Christopher Anderson

Identity Formation and Armed Conflict

NOHA UPPSALA
Network On Humanitarian Action

Identity Formation and Armed Conflict

A case study of young Karen long-term refugees in Mae La camp, Tak Province, Thailand

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
International Master of Humanitarian Action at Uppsala Universitet, Sweden

Supervisor: Kjell-Åke Nordquist

November 2009

Christopher Anderson
ခရုံးစထီ်ဖား အါနဒၢ်စား

chris@christopheranderson.ca

Cover photo © 2008 Dave Tacon | www.davetacon.com | Used with permission

NOHAUPPSALA
Network On Humanitarian Action

© 2009
Christopher Anderson
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Abstract

Over six million people currently live in protracted refugee situations, many due to armed conflict. However, linkages between protracted refugee situations, armed conflict, and the identity formation process of young refugees have not been analysed heretofore. For this study I interviewed 14 refugee youth aged 12 to 21 who were members of the Karen ethnic group of Burma (Myanmar) living in Mae La refugee camp in Thailand. The interviews were carried out and analysed within a framework combining Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model with James Marcia's Ego Identity Status theory. A high rate of foreclosure was found for most identity status domains. Results were consistent with the hypothesis that spending formative years in a conflict-related protracted refugee situation, with or without the active influence of belligerents, is linked with willingness to take up arms.

Acknowledgments

This thesis is the culmination of over a year's effort, procrastination, and delays. I am grateful for, and highly impressed by, the patience and understanding with which this long, drawn-out process has been met by my supervisor, Kjell-Åke Nordquist. Over coffees and emails, he helped me turn imprecise and incongruent ideas into a cohesive collection of concepts. Kjell-Åke's encouragement and reassurance are hugely appreciated.

In sheer number of hours spent, I sometimes feel my parents, Rosemary and Max Anderson, have spent more time working on this thesis than I have. They helped proofread, edit, and analyse my writing over and over, at every stage of the process from research plan to final draft. Each having an advanced degree in hand, they also offered constructive criticism of my concepts, approach, and interpretation, forcing me to rethink and reassess regularly. Without the emotional and nutritional support provided by my parents through my youth and nearly seven years of university, I would not have completed this thesis.

Had I not overheard, and subsequently inserted myself into, a conversation between Tanaji Sen, Wiebke Harms, and Katherine Harris, I would likely still be looking for a thesis topic. Together we designed a framework to study the links between identity formation and growing up as a refugee, originally with the intention of producing a joint publication. We were unable to carry this project through to fruition, but frequent communication and information-sharing has been tremendously helpful. Tanaji and Wiebke kindly permitted me to use material from their studies on refugee youth and provided support, advice, and knowledge, particularly on the study's theoretical framework.*

Kudos to Sarina Rehal for all her research help during my theoretical framework design phase, particularly a trip to the UBC Library in Vancouver, Canada to print the interview manual from microform and send it to me in Sweden.

Thanks also to Dave Tacon for the use of his amazing photo on the cover. Please check out his insightful photography portfolio at http://www.davetacon.com. Tack så jättemycket to Saw Weldone for connecting me with contacts in Mae La and friendly discussions over coffee in Uppsala. Thanks to the Karen Education Department for providing access for interviews with refugees and community members, and Per Kaw for hosting me in his home. တၢ်ဘျုး to Loh Pwe for translating and answering many of my questions. Dank je wel to Pieter-Henk van Wijk for being an excellent accomplice. ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါတယ် to Thant Zin Aung for his kindness and hospitality. My respondents have been thanked in person but cannot be named here.

---

* Parts of this thesis freely incorporate material with permission and without citation from the draft versions of Tanaji Sen's and Wiebke Harms's Master's theses.

Contents

1 Introduction 1
1.1 Aims and Objectives 1
1.2 Thesis Structure 2
2 Background Information and Literature Review 5
2.1 Background 5
2.1.1 Profile of Burma and the Karen 5
2.1.2 Who are the Karen people? 8
2.1.3 Understanding the conflict in Karen State 9
2.1.4 Status and rights of Karen refugees in Thailand 11
2.1.5 Mae La refugee camp 12
2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework 15
2.2.1 Earlier research and identification of gaps 15
2.2.2 Research Question 16
2.2.3 Bronfenbrenner's and Marcia's theories 17
3 Study Methodology and Issues 27
3.1 Sources of Information 27
3.2 Respondents 27
3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews 30
3.4 Language 32
4 Results and Analysis 33
4.1 The Karen in Thailand: a Protracted Refugee Situation 33
4.2 Understanding the Protracted Refugee Situation in the Context of Ecological Systems 36
4.3 Key Ecological Influences on Karen Refugees' Identity Formation 38
4.3.1 Overview 38
4.3.2 Influence of the Microsystem 38
4.3.3 To fight or not to fight? 40
4.3.4 Potential KNLA recruits 43
4.3.5 Ecological systems and willingness or unwillingness to fight 44
4.3.6 The Chronosystem's limiting influence on identity achievement 45
5 Conclusions 47
5.1 Implications for Karen Refugees in Thailand 47
5.2 Applicability in Other Contexts 48
5.3 Usefulness of Bronfenbrenner's and Marcia's Theories 49
5.4 Suggestions for Further Study 50
6 Appendices i
Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions - English i
Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions – Sgaw Karen တၢ်သံကွၢ်သံဒီးသ့ၣ်တဖဲၣ် v
Appendix C: Identity Status Ratings ix
7 Works Cited xi

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Map of Burma, showing Karen State and Mae La 5

Figure 2 - Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems 18

Figure 3 - Variation within identity statuses 24

Figure 4 - Variation within statuses 41

List of Tables

Table 1 - Four possible identity status outcomes 24

Table 2 – Willingness to Fight: respondents sorted by religion 43

List of Abbreviations

DKBA: ..... Democratic Karen Buddhist Army

KNLA: ..... Karen National Liberation Army

KNU: ..... Karen National Union

SLORC: ..... State Law and Order Restoration Council

SPDC: ..... State Peace and Development Council

TBBC: ..... Thailand Burma Border Consortium

UNHCR: ..... United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1 Introduction

There are two broad categories of problems addressed in the field of humanitarian action: natural disasters and man-made disasters. The latter are also known as armed conflicts or complex emergencies. While there are limits to preventing or mitigating the effects of natural disasters, it is possible, in theory at least, to prevent armed conflict. Although it is unlikely that the world will ever come to experience a complete absence of armed conflict, to work toward the goal of peace is to work toward improving the lives of those whose lives are affected. Among those affected are millions of refugees around the world who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries to escape armed conflict in their homelands. Over half of today's refugees worldwide live in protracted refugee situations, and many of these are children.

Like any other youth, these young refugees need to develop an understanding of who they are and what they believe; in other words, they need to develop their identity. Yet how is a young refugee's identity formation[1] process influenced by his or her unfortunate circumstances? More importantly, just as conflict affects young refugees' identity status, could the identity status of young refugees have implications for armed conflict?

The Karen National Union (KNU) movement and its armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), have been fighting against the government in Burma[2] for the past six decades – the longest ongoing armed conflict in the world. The Karen also represents the largest proportion of refugees in Thailand. This situation seemed to be particularly suitable to try and explore my questions, so I decided to conduct a case study among Karen refugee youth in Mae La refugee camp, situated just inside the Thai border.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The general aim of this research was to contribute to the current body of knowledge regarding refugees whose situation is linked to violence involving armed groups.[3] The specific objective of this research was to determine whether growing up as a refugee has a

---

[1] The terms 'identity development' and 'identity formation' are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.
[2] The name 'Burma' is used throughout this document. In 1989, the Burmese government decreed that the name Myanmar would replace Burma in all "laws enacted in the English language." Myanmar is the literary, ceremonial form of the country name, while Burma (more accurately, 'Bama') is the spoken, colloquial form. It is in essence the same word, and the decision to use Burma in this document is primarily one of convenience. For more information on the 'Myanmar vs. Burma' debate, see "An Introduction to the Toponymy of Burma," by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.
[3] Throughout this thesis, the use of the terms 'armed group' or 'armed movement' refers to belligerent parties in armed conflicts – in other words, organised militaries.

sufficiently strong effect on an individual's identity formation process that it may reasonably be said to affect his or her opinions and decisions regarding supporting armed groups in his or her 'country of origin.'[4]

It is necessary here to clarify briefly that this thesis is not concerned with identity itself but, rather, explores the relationship between the identity formation process and conflict. Identity formation is discussed in more detail in section 2.2.3.

The intention of this work is not to advocate for or against any armed group or assess the virtue or acceptability of such a group's struggle; rather, the focus is on identifying and understanding the links between identity formation and young refugees' support for armed groups, in particular in conflict-related protracted refugee situations.[5] This understanding might then be applied to situations elsewhere in the world where other refugees are also confronted with the option to join or support armed groups.

1.2 Thesis Structure

The main content of this thesis is organised into four parts: *Literature Review*, *Study Methodology and Issues*, *Results and Analysis*, and *Conclusions*, and is followed by three appendices which provide the interview questions and identity status ratings.

The first part of the thesis, *Literature Review*, includes background information about Burma and the Karen people, and highlights the political and humanitarian aspects of the refugee situation. This part also looks at earlier research and the gaps in existing literature, and explains the theoretical framework used in this study, which is comprised of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model and James Marcia's Ego Identity Status theory. *Study Methodology and Issues* outlines the means by which I gathered information for my analysis. *Results and Analysis* provides information on the environmental influences affecting and affected by young Karen refugees, as well as identity status ratings from my interviews. Based on this information, I offer an analysis of the potential links between the Burmese conflict and Karen identity formation. *Conclusions* explores the implications of

---

[4] 'Country of origin' is used to describe the country from which the group of refugees came, even if the individual in question was born as a refugee and has perhaps never been to his or her so-called country of origin.

[5] A protracted refugee situation is defined as one "in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance." For data purposes, it is defined as a situation "in which a refugee population of 25,000 persons or more has been living in exile for five years or longer in a developing country." United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Protracted Refugee Situations*, EC/54/SC/CRP.14, June 2004, sections II and III.

these potential links, and considers the applicability of my study to other instances in which youth find themselves living in conflict-related protracted refugee situations. Also offered are several suggestions for further study based on my acquired knowledge and experience carrying out this research.

2 Background Information and Literature Review

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Profile of Burma and the Karen

A short synopsis of the situation in Burma as a whole is useful in order to fully understand the situation in which the Karen find themselves, which has affected and been greatly affected by events and circumstances in Burma.

2.1.1.1 Location

Burma is located in Southeast Asia, bordered on the west by Bangladesh, on the northwest by India, on the northeast by the People's Republic of China, on the east by the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and on the southeast by the Kingdom of Thailand, with which it shares a border of about 1800 kilometres.[7]

Karen State (known in Burma as Kayin State) is in the eastern part of Burma bordered by Karenni State (also known as Kayah State), Shan State, Mandalay Division, Bago Division, Mon State, and on the east by Thailand's Mae Hong Son Province and Tak Province.

Figure 1 - Map of Burma, showing Karen State and Mae La (Adapted from a 2005 Karen Human Rights Group map)

Scale: 1 : 800,000

[7] "Burma," *CIA World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> Accessed 20 September 2009.

2.1.1.2 A very brief modern history of Burma

After many centuries of rivalry between the kingdoms of different ethnic groups in what is now Burma, followed by six decades of war with invading British colonisers (1824-1886), and six decades of British colonial administration (1886-1948), which included an invasion and occupation by the Japanese Imperial Army from January 1942 to August 1945, Burma became independent on 4 January 1948.

Democracy in Burma: 1948 to 1962

The first decade following independence was characterised by ethnic and communist insurgencies and a split in Prime Minister U Nu's own ruling political party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. On 2 March 1962, with the country in a continuing state of turmoil, General Ne Win launched a successful coup d'état and placed top politicians under arrest.[8] Within a month, the new government announced the 'Burmese Way to Socialism.' This approach would guide the country's development for the next 26 years.

Dictatorship in Burma: 1962 to 1988

This period in Burma's history can be summed up rather concisely by Ne Win's approach to governing: "he concentrated on building up a highly centralised system of administration in Rangoon while, in areas of rural insurgency, carrying out relentless counter-insurgency programmes in a bid to crush armed opposition once and for all."[9] The Military Intelligence Services came to play a very important 'big brother' role in all aspects of Burmese life, sowing fear and suspicion among and between ordinary people. All opposition groups were outlawed. During this long period, Ne Win deliberately isolated Burma from the outside world by closing the country to almost all foreign visitors and forbidding almost all travel abroad by Burmese. He also nationalised nearly all businesses and companies, both foreign-owned and domestic-owned.[10]

More dictatorship in Burma: 1988 to 2009

In September 1987, Ne Win's government demonetised Burma's currency (for the second time in three years), making all large bills in circulation immediately worthless.[11] Many Burmese citizens lost all their savings as a result. This was a major factor in the democracy movement uprising, which commenced in March 1988 and fully exploded in July and

---

[8] Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, London: Zed Books, 1999, 196.
[9] Smith, 199.
[10] Smith, 201.
[11] Smith, 25.

August of that year. Ne Win resigned in July 1988 but protests grew in intensity, demanding democratic reform. Ne Win's successor, Sein Lwin, organised a brutal reaction to the protests. He was forced to resign on 12 August. On 18 September, a new leadership emerged out of the violence, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), led by Saw Maung and Khin Nyunt, both loyal to Ne Win.[12] They also renamed the country Myanmar.

While this is sometimes called a coup, it was in reality simply a reorganisation of the leadership.[13] Ne Win is thought to have remained a powerful figure, if not the true leader, for several years afterwards.[14] In the ensuing weeks, over 10,000 people were killed by government forces.[15] Elections held on 27 May 1990 resulted in a landslide victory for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy but the SLORC refused to concede victory, choosing instead to imprison hundreds of people, including over 50 elected Members of Parliament and Aung San Suu Kyi.[16] In April 1992, Saw Maung resigned for health reasons and General Than Shwe became the SLORC Chairman.

In the 1990s, a number of insurgent groups signed ceasefires with the government in exchange for varying degrees of autonomy in their respective areas. Attempts by the KNU to negotiate with the government in the 1990s and 2000s did not produce any tangible results, with mistrust remaining high on both sides.[17]

In 1997, an internal purge and reorganisation took place whereby Than Shwe, Maung Aye, and Khin Nyunt formed a new governing council and arrested a number of their colleagues.[18] This new council was euphemistically named the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). General Than Shwe remains the SPDC Chairman at the time of writing (autumn 2009), having removed Khin Nyunt as Prime Minister in October 2004 and placed him under house-arrest. Than Shwe's health seems precarious, leading to speculation about potential unrest if he dies.[19]

As a result of the government's isolationist policies and its treatment of Burmese people of all ethnicities, including its anti-democratic practices, human rights abuses, and violent

---

[12] Smith, 15.
[13] Smith, 15.
[14] Smith, 415.
[15] Smith, 16.
[16] Smith, 412.
[17] Paul Keenan, ed., "The Karens and their Struggle for Freedom," Karen History and Culture Preservation Society Edition, 2006, 19-45.
[18] Smith, 433.
[19] Min Lwin, "Than Shwe's Health Again in Question," *The Irrawaddy*, 3 October 2008, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/> Accessed 30 March 2009.

suppression of demonstrations including the so-called Saffron Revolution of 2007, many countries have enacted strong sanctions against Burma. This has exacerbated the country's economic woes and led to increased inflation. One sign of this is the state of the country's currency, the Kyat. In early 2009, while the official exchange rate for one American Dollar was 4.4 Burmese Kyat,[20] the real street exchange rate was 1000-1200 Kyat to the Dollar.[21]

2.1.2 Who are the Karen people?

The Karen are the third largest ethnic group in Burma (after Burmans and Shan), currently making up about 7% of Burma's population.[22] The origins of the Karen are not well understood; a number of different opinions exist about their geographic, linguistic, and ethnic origins, with political overtones sometimes attached to these.[23] Without exploring these highly debatable issues, it can be said that the Karen language is classified as part of the South-eastern group of the Tibeto-Burman language family.[24] In terms of geographical origin, a genetic mapping study recently carried out among hilltribes in Northern Thailand, home to a significant Karen population, states that "their genetic affiliation … is consistent with their hypothetical place of origin in Tibet/China regions."[25] It is unknown precisely when or along which route the Karen migrated to their present homeland, but a number of sources say they moved in two waves in the 12th and 8th centuries B.C. via Yunnan, China.[26]

San Po wrote in 1928 of the difficulties encountered by the Karen in pre-colonial and colonial times, with a particular emphasis on troubled relations between Burmans and Karen. The extent of disharmony between the two, he felt, justified an independent

---

[20] According to www.xe.com currency conversion website, accessed 2 January 2009.
[21] Based on my firsthand experience in Burma in February 2009. At the official rate set by the government, a 650ml bottle of beer in a restaurant would cost between USD $155 and $280, depending on the brand of beer. At the street exchange rate, the same beer in fact cost only USD $1 to $1.80.
[22] "Burma," *CIA World Factbook*.
[23] Ananda Rajah claimed the Karen arrived before the Burmans, Shan, and Mon, but offered no hard evidence for this claim other than Karen oral tradition (Ananda Rajah, *Remaining Karen*, Canberra: Australian National University E Press, 2008, 308). Burmans and Mon often claim to have arrived in Burma first. None of these competing claims is particularly important. It is, however, important to emphasise that different groups have different and usually unsupported understandings of Karen origins. There is no irrefutably accurate history of the Karen people.
[24] David Bradley, "Tibeto-Burman Languages and Classification," *Papers in Southeast Asian Linguistics* 14 (1997): 2.
[25] Davide Besaggio, Silvia Fuselli, Metawee Srikummool, Jatupol Kampuansai, Loredana Castrì, Chris Tyler-Smith, Mark Seielstad, Daoroong Kangwanpong, and Giorgio Bertorelle, "Genetic variation in Northern Thailand Hill Tribes: origins and relationships with social structure and linguistic differences," *BMC Evolutionary Biology* 7, Supplement 2: Second Congress of Italian Evolutionary Biologists (First Congress of the Italian Society for Evolutionary Biology) (2007): S12.
[26] Keenan.

country for the Karen.[27]

2.1.3 Understanding the conflict in Karen State

There are presently three belligerents in the conflict in Karen State: the Tatmadaw (Burmese military), the DKBA (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army), and the KNLA (Karen National Liberation Army). A quick historical summary of the conflict helps in understanding these three armed groups.

