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# ABORTION AND HUMAN SECURITY

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*A field study of the work to decriminalize abortion in Nicaragua*

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# ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to outline for the potential inclusion of abortion as a human security issue. It deploys arguments retrieved from human security, such as survival and human rights, in order to make this inclusion visible. To exemplify the issue of abortion, the struggle to decriminalize abortion in Nicaragua is used as a case. The investigation is largely built on material gathered during a field study in Nicaragua, by the use of interviews and participant observation. By analyzing the work carried out by non-governmental organizations with the purpose of decriminalizing abortion, it seeks to investigate if the work is carried out in line with the critical security agenda. To enable the analysis, Critical Security Studies is applied. To examine to what extent the NGOs work according to the critical security agenda there is a focus on deepening and broadening the perception of security as well as on the pursuit of security and emancipation, which all are key components to CSS. The results show that the NGOs work largely according to the critical security agenda and that there are possibilities for including abortion as a human security issue, although more research is required.

*Key words:* abortion, human security, critical security studies, non-governmental organizations, Nicaragua.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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“Morality cannot only be a question of controlling sexuality and protecting unborn life. Morality is also a question of giving individuals the opportunity of choice, of suppressing coercion of all kinds and abolishing the criminalization of individual tragedy. Morality becomes hypocrisy if it means accepting mothers suffering or dying in connection with unwanted pregnancies and illegal abortions, and unwanted children living in misery”

Gro Harlem Brundtland

Most modern societies share the moral ideal of making sure that all human beings are freed from unnecessary suffering and able to live lives where security is experienced (Linklater, 2002:303). The words of Norway’s Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland from the 1994 UN conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo emphasized the need of an inclusive morality which respects women. Nonetheless, the change of attitude to women’s bodies which Harlem Brundtland promoted is still not a global reality. Morality has instead been seen in terms of religious fundamentalism and as a reaction towards globalization, not in the sense of enhancing women’s security and liberty (Goldberg, 2009:102).

At the Cairo conference most of the world’s countries pledged to commit to reproductive health and rights. The conference which initially was about overpopulation formed agreement around the fact that women are not means to a preferred demographic outcome but that their rights and health have to be paid

attention to. The conference made visible that it is necessary to focus on the individual's needs and what was agreed upon in Cairo has had great impact for sexual and reproductive health and rights globally. For example, the Cairo conference managed to reach consensus on an explicit call to end female genital mutilation. The policy which resulted from the conference was supported by every major donor country (Goldberg, 2009:2, 6, 115).

Even so, one important issue relating to women's reproductive health and rights could not be agreed upon: abortion. In the end, it could only be concurred that "in circumstances in which abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe" (UN, 1994). More than 17 years has passed but abortion remains a sensitive topic. The right to abortion is a question which divides communities around the world. Sweden is one of the countries who have taken a proactive stance regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights by stating that all women, regardless of where they live, should have the possibility of a safe and legal abortion (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2006:9). Nonetheless, abortion is currently completely banned in 68 countries, most of these countries do allow for an exception of the law if the life of the pregnant woman is at stake but not all 68 (Lerner, 2012).

Although sexual and reproductive health and rights and principally the right to abortion are intense topics all over the world, most clashes between liberalization and conservative opinions have taken place in Latin America. The region is also the one where the highest rate of unsafe abortions can be found: for every ten births there are four clandestine abortions. In most cases the laws banning abortion are reminders of colonial rule, but not in all cases (Goldberg, 2009:16-17, 41). In Latin America, the question of abortion is an ever current topic and it is an increasingly politicized issue. In Central America, a move towards stricter legislation is noticeable and if conservatives found the Cairo conference challenging they achieved enormous success in 2006 when abortion was completely banned in Nicaragua (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2012).

To not have access to a safe and legal abortion jeopardizes the lives of women and is a factor in contributing to maternal mortality. Albeit this is well-

known, abortion is not a prioritized issue. In order to lift abortion onto the agenda, this paper proposes that abortion is a concern of human security and should be viewed in security terms. Therefore, the case of abortion in Nicaragua and the work to decriminalize abortion will be analyzed through a perspective of Critical Security Studies, as to open up for a broadening and a deepening of how abortion is perceived in relation to security.

## 1.1 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

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The purpose of this study is to investigate how abortion can be considered an issue of human security. By using the complete ban on abortion in Nicaragua as a starting point, this paper proposes that the human security of women is jeopardized by a ban on abortion. It will examine how non-governmental organizations in Nicaragua are working to have the ban lifted and which results they have achieved. Simultaneously, it will analyze how the work towards decriminalization can be interpreted as forming part of the critical security agenda; specifically, to what extent the work of the organizations is comparable to that suggested by CSS with the purpose of including an issue on the security agenda. Thus, by analyzing the work to decriminalize abortion from a perspective of CSS it will be further highlighted why abortion is a human security issue. Therefore, the two research questions which will be the focus of this thesis are:

- In which ways can it be argued that abortion is a human security issue?
- To what extent have the organizations in Nicaragua worked according to the critical security agenda?

Through attempting to stress abortion as a human security concern, the issue can be studied in a relatively new framework and understanding for security and

abortion can be developed. In addition, examining the work to decriminalize abortion as connected to the critical security agenda enhances this understanding, since the critical security agenda includes aspects of human security. The topic is relevant since human security has been lifted to the agenda but there is an uncertainty as to how it should be used. Likewise, it is interesting in a global context because abortion is an area where global consensus has not been reached. Thus, by emphasizing how abortion is about security the study could contribute to raising awareness on an important issue. Moreover, the paper calls attention to the necessity of the right to access to a safe and legal abortion worldwide.

In order to develop and challenge the current view of security, the reasons for why abortion should be considered a human security issue are outlined for. The current view of security is further developed when CSS is used as the theoretical framework in order to illustrate the inclusion of abortion as a security issue. Critical Security Studies has been chosen to ensure the critical focus on security and to enable the possibility of broadening and deepening the perception of security, as well as highlighting the similarities between working to achieve decriminalization and including an issue on the security agenda.

## 1.2 MATERIAL

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The majority of the material used in this thesis was compiled during a field study in Nicaragua, between February and April of 2012. It is the result of interviews carried out with representatives for organizations working with the decriminalization of abortion and to an extent of material gathered while carrying out participant observation. Thus, most of the material concerning the work of the NGOs comes from primary sources.

Nonetheless, secondary sources have been valuable to the writing of this thesis. The link between security and abortion has been made visible through theoretical work on human security as well as Critical Security Studies. As for Critical Security Studies, the writings of Ken Booth are widely used, mainly since he is the front figure of CSS but also for his insightful work which has served me immensely in coming to understand CSS. Moreover, *The means of Reproduction – Sex, Power, and the Future of the World* by Michelle Goldberg has been a useful source for understanding the context in which women’s sexual and reproductive rights are situated and the issues pertaining to their liberalization.

### 1.3 LIMITATIONS

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This paper has foremost been limited to the fact that I only had a certain amount of time in Nicaragua. I have not been able to talk to every single one of the organizations in Nicaragua working with the decriminalization of abortion. However, to the best of my knowledge I have been able to make a fair representation of their work. The paper does not attempt to evaluate which organization has been more successful or who has made the best use of their methods, instead it recognizes the fact that all efforts to decriminalize abortion are valuable.

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## 2. BACKGROUND

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### 2.1 NICARAGUA

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Nicaragua gained independence in 1838 and became dominated by US business interests as a young nation. During the 1920s liberal General Augusto César Sandino refused to succumb to the conservative rule which was at large sustained by US troops. The American forces left in 1933 and Sandino made peace, but the following year he was assassinated by the leader of the National Guard: Anastasio Somoza. Somoza seized power in 1936 through a coup d'état and started a stable rule marked by close relations to the US. He was killed in 1956 by a supporter of Sandino but power remained in the Somoza family as his sons, Luis and Antonio, came to rule Nicaragua.

The Somoza family used Nicaragua's resources for their own benefit, as well as the international aid given to Nicaragua following the 1972 earthquake. Opposition was steadily increasing but did not come together until 1978, following the murder of opposition leader and editor of the regime critical newspaper La Prensa: Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. Then the conservative opposition and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) joined hands. The FSLN had been founded in 1961 and was a Marxist movement and guerilla (UI Landfakta). 25 percent of the FSLN were women, making female participation in the Nicaraguan revolution the greatest in recent time, except for Vietnam (Molyneux, 2001:38). The FSLN defeated Antonio Somoza who fled to Paraguay in 1979, where he was murdered in 1980.

When the FSLN came to power they expropriated most assets and introduced an ambitious agrarian reform along with increased resources to education and health care (UI Landfakta). The FSLN and the revolution were full of promises

for women's liberation. Their 1969 programme had stated that oppression of women would end and political, cultural and economic equality between men and women would be established. Nonetheless, they faced too many problems to prioritize women (Molyneux, 2001:47-49). At first the FSLN got some financial support from the US, but when Reagan became president in 1981 the relationship got worse. Mainly because the US feared that the Sandinistas would spread Communism to the rest of Central America. To avoid communist progress, the US funded *the contras*, which was the Honduras based guerrilla formed of supporters of Somoza and members of the National Guard. In 1981 the contras started their raids in Nicaragua. They drew support from people living in the regions around the Atlantic Coast, who felt mistreated by the Sandinistas' reforms. The Civil War got worse and until 1984 the contras were advancing.

In 1984 Daniel Ortega, leader of the FSLN, won the presidential election with 67 percent of the votes and consolidated the position of the FSLN. The US had put a halt to their financing of the contras, since it became known that the CIA had placed mines in Nicaraguan harbors; nonetheless, the contras soon received US "humanitarian aid." In 1985 the FSLN claimed to have defeated the contras and though fighting continued it became clear that the contras could not win. By guaranteeing the autonomy of the Atlantic Coast region, support for the contras decreased. In 1987 the Esquipulas Peace Agreement was signed and in 1988 the Sandinista government and the contras signed an agreement of cease fire, but minor fighting still took place. The Civil War did not end until 1990 when cease fire was agreed upon again (UI Landfakta).

Nicaragua was in a terrible state after the Civil War and unity was attempted by electing Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, as president. Yet, the loans from the IMF required Barrios de Chamorro to tighten the budget which made life in Nicaragua more difficult. Violence surged again and former contras emerged as *recontras* and former Sandinista fighters became *recompas*. The violence could not be curbed until the government promised amnesty in 1993, which became the start of the disarming of the forces – a process which was completed in 1997. Peace had been restored, but Nicaragua still

struggled. Arnaldo Alemán was president between 1997 and 2001 but did not improve the situation. In 2002 president Bolaños, vice-president during Alemán, charged him with corruption and in 2003 Alemán was given a 20 years jail sentence (ibid).

Former president Daniel Ortega had been the presidential candidate of the FSLN in several elections, and also in the election of 2006. Through the appointment of a former member of the contras as his candidate for vice-president, Ortega managed to attract voters from other parties. He remade himself as a strong believer in Catholicism and ten days before the elections, the parliament with support from Ortega and most FSLN parliamentarians, voted to prohibit all abortion. Ortega has been accused by different actors to have supported the ban on abortion in order to gain the support of the Catholic Church, as well as other churches in Nicaragua. Since the Catholic Church has been a consistently firm opponent of the FSLN it is not unlikely that some sort of peace offering would have been provided, as to preventing the church from campaigning against Ortega. Ortega won the election and became president of Nicaragua once again. Since his election Ortega has been accused of authoritarianism and nepotism (ibid).

To be able to run for president in the elections of 2011 Ortega tried to change the constitution, because according to the constitution the same person cannot hold the office for two consecutive terms nor can the same person become president more than twice. Ortega's candidacy violated both principles. When the parliament would not change the constitution, he appealed to the Supreme Court of Justice (ibid). The Supreme Court agreed with Ortega and decided that the constitution and its principles were in violation of Ortega's human rights. The members of the Supreme Court have political affiliation and the decision was taken on a day when the three members of the opposition were not there (Forsberg, 2011). Ortega won the elections of 2011.

