes that connect the whole story". The structure will follow an "overview of the story as a whole" and in depth study of turning points and moments of crises, the shaping from the other groups, culture and others and the missing local, historical or cultural background. This represents the way "how people see life", "what is important to them" and "possible theoretical implications and what the storyteller might have meant by it" (Atkinson, 1998, pp. 66–73).

Reliability and Validity

It is important to clarify issues of reliability and validity for the process of data collection and analysis. Qualitative research is frequently confronted with critiques about subjectivity, difficulties of replication and generalization and lack of transparency. Not all of these objections can be fully dismissed given the research design employed by this thesis. Objectivity is not assumed given the post-structuralist framework explained earlier. *Objectivity or replicability* are facilitated by the detailed description of the *data collection procedure* and *analysis* method in this chapter. The conclusions attempt to show direct link to the *data evidence* and analyzes the material line by line in order to have less reflection of her position (Mortelmans, 2011). In terms of *reliability*, whether the research is free from misrepresentations/errors in the data, the following procedures are taken into account. The *research question* and the *researchers role* in gathering and interpreting the data are clearly defined, the *theoretical con-*

structs are attempted to be clearly defined and checked together with the *coding work* and *data quality* (Mortelmans, 2011).

Determining the reliability of a life story is always difficult. A life story is *reliable* if answers received at different times and places *correspond* to one another. *Validity* depends upon if the respondent tells the *truthful* answers. Evidently, different standards apply for quantitative research and for qualitative research (Atkinson, 2001, p. 134), the latter being the concern of this study. The aim of life stories is to receive as much elaborate information as possible and to get access to the insiders' viewpoint. Furthermore, the storyteller is considered an expert and authority with regards to his or her life, having lived these experiences, and must thus be assumed to have given a truthful account of the story. Still, there are a few means by which the consistency of a story can be checked in order to achieve a certain level of reliability and validity.

Internal validity is assured if the story is not contradictory in different parts. While there can be different reflective stances across time but within a story, there should be a certain consistency in the whole story. One technique used is to ask the storyteller to clarify earlier comments with the recent ones that seem to differ. *External validity* is if what the story tells to us conforms to what we already know. This is not an objective sought in the life stories. This research aims for unique and not already known insights into state and peace building, as explained earlier. The emphasis is consequently on internal rather than on external consistency. Furthermore, the research does not aim to generalize as "case studies are often only secondarily interested in producing generalizations [and] primarily seek to explain particular outcomes in specific cases" (Mahoney, 2007, p. 8). Following grounded theory, the goal of this research is therefore theory creation, finding new categorical explanations on state and peace building research. This does not altogether exclude the possibility of testing the external validity of the propositions emerging from this research, for example through a transfer onto other cases. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have argued that it is the responsibility of the researcher who wishes to "transfer" those findings to another setting to assess whether the findings are transferable (Yanow & Shea, 2006, p. 109). The researcher itself is responsible to provide sufficient thick descriptions so that other researchers can assess whether it's plausible to transfer these findings to another setting. Understanding the context and how various events connect helps other researchers to build on research findings they find trustworthy. Hence, the present research provides thick descriptions about specific context of the case study of Kosovo in the hope that they can raise insightful questions for researchers dealing with other post-conflict situations.

There are two *control measures*, namely corroboration and persuasion. The subjective corroboration is applied if the person agrees with the story when the transcript check is done, or if he wants to change his original story. External corroboration is achieved when a close rela-

tive of the respondents who is very familiar with the story of the person reads the life story and confirms the content (Atkinson, 2001, p. 135). Persuasion is another important measure that the researcher can check if the story seems "plausible", "reasonable" and "convincing", "compelling" and "stimulating"? (Atkinson, 2001, p. 135).

