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**THE ARCTIC
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Centre for Peace Studies

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

Effects of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act on Gender: Influence of Social Ecology on Psychological well-being of Women in Nagaland

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Master's thesis in Peace and Conflict Transformation – SVF-3901, May 2017



Dedication

To the women who contributed with their stories and to the soldier in the twilight zone.

Abstract

The study examines the effects of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) on gender in Nagaland. The AFSPA is an extra judicial legislation enforced in 1958 to fight insurgency in several states in India including Nagaland. From its initiation, the Act has invited great controversy because it authorized the military, paramilitary and police to arrest, detain and shoot to death any person who is suspected of being an insurgent. Under the AFSPA, Indian army soldiers are protected by the law against court proceedings for their actions. The law has resulted in many deaths, and the female relatives of the victims bear the brunt of military violence as they struggle with psychological trauma, and the added burden of economic responsibility for the household. The study focuses on how women's voices are utilized to validate their experiences. It investigates the assumption that women tap into resources in their social environment -the church and the Naga Mothers Association- to help them cope with psychological trauma. The findings indicate that the church and the NMA did not have a significant impact on the women, rather, their coping process was influenced by the village community, individual resilience, their personal faith in God and by a notion of collective identity. The findings also reveal cases that contradict the assumption that such factors helped women cope with trauma.

Acknowledgements

My most sincere gratitude goes to my academic supervisor, Randi Rønning Balsvik, for the invaluable hours that she invested in meticulously reading my chapters. I am deeply grateful for her immeasurable guidance and feedback that helped me throughout the research and writing process.

I also thank:

My informants for sharing their stories with me and for the trust that they placed in me.

Keviphrulie Iralu, Kevisalie Iralu and Vitsono Thaprii for their assistance during my research.

Easterine Kire for proof-reading my work.

The Centre for Peace Studies for the financial help that enabled me to conduct my research in Nagaland.

List of Acronyms

AFSPA	Armed Forces Special Powers Act
DAA	Assam Disturbed Areas Act, also known as Disturbed Areas Act
NHDTC	Naga Hills District Tribal Council
NNC	Naga National Council
IA	Indian Army
NMA	Naga Mothers Association
NA	Naga Army
ULB	Urban Local Bodies
GoI	Government of India
C-nes	Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When India gained independence from Great Britain in 1947, there was a transfer of power of the control of the Naga Hills- Naga inhabited areas- from their former British rulers to India. The Indian government faced wide opposition from the Nagas who did not wish to become part of India. In 1963, Naga statehood¹ was signed between the Indian government in Delhi and the Naga People's Convention, a small group of Nagas who were serving as government officials in the Assam Government (Iralu 2009: 18; Chasie & Hazarika 2009: 53). To ensure that the Naga freedom struggle would be quelled, the Government of India introduced many laws and Acts that restricted their rights to a high degree. These laws were introduced as counter-insurgency Acts, for the purpose of maintaining law and order. The most significant law is called the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA, to be further discussed later in the chapter). The Act serves as the background for the thesis which seeks to explore how women have been affected by the AFSPA, and the influence of the church and the Naga Mothers Association in helping women cope with psychological trauma².

1.1 Historical background

The Nagas are believed to have originated from the Mongolian race making up the populace of Southeast Asian hill peoples. Nagaland state borders Assam to the north-west, Manipur to the south, Arunachal Pradesh to the north, and Burma to the east. According to the 15th nationwide census made in India in 2011, the Naga population in Nagaland state is approximately 1,978,502. The total area of the present Nagaland state in India comprises 16,579 sq. km (in comparison, Nagaland state is bigger than Telemark county in Norway by approx. 1283 sq.km). When India gained independence from Britain in 1947, the Naga-inhabited areas comprising 1, 20,000 sq. km. were divided and part of these areas came under Burma, while the other half came under Indian control. The areas under Indian control were then subdivided into Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland (Iralu 2009: 3).

