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Here, We Are Walking on a Clothesline: Statelessness and Human (In)Security Among Burmese Women Political Exiles Living in Thailand

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Here, We Are Walking on a Clothesline: Statelessness and Human (In)Security Among

Burmese Women Political Exiles Living in Thailand

by

Elizabeth Hooker

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requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
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Thesis Committee:
Robert Gould, Chair
Amanda Byron
Rachel Cunliffe

Portland State University
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Abstract

An estimated twelve million people worldwide are stateless, or living without the legal

bond of citizenship or nationality with any state, and consequently face barriers to

employment, property ownership, education, health care, customary legal rights, and

national and international protection. More than one-quarter of the world's stateless

people live in Thailand. This feminist ethnography explores the impact of statelessness

on the everyday lives of Burmese women political exiles living in Thailand through the

paradigm of human security and its six indicators: food, economic, personal, political,

health, and community security. The research reveals that exclusion from national and

international legal protections creates pervasive and profound political and personal

insecurity due to violence and harassment from state and non-state actors. Strong

networks, however, between exiled activists and their organizations provide community

security, through which stateless women may access various levels of food, economic,

and health security. Using the human security paradigm as a metric, this research

identifies acute barriers to Burmese stateless women exiles' experiences and expectations

of well-being, therefore illustrating the potential of human security as a measurement by

which conflict resolution scholars and practitioners may describe and evaluate their work

in the context of positive peace.

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my students, whose names I would like to list one by one

but cannot for the same reasons that they must learn and grow and work and live in

hiding. Your patience, grace, generosity, laughter, wit, softness and strength taught me

about commitment and love, for one another and for those we'll never meet. Most

importantly, you helped me believe in the inevitability of a just world. May you return

home soon to become leaders of your communities and of your country.

Acknowledgements

I have immense gratitude for my friend, mentor, and Burmese teacher, without whose support, guidance, and laughter this research would not have been possible.

Thank you to the women who set aside hours of their busy days to meet with me and who trusted me to listen to their stories and to be responsible and respectful with their voices and their histories. From them, I learned about devotion, integrity, durability, fear, and the profound force in conviction that refuses to be silenced. I learned about women's power.

And thank you to the dozens of friends and strangers in Mae Sot who answered my questions and offered puzzle pieces, large and small, in order to fill the gaps in my understanding. Living in a community that relies wholly on word of mouth taught me that we learn everything we know from one another, all the time, anyway.

To those who supported me at home, and from home while I was away: thank you. Dad, Annie, PP, and friends who are family kept me grounded and inspired, and loved, through three years of growth and learning.

And lastly, I'd like to share my appreciation for the help and guidance of my thesis committee: Dr. Rachel Cunliffe, Dr. Amanda Byron, and Dr. Rob Gould.

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List of Abbreviations

ABSDF   All Burma Students Democratic Front

AAPP-B   Assistance Association for Political Prisoners- Burma

CHS   Commission on Human Security

HRW   Human Rights Watch

ILO   International Labor Organization

IOM   International Organization for Migration

IRC   International Rescue Committee

MI   Burmese Military Intelligence

NCGUB   National Coalition Government Union of Burma

NGO   Non-governmental organization

POC   Persons of Concern

RTG   Royal Thai Government

SPDC   State Peace and Development Council

TBBC   Thailand Burma Border Consortium

UNDP   United Nations Development Program

UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Recent estimates from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2010) suggest nearly twelve million people worldwide are stateless, or living without the legal bond of citizenship or nationality with any state. Due to states' exclusive role in implementing international human rights law, stateless individuals are, thus, denied access to international legal protection as well. They are considered an anomaly, falling outside legal and social constructs, and frequently have no access to work, property ownership, education, health care, customary legal rights, and national protection. Despite the impact of statelessness globally, its causes and consequences are almost entirely ignored by the international community and the field of conflict resolution.

Due to the Burmese government's harsh persecution of political dissidents, many activists flee to neighboring Thailand in order to escape unbearable levels of surveillance and harassment, as well as inhumane living conditions in Burma's prisons. Once in Thailand, they are unable to return home, are offered no legal protection by the Thai government, and effectively become *de facto* stateless. They are prohibited from travel, education, employment, property ownership, and other rights that accompany citizenship. Activists arriving in Thailand typically face three options: (1) enter one of nine refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border with 135,000 other displaced Burmese individuals (Thailand Burma Border Consortium [TBBC], 2011); (2) secure work in urban factories or on rural farms along with millions of Burmese migrant workers, most of whom are

undocumented, underpaid, and overworked (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2010); or (3) continue their political work by joining a Burmese opposition organization working in exile.

The aim of this research is to provide insights into the protection and well-being of stateless people, globally, through the examination of how statelessness affects the everyday lives of Burmese women political exiles living in Thailand. The scarcity of literature pertaining to statelessness illustrates that, despite its global impacts, it has been overlooked as an academic topic of study. I have found no academic research around women's everyday experiences, agency, and resistance to statelessness. Due to intersecting local and global gender ideologies, women's life experiences are not typically seen as valuable sources of knowledge. Current literature on women and statelessness focuses on conflicting national citizenship laws that render women more susceptible to statelessness (Committee on Feminism and International Law, 2000; Weissbrodt & Collins, 2006), reproducing the patriarchal concept that women exist solely as wives and mothers. The multiplicity and diversity of Burmese women activists' experiences provide rich ground for understanding how convergent systems of oppression operate simultaneously, and how individuals and groups effectively contest them.

The research for this feminist ethnography was conducted in and around Mae Sot, Thailand, from October 2010 to August 2011. I chose Mae Sot due to its high concentration of community based organizations and non-governmental organizations working for social, economic, and political change in Burma. Participants were individuals who identified as women from Burma who could not return home due to fear

of political persecution, and who therefore considered themselves stateless. Eighteen women between the ages of eighteen and eighty-one, representing six ethnic groups, participated in semi-structured interviews, several of which were not audio recorded due to participants' concerns about security. I spoke with another forty individuals whose work in Thailand pertained to women and statelessness, such as doctors, teachers, counselors, and refugee service providers. Participant observation and the collection of field notes, essential research tools for ethnographers, contributed methodological triangulation to my data collection. While coding and analyzing interview transcripts for major themes, I found that security was the overarching topic. Subsequently, I applied the field of conflict resolution's human security paradigm in order to better understand what I was hearing.

My findings demonstrate that stateless political exiles' exclusion from national and international legal institutions grant Thai and Burmese state and non-state actors near impunity to enact direct and indirect violence as they please. This impunity, in conjunction with ethnic, racial, and gender discrimination, places stateless Burmese women in an ongoing state of extreme political and personal insecurity. I argue that the resulting fear and restrictions on mobility, access to public space, autonomy, voice, and well-being are symptoms that illuminate faults in our current world system of sovereign states. Those who do not have membership to a state are seen as threats to the state and therefore are actively targeted by state actors. Despite these constraints on autonomy and well-being, Burmese political exiles have strong community security through well-established networks of opposition groups operating in Thailand. In the absence of state

and international protections, stateless Burmese women exiles depend on their community for food, health, and economic security.

This paper is organized as follows. In Chapter 2, I begin with a description of the sociohistoric context of Burmese political exiles, including common reasons that individuals decide to flee Burma and the opportunities for livelihood that they face upon arrival in Thailand. Exiles may become camp or rural refugees, find work as migrant laborers, or continue their political work with an organization; these categories are fluid and individuals commonly move among them. Chapter 3 presents a critical review of the literature and identifies three major trends: surveys on statelessness; statelessness as a symptom of flaws in our international human rights regime and in our global system of sovereign states; and statelessness as an intentional act of resistance. The research methods described in Chapter 4 are followed in Chapter 5 by the two principal theoretical paradigms that guide this research: feminist epistemology and human security. In the first findings section, Chapter 6, I discuss participants' reasons for fleeing Burma and their decisions to remain in Thailand. In Chapter 7, I examine participants' experiences of statelessness as a human security issue by identifying sources of, and responses to, six indicators: food, economic, health, political, community, and personal security. Finally, in Chapter 8 I draw connections between participants' everyday experiences of statelessness and global systems of inclusion and exclusion in order to provide insights and recommendations on the protection and well-being of stateless people.

Chapter 2: Burmese Political Exiles in Sociohistoric Context

> What programs, projects or laws exist to encourage [political]
> participation of women, when history shows that when a woman wins
> the elections, the results are canceled? And when a woman wins the
> Nobel Peace Prize, she is imprisoned in her country?
> Zelmira Regazzoli (as cited in Belak, 2002, p. 253)

In order to appreciate a Burmese political activist's determination to flee her homeland, we must gain an understanding of the severity of political persecution and the resulting fear that permeates the lives of dissidents and their friends and family. The everyday reality of surveillance and harassment, as well as the threat of arbitrary imprisonment, creates a climate wherein individuals are willing to leave their families and communities behind to seek livelihoods in Thailand or elsewhere. Political exiles are not alone in crossing the border; an estimated two to four million Burmese refugees and migrant workers, many of whom were displaced by decades of civil war, also live in Thailand (Htwe, 2011). Activists fleeing persecution may arrive as refugees, migrant workers, or political exiles, or any combination of the three. This section discusses the situation of Burmese migrant workers and refugees in order to elucidate the larger environment that political exiles enter into in Thailand.

Leaving Home

In Burma, dissent is commonly met with strict surveillance by members of the Military Intelligence (MI), harassment to the dissenter's friends and family, and long prison sentences in inhumane living conditions. Dozens of laws restrict freedom of opinion, expression and the press in Burma. Burma Lawyer's Council has called the

1950 Emergency Provisions Act the broadest law in the world because it criminalizes any act that seeks to impede the full functioning of the state, its military, or its criminal investigative organizations. It grants the government unchecked power to punish any real or perceived dissent with up to life imprisonment or the death penalty (National Coalition Government Union of Burma [NCGUB], 2008). Printed and online materials are also heavily controlled; The Printers and Publishers Registration Law (1962) strictly regulates registration procedures for all publishers for printing or distributing materials. According to the law, banned publications include any that are "detrimental to the ideology of the State: anything which might be harmful to security, the rule of law, peace, public order, national solidarity and unity; and any incorrect ideas and opinions which do not accord with the times" (p. 567). The heavy-handed enforcement of legislation restricting political freedoms and punishing dissent is a primary factor in activists' decisions to flee Burma.

Activists who are arrested face severe treatment. Former political prisoners recounted the trauma of being arrested at home during the night and hooded and handcuffed before they were taken to an interrogation center. Their families were not informed about their whereabouts. "Anyone suspected of political dissent can be arrested, detained, and interrogated by the Military Intelligence (MI) without warrant, and without accountability of the MI to judicial authority" (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners – Burma [AAPP-B], 2005, p. 20). During their detention, they were not allowed medical care, to contact their families, or to learn the charges brought against them. Only one of the thirty-five former political prisoners interviewed by AAPP-B was

provided a lawyer. All individuals who were interviewed said their trials lasted between five and fifteen minutes, and the judge read their sentences from a sheet of paper, prepared by the MI. AAPP-B reported that between 5,000 and 10,000 political prisoners were held between 1988 and 2005.

AAPP-B's interviews with former political prisoners paint a grim picture of survival in Burma's prisons. Methods of physical torture included the use of violence and electric shock on sensitive areas of the body, targeting places where the prisoner was already injured, forcing prisoners to stay in painful positions for days or weeks, sexual abuse, hard labor, and long periods of isolation with deprivation of food, water, sleep, light, and the use of a toilet. Former political prisoners recounted extensive psychological torture, such as withholding water for long periods, followed by forcing prisoners to drink large amounts of water, and then making them beg to use the toilet. Other prisoners have been forced to simultaneously sing and crawl on their knees and elbows over gravel, while being whipped in front of other prisoners. Yet another example of psychological torture is the staging of a false release. Prisoners were prepared for release and brought to the prison gates within sight of their families, and then re-arrested.

Rotten food, lack of access to health care, re-use of injection needles by prison doctors, and cells with lice, rats, and feces all contribute to poor health and in some cases, the death of prisoners (AAPP-B, 2005). AAPP-B has documented that at least 127 political prisoners have died after enduring torture or ill-treatment in custody. Of these cases, ninety individuals died in prisons, eight in interrogation centers, and four in labor

camps. Ten individuals died shortly after their release and another fifteen have

disappeared from the prisons (AAPP-B, 2006).

Those who are released face ongoing physical and mental health problems, and

exclusion from full economic and social participation in society. Former political

prisoners may have brain damage, chronic back pain, nerve damage, and physical

disabilities such as paralysis from torture and ill-treatment in prison. Transmission of

tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS can also occur in prison. After release, former political

prisoners, as well as their families and friends, commonly face harassment, surveillance,

and arbitrary arrest by members of the MI. "I lost my sense of community. MI harassed

my neighbors and warned them not to have anything to do with me. I felt very isolated"

(May Lin, as cited in AAPP-B, 2010, p. 59). Former political prisoners may also be

approached about becoming informers for the MI, so friends and family members can be

wary of them, and potential employers are reluctant to hire them. Families of political

prisoners may also lose their jobs or are asked to leave their schools or universities

(AAPP-B, 2005).

> *MI came to my house, and watched me. They followed me when I left the house.*
> *If I went anywhere, they needed to inform someone, every time. I felt*
> *disappointed, but not afraid. I was worried it would be a problem for other*
> *people, mainly my friends. Even today there is still surveillance on my house.*
> Thida Htway was sentenced to 29 years under Section 17/1 of the Unlawful
> Association Act, Section 17/20 of the Printers and Publishers Act, Section 13/1 of
> the Immigration Act and Section 5(j) of the Emergency Provisions Act. She was
> released in 2002. (AAPP-B, 2010, p. 55)

Many activists flee Burma to avoid the genuine threat of detention and death in

Burma's prisons. While some individuals leave because they want to continue their

political activism and believe they can do so more effectively from outside Burma, others leave because they want to live free of surveillance or are unable to find suitable employment at home. Lastly, some individuals who are not activists themselves, but have family or friends who are, may also face political persecution and are forced into exile. For those who have survived prison, their main reason for fleeing Burma is the threat of re-arrest.

Living in Exile in Thailand

An estimated two to four million Burmese people live in Thailand (Htwe, 2011), making it host to the largest Burmese community in exile. Burmese migrants typically are categorized into two groups, both of which include political exiles: refugees and economic migrants. These categories are fluid. For example, after witnessing working conditions in a Thai factory, a young migrant worker may decide to join a union or a political organization working in exile. If her involvement with the group is discovered, her family may face harassment or imprisonment at home, and she may decide to remain in political exile in Thailand. Alternatively, a person who leaves Burma due to fear of political persecution may live in a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border for several years before deciding to leave the camp to find work at a garment factory.

> Interviews with the 'temporarily displaced', 'students and political dissidents,' and 'migrants' reveal that regardless of their classifications in Thailand, the vast majority has experienced a life of persecution, fear and abuse in Burma. While the initial reason for leaving may be expressed in economic terms, underlying causes surface that further explain their realities while living in Burma and their vulnerabilities upon return. Accounts given at border camps, in towns and cities, factories and farms in Thailand, describe instances of forced relocation and confiscation of land; forced labor and portering; taxation and loss of livelihood;

war and political oppression in Burma. For most, it is the inability to survive in Burma that causes them to come to Thailand. (Caouette & Pack, 2002, p. 15)

For myriad economic and social reasons, many individuals who migrate to Thailand do not hold the required documentation. Burmese passports are extremely expensive and time consuming to obtain, and dissidents are routinely denied passports and other travel documents. For individuals who leave Burma due to economic hardship, paying for a passport is not a viable option. According to Burmese law, it is illegal for citizens to leave and to re-enter their own country without a valid passport and individuals who cross into Thailand illegally may face up to seven years imprisonment in Burma (Caouette & Pack, 2002). Those who are caught returning to Burma may be forced to work as porters for the military, and women are often targeted to be human shields and mine sweepers (Yang, 2007). Fear of deportation can result in migrants' willingness to tolerate inhumane working conditions, extremely low wages, and high levels of discrimination in Thailand.

The Thai media commonly portray Burmese people as rebels and criminals who undermine national laws and norms, and as individuals who bring disease, violence, and corruption into their society. The availability of foreign workers who are willing to work at low wages and in poor or dangerous working conditions is seen to undermine the job market and wages for Thai workers (Pitayanon, 2001).

Burmese political dissidents living in Thailand may be considered refugees, migrant laborers, or both. In the following sections, I describe these groups' general legal, social, and economic situations in order to provide a foundation for understanding the everyday experiences of Burmese women living in exile in Thailand.

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Burmese Refugees in Thailand

> The lack of policies and procedures to protect newly-arrived civilians
> fleeing into Thailand is pushing increasing numbers of people into
> precarious, unofficial hiding sites, illegal employment and leaving
> many vulnerable to trafficking networks.
> (Back Pack Health Worker Team, 2011, p. 5)

An estimated 1.5 million displaced Burmese people live along the Thai-Burma border (International Rescue Committee [IRC], 2007). On the Thai side, over 135,000 individuals live in nine closed refugee camps and tens of thousands of unofficial refugees live in hiding in rural areas (TBBC, 2011). Another several thousand are urban refugees who do not feel safe near the border areas, and have settled in urban centers such as Bangkok and Chiang Mai (HRW, 2004). However, Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and, consequently, according to the Royal Thai Government (RTG), there are no Burmese refugees in Thailand (Caouette & Pack, 2002). Urban refugees are "Persons of Concern," camp refugees are "temporarily displaced," and refugees in hiding are treated as undocumented migrants. When they flee Burma, political dissidents may become rural, urban, or camp refugees in Thailand. It is not uncommon for individuals to move fluidly between these categories. For example, a family that attempted to survive in a rural border area before entering a camp may decide to send one family member to Bangkok to work. Remissions from family members in urban centers are crucial for moderating food, economic, and health insecurity in the camps.

The first camp, Mae La, was established in 1984 with the first large influx of Burmese refugees into Thailand (IRC, 2007). The Thailand Burma Border Consortium has been responsible for coordinating all refugee services along the border since, and currently serves a registered caseload of over 135,000 people in nine camps (TBBC, 2011). The camps are unofficial and the RTG does not allow for permanent building materials, such as steel or concrete, and all residents must use bamboo, leaves, thatch and other organic materials for houses, schools, and shops. To enter a camp, individuals must declare that they are fleeing from fighting (TBBC, 2011), and once they enter, it is illegal to leave, despite limited food rations and lack of employment. The RTG limits the role and actions of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in camps, including its ability to register refugees. Registration has taken place only twice: in 1998 and 2005. Registration as a refugee provides a status with certain protections. As of December 2011, TBBC records indicated that roughly 35 percent of the camp population was not registered, and therefore not protected by refugee status. Most arrivals since 2005 were not registered (TBBC, 2011) and thus were not considered for resettlement and were excluded from accessing certain services.

Many families chose to hide in rural border areas rather than formally enter a camp. For example, in November, 2010 an estimated 20,000 Burmese people fled from Myawaddy across the Moei River into Mae Sot, Thailand, to escape fighting between government troops and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army. Within twenty-four hours, an estimated 10,000 refugees had crossed the Moei River border, and Thai authorities and emergency relief staff had begun setting up temporary tents and water and food

dispensaries. On the third day, Thai authorities unexpectedly escorted the thousands of people back across the border, despite concerns about continued fighting in Myawaddy (Moe, 2010a). Soon thereafter, many of the same people covertly crossed back into Thailand to avoid forced recruitment by the Burmese military. A widely feared punishment for exiting and re-entering Burma illegally was enslavement as a porter for the military. Instead, many hid in local monasteries, houses near the river, or in the woods around Mae Sot (Moe, 2010b). Five months later, in March, 2011, over 10,000 Burmese people were still living in hiding in twenty-nine sites along the border. Without formal protection as refugees, individuals are vulnerable to forced repatriation to militarized zones (Karen Human Rights Group, 2011), human trafficking, and harassment and arrest by local authorities.

Thousands of Burmese refugees are also living in Thai urban areas. Over twenty years ago, the first wave of political exiles were welcomed in Bangkok (HRW, 2004). After the 1988 pro-democracy movement and subsequent military crackdown in Burma, roughly 10,000 students and political dissidents fled to Thailand or to rural areas in Burma to undertake military training with the newly formed All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF). Many who joined the ABSDF made their way to Thailand within a few years, unable to survive the conditions of conflict and disease in the jungle. Though this group is known as "the students," they were also doctors, teachers, graduates, and other professionals (HRW, 1998). The RTG allowed the UNHCR to register these individuals as "Persons of Concern" (POC) and to give them financial support as long as they proved their involvement in the demonstrations and registered in

Bangkok (Caouette & Pack, 2002). POC status was only available to activists who participated in the 1988 uprising, and has not been available to others fearing political persecution (HRW, 1998). During the 1990s, activists and dissidents with or without POC status needed to work to survive and were treated as undocumented migrant workers. They could be arrested, detained, or deported (Caouette & Pack, 2002).

Burmese Economic Migrants in Thailand

> From the moment they arrive in Thailand, many migrants face an existence straight out of a Thai proverb—escaping from the tiger, but then meeting the crocodile—that is commonly used to describe fleeing from one difficult or deadly situation into another that is equally bad, or sometimes worse. (HRW, 2010, p. 1)

Migrant work is a viable option for many Burmese political dissidents living in exile in Thailand. Those who do not to engage in migrant labor, however, face similar restrictions on movement and freedom of expression and are equally vulnerable to police extortion, harassment, arrest and deportation. In this section, I discuss the harsh conditions that migrant workers face in and outside of their workplaces in order to illuminate the everyday realities of many Burmese people living in Thailand. Of the estimated 400,000 Burmese migrant workers living in Mae Sot's Tak province, only around 30,000 were registered to work in Thailand (Noreen, 2010).

The abundance of migrant workers and cheap labor has helped Thailand remain competitive in international markets, particularly with fishing and seafood processing, agriculture, and manufacturing (HRW, 2010). These industries' dependence on Burmese workers was illuminated recently when the Thai Labor Ministry hired special airplanes to fly tens of thousands of Burmese workers back to Thailand after factories flooded and

migrant workers headed home (Wade, 2011). The 1.8 to 3 million migrant workers make up five to ten percent of Thailand's workforce and the majority of them are undocumented (HRW, 2010). Estimates show that of the 1.3 million registered migrant workers from bordering countries, 1 million are from Burma (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2011). In 2009 and 2010, all migrant workers were required to verify their nationalities with their home countries. While over 57,000 Cambodians and 58,000 Lao were able to do so at their consulates in Thailand, fewer than 3,000 Burmese returned to Burma to register (HRW, 2010). Individuals who return risk imprisonment for leaving and entering Burma without proper documentation. For political dissidents, registering at home could have even more dangerous consequences.