Validity designates whether the research design, the main questions and its variables accurately measure the studied phenomena. *Internal validity*, *trustworthiness* is described as *"*To what extent does the research design permit us to reach *causal conclusions* about the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable?*"* (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002, p. 33). Thus it is looked whether the results are trustworthy, how rich are the descriptions, are the results plausible, are concepts connected logically, are negative cases taken into account, are alternative explanations considered and whether the respondents found the results plausible (Mortelmans, 2011). This research focuses mainly on constitutive theory. There is a big debate among constructivists on the features of constitution and causation and the relations between the two (Lebow, 2009). Constitution, on the one hand, "addresses the question of who becomes actors [sic], how are they recognized as such and how they must behave to sustain their identities and status", and includes "core beliefs, not only practices" linked to the creation and sustenance of a particular identity (Lebow, 2009, pp. 2–3). Causal logic, on the other hand, refers to "the why and how and aspires to explain physical and social phenomena" (Lebow, 2009, p. 3). Some constructivists like Wendt argue that causal and constitutive theories, though both explanatory, address different questions. He claims that both should exist independently in international politics (Wendt, 1998, p. 114). Others argue, however, that both logics are interdependent. Lebow suggest thus a concept of "constitutive casuality" which

> theorises a necessary but insufficient condition for an outcome. Weaker forms of causal claims […] offer 'possible' and insufficient conditions… Constitutive causality directs our attention not only to these underlying cognitive and visual frameworks, but also to the social processes and interactions, confluences, accidents and agency that mediate between them and outcomes that interest us (Lebow, 2009, p. 4).

Onuf argues that social rules are constitutive (meaning that they offer guidance) and regulatory (thus requiring compliance) at the same time, but that speech acts produce either the one or the other (or both) consequence depending on the use of language (e.g. verbs) (Onuf, 2012, p. 86). The present research seeks to reveal constitutive relations, describing outlining possible alternative perspectives, as they are constituted by particular identities.

External validity refers to the extent to which it is possible to *generalize* from the research sample to a wider population, but is less important for the current research since the goal of case studies analysis is not to generalize but understand cases in greater detail (Hoyle et al., 2002, p. 33). It still though looks whether the sample was accurately chosen in order to make

comparisons between groups/participants, whether the sample has sufficient theoretical diversity to guarantee a broader applicability in the case itself and whether the researcher defines the research scope. It discusses also whether the results are confirmed by other theories or research and indicates where the results need to be refined and whether the results are replicated in other studies (Mortelmans, 2011).

Using Life Stories in International Relations

There are many potential uses of life stories for international relations research. Each life story contains an individual view upon the norms, culture, identity and values, as well as a view on how the politics is and should be conducted, what the relations between different actors are and how they should be. Research using life stories can identify how a specific person perceives the current international order. How do they think that the international institutions, non-governmental organizations and other entities contribute to peace and conflict? How do people make sense of the current global changes such as shifts in the balance of power? In short, there are many ways that life stories could be used in international relations research, depending on the interest of the researcher.

For example, life stories could become a textual source to Hansen's approach to discourse analysis, in particular the "3 A and B" research model to identify dissent. According to Hansen, discourse analysis represents the method of choice for a post-structuralist analysis in international relations. The third research model has to be included in such an analysis, since

> the ambition of discourse analysis is not only to understand official discourse, and the rest and representations which have directly impacted it, but also to analyze how this discourse is presented as legitimate in relation to the larger public and how it is reproduced or contested across the variety of political sites and genres (Hansen, 2006, p. 63).

Hansen emphasizes thus the importance of "less widely dispersed discourses", which might "intersect with and influence dominant representations in subtle ways and hence become important for the future" (Hansen, 2006, p. 63). For instance, Neumann reveals how new ideas firstly presented in marginal publications entered the public state debate in Russia (Neumann, 1996, p. 195). The problem is, however, that the marginal status of these texts makes it difficult to identify them. According to Hansen, the texts or objects of analysis in this model include marginal newspapers, websites, books, pamphlets and academic analysis. The inclusion of life stories to this list is not envisioned, but it is clear that the stories could be used to identify resistance, dissent and academic debates that are being excluded from the official discourse. After all, life stories have succeeded in different disciplines to identify local and marginalized ideas and give a platform to the silenced voices.

The narrative approach used by Hansen in the earlier mentioned model 3A focuses on the analysis of cultural representation as a means to recognize the reproduction of identities. She suggests reliance on materials such as film, photography, poetry, music as well as two forms

of literary non-fiction, namely travel narratives and memoirs (Hansen, 2006, p. 57). Life stories share some similarities with the latter two text types as they describe personal writings that draw significance from "personal encounters and experiences" (Hansen, 2006, p. 68). It is important to identify these experiences and retrospective reflections represented in personal encounters and cultural hermeneutics. In the end, Hansen advocates for the combination of different genres of texts when conducting a discourse analysis, including the identification of intersections (Hansen, 2006, p. 72).