¹ Nagaland was inaugurated as a state in the federation of India, made up of 29 states and 7 union territories.

² I choose to use the definition of 'trauma' by Becker and Weyermann (2006) as a "*deep emotional wound*", as well as "*the psychological equivalent of destruction*" that is caused by breakdown in the social or political order, and exhausts a person's coping ability.

The past decades of political unrest in Nagaland is said to have its origins rooted in the decolonization process in India in the 1940s (Iralu 2009; Oppitz et al 2008: 69). The British colonizers ruled Naga-inhabited areas that were called “Naga Hills” from 1832 until 1947. It was not colonised as part of India because the Naga Hills were not a part of India prior to 1947. The part of Naga-inhabited areas under British administration were roughly 30 percent, while the remaining 70 percent was categorised as “*unadministered areas*” or “*excluded areas*” (Iralu 2009: 5). British Administrative headquarters were established in areas like Samagudting, Kohima and Wokha for effective control of the Naga Hills. At the same time, the spread of Christianity by the American Baptist missionaries from the 1870s also spread the advancement of education among the Nagas (Oppitz et al., 2008: 66). In the next part of this chapter, I will present some of the important dates in the historical tapestry that lead up to the enactment of the AFSPA.

When the planned departure of the British became known in the 1920s, it motivated the educated Nagas to organise themselves with a concern for the future of the Nagas. The Naga Club, formed in 1918 and later called the Naga National Council in 1945, an organization that shaped and led Naga nationalism submitted a memorandum called “The Simon Commission” to representatives of the British Government in 1929. The memorandum expressed their demand to be excluded from the Reformed Scheme of India, but be placed directly under the rule of the British Government. The Naga Club feared that the poorly educated Naga population, who shared no social or religious connection to Hindus or Muslims, would lose their private rights and customary laws to the Indians (Chasie 2005: 39; Iralu 2009: 5; Chasie & Hazarika 2009: 3). Chasie and Hazarika (2009: 3) write that most Naga historians regard the Simon Commission as the first step towards Naga declaration for independence. In 1935, the Government of India Act 1935 was passed and it stated that the Naga Hills District was to be treated as “Excluded Areas”. This meant that the Naga Areas were exempted from the Act of the Federal Legislature of Assam Legislature. Nagas were to be the special responsibility of the Governor of the province who acted as Crown Representative. The Act, although passed in 1935, came into effect only in 1937 (Chasie 2005: 39; Iralu 2009: 5).

After the Second World War, the Naga Hills District Tribal Council (NHDTTC) was formed through the initiative of the Deputy Commissioner Charles Pawsey, in order to promote better communication among the Nagas. In 1945, the NHDTTC changed to the new name Naga National Council (NNC), leading the movement for Naga independence (Chasie 2005: 43;

Lhousa 2014: 5). In 1947, the Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari was sent to Kohima to make an agreement with the Naga leaders known as the Hydari Agreement. It provided extensive powers for the Nagas to govern themselves and protect their land and resources. The final clause stated that the Governor of Assam acting as the agent of the Government of India (GoI) would be responsible for observing the Agreement for 10 years, after which the NNC would be asked whether they wanted to extend the period further, or make a new agreement. However, the Indian Constituent Assembly refused to ratify the Hydari Agreement because they did not approve of the final clause (Chasie 2005: 48).

On August 14, 1947, the Nagas declared their independence (Chasie 2005: 51). In 1950 A.Z Phizo became the newly elected President of the NNC and he led a resolute campaign for independence. In 1951, the Naga Plebiscite representing all the Naga tribes by thumb impression was delivered to the Indian Government in support of an independent Nagaland (Chasie 2005: 52; Iralu 2009: ii). However, the Indian Government refused to grant the Nagas independence, and instead sent in troops to take control of the region by force. The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA 1986) have recorded the first killings of two Nagas by the Indian Army (IA) in Tuensang in 1948. This was followed by another two killings in 1950 and the attacks on Khonoma village and Lungkhum village in 1953. By the beginning of 1955, the IWGIA recorded the killings of 279 Nagas by the army. In his book, Iralu records that the death toll on the Naga side in the Indo- Naga war that began since the 1950s was over two hundred thousand Naga lives and a total of 645 villages were burnt, after mass rape and torture (Iralu 2009: iii).