Comprehensive research by the International Labor Organization (ILO) shows poor working conditions, long hours, debt slavery, and extremely low wages for migrant workers in Thailand. A 2006 report on child labor found that over 80 percent of their interviewees worked eleven to twelve hours per day, seven days per week, and 64 percent reported earning 300 to 500 baht (US$10 to $17) per week, before deductions for food, housing, and repayment of registration or travel fees. Thai minimum wage is 135 baht per day (ILO, 2006). Eighty-two percent of migrant domestic workers and 62 percent of fishing boat workers work more than twelve hours per day and many were not allowed to take any days off during the course of a month. Registered and unregistered migrant workers regularly face physical and verbal abuse, forced overtime, dangerous working conditions, and unexpected deductions from their salaries. When workers complain,

employers may call immigration officials or police to have them detained or deported. Local thugs may also enact retaliation on behalf of employers (HRW, 2010).

In addition to intimidation and exploitation, migrant workers face restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and movement. They are prohibited from forming unions and must gain permission in advance for a gathering of more than five people. Obtaining a driver's license and registering a motor vehicle are illegal and they often need written permission from employers and local officials to travel outside their workplaces. In several provinces, migrants are prohibited from using cell phones because they are considered tools for quick information relay, thereby threatening national security. Police are authorized to confiscate phones and motorcycles from migrant workers on sight and may ask for a high ransom for their return. Five provinces have curfews that forbid migrant workers to leave their places of work or residence in the evening. Limited access to transportation and cell phones can create or worsen dangerous situations, such as sudden illnesses, accidents, and extortion by police, gangs, or gangs posing as police.

Human rights abuses against migrants are common, regardless of legal status. Police may accuse an individual with a migrant worker ID card of holding a fake document and destroy the card; in fact, Burmese people holding passports may prefer to leave them at home in order to ensure the security of their documents. Police confiscate property and assign fines regardless of legal status. Human rights abuses by Thai authorities include forced labor, rape, killings, torture, and physical abuse. Migrants are also vulnerable to human trafficking, crime, and violence by Thai citizens who act with

near impunity; migrants are often targeted for vandalism and racial violence, as they are commonly known to be unlikely to file police reports.

> If you pay money [to the police], you can do anything in our region. If you want, you can kill people… I have seen dead bodies many times by the side of the road… Our area is like a fighting zone… when the police hear the sounds of gunshots, they will not come… [later] the police will come ask what happened, and write down the information and then they go away, and that is all that happens. (Saw Htoo, Burmese migrant worker in Mae Sot district, as cited in HRW, 2010, p. 36)

In 2010 after a large-scale police sweep of factories in Mae Sot, an estimated 5,000 Burmese migrant workers hid in monasteries and forests in the region in order to avoid arrest, imprisonment, and deportation (Noreen, 2010). Vulnerability to police harassment increases during times of national stress. When Thailand experienced some of its worst flooding in over fifty years in 2011, 10,000 factories shut down and 600,000 jobs were impacted. Since migrants' residences were inundated with water and their employers could not provide work, tens of thousands of Burmese migrants headed for the border. Some employers refused to release migrants' documents, and some workers were arrested by police as they crossed provincial boundaries to avoid the flooding (Htwe, 2011). In the border town of Mae Sot, migrants were arrested for not having the correct documentation, and once inside Burma, some were forced to pay up to 1,500 baht (US$50) at unofficial checkpoints (Saimon, 2011).

Whether activists arrive in Thailand as migrant workers, refugees, or political exiles, they face similar levels of violence and vulnerability and serious barriers to their well-being and survival. However, for the two to four million Burmese individuals living in Thailand (Htwe, 2011), this precarious situation is preferable to dangerous economic,

social, or political conditions at home, at least temporarily. For stateless activists,

returning to Burma in the current political climate is not an option. In the next chapter, I

analyze current literature on statelessness in order to further establish the context for this

research.

Chapter 3: Critical Review of the Literature

> Statelessness is also important because as much as it is increasingly a
> problem in the context of contemporary war, it is, symptomatically,
> barely legible as an academic topic in the social sciences right now. If
> one asks: who writes on 'statelessness' these days?—the question is
> hardly understood. In fact, it is generally dismissed as a trend of the
> 1980s. It is not that statelessness disappeared but only that we
> apparently have nothing *interesting* to say about it anymore. One has
> to wonder about what 'interesting' means in such a context.
> (Butler & Spivak, 2007, pp. 13-14)

Statelessness has only recently become a topic of inquiry for scholars. Before the creation of our global system of sovereign states, wherein states have the right to grant or deny citizenship to those who live within their geographic boundaries, all people were stateless. Since the establishment of the modern state system, stateless people are those who are excluded from all rights attached to citizenship, including international rights. A person is stateless if she or he is not considered a national by any state, or cannot access the protections of her or his nationality. The former, *de jure* statelessness, refers to situations where an individual has no legal bond with any state, while the latter type, *de facto* statelessness,* describes situations wherein an individual is registered with a state but cannot access her or his rights. Many Burmese political dissidents living in Thailand are *de facto* stateless; they hold Burmese citizenship and have Burmese identity documents but cannot re-enter their country, and have no legal protection from Burma, Thailand, or any other state. Because international human rights law is applied through states, they live without any civil or legal protections.

In this chapter, I first discuss international human rights legislation as it pertains to statelessness in order to provide a framework for understanding the current situation of Burmese political exiles living in Thailand. Next, I explore general trends in the literature on statelessness. While a majority of contemporary literature comprises surveys on statelessness, several authors explore statelessness as illustrative of the flaws in the international human rights regime and in our global system of sovereign states. Finally, I discuss several authors for whom statelessness is a mark of resistance to the current world order. The dearth of rigorous research and writing pertaining to statelessness highlights its near invisibility as an academic topic until quite recently. This study is the first to examine statelessness through the lens of women's experiences and to address statelessness using the human security paradigm; its contribution to the literature is crucial for understanding the connections between noncitizen status and human insecurity, and for outlining methods for identifying, describing, and addressing sites of violence and exclusion.

International Law

Most contemporary literature on statelessness begins with a discussion of international legislation on the topic. The right to a nationality, and to ensure the realization of a nationality, was developed throughout the 20th century with occasionally contradictory legislation. Article 1 of the 1930 Hague Convention on Certain Questions Relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws states,

> It is for each State to determine under its own law who are its nationals. This law shall be recognized by other States in so far as it is consistent with international conventions, international custom, and the principles of law generally recognized with regard to nationality. (UNHCR, 1999, p. 5)

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Nearly two decades later, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared, "(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality" (UN General Assembly, 1948, Article 15). This gap between international law and practice due to state sovereignty typifies many of the barriers to effectively reducing and preventing statelessness today.

Two Conventions provide the foundation for international legislation pertaining to statelessness. First was the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, developed to protect individuals not covered under the earlier refugee Convention. It defined a stateless person as "a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law" (UNHCR, 1954). This definition of statelessness is a purely legal description and therefore refers only to *de jure* statelessness. Some legal scholars believed this definition to be inadequate and argued that it needed to be broadened to include *de facto* statelessness as well (Batchelor, 1995; Weissbrodt, 2008). The 1954 Convention focused largely on the protection of stateless people, and supporting stateless people in leading stable lives, rather than calling for the elimination of statelessness (UNHCR, 1999; Weissbrodt, 2008).

The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness is the key international legal instrument on decreasing statelessness. States who are party to the Convention are not required to give nationality to stateless persons, but instead are encouraged to focus on birth and descent registration to reduce the occurrence of statelessness, and to avoid situations where individuals lose their citizenship before gaining another (UNHCR, 1999;

Weissbrodt, 2008). The Convention also "recommends that persons who are stateless *de facto* should as far as possible be treated at stateless *de jure* to enable them to acquire an effective nationality" (UN General Assembly, 1961, Final Act). This statement indicates that the 1954 Convention's definition of statelessness does not adequately encompass all people who experience statelessness.

One of the major weaknesses of these Conventions, in relation to political exiles, is their exclusion of certain peoples from the right to citizenship under certain circumstances. The 1954 Convention does not apply to people who "have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity" (Chap. 1, Art. 1). Moreover, the 1961 Convention does not prohibit states from revoking citizenship (Blitz, 2009), and is not applicable if a citizen has acted 'inconsistently with his duty of loyalty to the Contracting State… [or] conducted himself in a manner seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the State" (Weissbrodt, 2008, pp. 92-93). Burmese dissidents are often charged and imprisoned for threatening the peace and stability of their country, and this Convention sanctions the Burmese government's revocation of dissidents' citizenship. For example, The Printers and Publishers Registration Law bans any material "detrimental to the ideology of the State; anything which might be harmful to security, the rule of law, peace, public order, national solidarity and unity" (NCGUB, 2008). This includes distributing pamphlets and refusing to register material with the state before printing. The statelessness of Burmese dissidents in Thailand exposes several gaps in the two UN Conventions.

Many other instruments of international legislation deal with the right to a nationality. These include the 1957 Convention on the Nationality of Married Women and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which seek gender parity in acquisition and preservation of nationality, particularly through marriage. Three additional key Conventions that consider the right of nationality for all are the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR, 1999). Despite fairly extensive coverage of the right to nationality in myriad international legal documents created over the past 70 years, nearly twelve million people have no effective access to citizenship today (UNHCR, 2010).

General Themes

> The subject has received scarce attention from both scholars and monitoring bodies, and there is relatively little comparative research on the causes, patterns and consequences of statelessness in the international system. (Blitz, 2009, p. 7)

Most of the literature on statelessness can be grouped into one of three categories: (1) surveys that provide an overview of common causes and consequences of individual and group statelessness, or focus entirely on one group; (2) literature that uses the concept of statelessness to call into question state sovereignty or the international human rights regime; and (3) legal analyses exploring the history of and complex relationships between nationality laws, human rights legislation, and civil and political rights in practice. I primarily attend to the first two, as the international law scope relevant to this essay is addressed above.

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Surveys on statelessness. Much of the literature on statelessness is written by individuals representing non-governmental organizations, such as Refugees International, and governing bodies, such as the UNHCR. Many documents are informational and share a similar format and content: (a) nationality as a fundamental human right, as supported in international legal instruments; (b) the causes of statelessness; (c) the consequences of statelessness; and (d) addressing statelessness and recommendations to the UN, states, and NGOs. Some authors also include several case studies of individual or group statelessness. This general format is extremely useful as an introduction to statelessness, but does not add meaningful depth or breadth to dearth of literature on statelessness. Blitz (2009) has suggested that these are "descriptive reports which have sought to set an agenda at critical times" (p. 37). Therefore, the goal of the reports is not to fill a gap in the literature, but to call attention to an important issue to individuals who are not, themselves, scholars on statelessness. There remains a great need for rigorous and effective research on statelessness.

The causes of statelessness are named or listed at the beginning of the majority of the literature. The UNHCR (1999) list below is representative of the core reasons for statelessness.

1. Conflict of laws (for example, State A, in which the individual is born, grants nationality by descent (*jus sanguinis*) and State B in which the parents hold nationality grants nationality by birth (*jus soli*) resulting in statelessness for the individual).
2. Transfer of territory (including issues such as State independence, dissolution, succession, or restoration).
3. Laws relating to marriage.
4. Administrative practices.
5. Discrimination.

6. Laws relating to the registration of births.
7. *Jus sanguinis* (nationality based solely on descent, often of only the father, which in some regions results in the inheritance of statelessness).
8. Denationalization.
9. Renunciation (without prior acquisition of another nationality).
10. Automatic loss by operation of law (through loss of a genuine and effective link or connection with the State which the individual does not expressly indicate s/he wishes to maintain. May be associated with faulty administrative practices which fail to notify the individual of this obligation). (p. 3)

Southwick and Lynch (2009) identified additional causes of statelessness, which assist in understanding the breadth of the issue. These include "expulsion of people from a territory, abandonment of children, migrant workers being unable to pass citizenship to their children, and trafficking" as causes of statelessness (p. 2). Lynch (2005) also included financial barriers to registering children's births. Blitz (2009) named climate and environmentally induced displacement as additional causes of statelessness. While some of these causes are relevant to Burmese exiles living in Thailand and help clarify and validate their experiences, many allude to passive forces wherein individuals simply slipped through cracks in national legislation.

> It is helpful to distinguish between *primary* and *secondary* sources of statelessness. Primary sources relate to direct discrimination and include: a) the denial and deprivation of citizenship; b) the loss of citizenship. Secondary sources relate to the context in which national policies are designed, interpreted and implemented and include: c) political restructuring and environmental displacement; d) practical barriers that prevent people from accessing their rights. Arguably some forms of discrimination, such as gender based legislation, may be both primary and secondary sources of statelessness. (Blitz, 2009, p. 1)

Weissbrodt (2008) examined the mechanisms of statelessness rather than the reasons for it. He delineated *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* citizenship laws; the former specifies that one's citizenship is based on his or her place of birth, and the latter means

that one's citizenship is based on his or her heritage or descent. A state may have both or only one type of citizenship. The children of *de facto* stateless Burmese dissidents who are born in Thailand become *de jure* stateless due to the gap in citizenship laws between Burma and Thailand. Burmese authorities will not recognize children born outside of Burma to Burmese citizens who have left illegally, and the government of Thailand will not register non-Thai births. The Mae Tao Clinic (2012) in Mae Sot, Thailand, which provides free health care for up to 150,000 displaced Burmese people annually, attempts to fill this gap with birth delivery certificates and birth records. Although not officially recognized, these documents provide evidence of birth in Thailand and records may make legal legitimacy possible in the future.

Weissbrodt (2008) highlighted that whereas *de jure* statelessness can occur due to administrative omission, *de facto* statelessness is typically an outcome of discrimination. Not surprisingly, the mechanisms are different. He listed two mechanisms: slavery and human trafficking, and intentional governmental erasure of ethnic minority groups. After listing the causes or mechanisms of statelessness, much of the literature discussed the consequences of statelessness. For good reason, there is considerable overlap. Stateless people cannot vote, be elected, own land or work in the formal economy, and they have difficulties accessing education, health care, banking and credit (Southwick & Lynch, 2009). Stateless people may have difficulty traveling outside their towns without documentation, and cannot travel internationally without a passport. Registering marriages, deaths, or children's births are typically not an option. Without civil rights, they may be subject to arbitrary arrest and detention, and unnecessary imprisonment.

Obtaining asylum can be extremely difficult without documentation, as stateless people cannot prove where they are from, cannot return to their country of residence, and may face indefinite detention while the authorities grapple with how and to which country to deport them. Due to civil and political discrimination, they can be convicted more easily and unjustly (Weissbrodt, 2008). Lastly, stateless people may face arbitrary taxation and extortion from state and non-state actors (Blitz, 2009). The consequences of statelessness impact almost every aspect of individuals' lives.

Finally, the literature abounds with suggestions for the UN, specific states, and non-governmental organizations. There are lists of recommendations for legislative changes reducing or preventing statelessness as well as how to support the well-being of stateless people, such as ensuring that all non-citizens have access to identity documents. Weissbrodt (2008) allocated these remedies to three categories: pre-emptive remedies, minimization remedies, and naturalizing remedies. The first addresses statelessness before it occurs, such as ensuring that all children born within a state's boundaries receive citizenship. The second remedy is to promote changes that decrease discrimination, such as making identity documents available for everyone living in the state, and the third, naturalization remedies, seeking to give citizenship to stateless people.

Several authors offered more than simple descriptive accounts. For example, two Refugees International reports provided global surveys of statelessness, and Blitz, Lynch, Lakshman, and Chrimes (2011) recently conducted the first comprehensive study to estimate the cost of statelessness to peoples' livelihoods. Lynch (2005) and Southwick

and Lynch (2009) gave a broader depiction of statelessness by providing a brief summary of over eighty countries' citizenship laws and what was known about the situation of stateless people in each country. In addition, they assessed the previous four years of progress made in reducing and preventing statelessness by the UN and other agencies and stateless people in Kenya, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia.

Blitz, Lynch, Lakshman, and Chrimes (2011) surpassed other studies of statelessness by quantifying the impacts of statelessness in an effective and meaningful way; they used a mixed-methods approach to compare various human development indicators between stateless people, residents, and citizens in Bangladesh, Kenya, Slovenia, and Sri Lanka. Using a sustainable livelihoods approach, they identified challenges and opportunities stateless people face, and focused on an analysis relating to gender and education. Results showed that statelessness lowered household income more in situations where individuals were actively discriminated against by other members of society; stateless people earned 74.1 percent less than citizens in Bangladesh and 62.5 percent less than citizens in Slovenia, and 33.7 percent less overall in the four regions studied. For these stateless populations, people were less happy, and educational attainment, life expectancy, rates of participation in cultural and political groups, and the likelihood of owning a house were lower. Seasonal change was also more likely to impact stateless people because opportunities for work, food, and shelter shift. Explicit focus on gender parity showed interesting results: while female-headed households had 47.1 percent less chance of having social capital than male-headed households, they found that each additional woman in the household increased the chances of having

financial capital by 20.6 percent. Interviews with stateless people helped add depth and vibrancy to the quantitative data. The authors called for future research to examine the long-term impacts of statelessness on individuals' political participation, abilities to develop economically and socially, and successes in obtaining their rights. Further participatory research may illuminate stateless individuals' strategies and therefore direct best practices for support. This study illustrates the possibilities and need for rigorous, comprehensive research on statelessness.

Statelessness as a symptom. Statelessness can indicate multiple issues worthy of attention: it can highlight that a group is being singled out for oppression or it can draw attention to larger systemic issues, such as weaknesses in our international human rights regime and in our global system of sovereign states.

Hannah Arendt's writings on eighteen years without a nationality and the revocation of Jewish citizenship preceding the Holocaust were mentioned ubiquitously in the literature on statelessness. "The Jews had to lose their nationality before they could be exterminated" (Arendt, as cited in Weissbrodt, 2008, p. 96). The Nazis made all Jews in their territory stateless for two reasons: so that they could confiscate their property and so that no other country could inquire about their situation. Deportations almost always started with stateless Jews, and those with French or Dutch citizenship were less vulnerable. Arendt (1951) argued that statelessness could exist only within the presence of nation-states and that once an individual was stateless, others could do what they pleased with him or her. She did not call for the elimination of statelessness through a

change in citizenship policies or international human rights legislation. She called for the end of the nation-state.

> And if the state binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes. If it does the latter, it is not always through emancipatory means, i.e. through 'letting go' or 'setting free'; it expels precisely through an exercise of power that depends upon barriers and prisons and, so, in the mode of a certain containment. We are not outside of politics when we are dispossessed in such ways… This is not bare life, but a particular formation of power and coercion that is designed to produce and maintain the condition, the state, of the dispossessed. (Butler & Spivak, 2007, p. 5)

While some authors called into question the existence of states, others argued that statelessness "expose[s] major holes in the human rights regime" (Blitz, 2009, p. 3). States' unwillingness to ensure that all people have the protection of citizenship is an indication that states are not necessarily the best stewards of civil and political rights. Individuals are dependent on states to access their international human rights protections, and individuals who need them most may be the first ones excluded. The gap between international protections and the ways in which states implement these practices is significant. In theory, "Because being human is the sole requirement entitling us to human rights, whether or not one possesses a nationality should have no bearing on whether we enjoy all of our human rights" (Weissbrodt, 2008, p. 81). In practice, an individual only has the right to have rights if she or he has citizenship.

In some cases, individuals are better off without a state. Somalia's key development indicators were compared from before (1985-1990) and after statelessness (2000-2005). Of seventeen indicators, fourteen improved during statelessness, including life expectancy, measles and tuberculosis vaccinations for children under the age of one

year, infant mortality, maternal mortality, and access to sanitation and health facilities (Leeson, 2007). According to Foreign Policy/Fund for Peace, 16 percent of the world's countries have "failing states" and another 49 percent are in "warning mode." As Somalia's development indicators suggest, states can cause more harm than good. Therefore, possessing membership to *any* state is not necessarily better than having no state.

Other authors see statelessness as indication of the deficiency of the sovereign state system. An estimated 100,000 people live in nearly 200 enclaves on both sides of the India and Bangladesh border; residents originally fled from their homelands to escape violence, and have been living in these enclaves, stateless, for sixty years. Neither state provides a school system, public works, hospitals or health clinics, government, police or judges, electricity, or roads. The enclaves are simultaneously encircled by, and excluded from, the sovereign state system, and therefore illustrate the benefits of inclusion and the consequences of exclusion. "The enclaves expose the cracks and fissures in the friction of coterminous nations, states, and territories and displace the notion of the absolute sovereignty of the state over its people and territory" (Jones, 2009, p. 380). The occurrence of statelessness is thus an opportunity to question the sovereign state system's project of territorializing basic social protections.

Statelessness as a form of resistance. Statelessness may also be understood as a site of resistance. Groups or individuals choose to become or remain stateless in opposition to state coercion and oppression. I highlight three examples of such resistance: the avoidance of many Southeast Asian groups to state incorporation for two

millennia (Scott, 2009); the current refusal of exiled Tibetans to obtain Indian citizenship (Hess, 2006); and one man's renunciation of his American citizenship in favor of statelessness (Hanjian, 2003). Statelessness is not necessarily an accidental oversight or a result of discrimination and exclusion; it may also be an active choice made by individuals or groups.

Zomia refers to a 2.5 million square kilometer region encompassing parts of India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, and China. Scott (2009) has claimed that roughly one hundred million people in this region, representing expansive ethnic and linguistic diversity, actively and successfully resisted statehood until the 1940s when the balance of power tipped to favor states due to technologies such as railroads, telephones, helicopters, and information technology. State incorporation has still not been entirely successful in this region. Groups' social organization, oral cultures, and ideologies can all be read as tactics to keep the state at a distance.

> Their physical dispersion in rugged terrain, their mobility, their cropping practices, their kinship structure, their pliable ethnic identities, and their devotion to prophetic, millenarian leaders effectively serve to avoid incorporation into states and to prevent states from springing up among them. (Scott, 2009, p. *x*)

Zomia illustrates that statelessness can be seen as a site of resistance to global state-building and state-making projects for those who know a state will not have their best interests in mind.

Tibetans living in exile in India comprise a current example of a group actively choosing statelessness. Of nearly 100,000 Tibetans living in India, many are stateless and must re-apply every year for registration to legally reside in India. Although this annual re-registration reminds Tibetans that their stay in India is precarious, many who

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are eligible for Indian citizenship, particularly those who are born in India, choose to remain stateless. The ideological function of this choice symbolizes their pledge to eventually return home to Tibet, and their continued commitment to Tibet's liberation from China. Moreover, the Tibetan government-in-exile encourages Tibetans to come to India to take advantage of a much higher level of education than available in Tibet, and then return home. Uncommon, however, is that the host country assists the stateless group's livelihood and survival. The Government of India and the Tibetan exile government work together to make sure most Tibetans have access to land, housing, and education. If Tibetans obtain citizenship in India, it is perceived that they are assisting the Chinese government in the removal of Tibetans from Tibet. Resettlement in the US is, however, encouraged. The government-in-exile urges Tibetans to become ambassadors for their people, and to use their citizenship as a platform to advocate for the human rights of their people (Hess, 2006). This example demonstrates how groups may actively choose to remain stateless for political reasons, and subsequently choose citizenship over statelessness in certain circumstances.

