Suspect, Detainee, or Victim?

A Discourse Analytical Study of Men's Vulnerability in Thailand's Deep South

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to explore discourses of insecurity, vulnerability and conflict in Thailand's Deep South. In order to understand how such discourses are shaped by gender ideologies, the study examines how ideas about men and women are articulated, reproduced and challenged in Thai civil society. Special attention is given to the ways in which men and masculinity are constructed within the discourse, and the concept of hegemonic masculinity is used to explain the findings.

Data was retrieved through semi-structured interviews with NGO practitioners in Bangkok and analyzed using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. The analysis showed that gender ideologies played an important role in shaping NGO discourses of insecurity and vulnerability. While challenging certain traditional ideas about men and women, the discourse also reproduced men as legitimate targets of violence and failed to see men's vulnerability as gendered. By 'ungendering' male experience, and constructing women as ideal civil society activists, the discourse was also found to exclude men from practical interventions and capacity building in the Deep South.

Keywords: Thailand, discourse, vulnerability, conflict, gender, masculinity, civil society

Words: 18,235

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List of abbreviations

FDA	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
HRW	Human Rights Watch
JPF	Justice for Peace Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem statement

There is a growing recognition among scholars and activists in the field of peace and conflict that war and conflict are inherently gendered processes. An increasing number of analyses and interventions are now concerned with the different ways in which conflicts affect men and women, and with how ideas about gender shape and reproduce violent conflicts.

Because women have traditionally been excluded from conflict and security matters, an important result of this new development has been the increased attention given to the experiences and agency of women in conflict situations. While progress has been slow and much remains to be done, a wider section of the population is now involved in formulating responses and solutions to social conflicts. Civil society has played an important role in this development by advocating gender aware analyses and capacity building for local women and women's groups.

However, there is a significant silence in both academia and civil society concerning the ways in which civilian men and boys are affected by conflict and what role masculinity plays in reproducing conflict. Gender analyses that do take men's experiences into account often tend to focus on men as perpetrators, ignoring the large number of men who are not involved in armed violence. Accounts of men as victims are remarkably rare, and violence against civilian men during armed conflict is often seen as more legitimate than violence against civilian women, even by civil society actors working to ensure civilian security.

Exploring the idea of men as legitimate targets of violence means exploring the gendered ideas about men and women that shape both the way we talk about violence and the ways we attempt to tackle it. As civil society plays an important role in making visible and addressing civilian suffering, their ideas about gender and vulnerability have significant material consequences. As this thesis attempts to show, the current civil society discourse of insecurity, vulnerability and conflict in Thailand's Deep South[1] reproduces a number of traditional ideas about men and women and renders men's vulnerability invisible.

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[1] *Thailand's Deep South* refers to the three border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of how gender ideologies shape discourses of insecurity, vulnerability and gender in conflict situations. The study seeks to explore issues of insecurity and vulnerability among civilians living in conflict affected areas through a gendered lens, thereby making visible the gender ideologies that underpin NGO discourses of conflict. The study examines how ideas about men and women are articulated, reproduced and challenged by NGO practitioners, as well as the possible consequences of this discourse for NGO activism and involvement in Thailand's Deep South. By focusing particularly on how men and masculinities are constructed within this discourse, the study also seeks to contribute to the growing body of masculinity research.

1.3 Research questions

In order to answer the overriding question of *how gender ideologies shape NGO discourses of insecurity, vulnerability and gender in Thailand's Deep South,* the following operational research questions will be addressed.

- How is insecurity and vulnerability articulated in NGO discourses of conflict in Thailand's Deep South?
- How are ideas about men and women articulated, reproduced and/or challenged within these discourses?
- How are 'gender' and 'gender issues' conceptualized in the discourse?
- In what ways does the discourse enable and limit NGO's analyses and intervention concerning men's vulnerability in conflict?

1.4 Delimitations and demarcations

While the thesis adopts a view of discourse as both language and social action, the limited time for fieldwork and writing has not allowed for an in-depth study of the non-linguistic practices of NGO's in the Deep South. This thesis will therefore only make limited and tentative claims about non-linguistic practices as they have been described by the informants.

The study is limited to the institutional context of peace and human rights NGO's based in Bangkok, Thailand. These NGO's are constantly involved in dialogue and exchange with the wider NGO community, through which ideas about insecurity, vulnerability and gender are produced and reproduced. While analyzing the ways in which the studied NGO discourse differs and overlaps with wider discourses would contribute to a better understanding of how discourse is produced, such a broad analysis is not undertaken here.

It should also be noted that this thesis does not intend to make claims about men and women's actual vulnerability in Thailand's Deep South. While I argue that discourses have material consequences, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to assess the extent of insecurity and vulnerability prevalent in the conflict area.

A number of issues have emerged during the research process that calls for further exploration. Issues such as the recruitment of child soldiers and sexual violence towards men would certainly benefit from being studied through a lens of hegemonic masculinity. However, while I touch briefly on these topics, they are not central to my analysis and will therefore not be elaborated on at length.

1.5 Disposition

The thesis disposition is intended to be as accessible as possible for the reader. Chapter 1 identifies the research problem, its scope and delimitations. It also introduces the main research question, operational research questions and some central concepts.

Chapter 2 discusses the choice of methods and materials used to conduct this research. In addressing the use of discourse analysis, the chapter also introduces some important theoretical points of departure. This integration of theory and method is a result of the nature of discourse analysis which, rather than being merely a research method, provides both a methodological and theoretical foundation for research. Chapter 2 also discusses the process of analysis and reflects on the reliability, validity, ethics and role of the researcher in producing knowledge, as well as some meta-theoretical considerations.

Chapter 3 reviews the current literature on men, masculinity and conflicts, from which further theoretical concepts are introduced. The integration of theory and literature review is meant to facilitate the reader's understanding by introducing theoretical concepts in the contexts for which they were developed.

Chapter 4 outlines the conflict in Thailand's Deep South and pinpoints a number of issues to which men and boys could be considered vulnerable. These issues are discussed and analyzed in order to provide a backdrop to the analysis of NGO discourse.

Chapter 5 analyses the data collected through interviews with NGO practitioners in Bangkok. The findings are presented according to themes and categories developed during the process of analysis and correspond to the operational research questions identified in chapter 1.3. They are discussed in relation to the theoretical concepts introduced in chapter 3.

Finally, chapter 6 ends the thesis with a concluding discussion. Rather than being a pure summary of findings, the concluding discussion draws together key issues and questions raised by the study, and suggests topics for further exploration.

1.6 Concepts

As this is a discourse analytical study, I acknowledge that all concepts used by the informants are ultimately filled with the meanings that they themselves give them. However, in my own analysis I employ the following definitions of some central concepts. Other important concepts, such as masculinity, discourse, power and knowledge are defined and discussed in chapters 2.2 and 3.2.

Gender: Gender is here defined as the socially ascribed roles of men and women. The term does not refer to biological differences, but to the social construction of such difference. Gender orders usually locate women in the private realm of reproduction and men in the public arena of production. Gender also signifies a relationship of power in which women have historically been subordinated, but that also structures relationships among men and among women (Tickner 1992: 8, Tallberg et al. 2008: 92).

Insecurity: Insecurity is understood here as the absence of *human security*, originally introduced by the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) in their 1994 Human Development Report to describe the absence of threats to human life and dignity. As such, it is a people-centered view of security that encompasses both immediate threats to the lives of individuals and ever present threats of disease, hunger and repression (UNDP 1994: 23).

Vulnerability: Power relations in society leave individuals unequally exposed to risks. Social power relations such as gender, ethnicity, race and class determine the vulnerability of a society, a community, a group or an individual (Hilhorst and Bankoff 2004: 2). The way that the concept of vulnerability is employed to describe groups and individuals in Thailand's Deep South is a central topic of the thesis.

2. METHODS AND MATERIAL

2.1 Research design

The following thesis is essentially a descriptive study, but does have explanatory elements. Inherent to the research question is an assumption that the production of language involves certain logics and values, and that the language produced has material effects in society. The objective is thus to identify and describe the values involved in the creation of NGO discourses of insecurity, vulnerability and gender, and to show that these discourses influence social practices, such as efforts to alleviate men's vulnerability. As this suggests a correlation between discourse and practices, discourses can be regarded as an explanatory variable. This explanatory aspect is, however, inherent to discourse analysis and not a result of my own analysis.

The research design can be labeled *abductive* as it takes social actors' language and accounts as its' starting point (Blaikie 2007: 89). Rather than follow the fairly linear process of deductive (top-down) or inductive (bottom-up) research, the abductive approach requires the researcher to move back and forth between data and analysis, and involves a significant amount of repetition (ibid: 3). The key concern of abductive research is the ways people understand the world around them, and how their interpretations inform behavior. The objective is thus to uncover the tacit and mutual understandings that guide social action, and the only types of access that the researcher has to such understandings are people's own accounts of their social practices and the social practices of others (ibid: 90). While several methods of inquiry might have been able to obtain such accounts, discourse analysis is particularly well suited for studying language and uncovering tacit understandings (Taylor 2001: 6). The choice to use discourse analysis is thus a consequence of the chosen design, as well as the research question. For further discussion on the choice of the discourse analytical approach, see chapter 2.2.

Following an abductive design, social scientific descriptions developed from social actors' accounts can be used to develop new theories, or interpreted through existing theories (ibid: 90). This thesis follows the latter approach, using a theory of hegemonic masculinity to frame and explain the patterns revealed.

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2.1.1 Meta-theoretical considerations and the status of knowledge

As the preoccupation with interpretations suggest, the study assumes an *idealist* ontology, in which reality is understood as constructed through social actors' shared interpretations of the world around them (Blaikie 2007: 17). Because there is no 'reality' other than the one people create, knowledge is seen as something social scientist construct rather than discover. Such a *constructionist* epistemology also rejects the idea of theory-free observation and insists that all research reflects the position of the researcher (ibid: 23).

Social scientific research should therefore not be seen to produce any absolute truths. Like other forms of knowledge, scientific knowledge is discursively produced (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 175). However, while the status of knowledge in constructionist research positions scientific knowledge as merely one representation among many, it differs from other representations in the sense that its rules are explicit rather than implicit. By interpreting data through the use of specific theories, rather than everyday understandings, the researcher's framework of interpretation is made explicit and can be evaluated by others (ibid: 206).