1.2 The Armed Forces Special Powers Act

The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) is one of a series of 'draconian' laws that were enacted in Nagaland directed against Nagas fighting for their sovereignty. Firstly, the Assam Maintenance of Public Order, Act XVI of 1953 was legislated to govern the Naga Hills and other states who revolted against Indian rule. The second Act was the Assam Disturbed Areas Act (Act XIX of 1955) that gave the authority to any magistrate or police officer or the paramilitary to declare an area as "disturbed", to shoot or "use force to the extent of causing death" for the objective of maintaining public order. Indian police and army personnel operating under these laws were granted impunity against legal proceedings. The only exception is if the central government in Delhi sanctions legal proceeding (Chasie & Hazarika 2009: 9-11).

The AFSPA was enacted in 1958 as a third counter-insurgency Act. Under the Act, a soldier of the Indian Army is given full authority to “arrest without warrant”, “enter and search without warrant” and “...fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death” any person whom the Army suspects to be a member of an insurgency group or otherwise disturbing law and order (National Campaign Committee Against Militarisation and Repeal of AFSPA, 1997: 102). Originally limited to Naga-inhabited areas of Assam and Manipur (Baruah in Gill 2010: 25) the law was later applied to Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh and a 20 km stretch of Meghalaya that borders Assam (Hindustan Times, 2016, July 09). The AFSPA and the aforementioned Acts, are often referred to as “extra judicial legislations” that infringe on “basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India” (C-nes 2011: 12).

1.3 Statement of the problem

In such regions of conflict, women are exposed to high levels of violence with their freedoms curtailed. Gill (2010: 8; 2011: 2) says that women experience constraints imposed on their mobility, their access to employment, education and health and are troubled by a sense of insecurity. She also states that women in this region are subject to violence from three fronts; 1) the state that enforced the AFSPA law, 2) the militants from warring factions and 3) domestic violence in their own homes. The current study focuses on the first level of violence by the state, the AFSPA law, and its effects on women that are not only evident in physical trauma but also in psychological trauma.

In an environment that lacks adequate trauma centres or counselling centres to handle such severe cases of trauma, the study aims to investigate alternative sources through which women develop their coping mechanisms. The study looks at the church and the Naga Mothers Association (NMA, formed in 1984, to be discussed further in the theory chapter) as potential sources that contribute to women’s coping with psychological trauma. Interestingly, male voices have been predominant in the narratives of villages and the stories of its victims for many decades. Thus the study recognises the importance of women’s “voices” to tell their own stories. In this way, the study can contribute to new ways of understanding the impacts of the conflict situation from a gender perspective.

1.4 Research assumption

The importance of social relations and interrelations between individuals in Naga society forms the basis of the assumption for this study. An individual's social environment comprising of the family, close friends, clan and village community are all seen to serve as protective influences in situations of adversity. The guiding force of this study is the assumption that the church and the NMA as institutions are instrumental in assisting women cope with psychological trauma.

1.5 Research questions

The following are the main research questions for the study:

1. In what ways have the state-enforced AFSPA law and its violation of human rights affected women in Nagaland?
2. Have the church and Naga Mothers Association contributed to women's psychological well-being after traumatic experience? If so, in what way?

1.6 Women's voice in the midst of violence

Chapman (2005: 27) looks at the importance of "voice", what it speaks for and whom it speaks for as well as who has the authority to utilize voice. It is essential to consider in the study, the role and purpose of voice, how voice is utilized by a group that has been marginalized in Naga society i.e., women. From my reflections on the interview material, I can briefly sum up some of the answers to these questions concerning voice. Firstly, voice represents the addressing of the injustices and suffering that women have experienced for no wrong on their part. Secondly, creating a space for the women to utilize voice is intended for the women to tell their own stories, and thereby take a central role in confronting the past and the aggressor. In the context of the AFSPA law, it could be added that the individuals or groups on the receiving end of violence (the women) have the authority to utilize voice.