In the Second World War, the Karen fought on the British side against the Japanese invaders, supposedly with assertions from the British that the Karen would be granted an independent state following victory.[28] That alleged promise was not upheld by the British, and as a result the Karen started their armed struggle at a low level in 1947.[29] The government of newly independent Burma also refused to accept autonomy demands from the Karen and other ethnic groups. As a result, most of the ethnic groups mobilised armed insurgencies soon after independence. During the first few decades, the Karen and other ethnic groups each controlled their own areas of the country through military means.[30] However, by the 1980s the Tatmadaw had developed into a powerful military force, able to effectively take and hold rebel-controlled areas. Thus, the KNLA has been in "almost constant retreat since the mid 1980s."[31]

In December 1994 a group of Buddhist Karen soldiers split from the KNLA, claiming discrimination by the predominantly Christian leadership.[32] This group, the DKBA, immediately signed a ceasefire with the Burmese government and with detailed insider knowledge subsequently helped conquer the KNU's de facto capital of Manerplaw.[33] The DKBA, supported by the government, continues to fight against the KNLA, claiming to represent the interests of the Karen people. The successes of DKBA and Tatmadaw offensives have led to a gradual decline in the land area controlled by the KNU as well as a decline in the KNLA's ability to fight back.[34]

---

[27] San C. Po, *Burma and the Karens*, London: Elliott Stock, 1928.
[28] Andrew Selth, "Race and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945," *Modern Asian Studies* 20.3 (1986): 502.
[29] R. H. Taylor, "Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO)," *Southeast Asia: a historical encyclopedia from Angkor Wat to East Timor*, Ooi Keat Gin, ed., 711-712.
[30] R. H. Taylor, "Karen National Union (KNU)," *Southeast Asia: a historical encyclopedia from Angkor Wat to East Timor*, Ooi Keat Gin, ed., 712-713.
[31] Anthony Davis and Edo Asif, "Myanmar faces down its armed minorities," Jane's Intelligence Review, 01 March 2006, section: 'Non-ceasefire groups.'
[32] Smith, 446.
[33] Smith, 446.
[34] "Interview: Mahn Sha, General secretary, Karen National Union (KNU)," Jane's Intelligence Review, 01 December 2006.

Today the KNLA fights mainly defensive battles using guerrilla tactics, as opposed to the former approach of fixed positional warfare.[35] A large part of KNLA action consists of protecting and escorting internally displaced Karen villagers to safe areas or across the border to Thailand. At the time of writing, it is a war the KNLA is losing, and it seems only a matter of time before all KNU-controlled land in Karen State is lost to the Tatmadaw and DKBA. In recent years, Tatmadaw forces have been estimated to be comprised of anywhere from 350,000 to more than 400,000 troops.[36] KNLA forces are estimated at fewer than 2,500.[37]

While the conflict in Karen State has been ongoing since 1947, it has become particularly brutal since the 1980s. The first refugees from Burma began arriving in Thailand in 1984 and the next quarter century saw increasingly successful Tatmadaw operations, creating a growing number of refugees in Thai camps – from an estimated 10,000 in 1984 to well over 100,000 today.[38] Among Burmese refugees in Thailand's camps today, 61% are identified as Karen.[39] Approximately 95% of Karen refugees left Burma as a result of "the systematic destruction of their ability to survive caused by demands and retaliations" of government forces, according to the Karen Human Rights Group.[40]

This systematic destruction has taken, and continues to take, the form of serious and repeated human rights violations carried out as part of a systematic 'Four Cuts' strategy. This approach consists of cutting rebel groups' supplies of "food, funds, intelligence and recruits."[41] In other words, the Burmese government attempts to "drain the ocean so the fish cannot swim."[42] Examples of this process include: destruction of villages and forced relocation of villagers; burning and looting of crops, livestock, and food stores; intimidation and torture of people suspected of cooperating with opposition groups; and forced labour including the use of civilians as disposable human minesweepers.[43]

---

[35] "Interview: Mahn Sha."
[36] Kevin Heppner and Jo Becker, *'My Gun Was As Tall As Me': Child Soldiers in Burma*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002, 19.
[37] Davis and Asif.
[38] Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), "A brief history of the Thailand Burma border situation," <http://www.tbbc.org/camps/history.htm> Accessed 3 March 2009.
[39] TBBC, "Burmese border refugee sites with population figures: February 2009," <http://www.tbbc.org/camps/populations.htm> Accessed 2 April 2009.
[40] Karen Human Rights Group, "Background On Burma," <http://khrg.org/> Accessed 17 November 2008.
[41] Smith, 259.
[42] Karen Human Rights Group.
[43] Human Rights Watch, "Burma: Landmines Kill, Maim and Starve Civilians," 19 December 2006, <http://www.hrw.org/> Accessed 17 November 2008.

2.1.4 Status and rights of Karen refugees in Thailand

Within Thailand, Karen refugees have very few rights. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention) guarantees rights such as freedom of movement[44] and the right to seek employment.[45] Unfortunately, Thailand is not a signatory to the Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol and, as such, chooses not to recognise displaced Burmese officially as 'refugees.'[46] They are not permitted to leave the refugee camps; to do so is to risk arrest, imprisonment, fines, and deportation by Thai authorities.[47] At the same time, refugees are not permitted to work to earn money, leaving them dependent on humanitarian organisations for their daily needs such as food, clothing, and education.

Karen refugees have four main options from which to choose for their future: return to Burma, where they risk facing the treatment described in section 2.1.3; remain in the refugee camp, where conditions are poor and life is dull at best; become illegal migrants in Thailand's cities, where mistreatment and discrimination are common[48] and arrest is always a risk; or apply for resettlement to a third country such as the United States and hope for a chance at a new beginning.[49]

Those refugees who have not been granted official displaced status by the Thai government have essentially no rights in Thailand.[50] Furthermore, in 2005, Thailand ceased registration of new refugee arrivals,[51] making it ever more difficult for all parties involved to address the needs of the real people living in the camps, many of whom are there in the flesh but not on paper in Thai government records or UNHCR records. "At the end of 2007, the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) estimated that the total population being provided with food in the refugee camps was around 142,000."[52] The UNHCR reported only

---

[44] United Nations, *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, "Chapter V, Article 26: Freedom of movement," 1951.
[45] United Nations, *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, "Chapter III: Gainful Employment," 1951.
[46] UNHCR, *Statistical Yearbook 2007*, 40.
[47] On several occasions I witnessed Thai police rounding up illegal Burmese migrants in Mae Sot, the closest city to Mae La camp. The migrants were then driven to the border and handed over to authorities on the other side of the bridge that separates Thailand and Burma just west of Mae Sot.
[48] Amnesty International, "Thailand: The Plight of Burmese Migrant Workers," June 2005, AI Index: ASA 39/001/2005.
[49] The United States is by far the leading recipient of resettled Burmese refugees, having accepted over 10,000 Burmese refugees in 2007. UNHCR, *Statistical Yearbook 2007 Annexes*, Table 5.
[50] United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), *World Refugee Survey 2008*, "Country Report: Thailand," 19 June 2008, <http://www.refugees.org/> Accessed 18 November 2008.
[51] Department for International Development (DFID), "Review of Aid to Refugees and Internally Displaced People on the Thailand-Burma Border," July 2008.
[52] DFID, 8.

124,600 registered refugees at the end of 2007.[53] This means that aid agencies and donors, presented with incorrect camp population figures, have a difficult time designing and running aid programs – some must use the official figures for their own accountability regulations, others estimate the population. Only a very small number of directly conflict-related refugees are now recognised each year by Thailand.[54]

2.1.5 Mae La refugee camp

There are 9 refugee camps for Burmese refugees in Thailand, stretching from north to south along the border.[55] Mae La is the largest refugee camp in the country, home to nearly 40,000 refugees in 2009.[56] The camp is approximately 3.7 km long and 0.5 km wide, located 7 km east of the Burmese border. It is 62 km north of Mae Sot on the west side of Thai Route 105, which runs north from Mae Sot to Mae Sariang.[57] Police and army checkpoints have been set up on the highway to the north and south of the camp in an attempt to stem the illegal movement of refugees in and out of the camp and prevent refugees from joining the already large population of illegal migrants in Thai urban areas.

Living conditions

Inside the camp, conditions are crowded but tolerable. Despite the efforts of the Thai authorities to prevent any permanent structures from being erected, the wood and bamboo refugee homes are real homes, not just temporary shelters. Teak-leaf roofs must be replaced every year, otherwise they cease being waterproof (a potentially big problem during the rainy season), but the structure of a typical Mae La home simply needs small repairs now and again. From personal conversations with expatriates familiar with smaller, more remote camps, the conditions in those camps are not quite as good as in Mae La, though not much worse. While the camp is crowded, most homes have sufficient space for those who live in them.

---

[53] UNHCR, *Statistical Yearbook 2007*, 40.
[54] Sara Colm, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Thai Policy toward Burmese Refugees," *Human Rights Watch* 16.2(C) (2004): 10.
[55] UNHCR, *Statistical Yearbook 2007*, 40.
[56] UNHCR, *Statistical Yearbook 2007*, 116. Also, see TBBC website: <http://tbbc.org/>. Mae La formerly housed over 50,000 refugees; many were recently resettled to third countries.
[57] To see the camp's location, go to <http://maps.google.com/maps?&q=17.12%B0+N,+98.39%B0+E> Using satellite image software or mapping software, navigate to the following geographic coordinates: Lat. 17.12° N, Lon. 98.39° E.

Health conditions

Most of Mae La's latrines are in flimsy bamboo outhouses shared by the community, and are unhygienic and malodorous. Due to the generally poor hygiene in the camp, refugees suffer from a number of health problems and occasional disease outbreaks. Cholera, typhoid, and other water-borne diseases pose a serious threat to camp residents. Malaria and dengue fever are common, each spreading when the appropriate type of mosquito bites an infected person and then bites a healthy person.[58] Inadequate mosquito net use and crowded camp conditions enable these diseases to spread quickly. The current percentage of HIV-positive camp residents is unknown, but is believed to be low. It remains a threat, however, as it has become a serious health concern in both Burma and Thailand, particularly among cross-border migrants.[59] Some refugees sneak out of the camp to find paid work and then return later on, increasing the potential for importing HIV/AIDS.

Nutritional issues

Basic food rations are provided for each family, as there is no real space inside the camp for growing food. These rations, which consist of bare essentials such as rice and oil, keep the refugees alive, but they do not contain adequate nutritional value to keep the refugees healthy. Camp inhabitants must find their own way to meet their food energy needs and nutritional needs. Some residents are able to raise pigs or chickens to earn a bit of income and meet their protein needs. Eggs are also available for purchase from those who own chickens, as well as various fruit and vegetables. In some small shops set up in refugee homes, and particularly in the bustling market in Zone C, a slightly wider diversity of food items (and non-food items) can be purchased. However, the severe lack of paid work in the camp means that paying for these things is either difficult or impossible. Many families rely on one or more family members working outside the camp, often illegally in Thai urban areas, to support them financially.

Education in Mae La

All children in the camp can access basic education for free up to Grade 10. However, this education is severely limited by a lack of resources and lack of adequately trained staff. Classrooms often have no walls between different classes, and the education methods

---

[58] For more information on malaria and dengue fever, see: <http://www.who.int/topics/malaria/en/> and <http://www.who.int/topics/dengue/en/>.
[59] Alice Khin, "The HIV/AIDS problem of migrants from Burma in Thailand," Paper presented to the Burma Studies Group International Burma Studies Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden, 21-25 September 2002.

normally employed involve rote memorisation of information and oral repetition in unison of this memorised information when the teacher asks a question. As a result, some expatriates involved in various aspects of the refugee camp situation refer sarcastically to camp education as 'daycare' or 'babysitting' rather than 'school.' Those students who complete their basic education with sufficiently high marks are able to enrol in one of the few post-secondary programs in the camp, a means of developing more useful knowledge and abilities and a potential springboard to university admission outside the camp.

The KNU in Mae La

The Karen National Union is highly involved in most facets of Mae La refugee camp. However, unlike many conflict-related protracted refugee situations in other parts of the world, there is little active politicisation of issues by political leaders in the camp.[60] While there are some political messages voiced in the camp, these are mostly speeches on stage during public events such as Karen New Year or Karen Revolution Day.

The reasons for the lack of propaganda are unclear, and I was unable to find any definitive explanations. I asked an experienced expatriate employee of a non-governmental organisation working in the camp, and he suggested that perhaps the KNU simply sees little tangible benefit in spreading political messages among refugees. There may also be a lack of motivation to be politically active among refugees, as victory in the conflict in Karen State seems unlikely. A foreign journalist suggested that it may be the result of a lack of unity between the KNU and its armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army, which some say operates somewhat independently from the political leadership. Regardless of the reasons, the lack of active propagandising in Mae La camp on the part of the KNU plays a role in the identity formation process of Karen refugee youth, which is discussed in section 5.2.

[60] Palestinian refugees and Sahrawi refugees are two examples of conflict-related protracted refugee situations where life is highly politicised. In each, political leaders attempt to indoctrinate their people with a common understanding of the causes of, and solutions to, their situation. Wiebke Harms, "The Role of Education in the Identity Formation Process of Refugee Adolescents," Unpublished master's thesis, Uppsala Universitet, October 2008 and Tanaji Sen, "Identity Formation and Psychosocial Development among Saharawi Refugee Children," Unpublished master's thesis, Uppsala Universitet, October 2008.

2.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Earlier research and identification of gaps

Armed conflict, protracted refugee situations, and the identity formation process have all been studied to varying degrees and continue to be the subjects of ever-growing bodies of knowledge. In spite of this, the three have not been analysed together as a trio of interlinked concepts, as far as I can tell from my search of print and online materials.

Considering the central role played by conflict throughout modern history, it is no surprise that it should be one of the most studied and contentious areas of discourse in the social sciences. Focusing specifically on conflict-related protracted refugee situations significantly narrows down the available literature. This is primarily due to the fact that the protracted refugee situation was not popularised as a scholarly concept until the turn of the millennium.[61] In recent years, Gil Loescher and James Milner have written extensively on protracted refugee situations together.[62] In addition, Arafat Jamal and Jeff Crisp, both of whom are long-timers with the UNHCR, have each written on the topic and encouraged further study and exploration. The UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit has an informative protracted refugee situations project as well.[63]

Since the concept of identity formation first emerged as an area for serious academic investigation half a century ago, hundreds of articles, books, and studies have been published on related topics. Scholars have devised various theories and models of the identity formation process and influences on this process, and numerous studies have been carried out in many countries and among various demographic groups to assess and improve these theories and models, two of which I discuss in detail in section 2.2.3.

There is also some research that examines conflict and identity formation together, which certainly includes a lot of information applicable to the particular nature of conflict-related protracted refugee situations. Herbert Kelman and Phillip Hammack have both written on the topic of identity and conflict in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Kelman focused on the negative interdependence of the two groups' national identities, while Hammack explored identity and means of effecting positive change among adolescents from both groups through coexistence programs. Meanwhile, the Psychosocial Working

---

[61] Jeff Crisp, "No Solutions in Sight: the Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 22.4 (2003): 114.
[62] Many of Loescher and Milner's published articles are available for download on their protracted refugee situations project website: <http://prsproject.org/>.
[63] See <http://www.unhcr.org/epau/>.

Group used the ecological framework approach to identity to help explain the relationships between refugees, their environments, and their experience in conflict.[64]

However, there remains a clear gap in terms of understanding the dynamics of identity formation among children and young adults in conflict-related protracted refugee situations. In particular, I was unable to find any studies on the relationship between the identity formation process of long-term refugee youth and their opinions of armed struggles in respect of their support or lack thereof, in principle or practice, of armed movements.

2.2.2 Research Question

This thesis seeks to explore several hypotheses about the links between conflict and the identity development process of young refugees in conflict-related protracted refugee situations. Could a significant change in the environments surrounding these youth lead them to go even so far as to join an armed group? This thesis suggests that growing up in a protracted refugee situation is likely to result in problems in achieving identity development. If so, this may make it easier for interested parties, such as armed groups, to influence young refugees' decision-making. To fully explore this hypothesis, a large-scale study across a number of different protracted refugee situations would be needed. Nonetheless, my limited research among Karen refugees in Thailand sheds some light on this hypothesis, and further perspective is gained from additional field research that a colleague conducted on my behalf among Sahrawi refugees in Algeria. This information is presented in sections 4.3 and 5.2.