While absolute truths are rejected by constructionists, relativism is not necessarily the only way to relate to ones findings. Jørgensen and Phillips suggest that it is possible for constructionists to adopt a critical stance. By demonstrating the negative effects of certain interpretations of the world, constructionist research can open up space for different understandings and "destabilise prevailing systems of meaning" (ibid: 178). The following thesis thus aligns itself with a *critical* social constructionism.

2.2 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis can be understood as an approach to research that includes both theory and method. Marianne W. Jørgensen and Louise Phillips (2002) have suggested that most discourse analytical approaches constitute "a theoretical and methodological whole – a complete package". Rather than just prescribing methods for analysis, the different approaches to discourse analysis provide sets of philosophical ideas about how language shapes social reality, theoretical models for understanding this process, as well as methodological strategies and tools for analysis (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 4).

Viewing discourse analysis as a field of research, rather than a specific methodology, allows us to discern several different types of discourse analysis while recognizing their interconnectedness (Taylor 2001: 5). At its core, discourse analysis is the

study of language and how it relates to social life. A shared assumption among the different approaches to discourse analysis is that language is not neutral and should not be seen as an impartial transmitter of meaning. Instead, language should be viewed as *constitutive*, in the sense that it creates and alters meaning, as well as *situated*, requiring an understanding of the context of interaction (ibid: 6f). To this list of common assumptions among discourse analysts, Jørgensen and Phillips add the recognition of *links between knowledge and social processes* and *links between knowledge and social action* (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 5f).

While researchers inevitably make different distinctions between the various approaches to discourse analysis, my definition of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) follows the classification by Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001) and elaborated on by Jean Carbine in the same volume.

2.2.1 Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA)

Though virtually all approaches to discourse analysis are concerned with both language and context, the main focus is usually on one or the other. Analysts in the Foucauldian tradition typically place more emphasis on context than others. Language is understood as an integral part of larger processes and actions, and analysts study both the values and logics involved in producing language and the effects of language in society. The idea that language not only enables and restricts our ability to convey ideas, but also our actions is fundamental to this type of analysis (Taylor 2001: 7ff).

According to Jean Carbine (2001), FDA provides a lens through which we can study discourses. By employing this lens, we are able to see that discourses produce, and are produced by, power and knowledge. In order to understand this approach we must therefore address the central concepts of *discourse*, *power* and *knowledge* (Carbine 2001: 268).

Discourses in the Foucauldian tradition are productive, that is, "[t]hey produce the objects of which they speak" (ibid: 268), in this case, masculinity, insecurity and vulnerability. They are also constitutive, in the sense that they create an account of these ideas as reality, or truth. The establishment of such 'truths', or *knowledge*, will have certain consequences in terms of power. *Power* is not seen as binary but as distributed. It is constituted through discourses that establish 'what is and what is not' (ibid: 275).

I do not argue that there is only one knowledge regime operating at a specific time, but rather that several competing discourses "exist side by side or struggle for the right to define truth" (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 13). However, in employing the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' I do recognize that some discourses are more powerful than others and that established truth claims are difficult to challenge.

These discourses are adaptable and opportunistic, and they often draw on existing ways of conceptualizing an issue while simultaneously interacting with other prevailing discourses, hooking into 'common-sense' and normative ideas to produce new understandings of issues (Carbine 2001: 269).

Unlike conventional FDA, sometimes referred to as genealogical discourse analysis, my research does not trace the *history* of a discourse. What I'm studying is instead discourse at a particular moment. While this approach differs from the original, the aim remains the same; to study how a certain discourse of masculinity, insecurity and vulnerability is constructed through the discourses and practices of civil society actors, as well as the social consequences of such a discourse. Carbine identifies two ways in which such contemporary research is of value. First of all, it will add to the understanding of knowledge and power at this particular moment. Second, it will contribute to the genealogy of masculinity, insecurity and vulnerability over time (ibid: 280f).

Conducting contemporary Foucauldian discourse analysis has a number of advantages; important sources of information are more easily available, the context is more easily established and contemporary language more easily understood. However, this 'ease' can also make it difficult to step outside the chosen material and may lead to a study of discourses which we are ourselves part of and might therefore consider 'common sense' (ibid: 307). As researchers, we must therefore carefully reflect on our own role in constructing the discourses we study.

2.3 Sources

The thesis makes use of primary as well as secondary sources. Primary sources include interview transcripts and notes from participant observation. For further discussion on primary sources see chapter 2.3.1.

Secondary sources were consulted to provide a context of the conflict in Thailand's Deep South as well as the academic context in which men's vulnerability can be situated. Secondary sources regarding the conflict were also problematized with regard

to their treatment of issues concerning men and masculinity. These sources include books, academic articles, statistics and publications by non-governmental organizations.

2.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Primary data was collected during three weeks of fieldwork in Bangkok in March and April 2012. The data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with nine NGO practitioners during six interview sessions. Four interviews were individual while two were group interviews. The interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes and took place in the offices of informants (4) or at local cafés (2).

The choice to conduct semi-structured interviews was a result of both conscious decisions and practical limitations in terms of time and language qualifications. Qualitative interviews are well suited for the purpose of obtaining accounts of people's experiences, understandings and interpretations of different phenomena (Esaiasson et al. 2007: 286). The semi-structured interview form was chosen because it provides space for informants to bring up topics that might not have been thought of by the researcher, while structuring the interview enough to keep from losing sight of the central topic (Bryman 2004: 321). An interview guide was used that allowed respondents to first give their own account of the conflict and issues concerning insecurity and vulnerability among civilians. If gender was not brought up by informants themselves, the issue was introduced by the researcher after the respondents had finished their account. Likewise, if the following discussion on gendered vulnerabilities did not touch on men and boy's vulnerability, the theme was introduced by the researcher. In this way, it was possible to get an idea of the informants own evaluation of the importance of gender and men's vulnerability in accounts of the conflict.

Ideally, the analysis would also have included naturally occurring talk, obtained through participant observation. However, access to such talk was limited primarily by language restrictions. The informal character of the interviews, and the inclusion of two group interviews, did allow a certain measure of participant observation as the informants would discuss amongst each other and react to each other's accounts.

Finally, it is important to state that the respondents were treated both as experts on the issues and as subjects of research. This will of course have had consequences for how the interviews proceeded. In a way, the traditional relationship that places the researcher as 'expert' was avoided as the informants were the actual 'experts'

on the issues addressed. The fact that they were all professionals created the feeling that they were educating me, rather than merely informing me of their work. Furthermore, my own involvement in civil society activism, which was revealed and discussed in all interviews, posited us as 'colleagues' and enabled certain topics that might otherwise have been off limits. This 'insider' role may however have limited my ability to see certain things as I myself am part of civil society discourse and share certain taken-for-granted ideas with my informants.

2.3.2 Methods of selection

Key organizations were identified at the outset based on their involvement and activities in the Deep South conflict. While a number of contacts had been initiated before arriving in Bangkok, snowball sampling (Bryman 2004: 100ff) was used to identify additional organizations and to establish contacts and introductions.

While not deliberate, language became a criterion for selection. As I speak neither Thai nor Malayu, all attempts to contact organizations were made in English, and naturally those who replied did so in English. This probably excluded a number of interesting groups, but also helped delimit my research field to organizations active not only in local activism but also in national and international advocacy.

2.3.3 NGO informants

In order to contextualize the accounts of my informants, I will provide a short overview of Thai civil society and the work situation of the organizations I encountered.

Peace- and human rights organizations, particularly those involved in advocacy work, are rare in Thai civil society (FIDH 2009: 2). The organizations that I met with showed great familiarity with other organizations working with issues concerning the conflict in the Deep South and there were several collaborations between them. In fact, a number of organizations had offices in the same building and could therefore discuss and exchange information on a daily basis. While all my informants were employed by NGO's, many made reference to the difficulty of finding funds to cover their costs and it was apparent from the size and quality of their offices that resources were scarce.

While the level of involvement 'on the ground' varied significantly, all the organizations were involved in either national or international advocacy and regularly met

with government officials to discuss their issues. All had publicized reports on the situation in the South as it related to their areas of expertise, ranging from legal issues to peace education. Three of the informants were lawyers, four were international human rights analysts and two were activists, actively taking part in capacity building and other 'provocative' interventions in the Deep South. While none of the informants expressed any fear for their own safety, the situation for human rights defenders in Thailand is precarious. A number of prominent lawyers and activists have 'disappeared' from the South (ibid: 5), and several informants expressed concern for their local employees and partners in the South.

Out of the nine informants, five were Thai nationals and four had moved to Thailand from other Asian countries. Only one informant came from the Deep South and had family in the area. Six of the informants were women and three were men, a ratio which appeared to be representative of Thai civil society and that was actively discussed by the informants.

While it was sometimes difficult to get in touch with the organizations and many of the informants had heavy workloads, the atmosphere in all the places I visited was one of great openness. Most employees were young professionals, 25-35 years old, who welcomed my interest in their work and whose energy and engagement was tangible.

2.4 Process of analysis

Analyzing the collected data entailed a careful reading and rereading of the material. Following Jean Carbine (2001), I began by identifying interesting *themes*, *categories* and *objects* within the discourse. Following the abductive approach of moving back and forth between data and theory, I was able to refine these themes and categories as the theoretical and contextual framework took form. I also looked for evidence of *inter-relationships* between discourses, such as the discourse on men and the discourse on vulnerabilities. Equally important to what is present in the NGO accounts is what is not. *Silences* and *absences* are important aspects of discourse and were therefore also explored (Carbine 2001: 281ff).

To reduce the risk of selecting material that fits with my analysis, and of interpreting the material in a way that is consistent with my findings, special attention has been given to counter discourses and resistance. Such counter discourses are included in

my analysis to show that although a certain discourse may be prevailing at this moment, it is constantly challenged and therefore always in transformation.

The final step of analysis, identifying the effects of discourse on social practices is often the most difficult. Because of the limited fieldwork and the contemporary character of the analysis it is difficult say anything conclusive about the effects of discourse on NGO practices. I do however attempt to discuss such consequences based on the data collected during interviews and the way informants talked about their activities in the conflict area. Furthermore, since it is a basic assumption of discourse analysis that discourse informs practice, absences in discourse can be presumed to translate into absences in practice.