## 2.2 ABORTION

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As mentioned, abortion was completely banned in Nicaragua during the period leading up to the presidential election of 2006. Previously, therapeutic abortion had been legal since 1891. Therapeutic abortion means that an abortion can be performed when the woman's life is in danger. With the current legislation, no abortion can be performed in Nicaragua, for any reason. The 2007 penal code states that a woman who have an abortion performed shall be punished with one to four years of prison; a doctor who performs an abortion will be punished with one to ten years of jail time and lose his/her license to practice medicine (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2010).

The Catholic Church had wanted to push through the stricter legislation for some time and the presidential election gave them the perfect opportunity. Earlier, there had not been much of a possibility for a legal abortion, because a therapeutic abortion had to be permitted by at least three doctors, as well as by the spouse or the woman's closest relative (Dixon & Hernández, 2007:6). Nonetheless, with the complete ban it is impossible to have a legal abortion. Since Nicaragua is a Catholic society people are generally against abortion. However, the debate in Nicaragua has focused on the message of the opponents to abortion, often putting forward deceiving pictures of dead full-grown fetuses and emphasizing how "children are murdered" by abortionists (Larracochea 2012, interview).

Since Nicaragua is one of the youngest countries of the world, with half of its population being below the age of sixteen, there are also many fertile women and many fertile adolescent girls (Colectivo de Mujeres ITZA, 2003:13; Entre Vida y Vida). This has resulted in many teenage pregnancies, 27 percent of all pregnancies are accounted for by girls below the age of 19 and girls between 10 and 14 years account for three percent (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2010). Due to all of the teenage pregnancies, approximately 46 percent of the adolescents are mothers (Entre Vida y Vida). In addition, evidence points to the fact that unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion, especially in adolescent girls, are often

associated with violence and sexual coercion (Shaw, 2010:636). In the Nicaraguan context sexual violence is disturbingly frequent and young girls have been particularly exposed. Also, the victim of sexual violence is often blamed and stigmatized which further perpetuates the dilemma (Amnesty). There are many risks associated with having a child when one still is very young and the situation might get even more complicated when the girl is a victim of sexual abuse or incest. In spite of the debate on abortion, it is undeniable that safe and legal abortion on request improves the health of women, and girls. Fact is that the absolute prohibition deprives women, and girls, of access to what in some cases is a life-saving procedure (UN, 2011:10).

As put forward by the World Health Organization, unsafe abortion is a “silent pandemic” but also a preventable pandemic. It is an urgent public health matter as well as a human rights imperative, because unsafe abortion is one of the most neglected sexual and reproductive health problems the world face today. Even though statistics for illegal abortion are scarce, it has been estimated that 20 million illegal abortions are carried out each year (Grimes et al, 2006:1). In Nicaragua approximately 36 000 illegal abortions are performed each year (Colectivo de mujeres ITZA, 2003:18). An unsafe abortion and an illegal abortion are not necessarily the same, but many times they are. An illegal abortion is against the law of the country whereas an unsafe abortion is performed by an individual without the requisite skills, or in an environment that does not meet medical standards, or both. (Grimes et al, 2006:1). Almost 50 000 women die each year from unsafe abortions (Lerner, 2012). This is 50 000 unnecessary deaths, because when an abortion is performed in an appropriate environment by a trained professional it is one of the safest medical procedures available (UN, 2011:10).

There are no indicators that making abortion legal, accessible and safe would increase demand. Countries that have liberalized their legislation such as Turkey, Tunisia and Barbados have not experienced an increase in abortion. In the Netherlands, where access to abortion is unrestricted, the rate of abortion is among the lowest in the world (Grimes et al, 2006:6). In addition, it has been

confirmed that legislating against abortion does not prevent women and girls from going through with a clandestine abortion (UN, 2011:7-8). Women have had abortions since the beginning of recorded history and will continue to have them, regardless of what the law or the society says about it (Grimes et al, 2006:9). Regrettably many women are not ensured their very fundamental right to health and life, which shows the disdain and apathy many societies still show their female citizens (ibid, 1)

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## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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### 3.1 CRITICAL SECURITY STUDIES

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Security is a focal point for international relations and theories about it are abundant. For most of the twentieth century international relations was dominated by realism and thinking about security was also dominated by realism (Sheehan, 2005: 1, 5). The approach to security provided by realism was a clear and straightforward one: the state needed to be secured, and security would be achieved through military capabilities. Nonetheless, the limited approach to security gave rise to explorations of the concept. Various schools of thought developed theories of security, some operating in similar paradigms as realism, others worlds apart.

Critical Security Studies is a recent development but is increasingly recognized and used as a term. Since originally put forth by Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones whilst at Aberystwyth in West Wales it is sometimes referred to as Welsh School. CSS has its roots in Peace Studies and attempts during the Cold War to develop 'new thinking'. When Peace Studies was evolving in the 1980s it started to not only focus on the achievement of negative peace, but also on that of positive peace. This perspective broadened the issues studied and came to include health, environmental stability and economic welfare, as well as military issues (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2010:18). These developments of a broader conception of security became the growing ground for Critical Security Studies. CSS has been elaborated by adding security to Critical Theory and through that a specific range of implications was formed (ibid, 17). For example, this means that CSS does not agree that the state always is what should be secured, or that the means to security are military capabilities.

In literature today, one can encounter both upper case Critical Security Studies and lower case critical security studies, the difference lies in how upper case CSS draws on upper case Critical Theory and the Marxian tradition tied to it, such as the idea of not only interpreting the world but changing it. Thus, proponents of CSS see the term as reserved to a particular approach to security which includes the mentioned Marxian tradition of Critical Theory, as well as interpretations of this tradition in International Relations. Lower case critical security studies is related to lower case critical theory, which includes more diverse approaches and ideas that are not limited to Marxian ideas. As CSS is in part constructed around Marxian ideals it has an emancipatory purpose which CSS does not. The concept of emancipation has become known as one of the distinguishing features of CSS (ibid).

Rather than being presented as a theory per se, CSS is a body of knowledge about security. It does not tell who the key actors are; instead it serves to investigate security in both theory and practice. It has been developed as a challenge to realism and is opposed to realism's arguments about statism, status quo and strategy (Booth, 2007:29). CSS differs from realism in many ways. As mentioned, CSS is a Critical Theory as opposed to a Problem-Solving Theory. This means that it critically interrogates the traditional assumptions made by problem-solving theory. Thus, problem-solving theory takes the state of world politics as a given and argues that there is a number of actors and issues which need to be focused on. With regards to security, problem-solving theory aims to solve the problem of war (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2010:19).

Generally, approaches within critical theory of security are opposed to the traditional conception of security because of three reasons. The critical approaches believe that states only conform to the UN charter and international law when it is in their own interest; they also consider that the focus on rules and norms of the international society ignores most deaths caused by political violence. Moreover, they view the practices of the society of states as disregarding the structural causes of economic and social injustice (Dunne & Nicholas, 2011:20-21). Due to the flaws of traditional security thinking, Critical Security

Studies has attempted to bring forward an approach to security which both deepens and broadens the traditional conception of security.

As outlined for by Ken Booth, CSS has two steps and they are deepening and broadening the perception of security. The first step is deepening, where implications of the attitudes and behavior towards security are explored and uncovered in relation to the underlying theory. It is a way of analyzing and interrogating which interests and assumptions have shaped the current security agenda (Booth, 2005: 14-15). Then deepening is followed by broadening, which simply put is seen as an expansion of the security agenda. Therefore, the ontology of CSS embraces a more extensive set of referents for security, looking beyond the state and instead focusing on the individual (ibid). Since ontology refers to what we believe is to be real, in security it becomes the basis for what we think needs to be protected, which is the reason for why Critical Security Studies vouches for a broader understanding of security. By analyzing and interpreting a broader and deeper agenda it becomes possible to change how we perceive security and what we interpret as a threat (Booth, 2007:187). For example, investigating how abortion can be included in the agenda serves as a way to broaden and deepen what is perceived to be security.

For CSS, understanding security begins in conditions of insecurity (ibid, 110). That is, a condition of insecurity would be not having enough food to eat, no health-care or any other condition where one is exposed to threats to the human well-being. Critical Security Studies aims to explore the conditions of insecurity in order to pursue critical knowledge about security. Through critical knowledge, security can be understood outside of prevailing structures and processes. It seeks to provide a deeper understanding for the oppressive attitudes and behaviors which shape how security is viewed, as well as create conditions of insecurity (ibid, 30). For this paper, the condition of insecurity in which the understanding of security will begin is the criminalization of abortion. With the criminalization of abortion as a departure point it can be understood why it is resulting in insecurity and which the methods are to overcome the prevailing structures which are the cause.

It is certain that the potential security agenda and the issues to be discovered are depressingly long, but studying concrete examples is a possibility to move beyond a theoretical knowledge of security and transform it into a more compassionate understanding of conditions of human insecurity (Booth, 2005:16). By opening up the perception of security, common humanity rather than national sovereignty can be explored, as well as emancipation instead of power (Booth, 2007:109). In essence, Critical Security Studies believes that security will only extend throughout the world when emancipatory politics have achieved progress in the elimination of the structural and contingent human wrongs (ibid, 114).

Emancipation is a concept deeply connected to Critical Theory and is essential to CSS. It is believed that only emancipation can make the prospect of security likely (Booth, 2005:42). As defined by Booth, emancipation refers to “the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do” (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2010:21). Since the individual is the ultimate referent for security in Critical Security Studies and conditions of insecurity regarded as potential security issues, it is argued that the more emancipated one is the more secure one will be and vice versa (ibid, 24-25). Security and emancipation are considered to be two sides of the same coin. A higher level of security will lead to people being freed from constraints and being freed from constraints, that is emancipated, will result in a higher degree of security.

Emancipation is one of the three key concepts in CSS, the two others being community and identity (ibid, 23). Identity is crucial in the sense that Critical Security Studies views the different identities each individual has as central to what it is to be human and how security is experienced. Even though the individual is the ultimate referent for security, CSS recognizes that individuals do not lead lives completely independent of other individuals. Each and every one of us belongs to a community, to a greater or a lesser extent, and our sense of community also determines how security is viewed. Therefore, the community becomes the site of security. It is where both threats and perceptions of threats are experienced, as well as security. Nonetheless, CSS promotes inclusive and

egalitarian communities, rather than those based on difference. The ideal community is one celebrating common humanity, which would be endorsed by human emancipation (ibid, 25-26). To reach emancipation it is not enough that Critical Security Studies provides abstract ideas, but it needs to engage with reality and propose policies and sites of change. CSS needs to take part in stepping away from structural wrongs (Booth, 1997:114).

Having emancipation as the goal for how to achieve a better world is a normative approach and has attracted criticism. The focus on emancipation and CSS in general have been criticized for stepping away from the traditional method of maintaining objectivity and reporting on security (Smith, 2005:46). Critical Security Studies does not claim to be objective but has the pursuit of developing ideas by which human society can prevail over structural and contingent human wrongs as a core purpose (Booth, 2007:30). This approach suits the thesis perfectly because it is not pretending that there is an absolute truth in this matter but it is exploring the structural wrongs which have rendered women in an insecure situation where they do not have the right to decide over their own lives.

Whereas positivists have considered CSS to undermine the possibility for creating a true science of human affairs, realists blame CSS for creating disciplinary chaos and ending the international order (Booth, 2005:12). Emancipation does challenge the state-centric approach to security, which is viewed as an advantage by its proponents but entails a further commitment; a commitment which often has been associated with progressive politics and Eighteenth Century Enlightenment. Undoubtedly, emancipation is the most controversial component of CSS. It has been accused of being a meta-narrative, an overarching explanation of the world which attracts criticism from, for example, post-structuralism. Having a normative goal is seen as attached to its Enlightenment ideas and thus interpreted as a Western idea and an attempt to pass off Western ideals as universal (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2010:29). It has been argued that emancipation in a non-Western security context would lead to disorder since it might be interpreted as every ethnic group's right to self-determination (ibid, 30). Nevertheless, the idea of emancipation is not that any

particular community would prevail over the other; instead, CSS proposes emancipation and the development of common humanity as a simultaneous process.