The empirical investigation I undertook for this project consisted of field research conducted among Karen refugee children and young adults living in Mae La refugee camp in Thailand, the largest camp in the largest protracted refugee situation in East Asia.[65] I sought to find and explore links between the violent struggle for Karen autonomy in Burma[66] and the identity formation process of young Karen refugees in Thailand. Does the identity formation process of a young Karen refugee play a role in influencing potential

---

[64] Neil D. Booth, Alison Strang, and Michael Wessells, eds., *A World Turned Upside Down: Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones*, Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2006.
[65] Hazel Lang, "In the Shadows of the Thai-Burma Border: East Asia's Foremost Refugee Crisis," July 2007, <http://www.aseanfocus.com/> Accessed 21 October 2008.
[66] The name 'Burma' is used throughout this document. In 1989, the Burmese government decreed that the name Myanmar would replace Burma in all "laws enacted in the English language." Myanmar is the literary, ceremonial form of the country name, while Burma (more accurately, 'Bama') is the spoken, colloquial form. It is in essence the same word, and the decision to use Burma in this document is primarily one of convenience. For more information on the 'Myanmar vs. Burma' debate, see "An Introduction to the Toponymy of Burma," by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

future involvement, or lack thereof, in the Karen National Union (KNU) movement and its armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), which has been fighting against the government in Burma for the past six decades?

Young refugees are of particular concern, as roughly half of all Karen refugees in Thailand's camps are under the age of 18.[67] Some of these refugees have lived in the camps for over two decades; many of the youth have spent most or all of their lives in these camps. This protracted refugee situation impacts their own perception of their identity, culture, and country of origin. This in turn helps inform their decisions related to support of, or involvement in, the armed conflict between the three belligerents: the KNLA, the Burmese military (also known as the Tatmadaw), and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA).

2.2.3 Bronfenbrenner's and Marcia's theories

In order to explain refugee youths' support or lack of support for armed movements, as well as the potential implications thereof, I have analysed the results of semi-structured interviews within the context of two notable developmental psychology theories:

1. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory of development;[68]
2. An extension of James E. Marcia's Eriksonian Ego-Identity Status theory of identity advanced by Harold D. Grotevant, William Thorbecke, and Margaret L. Meyer.[69]

This section provides an overview of these two theories and the reasons for which I have chosen to use them.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory is employed because it focuses on the complex environments and events that affect the individual. Marcia's theory on identity is complementary, focusing on the individual and his or her concept of himself or herself. Combining these two, we are able to gain a relatively comprehensive understanding of the motivations for action or inertia: support or lack of support for an armed movement.

This inclusive framework allows us to explore relatively evident reasons for taking action (such as revenge, financial incentives, national pride, etc.) as well as more obscure sources

---

[67] UNHCR, *Statistical Online Population Database*, Data extracted: 23/10/2009.
[68] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.
[69] Harold D. Grotevant, William Thorbecke, and Margaret L. Meyer, "An Extension of Marcia's Identity Status Interview into the Interpersonal Domain," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 11.1 (1982): 33-47.

of motivation that lie in the complex fusion of an individual's life experiences, environmental influences, and identity exploration and commitment.

2.2.3.1 Urie Bronfenbrenner: Ecological Systems

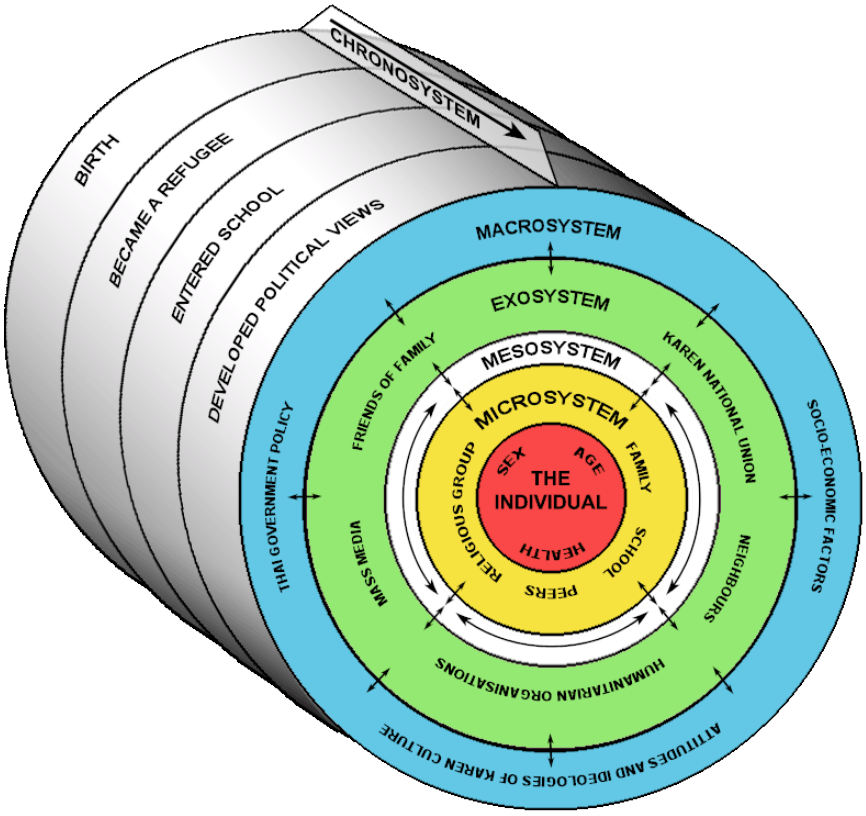

Figure 2 - Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems
Drawn by the author, based on numerous representations of Bronfenbrenner's model

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory holds that an individual's development is shaped by five environmental systems, as represented in Figure 2 and explained hereafter. Please note that examples of possible elements within each system are included in the figure to make it easier to understand, but these are not the same for every individual or for every cultural context, and these are by no means the only possible elements. The first four systems (Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem) are nested systems with bidirectional influences between and within all systems (each system influences the others and is influenced by the others); the fifth system (Chronosystem) is linear and is based on the passage of time (significant events in the individual's life thus far are of particular interest).

The Individual

The individual is at the centre of the nested systems. The individual is affected by, and has an effect on, these surrounding environments. Individual biological factors such as age, gender, and health play an important role in the individual's interactions with the various systems and thus impact his or her identity development.

The Microsystem

> *"[T]he complex of relations between the developing person and environment in an immediate setting containing that person (e.g., home, school, workplace, etc.)."*[70]

The Microsystem is often the focus of household explanations of the behaviour of individuals that results from environmental influences. What are the parents like? With which crowd does the individual socialise? What are the individual's school experiences? Which of these factors contributes to the formation or non-formation of an opinion in favour of, or against, the KNU/KNLA? The answers to these and similar questions certainly play an important role in the development of the individual, and I have focused on these themes in my research, but it is also necessary to be aware of the influence of the other systems.

The Mesosystem

> *"[T]he interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life… [such as] family, school, and peer group"*[71]

The Mesosystem, for instance, may have a strong impact on an individual's development without the link being obvious. One common example of a Mesosystem is the connection between an individual's school and parents: Do the parents disagree with the teacher on what is being taught in class or how it is being taught? Conflicting opinions may result in any number of outcomes, while similar opinions from both sources of authority are more likely to result in acceptance by the individual. There is, however, always a chance that the influence of the individual's friends outweighs that of both the parents and teacher, in which case the individual may choose to disagree with both sources of authority. In the life of a

---

[70] Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development," *American Psychologist* 32.7 (1977): 514.
[71] Bronfenbrenner (1977): 515.

young Karen refugee, the various interactions and connections between and among systems will help determine that individual's direction.

The Exosystem

> *"[A]n extension of the mesosystem embracing other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found, and thereby influence, delimit, or even determine what goes on there"*[72]

The Exosystem in a refugee setting may take a relatively high position of importance, as the effects of external environmental settings can become more direct. A parent's workplace or social network affects the behaviour and beliefs of the parent, and this in turn often affects the development of the child. While this effect may be small at times, it is greater when the parent is affected by his or her surroundings to a greater degree. Thus, we may expect that the effect is stronger when a parent becomes unemployed and unable to pay for the needs of the child, as compared to a parent being demoted to a position of lower pay, which simply reduces the amount and/or quality of goods and services afforded by the parent.

Similarly, the Karen parent who lives in a Thai refugee camp, often unable to work to earn money, is probably greatly affected by this inability to control the means of procurement for the family's basic needs. This may have any number of effects on the child's development, including the possibility that the family applies for resettlement to a third country such as the United States or Canada, where the government does not restrict the family to the camp without permission to earn a living.

The Macrosystem

> *"[T]he overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems, of which micro-, meso-, and exosystems are the concrete manifestations."*[73]

The Macrosystem, which consists of the ideologies and attitudes of Karen culture, is shaped by the historical experiences and circumstances of the Karen people. When these experiences and circumstances include systemic violence, repression, fear, and a significant movement of Karen people away from their traditional lands and often across international borders to refugee camps and third countries, the attitudes and ideologies of the culture are

---

[72] Bronfenbrenner (1977): 515.
[73] Bronfenbrenner (1977): 515.

likely to be affected in some way. It is also possible that a shift in traditional organisational units would occur with the move from villages to refugee camps, as traditional structures cannot always be replicated precisely within the context of refugee camps.

The Chronosystem

> *"Changes (and continuities) over time in the environments in which the person is living"*[74]

Several years after his initial Ecological Systems model was published, Bronfenbrenner added this fifth system. For Karen youth, changes of particular importance may include (not necessarily in this order) moving to a new country, entering school, becoming a refugee, coming of age, death of friends or family members, resettlement to a third country, etc.

The Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, and Macrosystem are all, in a way, bound together by the Chronosystem and its continuity or lack thereof. For example, a significant shift in the Chronosystem, such as occurs when a family flees from Karen State in Burma to a Thai refugee camp, coincides with a significant shift in the Exosystem, as the parents' environment is altered drastically in a very short time span. Likewise, the child's Microsystem of friends, family, and school is disrupted and the Macrosystem of cultural ideologies and attitudes is destabilised and removed from its traditional context. Lastly, the interactions among and between these systems, which make up the Mesosystem, cannot logically remain unchanged when the reference points that bind them are shifted.

2.2.3.2 James Marcia: Ego-Identity Status

This section briefly explains the identity theory component of my theoretical framework, James Marcia's Ego-Identity Status theory, followed by a description of its applicability to my research with Karen refugee youth. I first give a very short explanation of Erik H. Erikson's Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development, which formed the foundation for Marcia's work.

Erik H. Erikson's Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development

In 1950, developmental psychologist Erik H. Erikson published the first version of his seminal theory on the "Eight Stages of Man."[75] This theory argued that life can be divided

---

[74] Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development: Research Perspectives," *Developmental Psychology* 22.6 (1986): 724.
[75] Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society,* New York: Norton, 1950.

into eight stages, during each of which an individual must successfully resolve a crisis to develop properly and avoid problems in the future. In the fifth stage, adolescence (roughly ages 13 to 20), the individual is faced with an identity crisis: is there a "meaningful resemblance between what he has come to see in himself and what his sharpened awareness tells him others judge and expect him to be?"[76] Essentially, the individual is trying to answer the question, 'Who am I?' Erikson postulated that successful resolution of the individual's identity crisis leads to a strong sense of identity while failure to resolve the crisis leads to role confusion.

According to Erikson, this stage exists in all societies and cultures. There may be differences in the space and time given for this process, as well as how the process is understood and interpreted by members of the society, but the basic concept – a period between childhood and adulthood during which a lasting identity should be achieved – exists nonetheless in every culture.[77] As such, it applies to members of Karen society just as it would in other contexts.

James Marcia's Ego-Identity Status theory

Another developmental psychologist, James E. Marcia, built on Erikson's fifth stage, arguing in his theory on Ego-Identity Status[78] that success in this stage is in fact not dependent on solving the crisis, but on the commitment made following the crisis. David R. Matteson suggested the term 'crisis' be replaced by 'exploration' and I have adopted this terminology for my study.[79] It is also important to clarify that Erikson believed each individual goes through stages, whereas Marcia claimed that each individual experiences states of identity formation, of which there are four. An individual does not necessarily experience all four states of identity formation; and, if/when movement occurs from one state to another, it does not follow any particular sequential order.

Marcia's semi-structured Ego Identity Status Interview judges individuals' levels of exploration and commitment in the realms of occupation, religion, and politics in order to organise individuals into four categories of identity status.[80] "The Marcia Ego Identity

---

[76] Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, New York: Norton, 1993, 14.
[77] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis,* New York: Norton, 1968, 66.
[78] James E. Marcia, "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3.5 (1966): 551-558.
[79] "Matteson (1977) has suggested the use of the term 'exploration,' rather than 'crisis,' on the basis that some individuals achieve a coherent, tested sense of role clarity without the trauma or dramatic sense of confrontation implied by 'crisis.' Exploration, or the active consideration of alternatives, suggests that development can occur whether or not a crisis is experienced." Grotevant, Thorbecke, Meyer, 37.
[80] Marcia (1966): 551-552.

Interview is widely accepted as a valid measure of ego development."[81] Grotevant et al. modified Marcia's interview by adding the interpersonal domains of friendships, dating, and sex roles – key aspects of an individual's development they argue should not be ignored.[82] As such, identity can be examined across six domains and organised into four categories[83] as follows:

> ### Identity Achievement
>
> The individual has explored options and has committed to an occupation/ideology/religion/sex-role/etc on his or her own terms after adequately considering various choices.[84]
>
> ### Identity Foreclosure
>
> The individual has made a commitment, but without adequate exploration; often a result of parental/societal grooming, "becoming what others have prepared or intended him to become."[85]
>
> ### Identity Moratorium
>
> The individual is in the midst of exploration, and has not yet made a commitment.[86]
>
> ### Identity Diffusion
>
> The individual has made no commitment, and often (though not always) has engaged in little substantive exploration. This individual "is either uninterested in ideological matters or takes a smorgasbord approach in which one outlook seems as good to him as another and he is not averse to sampling from all."[87]

---

[81] Gerald R. Adams, "The Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status: A Reference Manual," Unpublished manuscript, University of Guelph, 1998, 45.
[82] These interpersonal domains are also seen to help correct Marcia's male-centric model, as interpersonal aspects of identity have been shown on average to hold more importance for female identity achievement. Grotevant et al. (1982).
[83] In Marcia's words, "Two types of identity were formed – identity achievement, exhibited by those who had made their own choices, and foreclosure, exhibited by those who had merely followed parental dictates. Similarly, two types of identity diffusion were seen, moratoriums, shown by those who were struggling and concerned, and identity diffusion, shown by those who were floundering and unconcerned." James E. Marcia, "Citation Classic - Development and Validation of Ego Identity Status," *CC/SOC BEHAV SCI* 48 (1984): 22.
[84] Marcia (1966): 551-552.
[85] Marcia (1966): 552.
[86] Marcia (1966): 552.
[87] Marcia (1966): 552.

Table 1 shows each of the four identity status outcomes and the combination of exploration and commitment required for an individual to be labelled with that status.

	Exploration	Commitment
Achievement	Yes	Yes
Foreclosure	No	Yes
Moratorium	Yes	No
Diffusion	No	No

Table 1 - Four possible identity status outcomes.
Adapted from Grotevant and Cooper, 1981, 44.

Figure 3 illustrates the four identity statuses in a more visual manner, which demonstrates the space for variation within each status. For example two identity achieved individuals could be illustrated in the figure as dots, very strongly committed in the case of A, and only weakly committed in the case of B, yet both fall into the identity achieved category.

Grotevant et al. proposed that identity should be viewed as a set of identity statuses across different domains, rather than assessing an overall identity status for each individual.[88] Thus, an individual may have adequately explored and committed strongly to an occupational choice for the future, thereby reaching identity achievement in the domain of occupation, but that same individual may not necessarily have explored and committed to a religious belief system. Identity development in different domains is not necessarily a simultaneous process.[89]

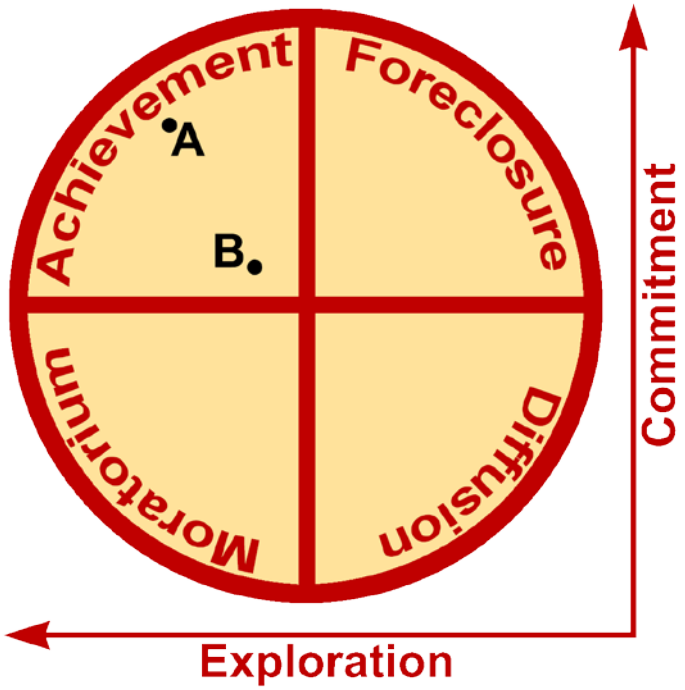

Figure 3 - Variation within identity statuses

[88] Grotevant et al. (1982): 35.
[89] Grotevant et al. (1982): 41.