Very few individuals have chosen to become stateless for political reasons. Hanjian (2003) renounced his US citizenship in 1985 at age 23, a rejection of his state's military and police force, dismissal of minority rights, punitive system and imprisonment, and use of the death penalty. He used the term *souvrien*, a person who is intentionally stateless, in order to avoid the assumption that people without citizenship are essentially lacking. According to Hanjian, souvrien life has its advantages, including integrity, adventure, political freedom, formal neutrality, and social transformation. Drawbacks

include government interference, discrimination, difficulty traveling, and no protection of human rights or government assistance. Though this example is in many ways unlike the experiences of people who are deprived of citizenship, or who are unintentionally stateless, his choices and political views contribute insights into statelessness as a site of inquiry.

Chapter Summary

Although an estimated twelve million people worldwide are stateless (UNHCR, 2010), or living without the bond of citizenship to any state, statelessness is barely acknowledged as an academic topic. Much of the literature on the subject are surveys that follow the same approximate outline: international law pertaining to the reduction and prevention of statelessness; mechanisms or causes of statelessness; general consequences of statelessness; and recommendations to international governing bodies, states, and non-governmental organizations. The two UN Conventions on statelessness, in 1954 and 1961, are typically discussed and critiqued. This general format is useful as an overview of the issue but does not address extensive gaps in the literature. The most comprehensive literature to date on the impacts of statelessness used mixed-methods research to compare human development indices between four countries (Blitz, Lynch, Lakshman, & Chrimes, 2011). These authors applied a sustainable livelihoods approach to analyze the cost of statelessness to individuals' lives. Their work illustrates the potential and need for further rigorous research on statelessness.

In addition to surveys on statelessness, I found that the literature aligned with two other themes: statelessness as a method of resistance and statelessness as a symptom of

weakness in the international human rights regime and in our global system of sovereign states. Leeson (2007) found that fourteen of seventeen key development indicators improved during statelessness in Somalia, and Arendt (1951) argued that statelessness is inherent in the existence of states and in order to eliminate statelessness, we must end our global system of state sovereignty. Although individuals access international human rights protections through membership to states, people who are marginalized and in most need of those protections are often the first to be excluded.

There are very few actual studies on statelessness, and none pertaining to women's experiences in particular. The most comprehensive work to date, as mentioned above, is the research by Blitz, Lynch, Lakshman, and Chrimes (2011). Serious gaps in the research on statelessness demonstrate an overall academic disinterest in the issue despite its impact on an estimated twelve million individuals worldwide. I aim to address this gap by highlighting everyday experiences of statelessness, rather than providing an overall survey of the issue. As a conflict resolution scholar, I believe that stories and experiences are what move people and are what we connect to; stories are what we really hear. Due to patriarchy, women's experiences are not seen as valid sources of knowledge and our stories are often hidden or silenced. My goal is to address gaps in the literature from multiple angles: to add to the body of literature on the experiences of women, of stateless people, and of political exiles. To meet this goal, my research question is: How does statelessness affect the everyday lives of Burmese women political exiles living in Thailand?

Chapter 4: Methods

A feminist ethnographic research design suggested the most appropriate strategies of enquiry for addressing the question: How does statelessness affect the everyday lives of Burmese women political exiles living in Thailand? Long-term participant observation in the field allowed me to gain an appreciation of the general culture of the opposition movement on the Thai-Burma border. Likewise, my work as a teacher at one of the organizations showed my support for, and contribution to, Burmese movements for change. This work also allowed me to get to know the culture and individuals over an extended period. Several participants had seen me at community events long before I obtained their contact information as potential interviewees. The ethnographic value placed on field notes and participant observation legitimized my own everyday experiences as a valid source of knowledge; for example, I witnessed the racial profiling and police harassment that participants reported, thus triangulating the data derived from interviews. Emergent and chain referral sampling allowed me to take advantage of opportune connections and made possible my entrance into a guarded community. Likewise, semi-structured interviews gave me the flexibility to explore and expand upon new topics that participants shared. Feminist ethnography's emphasis on flexibility, time in the field, and people's everyday lives and lived experiences made it the most appropriate methodology for this study.

Working with women who were living in various degrees of hiding and my commitment to strict confidentiality meant that I had no record of their names or contact

information. Several participants who I met early on connected me with most of the other participants; they facilitated the interviews, brought me to the meeting point, and served as interpreters if necessary. Interviewing individuals only once was not ideal, however I felt it was the most secure approach to gathering delicate information. Due to an exile culture of secrecy and also cultural norms around information sharing, this also meant that I frequently began interviews without knowing the participant's background and had to piece together quickly whether she was a high profile politician or a young activist who was just beginning her political career. Several times I thought that prior research on the individual would have helped me approach the interview in a way that was more useful for me and for the participant. However, the conditions of these women's lives precluded that luxury.

Another difficulty that arose was participants' understandable ambivalence about disclosing information. If their identities and stories, together, were made public, the well-being of their friends, families, and communities in Thailand and in Burma could be jeopardized. The combination of a culture of secrecy and a Burmese cultural trait of *anaday*, or "not wanting to say no," meant that individuals were more likely to answer a question falsely than skip the question. I realized this when the participant with whom I was speaking relayed contradictory information during different conversations. The first time we spoke, she told me about her experiences in a refugee camp. In our second conversation, she said she had never lived in a camp, and the third time, during the official recorded interview, she talked again about living in a camp. My heart sank when I realized that this could be the case with other participants as well. Discretion is crucial

for stateless political exiles and is simply a part of the research process. To address this thorny issue, I examined overarching themes in participants' experiences and did not rely on any one individual's narrative, nor did I focus on the facts most likely to be inaccurate. Due to my emphasis on their experiences in Thailand, I did not ask questions about their political activities in Burma, though some volunteered this information.

My role as an outsider was both a limitation and a benefit to my research. As an American graduate student, I had the privilege and the political freedom to communicate more publicly than the participants could about their situations in Thailand. As a white person, I was an unlikely spy for the Burmese military. Women would joke with me about sexism or talk about sexual violence; I believe that my gender allowed me greater access to conversations about gender itself than had I been a male researcher. Participants may have been less likely to talk about divisions within their community, and particularly the role of sexism, to an outsider. For many reasons, exposing fault lines in their community to the outside would not be desirable.

Despite the cautiousness of the exile community, it was not difficult to find participants who were interested in contributing to this ethnography. Gatekeepers were crucial. Participants routinely thanked me for making public their everyday experiences; though their voices were heard internationally on human rights violations in Burma, they were silenced on the topic of statelessness and racial and gender discrimination in Thailand. Participants went out of their way to contact me, to meet with me, and to trust me with their stories, and for that I am incredibly grateful.

Research Site

The field research for this thesis took place from October 2010 to August 2011 in multiple sites along the Thai-Burma border, while I lived in the Thai border town of Mae Sot. Mae Sot is home to dozens of community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations working for political, social, and economic change in Burma. Many organizations coordinating refugee services, such as access to food, health care, and education, are also based in Mae Sot. I chose this location due to its high concentration of political organizations and because Western aid workers, activists, and researchers already had an established presence and collaborative role with many of the organizations. When I arrived, I sought out work with a Burmese community-based organization and fulfilled their request for an English teacher. I taught there for six months. My students were not stateless, so my role as teacher and researcher did not directly overlap. However, I learned about Burmese history, culture, and opposition movements from significant time spent at their and ally group offices. I also witnessed the serious restrictions on movement and everyday fear they faced as undocumented Burmese youth living in Thailand.

Participants

Participants were drawn from the group of individuals who identify as women from Burma who cannot return home due to fear of political persecution, have not obtained citizenship from a second country, and who therefore consider themselves to be stateless. The eighteen women who participated in semi-structured interviews were between the ages of eighteen and eighty-one and represented six different ethnic groups.

I also spoke informally with forty individuals such as doctors, nurses, counselors, teachers, and refugee service providers about the impacts of being stateless on dissidents living in exile in Thailand.

Methods of Data Collection

Participant observation. Participant observation is a core activity in ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnographers typically live and work in the community, learn the language and customs, and participate in everyday activities in order to establish and maintain close, long-term contact with the group they seek to learn about (Fetterman, 1998). Before arriving in Mae Sot, I arranged long-term volunteer work with a small community organization so I could deepen my understanding of Burmese opposition movements. At the organization, I learned about the opposition groups in the region, their work, and witnessed the strict restrictions on day-to-day life of undocumented Burmese youth. In town, I became part of a network of foreigners, largely Westerners, many of whom worked at opposition organizations filling a requested need for improved English language skills for the staff. Proficiency in English is sought for two reasons: first, English is a necessary tool to communicate human rights violations in Burma with the international news media, non-governmental organizations, and foreign governments. Secondly, many pro-democracy organizations are funded by international, mostly Western, donors and must compete for increasingly limited resources. Strong English skills are required for grant proposals and all correspondence with donor organizations.

Field notes are an essential element of ethnographic data collection. They are considered the day-to-day activity of the research agenda: a continual and reflexive

process of textual production and reproduction. Working in a high security environment made writing field notes a complex task. Burmese dissidents who planned to return home kept a low profile; they often chose pseudonyms, were not in contact with their families, and allowed no photos of themselves. Activists who were already known, such as former political prisoners, may also have been in hiding because their families may face persecution at home for their continued political involvement. There was a real concern about the infiltration of informants and Burmese Military Intelligence in the activist community. Prior to arriving in Mae Sot, I was accepted by a political organization for a year-long internship; when the staff found out I would be taking field notes for my research, they withdrew their offer of a position before I arrived. I realized early on that taking notes at community events or at an organization would be regarded with suspicion and was wholly inappropriate, given the level of discomfort it could create. Secondly, I knew that if my notebooks with handwritten field notes were confiscated, stolen, or lost, any information I had recorded could be held against people who had trusted me in conversation or in daily life. Therefore, I kept extensive yet cursory field notes and wrote at opportunistic times, in private, prioritizing confidentiality and the integrity of my status in the community. I also included my thoughts, feelings and interpretations in the field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001).

Interviewing. After five months of participant observation in public spaces and at activist organizations, I began emergent and chain referral sampling to recruit participants for interviews. Emergent, or opportunistic, sampling refers to the recruitment of participants during the research process, allowing the researcher to take

advantage of new topics and themes as they emerge. Chain referral sampling refers to the use of current participants' connections within the community to find future participants (Patton, 2002). These strategies allowed me to find participants I otherwise would not have encountered. I drew upon connections I had formed in Mae Sot by asking friends and colleagues whether they knew any potential participants through their social and professional networks. I met all eighteen participants through word of mouth and personal introductions. Credibility is essential in finding participants in a high risk security environment. Gatekeepers were crucial: three participants connected me with a dozen other stateless women who were willing to interview with me. One participant scheduled interviews and served as an interpreter when necessary for nearly half of the study's participants. Her contribution to this study is immeasurable.

Interviewing is a central strategy to ethnographic work because the information received explains and puts into context what the researcher observes and experiences. Words and language, however, have myriad meanings depending on the context and the individual, and thus it is important to examine words, phrases, and ideas for both connotative and denotative meaning. I employed Heyl's (2001) four goals of ethnographic interviewing.

> 1. listen well and respectfully, developing an ethical engagement with the
> participants at all stages of the project;
> 2. acquire the self awareness of our role in the construction of meaning during
> the interview process;
> 3. be cognizant of the ways in which both the ongoing relationship and the
> broader social context affect the participants, the interview process, and the
> project outcomes; and
> 4. recognize that dialogue is discovery and only partial knowledge will ever
> be attained. (p. 370)

I chose to use semi-structured, informal interviews with the intention of softening the role between participant and researcher. The interviewer protocol may be found in Appendix D. When I began interviewing, I opened with what I considered to be straightforward questions first, such as age, place of origin, and occupation and then moved to what I assumed to be more difficult and complex topics. I quickly noticed that these were potentially the most dangerous questions, as they could be used to easily identify the participants. "Where did you grow up?" could be a painfully baring question for someone in hiding. Participants seemed uncomfortable talking about their ages, as they would often giggle, pause, look away, or make jokes, and asking direct questions seemed to be invasive and abrasive. One of my students joked that if someone was asking him questions, he would reply, "What? Are you the police?" This skepticism around direct questioning meant that I needed to take a subtler approach than traditional Western interviewing. When I moved the basic questions to the end of the interview, I found that participants seemed much more comfortable responding. I was also aware that the more conversational I could make the interview, the more culturally appropriate it would be. I preferred this fluid, flexible, and kind approach, and I believe it helped me connect better with participants. Lastly, when a participant shared something particularly sad about her experience or her life, my first reaction was to empathize and to give her space to cry or to laugh, to pause or to keep telling her story. I did not pretend to be unemotional, though I felt torn between the audio recording and living up to professional standards of research while also balancing my own and the participant's full humanity.

Saturation occurs when there is sufficient redundancy and no new information arises in participants' interviews (Morse, 1994; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). I found sufficient redundancy between interviews twelve and fourteen, and conducted several more to ensure saturation.

Reliability and Validity

To guarantee that my research meets reliability and validity standards, I have followed certain guidelines to ensure that it is plausible, credible, and ultimately, defendable. Johnson (1997) discussed three types of validity: descriptive, interpretive and theoretical. To ensure descriptive validity, I had the assistance of a co-researcher to check the accuracy of my descriptions. To ensure interpretive validity, I asked for immediate participant feedback to assure my understandings and conclusions; interpreting individuals' thoughts, meanings and inner worlds as accurately as possible is essential to ethnographic work. Lastly, theoretical validity was ensured through the use of extended fieldwork and peer review with my thesis committee members.

Two other techniques were used to promote research validity: reflexivity and methodological triangulation. Reflexivity is an essential facet of feminist ethnography and thus was crucial throughout the research process; it brought to the surface my biases and pre-dispositions that may have impacted my interpretations and conclusions. Methodological triangulation with the use of participant observation, formal, and informal interviews demonstrates convergence, and thus increases the validity in my research findings. Kopinak (1999) suggested analyzing the data measures separately

before proceeding with triangulation. Methodological triangulation, though time-consuming, adds the necessary depth to understanding a culture.

Methods of Data Analysis

Collecting and analyzing data do not happen separately or linearly. The pattern is much more cyclical, described well by Morse (1999):

> It is a process of observing patterns in the data, asking questions of those patterns, constructing conjectures, deliberately collecting data from specifically-selected individuals on target topics, confirming or refuting those conjectures, the continuing analysis by sorting, questioning, thinking, constructing and testing conjectures, and so forth. (p. 573)

In this study, content analysis of recorded interviews was based on Kopinak's (1999) research on refugee well-being: (a) transcription of the audio-tape (b) add field notes, (c) reread transcript to glean deeper meanings, (d) code the manuscript with major topics, reread and re-code an unmarked transcript to ensure validity with first coding, (f) apply categories to coded material, and (g) identify major themes relevant to all participants. Though this process appears linear, it was not; as stated above, analysis of data is ongoing and cyclical in nature. Though Kopinak recommends completing transcriptions within 24 hours of the interview, this was rarely possible due to time constraints. Instead, field notes were written and major themes were outlined immediately following the interview. Actual coding of the manuscripts began after I returned to the US; due to security concerns, I waited until returning home to print the transcripts.

DeVault (1999) encourages feminist researchers to pay attention to silences, and the places where participants "get stuck." Often, when there is a lack of vocabulary

available to articulate one's thoughts, we stumble or pause. These spaces could be easily missed during an interview, and ignored on a transcript, but are actually key places for feminist researchers to pay special attention. "What produces the analysis is the recognition that something is unsaid, and the attempt to articulate the missing parts of the account" (p. 71). Listening to women's speech, thus, provides clues to analysis.

Chapter Summary

The fieldwork for this research was conducted from October 2010 to August 2011 at multiple sites along the Thai-Burma border while I was living in Mae Sot, Thailand. I chose this region primarily because of its high concentration of Burmese opposition organizations and substantial Burmese population. After five months of participant observation in public, at organizational offices, and at community events, I began emergent and chain referral sampling to find participants. I met all eighteen participants through word of mouth and personal introductions. Participants were between the ages of eighteen and eighty-one and represented six ethnic groups and seven regions in Burma. I chose to use semi-structured, informal interviews to soften the line between researcher and participant, and asked questions about the impacts of statelessness on each woman's health, education, employment, family, and personal well-being. All participants confirmed that they were not able to return home due to political persecution and did not have access to citizenship rights in any state. Lastly, I employed theoretical, descriptive, and interpretive validity, as well as methodological triangulation and feminist reflexivity in order to ensure reliability and validity. In the next chapter, I discuss the two

theoretical paradigms, the human security paradigm and feminist methodology and

epistemology, which guided the actualization of these research methods.

Chapter 5: Theoretical Paradigms

Two principal theoretical paradigms guided this research: feminist methodology and epistemology and the human security paradigm. Feminist methodology and epistemology laid the foundation for how I approached the research itself, as well as defined my relationship to and roles with participants throughout the process. The human security paradigm was not initially in my research design. Participants' stories were so different from what I had anticipated and from my own life experiences that I returned to conflict resolution theory to better understand what I was hearing. The term "security" occurred so frequently in conversation that it quickly became an emergent theme in my understanding of political exiles' everyday lives. In this section, I first discuss the underpinnings of my methodology and then introduce the human security paradigm. Finally, I present a feminist framework for human security and its uses for addressing statelessness.

Research Paradigm: Feminist Methodology and Epistemology

> Ultimately the feminist ethnographer's approach has been replaced by
> the recognition that feminist ethnography is not so much a matter of
> adopting a particular style as it is maintaining a political commitment, a
> commitment that results in a standpoint that both recognizes the
> distortions and erasures of existing structures of knowledge and works
> to build an alternative legacy. (Borland, 2007, p. 625)

While there is no standard agreement about what makes feminist research feminist, researchers' motives, concerns, and knowledge are uniquely feminist. Several themes connect much of feminist research: (1) the researcher has a commitment to understand, uncover and dismantle systems of oppression, (2) the researcher holds an

epistemological standpoint that all people's stories and experiences are valid sources of knowledge, (3) the researcher believes that traditional researchers' work neglects people in marginalized groups, which is problematic, (4) the researcher must be acutely aware of her or his positionality, or location, and her or his impact on the research process, and (5) the researcher believes that her or his feminist research can transform systems of inequality and create social change (Bhavnani, 2007; Brayton, 1997; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007).

Many feminist researchers who write about feminist methodology argue that methods are not necessarily feminist or non-feminist. Instead, methods become feminist when the researcher employs feminist methodology, and it is not helpful to continue the tired, yet enduring, debate about whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods research are most appropriate for feminist research. Instead, what is important is how the researcher treats her or his participants and how the researcher represents their lived experiences. It is *how* the researcher carries out the research rather than what they do (Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008).

> Thus, feminists are concerned with who has a right to know, the nature and value of knowledge within this, the relationship between the method you use and how you use it and the 'knowledge' you get. Thus, the main concern is with the relationship between the process and the product of feminist research and how epistemology becomes translated into practice. (Leckenby, 2003, p. 97)

The need for feminist methodologies is well-documented. "We literally cannot see women through traditional science and theory" (DuBois, 1983 as cited in Jayaratne & Stewart, 2008, p. 44). Feminist critiques of traditional research include false objectivity, an inequitable relationship between the researcher and the research, and sexist topics,

research designs, and analyses. Non-feminist research may also exclude research questions that are important to women, and exclude women themselves as research participants. The nature of traditional science means that researchers who are not using a feminist lens tend to support sexist norms and reinforce the status quo.

A central concern of feminist research focuses on increasing the visibility and audibility of women's lives, while paying attention to commonalities and differences between women. However, aiming to benefit women first assumes that gender is the most important site of domination and subordination. Imagining women as a static category is essentialist and simply reinforces dominant narratives about power and privilege. Many feminists, such as Collins (1990), hooks (2000) and Lorde (2007) have argued that it is not helpful to rank oppressions hierarchically, and in fact this women-first thinking divides feminist movement. Middle class white women have long weakened feminist movement with classism, racism, and heterosexism (hooks, 2000). This has been true for other movements as well.

> --As long as there are gay and lesbian Americans who view sexuality as the first and last defining facet of their existence and who, therefore, do not defend immigrants against the savagery of xenophobic hatred… I am not one with you. You are not one with me. (Jordan, 1998, p. 179)

Feminist epistemology privileges the lived experiences of individuals who exist at the intersection of multiple oppressions; their knowledge may be counterhegemonic and can provide insight into understanding how multiple systems of oppression operate simultaneously (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). At the same time, researchers must not essentialize individuals by a singular identity, but instead acknowledge that each person offers a unique perspective which is part of a greater whole. Noticing and naming

intersecting oppressions is essential in feminist research. The task, then, is to work closely with individuals and support them in constructing their own way of knowing. Appropriate uses of reciprocity, representation, and voice are widely discussed among feminist researchers (Pillow & Mayo, 2007).

Feminist objectivity accounts for multiple ways of being and multiple ways of seeing. "Feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*" (Haraway, 2008, p. 348). Haraway discusses the embodied nature of vision as a standpoint from which we can only know our own experiences. Only when we are aware of our partial perspectives can we have feminist objectivity (Miner-Rubino & Jayaratne, 2007). Many traditional researchers rely on relativism or totalization to support their objectivity; both limit what we are able to see, and support us in remaining ignorant of what we are not seeing. Instead, by recognizing and acknowledging our situated knowledges, we can set the groundwork for a feminist objectivity.

Reflexivity also contributes to a feminist objectivity. We use our partial perspectives to engage with the world and to make sense of it. Reflexivity means that I want to and am able to understand how I, as a researcher, impact the situations I seek to learn about, how my perspective shapes my interpretations, and how my intersecting identities inform my strengths and limitations as a researcher. Reflexivity is the ability to engage with my situated knowledge in ways that make my biases transparent to myself and to my audience. Knowledge is not "out there" and it cannot be "collected." We create knowledge. "Reflexivity exposes the exercise of power throughout the entire research process. It questions the authority of knowledge and opens up the possibility

for negotiating knowledge claims as well as holds researchers accountable to those with whom they research" (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 495). Reflexivity requires us to ask: What do we know and how can we know it? All knowledge is created through a specific lens, and rooted in the observed and the observer.

This reality was highlighted beautifully to me by feminist researcher Hae Yeon Choo. I wrote to her seeking guidance on the interview process and asked for recommendations about how to talk to women participants about gender and sexism. She replied, "I believe that people—researchers and research participants included—tell the story they want to tell, that they feel passionate about, regardless of how rigorous they want to sound, and it's a matter of being open and listen[ing] to what people say with great care and awareness" (personal communication, February 1, 2011). Choo's insights helped me understand the underlying sincerity of reflexivity and feminist objectivity in practice.

Increasing my awareness and immersing myself in another culture does not fundamentally shift my positionality or the situatedness of my knowledge. As the researcher, I ultimately hold the power to represent.

> From the moment the researcher engages in the research project, to the probing and asking of questions, through the transcription of field notes, the voice of participants have already been interpreted…The researcher ultimately holds authority over the interpretation and writing of the final research product" (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 504).

This paradox of ethnographic authority—the commitment to revealing systems of oppression and the commitment to honor participants' voices— causes conflict for many feminist researchers (Borland, 2007), myself included.