Though possibly utopian it is a way to reach security; however, critics see the linkage between security and emancipation as a problem. It has been viewed as a dangerous assumption since it is believed to highlight the focus on security and result in unnecessary securitization. Booth too argues that it is unhelpful to securitize but that the security agenda needs to be broadened (Booth, 2007:163). Also, certain issues are security issues for someone and there is no real reason for why those should be kept off the agenda (Booth, 1997:111). This is above all true for the victims, there is a great difference between whether the threat one is experiencing is allowed onto the security agenda, or merely depicted as a problem for “women’s studies” (Booth, 2007:159). Nonetheless, this study does not want to victimize women, instead it believes that women themselves have agency and the capability of deciding whether or not they want to go through with an abortion. However, it seeks to emphasize the width of the problem of not having legal access to abortion by presenting it as a security threat.

This thesis uses Critical Security Studies as part of its theoretical framework since it agrees with the general assumptions made, which form part of the critical security agenda CSS puts forth. The framework provided by CSS allows for the exploration of abortion as a security issue whilst too promoting the analysis of the process of decriminalization. Moreover, Critical Security Studies too proposes that merely observing is not enough but that it is vital to move beyond interpretation and proposing real change, which is what the investigation of the NGOs in Nicaragua will attempt to do. In the endeavor of achieving this, CSS will be paired with human security. The analysis will attempt to broaden and deepen the conception of security, whilst asserting that the individual is the ultimate referent for security.

## 3.2 HUMAN SECURITY

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The political importance of security has been enormous during the past fifty years. Security as a term signals priority, which is another sign of its importance in politics (Sheehan, 2005:1-2). As mentioned, for a long time security was primarily linked to the use of military statecraft but during the 1980s attempts were made to create a more inclusive approach to security. Nonetheless, it was mainly after the end of the Cold War which real efforts could be devoted to promote any kind of security which was not related to the use of military statecraft (ibid, 43).

One of the most prominent scholars in promoting a different view of security is Barry Buzan with his broader security agenda. Broader in the sense that security is not considered as only a matter of the military domain but also pertaining to other sectors. In the work of Buzan the referent for security is the individual, which is different from previous assumptions where all focus had been on maintaining national security (ibid, 44). The broadening of the agenda meant that security threats faced by individuals no longer had to be dealt with through the state but could be directly addressed. In addition, the broader agenda made it possible to focus on threats to security which were not being met by state policies, as well as threats to particular groups in society (ibid, 56).

The increased focus on the individual resulted in the development of the concept of human security, which made individuals' security a priority and clearly departed from the dominating traditional approach to security which was statist and militarist (Bellamy & McDonald, 2002:373). When the concept started emerging, much thanks to Pakistani development leader Mahbub al Haq, it was intrinsically linked to development. In addition, it meant increasing the conventional concern of security from physical violence to including: income security, food security, health security, community/identity security, environmental security and political freedom (Gasper, 2005:223).

Traditionally, the legitimacy of the state has rested in the state's ability to control its territory but nowadays the legitimacy of the state is instead dependent on the support of the citizens, a support which is easiest granted through the fulfillment of human security (Newman, 2010:79). The state is seen as the main provider of human security and should thus fulfill human rights standards and offer welfare to its citizens. In some countries human security is taken for granted but there are many countries where it is not provided, or where certain aspects of it are neglected. Sometimes because the state does not have the capacity or the financial means, sometimes because the state does not care. Therefore, a human security perspective opposes the pursuit of the state to protect itself; it disregards the security dilemma of traditional security and instead emphasizes the survival dilemma of the people. The goal of human security is to ensure survival, meet basic needs and uphold human dignity for all people. This translates into promoting freedom from fear and freedom from want, which is the same as ensuring protection and empowerment (Hudson, 2005:163).

Although scholars have had a difficult time agreeing on a definition of human security, and still today have not reached consensus, the following quote summarizes the two integral parts of it: "Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity" (Sheehan, 2005:59). The fulfillment of basic human needs is part of human security but it is not only about mere existential survival, it is about being able to lead a dignified life where one is able to make one's own decisions (ibid, 81). The focus on not only existing but actually living is the result of the infusion of human rights into the concept. In essence, basic needs and human rights are fairly similar, with the exception that human rights grants the individual with greater agency and implies that there is a legal obligation to fulfill alleged rights (Gasper, 2008:35).

The lack of a universal definition of human security has been its main point of critic. It is either defined as too broad which makes it difficult to transform the concept into policy guidelines, or it is too narrow to take into consideration the actual threats faced by people today. Human security might be considered to be a difficult concept to apply, especially in its broadest definition. Nonetheless, it did

not take much time from the human security agenda had been introduced until the Millennium Development Goals had been created, which points to the fact that a broad definition not necessarily is too broad to be transformed into guidelines (Gasper, 2005:237). This thesis will use the broad definition of human security, which includes all threats to human integrity, because it considers that excluding some threats while including others is a far more problematic issue (ibid, 82). Likewise, there has been a tendency from the field to overlook the gendered aspects of security. When the word human is used as the overarching concept which includes both men and women, the masculine and the feminine, masculinity has a tendency to define the concept. Therefore, when specific concerns of women's security are not taken into account, the concept of human security might turn into a mere expression of the masculine (Hudson, 2005:157). This has taken place regardless if the interpretation has been broad or narrow, but this thesis argues that a broader approach both serves the development of human security and the development of complete inclusion of gender dimensions.

Human security is an interesting concept and the possibility of focusing on the needs of individuals and their experienced insecurity is a valuable addition to the thinking about security. By examining abortion as a human security issue its potential part in the security agenda can be determined and the inclusion of aspects into human security can be explored.

### 3.3 CRITICAL SECURITY STUDIES AND HUMAN SECURITY

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As the reader will have noticed by now, CSS and human security are similar in many aspects. Still, they have been fairly negligent to one and other. The analytical part makes use of both of the approaches and shows how they together

heighten awareness of what the concept of security involves and brings about both policy relevance and conceptual intellect. The two perspectives are used to stress abortion as a security issue and its place in the security agenda. Nonetheless, they are not completely integrated but rather represent two viewpoints with the aim of outlining for how they support abortion as a security issue. There have been attempts by various scholars to merge Critical Security Studies and human security together in the concept of critical human security studies, for example by Edward Newman who in his article “Critical human security studies” proposes a way of combining the two approaches. He argues that both of them have plenty to learn from each other and suggests that combining them might be the only way forward. Though, my theoretical approach to the topic does not necessarily build on Newman’s assumptions it agrees with the proposition that combining the two can be a way of achieving a both critical and policy relevant contribution to the field of security.

What is most apparent is the common idea of the individual as the ultimate referent for security, as well as how both Critical Security Studies and human security challenge the traditional state-centric approach to security. Likewise, they agree that the security agenda needs to be broadened and deepened (Newman, 2010:77). In the same way as CSS includes the normative concept of emancipation, human security is normative as such. It believes that there is an ethical responsibility to focus on the individual’s need for security and to ensure that human rights are universally recognized. This viewpoint signals that human security includes a commitment to solidarity, similar to those made by CSS regarding emancipation and common humanity (ibid, 78).

Nonetheless, there is one important difference and that is Critical Security Studies’ pledge to be Critical, as compared to the problem-solving nature of human security. The field of human security has chosen an untheoretical approach in an attempt to achieve higher policy relevance. This in turn makes CSS doubtful of human security and has suspected that it is merely a tool for states and governments. Moreover, the neglect from human security to be critical and rather

use a background in development than one in security studies has at times alienated CSS from human security (ibid, 77-78).

In order to combine the two there are obstacles to overcome but the ambition is that it will result in human security being able to become more critical whilst it is aspired that a manner of being both critical and policy relevant will be envisioned. For CSS, human security could be the tool it needs to become more practical and transfer its theoretical engagements into real-life strategies. For the topic of the thesis it will mean that abortion will be promoted as a human security issue while critically examining the structural wrongs causing the security threat and investigating how change is attempted to be brought about.

### 3.4 THEORETICAL SUMMARY

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The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of Critical Security Studies and human security. They are both being used for the purpose of scrutinizing the inclusion of abortion as a human security issue. Firstly, abortion will be analyzed by human security and it will be outlined for why it should be considered a human security issue, as to respond to the research question. Secondly, CSS will be applied to analyze the work of the NGOs in Nicaragua and investigate how the work to decriminalize abortion can be considered to be carried out according to the critical security agenda; explicitly, to what extent is the work carried out in line with Critical Security thinking with the purpose of including abortion on the security agenda.

When presenting abortion as a human security issue a broad definition of human security will be used, as it is considered more appropriate for the scope of the thesis. Furthermore, the exploration of abortion as a human security issue will

be concentrated around the integral parts of human life and dignity, as well as investigating its linkage to human rights and empowerment.

With the purpose of examining to what extent the NGOs work according to the critical security agenda, the analysis will be structured with the help of concepts from CSS. For a critical security agenda, CSS proposes that there are two important steps, broadening and deepening the perception of security. This is the prerequisite for being able to name a new security issue and therefore it is natural that these two assumptions will be discovered in relation to the work of the NGOs. Furthermore, it is important to outline for the pursuit of security, since it is suggested that abortion is a security issue. Thus, attempting to decriminalize abortion would equal pursuing security. Likewise, emancipation is seen as deeply related to security and is one of the most distinguishing features of Critical Security Studies. For that reason, emancipation is another of the concepts which will be brought up in the analysis. Therefore, the critical security agenda will in this paper be interpreted as composed of the concepts mentioned, with the purpose of investigating security.

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## 4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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I chose to conduct a field study for my thesis since the research problem revolves around the work carried out by different non-governmental organizations in Nicaragua. Thanks to having been awarded the Minor Field Study scholarship, which is granted by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, I was able to realize my field study. The starting point for which methods to use became the possibility to interact with the organizations and get an overview of their work. The methods applied to the investigation are interviews and participant observation. Interviews because it allowed me to get firsthand information from the organizations themselves and participant observation because it enhances the understanding for the context in which the research problem is situated.

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### 4.1 INTERVIEWS

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Qualitative interviews are increasingly used as a method within the social sciences and have along with other qualitative methods gained importance since the 1980s (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:27). A qualitative method will focus on a subjective experience, they are not positivist and do not result in exact numbers. Qualitative interviews are commonly used to identify certain characteristics, in this case the methods used by the NGOs (Starrin, 1994:19, 23).

There is not one single way of conducting an interview instead it is a skill which takes time learning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:33). At many times it would have been useful to have a guide on how to conduct the perfect interview

but I became increasingly aware that what is necessary is practice. With time one learns a lot about interviewing and there is not only one manner in which to conduct interviews. Nevertheless, the interviews which form part of the primary material for this thesis have all been carried out in a similar manner. I will account for the process as such, from preparing the interviews to interpreting the results.

After being decided on conducting interviews, the first step to take is to find and contact people to interview, in my case it meant contacting organizations which I wanted to interview and then relying on them to forward my e-mail or my call to a suitable person. The organizations I have interviewed mainly fall under the category of feminist organizations. Some of them work more generally with women's rights as connected to human rights; others focus on sexual and reproductive rights and others on the full participation of women. I started contacting organizations as early as two months before I left for Nicaragua, then continued with one month before, the first week on location and then continuously throughout my stay. All in all, when I contacted the organizations had very little effect on the probability of being able to interview them. Some organizations responded swiftly whereas others not.

Another step to carry out before actually interviewing is to decide on which questions to ask.<sup>1</sup> It is helpful to organize the questions or the themes one wants to bring up in a order which starts with more general topics and then when the interviewee starts feeling comfortable it is time to introduce the more sensitive questions (Dalen, 2007:31). Regarding my study, all the people I interviewed where accustomed to talking about abortion and I did not have to be particularly careful. However, had I interviewed people on the street then abortion would be one of those topics which need to be presented with care. In terms of the actual questions, it is important that they are not leading questions and that they are clearly formulated. It is imperative to take into consideration that some topics might be too sensitive and that others might require certain knowledge that the interviewee does not have (ibid, 32).

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<sup>1</sup> My interview questions can be found in the appendix.