2.2.3.3 Bronfenbrenner's and Marcia's theories in the context of Karen refugee youth

Non-context-specific theories

These theories were formed in Western contexts; they were not specifically designed to study youth in prolonged refugee situations. They are nonetheless well-suited for this purpose, as both theories (as applied in this study) were built not on Western precepts but on concepts believed to be universal.

That is to say, Bronfenbrenner's model examines the environmental influences on an individual's identity formation, so this model can be applied in any situation – the elements present in any given system always differ from individual to individual and from place to place, so the model has no significant cultural dependencies; it is simply necessary to correctly identify the elements of importance to consider in each system.

Marcia's identity status model is also relatively independent of culture as long as the identity status interview questions are modified appropriately to take into account cultural and situational differences of long term refugees as opposed to Western respondents in stable societies. It is precisely these differences that help shape the identity formation process and its outcome.

Applying the theories

The information gleaned from the semi-structured interviews and observation of camp life, analysed within the framework and context of Bronfenbrenner's and Marcia's theories, facilitates a certain level of understanding of the interactions among the refugees' environments and historical experiences and the influence of these on the refugees. This in turn permits a greater understanding of the reasons underlying each young refugee's current identity status in any given domain (occupation, religion, etc).

3 Study Methodology and Issues

3.1 Sources of Information

This study is based on three sources of information: firstly, a review of available literature on the protracted refugee situation, the Karen people, and the developmental psychology theoretical framework; secondly, qualitative semi-structured interviews[90] with young Karen refugees; thirdly, personal observations and unstructured discussions with Karen refugees and community members.

The semi-structured interview method is particularly suitable for research on refugee identity issues, as it is focused and produces qualitative data that can be compared, while simultaneously allowing respondents to express personal views and raise unanticipated themes which can be explored further by the interviewer. In addition, this technique is accepted as "a useful measure of identity development that should be used when … in-depth information is needed from the research subjects."[91]

The semi-structured interviews were carried out in Mae La refugee camp, the largest of the camps in Thailand, with an estimated population of nearly 40,000 refugees.[92] Each respondent was asked a variety of questions unrelated to the central theme of conflict, followed by a number of conflict-related questions. The purpose of posing questions unrelated to conflict was twofold: to allow the respondents to become comfortable with the interview style, and to gain a more detailed understanding of the respondents' ecological systems (Microsystem, Macrosystem, etc.). While questions were thus asked on a variety of topics, the analysis in section 4 focuses primarily on issues relating to the armed conflict in Karen State.

3.2 Respondents

For the purpose of this research on youth in a protracted refugee situation, the original intent was to interview only refugees falling into the United Nations definition of children. The study began with interviews of Karen refugees aged 11-17 years of age. As such, all respondents were classified as children according to the Convention on the Rights of the

---

[90] "Semi-structured interviews: an interview constructed around a core of standard questions; however, the interviewer may expand on any question in order to explore a given response in greater depth." From Mark L. Mitchell and Janina M. Jolley, *Research Design Explained*, 1st ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988, 297.
[91] Adams, 1998, 11.
[92] See section 2.1.5 for more information on Mae La camp.

Child.[93] After the first round of interviews, however, it became evident that it would be necessary to interview young refugees who were no longer technically considered children in order to produce enough useful information for the completion of the study.

Because this study concerns the effects of protracted refugee situations on identity formation, each respondent had to have considered the refugee camp(s) to have been his or her primary place of residence for a minimum of seven consecutive years immediately preceding the study. This prerequisite was chosen because it guarantees that even the oldest respondents would have spent their entire adolescence in a refugee camp setting. A number of respondents were born and raised in the refugee camp setting.

Initially, the study respondents were to be pairs of siblings, with each pair comprised of one sibling in Group A and one sibling in Group B, as explained below:

> Group A: Karen refugee youth aged 11 to 13 years
>
> Group B: Karen refugee youth aged 16 to 17 years

This age selection is based on Erikson's stages of child development[94] and includes the timeframe for the process of identity development. Analysing these two different age groups of siblings would have allowed me to:

> Compare children at two stages of the identity formation process (comparison of Group A with Group B directly); and
>
> Analyse if identity formation has evolved between the age groups as theoretically envisaged.

Unfortunately, on the ground in the refugee camp, it proved infeasible to interview pairs of siblings. This was due to severe limitations on my movement within the camp and difficulties locating pairs of siblings fitting all criteria; it might have been possible if I had had more time available to carry out the research. Furthermore, interviews with youth aged 17 and younger yielded very little useful information. The age range was then adjusted to permit inclusion of post-secondary students aged 18-21. This allows a comparison between the two age groups, while remaining within Erikson's definition of an adolescent – roughly ages 13-20.

I originally intended to interview approximately 15 to 20 pairs of siblings, for a total of 30-40 individual interviews. I believed this to be a reasonable compromise between confidence

---

[93] United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 1.
[94] Erik H. Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 4.1 (1956): 56-121.

in the information gathered, and financial and time constraints; regarding the latter, I was sorely mistaken. I was only able to carry out 21 individual interviews, 6 of which were unusable (due to incorrect age, bias/suggestion introduced by the translator, too many empty responses, and technical problems with the audio recordings), leaving only fifteen interviews to work with. As this study was not intended to be quantitative, the low number of interviews is not a fatal problem, but a greater number would perhaps have yielded other useful information. In total, five respondents were aged 11-17, and ten respondents were aged 18-21. Two respondents aged 18 years were still in secondary school, in grades 7 and 9 respectively. The remaining eight respondents aged 18-21 were attending a four year post-secondary education programme, the level of which is most easily explained as bridging the gap between secondary and tertiary education. In selecting respondents, we simply approached the nearest students we saw at school in the mornings and asked them if they would be willing to participate in an interview after school. We tried not to bias the sample as could happen if we had chosen only the high-performing students or those who were extroverted or particularly well-spoken. Of the refugees we asked, only a small handful preferred not to participate.

Owing to the fact that the vast majority of Karen individuals involved in the military aspect of the Karen struggle are male, and my time resources were very limited, I interviewed primarily young males. While I did interview four young female refugees, three interviews could not be used due to empty responses.[95] The one female interview retained is included in the identity status ratings in Appendix C, primarily for the sake of interest, but her responses are not central to the analysis in this thesis. The responses discussed throughout this thesis refer to the fourteen male respondents only.

Selection of respondents from among camp residents was not as random as I originally hoped due to strong limitations I encountered – primarily an inability for me to move freely in the camp and time constraints due to refugee school schedules and holidays. All respondents were therefore residents of Zone A, rather than a mix of different camp areas.[96] Religion was not known until discussed during the interviews. 8 respondents said they were Buddhist, 4 Evangelical Christian, and 2 Roman Catholic.[97] All Karen refugee youth in Mae La camp attend school, so all respondents in this study were enrolled in school at the time of the interviews. This education is free, and most students complete Grade 10, which is the end of secondary school in the camps. Only some students go on to post-secondary

---

[95] An 'empty response' is when the respondent could not answer the question, not even to say "I do not know," owing mainly to the extremely timid behaviour of most young Karen females when faced with a male foreigner and a male interpreter.
[96] There are 3 zones in Mae La camp, each subdivided into 5 sections: A1-A5, B1-B5, C1-C5.
[97] I am unaware of the total number of members of each religion in the overall camp population.

programmes. All respondents no longer in primary or secondary school were attending a post-secondary program in Zone A, which means the responses of this group may be different from those of youth aged 18-21 no longer in an educational institution, whose immediate environments (Microsystems) are therefore different. Regarding the effect on levels of overall identity achievement, we should expect "no significant differences … by education level."[98] However, in specific domains with which educational material may be concerned (occupation, for instance), more education may lead to increased likelihood of identity achievement.[99]

3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

In conducting semi-structured interviews with Karen refugee youth, I used the framework from Grotevant and Cooper's manual for Grotevant et al.'s extension of Marcia's identity status interview.[100] According to this framework, a number of identity status domains are assessed based on four guiding concerns. The domains initially studied by Marcia are politics, religion, and occupation. Grotevant et al. added male and female roles, friendships, and dating. I did not look at the friendships or dating domains as these are unlikely to have strong links to support for armed groups, and time constraints required that interviews be as concise as possible. I added the domain of conflict to the interview, as the framework is designed to be adaptable to other domains.[101]

I also included a set of 'other' questions about violence, refugee camp life, and Karen culture. The entire interview was made up of 68 questions, but not all questions needed to be answered by every respondent in order to assess identity formation, and this style of interview allowed room for me to ask additional questions based on responses to the standard questions.

The four guiding concerns of the interview, which kept the interview questions "relatively parallel across the domains," were:[102]

1. Has the individual considered any options in the domain being discussed? If so, how many? (Measures breadth of exploration)

---

[98] S.M. Clancy, "An investigation of identity development and formal thought within a college sample," Unpublished thesis, Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY, 1984. Quoted in Adams, 1998, 57.
[99] Alan S. Waterman and Caroline K. Waterman, "Factors related to vocational identity after extensive work experience," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 61.3 (1976): 336-340.
[100] Grotevant and Cooper (1981).
[101] Grotevant et al., (1982): 36.
[102] Grotevant et al., (1982): 41-42.

2. To what degree has the individual considered each of the options mentioned? (Measures depth of exploration)
3. Has the individual decided which option is best for him or her? (Measures strength of commitment)
4. How open is the individual to alternatives? (Measures flexibility of commitment)

Using a digital voice recorder, I recorded all interviews with the consent of the respondents, for later review and analysis. Later on, I listened to each interview and took notes on the statements made by each respondent. The Identity Status Interview Manual identifies each question with one of the measures listed above, thus allowing me to interpret each response as a measurement of either exploration or commitment or both. For example, asking questions to each respondent about the domain of occupation, I first asked him about his job plan and when this had been decided, and then asked what other job options he had considered. In the interview manual, the first question is identified as a measurement of commitment. For example: Ever since he was a child, respondent X has known that he wants to be a doctor. The second question measures exploration. For example: Respondent X has only ever considered being a doctor, and has not thought of pursuing other job options. In this case, respondent X has shown a strong commitment to his choice of occupation, yet he also shows no exploration in the identity status domain of occupation. Thus he would rate as foreclosed in the domain of occupation – commitment without exploration.

Some questions were not specifically designed to address either exploration or commitment, but these helped give me a broader understanding of each respondent's ecological systems (life circumstances) and other useful information to inform my analysis of the individual's identity status for each domain. During this note-taking process, I also paid close attention to questions used as validity checks. That is, there were certain questions, often ad-hoc, asked at a different point in the interview to verify an earlier response. The respondents showed consistency in the vast majority of responses, and further questions were asked when inconsistencies arose. These inconsistencies often turned out to be acceptable exceptions consistent with a given respondent's circumstances, based on his logic or interpretation of the original question and validation question.

According to the guidelines of the Identity Status Interview Manual,[103] I did not take written notes during the interviews; in this way the process was similar to normal

[103] Grotevant and Cooper (1981).

conversation, which is deemed to be more comfortable for the respondents. Interview questions in English and Karen can be found in Appendices A and B, respectively. By analysing the responses to questions coded for commitment and exploration, I was able to categorise each respondent according to one of Marcia's four identity statuses in each of the domains I investigated. These identity status ratings can be found in Appendix C.

Another tool often used for this type of data collection among a larger sample size is Gerald R. Adams's "Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status" (particularly the 1986 EOM-EIS-2 Revision by Bennion and Adams).[104] This is a written response tool that serves the same general purpose as the semi-structured interviews, but which is limited to "primarily classification purposes only and provides limited additional opportunity for analyzing a subject's reasoning behind choices."[105] If resources and time had permitted, it would have been beneficial to employ this method in addition to the semi-structured interviews, in order to gain more statistically relevant insight into the Karen protracted refugee situation. This is certainly an option to keep in mind for future studies in this subject area.

3.4 Language

Owing to my extremely limited ability to speak Karen, and the inability of respondents to speak English, I used an interpreter to translate questions and responses in the interviews. The quality of the interpreter was limited by the lack of trained interpreters in the camp. After he translated the interview questions from English to Karen in writing, I had them back-translated to English and I was very satisfied with the accuracy of the translation. However, in the actual interviews, it quickly became apparent that he was not using the exact wording of the written translations. As a result, the answers were at times influenced by the format of the questions. For example, when asking "Who should earn money to support the family?" he was in fact asking "Should the mother or the father earn money to support the family?" This 'mother' or 'father' question could only be answered with 'mother' or 'father,' whereas the intended question was open-ended and at times produced answers other than simply 'mother' or 'father.' After the first few interviews, which have been discarded and are not used in this study, we cleared up this and similar problems and established firm rules for the interviews that followed.

---

[104] Adams, 1998, 82.
[105] Adams, 1998, 11.

4 Results and Analysis

4.1 The Karen in Thailand: a Protracted Refugee Situation

The conflict[106] between the Tatmadaw, DKBA, and KNLA has been relatively well-documented. The literature, however, focuses primarily on the politics surrounding the conflict and the parties involved: the Burmese government and military, the DKBA rebels allied with the government forces, and the Karen rebel movement (the KNU and its armed wing, the KNLA). Martin Smith has written a particularly informative book[107] on internal conflict in Burma, with significant attention paid to the situation in Karen State over the past six decades.

It is also not difficult to find writing about the ethnic identity of the Karen people, as well as the situation of Karen refugees and, to a lesser degree, the internally displaced Karen population in Burma.[108]

However, as explained in section 2.2.1, I could find nothing written about the links between identity formation and armed conflict with regards to young Karen refugees. This refugee situation was particularly suitable for a case study because of the long duration of the conflict, the long-term nature of the refugee camps in Thailand, and relative ease of access to respondents. In order to explore my hypotheses, I applied them to the Karen situation: The experiences of Karen children and young adults and their support (or lack thereof), in principle or practice, of the KNU/KNLA movement. In the following pages I have tried to explore the nature and levels of such support among Karen refugee children and young adults, as well as the factors of identity formation that influence this support and some potential future problems rooted in the present state of affairs.

Before examining the information gleaned from the interviews, it is useful to contextualise this information in the current protracted refugee situation in which the respondents find themselves. Living in a protracted refugee situation means that an individual's Chronosystem is completely different from what it would have been in a 'normal' living space,[109] and affects each of the systems in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model.

---

[106] This is often called the longest-running civil war in the world, having begun in 1947. The accuracy of this label depends on which definition of war is employed. The conflict in Karen State does not currently meet the definition of war as an armed conflict with a minimum of 1,000 deaths per year, but the effect of the conflict on Karen people is extreme, due to the methods employed by the belligerents.
[107] Smith.
[108] For literature on Karen IDPs, see the Online Burma/Myanmar Library: <http://burmalibrary.org>.
[109] In the case of these Karen refugees, a normal living space would be a small, rural village of the type found in Karen State.

A basic introduction to protracted refugee situations

The UNHCR estimates that, at the end of 2007, out of a total world refugee population of 11.4 million, about 6.2 million lived in protracted refugee situations – roughly 54%.[110] In reality, the number is likely much larger.[111]

It is now clear

> *"that refugee situations usually persist for much longer than expected, that voluntary repatriation is often rendered impossible by continuing conflicts in countries of origin, and that the number of refugees who can benefit from resettlement in a third country is usually very limited."*[112]

In short-term refugee situations, the focus for aid agencies is on 'care and maintenance'; that is, meeting immediate needs such as food, shelter, and medical treatment. In protracted refugee situations, on the other hand, non-immediate needs – things like education, infrastructure, community governance, and livelihood – are also crucial to the well-being of the refugees.

Relevance to the Karen refugee population

The protracted nature of the circumstances in which Karen refugees find themselves is particularly relevant to understanding their situation. For instance, according to one expert, "prolonged encampment [of Burmese refugees in Thailand] produces considerable psycho-social stresses and reinforces a sense of hopelessness about future possibilities."[113] These effects are partly products of the care and maintenance method used to address refugee needs, a method not designed to deal with such long-term problems.

---

[110] This figure does not include Palestinian refugees under the mandate of the UNRWA, who are usually counted separately from other refugees because of their particularly unique situation and status. There are currently 4.6 million Palestinian refugees registered with the UNRWA, of which 1.4 million live in refugee camps. See United Nations Relief and Works Agency, "Publications/Statistics," <http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/> Accessed 23 January 2009.

[111] "Refugee statistics do not fully include urban refugee populations, many of whom live a clandestine life in host states which require all refugees to reside in camps. If these refugees who are currently excluded from UNHCR refugee totals were to be included, the global population of protracted refugee situations would be significantly larger." Gil Loescher and James Milner, "Protracted Refugee Situations: Causes, Consequences, and Trends," Paper presented to Refugee Studies Centre 25th Anniversary Conference, Oxford University, 2007, 5-6.

[112] UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations," High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, UN Doc. UNHCR/DPC/2008/Doc.02, 20 November 2008, para. 58, p. 14.

[113] Lang.

In addition, the care and maintenance model relies heavily on donor funds for meeting the immediate needs of large groups of refugees. This is problematic, as care and maintenance produces "few longer-term benefits to refugees, local populations or the host state,"[114] leading donors to become disinterested (an effect often called 'donor fatigue') and discontinue funding.