The analysis will be presented in a way that reflects my findings rather than the research process. Quotes will be used to illustrate aspects of discourse but are not in themselves evidence of such a discourse. A much larger body of evidence is the foundation of analysis.

2.5 Ethical considerations

All respondents were informed of the purpose and intended use of the collected data, and gave their informed consent to use their comments in the thesis. In my analysis, I make clear distinctions between their words and my own analysis.

While most interviewees did not find it necessary to mask their identities, I chose to do so for ethical reasons. While their words may not appear dangerous, they are commenting on a conflict which the Thai government has treated with heavy-handed repression, and civil society activists have been both threatened and killed for speaking out in the past.

2.5.1 Reflexivity

Reflecting on my own role in the research process, there are two important issues to address. The first issue is particularly important to discourse analysts and pertains to the way discourse is produced. According to Jørgensen and Phillips, the researcher does not hold a position outside discourse but is, together with her informants, involved in their production (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 21f). This means that my presence in the

interview setting will have influenced the discourse, and knowledge, produced during these sessions.

Second, my own background, identity and values cannot be separated from my research. Not only has it influenced my choice of topic, theory and methods, but has certainly influenced the way I was perceived by my informants and the information that they offered. Since all but one of my informants were young professionals working in an international context, my position as a young, white, academic was not particularly exotic. My background as a civil society activist was primarily an asset as it created a familiar and comfortable interview situation. However, as mentioned earlier, it may also have blinded me to certain aspects of the discourse. As a woman, I was able to ask about men's vulnerability and question uncritical assumptions about women's selflessness without being seen as a misogynist. However, as a female civil society activist I may also have strengthened their perception of civil society as an essentially female realm.

2.6 Reliability and validity

The aim of this thesis is not to produce knowledge that can be generalized. Rather, it is an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon that may or may not be specific to this context. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to say anything about the way men's vulnerability is constructed through discourse in other situations.

However, reliability and validity is not just about being able to generalize. The choices of methods and material have been carefully considered in order to reach reliable answers to the research questions. The selection of influential organizations and informants ensures that the discourses explored are not marginal but carry significant weight in the larger conflict discourse.

Adhering to social constructionist criteria for the production of knowledge, the thesis aims to present a coherent argument and to offer a transparent account of the process of analysis. (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 203). For further discussion of the research process and my own role as researcher, see chapter 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5.

3. MEN AND MASCULINITY IN CONFLICT

The purpose of this chapter is to locate the issue of men's vulnerability in contemporary academia. The chapter first explores the gradual inclusion of gender perspectives in conflict and development studies and practice, and then turns to the issue of men and masculinity. Introducing the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the chapter also provides a theoretical framework for the upcoming analysis.

3.1 Gender in conflict and development

Gender perspectives have become increasingly prevalent within conflict and development research and practice. Significant developments, such as the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and gender mainstreaming of UN peace operations, has helped raise the status of gender perspectives among researchers and practitioners. Recently, the recognition of gender-based violence as a crime against humanity has been taken as evidence that gender issues now have a place even in large-scale security politics. However, despite a large body of interdisciplinary work on militarism and peace-building, gender perspectives are still often excluded from academic and policy oriented literature (Moran 2010: 262).

In early literature on the relationship between militarism, peace and gender, a dichotomy of men-as-warriors and women-as-victims emerged. These categories were based on biological determinants that posited men as prone to violent behavior and women as peaceful and community-minded victims. While these ideas were later challenge by feminist scholars, who showed that such dichotomies did not fit very well with scientific observations, they have proven difficult to dispose of. However, most researcher working on gender and conflict now subscribe to the idea that culture, rather than biology, shapes men and women's relationship to violence (ibid: 263f).

Furthermore, contemporary research has shown that war and militarization, as sites of extreme violence, have great influence on gender ideologies and has the potential to both reinforce and challenge gender inequalities. A growing literature on gender and violence has dealt with issues such as domestic violence, rape and gender-based violence, women's wartime experiences, the impacts of military spending and the impact of militarization on gender relations (ibid: 264).

While gender has long been defined as the social construction of women and men, surveying the available literature on gender and peace-building, Moran reveals that the use of 'gender' is often conflated with 'women' and 'women's issues' (ibid: 262). Using 'gender' as synonymous to 'women's issues' is not exclusive to the field of peace-building but is prevalent in much academic and policy oriented research, including in the related disciplines of development and security studies (Carpenter 2006; Cornwall 1997).

The tendency to see gender as an issue concerning primarily women is, according to masculinity researcher R.W. Connell, a result of the history of gender politics as a part of women's liberation movements (Connell 1995: 227). Gender ideologies have almost universally placed women in a position of subordination in relation to men, and it is therefore not difficult to see why challenging gender stereotypes has often been understood as being in the interest of primarily women (Tickner 1992: 7).

However, there is a growing realization among researchers that stereotypes and gender ideologies also influence men and their experiences, and the emerging research on masculinity, especially in its militarized forms, has recently added to the understanding of militarism and peace as gendered practices (Moran 2010: 264).

3.2 Men and masculinities

The study of men and masculinities may to some appear contradictory to feminist claims that it is women who have been neglected in academia, and that most scholarly work is based on the experiences and practices of men. However, masculinity researchers do not usually argue against this analysis but instead attempt to build on it. What masculinity researchers argue is that men have not been studied as gendered beings. Rather, they have been viewed as the norm and therefore not problematized. Masculinity studies are thus "inspired by but not parallel to feminist research of women" (Ford and Lyons 2012: 2).

Early research on men and masculinity introduced the idea of a 'male sex role', a theory in which masculinity is an ideal taught to men and boys by family, friends, school and media. Although the 'male sex role' was an important step in thinking beyond biological difference, the theory was unable to account for many of the empirical findings of masculinity researchers in the social sciences. From this growing body of research, it became evident that there is not just one type of masculinity but multiple ones, constructed differently in different cultures and in different points in time. Multiple masculinities are often found even within a given society or in a certain institution (Connell 2000: 23f). In a

critique of this inability of 'male sex role' theory to explain and account for the plurality of masculinities and complex gender constructions, R.W. Connell developed a theory that has become exceptionally influential in masculinity studies, the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

3.2.1 Hegemonic masculinity

According to Connell, recognizing that there are multiple masculinities is not enough, we need to explore the relationships between these masculinities (Connell 1995: 76). While the concept of hegemonic masculinity refers to the most honored way of being a man in a specific time and place, the concept is normative and should not be understood as normal in any statistical sense. It is an ideal which very few men are able to enact, but which all men must position themselves in relation to (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832).

Analyzing gendered consequences of violence and conflict through the concept of hegemonic masculinity means exploring how actual men relate to collective ideals of masculinity, rather than assuming that they embody these ideals (ibid: 841). Some men may be able to enact hegemonic masculinity when it is needed, but may at other times choose to distance themselves from such ideals. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity can be said to represent "not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices" (ibid: 842).

Depending on how they position themselves in relation to hegemonic ideals, men can be said to enact subordinated, complicit or marginalized masculinities. Homosexual men represent some of the most *subordinated* masculinities in contemporary Western societies. Homosexual masculinities are subordinated to heterosexual masculinities and the material consequences for homosexual men are evident. From the point of hegemonic masculinities, homosexual masculinities are often equated with femininity, whose subordination is the very basis of the gender order (Connell 1995: 78).

Although few men embody all aspects of hegemonic masculinity, most men benefit from the subordination of women. A majority of men support the hegemonic project through everyday practices and enact *complicit* masculinities that do not challenge the current order (ibid: 79). According to Connell, relations of subordination and complicity are internal to the gender order itself. *Marginalized masculinities*, however, are created in the interplay with other power structures, such as race, ethnicity and class and are dependent on the authorization of hegemonic masculinities (ibid: 80f). Like

hegemonic masculinity, these masculinities should not be understood as fixed character types but, rather, as patterns of practice created in particular contexts in a constantly changing structure of relationships (Ford and Lyons 2012: 5).

Recent research has increasingly recognized the agency of such subordinated and marginalized groups. As an example, 'protest masculinity', created among working-class and ethnically marginalized men in Western countries, often make claims to power that are rarely supported by the kind of political and economic resources that underpin regional hegemonic masculinities. Furthermore, non-hegemonic patterns of masculinity, constructed in response to racial or ethnic marginalization, have proven much more resilient that first envisioned (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 847f).

The great value of the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' in studying men and boys' vulnerability is its ability to recognize the consequences of not conforming to the dominant type of masculinity. Because not all men benefit from dominant masculine values, hegemonic masculinity can be as oppressive for men who reject or fail to enact those values as it is for women (Cornwall 1997: 11).

3.3 Masculinities and violence

When we look at statistics of violence, the need for a gender analysis that takes men into account becomes evident. Men drastically dominate statistics of violence. Men own more guns, commit more murders, and are responsible for more assaults. As prison guards, police officers and private security agents, men also dominate the arena of enforcement and state sanctioned violence. Militaries around the world are dominated by men and are essentially masculine institutions (Connell 2000: 21f). Given the practice of violence among men and the concentration of weapons at the hands of men, it is difficult to ignore the gendered aspects of violence. Though certainly not the only cause of violence, gender dynamics are important to consider in order to better understand and contest violence in all its forms (ibid: 29).

Masculinity research has effectively proven that although the idea of men's violence as 'natural' is pervasive, biological essentialism is not particularly credible. The diversity of masculinities revealed in cross-cultural research is difficult to reconcile with one single, biologically fixed, pattern of masculinity (ibid: 22). The development of hegemonic masculinity theory and the recognition of multiple and hierarchical

relationships between masculinities has greatly increased researchers capacity to understand the links between violence and masculinity.

However, these relationships are considerably complex. Certain violent masculinities are not simply a cause of violence but have developed in response to violence in contexts of ethnic oppression and poverty. Institutionalized violence may require a number of different masculinities and different culturally hegemonic masculinities may create different patterns of violence in different cultures (ibid: 29).

3.3.1 Masculinities, war and militaries

Studies of men, wars and militaries have shown that militaries are important institutions for the making of masculinities and shaping of male identities, male power, male citizenship and societies. Male conscription and military service shape national self-conceptions, citizenship and gender politics (Tallberg et al. 2008: 86f).