Discourse analysis and life stories combine several forms of sources which are used across disciplines. Discourse analysis texts and life stories draw their authority from the same element, which is the authenticity of experiences, as in memoirs and travel writings. Thus adding life stories, a more localized narrative form, to the 3B model to identify dissent and resistance expands the reach of Hansen's model of discourse analysis. However for the 3A model there is always a danger that travel writings, memoirs and if included life stories might be used with an ideological purpose to reproduce the dominant collective narrative that discipline and distance the other.

The works of Derrida and Foucault, from post-structuralist perspective, give further indication as to the relation between life stories as a methodological tool and discourse analysis. Derrida's method of deconstruction states that each topic should be deconstructed gradually for gaining a better understanding of the researched phenomena. In this research, the state and peace building concept is deconstructed into smaller elements in order to understand it better. In Derrida's words, "to deconstruct is to hold that no indivisibility, no automicity, is secure" (Derrida, 2009, p. 309). Therefore, by analyzing at the indivisible components of reified researched phenomena, the invisible agenda behind the state and peace building becomes recognizable since every element is questioned during the deconstruction.

Derrida also places a significant importance to language and its usage, showing "a responsiveness to language transfer and transference, to the fact that there was, as he put it in French, *plus d'une langue*, meaning both *more* than one language and no more *one* language" (Hill, 2007, p. 23). By looking at language, one can identify the structures of power and politics, wider culture and their accompanying subjectivities on state, identities and political cultures. Weedon argues that

> Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed... Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices – economic, social, and political – the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power (Weedon, 1987, p. 21 in Goodley et al.).

Similarly, discourse analysis tries to identify "discourses that articulate very different constructions of identity and policy and which thereby separate the political landscape between

them" (Hansen, 2006, p. 47). For instance the basic discourses that "construct different Others with different degrees of radical difference; articulate radically diverging forms of spatial, temporal, and ethical identity; and construct competing links between identity and policy" (Hansen, 2006, p. 46). It also can identify other important elements by looking at different texts and analyzing the opposites and linking or delinking them.

According to Leslie Hill, Derrida suggests to analyze social phenomena in two different stages:

> if the word deconstruction means anything at all, it should be understood as denoting the necessity of *both* these operations (*Po*, 56–7; 41–2): an inversion, by which a hierarchy is reversed (with speech, for instance, being seen to rely on traits, such as absence or repetition, that hitherto have been solely attributed to writing); *and* a displacement, by which the conventional concept of writing, though provisionally now dominant, is shifted, dismantled, and reinvented as something radically other. (Hill, 2007, p. 28)

Thus deconstructing a concept includes looking at the different elements through looking at and challenging the different elements and assumptions that constitute a concept and reversing the implicit logic. For instance, looking at the state and peace building phenomena through observing state failure means reversing the hierarchy. Furthermore, while state and peace building has so far been understood mostly as an international policy, the perspective is now being reversed to focusing on local understandings. Furthermore, the elements of displacement, can be looked through the concept of minority integration which is addressed in this research as a policy that actually creates division. The analysis are conducted by looking at the most popular texts of state and peace building, reports and interviews and trying to analyze them as something radically different from what is being written.

Similarly, in the analysis of life stories which offer information, a researcher captures the socially constructed nature of these experiences through individuals identity formation, reversed hierarchy, and also an understanding of the real other and the reinvented, as discourse analysis include it as well. Michael Foucault argues that

> I would like to say …what has been the goal of my work during the last twenty years. It has not been to analyze the phenomenon of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made into subjects. My work has dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects (Michel Foucault, 1982, p. 208).

Narratives reveal encounters between oppressive discourses and resistance, which is exactly what discourse analysis aims to identify. The stories seek to show the sense of struggle over power, subjectivity and knowledge. Comparable to some accounts of the benefits of the life story method, Burman and Parker (1993) argue that discourse analysis is a method that provides a social account of subjectivity. Rather than viewing subjectivity as being solely in the heads of individuals, discourse analysts turn to practices, texts, assemblages of knowledge,

documents, experiences and narratives of given social and cultural locations where subjectivities are being constructed. Discourse analysis allows us thus to make sense of the ways in which human beings are shaped, via the power of discourses, in given social and cultural backgrounds. This links directly to the research objective of this work which is to investigate the meaning of state and peace building in the lives of people involved on it through the analysis of life stories.