> *"The list of the consequences of prolonged encampment is long, and includes material deprivation, psychosocial problems, violence, sexual exploitation, exploitative employment and resort to negative coping mechanisms. Protracted refugee situations perpetuate poverty and underdevelopment because they inhibit freedom. Freedom, as Amartya Sen has famously argued, is both a primary end and the principal means of development."*[115]

As a result, the UNHCR is now advocating for a rights-based approach whereby emphasis is placed on self-reliance:

> *"People who have benefited from education, skills training and livelihood opportunities during their time as refugees, and who have been able to attain a degree of self-reliance while living in a country of asylum, retain their hope in the future and are better placed to create and take advantage of new economic opportunities after their return. While living in exile, long-term refugees also have an ideal opportunity to acquire valuable skills in areas such as leadership, advocacy, mediation and conflict resolution, which will again enable them to contribute to the rebuilding of their communities once return becomes possible."*[116]

For Karen long-term refugees to experience such opportunities, they would require increased freedom such as being able to "leave their camps, find a job, establish a business or have access to agricultural land."[117] Because this is not possible, Karen refugees in Thailand often engage in "dangerous informal sector activities"[118] in order to earn money to improve their lot in life. Working illegally in Thai cities, Karen refugees usually receive extremely low wages and often experience ill-treatment and unsafe working conditions in

---

[114] UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations," 2008, para. 56, p. 13.
[115] Arafat Jamal, "Camps and freedoms: long-term refugee situations in Africa," *Forced Migration Review* 16 (2003): 4-5.
[116] UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations," 2008, 10 (para. 37).
[117] UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations," 2008, 15 (para. 64).
[118] UNHCR, "Protracted Refugee Situations," 2008, 15 (para. 64).

construction, fishing, and other industries.[119] Others end up in the sex trade, some by force and some by choice.[120]

4.2 Understanding the Protracted Refugee Situation in the Context of Ecological Systems

Having examined these aspects and consequences of living in a protracted refugee situation, it is clear that this experience has a notable influence on young Karen refugees' identity formation process. This influence can be examined in the context of Bronfenbrenner's systems:

The long-term nature of this refugee situation means that Karen youth are exposed only to camp life, not the traditional village life their family left behind in Burma. Because traditional Karen villages do not tend to have large populations, it is fair to say that environmental influences at the village level in Karen State form part of the Microsystem for Karen people. The vast majority of Karen are subsistence farmers by profession,[121] but in Mae La camp they have no land to cultivate. The youth growing up in the camp have therefore not been taught the agricultural techniques passed on for generations among the Karen. As the length of their stay in Thailand increases, so too does the severity of the effects from disruptions in cultural/societal practices such as farming methods.

In addition to such practical concerns as farming methods, young Karen refugees in Mae La grow up with a very different Microsystem, Exosystem, and Macrosystem from that which they would have known in a peaceful Karen State. When I asked young refugees where their families come from, each person usually named one or two villages that virtually all immediate and extended family members call home. These villages were also the most commonly named places mentioned when I asked young refugees where they would like to go once there is peace.

In the camp, however, village life is not replicated.[122] The social interactions between families in a crowded camp are very different from those in a traditional village. Village organisation is not transposed from Karen State to the camps, and the traditional village

---

[119] Amnesty International, "Thailand: The Plight of Burmese Migrant Workers," 11.
[120] For information on Burmese migrants in the Thai sex trade, see the Online Burma/Myanmar Library: Migration > Migration from Burma > Migrant Workers > Sex workers <http://burmalibrary.org/> Accessed 14 January 2009.
[121] Interview question A5, see Appendix A.
[122] These statements are based on my interviews and personal discussions and observations in Mae La camp and with various concerned individuals working for different organisations in Mae La camp, Umpiem Mai camp, and others.

authority structures that form a key aspect of the larger cultural context (i.e. a key part of the Macrosystem) disappear in the camps. The majority of extended families experience separation, with some families remaining in their villages, others hiding as internally displaced persons, and others moving to refugee camps or resettling to third countries. Within the camps, different families from the same extended family or the same village often find themselves living in different areas of the same camp, or even in a different camp altogether. In Karen culture, extended family is not as distinct from immediate family as it is in many Western cultures, so this dispersal of family units is not at all trivial. In addition, many immediate family members are separated from each other for various other reasons,[123] as was the case with a number of my respondents.

Most parents in the camp cannot work in any capacity due to Thai regulations and lack of wage-earning opportunities, and skills-training programs are few and far between. This aspect of the Exosystem has a particularly worrisome corollary: Parents are unable to pass useful skills and knowledge to their children. Because of this, if/when peace is achieved and refugees are able to return to their villages in Karen State, it is likely that many problems will arise as a result of the lengthy disruption to traditional social ties and skills, the consequences of which may be both detrimental and lasting. The youth in the camps today, most of whom have spent their formative years as refugees, will not easily make the transition from camp inactivity with food handouts to difficult agricultural work for which they've never been trained but of which they dream with rose-coloured glasses. While it would be difficult to label camp youth as lazy, it would be similarly difficult to call them particularly able. They simply haven't had much reason or opportunity to develop skills needed for productive life outside the camp. Difficulties will inevitably surface if/when they return to Karen villages, and the refugees' lack of adequate abilities to adjust to village life may lead to an increase in the quantity and severity of social problems.

When examining a list of key events in the Chronosystem of the average Karen refugee, such as his or her birth, moving to the refugee camp, entering school, etc., it is clear that the length of time spent as a refugee dominates the entire system. For those who have spent their entire lives as refugees, every single Chronosystem event has to be contextualised within the protracted refugee situation. Birth, attending school, finding a spouse, deciding on a career, having children – all of these events, and more, are significantly different experiences in a refugee camp setting than they would have been in a rural village environment.

---

[123] These reasons include: some members of the family opting to resettle while others refuse to leave; parents sending their children to a refugee camp to ensure their safety and education; some family members working illegally in Thai urban centres to earn money; separation and/or deaths of family members caused directly by the conflict in Karen State.

4.3 Key Ecological Influences on Karen Refugees' Identity Formation

4.3.1 Overview

Having discussed the wide-ranging nature and consequences of the protracted refugee situation, I will now provide an overview of the key environmental influences on young Karen refugees' identity formation in line with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. This overview is based primarily on information gathered from my semi-structured interviews and, to a lesser degree, my informal discussions with other members of the Karen refugee community in Mae La camp.

Ideally, I would have liked to have examined in detail the role of each of the ecological systems in the identity formation process of young Karen refugees. However, this would have required a far more comprehensive interview process than was possible, due to the practical constraints of carrying out the interviews in Mae La camp without official permission from the Thai authorities (not to mention the financial and time constraints inherent in such an in-depth study). Therefore, in order to provide a reasonable response to the research question I decided to focus on the Microsystem and my interviews were concerned with this system more than the other systems.

4.3.2 Influence of the Microsystem

Among the youth I interviewed in Mae La refugee camp, the influence of the Microsystem on their identity formation process was strong, as expected. It was clear to me from my interviews and informal conversations and observations that, as elsewhere, family plays a particularly important role in the identity formation process of young Karen refugees. When I asked respondents to explain why they held various beliefs and how they had come to make certain life decisions, the most common answer was parental influence. This was especially the case with regards to values and religion, in which all but one respondent cited family as primary influences. Family and teachers were both highlighted as influential in the realm of occupation.

However, in the domains of politics and conflict, the two aspects with which this study is most concerned, respondents were less reliant on parental or teacher guidance. This apparently stems from the lack of information proffered by parents and schools on these topics. Only one respondent said his political views were influenced by his parents. Although I could not definitively assess the reasons for which Karen refugee parents don't appear to attempt to provide guidance to their children regarding politics or conflict, I was given the impression that they simply deem these topics to be unimportant or irrelevant to daily life in the camp.

One possible contributing factor to this disinterest is an acute absence of any negative interdependence of identities of the sort frequently encountered in other conflict-related protracted refugee situations, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[124] One would expect a negative interdependence of the Israeli-Palestinian type to lead to an identity status of foreclosure, in which individuals feel strongly about the conflict and the opposing group but have not actively explored other possible ways to see the conflict. A strong commitment such as this does not exist among young Karen refugees in Mae La: Asserting one's Karen identity "does not require negating the identity of the other."[125] In practical terms, this means that Karen refugees are able to live peacefully alongside Burmans and members of other Burmese ethnic groups, and often they are friends with each other. Karen refugees enjoy watching films, listening to music, and reading books in both Burmese and Karen. This is a positive sign, known as "[i]dentity transcendence, in which a reduction in salience of ingroup ideology [is] accompanied by increased recognition of outgroup ideological legitimacy."[126] Such identity transcendence is believed to be a strong contributing factor in building lasting peace. In contrast, "polarized identities contribute to the reproduction and intractability of the conflict across generations."[127]

The respondents' family members, friends, and school teachers did not actively discuss the Karen struggle on a regular basis. There was also no active propaganda campaign to spread pro-Karen or anti-SPDC messages. This was surprising because the Karen refugees' current situation in Mae La camp relates directly to the conflict. Among the respondents, there was very little interest in joining the KNLA despite the generally positive opinion they and other camp residents hold toward the KNLA. As a general rule, respondents did not form their opinions based on a meaningful exploration of political issues or arguments, nor did they hold strong opinions on such topics. One respondent said his father used to be a KNLA soldier, and this respondent listed both teacher and soldier as possible professions, though he demonstrated a strong preference to be a teacher. Another respondent's father works for the KNU, and this respondent would like to work for the KNU someday. Two other respondents also said they would like to work for the KNU. The common theme among respondents was a desire to help their Karen community.[128] No respondent expressed a real interest in becoming a soldier.

---

[124] Herbert C. Kelman, "The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts," *Journal of Social Issues* 55.3 (1999): 581.
[125] Kelman, 581.
[126] Phillip L. Hammack, "Identity, Conflict, and Coexistence: Life Stories of Israeli and Palestinian Adolescent," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 21.4 (2006): 323.
[127] Hammack, 323.
[128] 7 respondents wanted to be teachers, 2 wanted to be doctors, 3 wanted to work for the KNU, 1 wanted to work in a Karen NGO in Mae Sot, and 1 didn't know.

4.3.3 To fight or not to fight?

Despite their lack of interest in becoming soldiers, two thirds of my respondents stated that they would take up arms if they were asked to do so 'tomorrow' by the KNLA. This apparent contradiction is central to answering the question posed by this research project: Could a significant change in the ecological systems surrounding these youth potentially result in their joining an armed group? In order to understand why a young refugee would choose to become a rebel soldier despite a general disinterest toward, and lack of knowledge of, the conflict, it is helpful to look at the interaction among the ecological systems as well as the individual's identity status in the conflict domain.

Of the fourteen respondents, only one scored as identity achieved in the domain of conflict; he said he would not fight if asked by the KNLA 'tomorrow,' because he first wants to finish his studies. One respondent rated as moratorium, two rated as diffusion, and ten were foreclosed. A deeper analysis of family situations might provide further insight into the Microsystem causes of foreclosure among young Karen refugees and help explain why such a high proportion of the respondents fell into this category.[129] It may be linked with Marcia's claim that, in "contexts where communal values are stressed as necessary for group survival, […] foreclosure is the most adaptive identity status."[130]

In section 4.3.2, I wrote that parents did not actively discuss the conflict on a regular basis. Yet, in spite of this lack of discussion with their families, two-thirds of respondents were foreclosed in the domain of conflict. While foreclosure is often described as a result of parental grooming, the deliberate transmission of beliefs is not necessary to produce a foreclosed individual. "Research with foreclosure adolescents has shown little differentiation between their self and internalized parental representations."[131] Thus, if a respondent is close to his parents and is foreclosed in the domain of conflict, this may be the result of active opinion-sharing by the parents or simply of the respondent internalising his parents' views without them having explicitly shared them. In the absence of parents, a similar parental influence may exist from a different source such as other relatives, teachers, or friends. Alternatively, the respondents' foreclosed status may be unrelated or only weakly related to parental influence – other sources of influence can certainly lead to a state of foreclosure.

---

[129] Cakir and Aydin found that children of both authoritative and permissive parents score much higher on identity foreclosure than children of neglectful parents. S. Gulfem Cakir and Gul Aydin, "Parental Attitudes and Ego Identity Status of Turkish Adolescents," *Adolescence* 40.160 (2005): 848.
[130] Jane Kroger, *Identity in Adolescence: The balance between self and other*, 3rd ed., New York: Routledge, 2004, 41.
[131] Kroger, 73.

One respondent from the foreclosed group did not know if he would say yes or no upon being asked tomorrow to fight. Another foreclosed individual said he would not fight, but added a caveat of his own accord: He would say yes if asked the same question when he is older.[132] This respondent was the only one to list his father's past occupation as a KNLA soldier.[133] Six of the foreclosures and both of the diffusions said they would fight. The lone moratorium said he would fight if asked tomorrow, yet if he were forced to choose between fighting and resettling to a third country, he would opt for resettlement.

Two of the foreclosed individuals (not including the single exception above) said they would not fight if asked 'tomorrow' by the KNLA. However, this does not exclude the actual possibility of their becoming soldiers. A state of foreclosure is theoretically characterised by strong commitment with little exploration, but there is naturally a range within which the degree of commitment can vary. In the case of the young Karen refugees I interviewed, I would argue based on their answers that seven of the ten foreclosed respondents could be placed just barely on the moderate side of the commitment spectrum in the conflict domain, not far from the weak side of the dividing line. Thus, these respondents are on the periphery of foreclosure, and are not far from a potential shift into diffusion if their beliefs are upturned by some external factor outside their control. Therefore, for the two foreclosed respondents who said they would not fight with the KNLA if asked 'tomorrow,' we cannot assume that this would hold true in different circumstances.

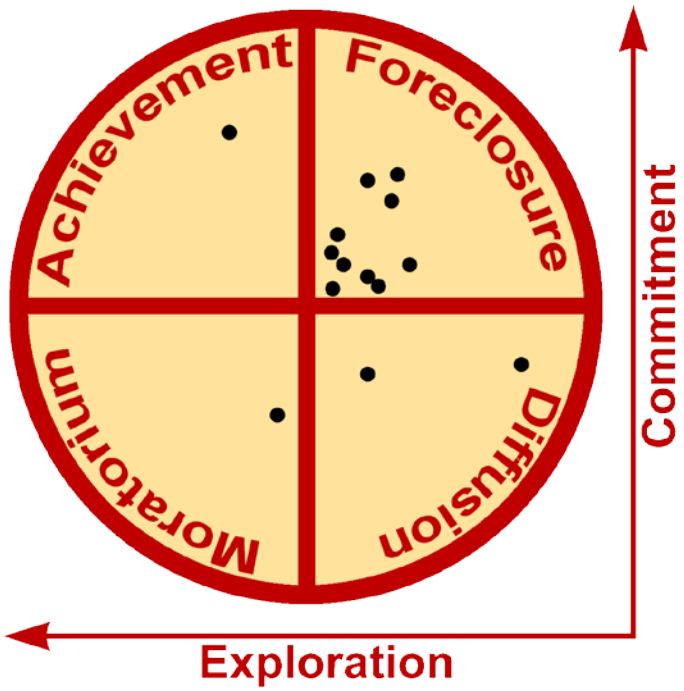

Figure 4 - Variation within statuses

[132] This respondent was 17 years old at the time of the interview.
[133] I did not ask any respondents if their family members were soldiers previously or currently, as such a question from me, a stranger, would have been inappropriate. Furthermore, the accuracy of responses to such a question would be of dubious reliability.

Figure 4 demonstrates an approximation of where many of the respondents would place within the identity statuses. Please note that the placement of the dots is not statistically representative, but rather a human estimation in order to illustrate the concept.

This sample size may not permit me to identify definite trends linking identity status and the decision to fight or not, but it nonetheless carries a certain statistical significance. Furthermore, of those who said they would not fight if asked 'tomorrow,' only one excluded the possibility of fighting altogether. Indeed, two said they would fight as KNLA soldiers if they were forced to choose between fighting and resettlement. The other respondent was not asked this question. This is further evidence that the potential exists for nearly all young male Karen long-term refugees to take up arms in different circumstances. Statistically speaking, based on the data collected and demographic information available, I have 95% confidence that between 35% and 87% of Karen refugee males aged 12-21 in Mae La who have spent the past 7 or more years in refugee camps, would say they would be willing to fight if asked by the KNLA tomorrow.[134]

It might be suggested that a difference along religious lines could exist among Karen refugees. For example, Buddhist Karen youth might align themselves with, or at minimum hold some sympathy toward, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) fighting against the KNLA. However, there was no uniform correspondence between respondents' religion (Buddhist, Evangelical Christian, or Roman Catholic) and willingness to take up arms. Table 2 lists each of the fourteen respondents' religions and whether they would fight if asked 'tomorrow' by the KNLA, as well as whether they would choose to resettle or to fight as a KNLA soldier if faced with only these two options.

The fifth column in Table 2 shows whether or not the respondent claimed to have had a member of his extended family injured or killed in the conflict. Extended family is highly valued in Karen culture. Thus, although none of the respondents said that a direct family member had been killed because of the conflict, the effect of the noted extended family deaths may nevertheless have had a big impact on some respondents. Although no statistical cross-correlation exists between the third and fifth columns, it is nevertheless interesting that: a) so many (half) of the respondents claimed a conflict-related death in their extended family; b) both respondents who unqualifiedly said they would not fight tomorrow claimed no conflict-related deaths in their extended family; and c) two out of

---

[134] Confidence limits calculated using StatLib statistical library of SEMSTAT statistical routines obtained from the National Institute of Standards and Technology of the U.S. Commerce Department, "Two sided confidence limits for the probability in the binomial distribution," SEMSTAT > Hypothesis Testing and Confidence Bounds > Confidence limits on binomial paramater. [Sample size: 14, Successes: 9, Confidence coefficient: 0.95].

three who said they would resettle rather than fight did not report a conflict-related death in their extended family. This may present an opportunity for further research: It would be interesting to see what results would be obtained if a larger study of refugee identity formation were conducted and only refugees with no conflict-related deaths in the extended family were included in the analysis.