When I conducted my interviews I took care to always inform my interviewees about the thesis I was writing as to receive their informed consent regarding the use of their answers. The interviewees were always given the opportunity to be anonymous in their answers, as well as to decline being recorded. In addition, I gave the interviewees the possibility to ask questions about the thesis and the interview, both before and after the interview. These are all ways of making sure that the interviewee knows what he/she is participating in and to make sure that he/she is comfortable with the situation (Madison, 2005:114-115).

On two occasions I was not ultimately responsible for organizing the interview, or more so the interviewee. On one occasion a woman I interviewed set an interview up with another organization, which I was very thankful for. At another occasion the woman I was supposed to interview instead had me interviewing one of her co-workers. On both of these occasions I got the opportunity to reflect over how the interview might be affected when the interviewee had not accepted to me but to a co-worker or a fellow organization, something which might increase the possibility that the interviewee would feel obliged to participate (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:87-88). I did not notice anything particular about these two interviews and was of course granted their informed consent before starting the interview; nonetheless, I had not been responsible for organizing the interview with those two people.

Interviewing is a time consuming method, even if few of the interviews lasted for more than one hour the work leading up to an interview and the work which continuous when the recording stops take its time. After having performed an interview follows the process of transcribing the interview which is a long process (Dalen, 2007:65). The time of transcription is the time when the researcher realizes that the background noise makes it difficult to figure out certain parts of the interview. This happened to me several times and on a couple of occasions, the sounds of phones ringing, high heels clicking and the cars from outside made certain sentences impossible to grasp in their totality. Although, the background

sound spoiled a sentence here and there it should not be considered a problem but merely one of those things that happens when using interviews as a method.

After having conducted the interviews and transcribed the data it is time to do the actual analysis. In the case of my study I familiarized myself with the results and compared the interviews as to find patterns (ibid, 69). I studied the ways in which they described their work and the methods they mentioned to discover which were the most commonly mentioned. When I had all the methods figured out I could start analyzing how they were connected. This connection was primarily investigated in terms of the purpose of the method, to whom it was directed and what kinds of results were aspired.

When doing interviews it is necessary to keep in mind that the more interviews one conduct, the more knowledge one accumulates. This might affect the interviews, since when one is performing the last interview one knows much more than when the first one was carried out (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:126). It will have an effect on the person conducting the interviews because certain answers may no longer come as a surprise, certain issues will already have been contemplated and good follow-up questions thought of. I do think the time aspect affected my interviews in the sense that I got a better capacity to analyze them with time, because the more time I spent in Nicaragua did not only mean more interviews but a better understanding for the context in which the NGOs are working.

The issue which I spent the most time contemplating is definitely the one on how many interviews one should conduct. It is essential that there is a balanced amount, in order to be able to make generalizations and to not be swamped by material which would unable well-grounded interpretations. Just as with interviews in general there is not a perfect answer, instead one simply needs to do the amount of interviews which is required to be able to answer the question. The idea is that one conducts interviews until a point is reached where the interviews start to sound repetitive and not much new information is collected from performing another interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:129). An ordinary study normally contains between five and 25 interviews, the amount depending

primarily on time and resources (ibid, 130). My study consists of interviews with 11 different organizations and in total I interviewed 13 people. I am content with the amount of interviews and during the last two interviews I did experience that little new material was added to the study. Nonetheless, there were two organizations I wanted to interview due to them being influential. However, my phone calls and e-mails gave no results and I had to accept that they were not interested.

When using interviews as a main method the interviewees are the biggest asset but they could potentially be an obstruction as well. The information gathered from an interview is all based on what they say. In extension, this could limit the study because the interviewee might forget to mention something, decide to not mention something, feel embarrassed about something or not want to reveal things which place them or their organization in a bad light (Madison, 2005: 114-115). It is not easy to know if an interviewee is obstructing the interview by the way they phrase themselves and what they neglect to mention. When performing the interviews I have felt as if my interviewees were sincere and trying to answer my questions accurately. Nearly all of them have been very outspoken and not afraid to mention things which in theory could complicate their work in Nicaragua. In addition, they have mentioned rather scarce results, being careful not to overstate the effect of their work, which points to the fact that they are not attempting to put their organization in a favorable light. However, I cannot know if any of the interviewees forgot to tell me something during the interview.

To carry out interviews in a different culture than one's own can be troublesome, because it takes time to figure out the norms of communication within that particular society (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009:160). It is true that it takes time to understand the norms of communication and I cannot say that I perfected it. Nevertheless, considering that the interviews were about a topic well-known to the interviewee and because at least the majority of the people I interviewed had been in similar situations before I felt that I managed to avoid mishaps. I conducted all my interviews in Spanish, without an interpreter. I certainly made some language mistakes but I always had the support of my

interviewees who never seemed to mind. My level of fluency in Spanish is good and although conducting interviews in Spanish was a new experience I never felt that it limited my results.

Conducting interviews is a way of engaging with reality and open up for the possibility to reach conclusions which might result in policy suggestions (Booth, 1997:114). Interviewing enables the study of concrete examples and a direct interaction with those experiencing it. By investigating the work carried out and the results reached by the various non-governmental organizations in Nicaragua it becomes possible to reach beyond theoretical knowledge and discover the reality of insecurity, as well as if the reality concerning the criminalization of abortion in Nicaragua is appropriate to be put on the human security agenda.

## 4.2 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

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Participant observation is a qualitative method which more commonly belongs to the field of anthropology and sociology. In its original shape it is an extensive method where the researcher interacts with the subjects of study for a longer period of time and writes rigorous field notes about what is happening (Gillespie & Michelson, 2011:261-262). In the study presented in this paper, participant observation has not been used to capture a complete culture but instead to investigate the dynamics concerning the work of NGOs. I have acted as a participant observer when I have been invited to activities organized by the organizations, such as educational sessions and demonstrations. Nonetheless, being in Nicaragua during the entirety of the study I have neither been removed from the field and the structure of society has been present also during my spare time. In relation to the topic and the purpose of broadening and deepening the conception of security, participant observation is used to examine how culturally

sustained ideas of security are being reproduced and thus naturalized, while exploring how these ideas are challenged.

As the name entails, both participation and observation is required when carrying out the method. However, it is not explicitly stated to what extent and it is left to the researcher to create his/her own balance between the two (Behar, 1996:5). The balance between participating and observing is rarely fixed during the whole study, since some activities might require a greater part of participation than others, just as other events might require a higher frequency of observation (Burgess, 2006:301). The possibility to create one's own combination of participation and observation is a great advantage of the method and I myself have participated and observed to various degrees, for example when participating in a demonstration I chose to participate to a high degree, in order to experience the environment more intensely.

There is no doubt that the use of participant observation enriched my understanding for the work the organizations do; in addition, it enhanced my understanding for Nicaragua and enabled me to see the context in which the work of the NGOs takes place. One of the main advantages with participant observation is the firsthand experience of the situation one wants to analyze, making it unnecessary to assert to speculation (Becker, 1996:58-59, 61). For this reason, it works complimentary to the use of interviews. I have not had to take my interviewees' word for the situation in Nicaragua. Conversely, the interviewees are arguably the true experts on their own experiences, which suggests a problem for the researcher of assigning importance to certain events experienced, since they might be interpreted differently by those the researcher is observing (ibid, 57-58; Stein, 2006:69). Therefore interviews also work complimentary to participant observation.

Anthropology did in many senses start with a curiosity about 'the other', about an unknown culture (Lewin, 2006:1). It is not possible to escape the fact that anthropology historically took part in constructing the divide between West and non-West, and even though field work today at large strives to give a voice to the oppressed, it is important to be aware of the implications of the past and the

construction of the other (Abu-Lughod, 2006:154). Nonetheless, the strand of anthropology which has focused on issues of social justice and that has attempted to account for patterns of inequality has stepped away from the excuse of cultural relativism as an escape for the significance of the issues experienced by women worldwide (Lewin, 2006:2, 26).

The culture or the phenomenon studied by participant observation has often been created into the other by simplicity, because it is believed that one cannot be objective about one's own society. Therefore, to maintain one's identity as an anthropologist the culture under investigation has to be considered the other (ibid). Even if one is not doing research on one's own society the researcher might still identify with the society studied. This identification has been known to happen to the female researcher, who when observing the situation of women in a given context draw parallels to herself. However, as a researcher it is not possible to become a 'true' insider (Lewin, 2006:150). As a researcher one has to remember that there is a difference between being part of a social reality and being there for research purposes, the researcher for example has outside experiences and other points of reference (Fielding, 2006:290). In relation to my study I had the experience of being from a country where abortion has been legal under all circumstances since 1974.

Just as gaining informed consent from the interviewees, it is important to make certain considerations when implementing participant observation. However, the conduct can be a little different. When I participated in the demonstration on the International Women's Day not every single person there was aware of the fact that I was writing a thesis on the subject of abortion. As noted by several researchers, the results can depend on whether the researcher is known or not (Stein, 2006:70). Nevertheless, I did not feel that my presence had any effect on the behavior of those I observed during the demonstration, primarily because of the large amount of people present and the public nature of the event. At other events I was introduced to those I wanted to observe and then often had a moment to talk about my study.

Pairing Critical Security Studies and human security with participant observation is suitable, since it makes it possible to take a closer look at structural problems and oppressive attitudes. It becomes a possibility to see the workings of security in practice and thus discover the link between security in theory and in practice (Booth, 2007:29). By observing oppressive behavior and structures, understanding for them will be deepened and change is possible. Therefore, the use of participant observation will strive to highlight which these oppressive structures and actions are and how NGOs in Nicaragua are attempting to counteract them (ibid, 30).

#### 4.3 METHODOLOGICAL SUMMARY

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In essence, as idealistic as CSS and human security may be, the method of interviews and participant observation provide an interaction with reality. The methodology will strengthen the thesis in the sense that the work towards emphasizing the access to abortion as part of the security agenda can be pinpointed. By the use of two qualitative methods it is possible to develop the analysis at the level of the individual, guided by subjective experiences and the structure of the society in which the individuals find themselves. Performing interviews and participant observation enable the analysis to be carried out in the experienced conditions of insecurity as well as providing a connection with those experiencing the insecurity. This connection promotes a further understanding whilst it makes it possible to examine the structures which determine the perception of security in Nicaragua. Consequently, it becomes possible to explore how the NGOs are in fact working to alternate the perception of security and initiating a movement towards the inclusion of abortion as a security issue.

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## 5. THE RIGHT TO ABORTION AS A HUMAN SECURITY CONCERN

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In the following sections the reasons for why abortion should be considered a human security concern will be discussed. The arguments are divided into two different categories: basic needs and the empowerment of women. Both these two categories are representative for human security, basic needs represents freedom from fear and is the part which deals with survival and human rights. Empowerment of women is interpreted as freedom from want and is about the inclusion of gender issues in the aspect of human security. In addition, arguments which might hinder the inclusion of abortion will be discussed and hopefully proven to be irrelevant.

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### 5.1 BASIC NEEDS

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An integral aspect of human security is survival, in the case of abortion it becomes a question of whose survival: The survival of the woman, the survival of the fetus or the survival of mankind. In countries where therapeutic abortion is prohibited, the survival of the women is threatened. Not even when an abortion would save her life can it be performed – endangering her survival in the most literal sense. Likewise, even when abortion is illegal it is being performed, because women chose to abort regardless of the law. However, they have to have an unsafe abortion, which might lead to death. Making abortion legal is a small step towards decreasing the suffering of women (Grimes et al, 2006:6). Women would not die when a therapeutic abortion could have saved them, have a clandestine abortion that leaves them bleeding to death or commit suicide because they do not want a child. Not having access to safe and legal abortion jeopardizes

the survival of women in many ways. For example, in Nicaragua about 30 women die each year because they could not have a therapeutic abortion (Quintana 2012, interview). Moreover, suicides have increased in adolescent girls since the complete ban on abortion was introduced in Nicaragua (Jiménez 2012, interview). Worldwide 50 000 women die each year due to unsafe and illegal abortions, countless others suffer the consequences of living in a country where abortion is criminalized. It seems incredible that the potential survival of these women should not pass as human security (Lerner, 2012).