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When a researcher chooses to do feminist work, the choice is political, both for the study and for the researcher herself. "The act of writing can be political for women. Learning to organize thoughts on paper, to express feelings, to respond to others is an enormous extension of women's power" (Chester and Nielson, as cited in Leckenby, 2003, p. 92). For many people in marginalized groups, the act of writing, speaking out, and advocating for one's work and one's legitimacy is a feminist act. As I examine how feminist research affects the lives of my participants, I also consider the impact it will have on my own life.

In sum, feminist ethnographic work has both hermeneutic and emancipatory concerns and is, in itself, inherently political work. It is linked to my beliefs that our global society is inequitably structured and ideologically dominated; this can be seen clearly by whose voice is considered legitimate and whose voice is silenced. Power and inequality are multi-faceted and affect everyone uniquely depending on their positionality, which is constantly in flux. I use reflexivity to understand my own situatedness as a researcher, and also acknowledge that there are aspects of participants' lived experiences that I do not have the linguistic or cultural tools to understand. Effective feminist ethnographic research is, first and foremost, essential to changing local and global inequalities by being helpful to the researched communities.

The Human Security Paradigm

Human security offers an alternative to militarized state-centered security. It can be seen as a transition from a narrow view of security that focuses on threats to physical safety such as armed conflict and torture, to a wide perspective of security that

encompasses freedom from want, such as political and social threats like hunger, disease and repression (Korhonen, n.d., p. 19). States are often a more significant threat to individual and community well-being than are threats of international armed conflict. In the past two decades, non-state actors such as international organizations and civil society actors have become more fundamental sources of protection for individuals targeted or neglected by states. However, states are currently the primary producer of both human security and insecurity.

Multiple interpretations of human security exist. Canada, one of two states that has implemented human security as its national security strategy, defines human security as "freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety, or even their lives" (Juntunen, n.d., p. 60). This description speaks more to protection from harm, or negative peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of war or violence of all kinds (Galtung, 1996). On the other hand, the Commission on Human Security (CHS) offers an additional element in its definition of human security: positive peace. CHS (2003) defines human security as something positive to strive for: protection and empowerment, or the freedom to live in dignity. It must "protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment" (Korhonen, n.d., p. 20). Seven types of intersecting securities are helpful in understanding how to dismantle direct, structural, and cultural violence and how to build positive peace: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994). By examining these main indicators of human security and insecurity, peace scholars can identify inroads in addressing complex problems. Six of the seven indicators emerged as

themes during my ethnographic fieldwork; consequently the seventh, environmental security, is not included in the findings chapters.

The human security framework also attends to the weaknesses of the international peacebuilding agenda, such as relying on top-down approaches at the expense of individual and community needs. Peacebuilding strategies often rely on the assumption that effective statebuilding will ensure local and international stability and therefore peacebuilding often merges with statebuilding and securitization.

> Despite notable successes in promoting stability and containing conflicts, the record in terms of promoting durable peace – based on sustainable economic growth, service delivery, self-sustaining institutions, inclusive democratic practices, personal security, and the rule of law—has been questionable. The reasons for such shortcomings, insofar as the role of the international peacebuilding and development donor community is concerned, may be sought in two areas. One is the rationale behind the peacebuilding agenda, which has increasingly conflated the need for stability in fragile states as an international security imperative. The other is the problems related to the liberal institutionalist models that guide peacebuilding and development programmes, and the implementation of these models in post-conflict settings. (Futamura, Newman, & Tadjbakhsh, 2010, p. 46)

The human security approach addresses current gaps in peacebuilding theory and praxis by recognizing the interconnectedness of all threats and by taking into account these multiple layers of security in order to promote sustainable peace. For example, food aid must be coordinated with agricultural and rural economic development strategies. Human security serves peacebuilding by focusing on the needs of individuals and communities and by recognizing and supporting their agency, capacity, and judgment. It highlights that the causes of conflict are social and political exclusion, inequality and structural violence; thus, strategic planning must be long term and include

preventive action that addresses the root causes of the conflict. Lastly, human security

does not rely on predetermined goals, such as the building of a state or a certain type of

political or economic system. Instead, it focuses on protecting and empowering citizens

first.

> From a human security perspective, a weak state is one which cannot exercise its
> primary function of social protection and therefore fails in its duty to protect, care
> for and empower its citizens. A 'failed state' therefore is one that is weak in the
> eyes of its own citizens primarily and cannot provide for their survival,
> livelihoods and dignity, as opposed to being seen as a 'dangerous' menace to
> international security. The legitimacy of state institutions comes therefore not
> merely from its existence, capacity or leadership, but the extent to which
> populations perceive its capacity and will to distribute justice, basic human needs,
> public goods and space for participation. (Futamura, Newman, & Tadjbakhsh,
> 2010, pp. 51-52)

Essentially, a human security approach to peacebuilding must focus on inclusive

development, social integration and coexistence, as well as reconciliation where

necessary. Because conflict erodes trust, one of the most important facets of

peacebuilding must be to foster trust and confidence in peaceful community and national

relationships. "Human security suggests that public policy must be directed above all at

enhancing the personal security, welfare and dignity of individuals and communities"

(Futamura, Newman, & Tadjbakhsh, 2010, p. 51). While some scholars argue that

human security and state-security complement one another (Korhonen, n.d.), or simply

ignore the links between state-centered security and human insecurity (UNDP, 1994)

feminist peace researchers argue that our global militarized state security system is

fundamentally in opposition to human security, and critique human security scholars for

ignoring this underlying flaw.

A feminist framework of human security.

> …The disadvantaged position of women in patriarchy puts in jeopardy
> the security of most of the human community—even the patriarchs. If
> women and those who depend upon them are not secure, to what extent
> can a nation, in the true sense of the word, meaning the people of a
> state or society, be secure? (Reardon, 2010, p. 11)

Feminists have long pointed out the connections between the oppression of

women and the institution of war (Reardon, 2010). In patriarchal thinking, the

masculinized gallantry of war depends on the devaluation of the feminine and

simultaneously the feminization and dismissal of peace (Milner, 2010). Patriarchy

ensures that most people will never feel secure, even during times of peace, because most

individuals are not among the globally privileged and have very little voice, particularly

to influence the decisions or actions of their state. Our international security system

disadvantages women and other marginalized groups because it is designed to be

dominantly masculine, rather than fully human, and to serve the interests of the state,

rather than individuals and communities. Moreover, because patriarchy assigns the

majority of family and community work to women, women's standpoints towards

security tend to be everyday, or quotidian, security (Reardon, 2010). For example,

Muthien (2010) found that some South African women included in their need for security

that their partners be monogamous and faithful, and to end violence against women and

children. Their views of security were rooted in their gendered roles in their

communities; a strong army could not, and would not, improve their everyday security.

As long as militarized state security is seen as a legitimate source of protection

from harm, human security is not possible. Violence tends to be socially sanctioned

when a state or state actors perpetrate it, such as the use of the death penalty and violent

conflict to protect state borders or sovereignty. However, because all forms of violence

are connected, all are integral to maintaining one another. Likewise, human security

relies not only on the experience of, but also the expectation of, well-being. When we

feel less threatened, we are less likely to threaten those around us (Reardon, 2010).

National leaders use and abuse potential threats to national security to maintain a

population's deep feeling of insecurity so that they will believe that they need a heavily

militarized state for protection, and will not question the diversion of much-needed

resources to preparations for war rather than for their own well-being, such as for

institutions of health and education.

Reardon (2010) defined security as,

The conditions that make possible the experience and expectation of wellbeing.
This definition obtains in the cases of individuals and groups of all sizes and
characters, including nations. Everything that is done in the name of security is
ostensibly to fulfill those conditions. (p. 16)

She named four fundamental sources of human well-being: a life-sustaining

environment, fulfillment of needs for survival and health, respect for individual and

group dignity and identity, and protection from avoidable harm. In order to meet these

expectations, Reardon has argued that we must transform the way we think about

security; we must change our understanding of security from increasing the potential for

destruction to increasing the potential for human well-being. Human security depends on

replacing patriarchy with gender equality (Milner, 2010; Reardon, 2010) and replacing

the institution of war with nonviolent structures. Thus, a feminist approach to human

security can offer answers to address fundamental and complex problems faced by peace scholars and practitioners.

Addressing statelessness with a feminist human security framework. A feminist human security framework can help address the problems that non-citizens face by providing a tool for identifying sources of human insecurity and by outlining various new avenues for action. Human security's emphasis on protection and empowerment simultaneously shows faults in the current international human rights regime and also lays the foundation for building the conditions necessary for human security.

> Despite the global impact of statelessness and its relevance for human security, the interrelationship between the two has been relatively little explored. To some degree this is not surprising, as there is relatively little writing on statelessness generally as compared to, for example, refugees and internal displacement. Additional study and writing is in order. Examination of the situation of stateless persons and populations reveals that there is a clear link between possession of a nationality and human security, or lack of nationality and human insecurity. Statelessness leads to risks to an individual's human security and, if left without a legal status, one's enjoyment of basic rights and security of residence. (Manly & Van Waas, 2010, p. 50)

Statelessness is a risk to one's human security. Individuals access their international human rights through their memberships to states, leaving stateless people without national or international legal protection. For example, states are required by international law to grant identity documents to individuals living within their borders who do not have valid travel documents; however, this is rarely observed and no international monitoring body can enforce it.

A human security framework can help facilitate new responses to statelessness in three primary ways. First, it highlights the relationship between statelessness and

national security by illustrating the lapse in protection it offers certain groups of people. Looking at statelessness from a human security lens, wherein individual and community well-being are primary, it is clear that national security falls short. Second, both topics highlight the reality of states' and individuals' interdependence and lay bare the gaps in our rationalization of absolute state sovereignty. Lastly, the human security framework makes prominent and relevant the need for protection from sudden disasters and the necessity of putting into place long-term strategies for reduction of harm. Stateless individuals and others who are excluded from normative legal and social frameworks face the highest consequences during times of crisis (Manly & Van Waas, 2010). The magnitude of the issue clearly requires a multilateral response and highlights the interdependence of states.

In addressing statelessness, it is already clear that simply considering protection is not enough to reduce and prevent statelessness. International human rights law guarantees certain rights and freedoms, but human security adds another element: empowerment. If individuals are able to act on their own behalf, and others are able to act on their behalf as well, new, innovative solutions to an old problem may be found. Human security may be able to change the discourse around statelessness from tolerance and protection, to full inclusion.

Chapter Summary

Conducting feminist ethnographic work is a political commitment and a standpoint that recognizes the falsehoods and erasures in our current systems of knowledge production, and seeks to provide an alternative body of work and support a

world that is more equitably structured. A main concern of this research is to increase the audibility and visibility of women's lives and of non-citizens' everyday experiences. Feminist epistemology privileges the lived experiences of individuals over positivist attempts to gain knowledge, maintaining that our partial perspectives lend to our objectivity. All knowledge is created through a specific lens and is rooted in the observed and the observer.

Similar to the hermeneutic and emancipatory concerns of feminist ethnographic work, the human security paradigm is also an instrument for envisioning and implementing revolutionary change. Human security provides an alternative to militarized state-centered security wherein individuals and communities are at the center of care, rather than the state and its interests. States are currently the primary producer of both human security and insecurity, and are globally a greater threat to individuals than the threat of armed conflict. In particular, a strong military does not improve the everyday security of women's lives. The masculinization of armed conflict and the unbridled power of the state to enact violence depend on the devaluation of the feminine and the powerless; the international security system inherently disadvantages women and other marginalized groups. We must re-imagine security as working to implement and maintain the conditions that make possible the experience and expectation of well-being. When we consider the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities first, we see that human security and the state-centered security are fundamentally incompatible.

In the next two chapters, I use a feminist framework of human security to examine the impacts of statelessness on the everyday lives of Burmese women political exiles living in Thailand. Three human security indicators guided my analysis and provided the framework for understanding what I was hearing in interviews: political, personal, and community security. Food, health, and economic security emerged as elements of community security. Feminist methodology and epistemology and the human security paradigm provided tools for identifying sources of human insecurity and laid the foundation for understanding the conditions necessary for human security. To address conflict and insecurity effectively, we must focus on their root causes: inequality, structural violence, and social and political exclusion.

Chapter 6: Findings - Going into Exile

Here, we are walking on a clothesline. (Tizu)

How does statelessness affect the everyday lives of Burmese women political exiles living in Thailand? Semi-structured interviews with eighteen women from the population group, informal conversations with forty community members, and ten months of participant observation in public spaces, at organization offices, and at local events informed the response to this question. While these findings cannot be generalized to represent the experiences of all stateless women, nor of all Burmese political exiles, they contribute to the knowledge base of statelessness from a human perspective. The stories and voices of the particular individuals with whom I spoke illuminate the multiple social and political barriers to the fulfillment of human security in the lives of political exiles. The themes that emerged shed light on the fault lines in our systems of international protection, the gaps in our global system of state sovereignty, and the ways in which gendered, racial, and ethnically motivated violence are used to maintain power and inequality.

Basic demographic data about the participants is helpful in understanding the diversity within the group but because the information is sensitive, it will be included only loosely and briefly. The women were between the ages of eighteen and eighty-one and represented six ethnic groups from Burma. Of the eighteen participants, eleven had been in Thailand longer than five years and only three had been in Thailand fewer than two years. The participants grew up in seven different regions in Burma and half of them

were from Yangon, formerly the capital city. Roughly two-thirds of the participants reported that they were not married and half had children. Three had lived in a refugee camp and six were actively seeking, waiting for, or would consider resettlement at some point. Former political prisoners and leaders of prominent organizations were included in the sample group. Half of the participants held a bachelor's degree or higher and one individual had had no access to formal education. Almost all of the participants held stable employment at the time of interviewing and their past and present occupations included editing, teaching, accounting, fashion design, counseling, tutoring, academic advising, health care, and research. Given that intersecting identities influence women's experiences of statelessness differently, I believe that my research group has atypically high levels of educational attainment and occupational status.

To safeguard anonymity, I used pseudonyms in the place of the participants' names. I worried that assigning other Burmese names to participants could potentially incriminate individuals not involved in the research and thus chose along with the guidance of my thesis advisor, Dr. Rachel Cunliffe, to assign the names of Burmese rivers to participants. While this is admittedly not perfect, I believe that names better represent individuals than numbers do and wanted to use Burmese words that would not link directly to real individuals. Transliteration of Burmese words can vary greatly, such as the Irrawaddy or Ayeyerwady River, and I have used the spellings standardized by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (2012). I assigned the river names arbitrarily to maximize confidentiality; they do not represent the participants' region of origin.

Another decision that I made with the guidance of my thesis advisor was to modify participants' direct quotations into standardized English for clarity and ease of reading. I made great efforts to maintain participants' meanings and intentions because accurate representation is extremely important to my research and work. To reduce inevitable cultural and linguistic misunderstandings, I clarified and reviewed my understanding with participants during interviews. I have also omitted information in direct quotes that could compromise anonymity; this exclusion is denoted by […].

In the two chapters on my findings, I explore major themes that emerged during the eighteen semi-structured interviews and through ten months of participant observation on the Thai-Burma border. In this chapter, I share participants' reasons for fleeing Burma, their initial impressions upon arrival in Thailand, and their decisions to stay in Thailand or seek resettlement. In the next chapter, I apply the human security paradigm to understand core themes that emerged when participants illustrated how statelessness affected their everyday lives. The three overarching themes of political insecurity, personal insecurity, and community security illustrate the dangerous intersections of social and political exclusion.

From the Tiger to the Dragon

Leaving Burma. While none of this study's participants can return home due to fear of political persecution, some did not come to Burma for exile, but instead left to find work or to study and have since become stateless due to their political activities in Thailand. Pyamalaw arrived in Thailand as an economic migrant and worked in a factory for three months before she decided to join a worker's rights organization.

Originally, my idea was to come to Thailand to work. But then I saw that so many Burmese people travel here and employers exploit their wages, and they have to work in factories with bad working conditions. I wanted to do something, and I found a way to help my people, to help my country. So that's why I joined the organization. (Pyamalaw)

Pyamalaw's newfound political activism in Mae Sot was noted by Burmese Military Intelligence and as a result, her family in Burma faced much of the same harassment and surveillance that activists, themselves, face. Because of this, she knew she could not return home.

I know the military regime knows I am working for an opposition group because the SPDC questioned my family. If I go back to Burma, I'm sure I will be tortured, I'll be arrested. They question my family about whether they have contact with me, they investigate that. The special police came to my family one night and they took my younger sister, and they asked her if she has contact with me.

Harassment of family members, coworkers, and friends was common for former political prisoners or others who are suspected of political involvement. Due to constant surveillance, prevention of employment, education, and political involvement, and fear of re-arrest and imprisonment, many participants chose to flee Burma in order to live in exile in Thailand. AAPP-B (2005; 2010) interviews with former political prisoners showed equivalent reasons for fleeing to Thailand. After playing a leadership role in the Saffron Revolution in 2007, Mayu went into hiding for seven months with friends and colleagues before deciding to flee; she avoided arrest and imprisonment entirely. Former political prisoners Myitnge, Kaladan, Lemro, and Tizu chose to flee to avoid re-arrest after their houses were searched by Military Intelligence or their families were too afraid to have contact with them after their release. After Lemro's release, life felt impossible.

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Everywhere I went, I was followed. Before I was in prison, I was followed by Intelligence but it was different, they stayed far behind me. After I was released, even if I went to the pagoda they were right near me. My family was accused by the Military Intelligence so they were too scared to let me stay at home… If I stayed in Burma, I could face re-arrest, so I decided to flee… [Friends] encouraged me to flee, "If you are re-arrested, you will die in prison, you should go to Mae Sot."… I was shivering, shaking because of 11 years in prison, I couldn't sit, I couldn't talk. If I tried to open a lock, my hands were shaking… I would crawl, using my hands and legs, because I could not climb [stairs] like an ordinary person. (Lemro)

Most participants who left due to fear of political persecution did not tell their families, and instead simply fled overnight. Kaladan, who sought to avoid imprisonment for a third time and feared for the arrest of her family members due to her political activities, told her youngest daughter on the day that she fled, "Think of me as dead. I won't communicate with you, or with my family or with my friends in Burma. Think of me as a dead person." Like many others, she hired a guide, or an agent, to accompany her to the Thai-Burma border, where another person picked her up and brought her to a friend of a friend's place, where she stayed temporarily until she secured housing and employment.

While not all of this study's participants fled situations of extreme political insecurity, they all understood that returning to Burma meant arrest, imprisonment, or worse. As activists, they were viewed as threats to the state, and were therefore treated as state security risks. Because they had no access to citizenship rights in Thailand or in Burma, they were *de facto* stateless. For participants, having no state membership was preferable to the available alternatives, reinforcing Leeson's (2007) argument that membership to *any* state is not necessarily better than no state.

Arriving in Thailand. The high level of insecurity in Thailand was a shock for many participants. Many explained that they did not know how to get a job, how to get food, how to get to a hospital or a health care practitioner, or whether they could access health care without documents. They knew only a few days before fleeing Burma that they would be leaving and knew nothing about life in Thailand. Most surprising was the reality of their status as non-citizens and the consequent police harassment. For example, Ataran was brought to Thailand by an opposition group's leader because she wanted to pursue an education in health care, an opportunity she could not afford at home.

> When we first got here, the police arrested us. We didn't know what the culture was like, we didn't know that if you don't have an ID card, you will be arrested. We didn't have a TV and we really wanted to watch a documentary, so we went to [organization] office. We were just walking, six or seven of us, and the police arrested us. We called our leader, and he said, "Ah, [Thai] Intelligence will come and get all of you, don't worry." … [Then] we only had the documents that Intelligence gave us, permission to stay at the house. If we went outside, the police would arrest us, so we just stayed at home quietly. (Ataran)

On the other hand, former political prisoners were more likely to have friends or acquaintances that would provide them with housing, food, and ultimately connections for employment.

> The agent arranged everything, to buy a ticket, to take a boat, like that. So we got to Mae Sot, a car picked us up and then we arrived at a friend's house. There were a lot of students, about 35 or 40 [laughing]. Luckily we got a room, so my colleague and I lived together there, and they said we were not allowed to go outside because we could be arrested by Thai police. "Really?!" [Laughing]. For three months. They don't want me to be deported, so they worry, but I feel really upset. (Myitnge)

Myitnge relied on friends who were fellow former political prisoners for food and housing until she found employment through an activist organization that offered a

stipend and accommodation. Her story was characteristic of many participants: frustration, confusion, hopelessness, and fear in the first few months, mostly in hiding. As political exiles became more connected through activist networks in Mae Sot and learned to navigate the heavy police presence and non-citizen status as a stateless person, everyday life typically became less debilitating, and was somewhat normalized. Basic human security needs such as food, health, and economic security were accessed over time through a strong network of dozens of activist groups and organizations. Personal and political insecurity remained a serious threat due to ongoing non-citizen status and the stereotype that Burmese migrants were a threat to Thai stability and state security. Despite these risks, many participants chose to stay in Mae Sot.

Deciding to stay. Very few participants were seeking resettlement to a third country, and instead, most had no intention of seeking refugee status, resettlement, or Thai citizenship. Almost all participants expressed a strong desire to return home to Burma and wanted only Burmese citizenship. Until it was safe to return home, they were committed to working for political and social change in exile. When I asked Pyamalaw if her work permit and temporary passport would lead to Thai citizenship or whether she was interested in resettlement, she replied, "No! I don't want to be Thai! I only want to be a Burmese citizen. I want to stay here and I want to do something for my country." Due to her high profile political status, Kaladan was quickly resettled to a third country in 2003 but decided to return to Mae Sot after six months. "I have to live there continuously for two years in order to apply for citizenship, but I never thought of applying for citizenship… I'm happy in Mae Sot, not in [third country]." Myitmaka felt that she was

free to leave Thailand due to her passport, friends in third countries, and financial

stability, but she stayed because her work was in Thailand. Several other participants had

been offered resettlement years prior and had refused.

> The UNHCR came to ask us, "Do you want to go to a third country? We'll
> interview you and you can go." At the time it was very easy… We said, "Oh!
> We don't want to go to a third country." We don't have any other staff here, we
> were just small, so we said no. (Ataran)

Ongoing commitment to political activism was a major theme in participants'

decisions to stay in Mae Sot. I heard again and again that participants believed that once

they resettled, they would not be able to continue their political work because all of their

time would be spent working for survival. Because international donors supported pro-

democracy groups working in Thailand, activists were able to work full-time towards

political and social change at home while living on modest stipends from their

organizations. This commitment was nearly ubiquitous. Lastly, political freedoms such

as speaking with foreign press, which is banned in Burma, occurs in Thailand without

fear of retribution. A parallel government with opposition groups, diverse parties,

community based organizations, youth and women's organizations, also banned in

Burma, functioned covertly in Thailand.

In addition, most participants had better access to sufficient health care and

education in Mae Sot than in Burma. Many of the opposition in exile groups offered

training courses to their own and other groups' staff members on human rights, women's

rights, democracy, and other subjects that are forbidden in Burma. Dialogue facilitation,

press conferences, grant-writing, and computer literacy courses were also available.

Participants who were parents mentioned the educational opportunities for their children at migrant schools along the border.