War and militaries are obviously not new concepts in academic research and have been studied from a number of different perspectives ranging from history and international relations to sociology and psychology. However, the relationships between militaries and civilian societies remain underexplored, and in the limited work on civil-military relations, gender perspectives have often been ignored. In order to understand how societies, wars and militaries shape and reshape each other, theorizing and problematizing men and masculinity remains crucial. According to Tallberg et al., increased interaction between the fields of civil-military relations and masculinity studies is necessary in order to come to terms with the shortcomings of both fields (ibid: 86). A widening of the perspective on civil-military relations is crucial to avoid making simplified links between men and militaries, and women and civilians. In order not to reproduce such simplified dichotomies and the power relations they assume, a nuanced understanding of gender and the actual experiences of civil-military encounters are needed (ibid: 91).

In calling for a 'gendering' of men in studies of war and militaries, Tallberg et al. not only want to draw attention to the experiences of men in and around war and militaries but also identify a need to refocus attention to the construction of masculinities outside or opposed to militarized forms of masculinity. They argue that men-as-victims, civilian men, and pacifist men are often silenced by security discourses and gendered power relations (ibid: 93).

While feminist scholars have successfully explored the gendered dimensions of war and militarism, focus has been on the ways in which conflict and militaries influence women's lives (Tickner 1992, Cockburn 1998, Enloe 2000,). According to Tallberg et al., this research on women, gender and militaries should be complemented with gender analyses of men in and around militaries. Such analyses should utilize and build on principles developed within men and masculinity research, taking account of all aspects of the gender system, including connections, divisions and hierarchies between men and women, as well as the relationships among women and among men (Tallberg et al. 2008: 91f).

3.3.2 Vulnerability and insecurity among civilian men and boys

Though much research on men and violence has focused on men as perpetrators, there are studies that look into civilian men's vulnerability. Since the 1990's, a number of scholars have come forward to demand a more inclusive gender framework. In development studies, Andrea Cornwall has pointed out that the lack of attention to men and boys' experiences constitute an important gap in the literature. Cornwall shows that research on hegemonic masculinity could contribute to the study and practice of development by providing a better understanding of how dominant ideas about what it means to be a man shape men's relationship to power. Since the theory of hegemonic masculinity shows that all men do not necessarily have power, and that having power depends on conforming to certain types of 'masculine' behavior, it can be a useful tool for development practitioners in addressing the development needs of men and boys. For Cornwall, the greatest value of hegemonic masculinity theory is its capacity to recognize the consequences for men that do not conform to a hegemonic type of masculinity (Cornwall 1997: 11). The vulnerability of men who do not conform, or express different masculinities, thus becomes an important issue in research and practice.

Arguing in a similar vein, Charli Carpenter (2006) addresses the issue of men and masculinity within a human security framework. She argues that men not only deserve protection 'in their own right', but that civilian men's vulnerability is closely linked to the vulnerabilities of women and girls (Carpenter 2006: 83). Starting with a definition of gender-based violence as "violence that is targeted at women or men because of their sex and/or their socially constructed gender roles", Carpenter identifies three

forms of gender-based violence that is targeted at men and boys; sex-selective killings, sexual violence and forced recruitment (ibid: 84).

The issue of sex-selective killing illustrates many of the key points in this vein of argumentation, namely that men are not only the main perpetrators of violence but also most likely to be victims of lethal violence. Adult men of 'battle age' are, in fact, more likely to be killed during armed conflict than those groups usually termed especially 'vulnerable', such as women, children and elderly (ibid: 88). Adam Jones sparked a controversy when he first began to study the issue of 'gendercide', or sex-selective killings, as it relates to the killing of men and boys. Using examples from Kosovo, Rwanda and East Timor, Jones showed how men of 'battle-age', approximately 18 to 55 years old, constitute the group most likely to be targeted for mass-killings (Jones 2000).

Like Cornwall, both Jones and Carpenter see the failure to live up to hegemonic ideals as a source of vulnerability. However, they also recognizes that one of the greatest sources of insecurity is the perception of men as *potentially* living up to these ideals, that is, being the warriors that stereotypes cast them to be. Men and young boys are often seen as potential combatants and are therefore considered legitimate targets of violence (Carpenter 2006: 88, Jones 2006: 458).

According to Carpenter, a key explanation for sex-selective killings of men is the way we conceptualize 'the civilian'. While international law requires a distinction between 'civilian' and 'combatant' based on actual partaking in armed violence, in reality, gender is often used as a shortcut to determine which category a person belongs to (Carpenter 2006: 89). A counterargument to this, one which is often used to justify the targeting of men, is that men are in fact more prone to armed violence and more likely to pose a threat to their enemies than women. However, in many conflicts, a significant number of men choose not to take up arms, and women now constitute between 5 to 15 percent of regular armed service. In Colombia, 30-40 percent of FARC[2] fighters are women, yet summary killings of rebel suspects have predominantly targeted men (ibid: 90). According to Carpenter, "[g]endered assumptions about wartime roles explain this tendency and therefore need to be specifically addressed by human rights advocates working in the area of civilian protection in armed conflict" (ibid: 91).

When academics and practitioners discuss women's vulnerability they usually acknowledge that it is not their physical vulnerability that grants them special

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[2] Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

protection. Indeed, most adult women cannot be considered physically vulnerable in the same sense as children, wounded or the elderly. Rather, it is their 'socially induced vulnerability' that is invoked to explain their need for protection. As many scholars have shown, there are a number of violations to which women are especially vulnerable. In development contexts they are often poorer, less educated and wield less power in their societies, key issues that demand practitioners' attention. However, men are usually excluded from the category of 'vulnerable' simply because of their physical strength, and their socially induced vulnerability remains unexplored, save for the exceptions mentioned above (Carpenter 2003: 675).

A number of issues to which men and boys are more vulnerable have been identified in the emerging literature on men and boys' security concerns. These include, but are not limited to, sex-selective killing/repression, recruitment, militarization and gun violence. Of these, sex-selective killings have received most attention due to much publicized cases such as the Srebrenica massacre, in which 8,000 men and boys lost their lives (ibid: 666). While such large scale crimes serve as good examples of how gender contributes to vulnerability, it is important to recognize that the underlying logic of these massacres are also present in other forms of repression such as roundups, detention, harassment and torture of men and boys. In the following chapters, I therefore choose to use the concept of sex-selective *repression* rather than sex-selective *killings* or *massacres*.

4. INSECURITY AND VULNERABILITY IN THAILAND'S DEEP SOUTH

The following chapter explores the context of conflict in Thailand's Deep South. Starting with a general description of the conflict and its background, the chapter then addresses its impacts on civilian security and analyzes the resulting gendered vulnerabilities.

4.1 Conflict in Thailand's Deep South

Since January 2004, the conflict in Thailand's Deep South has taken over 5,000 lives, and many more have been injured by insurgent and state sanctioned violence. In 2011, 489 people were killed in violent attacks and the cycle of violence shows no signs of decelerating (Deep South Watch 2012).

The area referred to as the Deep South is comprised of the three border provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. These predominantly Malay Muslim provinces were annexed by Thailand, or Siam as it was then called, as late as 1909 and 80 per cent of the population in this area are still Malay Muslims (McCargo 2007: 3). The growth of Thai nationalism, centered on the idea of one King, one Religion and one Nation, effectively marginalized the border provinces while simultaneously encroaching on the relative autonomy that the region had previously enjoyed (Nilsen 2007: 1).

While resistance to Bangkok rule has been prevalent since the time of incorporation, and the local population has expressed feelings of marginalization and discrimination, violence has remained relatively manageable for decades. When violence erupted in 2004, a number of scholars explained it as a result of the heavy handed security politics of Thaksin Shinawatra, who was seen to provoke the Muslim population by increasing militarization in the South and sending Thai contingents to fight alongside US troops in Iraq (McCargo 2007: 3f).

While McCargo sees the upsurge of violence in 2004 as primarily a result of national level politics, other explanations include international influences, such as the US led 'war on terror' and transnational jihadist movements (McCargo 2007; Liow 2006; Nilsen 2007). However, while both national politicians and international scholars have attempted to dress the conflict in religious terms, most researchers agree that the conflict is

an essentially ethno-nationalist struggle, based on old grievances and economic and social marginalization (Liow 2006; Nilsen 2007).

In response to the outbreak of violence in January 2004, the Thai government has imposed a number of special security laws in the provinces and has heavily increased their military presence in the Deep South (Human Rights Watch 2007b: 2). The special emergency laws that govern much of the southern provinces allow security personnel to make arrests and searches without warrant, to detain people without charge and effectively gives military and police immunity from prosecution in cases related to the enforcement of these laws (ibid: 15).

4.2. Insecurity and vulnerability among civilians

According to statistics from 2009, civilians constitute more than 40 percent of casualties in the Deep South (Sarosi and Sombutpoonsiri 2009: 7). Neither ethnic nor religious belonging has provided much protection from the violence, and while Malay Muslim victims account for the majority of deaths, Buddhist victims make up the majority of injured (Deep South Watch 2012).

NGO's and civil society groups working in the area have helped shed light on some of the key security issues facing civilians in the Deep South. While insurgent activity certainly causes much insecurity in the South, and critique of the insurgents' targeting of civilians is widespread (Amnesty International 2011; Human Rights Watch 2007a; Human Rights Watch 2010), the extensive military presence and special security laws imposed by the Thai government also pose significant threats to people's security and wellbeing. Accusations of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detention have been leveled against the Thai state, and access to justice, due process and compensation remain inadequate (Cross Cultural Foundation and Muslim Attorney Center 2010; International Crisis Group 2005; Human Rights Watch 2007b). Furthermore, increased sexual violence, weapons proliferation, crime, militarization, recruitment of child soldiers and paramilitary organizations constitute key challenges for the enjoyment of human security in the Deep South (Justice for Peace Foundation 2011; UNICEF 2008).