Opponents to abortion are often focused on the “suffering baby,” meaning the unborn fetus. Just as abortion should be an aspect of human security due to the survival of women, many pro-life groups focus on the survival of the fetus. For example, they commonly argue that life begins at conception, meaning that the fetus would also have the right to life. The organization Human Rights Watch let those authorized to interpret international law investigate the right to abortion and the question of whether the life of the woman could take precedence over that of the fetus. They reached the conclusion that women are entitled to decide over their own bodies, also if the decision they wish to make is to have an abortion (Goldberg, 2009:115). In essence, the focus on the survival of the fetus is often a result of misinformation, where the fetus is called baby and photos of dead almost full-grown fetuses are passed off as aborted (Larracoechea 2012, interview). Therefore, the misinformation concerning the nature of abortion is a main obstacle in including it as a part of human security. Likewise, sympathy for the fetus is known to have taken precedence over respecting women’s fundamental right to their own bodies.

Today abortion coexists uneasily with national security which is visible in the case of Nicaragua. (Hudson, 2005:155). It is difficult to bring up abortion on the security agenda because the continuity of the human species depends on women having children. Already in 1987 President Daniel Ortega emphasized this uneasy coexistence when he said that women had a duty to Nicaragua, they needed to have babies to replace the men killed during the Civil War (Molyneux, 2001:5). Women needed to have many children to strengthen the national security since the

smaller the population the easier it would be for the United States to wage a war and win it (ibid, 69). The women had a duty to Nicaragua, but their country did not have any duty to the women. This stresses the need to view abortion as a human security issue, so that the governments of the world will realize that they have duties to their female citizens. Our species will not become extinct because abortion is legalized but it might help women to be liberated and not have their bodies viewed as a means to an end.

If human security is, as declared by the United Nations: “a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced” (Sheehan, 2005:77). Then it is also “a girl who did not have to carry and give birth to her rapist’s child” and “a woman who did not have to go through with an unsafe back-alley abortion.” However, and even more importantly, human security should also be defined as “a woman who was not denied her right to choice and forced into maternity.” When using this type of definition of human security, abortion becomes the solution to the issue. Just as a vaccine prevents disease, access to food prevents hunger and political freedom breeds democracy – access to safe and legal abortion protects and empowers women and girls.

As previously mentioned, the Millennium Development Goals are human security issues made into a policy. All the countries of the world have agreed to the UN’s Millennium Development Goals, number five is to improve maternal health. The goal is to between 1990 and 2015 reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio and to achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health (UN, 2010). Unsafe abortion accounts for 1-49 percent of maternal mortality worldwide, in Latin America 17 percent of all maternal deaths result from unsafe abortion (Grimes et al, 2006:3). Thus, eliminating unsafe abortion would be a step towards reaching the goal, because reducing maternal mortality is the MDG which has proven the most difficult to reach. It is necessary that the need for safe and legal abortion is realized and that its potential effects in lowering maternal mortality are recognized. As emphasized by UN Special Rapporteur Anand Grover: “Barriers arising from criminal laws and other laws

and policies affecting sexual and reproductive health must therefore be immediately removed in order to ensure full enjoyment of the right to health” (UN, 2011:2).

As mentioned, human rights are linked to and included into the concept of human security. Firstly, the access to a therapeutic abortion is increasingly accepted as a human right by international law, even though this is not a well-known development. For example, the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa is the first treaty which specifies the right to a therapeutic abortion (Goldberg, 2009:16). Secondly, when not providing access to abortion a number of human rights are being violated. The complete prohibition of abortion is in clear violation of the rights to life, health and religious freedom, as well as the right to be free from inhuman and cruel treatment. In addition, it violates the rights of the child in the case of the right to health of girls. (UN, 2011:7-8). Moreover, it has been determined by CEDAW that neglecting to provide a health service that only women need is discriminatory and that the criminalization of abortion should be removed (Grimes et al, 2006:9). Just as it is discriminatory to not provide a health service only required by women, it is discriminatory to imprison women for a crime that only women can commit (Cook, 1995:264).

The rights mentioned fall under the category of basic needs and are in any case included in human security. The rights to life, to health and to freedom from torture are intimately linked to survival, but in the case of abortion also to dignity. Women and girls living in countries with restrictive abortion laws, and especially those in countries like Nicaragua with a complete prohibition, have in many cases been deprived of their dignity before their health and survival is being threatened. It is nothing dignified about seeking a clandestine abortion or attempting to carry out the procedure single-handedly, but it is the only option when abortion is not provided. Denying women their rights in relation to abortion further signals the disadvantaged position of women. In comparison to other issues faced by women, the access to abortion might seem to be of lesser importance but it is at the heart of the problem. Prohibiting abortion denies women the control over their own bodies in a way which prevents them from being fully empowered (Goldberg,

2009:11). Likewise, women are not only discarded in the case of abortion, generally throughout the world women are granted less access to their human rights than men, to an extent which makes it a human rights crisis (ibid).

## 5.2 EMPOWERING WOMEN

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Just as human rights are facing a crisis in terms of granting women their rights to the same extent as men, human security run the same risk. It is obvious that gender plays a role in constructing the dominant thinking about security and a masculine view often gets the upper hand. With human security, human have often been translated into the masculine (Hudson, 2005:157). For example, the right to life tends to be constructed in a masculine way since men mainly have had to fear threats to their life by direct violence or execution (Booth, 2007:288). Thus, the threat to women's life by for example unsafe abortion has not gotten the same attention or been assigned the same importance.

Even though speaking about security threats does entail an aspect where someone is considered a victim, there is an importance in including abortion as an aspect of human security without victimizing the women and the girls. Yes, when a raped woman suffers because she cannot have an abortion she is a victim in the sense that she experienced a crime. When an abortion in Nicaragua is needed to save the life of a woman but not performed because of the law, she is a victim to that law. Nonetheless, it is essential to not use the concept of human security as a way of emphasizing female vulnerability and inferior position through the victimization of her; instead women need to be looked at as subject or agents of change (Hudson, 2005:170). This means that the necessity lies in detecting the need for human security within the context of society and bringing it about

through a combination of protection and empowerment, not only by setting out to look for suffering women (ibid).

In addition, when women are victimized abortion might be placed under restriction. To only consider the women which are victims as worthy of an abortion perpetuates a view of women where some are good and some are bad (Larracoechea 2012, interview). A view where the poor raped woman that is dying from an ectopic pregnancy should be granted an abortion but the woman who got pregnant from a one-night stand should not, because she is not worthy. This type of argumentation is common when talking about abortion and might hinder its inclusion in the concept of human security. However, it should be considered the result of a power structure which argues that there are good and bad women. Oppressive power structures can result into structural violence, meaning that one's life becomes threatened because of the conditions imposed by the structure. Due to the current structures of society, women are affected by structural violence (Sheehan, 2005:123-124). This is visible in the case of access to abortion, because the life of any woman can be threatened by an unsafe pregnancy or a clandestine abortion.

When human security is defined broadly, many issues can be included in the concept. Therefore, a broader agenda might cause for doubt as to what should be a security issue and what should be interpreted as a problem (Booth, 2007:163). One could consider the need for an abortion to be the result of a frivolous, careless act and that the woman has herself to blame. However, it is not as simple as it seems. Women also get pregnant because they did not know they could say no, because their partner refuses to use protection, because they do not understand how you get pregnant, because they were raped. There are just as many reasons to why a woman would want an abortion as there are explanations to why she finds herself in that position. Fact is that even if abortion is illegal women have them; therefore, decriminalizing abortion is a minimal response to the reality experienced by many women (Goldberg, 2009:102). It is a way of saving lives and increasing equality to a minimum cost.

The ban on abortion often finds its legitimacy in ‘the will of the people’. Ortega has for example used it as his explanation for why the complete criminalization was introduced (Blandón 2012, interview). Opponents to abortion argue that enforcing legal abortion would threaten the security of the identity of the community. This pattern is noticeable everywhere; the demand for women’s rights and abortion is conflated with imperialism or westernization (Goldberg, 2009:4). The role of women is being fought over globally, with universalist claims on the one side, finding support in human rights and female autonomy and empowerment, and cultural relativism on the other side claiming tradition and resisting modernity (ibid, 5, 8). Abortion has come to symbolize the decline of religious authority, foreign pop culture and familial chaos, but to give into cultural relativism would be to ridicule all those women who are clearly suffering (ibid, 9). Fact is that when looking into the issue of abortion it becomes undoubtedly clear how the struggle between modernity and tradition is literally fought on the terrain of women’s bodies and over their right to self-determination (ibid, 5). Human security should not deny communities their rights but legalizing abortion does not oblige women to abort, it merely provides them with the opportunity. By giving women the possibility of choice the idea that women have agency and can make their own decisions is supported, which increases their independence.

By controlling women’s reproductive functions, which a ban on abortion does, women themselves are being controlled (Cook, 1995:270). Moreover, as UN documentation based on worldwide research has shown, the ability to control the timing and the number of births is a way of hindering women from exercising the human rights they are entitled to (ibid). Thus, one can see that the right to abortion is a part of a bigger picture. When neglecting to provide abortion, women’s oppression increases and their possibilities to enjoy the human rights they are entitled to are lowered. Consequently, if abortion would be completely legal worldwide it is fair to assume that women would be less oppressed and enjoy their human rights to a higher extent. Women’s empowerment is equally important in ensuring human security as protection from threat which is one reason for why the

access to safe and legal abortions would result in an augmented human security for women (Hudson, 2005:163).

#### 5.4 THE INCLUSION OF ABORTION AS A HUMAN SECURITY ISSUE

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To summarize, survival is more than a basic need; it is the prerequisite for our existence. Making abortion legal could save 50 000 lives and improve those of the 20 million women who have an illegal abortion each year. Calling something a security issue signals its priority, something which is not that popular when it comes to abortion or reproductive rights, or in many cases even women's situations. That is why it is necessary to realize that the prohibition of abortion is just as real a threat to security as any other. The only difference is that it is only experienced by women, and foremost disadvantaged women who cannot afford to arrange to go somewhere where abortion is legal. Making abortion legal would not solve the underlying problems, such as sexual violence, but it will ensure that women's insecurity is not enhanced by a health problem, socio-economic difficulties or the lack of education.

To include abortion as a human security issue is a way of saving lives by providing safe abortions and lowering maternal mortality. Furthermore, it would serve to recognize that women too are entitled to fundamental rights such as the right to the own body and the right to decide over one's own reproduction. It is probable that with access to abortion women would experience equality and independence to a greater extent. Thus, abortion should be an issue of human security since it is both an aspect of survival and empowerment.

This paper considers the right to abortion an integral part of human security and representative of the concept since it brings together survival, dignity and human rights which are all at the core of human security. Thus, the analysis has

now been opened up for the application of Critical Security Studies, as to further investigate the dimensions of abortion as a human security issue.

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## 6. WORKING TO ACHIEVE THE DECRIMINALIZATION OF ABORTION

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When the complete prohibition of abortion was introduced the women's movement in Nicaragua had to evaluate their standpoints and their opinions regarding abortion. Thus, in common for all of the organizations are that they are struggling for the decriminalization of therapeutic abortion. In addition, there is a vast demand within the organizations to include abortion by choice but due to the situation in Nicaragua the NGOs primarily focus on therapeutic abortion.

As outlined for in the theoretical framework, the various methods deployed by the organizations in order to achieve the decriminalization of abortion will be considered in the light of CSS. The methods will be outlined for in three different categories, structures as to allowing for the analysis to be developed in the same way as a critical security agenda is. By focusing the analysis according to key concepts of Critical Security Studies it will be investigated to what extent the work of the NGOs can be accounted for by CSS. In addition, the use of CSS will further highlight why abortion should be viewed as a security issue. Emphasis will be put on the way in which the process towards decriminalization can be seen as a process towards having abortion included on the security agenda.

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### 6.1 DEEPENING THE PERCEPTION OF SECURITY

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When the NGOs are analyzing and exposing which assumptions are hindering the decriminalization of abortion they are exploring attitudes and

behavior towards security, as well as how the current security agenda has been shaped. Deepening is used as a first step of interrogating the current agenda and enabling a change. It serves to give a clearer picture of what is limiting the security agenda and which are the fundamental reasons for how the perception of security has been constructed. In Nicaragua this is mainly done through interrogating the structures of society and analyzing how they are part of setting the security agenda, and thus avoiding that abortion is considered a security issue.