Foucault investigated throughout his work elusive practices of power such as "technologies of the body", "disciplinary powers" and the "professional gaze". He was interested in texts that illuminated some of these discursive practices. Such an approach fits with the original research question of interrogating social and cultural worlds through the story of persons involved in the process of state and peace building. Foucault famously wrote that where there is power there is also resistance (Foucault, 1977, p. 259). Life stories often reflect the resistance in the face of oppressive and exclusionary practices and institutions.

Depending on the preference of the observer, different approaches can be taken to discourse analysis. This study takes a reflective, critical approach to research. It adopts hence a post-structuralist epistemology and philosophical orientation, which "directs us to see the world in particular ways, and then make sense of what we see through the use of related theories" (Goodley et al., 2004, p. 94). For instance, there is a greater concentration on the meanings "behind" a certain topic in this sort of approach than in the simple observing the behavior. The narratives collected during fieldwork make it possible to destabilize common sense understandings of state and peace building and to challenge "truths" that have become reified, dominating the current discourses on state building.

To conclude, international relations (ie discourse analysis) and life stories can be well integrated as they share an epistemological framework, approaching language and subjectivity comparably. The relation between life stories and the works of Derrida's method of deconstruction and Foucault's conceptions of power illustrates this potential convergence. Life stories are suitable to reveal oppressive and exclusionary practices. In addition, life stories can be used to clarify the way the main discourse is represented and how it is being negotiated in a specific setting. Finally, the objectives of the 3B intertextual model of Hansen's can be obtained by employing the life stories method, gathering information that has so far fallen outside the established discursive framework of state and peace building. In other words, it can contribute to the realization of the goals of the model identifying dissent, which is to identify local resistance in post conflict settings and dissent in cases of hegemonic academic debates.

Limitations of the Study: Ethical, Epistemological and Methodological Challenges

Life story research involves a highly personalized approach of gathering qualitative data. It therefore implies a number of dilemmas and ethical questions. The last section of this chapter

is consequently dedicated to the challenges of doing life stories on state and peace building. It discusses the aspects of *methodological persuasions*, that is "how we approach our subject matter, our stories and our narrators, participants or narrative subjects" (Goodley et al., 2004, p. 54). Thereafter a description of the concerns on doing life story research is offered, focusing on the issues of access, ethics, the writing process and the relationships with the informants. Furthermore, I address concerns about underlying epistemological assumptions, analyzing how stories can be "products of particular epistemological locations" (Goodley et al., 2004, p. 54). Finally, the methodology proposes a *commitment* to storytellers, which is the last aspect to be inquired in this chapter.

The research design envisions interviews of international individuals in order to have a view on their contribution to the process. However, since they are not the main focus group, their life stories are not being discussed for a number of reasons. Rather than discriminating against a category of people involved in the process, these reasons are methodological. Firstly, few international individuals have been involved in the process persistently and continuously for more than two years as they have temporary positions. Hence life story research on internationals would be less likely to bring about results that would be interesting for the topic of state and peace building in Kosovo. Furthermore, they do not seem a marginalized group whose embodied experience tells something about the state and peace building process. Semi-structured interviews are the more apt methodology for looking at the involvement of internationals whose experience in Kosovo was temporally limited. Finally, the research is geared to bring forward local perspectives since the views of international stakeholders are already represented in most of the works on state and peace building.

Ethical and Epistemological challenges: Authenticity, Subjectivity and Rights

One important question concerns the *intentions* behind the research, the representation and the authenticity of the story. Reconciling the needs of the storyteller and the research intentions is a challenge in this type of research as it is often the researcher who benefits and the participant who might feel exploited. The danger arises that the interviewee does not gain anything from the invested effort, time and trust, while the researcher does complete their research purposes on the basis of the information gained during the research process. The interviewees' requirements need therefore to be taken into account to ensure that they have personal benefits of telling the story (see section I of this chapter), as well as the final say about the final product and the story that is published and disseminated.