Several of these issues are highly gendered, meaning that their impact on people's lives is dependent on whether they are men or women. Sexual violence has, to the extent that it's been documented, primarily been committed by men towards women (Justice for Peace Foundation 2009). However, while not explicitly referred to as 'sexual

violence' several NGO's report that torture cases have included humiliation and violence against men's genitalia (Human Rights Watch 2007b: 17), identified by Carpenter as sexual mutilation and a form of gender-based violence against men (Carpenter 2006: 94). Access to justice has also proven an important issue in the context of special security laws and heavy handed security enforcement. To the extent that women constitute a majority of civilians dealing with legal issues, due to their husbands' or sons' detention, access to justice has become and is being treated as a gender issue (Justice for Peace Foundation 2009: 10).

Other issues have primarily affected men and boys. These issues include enforced disappearances, torture, recruitment of child soldiers, and armed violence. In the following passage I will briefly discuss these issues as they have been addressed by scholars and activists working with the conflict, including the gaps and silences in their treatment of men and masculinity.

4.2.1 Sex-selective repression

Adam Jones has argued that men constitute "the group most likely to have the repressive apparatus of the state directed against them" (Jones 2006: 452). Looking at the US involvement in Iraq, Jones identifies gender-selective victimization of Iraqi men as a key strategy of the US military operation. He shows that "harassment, humiliation before family members, mass roundups, incarceration, torture, selective killing, and denial of the right to humanitarian evacuation from besieged cities" are actions directed predominantly against men. This gender-selective repression has led to the incarceration of over 10,000 men and boys, despite military acknowledgement that most of the captured are probably not dangerous (Jones 2009: 123).

In Thailand's Deep South, a number of offences, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and torture, can be summarized under the heading of 'sex-selective repression'. Many of these violations are made possible by the special security laws that govern most of the three border provinces. In their report to the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, several organizations reported that the special security laws had led to human rights violations by state officials. While none of the organizations identified such violations as sex-selective or gendered, all the examples presented in the report were of men (OHCHR 2011). Likewise, in their report from 2007, Human Rights Watch (HRW) detail 21 cases of

enforced disappearances in which all named victims are men without making any reference to the issue as 'gendered'. While the focus of the report is enforced disappearances, the cases also involve torture, arbitrary detention and extrajudicial killings (Human Rights Watch 2007b).

A key explanation for targeting men in this sort of strategy is, as discussed earlier, the almost universal perception of men as the greatest threat to a conquering force (Jones 2006: 452). That these violations are not represented as sex-selective in reports by civil society organizations suggests that such perceptions are deeply ingrained and that civil society actors also subscribe to the 'naturalness' of targeting men in counter-insurgency activity.

5.2.2 Gun violence

According to the Small Arms Survey, young men are the primary perpetrators as well as the group most vulnerable to armed violence. While young men are the primary victims of most types of violence, they are particularly vulnerable to violence involving the use of a gun. The Small Arms Survey has shown that young men, approximately 15-29 years old, are four times more likely to be victims of firearm homicides than the general population, and that this is a trend that has proven reliable across a large number of countries suffering varying rates of violence. The survey also shows that men involved in gun violence "often belong to gangs or other armed groups that tend to emerge in contexts of social and economic marginalization" (Small Arms Survey 2006: 297f).

Showing that biological and demographic theories are insufficient to explain the large number of men who are not involved in armed violence, the survey argues for a situational approach that takes into account young men's interaction with family and local community as well as the larger context of social and cultural norms (ibid: 300f). Men's interpretation of cultural ideologies of masculinity, what Connell would call hegemonic masculinities, will therefore influence their propensity to engage in armed violence. According to Michael Kimmel, socially and economically marginalized young men often lack power, but are "socially conditioned to seek it". By taking up arms, young men who feel that they have been denied their place in society are able to "even the score" (Kimmel in Small Arms Survey 2006: 301).

This is relevant to the Thai context due to the increased firearm proliferation in the Deep South and the fact that shootings have become the most frequent method of

attack (Sarosi and Sombutpoonsiri 2009: 6). Since the escalation of violence in 2004, the Thai state has struggled to provide security for their citizens in the South and have, in an attempt to manage the situation, begun arming civilians. They have done so by supplying civilian forces with firearms, easing weapon regulations in the South, and subsidizing firearm purchases, all of which has resulted in increased firearm proliferation in the three border provinces (ibid: 13).

However, the issue should not only be understood from the supply side, but also by the demand of weapons by local people. In their study from 2009, Sarosi and Sombutpoonsiri found that Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims articulated different reasons and justifications for gun ownership, and also suffered different consequences. While Thai Buddhists feared insurgents, and owning weapons fed into nationalist ideologies of 'protecting the motherland', Malay Muslims saw guns as a source of protection from soldiers and civil defense militias. Moreover, Malay Muslims faced harder restrictions of gun ownership as they were viewed with suspicion by state authorities and also faced greater insecurity due to their gun ownership, which was often seen as evidence of their involvement in the insurgency (ibid 18).

The fact that guns are perceived as a source of security when in fact they are often a source of insecurity is particularly evident in the case of young men. The Small Arms Survey therefore conclude that gun violence must be tackled by limiting young men's access to firearms, but also by challenging the cultural ideologies of masculinity that posit weapons as sources of security and power (Small Arms Survey 2006: 317). In Thailand's Deep South, the government has chosen to do the exact opposite by increasing access to weapons and by cementing militarized forms of masculinity through continued military presence in all aspects of life in the South.

5.2.3 Militarization

The issue of militarization is well-explored in feminist research on violence. Foremost among researchers of gender and militarization is Cynthia Enloe who has detailed the militarization of women's lives and shown how militarized norms influence societies and structure people's lives (Enloe 2000).

The proliferation of civilian firearms and the constant military presence in the Deep South has created a highly militarized society. In a joint report from 2011, the Justice for Peace Foundation (JPF) and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (the

Coalition) argue that military uniforms and weapons are everyday scenes in Deep South villages and that they are increasingly seen as status- and power symbols. The military has taken on responsibilities that would normally be handled by a civilian administration and is seen carrying out tasks ranging from agricultural training to drug education. The report labels the Deep South a "highly militarized environment" and argues that the absence of demilitarized spaces constitutes a significant threat to people's security (Justice for Peace Foundation and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2011: 13).

As discussed in earlier chapters, militaries are important sites for the construction of masculinity, national identity and citizenship (Tallberg et al. 2008: 86f). The increased military presence in the South thus has important consequences for the construction of hegemonic masculinity in the area. Discussing particularly the impacts on children in the area, JPF and the Coalition show that in addition to the physical risks of living in these conditions, children's psychological development is affected by their daily contact with security forces (Justice for Peace Foundation and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2011: 14). While not referring specifically to the gender dimensions of militarization, the report introduces a number of issues that could, and should, be discussed from a masculinity perspective.

First of all, the report makes exclusive reference to boys in their discussion of child soldiers and children's involvement in village defense militias. Second, it acknowledges that firearms are often glamorized and that boys want to join militias because it is considered 'cool' and 'good for their image' (ibid: 14).

As shown in the previous chapter, association with firearms can be an important source of insecurity in the Deep South. The increased militarization of society and of people's lives is thus in itself a source of insecurity and vulnerability, especially for young men who are treated with suspicion by state officials. Increased militarization has also led to increased danger associated with travelling on the roads in the conflict area. In a study from 2010, the World Bank showed that men were increasingly interested in working closer to their homes due to the security risks associated with travelling to and from work at remote rubber plantations, a conventional source of income for many men in the Deep South (World Bank 2010: 9).

5. GENDERED DISCOURSES OF CONFLICT IN THAILAND'S DEEP SOUTH

The following section analyzes the discourse of conflict in Thailand's Deep South expressed by NGO practitioners, with special attention given to discourses concerning men and masculinity. The first part of the analysis (5.1) deals with the ways in which insecurity and vulnerability are articulated in relation to the conflict. The second part (5.2) looks at how men's and women's roles are articulated, reproduced and resisted within the discourse. The final part of the analysis (5.3) explores the understanding of 'gender' and 'gender issues', and the ways in which these concepts are employed by NGO practitioners in the Deep South. Throughout the analysis I attempt to pinpoint ways in which the discourse enables and limits practical intervention concerning men's vulnerability in the conflict situation.

5.1. Insecurity and vulnerability in discourses of conflict

Charli Carpenter has argued that to treat something as a security issue is to "imbue it with a sense of importance and urgency" (Carpenter 2006: 85). Exploring what sources of insecurity and vulnerability are articulated by NGO practitioners is thus a way to understand what issues are considered important and which are not.

5.1.1. Insecurity

Daily sources of insecurity expressed by the NGO informants included bombings, shootings and other 'random' acts of violence. The indiscriminate nature of such violence was described as disruptive to people's daily lives and as a source of fear for most civilians. However, while random acts of violence perpetrated by insurgents was seen as damaging to civilians' security, it played only a marginal role in NGO discourses of security and insecurity in the Deep South. Instead, the main source of insecurity articulated by the informants were human rights violations committed by Thai military and police.

"While we are critical of what the insurgents are doing we are actually strong against the military, who does human rights violations as well" (Khun[3] F, peace activist, 10 April 2012).

The focus on state violations, rather than insurgent violence, can be explained in part by the elusive character of the insurgency in Thailand's Deep South. The decentralized and largely anonymous character of the insurgency makes it difficult for NGO's to influence their behavior (Amnesty International 2011: 7). While the Thai government is not known for their openness to civil society influence, they are at least accountable to international pressure and national constituents. NGO's can therefore have a bigger impact on state conduct than insurgent behavior.

Nevertheless, the government-centered discourse of NGO practitioners provides a powerful counter discourse to the official narratives of conflict in the Deep South. The Thai government's conceptualization of insecurity in the South as a result of insurgent activity, and the use of special security laws as a prerequisite for civilian security (Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011), was strongly challenged by the informants. The laws, they argued, were not part of the solution but part of the problem.

"[T]o use the special security laws […] to solve the problem *is* the problem" (Khun C, lawyer, 5 April 2012).

According to the informants, the laws enable a number of human rights violations that constitute important sources of insecurity for civilians in the South. The violations articulated by the informants include arrests without warrant, long term detention without trial, mass arrests, torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. While some violations were seen as direct results of the enforcement of special security laws, others were linked to the impunity that the laws grant military and police in the Deep South.

As previously discussed, state sanctioned violence often affects men disproportionally, sometimes taking the form of 'sex-selective repression'. While the informants discussed issues of insecurity mostly in non-gendered terms, when prompted about whether the enforcement of special security laws affected men and women differently, all acknowledged that the majority of victims were, in fact, male.