Much care and caution has to be taken in how voice is presented by the researcher. Hazarika and Gill (2011:7) stress the importance of listening to the stories of those who have suffered, at the same time respecting what has been revealed. It is also pointed out by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1987 cited in Chapman 2005: 35) that some part of the researcher's voice is present or visible throughout the representation of data. Such aspects of voice and conveying what the women have to say will be further discussed under Reflexivity in the methods chapter.

1.7 Motivation for the study

My personal experience of having lived under the AFSPA law is my main motivation for the Master thesis. I am motivated by the need to write about the injustices that I have heard and read about. I grew up in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland until the age of 16. When my mother, Easterine Kire, a literary writer and university teacher wrote articles in the local newspapers about the assassination of her uncle who was a political figure in Nagaland, she received threats from one of the militant groups. In order to provide a safer environment for me and my sister to live in, she applied for asylum in Tromsø, Norway, as part of the Norwegian PEN program for writers from conflict countries. The PEN program later came under International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN). This is how I came to live in Norway for the past 12 years.

Prior to writing my Master thesis, my previous knowledge about the AFSPA as an insider was based on articles that I had read. Reports of Indian paramilitary soldiers harassing and beating up civilians would appear in local newspapers when I was growing up in Nagaland. The story of Irom Sharmila, a woman from Manipur who had gone on hunger strike for more than 15 years to ask for the removal of the AFSPA (Mehrotra, cited in Gill 2010) further added to my knowledge about the law. More details on the insider aspect of my role as researcher will be discussed in the next chapter.

Dr. Ngully, a Naga psychiatrist, investigated cases of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in individuals who have seen or experienced violence from both the IA as well as from insurgent groups. He explains that the sight of a uniformed person causes feelings of fear and terror in villages because they are associated with “*harassment and violent behaviour*” (Hazarika and Gill 2011: 2). As a young girl growing up in Nagaland, I used to fear Indian soldiers because of the accounts of rape incidents or beatings of young students who were suspected to be insurgents. These crimes were committed by the IA. We were taught by our parents and our elders to avoid uniformed soldiers, or else they might “do bad things” to us. In the interviews, there was a recurrence of this common fear among the respondents, as will be discussed in the analysis chapter. An interesting shift is that more than 10 years ago, the fear was associated with an Indian face in the soldier’s uniform, i.e., Dravido-Aryan race, with features like darker skin complexion, distinct from the Nagas who belong to the Mongolian race (Iralu 2009: 10). In recent years however, it is common to see young IA or paramilitary recruits of

Northeastern background (Naga, Mizo, Manipuri etc). This shift in the association with the physical face of terror could reflect how the oppressive powers are no longer foreign, but are in fact employing one's own countrymen.

Another motivation for this thesis is to contribute to letting the women tell their own stories, and contribute to the very limited yet emerging literature and research that has been conducted on women's hardships in this conflict region. The collaborators in the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research (C-nes) write that although scholars have researched the conflict region as a whole, there has been little work directed specifically towards how the conflict has impacted women (Hazarika and Gill 2011: 4). Some of the previous research on the topic of women's stories include research done by Hazarika, Ao, Mehrotra (all cited in Gill, 2010), Iralu (2005), C-nes (2011), Kikon (2015).

During my trip to Nagaland where I conducted fieldwork between June 29 and August 08, 2016, I went to visit the grave of one of the victims of the IA. The woman was 47 years old at when she was raped and killed by the soldiers of the IA. Seeing her tombstone was one of the incidents that I will never forget. I was numbed with horror and anger as I stood facing the reality and brutality of militarised power that is ingrained through the AFSPA law. On her tombstone stood the following words defiantly inscribed, although difficult to decipher since time had eroded the writing:

In ever loving memory of Mevi³ Age 47. Youngest daughter of Late Rhalie. Raped and murdered by Indian Army cutting her head, hands and legs on 4th August 1964.