> If [political activists] stay in Burma, we hand our fundamental rights to the regime…. We fled from Burma so we have the rights to do good things for our country. If we live here, we can help and do civil society work, and also, in Mae Sot there is a Burmese community. We can help people and we can nurture the next generation. So all these things we work for are for our country's future. One day, everybody will return to our native country. Here, we attend classes and become sharp, because we plan to return home. (Uyu)

Many participants shared their commitment to returning home when the political climate changed. For example, Thandi, an eighteen year old woman who had spent most of her life in Thailand, wanted to get her GED in order to return to her region to teach in her own language. Burmese is currently the only language permitted to be taught or spoken in her region's schools. Yunzalin Chaung had been in Thailand for more than a decade and wanted to return to her region to focus on community development, particularly with girl orphans, but could only do so when she would be guaranteed political security. The decision to stay stateless and in Mae Sot, despite everyday hardships, was a common sentiment for many participants.

However, women with the highest skills and the best connections were most likely to find work, and therefore survive, in Mae Sot. Those who had lived in Thailand fewer than two years, or who had only recently found work at political organizations expressed interest in resettlement. Zami shared her sadness that her close friends were forced to choose resettlement because their everyday levels of insecurity were too great.

> I had no idea it would be this difficult in Thailand. Sometimes I think about so many of my friends who just want to go back to Burma, but they can't. It's difficult [here]. I think that's why a lot of my friends, in 2005, they accepted the

resettlement program. They really believe in politics, they believe in the struggle, but they did not really speak Thai or English. I was lucky that I studied so hard, I self-studied all the time, even now… I've never gone to a formal, proper school…. I want to cry when I speak about it, because most of my friends are gone. They could not suffer here anymore. They could not struggle here anymore. And they left. (Zami)

However, resettlement had not been an option for those who arrived after 2005 due to the Thai authorities' restrictions on the role and actions of the UNHCR. In order to apply for resettlement, individuals must first obtain refugee status at one of the UNHCR camps and Thai authorities had allowed registration only in 1998 and 2005. Therefore, most refugees who had entered Thailand since 2005 were not considered Convention refugees (TBBC, 2011), and consequently could not be considered for resettlement and were not protected with refugee status under international law. Individuals in this situation were given a refugee consideration slip as their documentation and were not permitted to leave the camp. When Mayu, a young activist, arrived in Thailand, friends told her a camp would be the most secure place for her. She had recently secured employment with an organization in Mae Sot.

I spent three years in the camp waiting to be resettled and nothing happened. Some of my colleagues decided to stay and survived in Mae Sot and they already went to school or got a scholarship, but I don't have anything, I just wasted my time in camp… I want to continue my education… I don't want to be a stateless woman anymore. I want to resettle because living in the camp is impossible, we struggle a lot. I prefer living in Mae Sot, but it is also insecure because I still don't have any legal papers. Once I have citizenship, I'm going to continue my political activities, work and survive on my own, help my colleagues in prison, and my family. Now, I cannot help anyone, and I cannot survive by myself.

Mayu's story may be much more common for women political exiles than my findings show. It is feasible that most stateless political exiles who flee Burma travel

directly to a refugee camp, as Mayu did. However, many of the women I interviewed held established positions at community organizations and had lived in Mae Sot for more than three years. These women had been able to find economic security in Mae Sot and therefore had not needed to go to a camp. I sought out participants with various lengths of time in Thailand in order to better understand the differences and similarities between recently arrived political exiles and those who had been living as stateless women for years. I found that community security was the fundamental and primary support for all stateless women activists' safety and well-being in Mae Sot and had a moderating effect with ongoing high levels of political and personal insecurity. If an individual was not embedded in the larger activist community network in Mae Sot, the level of insecurity was too great to survive.

Participants' complete disinterest in gaining Thai citizenship corresponds with the Tibetan exile population's widespread reluctance in obtaining Indian citizenship (Hess, 2006). For both exile groups, refusal of another country's citizenship symbolizes their ongoing commitment to returning to their homeland and to their own political liberation. Participants' refusal to apply for resettlement also supports Leeson's (2007) findings in Somalia that when states cause more harm than good, membership to no state is more beneficial than membership to any state. As Scott (2009) argued, statelessness can be seen as a site of resistance for those who know that a state will not have their best interest in mind.

Chapter Summary

While most, but not all, of this study's participants fled Burma due to political persecution, all had participated in political activities in Thailand that prevented them from returning home. Thus, they were *de facto* stateless individuals and had no access to their citizenship rights at home or in any other country. Participants who were known activists in Burma had experienced high levels of surveillance and police harassment, faced serious obstacles to securing work and education, and fled due to fear of arrest, imprisonment, or worse. Most participants shared dismay and shock upon arrival in Thailand; a lack of civil and legal rights presented multi-layered barriers to security and well-being. In order to continue their political work within a network of activists living in exile, most participants had chosen to remain stateless in Mae Sot rather than seek citizenship in Thailand or resettlement in a third country. These individuals planned to return home when it is safe to do so. In the next chapter, I discuss the major causes of personal, political, and community insecurity that illustrate statelessness as a great threat to human security.

Chapter 7: Findings - Statelessness and Human Insecurity

> We have to change everything when we move to Thailand. First thing
> is, we are afraid of the police. When we live in Burma, we can wear
> anything, like a *longyi* or we can put on *thanaka*. When we arrive here
> we have to change everything. It's very different, very strange for us.
> And also the language… We cannot speak Thai, we cannot speak
> English… So it's very difficult… We have to change everything. Then
> we have to be afraid of the police, we cannot go to the market. …And
> then sometimes we have to hide from the police. It's very difficult.
> And also, no money, no food, sometimes. (Yunzalin Chaung)

Not only are stateless people excluded from access to civil and legal rights, they often become targets of the state security system, represented by police officers, immigration officials, and Intelligence agents. Burmese activists living in exile reported high levels of violence from state and non-state actors due to this simultaneous lack of protection and deliberate targeting. As Arendt (1951) argued, statelessness was an essential step in the exclusion process for Jewish individuals preceding the Holocaust. Without the link of citizenship, stateless people were left with conditions of extreme insecurity and no outside state could enquire about their situation. In this chapter, I employ a feminist framework of human security in order to examine three major themes: political, personal, and community security. My findings show that food, economic, and health security occur within the larger theme of community security. Political insecurity was due to harassment and the threat of arrest, imprisonment, and deportation by Thai police and Burmese Military Intelligence agents. Participants reported high levels of personal insecurity due to race-related violent crime enacted against them with near impunity by men who are not state actors. After I discuss the role of community security

in providing for Burmese political exiles various levels of food, economic, and health security, I assess the threats to community security.

Statelessness and Political Insecurity

A major limitation of state-centered, militarized security in protecting individuals from harm is that violence is sanctioned when the state or state actors are the perpetrators (Reardon, 2010). Political security, a key component of human security, is the ability to live in a society that upholds one's basic human rights. It includes freedom from state repression including both systemic and direct violence from police and other state actors (UNDP, 1994). Much of the literature on statelessness focuses on the lack of access to international human rights and the consequences of living without the civil and legal rights that individuals typically access through citizenship, including the right to travel, own land, and obtain legal work. Without citizenship, stateless individuals also have difficulties accessing health care, education, banking and credit (Southwick & Lynch, 2009), and are more vulnerable to extortion from state and non-state actors (Blitz, 2009), as well as arbitrary arrest, detention, and deportation (Weissbrodt, 2008). The lack of legal and civil rights, and the subsequent consequences of political insecurity, were major themes in the everyday experience of statelessness for Burmese political exiles living in Thailand.

Threats to political security. Both Burmese and Thai state actors created high levels of political insecurity for stateless activists living in Thailand. Thai police, Thai Intelligence, and Burmese Military Intelligence greatly impeded activists' ability to travel, work, rent housing, trust coworkers, contact family members at home, return to

Table 1. Threats to Political Security by Thai Police and Participants' Responses

Threats from Thai Police	Participants' Responses
· Informal checkpoints	· Self- or community- imposed house arrest
· Fines and bribes	· Pay police fine immediately
· Harassment and surveillance	· Assimilate into Thai culture
· Arbitrary arrest and imprisonment	· Move to a refugee camp
· Deportation	· Protect identity documents
· Racial profiling	· Increase reliance on Thai Intelligence
· Sexual harassment	· Increase dependence on community
· Rape	· Increase dependence on male partner
· Torture	

Burma, realize their political work, speak out against injustice in Thailand and in Burma, and simply go about their daily lives. A majority of participants reported that the Thai police were their single greatest concern. Fear of harassment, arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, and deportation kept activists inside their homes for months at a time. While partnerships with Thai Intelligence agents were essential for activist groups' longevity and safety in Mae Sot, they were also sources of gendered insecurity. A few participants reported concern about Burmese Military Intelligence agents in Thailand that collected information about activists' activities and whereabouts and assassinated political leaders. All three groups functioned in the name of state security at the expense of human security, and all state actors I encountered and participants discussed were men.

   Thai police.

> If someone does bad or good things to us, we have to be patient
> with whatever people do to us. (Lemro)

> There is no democracy in Thailand for Burmese people. (Mali)

Police harassment, fines, and the fear of detention and deportation kept many participants inside their homes for up to months at a time. A strong, public police presence made blatant the high level of surveillance on everyday life and mobility. Informal police checkpoints were set up daily for a few minutes or hours in chance areas of downtown Mae Sot and on the highway at the edge of Mae Sot, the highest-volume land trade route between Burma and Thailand. Mae Sot is within an extended border zone so while it was possible, though not legal, for individuals without documents to be in public in their neighborhoods, it was extremely difficult to travel elsewhere in Thailand. On the one hour route from Mae Sot to Tak, the provincial capital, there were three border control checkpoints. At these checkpoints, I witnessed immigration police board buses, peek inside vehicles, and ask travelers to show documentation. During four of the twelve times I traveled between Mae Sot and Tak, individuals on my bus were ordered by officials to exit and then left behind at checkpoints.

Almost every day I observed informal checkpoints in Mae Sot with two Thai immigration officials stopped along a side or a main road. On several occasions, I witnessed over a dozen officers halting traffic on the highway, creating long lines of cars, motorbikes, and trucks in both directions. As a white person riding a bicycle, I was waved through, at times passing a dozen or more vehicles, and I was not once asked to show identification. I also commonly witnessed motorists taking U-turns on the highway or across the grassy median, exiting on entrance ramps, and swerving onto side streets, presumably seeking to avoid the unexpected police checkpoint.

On my daily route through Mae Sot, I passed an immigration detention center, a two-story concrete building set back on a side road. Since the anterior ground level was open air with bars, I could see that typically fewer than twenty detained individuals were lying, sitting, or standing inside. There were no chairs, benches, or beds. Individuals slept overnight on the concrete floor, sometimes with blankets. Occasionally one to two hundred individuals would be sitting in neat rows with their legs crossed, knees tucked closely to their chests, facing the road. Other mornings a black box-like police truck with detained individuals was leaving from, or arriving at, the detention center. Random checkpoints and public detention centers served as everyday reminders that non-citizens' stay in Thailand was closely monitored, conditional, and temporary.

Participants reported that while interactions with the police typically resulted in paying a fine or a bribe, they were most afraid of violence, rape, and deportation (see Table 1). While migrant workers who were deported often came back to Thailand within a few days, for political exiles, deportation to Burma could mean immediate arrest, imprisonment, torture, and death. Many participants expressed feelings of powerlessness; once in police custody, anything could happen. Yunzalin Chaung and other participants who arrived in Mae Sot for education or work, not due to fears of political persecution at home, discussed their new anxieties about deportation after becoming politically active and stateless. The first time she was arrested, she was not a political leader and her activities were not known to the Burmese authorities; since then, due to her interviews with international news groups, she can no longer return home.

> [The first time I was arrested] I was scared and I wanted to cry. When they brought me from the checkpoint to immigration, I whispered, "Please! Release

me!" He said, "No, we can't. We will send you back to Myawaddy." I was worried about my bag, because there was a USB and my notebooks with information about organizations and meeting appointments… But when the Thai Intelligence came and took my bag, then I thought it was okay if they send me to Myawaddy because I can just come back. At that time I was just studying, not working like now, so it was no problem. But now they have evidence. (Yunzalin Chaung)

Participants described self- or community-imposed house arrest in order to avoid contact with the police. Because many political activists lived at their organization's offices, home and work were the same location; thus, they did not need to travel between their residences and places of work on a daily basis. Mayu discussed leaving her office only once or twice a month and Myitnge recalled staying at home for three months when she first arrived in Mae Sot. Friends or other staff members who had work permits ran to the market to buy food for those who could not leave. On days when the police presence was highest, organization members locked their office doors and remained inside, and those who lived elsewhere would stay home. Before Pyamalaw obtained a Thai work permit, she rarely left her office. "I stayed at home for one year, except when I wanted to go out, I went on the smaller streets. I was nervous, yeah, I was so scared of Thai police. Even if I saw traffic police I would turn around and come back to my house, my office. I was so scared." Mayu and Myitnge joked and laughed about gaining weight and having trouble walking because they had so little exercise.

This rigid limitation on Burmese migrants' access to public space in Mae Sot was starkly highlighted several times a year. It was known that police would not stop or harass documented and undocumented migrants on certain holidays and during these times, Mae Sot's population seemed to balloon. Suddenly women with *thanaka* on their

cheeks and men wearing brightly colored *longyi*s walked in large groups along main streets and gathered at Burmese markets and temples. Their sudden presence pronounced that they were already and always there, and that due to restrictions on their freedom of movement, they were otherwise hidden and therefore invisible. Uyu described this population-wide mechanism in terms of international human rights.

> Stateless people in Thailand are victims of human rights violations. We are scared of the police all the time, so insecure, and we cannot go anywhere else in Thailand. This means that statelessness is a daily human rights violation. (Uyu)

Participants reported that the Thai police most commonly asked for bribes or fines, and arrest was to be expected if the payment was not readily handed over. Zami noticed a change over time. "In Mae Sot you have to know the roads to skip the police. It's difficult now because there's police everywhere. Worse than before. I think because the economy is going down, Burmese people are becoming their ATM machine." In two years in Mae Sot, Tizu was stopped four to five times and paid a 100 baht (US$3) fine each time. Other participants paid 200 to 500 baht (US$7 to $17) fines and expressed relief to have avoided arrest and deportation. Participants and other political activists who disclosed their income earned roughly 1,000 to 2,000 baht (US$33 to $67) per month.

Those who did not or could not immediately pay a bribe or fine were taken to a police station or to an immigration detention center. Multiple participants told stories of migrant women who were raped by police while in custody and Burmese men who were beaten and tortured. While the presence of Burmese political opposition groups is reluctantly tolerated in Thailand, their stay is precarious and political activists face

additional incentive to remain silent on political insecurity from state actors. Several years ago, the leader of an opposition organization was arrested and detained on the street for not having documents. In police custody,

> They were beating him with a stick, with a stone… after that they took him again, they covered his face with a plastic bag and tortured him with a gun… [The officer] said, "Don't tell others that you were beaten, tell them you fell down from a tree." They will chase after us, our organization. (Zami)

Once a Burmese activist was in custody, colleagues, friends, and family members worked to get them out as quickly as possible. Zami shared that when she could not pay, a Thai police officer invited her to live with him because he believed that as a Burmese woman, she would be good at cooking, cleaning, and washing clothing.

> You know, we try to remedy the situation as quickly as possible. You can't let them stay there for a night. A woman will be in trouble... It's not safe. Need to get them out fast. As soon as we get arrested, we try every way we can, we call everyone. We need to pay money, we pay for them... there's just no other option.

Pyamalaw had been arrested, detained, and deported, twice. The first time, she was at home when police raided the organization where she lived and she spent fifteen days in prison before deportation to Burma. In Myawaddy, she pretended to be a migrant worker and simply traveled back to Mae Sot several days later, returning to her organization and continuing her work as usual. Most shocking about detainment were the public, humiliating, and invasive drug searches. Men and women's prisons were in sight of one another and all men were forced to undergo body cavity searches upon entrance. "Horrible, horrible… Yeah at the time I cried. For my people, I was so sad…. I really, really did not like that." Women who were suspected of being sex workers or trafficked persons were searched vaginally in full public view.

I was in prison two times, so thirty days I had to live, to stay in prison. It was very bad. I had to stay with many people in a small room, ten of us. And then I had to carry waste. Among the prisoners my friend and I were stronger than the others, so the warden of the prison asked us to clean the toilets. I had to carry [excrement from inside to] outside the prison. So the whole day I had to stay with that smell. They arrested me because I had no documents and after fifteen days they sent me back to Burma, Myawaddy. At the time the regime didn't know I was an activist for an opposition group, so I pretended I was a worker.

Fear of police and the consequential severe restrictions on mobility was an everyday reality for many documented and undocumented Burmese individuals living in Thailand. For some participants, obtaining legal status allowed them to travel around town without worry, and for others it made no difference. Several participants reported leaving documents at home as a precaution for both themselves and as a way of ensuring their IDs or passports would remain unharmed. Stories of police ripping up passports or confiscating other legal documents were common. "So even though I have a passport, I don't feel safe, because they always look down on Burmese people. I was afraid to use it in Mae Sot, so I didn't." (Yunzalin Chaung) Because Burmese passports are expensive and difficult to obtain, showing a passport could raise questions about the individual's background and suggested an ability to pay expensive fines or bribes for release from detention. Pretending to be a migrant worker was a way to ensure quicker release and lower fees, but was not congruent with efforts to avoid racial profiling by passing as Thai. Stateless Burmese activists could use passports only for international travel and had no greater mobility throughout Thailand than those without documents.

Even though Yunzalin Chaung had lived in Mae Sot for over a decade and possessed a migrant worker card, she felt no safer from the police:

We live as if we are illegal even when we have documents, because we are not legal. Whether here or inside [Burma], we are still stateless. It's not our country and we need to worry every day. Even when we go to the market, you know. "Oh! We saw the police, they will arrest us!" Just very worried they will arrest us and ask for money. If I need to go to the market I just need to pray I don't see the police. It's not easy.

Applying for documentation to reside in Thailand is different for political exiles than for other refugees and migrant workers because registering with Thai or Burmese authorities could be dangerous for themselves, their families, and their communities. However, some activists did obtain migrant worker cards. According to Chindwin, the ten-year worker card provided hope for increased political security for stateless women activists in Thailand.

At present, the Thai government has opened up a chance for Burmese people, and this chance is good for stateless women, for everybody. Everybody can apply for this ten-year card. It's not to stay for a long time in Thailand, it's only for security. I don't know how many years the military government will rule. If we have a democracy, we can go back. We must go back.

Even with a ten-year worker card, individuals needed a letter from the authorities to travel outside of their towns or provinces. This serious restriction on mobility meant that individuals who were politically active had difficulties traveling to conferences, lectures, and meetings, limiting their abilities to collaborate with other activists and organizations. One young woman was granted a scholarship to study at university in New Zealand for six months and was not able to get the travel documents necessary to leave Thailand; statelessness prevented her from pursuing her educational goals. Another participant was arrested three times attempting to travel to a nearby city to take her elected position as leader of a prominent organization, even though she had a Thai work

permit. Lack of travel freedom meant that individuals were dependent on agents, police, traffickers, or Thai Intelligence to bring them to where they need to go for work or school: a very risky collaboration.

Thai Intelligence. Thai Intelligence agents were state actors who provided essential community security to activist groups and were also a threat to women activists' personal security. While the relationship between Thai Intelligence, police, and activist groups in exile was not entirely clear to me, I understood that their role was crucial to the existence and continuation of the groups' work in Thailand. Unlike other Thai state actors, Intelligence agents had the power to convey important information, such as when police surveillance in town would be highest, and when a raid on an organization would take place and the group needed to move overnight. They were also called upon to arrange for the immediate release of activists from immigration detention centers and wrote letters of permission to travel in Thailand or worked as agents to arrange secure travel. At times, they drove long distances in order to get activists through many layers of security checkpoints to their destinations.

Accounts of personal interactions with Thai Intelligence agents exposed sexism, racism, and the threat of violence that stateless women activists faced in order to ensure the "protection" of their communities. Members of women's organizations relayed pragmatic ways of responding to Thai Intelligence agents' sexual harassment.

> We don't like Thai Intelligence. They come to ask for money, for alcohol. We don't tell them where we live because we are women, and sometimes when Intelligence looks at us, it's not good. Even if they have a wife, even if they have sons and daughters, they just want to, you know, have relationships. "We love

this girl, we love this one." So we worry for our member and we said, "Oh, we don't need to tell them where our office is." (Ataran)

This inappropriate use and abuse of power created an atmosphere of constant, gendered insecurity for participants, regardless of their socioeconomic, educational, marital, or social status; powerful community leaders had no additional protections. At a women's conference at a hotel in a neighboring city, a Thai Intelligence agent pressed Zami to have dinner with him, and when she said no, he pushed further and suggested they go to a club together. Despite her feelings of disgust, she acted friendly toward him.

> This is not the way I would deal with any man, but you can't say it because then he will call his friends and then you're going to be in trouble. I said, "I'm so sorry, this foreigner has just arrived and I really need to talk with her, so we're going to her room." That foreigner had no idea what I was saying. "Let's go up, let's go up."

> The next day it was four in the afternoon and he came to our room. I never wanted Thai Intelligence to come to our room. We were having a meeting — *boom!* — he came into the room with this military uniform. Everyone was afraid. I had to run to him to say, "Why are you doing this?" I think if I were a man, he would not do this. If a man told him, "Don't come to my room," he would be scared. Because I'm a woman, I have to deal with that. It makes a difference, you know. It's discrimination, you get this treatment that you don't like. Being a woman's totally different. But you just automatically deal with it, and they just treat us that way… I'm so sick of dealing with Thai Intelligence, so sick of it. But it's tough to say it in public. I just wish that we can go back to Burma soon.

Opposition groups' reliance on Thai Intelligence for basic security from police harassment, raids, and deportation meant that activists were vulnerable to exploitation from these officials. This power inequality was even more pronounced for Burmese women's organizations that worked with all male state actors and male Thai Intelligence

agents. Information sharing between Thai and Burmese Intelligence meant that activists may have been able to find out the level of Burmese Intelligence surveillance on them. Unfortunately, this relationship also meant the Burmese Military Intelligence may have had access to their affiliations and addresses in Thailand.

Burmese Military Intelligence. In addition to Thai police and Intelligence, exiled activists faced threats from their home country's state actors. Military Intelligence agents collected information in Mae Sot about opposition group members' activities; they posed as construction workers, tour guides, teachers, students, and activists. The Burmese government's blacklist named individuals who were considered the highest threats to state security, and included Burmese and foreign nationals who were writers, health workers, students, teachers, monks, and journalists. In August 2012, roughly 2,000 names were removed from the blacklist, leaving over 4,000 individuals on the list (Thu, 2012). High profile Karen National Union leader Pado Manh Sha was assassinated at his home in Mae Sot in 2008 (Democratic Voice of Burma, 2008); other opposition leaders were aware that they were not safe from their own government, even in exile.