Respondent's Religion	Identity Status: Conflict	Fight in Karen State, if asked by KNLA tomorrow?	Resettle to a third country or fight as a KNLA soldier?	Conflict-related violent death in extended family?
Buddhist	Foreclosure	No	Not asked	Non-fatal shooting
Buddhist	Foreclosure	No*	Fight	Doesn't know
Buddhist	Achievement	No**	Fight	Yes
Buddhist	Foreclosure	Yes	Not asked	Yes
Buddhist	Foreclosure	Yes	Fight	No
Buddhist	Foreclosure	Yes	Fight	No
Buddhist	Foreclosure	Yes	Fight	Yes
Buddhist	Foreclosure	Yes	Fight	No
Evang. Christian	Foreclosure	Yes	Resettle	Yes
Evang. Christian	Moratorium	Yes	Resettle	No
Evang. Christian	Diffusion	Yes	Fight	Yes
Evang. Christian	Foreclosure	Not sure	Fight	Yes
Roman Catholic	Foreclosure	No	Resettle	No
Roman Catholic	Diffusion	Yes	Fight	Yes

Table 2 – Willingness to Fight: respondents sorted by religion
*** This respondent would answer yes if he were older. ** This respondent said he wants to finish his studies first.**

4.3.4 Potential KNLA recruits

For the sake of interest, a basic statistical analysis of the data was carried out to give some insight into the number of potential KNLA recruits aged 17 or over currently living in refugee camps in Thailand.[135] Based on population figures extracted from the UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database,[136] it is estimated that 2.67% of the population in Mae La camp is 17 years old, and each one-year cohort of refugees aged 18 through 21 makes up approximately 2.53% of the population. Thus, the total percentage of refugees aged 17 to 21 in Mae La is estimated at 12.79%. The Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) estimated the population in Mae La refugee camp to be 38,613 at 31 August

[135] The age of 17 or over is an arbitrary age range chosen because soldiers in the KNLA are supposed to be 18 or older, but recruits may lie about their age or the age range may be unofficially expanded in times of need.
[136] UNHCR, *Statistical Online Population Database*, Data extracted: 23/10/2009.

2009.[137] Of these, 97% were Karen, and 50% were male.[138] This works out to approximately 2,395 Karen males aged 17 to 21 living in Mae La camp. It is estimated that over half the refugees in this age group have been living in a refugee camp for seven or more years, as in the interviewed group; that is, over 1,197 individuals.

Using a conservative estimate that half of the males in this age group are long-term refugees (seven years or longer), thus matching the population subset interviewed, the 95% confidence limits on the number who would be willing to fight, if asked tomorrow, would be 421 to 1,045 individuals.[139] If it turns out that this willingness applies equally to young males who have been refugees for less than seven years, the 95% confidence limits would be 841 to 2,089 who would be willing to fight tomorrow if asked.

The refugee camps in Thailand held 133,187 refugees as of 31 August 2009, according to the TBBC. Of these, 61% were Karen. If the sample findings apply to the Karen within all refugee camps in Thailand, the 95% confidence limits correspond to a range of 913 to 2,266 young male refugees who would be willing to fight if asked tomorrow; if it also applies to those Karen who have been refugees less than seven years, the range is 1,825 to 4,532.

These are significant numbers in comparison to the number of KNLA forces, presently estimated at less than 2,500.[140] There is therefore a relatively large pool of potential recruits if circumstances encourage them to take up arms.

4.3.5 Ecological systems and willingness or unwillingness to fight

The reasons for which these young Karen refugees are not currently enlisted in the KNLA relate to the ecological systems. Parents, teachers, and friends have not actively encouraged these young men to pursue a future in the rebel army. Rather, they have set an example of living a relatively simple life concerned with the present, just as they normally would have done if there were peace in their home villages in Karen State.

This is underscored by going beyond the situation of Karen refugees in Thailand. On my behalf, one of my colleagues asked a limited number of questions to refugee youth in the same demographic range as my respondents but in a markedly different refugee setting:

---

[137] TBBC, "TBBC's camp population figures," <http://www.tbbc.org/camps/populations.htm> Accessed 2 October 2009.
[138] TBBC, "Mae La," <http://www.tbbc.org/camps/mst.htm> Accessed 2 October 2009.
[139] See footnote 134.
[140] Davis and Asif.

Sahrawi refugees in Algeria.[141] While the information received is limited in terms of detail and does not include an in-depth examination of the circumstances unique to young Sahrawi refugees, I believe it nevertheless helps validate my research question and contributes to understanding my conclusions.

The young Sahrawi refugees interviewed by my colleague in refugee camps in Algeria expressed unanimous willingness to fight if asked to do so.[142] These young Sahrawi respondents were strongly supportive of the Sahrawi cause and they all considered themselves "inherently fighters for their cause."[143]

The contrast in commitment between these two groups demonstrates the significant influence of ecological systems on willingness to join an armed group: Families, schools, community leaders, and media constantly remind Sahrawi youth of the injustice of not having a state which they claim as rightfully theirs, of the valour of fighting for the cause represented by the Polisario Front, and of the history of their struggle.[144] Interestingly, many of the Sahrawi respondents said they want to be doctors to treat and care for the soldiers in war – even though there has been a pause in the fighting since before they were born.

This presents a stark contrast to the Karen situation in Thailand where it appears that, with time, these topics have worn out their welcome in everyday camp conversation.

Residents of Mae La camp told me that, in the past, there was more active support in the camp for the Karen armed forces and their struggle against the Burmese military. However, in recent years the KNLA has not actively recruited soldiers from among camp residents. Nobody could tell me with certainty why this change occurred, but it was likely due in part to Thai government pressure on the KNU to tone down its activities in the Thai refugee camps, and in part to the KNU's insufficient financial resources to maintain a larger military force.

4.3.6 The Chronosystem's limiting influence on identity achievement

The low degree of exploration in virtually all domains, including conflict and especially politics, was very much evident in the interviews. When asking about job plans for the future, only a very narrow range of job possibilities was given – most respondents said they

---

[141] Tanaji Sen, "Identity Formation and Psychosocial Development among Saharawi Refugee Children," Unpublished master's thesis, Uppsala Universitet, October 2008.
[142] Sen, 34.
[143] Sen, 34.
[144] Tanaji Sen, personal correspondence, 23 October 2009.

want to be a teacher or doctor. When I asked what is required to become a teacher or doctor and what difficulties might be encountered, the majority of respondents provided answers that revealed a strong lack of knowledge of how to reach their stated career goals. This is in obvious contrast to individuals in developed countries who, in planning to become a doctor, know that they will need to get good grades, study certain subjects in preparation for medical school, study several years at university including or followed by a clinical/practical aspect, etc. This same lack of exploration, within the domain of conflict, resulted in ten of fourteen respondents being classified as foreclosed (instead of achievement) and two as diffused (instead of moratorium).

The reason that young male Karen refugees are primarily in foreclosure and diffusion is because of the interaction between the Microsystem and/or Macrosystem, and the Chronosystem: Everything that happens in life happens in the refugee camp. It is impossible to avoid the influence of this forced set of surroundings/life structures. Because they live in a protracted refugee situation with no hope in sight for a solution, young Karen refugees are not forced to explore options and commit to beliefs – identity achievement may affect their personal life, but not their presumed destiny of living and dying in the camp. The Microsystem and Macrosystem encourage the status quo, rather than encouraging independent thought, knowledge-seeking behaviour, and exploration of issues such as occupation, male and female roles, politics, and conflict. The Mesosystem further adds to this state of affairs, as the interactions between parents, teachers, and camp leaders all incorporate the assumption that tomorrow will be essentially the same as today, the next day will be essentially the same as tomorrow, and so on. Experience has shown this to be true for the most part, with the exception perhaps of sudden and significant changes to the camp population such as when the United States accepted many hundreds of Mae La residents to be resettled.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Implications for Karen Refugees in Thailand

"Identity achievement is associated with higher self-esteem, conscientiousness, security, [and] achievement motivation."[145] As such, greater rates of identity achievement may help increase the likelihood and ability of young Karen refugees to work constructively on solutions to the problems faced by their communities inside the camps. This would increase the chances for a peaceful outcome if/when the opportunity for change arrives. In planning for the future, it makes sense to place a particular emphasis on ensuring that the refugee youth of today reach a state of identity achievement with regards to the domains of politics and conflict, as the youth make up a sizeable and potentially influential segment of their society. If there is any chance for peace in the coming years, the Karen youth of today – as in any culture – will inevitably play a role.

If, however, refugee youth remain in states of moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion, they are by definition less likely to become useful leaders of society, be it in the camps or in a post-conflict Karen State. Perhaps of greatest immediate concern is the problem of spoilers. Spoilers are "leaders and parties who believe the emerging peace threatens their power, world view, and interests and who use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it."[146] The success of would-be spoilers in any conflict or post-conflict setting rests to a large degree on their ability to convince one or more segments of society to act in a manner counterproductive to a peaceful or fair outcome.[147] Individuals in a state of diffusion, who are "significantly more likely to conform to peer pressure,"[148] are thus especially vulnerable to spoilers. While only two respondents were classified as diffusions in the domain of conflict, seven of the ten foreclosures were weakly foreclosed which means they were close to being classified as diffusions. Conversely, refugees with a strong sense of political identity, who have developed firm beliefs about conflict based on a thorough exploration of the issues, are less likely to be influenced to change their minds about related issues without the introduction of substantial new information or a sudden and emotionally stirring event.

---

[145] Wayne Weiten, *Psychology: Themes and Variations,* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2008, 467.
[146] Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International conflict resolution after the Cold War,* Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman, eds., Washington, DC: National Research Council, 2000, 178.
[147] Ill-intentioned people may attempt to affect the peace process itself, or take advantage of the uncertainties and confusion that often accompany transition periods in order to claim assets or positions of power that do not fairly belong to them.
[148] Gerald R., Adams, et al., "Ego identity status, conformity behavior, and personality in late adolescence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 47.5 (1984): 1102.

The limited knowledge and experience possessed by young Karen refugees, combined with – and partly the cause of – their weak identity formation (e.g. not having reached identity achievement, commonly making decisions without compelling reasons), leaves them vulnerable to the influence of individuals or groups with agendas, both positive and negative. Those refugees who remain in a state of diffusion are more likely to be easily influenced by potential spoilers.[149] On the other hand, if the refugees' identity formation process leads them to become identity achieved and to adopt a pro-peace stance, potential spoilers would probably find themselves with reduced opportunities to co-opt a percentage of the population and cause problems.

Identity development in conflict-related protracted refugee situations impacts, therefore, on the peace process. In a political peace process or transition period, recognising the causes and effects of identity formation in its various stages could be invaluable to predicting the outcome and may even be used to help influence the outcome. This would occur if experts in the field could enhance the peace process by increasing identity achievement in the domains of politics and conflict. For example, they could devise ways to provide Karen youth with opportunities for increased information and discussion.

5.2 Applicability in Other Contexts

While this study applies, strictly speaking, only to the particular situation of Karen refugee youth in Thai refugee camps, it is my hope that some of the insight gained might be useful in examining situations elsewhere in the world in which refugee youth have the option of supporting or joining an armed group.

The young Karen respondents in my study have very different ambitions from the Sahrawis. Generally, Karen youth do not want to be soldiers. However, they're willing to be soldiers if necessary. My results show that Karen long-term refugees are likely to join an armed movement if circumstances (such as a request from the KNLA) encourage them to do so, despite a general disinterest in the conflict in Karen State and in fighting in general. Sahrawi refugees, on the other hand, have very strongly developed support for fighting for their cause, from all aspects of the ecological systems, and the respondents quite predictably claimed to be willing to take up arms. In the case of the Karen, this constant propaganda from environmental influences such as family and the media is not present to anything like the degree of the Sahrawis. Nevertheless, most young male Karen refugees would still be willing to take up arms. This shows that, while belligerent efforts may influence the willingness to take up arms, they are not essential to this willingness. Furthermore, it

[149] Adams et al., 1102.

indicates that spending formative years in a conflict-related protracted refugee situation, with or without the active influence of belligerents, is linked with willingness to take up arms.

When individuals remain in a state of moratorium, foreclosure, or diffusion, the possibility of their being manipulated is increased. By extension, the ability of belligerents to take advantage of this identity formation failure is a determinant of the direction young refugees take vis-à-vis joining political and armed movements. It remains for future studies to determine if most or all instances of conflict linked to protracted refugee situations are partly dependent on the failure of the affected refugees to reach identity achievement. This knowledge could be very beneficial to peace processes.

5.3 Usefulness of Bronfenbrenner's and Marcia's Theories

Having carried out this study, I believe that the combination of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model with Marcia's Ego Identity Status theory results in an appropriate theoretical framework for studying links between identity formation and armed conflict among young refugees in a conflict-related protracted refugee situation. The ecological systems approach gave me insight into the play between the different environmental influences and refugee youth, although I was unable to investigate these as thoroughly as would be ideal, due to resource limitations. The model itself does not need to be adjusted to suit refugee situations, but a commitment on the part of researchers to apply this approach in a more comprehensive and detailed manner is necessary to take full advantage of the model. The identity status interviews and ratings based on Marcia's theory provided a suitable means of collecting and analysing qualitative information about young refugees' identity formation. In order to improve this method, the interview questions should be reviewed to ensure their applicability to the specific refugee situation being investigated. In particular, certain question formulations do not translate well to other languages; an experienced translator familiar with the identity status interview methodology would help avoid such problems. A review to determine which identity status domains are of importance in a given cultural context is also necessary to avoid asking inappropriate or confusing questions.

If these models are to be used to understand questions such as "How does growing up in a protracted refugee situation affect identity formation?" then studies would need to be longitudinal. This is a common criticism of studies on identity formation; while my study looked at the current identity status ratings of refugees, I don't know what results I would have found with the same group of respondents several years earlier. Such information might have allowed me to make statements of correlation between the Chronosystem and identity status, for instance. Alternatively, collection of data from individuals not having

grown up in protracted refugee situations, but being otherwise comparable to the respondents, would increase the reliability of the analysis of the protracted refugee situation. Overall, Bronfenbrenner's and Marcia's theories are suitable for studies of youth in protracted refugee situations, but the usefulness of these approaches depends on the comprehensiveness of the study and the gathering of data from comparison groups or longitudinal studies.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Study

Many young Karen refugees see their present as their future. Apathy toward the future characterises their outlook, and keeps their focus well short of the horizon. How best to encourage them to explore and commit to values and beliefs about identity status domains such as careers, politics, and conflict would be an interesting topic to explore.

To further investigate the themes discussed in this thesis, a detailed study of identity formation among long-term refugees in a large number of geographically diverse protracted refugee situations could be carried out. An in-depth analysis of Karen family situations would add to the understanding of the Microsystem causes of foreclosure among these refugees. It would also be useful to obtain non-refugee data so as to have a control against which to compare refugee data. Gathering vertical data would help to determine whether the number of years lived in a protracted refugee situation increases or decreases refugees' willingness to fight. Furthermore, given the high incidence of conflict-related deaths in refugees' extended families, an interesting question to explore would be what effect death in the family has on willingness to fight.

The primary benefit I see in such studies would be in their potential applicability to the peace process. If identity achievement is proven to be central to developing a focus on a horizon beyond the camps, and if the values encouraged are peaceful values, it is conceivable that the peace process could be positively influenced by a better understanding of the underlying factors involved in conflict-related long-term refugees' identity formation.

In order to produce an empirically valid dataset for quantitative analysis, use of the EOM-EIS-2 questionnaire is recommended.[150] This method permits data collection on a larger scale without the need to conduct time-consuming semi-structured interviews with every respondent. A limited number of questionnaire respondents should also be selected for semi-structured interviews for more detailed insight and as a check on the questionnaire's

---

[150] Layne D. Bennion and Gerald R. Adams, "A Revision of the Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status: An Identity Instrument for Use with Late Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 1.2 (1986): 183-198.

validity. Previous research has demonstrated that results from the EOM-EIS-2 questionnaire generally agree with the identity status ratings from semi-structured interviews and can therefore be employed for broad statistical analysis.[151]

[151] Susanne Bergh and Ann Erling, "Adolescent Identity Formation: A Swedish Study of Identity Status Using the EOM-EIS-II," *Adolescence* 40. 158 (2005): 384-386.

6 Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions - English

Hello, my name is Chris and I'd like to ask you some questions to learn more about your personal experiences as a Karen refugee.

I'm going to ask you about your current thinking on different topics. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; I just want to know what you think about these issues.

This interview usually takes about 45 minutes, and I'll be recording it with this little machine. Everything you say will be kept confidential; I will be the only person listening to the recording, and I will not share this with anyone else.

Do you have any questions before we start?

A. Introductory questions

1. How old are you?
2. Were you born in Burma or Thailand?
3. How long have you been living in the refugee camp?
4. Are your parents / guardians both living with you?
5. What did your parents / guardians do for work when they lived in Burma?
6. What do your parents / guardians do now?
7. Do your parents know how to read and write?
8. Do you know a lot about your family history?
9. Do you read newspapers / magazines? If so, which ones?
10. Do you listen to radio / watch television / check internet sites?
11. What year of school are you in?
12. How has education, schooling, and learning helped you? How do you plan to use your education?