It struck me how the letters on her tombstone pointed out the perpetrators of the crime as if in an attempt to demand justice. This strengthened my resolve to share the stories of those who have suffered, and bring to attention the injustices that have been committed in the name of "maintaining law and order".

³ all names have been changed for the purpose of securing the identity of victims and their families.

1.8 Relevance of the study to Peace Studies

The study can contribute to peace studies through the perspective of gender lens that is employed to understand the impacts of psychological trauma on women where the state is the aggressor. At the initial stage of my study, the first part of the thesis was titled "Gender Vulnerability and Effects of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act". During fieldwork, the interviews revealed a resilient quality⁴ in the women as they narrated how they coped after facing situations of high adversity. This was a discovery that contradicted my previous assumption of these women, and the title that implies that women are vulnerable subjects of the AFSPA law. For this reason, I changed the thesis title because the association of these women with the term vulnerability was counterfactual to what the study showed.

Galtung's theories for defining peace - apart from general understandings of peace as a state of stability and equilibrium - in what he refers to as 'negative' and 'positive' peace is well known in the field of peace studies. Negative peace, according to Galtung, is the absence of collective violence on an organized scale, be it between nations, racial, ethnic or class groups (Galtung 1967: 12). He defines positive peace as a concept that corresponds with "*all good things*" wherein human beings exist in a condition of cooperation and integration. Yet these concepts can be problematic because of the vague nature of their definitions. Scholars such as Barash and Webel (2009: 7) further define positive peace as a social order in which there is equity, justice and harmony.

The situation in Nagaland is far from a condition of positive peace. Yet it can be problematic to use the term negative peace in this context. This is because although there is no ongoing war in the region, the legal protection that the AFSPA grants soldiers to abuse, harass and shoot potential suspects can be seen as organized collective violence enforced by the state. Proponents of the AFSPA - mainly the Central Government - argue that the law must continue due to the political situation in Nagaland as a "law and order problem" (National Campaign Committee Against Militarisation and Repeal of AFSPA 1997: 23). The deployment of the armed forces to a disturbed area such as Nagaland is seen as a means to counteract a violent conflict situation by subduing the armed opposition (insurgents). In this way it would create negative peace in the region. Instead, violence intensified and ordinary

⁴ The stories of how these women survived after experiencing violence and trauma will be presented in the analysis chapter.

civilians were severely impacted as any Naga was perceived as a suspect by the armed forces. Similar to the armed conflicts in regions such as East Timor, Kashmir and Sudan listed by Barash and Webel (2009:11), there was no formal declaration of war in Nagaland, neither was there an official announcement of peace.

Furthermore, on the scope of violence exerted on the affected population, Hazarika and Gill (2011: 5) write that there is a gap in specifically documenting the field of women's suffering regarding conflict studies that are based on the Northeast India. With this in mind, the study aims to contribute to peace studies by shedding light on the forms of direct, structural, and cultural violence (to be discussed further in the theory chapter) on women in Nagaland. The relevance of the study also lies in that it highlights the resources in the community that women tap into while coping with psychological trauma. Additional factors such as their personal resilience and collective identity are examined as contributing sources to psychological well-being.