Ataran, a participant from a women's organization, was vocal about her fears of assassination. One of her organization's objectives was to make known in Burma and internationally the human rights abuses perpetrated by the government that were taking place in her region, and in particular the situation for women. Organization leaders took turns stepping into the international spotlight and being interviewed on exiled Burmese and foreign media sources followed by a year or two in hiding. However, when an activist took a break from public interviews, pressure increased on her colleagues to

become more visible. When activists' faces, voices, and opposition activities were

public, the threat of violence to themselves and their communities in Thailand, as well as

their families in Burma, increased. Ataran had recently found out from a Thai

community leader that her name was on the blacklist.

> We need to take very good care, even at home. After dark I won't go outside,
> only sometimes. We have to be smart all the time. Even the men who come to
> take bottles and the rubbish… Some say they are Intelligence… Sometimes they
> ask, "Ah do you have bottles to sell or anything? They just look at our faces.
> Sometimes I don't talk with them … I just speak Thai and say, "*Mai me, mai me
> lai kaaa.*" They just go. Some come for one month and then they change. Some
> men they are gone, and then they come again. They say, "Please be careful of
> that man. He is Intelligence." Some just come to sell eggs… They have like 60
> men who come here… They will check the blacklist's 200 people [in Mae Sot],
> they know our situation and they just come to kill us.

Many activists fled Burma for exile in order to have a voice on the international

stage. While inside, they could not speak out locally or globally to make known the

direct and indirect violence used by the government to suppress much of the population.

Kaladan was sentenced under Burmese law to life imprisonment for interviewing with a

BBC reporter in the late 1990s. It was her second time in prison as a political prisoner

and after she was released early, she fled to Thailand to avoid a third imprisonment and

to continue speaking out. While exile in Thailand afforded stateless activists

substantially greater political freedom than does life in Burma, Military Intelligence

agents were still a great security concern.

Responses to political insecurity. Participants addressed multiple ways of

moderating the effects of political insecurity due to Thai police (See Table 1),

immigration officials, and Intelligence. Stateless women activists who had lived in

Thailand for more than three years and held work permits or other documents generally had fewer barriers to everyday mobility around Mae Sot. Pyamalaw recounted that her life became "totally different" when she obtained a work permit and temporary passport to travel around Thailand. With these ID cards, she could access medical care and had legal rights; she was no longer worried about imprisonment in Thailand. She was one of three participants who chose to be interviewed in a public space.

Those who learned to speak Thai and who had adapted to pass as Thai citizens fared even better. Thandi reported no problems with the police due to her Thai language skills. Mali and her husband attributed their luck of not having been stopped by the police in nearly a year in Mae Sot to the fact that they looked Thai. When I asked them what it meant to look Thai, they laughed and said they had no idea. Even though they had not been stopped, she was too scared to go outside alone and her husband accompanied her to and from work every day. Because Zami had lived in Thailand for over a decade and had traveled frequently in the past few years, she learned to modify her presentation when in public.

> I dress better when I travel because Thai people dress well... I put on sunglasses so they don't recognize me at every gate, at every checkpoint. Thai people smile a lot, and Burmese people we come from this repressive regime and so much suffering... If they look at our Burmese faces, they will catch us... I try this technique at immigration in the airport... [If they know we are from] Myanmar they will check allllll the luggage... So when I came back I was smiling, "*Sa wa dee kaaa*!" They smile! I practiced this before the airplane landed... the official said, "Ahhhh you smile like Thai people!" From then on they recognize me there so they know I'm not Thai, but I smile, and I speak softly.

While passing as Thai provided a way to avoid racial profiling and police harassment, pretending to be a migrant worker was a common way to ensure lower fines

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or bribes if stopped by the police. Unfortunately, these two modes of dress and behavior were at odds with each other and young activist women who pretended to be migrant workers, but were dressed in trendy, urban fashion with jewelry, were accused of lying. Police confiscated one young woman's cell phone, cash, and groceries before arresting her and detaining her at an immigration center. They told her she was dressed too nicely to be a migrant worker so held her for several hours before releasing her on high bail.

One of the highest costs of political insecurity for stateless activist women was a lack of autonomy and an unwanted level of dependence on others. Myitnge expressed ongoing frustration that she had to rely on those who had documents to rent an apartment, to set up and pay for the utilities, and to go to the market to buy food for her. When the person whose name was on the lease moved, she had to find another place to live. If the person whose name was on the internet service provider account said that she and her housemates owed an additional 2,000 baht (US$67) for no reason, she had to pay it. She could not call the company to verify the charges. As a stateless person in hiding, she could not open a bank account and needed to store savings elsewhere, securely or otherwise. Dependence on others for everyday needs and security increased women's vulnerability and not surprisingly, contributed to some women's fear.

> So as a stateless person I don't have legal documents. If I want to rent a house, I have to depend on others. And I am scared, no? And if I want to travel somewhere, I need to depend on others and I am scared… (Lemro)

Another participant, Mali, talked about her complete reliance on her husband since they had arrived in Thailand. His opposition to the government was well known and they had fled to avoid arrest. His wage work in Mae Sot and stipend from an

international human rights organization paid for their apartment and food. He also accompanied her to work every day and she only went outside with him. "Because my husband is here, I can survive. If my husband was not here, I couldn't stand alone because it is not secure for me." Her reliance was made starkly clear when he was detained by police and threatened with imprisonment and deportation. He had needed to travel for political work and paid an agent to take him safely, through police checkpoints, to another city. After he boarded a truck and fell asleep, he awoke to realize that he was surrounded by young Burmese women who were being trafficked. He and the women were arrested at one of the checkpoints. Police told him he would be imprisoned for one month in Thailand and then sent back to Burma, where he believed he would face a 65-year prison sentence. He called his wife to tell her. She said to me, "I was alone here and very scared when he called on the phone to say he was caught by the police. Oh, I was very scared." Luckily, he was able to use his high status for release and returned home the same night. If he had been deported, she would have been left in Thailand with significant barriers to her physical safety and economic security. Mali's story highlights the precarious nature of dependence that stateless women face.

Fear of harassment and violence from Thai and Burmese state actors, due to lack of access to basic legal protections, were the most commonly reported barriers to well-being while living in exile. Because all state actors that participants encountered were men, these women faced sexism and the threat of sexual violence in addition to the racial and ethnic discrimination that their male colleagues experienced. Heavy police surveillance meant that many participants did not leave their houses for long periods of

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time and were thus dependent on others for food security and for economic security. While women developed successful strategies for coping with high levels of political insecurity, the threat remained present and ubiquitous.

The experiences of stateless Burmese women exiles living in Thailand clearly demonstrate that state security institutions are not designed to promote the security of marginalized individuals. Instead, stateless individuals were specifically targeted as threats to both Thai and Burmese state security, and were excluded from the protections that citizens access through legal and social legitimacy. Their situation also highlights the grave dangers of negative peace: Mae Sot was not an active conflict zone, yet its heavily militarized institutions wherein officials act with impunity created a situation of extreme repression for stateless individuals. In this case, militarized state-centered security maintained the violence of the state, rather than maintaining peace, as it purports to do. Police and other state actors' violence directed at stateless individuals exposed these contradictions. The human security paradigm makes apparent that individual and community well-being cannot be achieved in conditions of political insecurity.

Statelessness and Personal Insecurity

"Here, it is very easy to be dead." (Tizu)

Thai citizens' ability to enact violence on stateless individuals with near impunity mutually reinforced the barriers to everyday well-being caused by state actors. Lack of legal protection meant that stateless exiles' avoidance of travel on main roads in daylight due to fear of police harassment created situations wherein small groups of Thai men could attack and kill them on back roads after dark without consequences. According to

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Table 2.   Threats to Personal Security and Participants' Responses

Threats from Non-State Actors	Participants' Responses
· Racialized violence	· Self- or community- imposed curfew
· Gender-based violence	· Re-telling stories about sexual violence
· Connections between police, employers, and "gangsters"	· Confusion about whether perpetrators were police or not
· Verbal harassment in public spaces	· Silencing
· Physical violence in public spaces	· Inability to respond or protect oneself
· Murder and rape with impunity	· Stop learning Thai
	· Increase dependence on community
	· Increase dependence on male partner

the UNDP (1994), "Perhaps no other aspect of human security is so vital for people as their security from physical violence. …For many people, the greatest source of anxiety is crime, particularly violent crime" (p. 30). Personal insecurity includes threats from groups of people, individuals, and gangs, and can be in the form of crime, street violence, rape, and domestic violence. One study found that statelessness decreased household income more in situations where individuals were actively discriminated against by other members of society (Blitz, Lynch, Lakshman, and Chrimes 2011). The impact of interpersonal violence on stateless individuals was otherwise scarcely acknowledged in the literature. Yet, it played a prominent role in stateless Burmese political exiles' experiences of insecurity in their everyday lives.

Threats to personal security. Almost all participants told stories of violence enacted by Thai individuals on Burmese migrants living in Mae Sot (See Table 2). These stories were thorough and extensive, and accounted for the largest time spent on any topic. The telling and retelling of racial violence, rape, and murder, puzzled me at first. Very few participants shared their own experiences of violent crime, and most often, the

people who were harmed were not known to them. Typically the victims were migrant workers, who comprise by far the largest population of Burmese individuals living in the area. While they reported that they heard these accounts of violence through word of mouth, through friends or at their workplace, it is possible that some of the narratives were about themselves but were too painful to tell as such.

Participants expressed uncertainty about whether the perpetrators were Thai men posing as police or indeed police officers themselves. They also articulated interconnections between Thai police, employers, and groups of men they called "gangsters." Regardless, most participants felt that they simply had to deal with whatever happened to them as they had no legal recourse or protection. Stories about Burmese women who were attacked almost always included sexual violence perpetrated by a group of men. Mali described a recent situation wherein three Burmese women were walking in her neighborhood when they were attacked and raped by two Thai men. Similar stories were told by other participants.

> Near my apartment there is a field. One month ago a girl was raped by many Thai men, and they killed her and threw her body near the field. There is no law for us, stateless, living in another country. Our situation is not okay. (Lemro)

> Near […] minimart, a twenty-year-old girl was raped and killed, and they threw her body near the playground. I don't know any more information. Was it Thai police or Thai citizens? For us, there is no law, so they dare to rape, they dare to kill. (Nmai Hka)

> One young boy was working at […] factory and he wanted to return home, so he returned to Burma for ten days. When he came back to Thailand to work at the factory, he was dismissed, so he went to the border and sat on a bench. When he was sitting there, two Thai men came to speak to him, they said they were police

and they tried to handcuff him. But they were in plain clothes. He tried to escape, he ran. At that time he was shot dead. … I went to his funeral. Our organization motivated his parents to file a case at the police station. But it's been over a year and they haven't found out who committed the crime. (Tizu)

Though participants generally did not identify with Burmese migrant workers, in the case of racialized violence, the connection was profound. The time spent recounting violations of personal security perpetrated on migrant workers was perhaps a clear indication of their fear of opportunistic, racialized violence and the stark realization that they had no meaningful rights or protections. These stories may have served as reminders that their physical boundaries and well-being were in a constant state of insecurity. While activists' strong community networks in Mae Sot provided many types of security not afforded to migrant workers, activists had no additional protections against everyday acts of violence.

Participants reported that they would stay at home in the evenings in order to avoid violence by Thai men and gangs. Myitnge refused to bicycle in her neighborhood later than 8pm after hearing stories about violence against Burmese women. Mali's curfew was earlier: "After 6pm it's not safe for women." For a population that already had limited freedom of movement during daylight hours due to high police surveillance, fear of traveling at night presented a second major constraint to women political exiles' everyday well-being. Due to gendered cultural norms, it was more acceptable for Burmese men to travel on their own or in groups at night. Participants shared stories of violence directed at their stateless male colleagues.

I heard many times that Burmese exiled activists and young monks were beaten by Thai people. If they saw a Burmese man with a motorbike, or on a bicycle,

sometimes there is no reason or they don't like them and they beat them. One activist, he is only 22 years old, recently he was robbed in the daylight, his telephone and also his wallet were stolen. They had handcuffs so we don't know who they were. Were they civilians or were they police? They ask people to show them ID and if they can't, they beat them with the handcuffs and they rob them. I heard this many times. One male activist I know, one or two months ago, he was threatened with a gun but luckily he escaped. He used to live far from the office and he sometimes left work late, but now he decided to live close to the office. (Nmai Hka)

Many stateless political exiles have three options: stay at home, isolated, and depend on others for food and housing, go out during the day and risk police harassment, arrest and deportation, or travel at night and face the threat of opportunistic racialized violence perpetrated by strangers. Traveling on main roads increased individuals' risk of arrest and traveling on back roads increased their vulnerability to extreme physical harm. Lack of access to health care compounded the impacts of this violence. Preventable diseases and minor injuries became life-threatening when individuals were afraid to leave their houses due to police harassment, when the public hospital was only accessible for citizens with ID cards, when health professionals refused to treat people from a particular ethnic group, and when people could not read a pharmacist's dosage instructions on the outside of a pill container. Near impunity for Thai citizens who target Burmese migrants and barriers to adequate health care intersect to create a situation of tremendous insecurity for stateless political exiles living in Thailand.

Three staff members of a Burmese opposition group were assaulted in two separate racial attacks within the same week. In both cases, the young men bicycled home after dark from community soccer games, traveling on back roads to avoid police checkpoints and arrest for being without documents. On these isolated, unlit roads, small

groups of Thai men attacked them with bamboo sticks and metal pipes. They all survived and escaped, but were too afraid to leave home to seek medical help. Following the first attack, one of the injured young men began to strike out, bite people, and could no longer recognize his friends. After three days in hiding, they brought him to the General Hospital, despite the high cost of treatment, the risk of arrest, and an often biased level of care. His friends kept their school and work commitments during the days and cared for him through the nights, often taking turns sleeping under his hospital bed, because there was no staff to attend to him. This promising young person died within a month. Another friend had permanent hearing loss and was admitted to a safe haven. Lack of access to secure, immediate, and appropriate health care multiplied the devastating impacts of interpersonal violence for these young Burmese activists.

Several days after these attacks, two other staff members from the same organization, also men in their early twenties, were stopped and arrested by police and threatened with one-year imprisonment or a 100,000 baht (US$3,333) fine. With the help of others from their organization, they were released with a 6,000 baht (US$200) bribe. According to some participants, a typical monthly stipend for opposition group members is 1,000 to 2,000 baht (US$33 to $67). Police and non-police harassment and brutality mutually reinforced one another as reminders to the Burmese political exile community that their lives were under a constant threat of violence.

While the threat of violence against Burmese individuals severely restricted their freedom of movement after dark, Western foreigners living in Mae Sot commonly rode bicycles and drove motorbikes at any time of day or night. No physical violence was

reported during the ten months that I lived there. Several Westerners commented that they felt safer traveling at night in Mae Sot than they did at home. Similarly, one participant reported that she would bicycle after dark only if she was riding with a group of Westerners. Those who want to enact violence with impunity identify individuals who "look" Burmese by race, ethnicity, demeanor, and dress. White, Asian, and Black Westerners were therefore protected from physical violence. However, one Westerner who had regularly been mistaken as Burmese shared her concerns around vulnerability to violence while bicycling at night and traveled only with others. This distinction highlights the intersection of race and citizenship status in the nature of Burmese personal insecurity.

In addition to participants' stories of violence enacted on others in their community, many reported that they had experienced verbal harassment from Thai individuals. Tizu said that because she was "old and married," rather than young and single, she had only witnessed harassment. "I've seen Thai people say insulting words to young Burmese women, because in their eyes we are not at the same level as them." Another activist, Zawgyi, who was in her early twenties, decided to stop learning Thai because she did not want to understand what men and women were shouting at her; however, this decision weakened her ability to successfully navigate interactions with police, a coping strategy to avoid police harassment mentioned in the previous section. At a market, Lemro had been yelled at and hit with a small motorized vehicle. She went home without reacting to the violence or seeking medical attention.

Responses to personal insecurity. An inability to act or respond was a major theme for participants when discussing their fear of direct and indirect violence from Thai citizens (See Table 2). Lemro highlighted that although she had obtained legal documents through international connections and was not afraid of the police, she was scared of Thai individuals.

> I live in an apartment and my neighbors are a Thai husband and wife. Sometimes they have a fight or an argument in front of my apartment for the whole night. But I dare not say anything because, you know, I am not a Thai citizen. And I am from Burma and I am stateless. So I don't dare say anything. If I lived in Burma I could complain. And you know, I could talk to anyone.

Participants with children also highlighted this inability to respond or react to protect themselves and their families. Tizu did not allow her children to go outside due to fear that they would be trafficked or targeted by Thai violence. If they wandered into a Thai family's yard, "There could be a lot of trouble. Or if they throw rubbish in front of others' houses, that would be a problem. I am very careful." Her children faced discrimination at school as well. While talking about her children, her eyes teared up and she paused several times. "I don't feel they are safe because they are bullied by Thai kids… Sometimes they beat or hit them, or they grab Burmese children's snacks and eat them." Likewise, Thandi's family fled Burma when she was very young and she remembered wanting to learn Thai quickly so the Thai students in her class would stop excluding her. This speaks to the pressure on Burmese adults and children alike to assimilate in order to minimize harassment and violence.

The consequences of political and personal insecurity, in the case of Burmese political exiles, were extreme limitations on access to public space and an inability to

respond to dangerous living situations. While some of these activists' voices were heard internationally at the UN, in foreign parliaments, and in their persuasive and powerful writing, they were silenced on the effects of statelessness on their everyday lives. Citizen violence was a pervasive theme in activists' experiences of living in Thailand and yet, the literature on statelessness gives little acknowledgement of this type of insecurity.

This silencing and erasure from public space are strong barriers to human security for Burmese political exiles living in Thailand. Two of Reardon's (2010) four fundamental sources of human well-being are clearly not met: respect for individual and group dignity and identity and protection from avoidable harm. The two remaining needs, a life-sustaining environment and fulfillment of needs for survival and health, are addressed by activists' strong community networks.

Statelessness and Community Security

Community security is the protection that an individual derives from her or his membership in a group, including families, communities, and racial or ethnic groups. These groups typically provide identity, values, and practical support for survival and well-being (UNDP, 1994). Deep-rooted community networks between activist organizations and activists living in exile provided crucial support to stateless Burmese activists and accorded varying levels of food, economic, and health security. Without this strong community security, stateless exiles would not be able to continue their political work in Thailand. Those who could not find work or housing through an organization were forced to move to a camp or becoming migrant workers in order to survive. With the 2012 political landscape changes in Burma, international donor

Table 3.   Benefits of Community Security and Threats to Community Security

Benefits of Community Security	Threats to Community Security
· Ability to continue political work	· Relocation of international donor funding
· Assistance finding employment	· Patriarchy within the community
· Access to immediate survival needs	· Patriarchy within the family
· Food security	· Temporary status in Thailand
· Economic security	· Thai Intelligence presence
· Health security	· Thai police raids
· Access to education and skills training	· Burmese Military Intelligence presence

organizations have reduced their funding to activist, refugee, education, and health

organizations on the Thai-Burma border and instead are financing projects within Burma.

In this section, I discuss the ways in which participants' community connections provide

economic, food, and health security. Next, I consider threats to Burmese exiles'

community security, including threats from within the community such as gendered

insecurity. Stateless women exiles' livelihoods and everyday security are dependent on

the strong community network of activist organizations; a reduction in funding to these

organizations is a serious concern for a population already facing significant barriers to

human security.

   Community security as a response to political and personal insecurity.

Collaboration between activist groups and activists themselves created conditions of

stability and growth despite ubiquitous everyday threats to personal and political security

in Thailand. Almost all participants reported staying with friends of friends when they

first fled Burma and relied on these activist networks to support them for food and

housing until they could find work at an organization. Participants who were well-

established in the community, either as group leaders or because they had been in exile in Thailand for years, fared better than those who had arrived within the last two years. Ataran and Yunzalin Chaung reflected on the growth of the activist network since their arrival ten years prior; due to the increased number of programs and reliable funding sources, their organizations had grown significantly in size and capacity. Food and economic insecurity were no longer a primary concern.

Support from fellow activists was crucial to the survival of those who had recently arrived in Mae Sot (See Table 3). Lemro, a former political prisoner, stayed at a Burmese education center her first three nights before moving in with a colleague for a month, and Tizu stayed with her husband and two children at an organization for a month before moving to a students' boarding house for five months. After she secured a position with an opposition organization, they were able to move into their own apartment. Uyu fled Burma by herself in 2010 and arrived without contacts; she made her way to a Burmese health clinic and explained her situation. She was allowed to sleep there only one night and the following day several activists visited her to inquire about her connections and political affiliations. They brought her to a good friend's house, also a former political prisoner, who invited her to stay for several months before connecting her with employment through a human rights organization. Through this organization, she obtained lodging and a stipend which effectively secured her economic and food security, thereby increasing her autonomy.

Participants who were well established in the exile community in Thailand discussed the importance of supporting other stateless women and girls, thereby

increasing their security. Myitnge sent portions of her stipend money to a younger woman living on her own in a refugee camp in order to augment the inadequate food rations and Chindwin welcomed a girl and a young woman into her home so that they would have more protection and a better education than in a camp.

> I wanted to upgrade her education because she is very bright. The girl is my friend's friend's [daughter] and he told me about her situation, I was interested, so I brought her from the camp and I sent her to […] school… She is now twelve years. She doesn't have an ID card in Burma or in Thailand, she has no documents. She's attending the […] school and she only has a student card, but the headmaster keeps it. I worry about when she goes outside to the market or a shopping mall or a department store-- if she has a uniform, the police don't bother her, but if she doesn't have a uniform, the police can arrest her. Because she is a stateless girl, the police can rape or prostitute her, and I worry about that.

> The other girl, her parents are separated and she was staying in another house. It was very difficult and she was very unhappy. She was working all the time, and she told me she wanted to be educated. I like her personality and I decided to have her stay with me so she has more potential, more capacity.

> Another point is that if they don't live with me, where will they stay in Mae Sot? It is very difficult to stay here. For me, it's okay. I'm not rich but I can help support them emotionally. We eat together and live together. They are two women, not safe on their own.

Once participants found work within the community network in exile, they had access to varying levels of food, economic, and health security. Those without documents who felt unsafe leaving their organizations could depend on colleagues to bring food for them. However, if only one or two group members of thirty held documents, there was a heavy dependence on those few individuals. For some participants, economic security meant that they could rent an apartment and no longer

had to live with acquaintances, friends, or at an organization, a welcome mark of autonomy. For others, employment meant that they no longer had to live in a camp.

Work with organizations in Thailand offered educational and job training opportunities for stateless women as well. At her organization and through collaboration with others, Ataran learned about human rights, women's rights, political issues and how to organize, facilitate, and write and publish articles. Like many participants, she became fluent in English through extensive coursework led by foreign volunteer teachers. With these skills, women activists had powerful, leading voices in the global dialogue on human rights abuses in Burma and in maintaining a strong parallel government that demands political and social change. In addition, skills training and economic stability through her job helped Lemro heal from over a decade as a political prisoner.

> If I was looking by myself, it would be impossible to get a job, but because of the help of [an organization] I got a job that cures my mental, physical and financial problems… The job I got is really relevant for me. I'm counseling people who were systematically tortured, who have trauma. The training was really helpful because it can relieve my feelings as well as other people's feelings.