Another important issue concerns the representation of the *voice*, which is interlinked with the *authenticity* of the story. This aspect concerns how storyteller and researcher influence each other. As a researcher one has the means to direct the discussion and the interviewee. The main question is however if the informant is telling the true story or if it is simply the story

the researcher might be looking for or that is socially acceptable. At the same time, the researcher might be imposing his or her own voice into the subject. However that is minimized since the interview is mainly flexible and open ended and the researcher is only to facilitate the telling of the life story. Furthermore, if trust is built, then there is less risk that a story will be fabricated. Also it is preferred to share the transcribed texts. This in turn helps the subjects to retain ownership over their life story. Atkinson argues that in this methodology real people are usually inclined to tell real stories regardless who is asking which questions (Atkinson, 2001, p. 133). In addition, the emerged story is most likely authentic as authenticity emerges from personal struggles and if the researcher understands the storyteller's frames of reference the story is most likely authentic (Lummis, 1988, p. 100). Furthermore, a field diary was kept after each interview to observe the practice of interviewing and take track of non-verbal communication, feelings and difficulties during interviews. These were sometimes discussed in the following interview.

This leads us to the epistemological questions that relate in the present context to the link between the story and the truth. Different views exist upon this issue, one claiming that the story is a sort of subjective truth and the other one stating that people distort the facts while telling. Despite criticism that stories might not represent the truth, the interest in the unique and local created a difference in the opinion on the use, value and meaning of life stories (Atkinson, 2001, p. 136). As this research adopts a reflectivist and post-structuralist approach (see section I of this chapter), the rigor of quantitative methods rigor is not required. Qualitative research includes a different scale of the validity. In all autobiographies and interviews, the researcher works towards building the trust and interpreting the story accordingly, as the participants cannot be put under oath. This means that while interpreting the narrative, the aim is not to generate a historical truth but a unique point of view (Atkinson, 2001, p. 135). The stories are valid on a small scale. Yet general patterns can be recognized among different storytellers.

The researcher's identity and *subjectivity* is interrogated critically in order to clarify the reasoning behind the writing of the story. Thus in each life story, there is an attempt to understand rather than judge or assume a stance over and against the story. The researcher is aware that representation, labeling and misunderstanding of lives and personal viewpoints are omnipresent dangers. Thus during the writing process, there is always questioning of one's and the respondents values and the discovery of the subject (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 210). On other words, there is a parallel questioning of the already held beliefs to break them through constant interrogation, inclusion of difference and also expansion of the understanding and thinking about various possibilities of human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 211).

This research glorifies neither the local nor the international. It shows that both groups, locals and internationals, have been involved in both negative and positive processes after the war.

Moreover despite the animosities between the local groups, this research shows that the local does not imply being only "good", "bad" or "innocent" since there is a large variation in contrast to what is sometimes portrayed in literature. Some retain their old animosities, some seem to have moved forward peacefully, and some seem to be partly violent while rejecting foreign impositions. While the locals have experienced deep animosities, they still can be trusted to be the deliberative domain of peace building since they embody the experiences during and after war, most of which have not been violent. Since they understand the context and embody the consequences of war and peace between communities, they provide the necessary basis for any bottom-up effort that may facilitate sustainable peace building.

This led to another significant matter which is understanding the *complexities* of life stories and bringing more clarity to them. Atkinson suggests initially identifying if the storytellers see themselves vaguely or clearly. Do they tell who they see or who they wish to see? Clues are given, for example, in the correspondence of body language with wording. In Atkinson's view, the three main question concern "who am I?" (related to the content), "how am I?" (related to the construct of the storytelling), and "why am I?" (related to the meaning of the story). The answers may tell us about "the patterns, perceptions and process that contribute to our understanding of lives across time" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 133).

Some *ethical concerns* can be regulated by a general consideration of human rights and national guidelines, such as the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Purposes (VSNU, 2005). The code of conduct requires precision, reliability, verifiability, impartiality and independence. In addition, confidentiality clauses ensure the privacy rights of the storytellers if necessary. Candidates were informed of the ethical considerations that this research implies and were explained that their consent is required to realize the respective life story and also the semi-structured interviews with the international officials. Secondly, with regards to delicate information, the storyteller upon agreeing to participate in the research needs to give his or her informed consent. Anonymity is another option that storytellers can employ if they wish to remain unknown. Most of the interviews opted in for anonymity. In sum, the privacy rights of the storytellers were respected by providing information not only about the research and its purpose, but also by giving the opportunity to make decisions about the inclusion of aspects or the adoption of anonymity. In fact, all interviewees choose to remain anonymous, therefore pseudonyms are given for each participants. Only the supervisors know the real identity of the participants in the research. In addition, the participants were informed about the risks of participating on the research. All the above elements are included on the Consent and Confidentiality Agreement signed by the participants (See Appendix).