### 6.1.2 QUESTIONING THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

In Nicaragua there are primarily two underlying structures which counteract the progress towards decriminalization: those two structures are religion and patriarchy. Nicaragua is a very religious country where over 90 percent of the population is members of a religious denomination, about 73 percent are Catholics but the evangelic church is increasing and currently approximately 15 percent of the population is members (Nicaragua.com). The church is not in favor of decriminalizing abortion; instead it is a keen supporter of the complete ban. As explained by several of the organizations I interviewed, the church has the power to misinform or conceal information about abortion. The priests can use their pulpits when they find it suitable and spread whatever message they wish about abortion and people will listen to them and believe them, because they are spreading the message of God (Larracoechea 2012, interview).

The power of the church has been manifested in various campaigns, they too organize marches to show support for the prohibition and thanks to their large resources they can carry out vast lobbying (ibid). The Catholic Church collected signatures to prove that the Nicaraguan people are in favor of the criminalization of therapeutic abortion. A woman I interviewed had signed because she listened to her church and did not know what a therapeutic abortion was. The word abortion is infected and brings about all awful images presented by the church. Therefore,

a lot of people signed without knowing what they were signing, in the words of Petrona, she and others signed their own death sentences (Estrada 2012, interview). Thus, religion to a large extent has the power to control the opinions regarding certain themes and forms part in setting the agenda. As previously mentioned, it is largely believed that the complete prohibition of abortion was a consequence of Ortega's plan to please the Catholic Church who never had supported him. Thus, the power of religion in Nicaragua is so large that it has the power to influence legislation and determine how abortion is perceived.

Religion forms part in reinforcing another structure in Nicaraguan society which actively hinders the decriminalization of abortion, namely patriarchy. Religion and patriarchy support each other since they both believe in traditional gender roles and the core family. Due to the continuous existence of traditional gender roles, where men work and women take care of the children, many Nicaraguan relationships are marked by an unequal distribution of power. In relation to the topic, the result of the unequal distribution is that women can find it difficult to introduce contraceptives and to say no to sexual relations. In addition, some women do not consider their sexuality in relation to pleasure but rather in relation to being pretty for their partner and satisfying his sexual needs (Meneses, N. 2012, interview).

In consequence, it is not difficult to understand why women who do not want to get pregnant do so anyways. Through patriarchy and the inferior position of women which it enforces, women lose power over their bodies as well as the possibility to make decisions concerning it. Thus, in a society marked by unequal gender relations women's bodies become the property of her partner and her possibility to make independent decisions concerning it diminishes or vanishes. Therefore, patriarchy is highlighted as an assumption of society which shapes the way in which security is being thought of. To decriminalize abortion it is necessary to confront the patriarchy; although, it is not an easy task.

Patriarchy is not only sustained by men but also by women. Mothers take part in influencing their daughters into continuing the system, for example through emphasizing the necessity in finding a man, getting married, having children and

taking care of the household (Estrada 2012, interview). Women and girls are presented with one view of their future, a view which always includes a family. In Nicaragua the role of women is intertwined with motherhood and to a great extent it is considered the role of the women to have children, woman and mother are closely connected and it is not seen as a possibility that a woman would not want to be a mother (Blandón 2012, interview).

When deepening the perception of security the NGOs are interrogating the system which has shaped the society. By analyzing the effect religion has had on society and the opinions people hold concerning abortion it becomes evident that the church is an impediment in decriminalizing abortion. Moreover, it became obvious that the power of the patriarchy which perpetuates everyday life is a powerful structure in emphasizing abortion as being unnatural. Therefore, when deepening the perception of security it becomes clear that there are two structures standing in the way for decriminalizing abortion and open up for its inclusion as a security issue.

## 6.2 BROADENING THE PERCEPTION OF SECURITY

After deepening, the second step is to broaden the perception of security. This means to broaden the security agenda by increasing the amount of issues which are considered security issues. By trying to influence the way in which abortion is viewed, it can be considered that there is an attempt to broaden the security agenda, for example through making the struggle visible and by emphasizing the support for the decriminalization.

### 6.2.1 MATERIAL, ACTIVITIES AND CAMPAIGNS

In order to inform about the consequences of the complete criminalization of abortion and to promote its decriminalization, the various NGOs have produced different kinds of materials, such as brochures, stickers and a DVD. They also arrange various activities for people interested in learning more about women's rights and the law on abortion, such as seminars and forums. Moreover, specific campaigns have been carried out by the organizations. The main purpose of this method is to make the struggle visible, to educate, to inform and to promote knowledge about abortion (Simmons 2012, interview).

Even though the material can be distributed by itself it is often done in relation to a special activity. One organization has produced a DVD about abortion which they show the different groups of people they work with, principally women and adolescents. The DVD gives a picture of the consequences of the complete prohibition in Nicaragua through interviews with organizations working for the decriminalization and people who lost a family member because of the complete prohibition. After having viewed the documentary a discussion which both promote knowledge and reflection follow (Meneses, V. 2012, interview). The DVD presents a sad reality and makes it clear that women are dying. Whilst highlighting the need for legal abortion the NGOs put an emphasis on the sufferings of women and the difficult situation caused by the complete prohibition.

I got invited to participate in an educational session in a village just outside of Managua. The session I participated in was only a startup session but for me it served to understand yet more about the problematic surrounding the decriminalization – many women are not aware of their rights and cannot express the circumstances they are living nor critic it. During the session most women remained quiet and needed a lot of convincing to say anything. Afterwards I asked the organization if the women might have felt awkward to talk in front of me but got the answer that in the rural areas “it is always like this” (field notes, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012). Therefore, for change to be possible it is necessary to provide a space for

women where they can receive education and have a possibility of reflecting on their reality. The possible reflection is a way for them to reconsider their reality and contemplate how their situation could improve.

Another part of the material is for publicity purposes, attempting to reach more people and people who are not already involved. Common publicity means such as advertising boards have been used and radio campaigns have been aired. However, on the theme of abortion it can be difficult to get permission (Quintana 2012, interview). Therefore, other means have been used, for example stickers have been produced with messages such as “I have the right to become a mother without dying.” These stickers have been put on places such as the rear end of buses and lampposts (Blandón 2012, interview). Organizations have produced t-shirts, and other material, with specific messages connected to the campaign for decriminalization (Estrada 2012, interview). Another organization produced a short play which they performed in markets and in the health clinic, among other locations. This type of material primarily serve to inform about the issue, to reach as many people as possible and to claim a space of the public for putting through the message of decriminalizing abortion (Larracoechea 2012, interview).

Abortion is a complicated topic in Nicaragua; therefore, it is necessary that the work concerning the decriminalization focuses on explaining what an abortion is, what a therapeutic abortion is and why it can be necessary, which for example has been done through the participation of medical professionals (FCAM, 2008:5). One of the main results reached by various campaigns and the education given by the NGOs is that awareness has increased concerning the topic of abortion (ibid, 7). Investigations show that around 80 percent of the population in Nicaragua can identify what an abortion is and what the difference between a therapeutic abortion and an abortion by choice is (Jiménez 2012, interview). Before the criminalization of therapeutic abortion this distinction was not well-known, many people believed that there was only one kind of abortion. The increased awareness of the difference shows a possible result of the broadening of the perception of security: the idea of all abortion being equal has been reversed. In addition, this assumption is supported by a survey conducted last year which

showed that 73.8 percent are in favor of reviewing the law on abortion and that 73.1 percent agreed that abortion is a serious problem in Nicaragua (SISMO XXVIII, 2011).

Informing, educating and reflecting on the topic of abortion, often in relation to women's rights or sexual and reproductive rights, is an important step in broadening and deepening the concept of security. Thus, when the consequences of the criminalization are explored through campaigns and activities this is a way to broaden the perception of security by providing a different view on abortion is perceived (Booth, 2005:14).

#### 6.2.2 SUPPORT FOR THE DECRIMINALIZATION

A mayor success for the movement has been the increased support from the media, which is a result from making the struggle visible. Although it can be difficult to get advertising space when it concerns abortion, the press has increasingly integrated the struggle for decriminalization of abortion as part of their reporting. Many journalists have gotten more focused on human rights, and have for example written about the fact that the Supreme Court still has not reached a sentence on the unconstitutionality of the complete prohibition of abortion (Flores 2012, interview). Even though it is still very difficult to mention abortion by choice, the media has made an effort to give a more nuanced picture of abortion. This is very important since 78.5 percent of the population mentions media as the best source for information on abortion (SISMO XXVIII, 2011). That not only the church gets the possibility to be featured in media but also the organizations working for its decriminalization gives the public better access to information and is an important part in raising awareness (Quintana 2012, interview).

Media forms an essential part in the process towards changing the way abortion is viewed. Ultimately the NGOs have had an increased impact on media

and an increased visibility through media, which is important since through media the view of abortion can be challenged. When the reality caused by the ban is exposed then the perception of it is also affected. This leads to a possibility of broadening the perception of security since the various ways of viewing abortion are developed. Thus, broadening can be achieved by enforcing the necessity of decriminalization and offering an alternative to the current perception of abortion.

The organizations have concretized the human rights violations by bringing specific cases to the light. This has been a direct way of emphasizing the danger the criminalization of abortion puts women in. One of the most “famous” cases in recent time has been that of Amalia, who unfortunately passed away in December 2011. Amalia was a 27 years old woman who discovered she had cancer when she was seven weeks pregnant. She needed chemotherapy but it would be hazardous for her fetus and due to the complete criminalization of abortion Amalia could not have an abortion. Amalia went public with her case and through the help of various NGOs her fate became known to many Nicaraguans. Due to the pressure arising, foremost from the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights, Amalia was at last given a treatment which was said not to harm her fetus; nonetheless, it did (Paiz, 2010:15-18). After eight months of pregnancy Amalia gave birth to a stillborn child. During her sickness, and after her death, the case of Amalia has shown the violations committed by the state of Nicaragua and served to draw support to the decriminalization, “because nobody wants that a woman dies” (Flores 2012, interview).

By the use of a concrete case the danger women are placed in can be emphasized in an evident manner, and the conditions of insecurity can be shown to exist. It results in a better understanding for the situation and has caused people to identify with the situation in another way. Instead of thinking that it is only women who have been careless that want to have an abortion, situations which could affect anyone are highlighted. The support for the case of Amalia emphasizes that there is strong support for saving the lives of women. When Amalia went public with her suffering she refused to settle with the solutions presented to her by the health services in Nicaragua and instead decided that she

would not let the oppression caused by the complete criminalization of abortion determine her possibility to survive.

The complete prohibition of abortion in Nicaragua drew attention worldwide, with several countries as well as international organizations firmly positioning themselves against the prohibition. The NGOs in Nicaragua have been part of raising the international awareness on the issue and have gained support for their cause. Last year the movement for decriminalization of abortion in Nicaragua handed over more than 500 000 signatures, collected internationally, which all demanded the reinstatement of therapeutic abortion (Quintana 2012, interview). Moreover, the organizations have incorporated the support granted by various UN treaties, which Nicaragua has signed and ratified, into the struggle. For example, in 2010 the UN expressed concern about the complete ban and recommended the Nicaraguan government to not only decriminalize abortion in cases where the woman's life is at stake but also in cases of rape and incest (Cortez & Ramos, 2012:22).

According to Catholics for Choice in Nicaragua, the international support for the decriminalization has had an important effect and gotten the attention of Ortega, since the critic of the ban might harm his external relations, especially when women die as a consequence of the ban (ibid). Therefore, it matters that the world is not only watching but also taking stand for the rights of women. By stressing that there are those who does not agree with the complete ban a more nuanced picture can be presented and it becomes easier to debate the subject.

When emphasizing that there is support for the decriminalization the NGOs show that the opinion put forth by the Nicaraguan government is not the only one. By stressing opinions in support for the removal of the ban, the danger caused by the prohibition and the support found in international law the NGOs are showing that decriminalization is not only necessary but supported. In relation to broadening, this implies that the reasons presented by the NGOs also are reasons for broadening the agenda.