Similarly, participants received satisfactory health care through local health clinics and service agencies for Burmese migrants and refugees. Discrimination at Thai hospitals and clinics was widely reported: a nurse insisted Zawgyi must have HIV/AIDS because she was thin and Burmese, and Ataran witnessed Thai nurses talking on their cell phones while Burmese patients in critical condition waited for attention. A common strategy was to bring Western, typically white, coworkers and friends to the hospital to minimize levels of discrimination. In Burmese clinics in and outside the camps, health

care was very basic and understaffing was common. However, all participants reported that their health care needs had been met through local Burmese providers, particularly one associated with a women's organization. Lemro estimated that a biopsy of her breast tissue would have cost 20,000 baht (US$667) at a Thai hospital and instead a doctor at this clinic charged her only 800 baht (US$27). Health security, like food and economic security, was provided through Burmese political exiles' community networks.

Threats to community security. International donor organizations' recent reallocation of funding to groups working inside Burma at the expense of those on the Thai-Burma border is the single greatest threat to community security, and therefore economic, food, and health security for stateless Burmese political exiles. Financing for members' stipends, food, housing, office rental and supplies allows stateless women activists to survive and continue their political work in exile. Myitnge described the autonomy that employment gave her and other women.

> We are more comfortable, more confident, everything. We feel secure because we can stand on our own. We are working and we support ourselves with our own money and that's good. In conclusion, I want to say thanks, thank you so much to the international community, because our work depends on international community donors.

Without employment at an organization, most participants would be forced to move to a refugee camp in order to survive.

Gender, racial, ethnic, and status hierarchies served as threats to community security from within and between activists' organizations. A participant who was a political leader said, "I'm not an activist! They are down here," and placed her hand, palm down, an arms-length below her. On the other hand, a young participant responded

to my question about her ethnicity with a unique and unifying answer. She said, "I am Burmese, from Burma." "You're Burman?" I asked, confused. "No! Not Burman, Burmese." She explained that the military regime wanted to maintain divisions between ethnic groups and that she believed they were all Burmese. She was the only person I spoke with who addressed questions of ethnicity in this way. Several women from women's groups addressed the impacts of gender inequality on their personal lives and political work, which I discuss below. Overall, very few participants talked about inequities within their exile community and instead focused on personal and political insecurity from outside sources.

As discussed in the previous section, harassment and surveillance from Thai state actors created a situation of serious political insecurity for stateless Burmese activists. Thai Intelligence agents walked into organization offices, without warning, multiple times a day during important meetings, or alerted groups that they needed to move overnight to avoid police raids. In the course of ten months, I heard about six raids at political organizations wherein individuals were arrested and detained and computers were confiscated. The ubiquitous threat of police raids led to silencing with the result that groups attempted to go unnoticed even by their neighbors. Political meetings were postponed or canceled at the last minute if police checkpoints were posted nearby, and even education centers were threatened with eviction if young students were heard by neighbors. The unpredictable presence of Thai Intelligence agents in activists' offices and homes as well as the inevitability of police raids meant that stateless activists rarely felt secure in their private spaces. Agreements between the Thai government and the

Burmese government seeking to create an economic protection zone in Mae Sot included a five-year plan to expel all activist organizations. This persistent disruption to everyday normalcy and stability was another major threat to community security.

Due to gender norms and sexism in their relationships, in the exile community, and in the culture at large, most participants reported experiencing statelessness differently than men. Gendered insecurity, or insecurity due to gender inequality, intersects with all six indicators of human security: personal, political, food, health, economic, and community security. Myitmaka explained that because women are responsible for their family and community well-being, the experience of statelessness is different for women. "Everything is more difficult," she said. Likewise, Yunzalin Chaung said that women suffered more because they are responsible for their children's health and safety and, "If their children are not feeling well, or if the children have problems, it's always the women who have to take care of them." Other participants talked about the differences in terms of threats to their physical safety and a resulting reliance on having a husband. Multiple participants agreed that statelessness was more difficult for single women.

Several single women talked about social norms within their community to marry. "We go to a wedding and they tease us, 'Yeah you are a spinster! When will you marry?' Something like that. This is a kind of pressure."(Pyamalaw) In many patriarchal cultures, women face pressure to get married and to stay married to male partners. Women who are single or divorced are viewed as deviant and are often perceived as more vulnerable to male violence. Myitnge talked about a friend, a stateless woman living in

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exile, who had chosen to marry a man to strengthen her personal and economic security in Thailand, only to find out that he was physically and emotionally abusive. Due to her non-citizen status, difficulty finding work, and desire to avoid the stigma of divorce, she stayed in the relationship. For some participants, divorce was worse than being in abusive relationships due to the unacceptability of being single and of remarrying. Participants who were married did not discuss how being stateless affected their relationships with their husbands.

Nearly half of the participants discussed their active rejection of the cultural norm to be married or to be with only one man in their lifetimes; they chose to remain, and argued that they were better off, without husbands.

> It is difficult for a woman from Burma who is coming from a very suppressed tradition. We have this patriarchal system where you have to please all these men, treat your father as God, treat your husband as King. (Zami)

Some subverted cultural norms by divorcing their husbands and choosing to date other men afterward. However, serious economic, personal, and political insecurity due to statelessness increased women's reliance on male partners and therefore amplified their vulnerability to interpersonal violence within the home.

Zami divorced her husband despite serious objections from her community elders after he continually pressured her to stop her political work and limited her ability to attend meetings.

> [He used to ask me] "Why are you struggling? Can't you survive with my money?" I'm not working for my survival here, I only get a very small salary but I'm working because I believe in it. Being a single mom, I feel so much happier... You listen to me and you think I'm strong, but I was still married to a

man who thought I needed to be home on time, needed to take care of the children, cook, wash the clothes…

Myitmaka spoke of constantly fighting for equality with her ex-husband and her male colleagues alike. As activists, "Women need twice the strength, twice the voice, and twice the patience." At a board meeting, her male colleagues told her she was twice as loud as they were. "I have to be, or they won't pay attention." In her experience, women's rights have always been treated as second to fighting the military regime. When she fought for a resistance group before fleeing to Thailand, male soldiers refused to take "women's work" such as cooking, and said to her, "You want equality? Then pee the same as we do." Another participant faced death threats from members of her own community in exile when she founded a women's organization. Male leaders intercepted the funding for start-up costs they had been guaranteed by another organization.

> The reason they didn't want [my women's organization] founded is that they were afraid. They want us to be under them. "Stay there!" "Go there!" "Go!" You don't have a position, you don't have an office, and you are pleasing everyone. I remember I had to please people…

Mayu, a young activist who had moved to Mae Sot less than a year prior, had been solely responsible for the twenty-four hour care of her colleague with terminal cancer for three months before he passed away. As the only woman who lived at the organization, her duties were not negotiable. "I'm the only woman so I needed to cook. No one else can cook or take care of him. My male coworkers helped in other ways but cooking, you know, was on me." A week after he died, her colleagues brought her to a clinic due to exhaustion from taking care of him. Her work as an activist was secondary to her gendered role as a woman in the organization.

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Gendered insecurity within stateless women's home and work lives threatened the benefits they gain from their primary source of security: community security. Stateless women exiles are excluded from full participation in political processes in Burma and in Thailand, in their activist communities, and in their personal lives, thus exposing the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and citizenship status, and how violence and silencing are used to maintain multi-layered systems of power and oppression.

Summary of the Findings

The major themes of this research emerged from interviews with eighteen stateless Burmese women political exiles, informal discussions with forty community members, and ten months of participant observation in public spaces, at activist organization offices, and at local events in and around Mae Sot, Thailand. Participants who fled Burma due to political persecution did so because of constant surveillance, harassment to their friends and family by Military Intelligence agents, barriers to obtaining work and education, and a fear of arrest and imprisonment. Other participants left Burma for migrant work, education, or because their families were involved in politics and they later became involved in activist work in Thailand. Participants had no access to citizenship rights in any country; they were *de facto* stateless.

Once in Thailand, many participants experienced shock and disbelief at the high levels of police surveillance and severe restrictions on mobility. Many reported staying inside for weeks or months at a time and were dependent on others for food, housing, money, and obtaining employment. Once participants were established within the activist network and had been hired by an organization, many refused considering

resettlement to a third country or seeking Thai citizenship. Due to increased political

freedoms in Thailand, such as the ability to speak out about the human rights violations

happening in Burma, as well as the strong educational and skills-based focus of many

local training programs, many participants reported that they would stay in Thailand to

improve their skills and to continue their activism until it was safe to return home. While

these findings cannot be generalized to all stateless peoples nor to all Burmese women

political exiles, the decision and experience of going into, and staying in, exile sets the

framework for understanding participants' situations and standpoints. It also provides the

foundation for this chapter, and is essential in understanding that *any* state is not

necessarily better than no state.

I examined the effects of statelessness on Burmese women exiles' everyday lives

by applying a conflict resolution theory of human security as a way of framing the major

issues that arose. Political, personal, and community security were the primary indicators

of human security and insecurity in their lives; in these findings, food, economic, and

health security were obtained through community security and are discussed in that

section. A majority of participants reported that their fear of harassment, fines,

detainment, and deportation by the Thai police and immigration officials was their single

greatest concern (See Table 1). Once in detention, police could do anything and

community members worked to get their friends and family released as quickly as

possible to avoid sexual harassment, violence, and rape. Deportation to Burma could

mean arrest, imprisonment, or worse. Burmese Military Intelligence operated in Mae Sot

to collect information about activists in exile; their presence compounded some

participants' fears for their safety and well-being. This level of political insecurity kept some participants under self- or community-imposed house arrest and dependent on others for necessities like food and housing. Participants responded to such high levels of political insecurity by obtaining work permits and passing as Thai or migrant workers, though neither option was guaranteed to improve security.

Severe political insecurity intersected with racialized, targeted violent crime by local men to create a situation of incredible vulnerability for Burmese activists. Because there are no legal protections for stateless individuals in Thailand, many participants felt they simply had to deal with whatever happened to them. Stories of violence against male colleagues and Burmese migrant worker women accounted for the most time spent on any single topic during interviews. Inadequate access to health care compounded the long-term impacts of personal insecurity. Many participants chose to stay inside after dark in order to remain safe, and many felt frustrated with their inability to speak out about their experiences. Even though participants spoke out globally on human rights violations at home in Burma, many felt silenced on the everyday insecurities that they faced as stateless people (See Table 2). A stranger on the street could yell at them, or hurt them, and they felt powerless to respond.

Strong community security had a moderating effect on the high levels of political and personal insecurity, and offered participants access to food, housing, and health security (See Table 3). Many participants reported living with fellow activists when they first arrived in Thailand and depended on them for food and other necessities, as well as assistance finding employment. Those who had been in Thailand more than a few years

were better established in the activist network and tended to fare better with everyday insecurities. Organizations frequently provided their own and other groups' members with educational and skills-based workshops and opportunities, strengthening the capacity and the partnerships in the opposition movement. The greatest threats to participants' community security were hierarchies within the organizations and the potential reallocation of international donor funding to organizations operating inside Burma, given recent political changes.

The three major themes of political insecurity, personal insecurity, and community security illustrate the dismal intersections of social and political exclusion. The stories and voices of Burmese women exiles illuminate the compound social and political barriers to the realization of human security in the lives of stateless people. Their experiences shed light on the fault lines in our systems of international protection, the fissures in our global system of state sovereignty, and the ways in which gendered, racial, and ethnically motivated violence are used to maintain power and inequality.

Chapter 8: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Supporting research by Manly and Van Waas (2010), the experiences of Burmese women political exiles living in Thailand demonstrate a clear link between the lack of a nationality and human insecurity, therefore giving insights into the significance of statelessness for conflict resolution scholars and practitioners alike. Statelessness illustrates that state-centered militarized security is not working to protect and empower marginalized populations, and instead that individuals excluded from state power are often those who most need protection. Statelessness also exposes weaknesses in the international human rights regime and calls into question the absolute power of sovereign states over their peoples and territories. The constant threat of police harassment and violence supports Korhonen's (n.d.) argument that states can pose more substantial threats to well-being than armed conflicts. As long as we define security in terms of negative peace, or the absence of armed conflict, violence perpetrated by the state will be socially sanctioned. As other authors have pointed out, statelessness is an exercise in power that exposes dispossession as a means of maintaining the state (Arendt, 1951; Butler & Spivak, 2007).

Participants in this study faced many of the same civil and legal limitations mentioned in the literature, including difficulty traveling, obtaining employment, owning or renting property, and attaining educational goals. However, participants rarely mentioned these barriers and instead focused on their situations of serious political and personal insecurity. Personal insecurity due to the constant fear of physical and sexual

violence by non-state actors who operate with virtual impunity was scarcely discussed in the literature. Likewise, dissidents who flee their homelands due to political persecution are underrepresented in the literature on statelessness. This study fills a gap in the literature on statelessness and political exiles from an ethnographic perspective.

The application of the human security paradigm to Burmese women political activists' everyday experiences shows the potential for addressing current gaps in protection that allow statelessness to occur. By identifying intersecting layers of security (community, personal, political, food, economic, and health) and by recognizing the interconnectedness of all threats, human security offers a framework to promote sustainable peace. We must focus on the needs of individuals and communities and support their agency and capacity. We must understand security as the experience and expectation of well-being, as well as the protection and empowerment of all people. Most importantly, human security depends on replacing discrimination and oppression with equality.

Implications and Recommendations

The principal purpose of this research has been to find out how statelessness affects the everyday lives of Burmese women political exiles living in Thailand. Through this feminist ethnography, it becomes clear that exclusion from citizenship presents dangerous barriers to the fulfillment of human security. My aim in adding to the knowledge base on statelessness is to increase the topic's visibility and audibility in academic and non-academic discussions and policy implementations on human rights, international law, peacebuilding processes, and individual member states' responsibilities

Table 4. Implications for the Field of Conflict Resolution

Implications for the Field of Conflict Resolution
· All human security indicators are not equal: personal and political insecurity are primary concerns
· Statelessness represents a foundational paradigm for managing other political and social exclusions
· Statelessness highlights places that need work toward equality
· Statelessness calls for a unified approach to complex problems
· The human security paradigm presents a way to describe and to measure the need for and outcome of peace work
· Connections between gender, race, citizenship, and violence expose weaknesses in the human rights regime and highlight states' limited commitment to protecting individuals in marginalized groups

to the protection and well-being of individuals living within their borders. Given the interconnectedness of our continuously globalizing social and political world and its impact on an estimated twelve million individuals, we cannot continue to ignore this issue.

This research makes apparent the relevance of the human security paradigm as a universal metric to identify, describe, and evaluate levels of positive and negative peace in communities and regions. The paradigm offers to the field of conflict resolution concrete indicators by which to assess early warning signs of violence and highlights the places that need to most work toward positive peace. It can also serve as a measurement tool by which to evaluate outcomes of peacebuilding processes. Conflict resolution scholars and practitioners can use research on statelessness as a way to talk about the need for sustainable peace and as an indication of the need to work toward human security. Connections between gender, race, citizenship, and violence highlight the limitation of states' abilities to implement successful peacebuilding strategies. We can

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raise the potential for how we deal with statelessness to represent a foundational

paradigm for managing other social and political exclusions (See Table 4).

For the international human rights community, statelessness can force a more

unified approach to complex social problems. Human security may be able to change the

current legislation and discourse around statelessness from tolerance and protection to the

full inclusion of individuals and communities regardless of their state membership.

Statelessness clearly calls for a multilateral response and highlights the interdependence

of states and of individuals globally; it also illustrates states' inordinate power and the

need to change international law to offset this imbalance. We must put into place long-

term strategies for the reduction of harm; public policy with a feminist framework of

human security would ensure the well-being of individuals and communities as its

primary goal.

The findings of this research also have relevance to the Thai and Burmese

governments, who are responsible for upholding international human rights standards to

ensure the protection and empowerment of all peoples. The Burmese government must

make real changes to guarantee that political exiles may return home with full inclusion

into the social and political landscape. The Thai government must provide protection to

all individuals within its territory, including ensuring that migrants can and do obtain

documents, granting permission for the UNHCR to register refugees, and halting police

harassment, imprisonment, and deportation of undocumented individuals. Impunity for

state and non-state actors who enact violence on non-citizens is unacceptable.

International donors that support political organizations on the Thai-Burma border should not discontinue funding these groups in favor of those working inside Burma. It is not yet safe for members of these groups to return home and a decrease in funding will only weaken movements for democracy and peace in Burma. Community security through these organizations allows Burmese political exiles to continue their political work.

Directions for future research include a need for increasing the breadth and depth of literature on specific stateless populations. Many publications, reports, and articles examine people who are stateless without talking about statelessness; thus, the notion of statelessness must be more widely recognized and described more in depth. There is a great need for rigorous, large-scale, mixed-methods research similar to that of Blitz, Lynch, Lakshman, and Chrimes (2011). Their comprehensive work demonstrates the potential and need for the rigorous examination of the costs of statelessness. At present, this is the only research available that examines women's experiences of statelessness. In addition, research that continues to explore the relationship between statelessness and human security would further elucidate the need for international collaboration and peacebuilding efforts. While this study deepens the literature on statelessness, further research on the topic is crucial.

An estimated twelve million people are stateless worldwide, the largest numbers of whom are in Southeast Asia. Much of this is the outcome of conflict, or direct and indirect violence: war, structural inequality, and political and social exclusion. A feminist human security paradigm lays bare the effects of exclusion from citizenship on

individuals' everyday lives and illustrates the ways in which state security is in opposition to individual and community security and well-being. This research makes apparent the relevance and need for a multilateral response in the protection and empowerment of all peoples. This research seeks to call attention to the issue of statelessness as a risk to one's human security and also advocates for the use of the human security paradigm as a framework from which to see cracks and fissures in our current systems, so as to move towards sustainable peace.

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Appendix A: Original Human Subjects Research Proposal

I. Project Title and Prospectus

Exclusion by State, Ethnicity and Gender:
An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Karen Women in Thailand

More than half of the world's 6.6 million stateless people live in Thailand; the state's "Thai-only" nationalist policies largely prohibit citizenship for individuals from ethnic minority groups. Hill tribe peoples, such as the Karen, are excluded from access to health care, educational certificates, higher education, movement between provinces, property ownership, voting rights, and legal employment. Karen people have lived on the Thai-Burmese borderlands since long before state borders were drawn, and are excluded from citizenship in both places.

Current academic literature concerning Karen peoples largely focuses on nationalist movements for autonomy, and excludes the voices of women. Meanwhile, literature on women and statelessness focuses on conflicting national citizenship laws that render women more susceptible to statelessness. No academic research exists around women's everyday experiences, agency and resistance to statelessness.

I will spend October 2010 to September 2011 living and conducting research in Mae Sot, Thailand, to create a thick, rich description of the experience of statelessness in Karen women's everyday lives. I will use anti-racist, feminist ethnographic research methods to examine the various ways exclusion by state, gender, and ethnicity is expressed and contested in women's everyday lives.

Participants will be limited to stateless Karen women living in Mae Sot, Thailand, and individuals working with women's NGOs in the region. Data collection will begin in October, 2010, with participant observation in public spaces and at [….], my practicum placement. Later, I will begin emergent and chain referral sampling. Next, informational interviews will take place in houses, and at organizational meetings. Interviews will be semi-structured and questions will evolve as part of the developing research process. I will take into account descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity to ensure accuracy and reliability. To further support validity, I will use accurate translation techniques and methodological triangulation.

II. Exemption Claim for Waiver of Review
Full Committee Review

III. Subject Recruitment
Participants will be limited to (1) stateless adult Karen women living in Mae Sot, Thailand, and (2) individuals working with women's NGOs in the same region. This

research highlights the experiences of stateless Karen women, and thus their voices are the central focus. Appropriate NGO workers' voices will also shed light on overarching themes and issues faced by stateless Karen women. These individuals will be adults, and may be Karen or non-Karen, women or men. Their recruitment depends on their willingness to be interviewed and their ability to share information-rich insight around the research topic. My co-workers at […] will help me select appropriate participants based on the criteria I am looking for. They will also connect me with additional NGOs that work with Karen women in the region, thus broadening my participant pool for both participant populations (Karen women and NGO workers).

Data collection will begin in October, 2010, with participant observation in public spaces and at […], my practicum placement. Several months later, I will begin emergent and chain referral sampling to recruit Karen women to interview. Opportunistic, or emergent, sampling will allow me to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities during data collection, and chain referral selection will help me identify people who are information rich. Because many individuals in my sample population cannot read, I will do so through word-of-mouth. For most, if not all, interviews with stateless Karen women, I will employ an interpreter. On the other hand, employees at NGOs are more likely to speak English; thus, depending on their fluency, I may not employ an interpreter. To recruit these individuals, I will contact them via mail and email with a cover letter (Appendix 2).

Saturation occurs when there is sufficient redundancy and no new information in participants' interviews; at this point, I will stop collecting data. I estimate saturation to occur around 3-4 interviews with NGO workers and 4-5 interviews with stateless Karen women.

IV. Informed Consent
I will obtain verbal consent from each participant before he or she is enrolled in the study. Because a breach in confidentiality could lead to potential harm, I am requesting a waiver of signed consent. An informed consent form would be the only record linking participants to my study, and there are no risks to the participants in waiving the signature. I will have no written record of their names and instead use pseudonyms. Instead, I will ensure that each participant has read, or listened to, the verbal consent script (Appendix 3 & 4). I will ensure that they understand its meaning and verbally agree to it. Lastly, each participant will receive a copy of the script, unless they choose otherwise.

V. First-Person Scenario
a. An NGO worker who speaks English fluently
I received an email from an American woman living in Mae Sot who is doing research on how statelessness impacts Karen women. She sent information about the goals of her research, the knowledge she was seeking from me, the amount of time she wanted to talk to me, and the risks and benefits of speaking with her. Once I decided to participate, we

set up a day and time for her to come to [women's NGO]. She arrived at our office with her co-researcher, and before we began the interview, she asked me to read the verbal consent form. I understood it and gave my verbal consent. We talked for two hours about my work and what I have learned in my position about how statelessness impacts Karen women. They audio recorded our conversation. She asked several questions about my experiences, and also listened for a long time.

b. A stateless Karen woman who lives in Mae Sot, Thailand
From [friend], I heard about an American woman who has been living in Mae Sot and working at […]. She is a student and wants to talk to Karen women who are stateless about how lack of access to citizenship impacts our lives. I decided I would like to talk with her, and I asked [friend] to introduce us at the [community event]. She speaks some Karen and with the help of [friend], we agreed on a day and a place to meet to have the interview. She also asked whether I would be comfortable with [interpreter] and I agreed. She and the interpreter came to my house at the time and day we had agreed upon. [Interpreter] read to me a verbal consent form, and I agreed to it. They audio recorded our conversation. She asked a few questions and also listened for a long time.

VI. Potential Risks and Safeguards
One of the reasons that statelessness is under-examined in academic literature, and largely ignored in the international community, is because it is a silenced topic. This speaks to both the need for this research, and to its risks.

There are some risks involved in this research. Due to Thai and Burmese citizenship policies, Karen individuals do not have documentation to live, work and stay in either country. Thus, they have no access to political or legal rights. Participation in this study could, potentially, be seen as a threat to Thailand's peaceful image on the world stage, and increase participants' vulnerability to police harassment, or deportation.