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[3] *Khun* is a Thai courtesy title used in reference to both women and men.

"Most, if not all, were men" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

"[F]or victims of violence, a lot of them are men […]" (Khun S, human rights analyst, 5 April 2012).

By not recognizing the gendered nature of state violations, the informants reveal that men's increased exposure to violence is understood as natural. By not questioning or problematizing the fact that men constitute the vast majority of victims, they thereby contribute to an understanding of men as legitimate targets of violence.

5.1.2. Vulnerability

While 'insecurity' and 'vulnerability' were sometimes used interchangeably by the NGO informants, most differentiated between the two concepts. While insecurity was seen as imposed on civilians from outside, such as the actions of police, military and insurgents, vulnerability was closely linked to civilians themselves, determining the risk of being subjected to various types of insecurity.

Vulnerability proved to be a highly gendered concept, taking on different meanings and explanations depending on whether the informants were discussing men or women. Women's vulnerability played an important role in the informants' accounts of conflict. In these accounts, vulnerability was understood much in the same way as I conceptualize it in this thesis, as socially constructed through overlapping power structures.

"I guess there are multiple levels of discrimination. First of all because they are women, because they're Muslim women, and because they are Muslim women who's the wife of an insurgent" (Khun S, human rights analyst, 5 April 2012).

"[C]ultural stereotypes […] place women in a disadvantaged position, making them more vulnerable to abuses, including sexual abuse" (Khun S, human rights analyst, 5 April 2012).

Understanding women's vulnerability as socially constructed helped the NGO's identify ways in which they could reduce vulnerability. As an example, several of the informants reported that they worked primarily with women's groups to improve their knowledge of the legal system, since their gender increased the risk of them having to access justice for their husbands and sons. An understanding of vulnerability as socially induced thus has important consequences for NGO intervention. However, men's vulnerability was not correspondingly seen as socially constructed.

None of the informants voluntarily addressed men's vulnerability, but most were able to identify a number of ways in which men are particularly vulnerable when asked about it specifically. While the informants themselves did not refer to men's vulnerability as socially induced, their accounts revealed a number of ways in which male vulnerability in the Deep South is, in fact, a result of such 'cultural stereotypes'.

Men's vulnerability was primarily articulated as a consequence of the Thai state's perception of them as 'threats' and 'violence makers'. A careful reading of the NGO accounts show that there are three attributes that significantly increases the risk of being perceived as a threat in Thailand's Deep South – being young, being male and being Muslim.

> "They are vulnerable in the sense that they are, from the point of view of the state, […] men are deemed as a threat […]" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

> "[T]hey would search the village and all the men would be taken out to either torture or ask... So they're so scared, all the young men have to leave" (Khun F, peace activist, 10 April 2012).

> "If you're a young Muslim man driving in the three provinces, you might be stopped by the security forces more […]" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

This triple vulnerability can be understood in light of Adam Jones' argument, that young men of 'battle age' from the 'enemy' group are often considered the greatest threats to a conquering force (Jones 2006: 452). While the Thai state is not a conquering force per se, one should remember that the area was annexed by Thailand barely 100 years ago and that

the Muslim majority in the South has never fully been incorporated in the vision of Thai nationality. The states perception of Muslim young men as threats thus finds a reasonable explanation in Jones' premise.

However, while most informants identified the perception of men as threats as being 'from the point of view of the state', they also supported this conceptualization by arguing that men were in fact more likely to be part of the insurgency.

> "[O]f course men are, I guess, targeted more because usually a majority of insurgents are men" (Khun S, human rights analyst, 5 April 2012).

While the NGO informants often challenged the Thai state's narrative of conflict, in this instance they also reproduced it. That is not to say that a majority of insurgents are not men, but that by incorporating this discourse civil society contributes to an understanding of this 'fact' as a legitimate reason for targeting men in general. Even though the narratives discuss 'perceptions', there is an underlying assumption that these perceptions have a material basis. While women's vulnerability was explained by 'cultural stereotypes', men's vulnerability was constructed, at least in part, as a result of what was perceived as men's actual behavior. Despite recognizing that men's vulnerability was linked to the perception of them as threats, no discussion of stereotypes similar to that on women's vulnerability emerged in relation to men and boys. As Carpenter explains, understanding men's socially induced vulnerability remains a key challenge for the civilian protection community, as it severely limits the range of responses to civilian vulnerability they develop (Carpenter 2003: 675). By not problematizing the link between men's vulnerability and the perception of men as threats, the informants reproduce male experience as ungendered. This further illustrates the claim of masculinity studies, that male experience is taken as the norm and rarely problematized (Ford and Lyons 2012: 2f).

'Youth' was understood by the informants as a source of vulnerability when combined with the attributes 'male' and 'Muslim'. While the term 'young men' was often used in relation to mass arrests and unwarranted searches, 'boys' vulnerability was constructed as psychological rather than physical. The ongoing violence was seen as detrimental to children's, especially boys', wellbeing and their capacity to deal with conflicts peacefully. However, this psychological dimension was not present in accounts of young or adult men's vulnerability. The failure to link boys' capacity for peaceful conflict resolution to that of adult men will most likely have consequences for NGO

analyses and intervention. A deeper understanding of masculinities might have enabled different forms of involvement. The theory of hegemonic masculinity demonstrates that there is no fixed masculine ideal but that there is constants struggle between competing ideas about masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 833). By recognizing this, civil society could have actively attempted to construct such competing ideals.

While religion, in terms of being Muslim, was seen by the informants as a crucial source of vulnerability, it was also constituted as a positive influence on young people. In the sense that it tied communities together, and kept children away from harmful activities, the practice of religion was seen as a factor that countered vulnerability and produced resilience.

> "[L]uckily in the south there's religion; it's mostly religion that holds them together in a way, […] the religious activities" (Khun K, lawyer, 5 April 2012).

However, the two competing discourses on the role of religion refer to slightly different things. Vulnerability was seen by the informants as a result of being *labeled* Muslim by the Thai authorities, while resilience was seen as a result of active participation in religious activities.

It should also be noted that the triple vulnerability of being young, male and Muslim was assumed to compound other sources of vulnerability. Being 'outspoken' or 'high profile' was understood to increase Muslim men's vulnerability, and certain areas, such as court houses and detention centers, were seen as important sites of male vulnerability.

> "In the past, people…Muslim men who are outspoken might be kidnapped or disappeared" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

> "[…] especially in front of the detention centers, where they allow family to visit, the men normally will introduce themselves as the driver, because if they say that they're the brother […] or uncle of this guy, they will be targeted" (Khun K, lawyer, 5 April 2012).

While the informants identified a number of security risks to which men were more vulnerable, their vulnerability was not problematized and their gender did not form an important part of their discourse on conflict and vulnerability in Thailand's Deep South. Because of their familiarity with the context, the informants were able to relay information about the gender of victims and the ways in which men and women's vulnerability differed when prompted, but few discussed such issues in their original accounts of the conflict.

5.2 Gendering conflict in the Deep South

The informants' accounts of insecurity and vulnerability revealed a number of ideas about men and women, and their roles and responsibilities in the conflict ridden Deep South. All the informants conceptualized men and women as distinct groups. Women were assumed to share certain characteristics and men others, and the relationship between the groups was understood as dichotomous, meaning that men were primarily what women were not, and vice versa. This was revealed through the ways in which female qualities were often articulated through a discourse of men's lack of the same. Because the informants made clear distinctions between men and women, my analysis follows their categorization rather than my own ideas about gender difference.

5.2.1 Women in the Deep South

Responsibility, sacrifice and bravery were important themes that structured ideas about women in the informants' accounts of the conflict. The responsibilities and sacrifices articulated referred almost exclusively to family members, often close male relatives, and constructed women primarily as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. The discourse thus reproduced a number of traditional ideas about women as responsible for house and home, what feminists have identified as the private sphere of reproduction (Tickner 1992: 81, 91).

However, challenges to such traditional ideas were also expressed by the informants. The gendered division of labor in the South was, for example, seen as less desirable than the more equal sharing of responsibility in Bangkok families.

"Any issue, house matter […] that is the woman's job. I think that is different in Bangkok. If you have kids it's not only the woman's responsibility, the man has to help his share as well" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

Challenges to women's place in the private sphere were also expressed through the informants' reports of women's productive activities. Arguing that women were often responsible for providing for their families financially, the informants painted a picture of women as exceptionally hardworking and reliable in terms of providing and caring for their families.

"Women are normally the person who is working very hard in the family" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

"It's the women who are working very hard to take care of the kids, and also working to earn a living […]" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

Furthermore, the conflict was seen to have forced women to take on new responsibilities, such as accessing justice for their male relatives. Given that practically all detainees are men, and because their male relatives are viewed with suspicion, the informants argued that female relatives were faced with the task of taking on the Thai legal system and demand justice for their detained family members. Women's willingness to take action and pursue justice for their relatives was praised by the informants and seen as an extension of their responsibilities as family providers and caregivers.

"Women relatives, victims' relatives, are very active in the south. If something bad happens they're willing to take action" (Khun C, lawyer, 5 April 2012)

Several of the informants relayed that their organizations had observed this trend and were now working with capacity building among women on how to access the legal system. According to the informants, such NGO capacity building has led to the empowerment of local women in the South. Empowerment and women's changing roles were also central themes in the informants' discourse of women and conflict. The conflict, and the work of

civil society to mitigate its effects, was seen to have enabled women to take on new roles in society.

> "[W]omen are in the hands of seeking remedies because the men are arrested or killed or being abused, so in that sense women have been empowered…in the sense that there is a group of NGO's and civil society that are trying to increase the capacity of the women" (Khun K, lawyer, 5 April 2012).

> "A wife has to help her husband in the jail, so she have to connect to complain to the police, to keep in touch with the officials, so sometimes they learn from the process and they can advice for other women" (Khun T, lawyer, 5 April 2012).

The emphasis on empowerment and women's changing roles can be seen both as a challenge to more traditional gender discourse and as a description of what is perceived as actual changes in the roles of women in the Deep South. Some of the informants also reflected on the changing civil society discourse on women, which was seen to be moving from a victim to actor framework. Changes were seen both as discursive, in terms of how women were addressed by civil society, and as material, in that NGO's 'turned' victims into actors through capacity building.