## 6.3 THE PURSUIT OF SECURITY AND EMANCIPATION

In order to decriminalize abortion, the NGOs are defending human rights, attempting to change the structure of society and organizing mobilizations. This can be viewed as pursuit of security and emancipation since they are actions which attempt to augment security and emancipation. Initially, the idea was to present the pursuit of security and the pursuit of emancipation as two separate categories. Nevertheless, reviewing the results it became clear that distinguishing between a process towards emancipation and one towards security are close to impossible. Some of the features presented below might be possible to consider as pursuit of security to a higher degree than pursuit of emancipation, or vice versa. However, as far as the thesis is concerned there is no considerable value in presenting these degrees. Therefore, the pursuit of security and emancipation is presented as one category and through that confirming the assumption made by CSS that security and emancipation seem to be two sides of the same coin.

### 6.3.1 DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

When abortion was completely prohibited in 2006 more actors joined the struggle for abortion and foremost for its reinstatement. The complete ban had made it obvious that human rights were under attack in Nicaragua, among them the right to life, the right to the own body and the right to religious freedom. This signaled that it was necessary to act in the defense of human rights.

One of the first actions taken was several appeals for unconstitutionality sent to the Supreme Court of Justice. The first appeal for the unconstitutionality of the new law was presented on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2007. In total about 37 appeals have been presented, all signed by more than 100 people. When the penal code was revised in 2008, abortion was not taken into consideration and continued to be criminalized. Therefore, new appeals were presented on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2008. The organizations have continuously presented other material which favors the

decriminalization of therapeutic abortion to the Court; nonetheless, the Supreme Court has not been as frequent in its communication. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2009 the Court sent its latest notification to the organization CENIDH, with the purpose of letting them know that they had started examining the appeals. In July 2009 CENIDH communicated to the Court that they considered that there was a case of retardation of justice since a verdict should have been reached no later than 90 days after initiating the review of the appeals. The Court has still not responded to the appeals (Flores 2012, interview).

The NGOs in Nicaragua consider the elimination of therapeutic abortion to violate 16 different articles of the constitution. The rights granted by the constitution which were violated by the complete prohibition of abortion are the following: the right to dignity, life, health, integrity, live free from cruel and inhuman treatments, individual freedom, equality, live free from discrimination, religious freedom, freedom of thought, be protected by the state, receive true and scientific information, protection of the family, free exercise of the profession and the constitutional principal that Nicaragua is a secular country (Dixon & Hernández, 2007:16-17).

The complete ban of abortion contradicts the right to life which the organizations are setting forth in their work (Meneses, V. 2012, interview). If the worst violence is to be killed, then the biggest violation against women's reproductive rights is to let them die when their lives can be saved by a therapeutic abortion. By the organizations it is viewed as a murder permitted by the state, signaling that women's security and survival are at risk (Dixon & Hernández, 2007:28). Through the complete ban the right to life for women has become conditional and is now determined by religious, ideological, political and moral opinions. Not having access to abortion pushes women, especially poor women, to risk their lives in unsafe abortions, because although abortion is completely illegal they are still being performed (Movimiento Autónoma de Mujeres de Nicaragua, 2011). This further shows the injustice caused by the ban; it is poor women who will risk their lives and their dignity in a clandestine

abortion. Women with money can afford to pay to have a safe but illegal abortion (Morales 2012, interview).

Defending human rights is part of pursuing security and emancipation since it demands the respect for the constitution and the rights which it entitles the citizens of Nicaragua to. The struggle seeks protection in the constitution and principles of human rights. By evoking mechanisms which should keep the Nicaraguans safe, the organizations are emphasizing that they need security, and to have their rights respected.

### 6.3.2 CHANGING THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

By attempting to change the structures of society, women can be freed from the constraints of religion and patriarchy. Through challenging the churches' power to dictate how abortion is viewed, the support for decriminalization can increase. Many people believe that women who go through with abortions are bad women, that they are killers, which are ideas expressed by the churches (Romero 2012, interview). One way in which religion is being challenged is through the construction of a "new" Catholicism, a Catholicism which does not judge women for aborting. Due to the negative view of abortion presented by the Catholic Church, various organizations found it important to present another view of Catholicism where the right to choice would be recognized as well as other sexual and reproductive rights (Quintana 2012, interview).

By presenting this version of Catholicism, which is done through meeting with women and together discussing and reflecting on issues of fate while presenting the idea of right to choice, it is attempted to construct a "new era of spiritualism" (ibid). The organizations who are working with this consider it to be an integral part because "if we want to decriminalize abortion in any place and above all in our country it is very important to decriminalize the conscience" (ibid). By putting forth the possibility of both being a good Catholic and in favor of abortion the NGOs are attempting to remove the impediment religion is causing

for achieving a more liberal view on abortion. Due to the high amount of believers in Nicaragua, when working for the decriminalization of abortion it is essential to counteract the stigma concerning abortion, something which can be done by promoting a Catholicism which includes the right to abortion.

It is essential to break the influence of traditional gender roles in order to put access to abortion on the security agenda. When the purpose of women is thought of as giving birth there cannot be any circumstance when she will need, or want, an abortion. In addition, when her body becomes the property of someone else she is no longer considered to have the power to decide over it. Confronting the ideas of patriarchy is therefore a way of signaling that each woman has a value in herself and with that value comes rights, for example the right to an abortion. The idea of the “mandatory motherhood” is confronted by the organizations in Nicaragua through debating, discussing and reflecting over the topic in various forms, such as forums, seminars, debates, etc. (Larracoechea 2012, interview). Challenging a structure which ignores women’s rights and their own capability to decide for themselves and over their own bodies is necessary to be able to pursue security for women, as well as freeing them from the constraints of patriarchy. Undoubtedly, the obligation to give birth regardless of the circumstances jeopardizes the security of women, especially since many Nicaraguan women live in conditions of poverty (Dixon & Hernández, 2007:28). Thus, a structure which emphasizes mandatory motherhood puts women’s lives at risk, which is why its removal is necessary in order for security to be improved.

As mentioned, when the current system is questioned it becomes possible to deepen and broaden the understanding of security, since what previously was naturalized no longer has complete power to dictate what security is. Creating or signaling other options than the dominant system becomes a way of pursuing the type of security one is attempting to have included on the security agenda. Therefore, stepping away from the structures of patriarchy and religion is a way of pursuing security, just as it is a movement towards emancipation, since it attempts to remove the constraints which these structures are responsible for (Peoples, 2011:1116). Even though it has yet to result in the decriminalization of abortion,

thanks to the NGOs' attempts to challenge the structures in society a movement where emancipation and security reinforce one another has been initiated in Nicaragua.

### 6.3.3 MOBILIZATION

One of the methods most commonly mentioned by the organizations I interviewed is mobilizing. Mobilizations foremost occur around emblematic dates such as 8<sup>th</sup> of March (International Women's Day), 28<sup>th</sup> of May (International Day of Action for Women's Health), 28<sup>th</sup> of September (Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion in Latin America) and 25<sup>th</sup> of November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) (Larracoechea 2012, interview). These dates provide a great opportunity to hold demonstrations and to give voice to the issues the organizations work with all year. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March I got to see the demands of the feminist movement in a protest outside of the Supreme Court of Justice and during the big women's march through downtown Managua. Both of these acts of mobilization emphasized that fighting for the right to abortion is an integral part of the feminist movement of Nicaragua, and that its complete criminalization in no way has silenced the voices demanding legal access.

At 8 am I stood waiting outside of the Supreme Court of Justice, there was no-one there even though the protest was scheduled to start at 8 am. Some ten minutes later people started arriving and all in all there were probably some 150 people participating. Some of them were holding placards with different messages, the most recurrent being: "We are losing our lives because we do not get justice." The protest was at times blocking the traffic heading towards downtown Managua and at times the entrance to the Supreme Court. While holding the placards there were attempts to shouting the same key messages as showed on the placards. The main message of the protest was to demand that the Supreme Court would reach a verdict on the appeals it has received in relation to the criminalization of abortion. After demanding to be allowed to meet with the

magistrates a group of about seven people were allowed in, a short while later the group came out of the Supreme Court and at the same time the people assisting the protest started to head downtown to the demonstration (field notes, March 8<sup>th</sup> 2012).

The protest outside of the Supreme Court strived to highlight the fact that the Supreme Court still has not reached a verdict on the appeals for unconstitutionality caused by the complete prohibition of abortion. The demand was illustrated by the message that lives are being lost because justice is not achieved. The demand is connected to the worst consequence of the Court's negligence to fulfill its obligation, namely that lives are being lost. As a mean to achieve the human security which is not being provided the NGOs are protesting and making demands; nonetheless, the response they are given is close to nonexistent. Considering that the Supreme Court is closely connected to the government it becomes visible why the state cannot be left with the sole responsibility of protecting the security of its people (Booth, 1997:106). It is difficult to let the state be the only guardian of security since power tends to corrupt, which in this case can be seen since the court is not being bothered to review the appeals (Booth, 2007:205-206).

After the protest outside of the Court followed the larger Women's Day demonstration with at least a couple of thousands participating. The demonstration did not only bring up the topic of abortion but through the mottos being chanted it was clear that the right to abortion is considered an integral aspect of the women's movement. Some of the mottos were: "Attention midwife, the egg is not a chicken and the zygote is not a person," "Pro-life contaminates, why is it not exterminated?" and "Get your rosaries out of our ovaries" (field notes, March 8<sup>th</sup> 2012). The mottos clearly pinpoint parts of the dynamic concerning the theme of abortion in Nicaragua and the feminist movements' attempts to counter it. As emphasized by these, there is confusion about what should count as a life, heightened by pro-life and religious groups whose mottos emphasize that life starts at conception.

Mobilization is an essential part of the work the organizations carry out and it unites the various NGOs. Carrying out demonstrations is a loud way of making a point and showing that the feminist movement is large and active (Flores 2012, interview). Thanks to the movement's reluctance to keep their demands quiet they have achieved one very important result, although abortion is completely illegal the demand for its decriminalization has not been silenced. Initially there were worries that the complete criminalization would silence the movement but that has not happened (Meneses, V. 2012, interview). Although the complete prohibition of abortion produced a backward movement for the rights of women it served to make the women's movement more active in the area of abortion, having nothing to lose and experiencing a harsh attack on their rights they got courage to take on the topic of decriminalization (FCAM, 2008:7).

Mobilization is a key part in the struggle for decriminalization of abortion and for the advancement of women's rights in Nicaragua. The protests and demonstrations highlight that access to abortion is an essential issue and that women's lives are being jeopardized without it. When mobilizing the NGOs are doing it in pursuit of security and emancipation, although their results so far have been slim the purpose of the protests is to achieve the removal of the complete prohibition of abortion and in so doing eliminate the insecurity it causes women. When the movement mobilizes to enforce the message of lives being lost, it is in pursuit of security. However, at the same time there is an advance towards emancipation. When the organizations refuse to be silenced they are refusing to succumb to the oppression caused by the complete criminalization of abortion (Peoples, 2011:1116). Thus, the mobilization in favor of the decriminalization of abortion is part of the two-fold movement which is security and emancipation.

## 6.4 THE CRITICAL SECURITY AGENDA

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By illustrating the work of the NGOs through concepts put forth by CSS it becomes possible to determine to what extent they are working according to the critical security agenda. The aspects which have been brought up in this paper are the deepening and the broadening of the perception of security and the pursuit of security and emancipation. These concepts have been illustrated by various work methods used by the NGOs.

The results of the analysis show that the NGOs are interrogating the current structure of society and have exposed religion and patriarchy as impediments to the decriminalization of abortion. Since exposing the assumptions which shape the current agenda is part of deepening the perception of security, it is implied that the organizations are working in a similar manner. In addition, when using methods that aim to educate on abortion, make the struggle visible and show the support for the decriminalization, the organizations are broadening the perception of security. Given that they are demonstrating the negative consequences of the ban, along with the support for change, the necessity for change is promoted. Raising awareness is another tool in broadening the agenda, the more people which support the decriminalization the more likely its inclusion becomes.