B. Occupation

1. What job do you plan to do when you're older?
2. When did you decide to _____?
3. What people or experiences have been major influences on your job plans for the future? (Teachers? Parents? Books? Religious leaders? Celebrities? Etc.)
4. Have you ever considered other job choices for your future? If so, what?
5. Do your parents ever tell you what job you should try to have when you're older?
6. How do your parents feel about the job plans you have now?
7. What problems do you see that might come up with your decision to _____?
8. If these things were to become difficult, what would you do then?
9. If you could be or do anything you wanted, what would you be or do? What do you like about this job?

C. Religion / Values

1. What do you have to do to lead a good life?
2. What do you have to do to be a good person?
3. How did you come to believe this?
4. Do you see yourself as a member of any particular religion?
5. What about your parents?
6. How did you come to be _____?
7. What people or experiences have influenced your thinking about religion?
8. Were you ever very active in church/temple/etc? How about now?
9. Do you have religious discussions with other people?
10. How do your parents feel about your religious beliefs now?
11. Are your religious beliefs any different from your parents'?
12. Do you think your religious beliefs will stay the same or change over the next few years?

D. Male and Female Roles

1. Do you think men and women are different in the way they act or think? How?
2. In a married couple, who should take care of the young children?
3. Who should earn the money to cover the family's costs?
4. How should major decisions be made, such as moving to the refugee camp or applying to resettle in another country?
5. Are there situations where the opinion of one member of the family should be more important than the others? When?
6. Do you discuss these things with your parents? Do you discuss them with your friends?
7. What people or experiences have influenced your thinking about men's and women's roles?
8. Do you expect that your ideas about men's and women's roles will stay the same or change over the next few years? Have your ideas changed in the last few years?
9. Is the General-Secretary of the KNU a man or a woman? What is the name of the General-Secretary?

E. Politics

1. Are you a member of any club or association?
2. Do you have any particular political preferences?
3. Are there any issues you feel strongly about
    a. the Burmese government?
    b. the KNU?
    c. the Thai government?
    d. the DKBA?
4. Have you ever taken any political action, like joining groups, writing letters, participating in demonstrations about politics, or political discussions?
5. What people or experiences have influenced your thinking about politics?
6. Did you ever feel differently about political issues or your political preferences?

7. Do you expect your political involvement to stay the same or change in the coming years?

F. Conflict

1. Which is more important: the rights of individual people, or the good of the group?
2. When two people have a serious disagreement, how do they usually solve it?
3. How do you think people should solve their disagreements?
4. If the problem is big enough, is it ok to use violence to solve a problem? When? Why? Can you give an example?
5. Who is fighting in Karen State?
6. What do you know about the conflict in Karen State?
7. Have friends or members of your family died or been injured in the conflict in Karen State? How has this affected you?
8. If the KNLA asked you tomorrow to go fight in Karen State, would you go? Why or why not?
9. If you had to choose either to resettle to a third country or fight as a KNLA soldier in Karen State, which would you choose?
10. Can you name any Karen heroes? What do you know about them?

G. Other

1. Are you happy with your life? Do you have any worries?
2. Who do you go to for advice?
3. Do you feel safe in the camp? Is it safe to leave the camp?
4. Do you ever go to Karen state for Karen New Year? Is it fun? Is it dangerous?
5. Do you feel at home? What does 'home' mean to you?
6. Do you get angry and frustrated at your situation? How do you react to this emotion?
7. If you were not staying here where would you like to have a home?
8. What are the advantages / disadvantages of staying here?
9. Can you tell me what it means to be a Karen? What is required to be a good Karen? Do you think I can become a Karen? Why or why not?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions – Sgaw Karen
တၢ်သံကွၢ်သံဒီးသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်

ဂီၤ,နံၤ,ဟါ,လၢဂ့ၤလီၤ– ယမံၤမ့ၢ်(Chris)ယအဲဉ်ဒီးသံကွၢ်နၤတၢ်သံကွၢ်တစံးတက့ၢ်လၢကမၤလိအါထိဉ်ဘဉ်ဃးနနိၢ်တဂၤတၢ်လဲၤခီဖျိဒ်အမ့ၢ်ကညီဘဉ်ကီဘဉ်ခဲတဂၤအသိးလီၤ.

ယကသံကွၢ်နၤဘဉ်ဃးနတၢ်ဆိကမိဉ်လၢအလိၤဆိသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်လီၤ.တၢ်စံးဆၢလၢအဘဉ်လီၤတၢ်လီၤဆဲးတအိဉ်ဘဉ်.ယအဲဉ်ဒီးသ့ဉ်ညါထဲလၢနဆိဉ်ကမိဉ်တၢ်ဂ့ၢ်တၢ်ကျိၤတဖဉ်အံၤဒ်လဲဉ်နှဉ်လီၤ.

တၢ်သံကွၢ်ဝဲအံၤညီနှၢ်ယံာ်ဝဲ၄၅မံးနံး,ဒီးယကဖိဉ်နှၢ်ဃာ်လၢတၢ်ဖိဉ်တၢ်ကလုၢ်ဝဲအံၤလီၤ.တၢ်လၢနတဲသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်ကမ့ၢ်ဒဉ်တၢ်လၢအဘဉ်ဃးတၢ်ခူသူဉ်,ယဖိဉ်ဃာ်တၢ်ကလုၢ်ဝဲအံၤယကသ့ဉ်ညါဒဉ်ထဲယၤတဂၤဒီးယတဖုးသ့ဉ်ညါပှၤအဂုၤအဂၤနိၤတဂၤဘဉ်.

တချုးယသံကွၢ်နၤဖံးအခါလၢနဲခိတၢ်သံကွၢ်အိဉ်တမံၤမံၤဧါ.

က. တၢ်ကတိၤဟဲလၢညါသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်

၁. နအိဉ်ပွဲၤနံဉ်လံလဉ်.
၂. နအိဉ်ဖျဉ်လၢကိဉ်ပယိၤဧါ.မ့တမ့ၢ်ကွီဉ်တဲဉ်ကီၢ်ဧါ.
၃. နအိဉ်လၢဘဉ်ကီဘဉ်ခဲဒဲကဝိၤပူၤအံၤပွဲၤနံဉ်လံလဉ်.
၄. နမိၢ်နပၢ်,ပှၤလၢအကွၢ်ထွဲနၤခဲအံၤအဝဲသ့ဉ်အိဉ်ဒီးနၤဖဲအံၤဧါ.
၅. နမိၢ်နပၢ်,ပှၤလၢအကွၢ်ထွဲနၤလၢအဝဲသ့ဉ်အိဉ်လၢကိၢ်ပယိၤအခါအမၤမနုၤလဲဉ်.
၆. နမိၢ်နပၢ်,ပှၤကွၢ်ထွဲနၤခဲအံၤအမၤမနုၤလဲဉ်.
၇. နမိၢ်နပၢ်သ့ကွဲးသ့ဖးဧါ.
၈. ဘဉ်ဃးနဟံဉ်ဖိယိဖိဂ့ၢ်ကျိၤနသ့ဉ်ညါဖးအါညါဧါ.
၉. နဖးတၢ်ကစိဉ်,မဲးကစံဧါ.မ့ၢ်ဖးနှဉ်နဖးဖဲလဲဉ်တမံၤလဲဉ်.
၁၀. နကနဉ်ကွဲၤလ့လီၤ,ကွၢ်ကွဲၤဟူဖျါ,မၤ(Internet)စ့ၢ်ဧါ.
၁၁. မ့တအိဉ်ဘဉ်နှဉ်ဘဉ်မနုၤအယိလဲဉ်.
၁၂. နသရဉ်,သရဉ်မှဉ်သ့ဉ်တဖဉ်နှဉ်မ့ၢ်ပှၤတကလုာ်ယိဒီးနၤ,ဟဲလၢတၢ်လိၢ်ဒ်သိးဒီးနၤဧါ.အဝဲသ့ဉ်မ့ၢ်မနုၤကလုာ်လဲဉ်.
၁၃. တၢ်ကူဉ်ဘဉ်ကူဉ်သ့,တၢ်ထိဉ်ကွီ မၤစၢၤနၤဒ်လဲဉ်.နတၢ်ကူဉ်ဘဉ်ကူဉ်သ့နှဉ်နတိၤဟ်အိၤလၢနကသူအိၤဒ်လဲဉ်.

ခ. တၢ်ဖံတၢ်မၤသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်

၁. နမ့ၢ်ကဲထိဉ်ပှၤဒိဉ်တုာ်ခိဉ်ပွဲၤတဂၤနှဉ်နတိၤဟ်လၢနကမၤမနုၤလဲဉ်.
၂. နဆၢတဲာ်လၢနကမၤတၢ်မၤ(_____)ဝဲနှဉ်အခါဖဲလဲဉ်.
၃. ပှၤဒ်လဲဉ်,မ့တမ့ၢ်တၢ်လဲၤခီဖျိဒ်လဲဉ်လၢကမၤဘျုးနတၢ်တိာ်ဟ်ခါဆူညါအဂီၢ်နှဉ်လဲဉ်.သရဉ်,မိၢ်ပၢ်,
လံာ်လဲၢ်,တၢ်ဘူဉ်တၢ်ဘါခိဉ်နၢ်,ပှၤမံၤဟူသဉ်ဖျါသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်ဧါ.

၄. နဆိကမိဉ်နိုးဖးတၢ်ဃုထၢအဂၤလၢခါဆူညါအဂိၢ်အိဉ်တမံးမံးစ့ၢ်ဧါ.မ့ၢ်အိဉ်နှဉ်တၢ်မနုးသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်လဲဉ်.
၅.ခါဆူညါအဂိၢ်နကြၢးမၤမနုးလဲဉ်နှဉ်နမိနပါတဲနုးတဘျိဘျိဧါ.
၆. ဒ်နတၢ်ပညိဉ်အိဉ်ဒ်အံၤအသိးနမိၢ်နပ်ၢ်ထံဉ်ဒ်လဲဉ်.
၇. လၢနကမၤတၢ်ဂ့ၤ,တၢ်ကဲဘျူးတမံးမံးအဂိၢ်နှဉ်နကထံဉ်ဘဉ်တၢ်ကိတၢ်ခဲဒ်လဲဉ်တမံးလဲဉ်.
၈. တၢ်တိာ်ဟာ်ဒ်အံၤမ့ၢ်ဟဲကဲထိဉ်တၢ်ကိတၢ်ခဲနှဉ်နကမၤဒ်လဲဉ်.
၉. တၢ်လၢနဇဲဉ်ဒိးမၤတၢ်မံးမံးကဲထိဉ်လိဉ်ထိဉ်မ့သ့နှဉ်နဇဲဒိးမၤမနုးသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်,နဇဲဉ်ဒိးကဲထိဉ်မနုးသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်လဲဉ်.
၁၀. ဒ်နတၢ်တိာ်ဟာ်အိဉ်အသိးနကွိကမၤန့ၢ်စၢၤနၤဧါ.နကမၤန့ၢ်အီၤဒ်လဲဉ်.

ဂ. *တၢ်ဘူဉ်တၢ်ဘါဒိးတၢ်ဟာ်လ့ၢ်ဟာ်ပှၤသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်*

၁. ဒ်သိးနတၢ်အိဉ်မူကဂ့ၤအဂိၢ်နကဘဉ်မၤတၢ်မနုးလဲဉ်.
၂. ဒ်သိးနကကဲထိဉ်ပှၤလၢအဂ့ၤတဂၤအဂိၢ်နကဘဉ်မၤမနုးလဲဉ်.
၃. တၢ်ဝဲအံၤနနာ်အီၤဒ်လဲဉ်.
၄. နထံဉ်လီၤနသးဒ်နမ့ၢ်တၢ်ဘူၢ်တၢ်ဘါကရၢဖိတဂၤအသိးဧါ.
၅. နမိၢ်နပ်ၢ်သ့ဉ်တဖဉ်မ့ၢ်ဒ်လဲဉ်.
၆. နဟဲကဲထိဉ်တၢ်ဝဲအံၤ(_____)ဒ်လဲဉ်.
၇. ပှၤဒ်လဲဉ်တကလုာ်,မ့တမ့ၢ်တၢ်လဲၤခီဖျိဒ်လဲဉ်တကလုာ်လၢအမၤဘျူးနတၢ်ဆိကမိဉ်ဘဉ်ဃးတၢ်ဘူဉ်တၢ်ဘါအံၤလဲဉ်.
၈. နမ့ၢ်ပှၤမၤတၢ်,ပှၤဟူးဂဲၤလၢသရိာ်ပူၤ,တၢ်ဘူဉ်တၢ်ဘါအဟံဉ်ပူၤတဂၤဧါ.ခဲအံၤနမၤဒံးဧါ.
၉. နအိဉ်ဒိးတၢ်တၢ်ပိၢ်တၢ်ပိၢ်ပိသကိးဘဉ်ဃးတၢ်ဘူဉ်တၢ်ဘါဒိးပှၤအဂၤစ့ဉ်ဧါ.
၁၀. တၢ်လၢနနာ်ဘဉ်ဃးတၢ်ဘူဉ်တၢ်ဘါအံၤန့ဉ်နမိၢ်နပ်ၢ်ထံဉ်ဒ်လဲဉ်.
၁၁. နတၢ်နာ်ဘဉ်ဃးတၢ်ဘူဉ်တၢ်ဘါအံၤန့ဉ်လီၤဆိလိာ်သးဒိးနမိၢ်နပ်ၢ်အိဉ်ဧါ.
၁၂. နဆိကမိဉ်တၢ်ဘူဉ်တၢ်ဘါလၢနနာ်အံၤကအိဉ်ဂၢၢ်အိဉ်ကျၢၤ,မ့တမ့ၢ်နံဉ်လၢကဟဲသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်တၢ်ဆိတလဲသးကအိဉ်ဒံးဧါ.

ဃ. *ပိာ်မုဉ်,ပိာ်ခွါလီၢ်လးဒီးမူဒါ*

၁. ပိာ်မုဉ်ဒိးပိာ်ခွါနှဉ်နဆိကမိဉ်အတၢ်လီၤဆိလိာ်သးလၢတၢ်ဆိကမိဉ်,တၢ်ဟူးတၢ်ဂဲၤသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်အိဉ်ဧါ.ဒ်လဲဉ်.
၂. ကြၢးလၢမတဂၤကွၢ်ထွဲဖိလံၤသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်လဲဉ်.
၃. မတဂၤလၢကြၢးဃုစ့လၢဟံဉ်ဖိယီဖိတၢ်လိဉ်အဂိၢ်လဲဉ်.
၄. တၢ်ဆၢတဲာ်လၢအရူဒိဉ်ဒ်သိးတၢ်လဲၤအိဉ်လၢဘဉ်ကိဘဉ်ခဲဒဲကဝီၤ,ပတံထိဉ်လၢကလဲၤအိဉ်ဆိးလၢထံကိဉ်လၢအဂၤ,တၢ်ဒ်နှဉ်သ့ဉ်တဖဉ်တၢ်ကြၢးဆၢတဲာ်အီၤဒ်လဲဉ်.
၅. ပှၤလၢအတၢ်ထံဉ်ဂ့ၤ,ပှၤလၢအရူဒိဉ်နှ်ပှၤအဂၤလၢနဟံဉ်ဖိယီဖိကျါနှဉ်အိဉ်တဂၤဂၤစ့ၢ်ဧါ.မ့ၢ်အိဉ်နှဉ်မတဂၤလဲဉ်.အဆၢတဲာ်တၢ်ဆၢတဲာ်အဆၢကတိၢ်ဖဲလဲဉ်.
၆. တၢ်မၤဝဲအံၤန့ဉ်နတၢ်ပိၢ်ဒိးနမိဉ်နပ်ၢ်ဧါ.မ့တမ့ၢ်နတၢ်ပိၢ်ဒိးနသကိးသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်ဧါ.
၇. ပှၤဒ်လဲဉ်,တၢ်လဲၤခီဖျိဒ်လဲဉ် လၢအဒုးအိဉ်ထိဉ်နတၢ်ဆိကမိဉ်လၢအဘဉ်ဃးပိာ်မုဉ်ပိာ်ခွါမူဒါဒိးတၢ်ဖံးတၢ်မၤဒ်အံၤလဲဉ်.

၈. နမ့်လ်လၢနတ်ထံဉ်ဘဉ်ယးပိာ်မှဉ်ပိာ်ခွါအတ်ဖံးတ်မၤ,အမူအဒါအံၤကအိဉ်ဂၢ်အိဉ်ကျၢၤ,မ့တမ့်နမ့်လ်လၢကဆိတလအသးခါဆူညါစ့ဉ်ဓါ.
၉. ကညီဒိကလုာ်စ့ၢဖြဉ်ကရၢအနဲဉ်ရှဉ်ခိဉ်ကျၢ်နှဉ်အပိာ်မှဉ်ဓါ,ပိာ်ခွါဓါ.အမံၤဒ်လဲဉ်.