1.9 Present situation of structural deficiency

Galtung (2006:18,19) distinguishes between the terms 'conflict' and 'violence' wherein, conflict is a "*state of incompatible goals*" and it often comes before violence, therefore conflict can be resolved before it culminates into violence. Violence on the other hand, is intended to do harm and it is an "*insult to basic human needs*". During my second trip to Nagaland⁵ I experienced first hand how a situation of conflict and political disagreement could turn violent. The background for the political turmoil is that the majority of the Naga public represented by different tribe organisations opposed the planned town and municipal elections called the Urban Local Bodies (ULB) elections to be held on Feb 01, 2017. The state government saw the ULB elections as an opportunity to bring in much needed funds for the next upcoming elections. The tribe organisations' main fear was that the money would be pocketed by the ministers instead of investing it in development areas that it was meant for. The public's mistrust was rooted in frustrations towards corrupted politicians and mismanagement of resources. In an attempt to stop the ULB elections, hundreds of protesters were mobilised who began to damage polling stations. As the protestors turned violent, the

⁵ I went to Nagaland a second time (5 January 2017 to 15 February 2017) to write my theory chapter.

police retaliated by firing shots into the protesting crowd, killing two young men aged 22 and 25 (the Morung Express, 2017 February 02).

The situation of political turmoil culminated in the burning of Government buildings and offices in Kohima town on Feb 07, damaging government property considerably. In the following days, there was a heightened level of security as the police, paramilitary forces and State authorities were stationed in several places as military personnel had been deployed to Kohima. However, the presence of uniformed military personnel created a sense of insecurity for the locals. There was a total ban on social media and communication as mobile internet and SMS services were shut off in Kohima and Dimapur for several weeks. In addition, a “*bandh*” i.e., ban or restriction, was imposed on the movement of government registered vehicles, and government offices were closed. During this situation of high tension and turmoil, I experienced first hand the curtailment of one’s freedom through the restriction on mobility and social media ban. Eventually, I had to leave Nagaland earlier than planned because of the uncertainty of the circumstances. The situation calmed down after a few weeks when the Chief Minister agreed to step down in response to public demand. This experience shows that the present day situation is far from a state of positive peace as corruption and a lack of trust in the political system are the main underlying tenets of structural violence⁶ that ultimately led to a violent confrontation.

1.10 Literature review

In this part of the chapter, I will briefly summarize some of the previous literature that is linked to my study and provided me with relevant background information for my thesis.

The book, *The Naga Saga*, is a historical and factual account of victims’ stories with dates and names. The author has researched and collected over a long period, a chronological document of the political conflict. The book is a first attempt at telling the stories of victims of the war, including accounts of rape survivors. The author met and interviewed many victims and their families. Of particular relevance to my thesis is the interview of the soldier, Riiyo’s uncle, (pp. 329-335) who became mentally deranged after he was tortured by the IA.

⁶ Refers to underlying problems in the socioeconomic and political structures (Galtung 1996) to be further discussed in the theory chapter.

The State Strikes Back: India and the Naga Insurgency by Chasie and Hazarika gives a very clear analysis of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. The authors describe the historical background of the AFSPA to show that it grew out of an earlier Act called Assam Disturbed Areas Act (DAA), and how elements from the DAA were retained in the AFSPA while giving it even more impunity. The historical background of AFSPA and laws preceding it such as Assam Maintenance of Public Order, the DAA and other laws to battle 'terrorism' are made available and their legal implications explained.

In *The Peripheral Centre: Voices from India's Northeast*, edited by Preeti Gill, she talks about the impacts of conflict on women that are traced not only in the physical form but also in psychological scarring. Gill talks about how the loss of male relatives during conflict affects the economic and social spheres, as women lose social legitimacy and have to carry the responsibility of heading a household on their own. One essay was particularly relevant, Temsula Ao's "Benevolent Subordination: Social Status of Naga Women". The writer states that the position of Naga women has not changed much in contemporary Naga society from what it was in a traditional society. In a society where the decision making is mainly done by men, Ao observes that women still occupy positions of subordination; partly due to 'deference' to custom, and partly due to resistance to equal partnership from men.

Bearing Witness: A Report on The Impact of Conflict on Women in Nagaland and Assam is one of the few extensive documented studies of women in conflict situations in Nagaland and Assam as a total of 123 women were interviewed in three districts in Nagaland. It is linked to my own study as the research team in Nagaland examined how women were affected by military violence, how they coped with trauma through notions of collective identity and personal faith in their gods. The report has distinctly focused on women's voices alone. The authors state that many of the women interviewed were illiterate and did not know the possibilities of seeking legal redress or lodging complaints. The study also assessed women's hopes and aspirations, and offered recommendations for building better support systems and counselling centres to treat trauma survivors.