When speaking in terms of pursuing security and emancipation it has been made visible that the struggle at large is about reaching security and emancipation. The organizations attempt to revoke the insecure situation for women by pursuing the respect of their constitutional rights, which is a sign of seeking protection whilst removing unlawful constraints. Moreover, when making the endeavor of changing the structure of society, by challenging the patriarchy and promoting a “new” Catholicism, the NGOs try to liberate women from the constraints placed on them.

Therefore, the NGOs are working according to a critical security agenda to a large extent, seeing as their way of achieving the decriminalization of abortion hold many similarities with the concepts put forth by the agenda. The way the organizations are pursuing the decriminalization of abortion too shares similarities

with the manner in which an issue can be included on the security agenda; thus, it can be suggested that there are possibilities of having abortion included on the security agenda and that the movement to achieve it already has been initiated.

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## 7. CONCLUSIONS

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“Women will not become more empowered merely because we want them to be, but through change of legislation, increased information and by redirecting resources.”

Gro Harlem Brundtland

The purpose of this thesis has been to argue for the inclusion of abortion as a human security issue. By using arguments of human security to examine abortion and through the investigation of the work to decriminalize abortion in Nicaragua, the purpose has been completed. The necessity of access to safe and legal abortion has been highlighted in a way which emphasizes the connection between abortion and security. In the case of abortion in Nicaragua, public morality and religious values have served as the justification for enforcing a law which violates the human rights and the human security of women whilst intending to regulate her sexual and reproductive conduct and decision-making. By criminalizing abortion Nicaragua has coercively substituted its will for the will of the woman and interfered with her sexual and reproductive health and rights by restricting her control over her body and subjecting her to unnecessary health risks.

Through the analysis of abortion as a human security concern it has been made visible that there are several reasons for why abortion should be interpreted as a human security issue. It has been proven that access to abortion could increase female empowerment whilst saving the lives of women. Since abortion is connected to dimensions of human security such as survival, dignity and human rights it is argued that abortion should be included in the concept of human security. In addition, its inclusion should be based on the fact that women would benefit greatly from having safe and legal access to abortion. Not only would

maternal mortality decrease, there would be benefits in terms of increased equality, which in turn would have other positive effects on security.

Nevertheless, opposition to the legalization of abortion is large. The work of the NGOs has shown that it is necessary to combat opposition in order for abortion to be legalized, for example by changing the structure of society. In addition, the NGOs have been shown to organize mobilizations, defend human rights, organize activities, publish material, run campaigns and question the structure of society. These methods have been part in accomplishing results such as higher media coverage of the struggle and an increased awareness among the population on the topic of abortion.

As part of the analysis, the methods of the NGOs have been interpreted according to the critical security agenda. The critical security agenda has been illustrated by broadening and deepening the perception of security and by the pursuit of security and emancipation, with the aim of evaluating to what extent the work of the organizations is similar to the conduct of putting something on the security agenda. By applying some of the most fundamental concepts of CSS it was investigated if the work carried out by the organizations could be considered as pertaining to the critical security agenda. The analysis had the outcome that Critical Security Studies was determined as able to account for the work of the organizations. Discovering that the organizations work according to the critical security agenda to a large extent strengthens the idea that abortion should be dealt with as a human security issue and that it is possible to pursue its inclusion on the security agenda.

So as to explore abortion as a human security issue it is necessary to carry out more research on the topic. Further investigations are needed because abortion will not automatically surge as a security issue. The inherent sensitivity to the issue is a problem and much work needs to be carried out in order for that to change. Nonetheless, emphasizing the necessity in abortion as well as the work towards decriminalization is of essence. In view of the fact that reaching a global consensus on the legalization of abortion is a difficult task, considering abortion as a security issue enables the discussion to advance. Security signals priority and

the aspiration is that by including abortion as a human security issue the negative consequences resulting from the prohibition of abortion will be observed as conditions of insecurity. However, for this to be possible the connection between abortion and security needs to be further developed.

To build on the assumption that abortion is a human security issue, research could for example be devoted to the exploration of other cases. Due to the scope of this thesis merely one case has been investigated, which means that the work of the NGOs in Nicaragua not necessarily is representative for all movements which attempt to decriminalize abortion. Therefore, there is a value in investigating other cases. There are both examples of countries which have liberalized their legislation and countries which have made their legislation stricter. Cases like these could be investigated in order to outline for how women have been affected by the policies of their governments. Furthermore, studies could be dedicated to areas such as clandestine abortion and the attitudes towards abortion, since these topics could further illustrate the context of legalizing abortion. Nonetheless, it is essential that focus is maintained on the relationship between abortion and security, as to ensure the promotion of abortion as human security issue.

To conclude, by having presented abortion as a human security issue and demonstrated that the work to decriminalize abortion is carried out according to the critical security agenda, this thesis aims to emphasize the need of abortion. The criminalization of abortion subjects women to conditions of insecurity and denies them the right to their own bodies. The apathy towards liberalization signals the disdain towards women and the rejection of female empowerment. It is time that the needs of women are respected and recognized, a process which preferably starts with legislating in favor of women.

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## 8. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Every year about 20 million women have an unsafe abortion, 50 000 die from an unsafe abortion. An unsafe abortion is often the result of abortion being illegal in one's country. Abortion is currently completely illegal in 68 of the world's countries, in some of these an exception, as so called therapeutic abortion, is allowed if the life of the woman is endangered. However, in some countries an abortion is not even allowed when it can save the life of the woman, for example in Nicaragua. The complete criminalization of abortion was introduced during the presidential elections of 2006. It is believed that Daniel Ortega agreed on the complete ban in order to appease the Catholic Church, Ortega then won the elections. Since the complete prohibition of abortion, non-governmental organizations in Nicaragua have worked to have the ban lifted in order to allow for therapeutic abortion to be reinstated. So far they have not succeeded.

Between February and April of 2012 I carried out a field study in Nicaragua so as to follow the work of the NGOs, learn about their methods and examine the results of their struggle. The field study was carried out with the purpose of investigating abortion as a human security issue, since lifting it onto the security agenda might increase its priority. The analysis of this thesis departs from two research questions:

- In which ways can it be argued that abortion is a human security issue?
- To what extent have the organizations in Nicaragua worked according to the critical security agenda?

Thus, the aim of the paper is to expose the ways in which abortion could be considered an issue of human security. Moreover, when interpreting the work of the organizations in the light of the critical security agenda, the connection between abortion and human security will be heightened.

For the theoretical framework of the study, Critical Security Studies and human security are being used. They are believed to be compatible in the sense that both of them promote a broader security agenda and put forth the individual as the ultimate referent for security. In addition, considering the policy relevant approach of human security and the critical of CSS, they are deemed to be able to merge well, whilst also enabling to combine the two different approaches. Human security will be applied as to analyze abortion as a human security issue by emphasizing arguments and components of human security. CSS was found suitable because of its critical approach and for allowing the exploration of abortion as a security issue whilst too promoting the analysis of the process of decriminalization. In addition, CSS agrees with the assumption that it is not enough to observe, but that research needs to engage with reality and promote change.

The more part of the material was gathered during the field study, through the use of two methods: interviews and participant observation. The methods were chosen to enable direct contact with the organizations. In addition, they provided for a firsthand experience of the reality in Nicaragua, as well as a possibility of getting to know the subjective experiences of the organizations. Although, the method of interviews was applied to a larger extent, participant observation was valuable for the same reasons as interviews. Moreover, they work complimentary in the sense that participant observation discovers what the interviewee might not say and interviews give meaning to events that the participant observer might not know how to categorize. All in all, the methodological framework worked well for the study, both in relation to the theory and the scope of the research.

When analyzing abortion as a human security issue, the discussion is focused on two overarching components of human security: basic needs and the empowerment of women. In the category of basic needs, abortion is viewed in relation to survival and human rights. The women which would survive each year if they did not have to have an unsafe abortion is stressed as a key evidence, because legislating against or in favor of abortion has no effect on the amount of abortions performed. However, it has an effect on what type of abortion is carried

out, whether it is safe or not. Moreover, it is put forth that women have an undeniable right to their own bodies and to controlling their own reproductive functions.

In terms of female empowerment the issue of not allowing women access to human security to the same extent as men is brought up, because human often tend to be defined as the masculine. Therefore, the insecurity experienced by women is taken into account to a lesser extent. Moreover, the sensitivity of the topic of abortion often hinders it to be included as a matter of importance. There might be agreement on saving the lives of women dying as the result of an unsafe pregnancy, but to allow women to abort by choice is difficult to promote. The analysis shows that it is essential to not succumb to creating conditions for whom is allowed to abort, because each woman's life is equally at risk in an unsafe abortion. It is necessary to recognize that women are able to make independent decisions and to not view women as the means to a desired demographic outcome.

The organizations in Nicaragua are working to have the consequences of the complete prohibition known, and of course to have the ban revoked. They work according to various methods but most commonly they organize mobilizations, do campaigns, defend human rights, question and change the structure of society and arrange activities. When the work carried out by the NGOs was analyzed, it was performed according to a structure of Critical Security studies. The structure emphasized the following parts: deepening and broadening the perception of security and the pursuit of security and emancipation. These are some of the basic components of CSS and therefore believed to be representative of the theory. Moreover, they are clearly connected to the work of putting forth a critical security agenda.

In the analysis, it was discovered that when questioning the structures of society, which in the case of Nicaragua are religion and patriarchy, the organizations were interrogating the assumptions which have shaped the current agenda. Thus, they were also taking part in deepening the perception of security. With methods that aim to educate on abortion, make the struggle visible and show the support for the decriminalization, the organizations are presenting their

message and attempting to broaden the perception of security. In addition, in the struggle to decriminalize abortion the organizations are appealing to the Supreme Court of Justice, in order to have their constitutional rights respected. Even though it has yet to have result it is a clear measure to seek protection and have unlawful constraints removed. The NGOs too attempt to have the constraints of society removed by changing the structures imposed by religion and patriarchy. This is done by offering other alternatives, such as a “new” Catholicism. These methods are examples of how the NGOs are pursuing security and emancipation, concepts of CSS which are integral to the promotion of security.

As for the results, it was concluded that abortion can be considered as a human security issue since it brings together the dimensions of survival, human rights and dignity. In addition, it is put forth as part of human security because of the fact that the legalization of abortion would not only protect women but empower them. Having shown that the work to decriminalize abortion share similarities with the way in which the critical security agenda is pursued, enforces the argument that it is possible to attempt the inclusion of abortion in human security. Nonetheless, abortion is a sensitive topic, which is the reason that while demanding that the rights of women are respected this thesis also calls for further research in order to strengthen the link between abortion and human security.

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## 10. LIST OF INTERVIEWS

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# 11. APPENDIX

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Below the reader will find the interview questions.

## 11.1 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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### YOUR WORK AS AN ORGANIZATION

- What is your main focus as an organization?
- Which type of issues do you work with?
- How long have you been working for the organization?
- Who participates in your activities?
- To what extent do you collaborate with other organizations?
- Do you also cooperate with international organizations?
- Do you encounter any type of difficulties when carrying your work out?
- Is it difficult to speak in favor of abortion?
- Has your organization grown since the complete ban was introduced?
- How can women participate in your work?
- How do people react to your work?

### THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BAN

- How has the complete criminalization of abortion affected the lives of the women?

- How was the feminist movement affected when the complete ban was introduced?
- Do you think that people are aware of the consequences of the complete prohibition?
- What kind of opinions have women voiced concerning the complete ban?
- How was your work affected when abortion was completely criminalized?

### THE STRUGGLE TOWARDS DECRIMINALIZATION

- How is your organization working to achieve the decriminalization?
- What do you think would be necessary in order to achieve the decriminalization of abortion?
- What is your advice for people who want to be part of the struggle?
- Do you see any progress towards decriminalization?
- Do you feel that the support for therapeutic abortion has increased during the last years?
- What do you need for your work to have more influence in the struggle towards decriminalization?
- What type of results have you reached so far?
- If you achieve the decriminalization of therapeutic abortion, is there a possibility of continuing towards a complete decriminalization?
- According to you, what possibilities do you have to influence the government?
- Have you seen an increase of actors in the struggle towards decriminalization?
- Do you think that your critic has had any type of impact on the government?
- What type of changes needs to occur in order for decriminalization to be possible?

- How do you think the situation has developed since the complete ban was introduced?