The construction of women as hardworking, better educated and willing to take action led many of the informants to conclude that women in the South were well suited for working with civil society groups. Their 'natural' role as mediators as well as their superior mobility, bravery and access to local communities was seen to position them as ideal civil society activists. Women were also constructed as 'brave' through tales of male civil society activists that had expressed concerns about working in certain risky areas, whereas women insisted on going into the 'red zones'. Some of the informants also argued that women could move more freely in the South because men were stopped by security personnel more frequently. However, this issue of 'mobility' was challenged by other informants. The quotes below illustrate this contestation.

> "[W]omen are easier to mobilize, I mean to mobile, to go to houses and talk" (Khun K, lawyer, 5 April 2012).

"[M]any of the motorcycle-riding people are women! And I really…it's empowering for me to see that […]" (Khun F, peace activist, 10 April 2012).

"You seldom see women driving in the south […]" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

While the issue of mobility was contested, women were seen to have better access to local communities and security personnel. Utilizing their roles as mothers, wives and sisters, and the fact that they were viewed with less suspicion than men, women could talk more openly with military and police.

[T]hey were able to go out and investigate as a women's group […] because it was easy, no kind of doubt or suspicion when it's women […]. Mothers could just call their kids, even if it's military, and they could speak […] this whole respect for older women" (Khun F, peace activist, 10 April 2012).

A number of ideas about women thus work together to construct 'women' as fitting partners for civil society organizations. Ideas about women's sense of responsibility, work ethic, willingness to take action and access to society had important material consequences in the sense that the informants' organizations would choose to work with women's groups and to invest in capacity building for women, rather than men.

While it is of course crucial that women's groups receive training and are consulted in matters that concern their communities, there is a tendency among conflict and development practitioners to romanticize women's 'community-minded selflessness' (Cornwall 2003: 1335). If men are not represented in civil society, a number of male voices are silenced. Men will remain strong stakeholders in conflict and security matters, but only those men who represent state, police and military. Civilian and/or pacifist men will ultimately be overlooked by such discourses.

To summarize, the analyzed accounts challenge traditional ideas about women and femininity by locating women outside the home; as workers and as active participants in accessing justice for male relatives. The emphasis on women's empowerment and their changing roles are other example of the resistance to traditional gender discourses that can be found in these informants' accounts.

However, the accounts also serve to reproduce traditional gender discourse by idealizing women's responsibility for home and family. While acknowledging that women are taking on new tasks and roles, their reason for doing so is firmly rooted in their responsibility for the family and community. Likewise, the construction of women as ideal civil society activists is based on pervasive "gender myths about female solidarity and general community-minded selflessness" (ibid: 1335). Such conceptualizations not only reproduce traditional ideas about women, but also exclude men from civil society intervention and activity.

5.2.2 Men in the Deep South

While men were discussed less frequently than women, their roles and behavior played a crucial role in constructing women as brave and hardworking. Revisiting some quotes from the previous chapter, it is possible to see that men's irresponsibility was often implied in discussions of women's domestic responsibilities.

> "Women are normally the person who is working very hard in the family" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

> "It's the women who are working very hard to take care of the kids, and also working to earn a living […]" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

From the quotes above, we can see that the informants not only construct women as hardworking, they also construct men as not working particularly hard. Note that the informants not only claim that women are hardworking, but that 'it is the women' that are working hard and that women are 'the person in the family' that is working hard, implying that others are not working equally hard. While most references to men's irresponsibility were implicit, some informants were more explicit in their conceptualization.

> "[T]he men in the family is not working that hard. And, you know, they like to sip tea in the tea shops and discuss about politics, and they are spending a lot of time raising the birds […]" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

"I don't know, they might just be lazy" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

While recognizing that it might be a stereotype, one informant returned to this idea of men as lazy several times, showing that such stereotypes are firmly rooted. Explaining men's reluctance to work in terms of laziness and irresponsibility, the informants did not connect it to the fear and danger associated with travelling to and from work, nor with the increased exposure to military searches and checkpoints on the roads. As discussed in previous chapters, both Muslim and Buddhist men in the South have expressed a desire to work closer to home due to the security risks associated with travelling to and from work (World Bank 2010: 9). However, in the informants' accounts, reluctance to work was merely seen as a result of men's 'laziness'. Reducing men's unemployment to their own willingness to work severely limits the ways in which it could be addressed by civil society.

While most informants subscribed to this idea of men as not really contributing to family income, a competing discourse of men as 'breadwinners' was articulated by one of the informants. In discussing widows and wives of detainees, men were described as 'breadwinners', indicating that women lost not only their husbands but also their main source of income when men were arrested or killed. However, this view was expressed by the informant with least practical experience from the Deep South and might therefore be a generalization based on gender ideologies that posit men as breadwinners and women as homemakers (Tickner 1992: 81).

The discourse of men's unwillingness to work was sometimes extended to the Muslim community in general, alleging that Muslims did not dream of becoming academics and that they prioritized 'the religious way' over attempting to improve their economic situation. However, this view was never expressed when talking about Muslim women in particular, who were instead seen as better educated and more hardworking than their male counterparts.

The ideas expressed about men as lazy and irresponsible extended well beyond the topic of work. In an account of men who had been forced to escape their villages and hide for long periods of time, one informant relayed the following story.

"When the men was 'around' for their survival, they might get attached to another girl in order to get food or shelter […]. And the woman also have to say yes […] for the safety of the man" (Khun K, lawyer, 5 April 2012).

Through such stories, men's irresponsibility was emphasized in contrast to women's sacrifice. While the accounts of men as irresponsible and lazy challenge conventional ideas about the male breadwinner and responsible patriarch, the way in which these accounts are expressed make it clear that the informants are judging men in relation to more traditional norms. Men's inability to live up to such masculine ideals is not explained by changes in society, such as the increased risk involved in rubber tapping and the movement restrictions on Muslim men, but rather by innate qualities such as laziness and irresponsibility. This can be compared to how changes in women's roles were seen as an outcome of changing circumstances, as well as innate qualities such as bravery and responsibility.

Another theme that came to shape the construction of men in relation to conflict and insecurity was a discourse of fear. Several narratives centered on men's fear in at least two different ways. First, fear of mass arrests, searches and torture were seen as rational and practical due to the very real risks associated with the enforcement of special security laws in the Deep South.

"[T]hey would search the village and all the men would be taken out to either torture or ask...so they're so scared. All the young men have to leave […]" (Khun F, peace activist, 10 April 2012).

"I learned that a lot of men in the village they are the relatives of the detainee, but they are very afraid to visit the detainee because they are very insecure with the security force" (Khun T, lawyer, 5 April 2012).

"And men, because they were suspects […] they're basically scared up" (Khun F, peace activist, 10 April 2012).

Second, men's fear was articulated as a problem within civil society, where women were seen to be more willing to take risks and to put themselves in harm's way. This fear was

less accepted by the informants who used the tales of male fear to idolize women's bravery.

> "Most men are too scared to get involved in civil society groups" (Khun A, peace activist, 27 March 2012).

> "[W]e went through decision making and then the men, our coordinator is a man, he would say: It's too dangerous! […] But the women were saying: No, we can do it!" (Khun F, peace activist, 10 April 2012).

This discourse of fear in the informants' accounts of men and conflict is interesting because it challenges conventional ways of talking about men and risk taking. While the fear of security personnel experienced by local men was understood as a result of actual risks, the fear felt by civil society staff was seen to be related to gender. Challenging the view that men are risk takers, the NGO practitioners were deliberately resisting traditional discourses. However, similar to their construction of men's unwillingness to work, this challenge carries normatively negative undertones. Men's fear is a way to show women's bravery, which is considered desirable, rather than a discourse of role transformation among men.

So far, we have seen that accounts of men in the South are used to construct positive images of women, thereby emphasizing the dichotomy between men and women. However, in most accounts, men were not mentioned at all. When talking about issues that concerned primarily men, generic terms and general categories such as 'youth', 'soldiers', 'insurgents', 'suspects', 'detainees' and, to a lesser extent, 'victims', were employed by the informants. The tendency to talk about men as 'people' rather than 'men' is symptomatic of the gendered order of the world at large. Taking men's experiences as universal has been criticized by feminists for rendering women's experiences invisible. However, it has also instilled a view of the world in which women are gendered, while men are simply human. This also makes it difficult to see what is particular to the male experience (Ford and Lyons 2012: 2).

It is also interesting that despite being a discourse of conflict and vulnerability, which has arguably had a disproportionate number of male fatalities and incarcerations, the word 'victim' was rarely used. Instead, the more ambiguous 'suspect' was often employed. This might be a consequence of the fact that many of my informants

were lawyers and as such adhered to professional practices of labeling the suspect/victim in terms of their legal status. However, in many of the cases, the men were no longer actual suspects but plaintiffs in civil suits against the state, so this does not fully explain the unwillingness to describe men as victims. Instead, we must consider that gender ideologies make it difficult to reconcile the idea of 'victim' with young, able bodied men (Carpenter 2003).

The word 'suspect' is furthermore used to talk about two distinct but interrelated groups of people; those who are suspected by the government of having committed a crime, and those who embody some of the qualities that makes one 'suspicious' in the eyes of the state, i.e. being young, male and Muslim. By using the term suspect in talking about both groups, the informants reproduce government discourses that position all young Muslim men as potential threats. The absence of references to women as suspects is a notable silence within the discourse.

Finally, men were also talked about as actual perpetrators. Both as security personnel and as insurgents, men were seen as key perpetrators of violence in the Deep South. In only one instance did informants talk about women as perpetrators, describing a case in which a group of women kidnapped a local teacher and held her at a location where she was later killed, presumably by male insurgents. While the relaying of this story could be perceived as a counter discourse to the more common view of men-as-perpetrators, the way the story was told reproduced, rather than challenged, the common view. The story was told with a sense of 'believe-it-or-not', and constant declarations that it was, in fact, true. The story about female perpetrators thus serves to further strengthen the perception that men are the primary perpetrators of violence rather than challenge it. Furthermore, the female perpetrators were described quite differently from the male ones. These women were described as 'mothers' of children in a local school and as the 'wives' of insurgents. The fact that their role in the kidnapping and death of a teacher did not warrant the label 'insurgents' but rather 'wives of insurgents' is illustrative. It seems to indicate that a 'real' insurgent is male, once again reproducing the idea of a link between male and perpetrator.