Fieldwork Challenges: Access to Data, Relationships and Language

Reflectivists argue that the data acquired is influenced by the researcher's standpoint and various aspects such as identity, gender, ethnicity and personal history (Davies & Spencer, 2010, p. 1). These elements influence in turn the way in which the research is understood, interpreted, conducted and reported. The position taken in this regards in this dissertation is a radical empiricist one which "refuses the epistemological cut between subject and object, that endows transitive and intransitive experiences with equal status, and that investigates the phenomena which the inductive methods of traditional empiricism were never designed to treat" (Davies & Spencer, 2010, p. 3). There include certain personal characteristics of the researcher such as gender, ethnicity and age, which are unchangeable. Their effects of these personal characteristics may vary. For instance, a minority storyteller may regard certain research assumptions as biased, favoring the majority. Furthermore a male storyteller may regard a feminist researcher as less serious and may attach less relevance to life stories which question gender assumptions. The former bias might also be because of age.

Another challenge for researchers is to maintain *working relationships* during the fieldwork, thus not neither too involved nor too distant in their interaction with the storyteller. While it is desirable that trust and understanding deepens, there are tools at disposal for keeping some distance. Meetings took place twice per week with each subject preferably for no longer than two hours. Respect was paid to the storytellers' choice to not speak about certain topics, however it was noted for interpretative purposes of the story later on. Consultations took place on the progress and experience of participating in this research and transcripts of earlier interviews were discussed. Relationships with other ethnicities are sometimes more difficult to manage, especially when combined with possible security risks present in the interviewed area.

A few techniques are employed to accommodate the attitudes of the storytellers, to prevent the storyteller challenging the research and the intentions of the researcher. The main ones are "impression management" and "managing marginality" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 44–86). Impression management refers to different factors that shape the research like dressing similarly with subjects, alter the habits to reduce sharp differences, and monitor speech and demeanors (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 66–9). This is mainly because different settings require different presentations. Expertize and knowledge can be essential on establishing reciprocity, however if used, they need to be used carefully. Sociability is another essential tool or personal characteristic in fieldwork. Similarly, self-consciousness management is essential to find about the degree of disclosure which is appropriate in each case study. The researcher has "just as in many everyday situations, to suppress or play down personal beliefs, commitments, and political sympathies" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 72). Thus he/she is supposed to show tact and sensitivity, even if he/she is tested for his/her beliefs. The man-

agement of disclosure is essential, especially when there are differences in opinion and attitude between the researcher and the storyteller, sometimes not known ones. Also what can be considered commonality in certain situations, can sometimes be interpreted as marking the difference (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 73). Impression, consciousness and disclosure management are essential during the fieldwork since their mismanagement can seriously damage the collection of data and the relationships with the storytellers.

In "managing marginality", the relations in fieldwork require to maintain the communication, trust and gain the insiders and outsiders views. The researcher needs to, have access to the participants but also minimize close relationships, in order to maintain the analytical rigor. This position of marginality is difficult to maintain, and sometimes it can cause emotional and physical reactions in situations of uncertainty. It is called the "dysadaption syndrome" referring to feelings of incompetence, fear, anger and frustration. These feeling should be managed and dealt accordingly by engaging in pragmatic social interactions and never give the self to the moment (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 91). On a final note, field researcher should keep social and intellectual "distance" in order to produce the study effectively (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 90). Without such analytical distance, the account is likely to be only of autobiographical nature.

Conducting fieldwork in Kosovo presented a particular challenges to fieldwork in this study since it is my country of origin. Negotiating the distinction between home and fieldwork is difficult (Sultana, 2007, p. 377). Strong social ties existed to both the capital and the countryside. Certain differences such as education privileges and living in diaspora for many years affected the fieldwork as different groups considered me to be an insider or an outsider, with different advantages and disadvantages. The ambiguity of the position and the "in between" status brings about tensions and requires awareness and constant reflection during the fieldwork (Sultana, 2007, p. 377). Therefore it is important to keep the distance as well as be friendly, identify the research questions and maintain flexibility in order to have access to storytellers.