Confidentiality is a very important safeguard against potential risks. Because a breach in confidentiality could lead to potential harm, I am requesting a waiver of signed consent. An informed consent form would be the only record linking participants to my study, and there are no risks to the participants in waiving the signature. I will have no written record of their names and instead use pseudonyms. Instead, I will ensure that each participant has read, or listened to, the verbal consent script. I will ensure that they understand its meaning and verbally agree to it. However, I will audio record our interviews to ensure validity with translation techniques; this means their voices will be recorded, and stored securely, with a password, in a program on my computer.

Secondly, the location of this study, Mae Sot, Thailand, was chosen as a safeguard to minimize potential risks. Hundreds of thousands of Karen peoples live in Thailand, and roughly 100,000 Karen peoples live in Mae Sot, also known as "little Burma." This small city on the Thai-Burmese border is a home for many Karen political leaders and dozens of pro-democracy and humanitarian NGOs. In many ways, because Mae Sot is in

international eyes, and has a majority population of stateless, ethnic minority peoples, it is more secure to do this research here than other regions in Thailand.

Another risk is participant discomfort in speaking with me about a political topic. To minimize discomfort, I will make the topic of the interview very clear in advance, and know that many people in the population group will not be interested in participating. I will limit interview questions to participants' everyday experiences, and not ask them to talk about overt political opinions and beliefs. Also, I will encourage the participant to suggest the location of the interview, and to approve the interpreter in advance. I am aware that the interpreter's position, as insider or outsider to the community, could greatly impact the participants' level of sharing and feeling of safety. I am also committed to ensuring the participant knows she or he can leave, or cancel, at any point during the study.

VII.   Potential Benefits
Participants will not receive any material compensation.

This study aims to connect direct practice work with structural analysis. The former is rooted in the conflict resolution premise that feeling heard and witnessed, through the process of storytelling, can be healing. Thus, my intention is to validate women's experiences and offer the space for reflection.

My structural analysis will lead to an increased knowledge of statelessness in the international community and for the field of peace and conflict resolution. I seek to expand and influence the broader dialogue around statelessness and gender and offer innovative approaches on how to make inroads on a complex problem.

The results of this study will also shed light on a broader, global issue: structural oppression. The multiplicity and diversity of Karen women's experiences provide rich ground for understanding how convergent systems of oppression operate simultaneously, and how individuals and groups effectively contest them.

VIII.   Records and Distribution
I will use pseudonyms to conceal participants' identities throughout the course of research and writing.

Data will be stored on my secure computer for at least three years. The audio recordings and transcripts will be digital and will be stored for this same amount of time.

Section 1: Interview Questions
Interviews will be semi-structured and questions will evolve as part of the developing research process.

Interview Questions—Karen Women
- How long have you been in Mae Sot?
- Where is your place of origin?
- Did you come here with your family, or alone?
- For what reasons did you come to Mae Sot?
- Has your citizenship status changed over time?
- Do you come from a family/community where most people are stateless?
- What has it been like to live without citizenship?
- What are the barriers to obtaining citizenship?
- How has statelessness affected your family?
- How has statelessness affected your health?
- How has statelessness affected your employment?
- How has statelessness affected your education?
- Do women and men experience statelessness differently? If so, how?
- If you had citizenship, in which ways would your life be different?
- Is there anything else you would like for me to know?

Interview Questions—NGO Workers
- How does statelessness affect the populations you work with?
- What are the reasons you came to this NGO?
- What are the barriers to obtaining citizenship?
- Do women and men experience statelessness differently? If so, how?
- How does statelessness affect families?
- How does statelessness affect women's health?
- How does statelessness affect women's employment?
- How does statelessness affect women's education?
- If people had citizenship, in which ways would their lives be different?
- Is there anything else you would like for me to know?

Additional Prompts
- I am interested in what you just said. Can you tell me more about what you mean by "_____"?
- That is a phrase I don't understand. Can you tell me what it means to you?
- I want to make sure I understand you right. Do you mean _____?

Section 2: Cover Letter for NGO Workers

Exclusion by State, Ethnicity and Gender:
An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Karen Women in Thailand

Dear [prospective subject's name]:

My name is Elizabeth Hooker, and I am a student at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, USA. I am beginning a study on how statelessness impacts Karen women's lives, and would like to invite you to participate.

You are being asked to take part because you work with stateless Karen women. As part of this study, I am interested in your opinions and attitudes about the impacts of statelessness on the women with whom you work. I hope that the information I collect will help us to better understand how we can make local and international changes. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about how statelessness impacts the lives of those with whom you work. It should take approximately two to three hours to complete.

As a result of this study, you may feel discomfort speaking about politically sensitive issues. However, I can assure you I have no written record of your name. The study may help increase knowledge that may be helpful to others in the future.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential; again, there will be no written record of your identity.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the researcher. If you decide to take part in this study, you may choose to withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 600 Unitus Building, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA, 001-1-503-725-4288, hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Elizabeth Hooker at erh@pdx.edu and [phone number in Thailand].

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hooker
Conflict Resolution
Portland State University

Section 3: Verbal Consent Script for Stateless Karen Women

Exclusion by State, Ethnicity and Gender:
An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Karen Women in Thailand

You are invited to participate in a research study by Elizabeth Hooker, from Portland State University, in Portland, Oregon, USA. The researcher hopes to learn about the impacts of statelessness on Karen women's lives. This study is part of the researcher's requirements for receiving a Master's degree.

You were chosen as a possible participant in this study because you are a Karen woman who is stateless and you showed interest in talking to me about your experiences. As part of this study, the researcher is interested in your opinions and attitudes about the personal impacts of having no access to citizenship. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about how being stateless has impacted your life, health, work, education. Our conversation will be audio-taped, and will be approximately two to three hours.

As a result of this study, you may feel discomfort speaking about your political status, and may face risks speaking out about your experiences. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential. There will be no written record of your name. The audio recording of our interview will be stored securely in a computer program that can only be accessed by me.

The study may help increase knowledge that may be helpful to you, and others, in the future.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in the study, and you may also withdraw from this study at any time.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 600 Unitus Building, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA, 001-1-503-725-4288, hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Elizabeth Hooker at erh@pdx.edu and [phone number in Thailand].

Your verbal agreement indicates that you understand this information and agree to take part in this study. You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form, unless you choose not to have one.

Section 4: Verbal Consent Script for NGO Workers

Exclusion by State, Ethnicity and Gender:
An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Karen Women in Thailand

You are invited to participate in a research study by Elizabeth Hooker, from Portland State University, in Portland, Oregon, USA. The researcher hopes to learn about the impacts of statelessness on Karen women's lives. This study is part of the researcher's requirements for receiving a Master's degree.

You were chosen as a possible participant in this study because you expressed interest by responding to my letter. As part of this study, the researcher is interested in your opinions and attitudes about the impacts of statelessness on women. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about how being stateless impacts the population with whom you work. Our conversation will be audio-taped, and will be approximately two to three hours.

As a result of this study, you may feel discomfort, and face known risks speaking about politically sensitive issues. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential. There will be no written record of your name. The audio recording of our interview will be stored securely in a computer program that can only be accessed by me.

The study may help increase knowledge that may be helpful to others in the future.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in the study, and you may also withdraw from this study at any time.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 600 Unitus Building, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA, 001-1-503-725-4288, hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Elizabeth Hooker at erh@pdx.edu and [phone number in Thailand].

Your verbal agreement indicates that you understand this information and agree to take part in this study. You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form, unless you choose not to have one.

Appendix B: Revised Human Subjects Research Proposal

I.   Project Title and Prospectus

An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Burmese Women Activists
Living in Mae Sot, Thailand

II.   Reasons for the Change in Subject Group

My partnership with the […] fell through before I arrived in Thailand; they were essential in my research process and I had designed my thesis topic around my work with them. I had planned to examine how statelessness impacts Karen women who live in Mae Sot, Thailand, on the Thai-Burma border. I quickly found another organization, a Burmese youth organization, and started working in the Burmese community within a week of arriving in Mae Sot. Throughout the past four months, I have met and connected with countless individuals who are working for political and social change in Burma, and who collectively represent a large network of pro-democracy groups working in exile in Thailand.

Due to their home government's severe persecution of political activists, many of the more high-profile activists cannot return home and cannot access their citizenship rights. In addition, the Thai government's unofficial policy of ignoring its millions of undocumented refugees, migrant workers, persons of concern, and exiles from Burma, means that a majority of these individuals are unable to obtain documentation to stay in Thailand legally. This, in turn, means that they are *de facto* stateless, and thus prohibited from travel, employment, property ownership and simply *living* in either country. "We give our lives for our country," a twenty-five year old man explained to me recently.

I have been profoundly and deeply moved by this population's dedication to their various opposition movements and willingness to sacrifice their personal futures for the liberty of their people. I believe that their stories contain knowledge that is important for peace and conflict resolution scholars and practitioners to hear. Similarly, I also believe this research will be compelling enough to raise awareness within the international community and provide a strong argument in support of opposition activists. The Thai-Burma border has, for decades, been home to thousands of stateless activists, who ask for self-determination and voice, both within Burma and in the international community, and I seek to promote these objectives.

III.   Subject Recruitment

Participants will be limited to (1) Burmese women who are political activists living in exile in Mae Sot, Thailand, and (2) individuals working with this subject group through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the same region. This research highlights the experiences of Burmese activist women living in exile, and thus their voices are the central focus. Appropriate NGO workers' voices will also shed light on overarching themes and issues faced by members of the subject group. These individuals will be

adults, and may be Burmese or non-Burmese, women or men. Their recruitment depends on their willingness to be interviewed and their ability to share information-rich insight around the research topic.

Data collection began in October, 2010, with participant observation in public spaces and at my volunteer placement. In February, 2011 I will begin emergent and chain referral sampling to recruit Burmese women activists to interview. Opportunistic, or emergent, sampling will allow me to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities during data collection, and chain referral selection will help me identify people who are information rich. Because much of the Burmese activist community in Mae Sot is tightly connected, I will do so through word-of-mouth. Many individuals in my sample population speak English, and thus most, if not all, interviews will be conducted in English. Likewise, staff at NGOs are likely to speak English, and I may not employ an interpreter with this group either. To recruit NGO staff, I will use word-of-mouth and also contact them via email with a cover letter (Appendix 2).

Saturation occurs when there is sufficient redundancy and no new information in participants' interviews; at this point, I will stop collecting data. I estimate saturation to occur around 3-4 interviews with NGO staff and 4-5 interviews with Burmese activist women.

IV.   Informed Consent
I will obtain verbal consent from each participant before he or she is enrolled in the study.   Because a breach in confidentiality could lead to potential harm, I am requesting a waiver of signed consent. An informed consent form would be the only record linking participants to my study, and there are no risks to the participants in waiving the signature. I will have no written record of their names and instead use pseudonyms. Instead, I will ensure that each participant has read, or listened to, the verbal consent script (Appendix 3 & 4). I will ensure that they understand its meaning and verbally agree to it. Lastly, each participant will receive a copy of the script, unless they choose otherwise.

V.   First-Person Scenario
a. An NGO worker who speaks English fluently
I received an email from an American woman living in Mae Sot who is doing research on how statelessness impacts Burmese women who are political activists in Thailand. She sent information about the goals of her research, the knowledge she was seeking from me, the amount of time she wanted to talk to me, and the risks and benefits of speaking with her. Once I decided to participate, we set up a day and time for her to come to our office. She arrived at our office with her co-researcher, and before we began the interview, she asked me to read the verbal consent form. I understood it and gave my verbal consent. We talked for two hours about my work and what I have learned in my position about how statelessness impacts Burmese women in Mae Sot. They audio

recorded our conversation. She asked several questions about my experiences, and also listened for a long time.

b. A Burmese woman who is stateless due to her political activism
From [friend], I heard about an American woman who has been living in Mae Sot and is teaching at [organization]. She is a student and wants to talk to Burmese women who are stateless about how lack of access to citizenship impacts our lives. I decided I would like to talk with her, and I asked [friend] to introduce us at [community event]. We agreed on a day and a place to meet to have the interview. She also asked whether I would be comfortable with [co-researcher] and I agreed. They came to my office at the time and day we had agreed upon. She read to me a verbal consent form, and I agreed to it. They audio recorded our conversation. She asked a few questions and also listened for a long time.

VI.   Potential Risks and Safeguards
One of the reasons that statelessness is under-examined in academic literature, and largely ignored in the international community, is because it is a silenced topic. This speaks to both the need for this research, and to its risks.

There are some risks involved in this research. The subject population's status of statelessness means that they are not protected by any country. They cannot return to Burma, due to severe political persecution, and they are undocumented in Thailand. Participation in this study could, potentially, be seen as a threat to Thailand's peaceful image on the world stage, as it displays the Thai government's failure to abide by certain international human rights standards. Thus, it could increase participants' vulnerability to police harassment. In addition, participation could, potentially, worsen individuals' profiles with Burmese intelligence in Mae Sot. However, my subject population is limited to those who cannot return to Burma, and the Burmese authorities cannot exercise their power in Thailand.

Confidentiality is a very important safeguard against potential risks. Because a breach in confidentiality could lead to potential harm, I am requesting a waiver of signed consent. An informed consent form would be the only record linking participants to my study, and there are no risks to the participants in waiving the signature. I will have no written record of their names and instead use pseudonyms. Instead, I will ensure that each participant has read, or listened to, the verbal consent script. I will ensure that they understand its meaning and verbally agree to it. However, I will audio record our interviews; this means their voices will be recorded, and stored securely, through a computer program called Martus. This technology was designed for NGOs that record human rights abuses, and thus seek particularly high security.

Secondly, the location of this study, Mae Sot, Thailand, was chosen as a safeguard to minimize potential risks. For decades, this small city on the Thai-Burmese border has been home for many political leaders and dozens of pro-democracy and humanitarian

NGOs. In many ways, because Mae Sot is in international eyes, and has a majority population of stateless and undocumented peoples, it is more secure to do this research here than other regions in Thailand. Lastly, a majority of the people I will interview are accustomed to speaking with Western researchers, donors, teachers and volunteers about these topics.

Another risk is participant discomfort in speaking with me about their undocumented status. To minimize discomfort, I will make the topic of the interview very clear in advance, and know some people in the population group will not be interested in participating. I will limit interview questions to participants' everyday experiences, and not ask them to talk about overt political opinions and beliefs. Also, I will encourage the participant to suggest the location of the interview. I am also committed to ensuring the participant knows she or he can leave, or cancel, at any point during the study.

VII.   Potential Benefits

This study aims to connect direct practice work with structural analysis. The former is rooted in the conflict resolution premise that feeling heard and witnessed, through the process of storytelling, can be healing. Thus, my intention is to validate women's experiences and offer the space for reflection.

My structural analysis will lead to an increased knowledge of statelessness in the international community and for the field of peace and conflict resolution. I seek to expand and influence the broader dialogue around statelessness and gender and offer innovative approaches on how to make inroads on a complex problem.

The results of this study will also shed light on a broader, global issue: structural oppression. The multiplicity and diversity of Burmese women's experiences provide rich ground for understanding how convergent systems of oppression operate simultaneously, and how individuals and groups effectively contest them.

VIII.   Records and Distribution

I will use pseudonyms to conceal participants' identities throughout the course of research and writing.

Data will be stored on my computer for at least three years. The audio recordings and transcripts will be digital and will be stored for this same amount of time. I will use Martus, a computer program designed intentionally for high security information.

Section 1: Interview Questions
Interviews will be semi-structured and questions will evolve as part of the developing research process.

Interview Questions—Burmese Women
- Where is your place of origin?
- How old are you?
- What is your work?
- Which ethnic group do you belong to?
- When and why did you decide to leave Burma?
- How long have you been in Mae Sot?
- Did you come here with family?
- Was your family supportive of you leaving?
- For what reasons did you come to Mae Sot?
- Do you have a Burmese ID card? Do you have a Thai ID card?
- Are other members of your family living outside of Burma? If so, where and what are the circumstances?
- What would happen if you went back to Burma?
- Do you want citizenship? If so, for which country?
- What are barriers to obtaining citizenship?
- How has statelessness affected your family?
- How has statelessness affected your health?
- How has statelessness affected your employment?
- How has statelessness affected your education?
- Do women and men experience statelessness differently? If so, how?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Interview Questions—NGO Workers
- How does lack of access to citizenship affect the populations you work with?
- What are the reasons you came to this NGO?
- What are the barriers to obtaining citizenship?
- Do women and men experience statelessness differently? If so, how?
- How does statelessness affect families?
- How does statelessness affect women's health?
- How does statelessness affect women's employment?
- How does statelessness affect women's education?
- If people had citizenship, in which ways would their lives be different?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Additional Prompts
- I am interested in what you just said. Can you tell me more about what you mean by "_____"?
- That is a phrase I don't understand. Can you tell me what it means to you?
- I want to make sure I understand you right. Do you mean _____?

Section 2: Cover Letter for NGO Workers

An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Burmese Women Activists
Living in Mae Sot, Thailand

Dear [prospective subject's name]:

My name is Elizabeth Hooker, and I am a student at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon, USA. I am beginning a study on how statelessness impacts Burmese women's lives, and would like to invite you to participate.

You are being asked to take part because you work with stateless Burmese women. As part of this study, I am interested in your opinions and attitudes about the impacts of statelessness on the women with whom you work. I hope that the information I collect will help us to better understand how we can make local and international changes. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about how statelessness impacts the lives of those with whom you work. It should take approximately two to three hours to complete.

As a result of this study, you may feel discomfort speaking about politically sensitive issues. However, I can assure you I have no written record of your name. The study may help increase knowledge that may be helpful to others in the future.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential; again, there will be no written record of your identity.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the researcher. If you decide to take part in this study, you may choose to withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 600 Unitus Building, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA, 001-1-503-725-4288, hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Elizabeth Hooker at erh@pdx.edu and (+66) 08 5603 4763.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hooker
Conflict Resolution
Portland State University

Section 3: Verbal Consent Script for Stateless Burmese Women

An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Burmese Women Activists
Living in Mae Sot, Thailand

You are invited to participate in a research study by Elizabeth Hooker, from Portland State University, in Portland, Oregon, USA. The researcher hopes to learn about the impacts of statelessness on Burmese women's lives. This study is part of the researcher's requirements for receiving a Master's degree.

You were chosen as a possible participant in this study because you are a Burmese woman who is stateless and you showed interest in talking to me about your experiences. As part of this study, the researcher is interested in your opinions and attitudes about the personal impacts of having no access to citizenship. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about how being stateless has impacted your life, health, work, education. Our conversation will be audio-taped, and will be approximately two to three hours.

As a result of this study, you may feel discomfort speaking about your political status, and may face risks speaking out about your experiences. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential. There will be no written record of your name. The audio recording of our interview will be stored securely in a computer program that can only be accessed by me.

The study may help increase knowledge that may be helpful to you, and others, in the future.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in the study, and you may also withdraw from this study at any time.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 600 Unitus Building, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA, 001-1-503-725-4288, hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Elizabeth Hooker at erh@pdx.edu and (+66) 08 5603 4763.

Your verbal agreement indicates that you understand this information and agree to take part in this study. You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form, unless you choose not to have one.

Section 4: Verbal Consent Script for NGO Workers

An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Burmese Women Activists
Living in Mae Sot, Thailand

You are invited to participate in a research study by Elizabeth Hooker, from Portland State University, in Portland, Oregon, USA. The researcher hopes to learn about the impacts of statelessness on Burmese women's lives. This study is part of the researcher's requirements for receiving a Master's degree.

You were chosen as a possible participant in this study because you expressed interest by responding to my letter. As part of this study, the researcher is interested in your opinions and attitudes about the impacts of statelessness on women. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about how being stateless impacts the population with whom you work. Our conversation will be audio-taped, and will be approximately two to three hours.

As a result of this study, you may feel discomfort, and face known risks speaking about politically sensitive issues. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential. There will be no written record of your name. The audio recording of our interview will be stored securely in a computer program that can only be accessed by me.

The study may help increase knowledge that may be helpful to others in the future.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in the study, and you may also withdraw from this study at any time.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 600 Unitus Building, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA, 001-1-503-725-4288, hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Elizabeth Hooker at erh@pdx.edu and (+66) 08 5603 4763.

Your verbal agreement indicates that you understand this information and agree to take part in this study. You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form, unless you choose not to have one.

Appendix C: Verbal Consent Script

An Ethnography on the Impacts of Statelessness on Burmese Women Activists
Living in Mae Sot, Thailand

You are invited to participate in a research study by Elizabeth Hooker, from Portland State University, in Portland, Oregon, USA. The researcher hopes to learn about the impacts of statelessness on Burmese women's lives. This study is part of the researcher's requirements for receiving a Master's degree.

You were chosen as a possible participant in this study because you are a Burmese woman who is stateless and you showed interest in talking to me about your experiences. As part of this study, the researcher is interested in your opinions and attitudes about the personal impacts of having no access to citizenship. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about how being stateless has impacted your life, health, work, education. Our conversation will be audio-taped, and will be approximately two to three hours.

As a result of this study, you may feel discomfort speaking about your political status, and may face risks speaking out about your experiences. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential. There will be no written record of your name. The audio recording of our interview will be stored securely in a computer program that can only be accessed by me.

The study may help increase knowledge that may be helpful to you, and others, in the future.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in the study, and you may also withdraw from this study at any time.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 600 Unitus Building, Portland State University, Portland, OR, USA, 001-1-503-725-4288, hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu. If you have questions about the study itself, contact Elizabeth Hooker at erh@pdx.edu and (+66) 08 5603 4763.

Your verbal agreement indicates that you understand this information and agree to take part in this study. You may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form, unless you choose not to have one.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Interviews will be semi-structured and questions will evolve as part of the developing research process.

Interview Questions—Burmese Women
- Where is your place of origin?
- How old are you?
- What is your work?
- Which ethnic group do you belong to?
- When and why did you decide to leave Burma?
- How long have you been in Mae Sot?
- Did you come here with family?
- Was your family supportive of you leaving?
- For what reasons did you come to Mae Sot?
- Do you have a Burmese ID card? Do you have a Thai ID card?
- Are other members of your family living outside of Burma? If so, where and what are the circumstances?
- What would happen if you went back to Burma?
- Do you want citizenship? If so, for which country?
- What are barriers to obtaining citizenship?
- How has statelessness affected your family?
- How has statelessness affected your health?
- How has statelessness affected your employment?
- How has statelessness affected your education?
- Do women and men experience statelessness differently? If so, how?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Interview Questions—NGO Workers
- How does lack of access to citizenship affect the populations you work with?
- What are the reasons you came to this NGO?
- What are the barriers to obtaining citizenship?
- Do women and men experience statelessness differently? If so, how?
- How does statelessness affect families?
- How does statelessness affect women's health?
- How does statelessness affect women's employment?
- How does statelessness affect women's education?
- If people had citizenship, in which ways would their lives be different?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Additional Prompts
- I am interested in what you just said. Can you tell me more about what you mean by "_____"?
- That is a phrase I don't understand. Can you tell me what it means to you?
- I want to make sure I understand you right. Do you mean _____?