1.11 Conclusion

The situation in Nagaland is complex as it is not only confined to the inter-state conflict level of the AFSPA between the Naga people and the central Government of India, but it also extends to the intra-state level between existing non-state groups or factional groups. Due to

the limited scope of the Master thesis, I chose to work within the premises of the inter-state level AFSPA law and its damaging effects on women. In this introduction chapter I have presented the chain of events that led to the invasion of the Naga Hills by the Indian military troops, the enactment of the AFSPA law in 1958 and its existence to the present day. The subsequent chapters will deal with the research questions of how the Naga women have been affected by the AFSPA law, and the influences in the social environment that have helped them cope with trauma.

Previous literature show that the women had no knowledge of seeking compensation (illiterate), or had no faith in the legal system because of the immunity status of the perpetrators, or it was just unthinkable to approach the Indian Government to seek justice when it was this same government that had enforced the AFSPA law⁷ (C-nes 2011: 11, 19). There was no possibility of seeking compensation even upto the 70's because judicial inquiries did not exist back then. However, there has been a judicial inquiry into recent cases such as the Wuzu incident in July 2015 where two young students were killed by the IA (the Morung Express, 2016 June 20). The newspaper reported that the government paid 100,000 Rupees each (approximately 15300 Norwegian kroner) to the families of the victims.

1.12 Structure of the thesis

The thesis will be divided into 4 chapters, the first chapter being the introduction chapter. In the second chapter I will present my methodological framework and illustrate the reasons for my choice of methods and tools in collecting data. In this chapter, I will also address the insider- outsider dichotomy in qualitative research. The third chapter will consist of the conceptual framework for my thesis, where I present different concepts that offer a better understanding of the study, the different effects of the AFSPA law on women and the elements that contribute to women's coping with trauma. In the fourth chapter, I will present the findings and analysis of the data material, with a focus on the multiple ways through which the women have coped with psychological trauma. The fifth and final chapter will consist of the summary and conclusion of the study with recommendations for future research.

⁷ In assessing the impact of conflict on women in Nagaland and Assam, Hazarika and Gill (2011: 6) write that none of the victims were compensated for their suffering and loss by the legal system.

Chapter 2: Methodology

In this chapter, I will present the methods that were employed for data collection to find out the effects of the AFSPA on women in Nagaland and the influence of the church and the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) on women's psychological well-being. Neuman (2011: 23) says that social science research is research *"for, about, and conducted by people"*. Social research is conducted to create new knowledge and expand our understanding about the social world (Neuman 2011: 2). The findings from a research doesn't offer an absolute truth, rather it offers new ways of looking at certain phenomena.

The term 'methodology' covers the research process as a whole, as it looks at the *"social-organizational context, philosophical assumptions, ethical principles, and the political impact of new knowledge from the research enterprise"* (Neuman 2011: 2). My thesis is a qualitative research based on interactions with participants where the researcher's goal is to obtain answers to a set of questions and interpret these findings. In this way, the epistemological process of how we know what we know is based on interpretive understandings of the participants' accounts⁸. The ontological position in this type of research, that deals with knowledge about the world as it is, is based on constructionist view meaning that the interplay of communication between individuals contribute to constructing the social world (Bryman 2008: 366).

2.1 The research site

According to Neuman, the 'site' is *"the context in which events or activities occur, a socially defined territory with flexible and shifting boundaries"* (Neuman 2011: 441). He adds that a research site should be chosen considering the *"richness of data, unfamiliarity and suitability"* (ibid). In my research interviewing female respondents, almost all the interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes⁹. This was a conscious choosing of the site because it was more convenient that I visited them at a time that suited them, and it was important that the women felt comfortable in their own homes. The private home as a site could be disadvantageous as I experienced that in two interviews, ongoing construction work on the neighbouring house posed a challenge for recording the interviews. However, I was

⁸ Later in the chapter, I will look deeper into the feminist approach to epistemological process in qualitative research.