၎. *ထံရူ်ကီၢ်သဲးသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်*

၁. နမ့်တ်ကရၢကရိ အကရၢဖိတဂၤဓါ.
၂. ထံရူ်ကီၢ်သဲးလၢနဆိမိဉ်ဒိဉ်,နဟ်လုာ်ဟ်ပှၤဒိဉ်လီၤလီၤဆိဆိအိဉ်တမံၤမံၤဓါ.
၃. တ်ဂ့်တ်ကျိၤလၢနသးစဲးဆူဉ်ဆူဉ်ကလဲာ်အိဉ်တမံၤမံၤဓါ.ဒ်အမ့်–
က. ပယီၤထံဖိကီၢ်ဖိပတီၢ်.
ခ. ကညီဒိကလုာ်စ့ၢဖြဉ်ကရၢပတီၢ်.
ဂ. ကွဉ်တဲဉ်ပဒိဉ်ပတီၢ်.
ဃ. ကညီဘါသီခါဖိသုးမ့ၢ်ဒိဉ်.
၄. နမၤယုာ်တ်လၢထံရူ်ကီၢ်သဲးတ်ဟူးတ်ဂဲၤဒ်သိးပှၤတဖုဒိးတဖုမၤသကိးတ်,ဆဲးစုမ့ၢ်ကျၢ်ဘဉ်ယးတ်ဃ့ကညး,တ်ကွဲးလံာ်ကွဲးလဲၢ်,တ်တဲသကိးဘဉ်ယးထံရူ်ကီၢ်သဲး တ်ဒ်နှဉ်သ့ဉ်တဖဉ်နမၤအိဉ်တမံၤမံၤဓါ.
၅. ပှၤဒ်လဲဉ်,တ်လဲၤခီဖျိဒ်လဲဉ်လၢအမၤဘျုးနတ်ဆိကမိဉ်ဘဉ်ယးထံရူ်ကီၢ်သဲးအံၤလဲဉ်.
၆. လၢအဘဉ်ယးထံရူ်ကီၢ်သဲးတ်ဂ့်တ်ကျိၤ,တ်သူဉ်အိဉ်တ်သးစဲသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်နတူၢ်ဘဉ်လီၤလီၤဆိဆိအိဉ်တမံၤမံၤဓါ.
၇. နထံရူ်ကီၢ်သဲးအတ်ပဉ်ယုာ်ပဉ်ဂိၢ်,ထံရူ်ကီၢ်သဲးတ်အိဉ်သးအံၤနမ့်လ်လၢကအိဉ်ဒ်အံၤလီၤစိၤမ့တမ့်နမ့်လ်လၢကဆိတလဲသးခါဆူညါဒံးဓါ.

၈. *တ်ဘဉ်ဂ့ဉ်ဂုဉ်*

၁. နီၢ်တဂၤတ်ခွဲးတ်ယာ်,ပှၤဒိဖုတ်ခွဲးတ်ယာ်နှဉ်အရူဒိဉ်ဖဲလဲဉ်တမံၤလဲဉ်.
၂. လၢပှၤခံဂၤအဘၢဉ်စၢၤတ်ကိတ်ခဲမ့အိဉ်ထိဉ်နှဉ်ကြားလၢအဝဲသ့ဉ်ဘျါဆဲဝဲဒ်လဲဉ်.
၃. တ်ကိတ်ခဲနှဉ်ကြားလၢပှၤဘိၤအီၤဒ်လဲဉ်.
၄. တ်ကိတ်ခဲလၢအနးနးကျုၤကျုၤမ့အိဉ်ထိဉ်နှဉ်နဆိမိဉ်အဝဲသ့ဉ်
ကၢးမၤတ်တအုးတပျိၤလၢကဘျါဆဲတ်ကိတ်ခဲအဂီၢ်စ့ၢ်ဓါ.မ့ၢ်
ကၢးနှဉ်အခါဖဲလဲဉ်.ဘဉ်မနုၤအယိလဲဉ်.နဟ့ဉ်အဒိတခါကသ့ဓါ.
၅. ပှၤလၢအနုးတ်လၢကညီကိဉ်ပူၤနှဉ်မတဂၤသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်လဲဉ်.
၆. တ်ဘဉ်ဂံာ်ဂုာ်လၢကညီကိဉ်ပူၤနှဉ်နသ့ဉ်ညါမနုၤသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်လဲဉ်.
၇. နဟံဖိယီဖိ,မ့တမ့်နတံၤသကိး လီၤမ်ၢ်,သံ, လၢတ်သဘံဉ်သဘုဉ်ပူၤအိဉ်တဂၤဂၤစ့ၢ်ဓါ.မ့ၢ်အိဉ်နှဉ်လၢနသးပူၤမၤသးဒ်လဲဉ်.
၈. ပှၤမ့ၢ်မၢနလဲၤနုးတ်လၢကညီကိဉ်ပူၤနှဉ်နကလဲၤဓါ.မ့ၢ်လဲၤနှဉ်ဘဉ်မနုၤအယိလဲဉ်.
၉. နကလဲၤအိဉ်လၢကိဉ်ချၢဓါ.မ့တမ့်နကနုးတ်လၢကညီအဂီၢ်ဓါ.
၁၀. နတဲဖျါထိဉ်ကညီမံၤဟူသဉ်ဖျါအမံၤတဂၤဂၤကသ့ဓါ.နသ့ဉ်ညါအဂ့ဉ်ဒ်လဲဉ်.

ဆ. တ၊်အဂုၤအဂၤသ့ဉ်တဖဉ်

၁. လၢနတ၊်အိဉ်မူအပူၤမ့ာ်ဘဉ်နၤကစီဒီဓါ. နတ၊်သူဉ်ကိဉ်သးဂီၤအိဉ်တမံၤမံၤဓါ.
၂. နလဲၤဃ့တ၊်ဟ့ဉ်ကူဉ်လၢမတဂၤအိဉ်လဲဉ်.
၃. နအိဉ်လၢဒဲကဝီၤပူၤဇံၤဘံဉ်ဘံဉ်ဘၢဘၢဘဉ်နၤစ့၊်ဓါ.မ့မ့၊်လၢဒဲကဝီၤချၢန့ဉ်တ၊်ဘံဉ်တ၊်ဘၢအိဉ်စ့၊်ဓါ.
၄. နလဲၤညီန၊်လၢကညိကီဉ်ပူၤ,နံဉ်ထိဉ်သိတဘျိဘျိစ့ဉ်ဓါ.မ့ာ်ဓါ.တ၊်လိၤပျံၤလိၤဖုးအိဉ်ဓါ.
၅. နအိဉ်ဖဲအံၤန့ဉ်ဒ်သိးဘဉ်နၤနဟံဉ်စ့ဉ်ဓါ.နဟံဉ်န့ဉ်အမုဉ်ဘဉ်နၤဒ်လဲဉ်.
၆. နဟံဉ်မ့၊်တအိဉ်ဖဲအံၤဘဉ်နှဉ်,နအဲဉ်ဒိးလၢနဟံဉ်ကအိဉ်တ၊်လီၫ်ဒ်လဲဉ်တတီၤလဲဉ်.
၇. တ၊်သူဉ်တမ့ာ်သးတမ့ာ်,တဉ်တြိမၤတံာ်တာ် လၢနတ၊်အိဉ်သးခဲအံၤအိဉ်တမံၤမံၤဓါ.မ့၊်အိဉ်စ့၊်ကီးနမၤဆၢက့ၤနတ၊်တူ၊်ဘဉ်ဒ်နှဉ်သ့ဉ်တဖဉ်ဒ်လဲဉ်.
၈. နအိဉ်ဖဲအံၤန့ဉ်တ၊်လၢအကဲဘျုးလၢနဂီၫ်,ဒိးတ၊်တကဲဘျုးလၢနဂီၫ်နှဉ်အိဉ်မနုၤလဲဉ်.
၉. နကဲထိဉ်ကညီကလုာ်တဂၤန့ဉ်အခိပညိဒ်လဲဉ်နှဉ်နတဲကသ့ဓါ.ဒ်သိးနကကဲထိဉ်ပှၤကညီဖိလၢအဂ့ၤတဂၤအဂီၫ်နှဉ်လိဉ်တ၊်မနုၤလဲဉ်.မ့၊်သ့,ဒိးမ့၊်တသ့ဘဉ်နှဉ် ဘဉ်မနုၤအယိလဲဉ်.

Appendix C: Identity Status Ratings

Identity status rating summaries for fourteen respondents in five domains based on:

> Harold D. Grotevant and Catherine R. Cooper. "Assessing adolescent identity in the areas of occupation, religion, politics, friendship, dating, and sex roles: Manual for administration and coding of the interview." *JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology* 11.52 (1981): Ms. No. 2295.

Domain	Age		Totals	
Occupation	**11-17**	**18-21**	**Total**	**Percent**
Achievement	0	5	5	36%
Foreclosure	3	4	7	50%
Moratorium	0	1	1	7%
Diffusion	1	0	1	7%

Religion/Values	**11-17**	**18-21**	**Total**	**Percent**
Achievement	0	2	2	14%
Foreclosure	0	5	5	36%
Moratorium	1	0	1	7%
Diffusion	3	3	6	43%

Male/Female Roles	**11-17**	**18-21**	**Total**	**Percent**
Achievement	0	2	2	14%
Foreclosure	2	6	8	57%
Moratorium	0	0	0	0%
Diffusion	2	2	4	29%

Politics	**11-17**	**18-21**	**Total**	**Percent**
Achievement	0	2	2	14%
Foreclosure	0	6	6	43%
Moratorium	0	0	0	0%
Diffusion	4	2	6	43%

Conflict	**11-17**	**18-21**	**Total**	**Percent**
Achievement	0	1	1	7%
Foreclosure	4	6	10	71%
Moratorium	0	1	1	7%
Diffusion	0	2	2	14%

7 Works Cited

Adams, Gerald R. "The Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status: A Reference Manual." Unpublished manuscript. University of Guelph, 1998.

Adams, Gerald R., John H. Ryan, Joseph J. Hoffman, William R. Dobson, and Elwin C. Nielsen. "Ego identity status, conformity behavior, and personality in late adolescence." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 47.5 (1984): 1091-1104.

Amnesty International. "Thailand: The Plight of Burmese Migrant Workers." 2005. AI Index: ASA 39/001/2005.

Bennion, Layne D., and Gerald R. Adams. "A Revision of the Extended Version of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status: An Identity Instrument for Use with Late Adolescents." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 1.2 (1986): 183-198.

Bergh, Susanne, and Ann Erling. "Adolescent Identity Formation: A Swedish Study of Identity Status Using the EOM-EIS-II." *Adolescence* 40. 158 (2005): 377-396.

Besaggio, Davide, Silvia Fuselli, Metawee Srikummool, Jatupol Kampuansai, Loredana Castrì, Chris Tyler-Smith, Mark Seielstad, Daoroong Kangwanpong, and Giorgio Bertorelle. "Genetic variation in Northern Thailand Hill Tribes: origins and relationships with social structure and linguistic differences." *BMC Evolutionary Biology* 7, Suppl. 2 (2007): S12:1-10.

Booth, Neil D., Alison Strang, and Michael Wessells, eds. *A World Turned Upside Down: Social Ecological Approaches to Children in War Zones*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2006.

Bradley, David. "Tibeto-Burman Languages and Classification." *Papers in Southeast Asian Linguistics* 14 (1997): 1-71.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. "Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development: Research Perspectives." *Developmental Psychology* 22.6 (1986): 723-742.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie. "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development." *American Psychologist* 32. 7 (1977): 513-531.

"Burma." *CIA World Factbook*. 2009. <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> Accessed 10 October 2009.

Cakir, S. Gulfem, and Gul Aydin. "Parental Attitudes and Ego Identity Status of Turkish Adolescents." *Adolescence* 40.160 (2005): 848-859.

Colm, Sara. "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Thai Policy toward Burmese Refugees." *Human Rights Watch* 16.2(C) (2004): 1-47.

Crisp, Jeff. "No Solutions in Sight: the Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 22.4 (2003): 114-150.

Davis, Anthony, and Edo Asif. "Myanmar faces down its armed minorities." *Jane's Intelligence Review*. 01 March 2006. Section: 'Non-ceasefire groups.'

Department for International Development (DFID). "Review of Aid to Refugees and Internally Displaced People on the Thailand-Burma Border." July 2008.

Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton, 1950.

Erikson, Erik H. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton, 1968.

Erik H. Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 4.1 (1956): 56-121.

Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, New York: Norton, 1993, 14.

Grotevant, Harold D., and Catherine R. Cooper. "Assessing adolescent identity in the areas of occupation, religion, politics, friendship, dating, and sex roles: Manual for administration and coding of the interview." *JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology* 11.52 (1981): Ms. No. 2295.

Grotevant, Harold D., William Thorbecke, and Margaret L. Meyer. "An Extension of Marcia's Identity Status Interview into the Interpersonal Domain." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 11.1 (1982): 33-47.

Hammack, Phillip L. "Identity, Conflict, and Coexistence: Life Stories of Israeli and Palestinian Adolescents." *Journal of Adolescent Research* 21.4 (2006): 323-369.

Harms, Wiebke. "The Role of Education in the Identity Formation Process of Refugee Adolescents." Unpublished master's thesis. Uppsala Universitet, October 2008.

Heppner, Kevin, and Jo Becker. *'My Gun Was As Tall As Me': Child Soldiers in Burma*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2002.

Human Rights Watch. "Burma: Landmines Kill, Maim and Starve Civilians." 20 December 2006. <http://www.hrw.org/> Accessed 17 November 2008.

"Interview: Mahn Sha, General secretary, Karen National Union (KNU)." *Jane's Intelligence Review*. 01 December 2006.

Jamal, Arafat. "Camps and freedoms: long-term refugee situations in Africa." *Forced Migration Review* 16 (2003): 4-5.

Karen Human Rights Group. "Background On Burma." <http://khrg.org/> Accessed 17 November 2008.

Keenan, Paul. ed. "The Karens and their Struggle for Freedom." Karen History and Culture Preservation Society Edition, 2006.

Kelman, Herbert C. "The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts." *Journal of Social Issues* 55.3 (1999): 581-600.

Khin, Alice. "The HIV/AIDS problem of migrants from Burma in Thailand." Paper presented to the Burma Studies Group International Burma Studies Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden, 21-25 September 2002.

Kroger, Jane. *Identity in Adolescence: The balance between self and other*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Lang, Hazel. "In the Shadows of the Thai-Burma Border: East Asia's Foremost Refugee Crisis." *Asian Analysis* (2007) <http://www.aseanfocus.com/asiananalysis/> Accessed 21 October 2008.

Loescher, Gil, and James Milner. "Protracted Refugee Situations: Causes, Consequences, and Trends." Paper presented to Refugee Studies Centre 25th Anniversary Conference, Oxford University (2007): 5-6.

Lwin, Min. "Than Shwe's Health Again in Question." *The Irrawaddy*. 3 October 2008. <http://www.irrawaddy.org/> Accessed 30 March 2009.

Marcia, James E. "Citation Classic - Development and Validation of Ego Identity Status," *CC/SOC BEHAV SCI* 48 (1984): 22.

Marcia, James E. "Development and Validation of Ego-Identity Status." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3.5 (1966): 551-558.

Mitchell, Mark L., and Janina M. Jolley. *Research Design Explained.* 1st ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988.

National Institute of Standards and Technology. United States Commerce Department. StatLib statistical library of SEMSTAT statistical routines. <http://www.itl.nist.gov/div898/handbook/semstat/> Accessed 25 October 2009.

The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names. "An Introduction to the Toponymy of Burma." October 2007.

Po, San C. *Burma and the Karens*. London: Elliott Stock, 1928.

Rajah, Ananda. *Remaining Karen*. Canberra: Australian National University E Press, 2008.

Selth, Andrew. "Race and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945." *Modern Asian Studies* 20.3 (1986): 483-507.

Sen, Tanaji. "Identity Formation and Psychosocial Development among Saharawi Refugee Children." Unpublished master's thesis. Uppsala Universitet, October 2008.

Smith, Martin. *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*. London: Zed Books, 1999.

Stedman, Stephen John. "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes." *International conflict resolution after the Cold War*. Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman, eds. Washington, DC: National Research Council, 2000. 178-224.

Taylor, Robert H. "Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO)." *Southeast Asia: a historical encyclopedia from Angkor Wat to East Timor*. Ooi Keat Gin, ed. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004. 711-712.

Taylor, Robert H. "Karen National Union (KNU)." *Southeast Asia: a historical encyclopedia from Angkor Wat to East Timor*. Ooi Keat Gin, ed. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004. 712-713.

Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC). "A brief history of the Thailand Burma border situation." <http://www.tbbc.org/camps/history.htm> Accessed 10 September 2009.

TBBC. "Burmese border refugee sites with population figures: February 2009." <http://www.tbbc.org/camps/2009-02-feb-map-tbbc-unhcr.pdf>

TBBC. "Mae La." <http://www.tbbc.org/camps/mst.htm> Accessed 10 September 2009.

TBBC. "TBBC's camp population figures." <http://www.tbbc.org/camps/populations.html> Accessed 30 September 2009.

United Nations. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. Entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49.

United Nations. *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*. Adopted on 28 July 1951 by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons convened under General Assembly resolution 429 (V) of 14 December 1950. Entry into force 22 April 1954, in accordance with article 43.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Protracted Refugee Situations." Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Standing Committee, 30th Meeting. UN Doc. EC/54/SC/CRP.14. June 2004.

UNHCR. "Protracted Refugee Situations." High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges. UN Doc. UNHCR/DPC/2008/Doc.02. 20 November 2008.

UNHCR. *Statistical Online Population Database*. Data extracted: 23/10/2009.

UNHCR. *Statistical Yearbook 2007*.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). "Publications/Statistics." <http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/> Accessed 23 January 2009.

United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI). *World Refugee Survey 2008*. "Country Report: Thailand." 19 June 2008. <http://www.refugees.org/> Accessed 18 November 2008.

Waterman, Alan S., and Caroline K. Waterman. "Factors related to vocational identity after extensive work experience." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 61.3 (1976): 336-340.

Weiten, Wayne. *Psychology: Themes and Variations*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2008.

Cover photo © Dave Tacon. Used with permission.
www.DaveTacon.com