Furthermore, there are challenges to *communication and cooperation* as life story candidates might not cooperate. The research depends upon their ability to communicate and express their experiences which depends on language abilities and on trust. One method of sharing life stories may make these storytellers more willing to participate and create trust is by persuading them that sharing their life story is beneficial. As Atkinson states, among the benefits for the subject might be that "the interviewee gains a clearer perspective on personal experiences and feelings, which in turn brings greater meaning… one obtains greater self-knowledge, stronger self-image, and enhanced self-esteem, … one shares cherished experiences and insights with others, can bring joy, satisfaction... releases certain burdens and validates personal experiences" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 127). One might realize that one has more in

common with others than initially thought, and one might see more clearly or differently the life story and perhaps inspire positive change in future.

This leads us to the question of language use and translation. Language is used creatively and not only descriptively as it "recognizes the constructive effects of language rather than language as a transparent medium for describing the world" (Goodley et al., 2004, p. 98). The challenges on communication are that the researcher lacks cooperation from the target group and also the research depends upon their ability to communicate and express. This problem can be overcome by assisting actively in telling the story with sharing the benefits of telling the story and gaining trust. However due to the knowledge of both local languages, Albanian and Serbian, and the international language of international officials, English, in this study language facilitated the relations with the participants. There are other concerns associated with the translation of the life stories, however, it is held that translation has power to reinforce cross-cultural relationships (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 174). The use of translators was minimized even when Serbian language was necessary to conduct interviews by translating only the parts that were not understandable to the researcher. In the execution of the research design, the participants check if the transcript fits to their ideas (in Albanian or Serbian) and can approve or change it with the help of a translator if necessary.

In sum, the role of the researcher is to facilitate people telling their stories in their own words. However, it is clear that the engagement of the researcher with knowledge generation and the requirements of research often influence the writing process. The storyteller's subjectivity is checked with internal consistency measures. The life story and this study seek specificity, not generalization primarily, stressing the specific description and explanation of a few people rather than the representative generalities of a wider population. These studies are authentic not validating, meaning that they engage the authentic meanings of a story and its narrator rather than devising measures of preconceived concepts.

Conclusion

To conclude, the means of conducting the research were outlined in this chapter. It outlined the research design, focusing especially on epistemological and methodological questions. The post-structuralist framework is taken in this thesis as it incorporates the representations given by subjects with specific identities in international relations, namely the Kosovo's local communities unheard voices are incorporated to deepen the knowledge of state and peace building processes. Methodologically, the main tool for analysis of state and peace building is grounded theory through life stories. Furthermore, the chapter provided a description of the data collection procedure of the mixed material, of the international interviews and the local life stories.

In addition, the chapter introduces the main methodology used for the local perspective, especially life stories. It has become clear that life stories are used across different disciplines to analyze pertinent and complex phenomena. Life stories "serve as excellent means for understanding how people see their own experiences, their own lives, and their interactions with others" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 137). The essence is that storytelling in the voice of the person is a timeless format as "setting and circumstances change but motives and the meaning they represent remain constant across lives and time" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 137). Adding this methodological tool to international relations (ie discourse analysis) will consequently help to understand foreign policy and make new connections and paths possible for future research, in international relations and in other disciplines.

With regard to the second question, so far the academic work on Kosovo has mostly used traditional research designs such as institutional and legal paradigms. The traditional method has focused on the international and national actors by analyzing mandates, consent, constitution framing, local ownership etc. Thus researching state and peace building in post-conflict societies through life stories represents a methodological innovation to the field. The local perspective yields insights that can inform theories of state and peace building and even deepen the common sense understanding of it. Indeed, it can be argued that local perspectives have not yet received enough attention when compared to the more established international angles. Thus in contrast with traditional research of state and peace building, this research tries to bring in a different perspective to the analysis of the process of institution and peace building in post-conflict states by employing a different methodology – grounded theory and life stories, a historical and sociological tool. This presents an inter-displinary research. In addition, the knowledge of the languages spoken on the ground facilitated the research as well as contributed to the current theories with data from the ground uncovering the local angles that have been under-researched so far empirically and providing a contextualized understanding of the case study.

Finally, the chapter has shown that the methodology has firstly been designed in the fields of anthropology, psychology and sociology but that it can be usefully applied to the discipline of international relations. On other words, life narratives can contribute to thinking in terms of theory, practice and policy of international relations. In the present case, I approach by these means the difficult state and peace building efforts that have taken place in the Balkans and, more specifically, in Kosovo. The next chapter introduces the global institutional developments regarding peace and state building and the local developments in the case study of Kosovo.