To summarize, several aspects of the discourse challenge conventional male roles and characteristics, such as the male breadwinner and the male risk taker. However, in challenging these roles, the informants are also reproducing aspects of them, labeling men who do not live up to traditional male ideals as irresponsible and lazy. The use of generic terms in accounts of men's experiences, rather than labeling them as 'men's

experiences' can also serve to reproduce traditional gender discourse by cementing the view that male experience is the human experience. This is also illustrated by the use of the words 'suspect' and 'insurgent', concepts that appeared difficult to transfer to women, who despite acting in a way that would, if they were men, place them in such a category instead remained 'wives of insurgents' or 'relatives of suspects'. The ideas expressed about men and masculinity are thus clearly limited by taken for granted assumptions of men-as-perpetrators. Not only does it hinder understandings of men-as-victims but also fail to recognize women-as-perpetrators.

The construction of men as lazy and irresponsible especially combined with a discourse of fear and risk effectively render men ill-suited for civil society intervention. Why invest time and resources in a group that is seen as irresponsible? The NGO discourse of men in conflict clearly shows that the way men are conceptualized by practitioners has important consequences for how interventions are devised.

5.3 'Gender' and 'gender issues'

Finally, it's important to recognize that gender is not only a lens through which to study NGO discourse, but that the concept is in itself part of the discourse. While the term 'gender' is employed differently by different actors and may be understood in fundamentally different ways, few NGO's working with conflicts and human rights are unaware of its existence. While some of my informants declared that they themselves did not work specifically on 'gender issues', they all maintained that their organizations tried to employ a gender perspective. Gender therefore formed part of the discourse not only in the sense that ideas about men and women were expressed through conflict discourse, but as an explicit discourse of gender and gender issues.

While gender proved to be a highly contested concept, a few patterns could be discerned. First of all, gender was commonly equated with women's issues. When asked about the gender dimension of the conflict, all informants began to discuss the particular ways in which the conflict has affected women in the Deep South, and women were easily identified as the main objects of gender discourse.

Interestingly, gender issues that were considered important because of their disproportionate effects on women were often a result of male relatives having their human rights violated. Widows of men who had been victims of extrajudicial killings, female relatives of tortured and detained men, and wives of disappeared men were the

main objects of gender discourse. While such conceptualizations actually contain information about male vulnerability, violations that affected men disproportionally were not understood as 'gender issues' in their own right by the informants. In fact, male majority victimization was seen as a reason to exclude certain issues from the gender discourse. In a revealing example, when asked if enforced disappearances or the recruitment of child soldiers could be seen as a gender issue, one informant replied:

> "Not really, no. Because most of them are men" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

Likewise, the proliferation of weapons was excluded from the gender framework by the informants because women played a minor role.

> "On the proliferation of weapons, the regulation is really relaxed in the South. I'm not aware of any gender issues related to this. Women normally play sort of a supportive role" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

By excluding men and 'men's issues' from the concept of gender the informants effectively 'ungender' men and their experiences. As Connell explains, this is a result of the historic subjugation of women and the role of 'gender' in women's liberation movements across the world. The realization that men's experiences are also gendered is relatively recent and has not played an equally prominent role in gender research and discourse (Connell 1995: 227).

Gender was also constructed as a primarily Muslim issue, and the Muslim community was continuously referred to as a source of gender inequality. While one informant was careful to stress that gender inequality was also prevalent in the Buddhist community, the general perception was that Muslim culture and society was the site of gendered inequality.

> "I think [that there are gender dimensions to the conflict]. Because the Muslim community in the South […], Khun Angkhana[4] has raised some issues about the application of Shari'a law and provisions governing

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[4] Angkhana Neelaphaijit, prized human rights activist working with women's issues in the Deep South.

marriage that are not consistent with international law […]" (Khun S, human rights analyst, 5 April 2012).

"I mentioned about these stereotypes earlier. What are the roles of the women in Malay Muslim society and why are they still playing a subordinate role in relation to men?" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

"[I]t would also be interesting to look at gender issues in Muslim societies as a whole" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

Overlapping with the idea of gender as a Muslim issue was the perception of gender issues as unrelated to the conflict. Despite the construction of gender as an issue that all NGO's employed to some extent, many of the informants challenged its relevance in connection to the conflict.

"I'm not sure it's directly related to the conflict […]" (Khun S, human rights analyst, 5 April 2012).

"In my experience, the gender issue in the South is […] not directly relevant to the conflict" (Khun R, human rights analyst, 4 April 2012).

As the examination of literature on the conflict in the Deep South has shown, there are a number of important issues, closely related to the ongoing conflict, that affect men disproportionally. The failure to recognize any significant 'gender issues' connected to the conflict can thus, at least in part, be attributed to the informants understanding of gender as a women's issue. Had men's experiences been taken into account, it would be difficult to argue that gender and conflict are not linked in a number of ways.

Sex-selective repression, militarization and weapons proliferation all constitute important elements of the Deep South conflict. If gender issues are only understood as women's issues, those elements will be left unexplored by those working with a gendered lens. By not seeing the important links between masculinity on the one hand, and repression, militarization and violence on the other, the understanding of conflict remains partial. As long as such issues are excluded from discourse, they will remain excluded from practice (Carbine 2001: 268).

Conceptualizing gender as a women's issue also limits NGO analyses to the *experience* of conflict. When masculinity is included in the framework, it becomes apparent that gender also plays a role in producing and reproducing conflict. Such understandings are necessary if civil society wants to reduce the prevalence of conflict, not only mitigate its effects.

6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Civil society has played an important role in identifying and addressing civilian insecurity and vulnerability in Thailand's Deep South. Through advocacy and interventions, civil society actors are constantly involved in the production and reproduction of a discourse of conflict, insecurity and vulnerability. My analysis shows that while civil society actively challenges official state discourses of conflict, insecurity and vulnerability in the Deep South, it also reproduces many of the gendered ideas that shape them. A number of significant findings were revealed in the analysis of these discourses.

By positioning the Thai military and police as sources of civilian insecurity, the informants created a powerful counter discourse to that of the Thai state. However, by not problematizing the fact that most victims of state sanctioned violence are men, the informants reproduce the idea of *men as legitimate targets of violence*. As previous research has shown, this idea is based on a perception of all men as potential combatants and is a consequence of not recognizing the role gender plays in structuring relationships between men. By not acknowledging the hierarchies that exist among men and the ways in which men position themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinities, marginalized and subordinated masculinities are rendered invisible.

The analysis also exposes *vulnerability as a highly gendered concept*, employed differently in relation to women and men. Whereas women's vulnerability was emphasized, and articulated by the informants as socially induced, men's vulnerability was downplayed by the informants who perceived it as a result of men's actual behavior. The reproduction of men-as-perpetrators could also be discerned by the absence of men-as-victims in the discourse. By referring to male victims as 'suspects', the informants revealed an interpretation of masculinity that was difficult to reconcile with victimhood and powerlessness. However, the theory of hegemonic masculinity reveals that not all men have power and that hegemonic constructions of masculinity leave some men vulnerable to abuse. Civil society thus reproduces the very ideas that lead to state violations against men in the first place, the idea that all men are potential combatants.

Through the discourse of insecurity and vulnerability, the informants articulated several ideas about men and women, masculinity and femininity, in the Deep South. Importantly, a *dichotomous relationship between men and women* was articulated by positioning men and women as two distinct groups, whose roles and responsibilities

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were seen as each others' opposites. Men's laziness was, for example, articulated through accounts of women's work ethic, and women's bravery was conditioned on men's fear. While the informants challenged a number of traditional ideas about women by locating them in the public arena, as providers and activists, the discourse simultaneously reproduced women as primarily mothers, wives, and daughters. By explaining women's work and activism in terms of sacrifices for the family, the discourse reproduces women's interests as firmly rooted in the private sphere of home and family, even as they pursue interests in the public sphere.

The changing roles and empowerment of women articulated by the informants was seen as a positive development to which most organizations wanted to contribute through continued capacity building and education. However, while several of the accounts made known that men's roles had also been altered by the conflict, none of the informants made any reference to 'men's changing roles'. Instead, men were continuously *judged in relation to traditional male expectations* and their inability to live up to such ideals was attributed to laziness and irresponsibility.

The analysis also identifies the *ungendering of male experience* of conflict through generic and broad categorizations of 'detainees', 'suspects' and 'insurgents'. This 'ungendering' contributes to an understanding of male experience as human experience, which not only excludes female experience but also ignores men's experiences as men. The ungendering of male experience was also apparent in the informants' articulations of 'gender' and 'gender issues'. By equating 'gender' with 'women's issues', the informants effectively exclude men from a gender framework that is becoming increasingly important for international donors and practitioners, thereby excluding men from a majority of interventions directed at 'gender issues' in the Deep South.

Several of the ideas about men articulated by the informants have *important material consequences*. Whereas the reproduction of men's fear and exposure to risk posit them as ill-suited for civil society, an important site for education and capacity building in the conflict area, the construction of men as lazy and irresponsible will hardly encourage investments in men's activities and work. Finally, by excluding men from the framework of gender, important economic and human resources are diverted from issues concerning men's vulnerability in the Deep South.

The findings of this study raise a number of important questions about civil society's role in promoting gender perspectives and how NGO discourses limit the range of

interventions available for practitioners interested in promoting civilian security in armed conflict. The findings suggest that while human rights and peace NGO's may want to challenge traditional ideas about men and women, they sometimes inadvertently reproduce them. How, then, can NGO practitioners be made aware of such pitfalls? This thesis suggests that an understanding of masculinities as diverse and hierarchical, as proposed by hegemonic masculinity theory, could prove an important starting point for looking beyond categorical differences.

As this thesis deals primarily with discourses, and makes only limited claims about the material consequences of discourse, an important complement would be to study the actual vulnerability of men in the Deep South. In-depth studies of men's vulnerability in conflicts are rare and would therefore greatly contribute to a better understanding of men's experiences of violence as well as the gendered nature of conflict itself.

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