⁹ Doshii chose to be interviewed on a trip to harvest potatoes from her farm. Kezei was interviewed in her son's house in Kohima where she was residing at the time of the interview.

able to take notes and since this noise problem arose towards the end of the interviews, it did not prevent me from gaining valuable information.

I mostly resided in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland, throughout the duration of my fieldwork from June 29 til August 08, 2016. The size of Kohima town is 1,463 sq. km, less than half the area of Tromsø, with a population of 267,988 as of the 15th nationwide census in India that was conducted in 2011¹⁰. It is a relatively busy urban town with a close location to the villages that I travelled to for conducting interviews. The villages were chosen due to their proximity in order to avoid time consuming journeys, and the travel distance by car to these villages took less than an hour. An exception was the interview with Cadi from Fog town that is located in the neighbouring state of Manipur. On a 7 hour roadtrip to Fog town with friends, our host managed to arrange an interview with Cadi after hearing about my thesis project. Cadi is a Naga living in Manipur. Her story was relevant for my thesis since she is from one of the states under the AFSPA jurisdiction, and her husband was a victim shot by the Manipur Police acting under the AFSPA.

Apart from the home as a research site, the respective villages and towns could also be considered as sites that were unfamiliar and offered richness in data. Interviews were conducted in village A, village C, village V, and village Z, including 3 towns; Pearltown, Pine town and Fog town. The presence of the (IA) or paramilitary in the village is one thing that villages A, V, and Z and the 3 towns had in common. As already mentioned, the choice of the villages and towns was based on their proximity and the fact that the respondents lived there. Village C has a distinct history of having resisted the British colonizers from 1845 til 1880 (Iralu 2009: 164). The inhabitants had experienced the first raid by Indian troops in November 1953, and had to flee to Doshali valley in March 1956 before another raid. It was during this fleeing that the relatives of respondents Kera, Ketshii and Cacii were killed. Since I myself belong to village C, this may also explain why I got access to more respondents from this village. Among the different research sites, the presence of the IA and paramilitary and the tension was observed the highest in Fog town in Manipur. This could be due to a curfew being observed in the area during my visit, as well as the political situation being worse in Manipur.

¹⁰ kohima.nic.in (Accessed: 17.03 2017).

2.2 Selecting the participants

'Purposive sampling'¹¹ method was employed in selecting the female respondents. At the start of my research, I planned to apply 'snowball sampling' method (Bryman 2008: 184) by firstly contacting members of the NMA who could then suggest potential other women who had received counselling and support from the NMA. However, my contact from the NMA cancelled the appointment three times. In order not to waste valuable time, I approached personal contacts who suggested possible interview subjects. Among the personal contacts were a journalist and the son of a former parliamentarian who had information on female relatives of victims of the AFSPA.

My male gatekeeper Pele¹² works as a tourist guide in a tourist company and had extensive knowledge about the history of village C. We visited four of the respondents directly and asked to interview them. This was because the respondents were older, all aged above 60 and they belong to the same village as myself. In this context, it is socially and culturally acceptable to personally go to the women's homes and make enquiries as the women did not own mobile phones. As for the other respondents, a contact person asked them beforehand whether they wished to be interviewed. Snowball sampling was applied only once where a respondent put me in contact with another possible interviewee, and this happened on her own initiative without my asking for it. Selection through snowball sampling was discouraged due to the sensitive, painful and personal nature of the women's stories. Pele cautioned that it would be insensitive to ask my respondents to suggest names of other women who could be interviewed. He pointed out that in case these women did not wish to be interviewed, it would 'look bad' that person X had given their name to the researcher without their consent.

2.3 Data collection method

For the purpose of collecting data, both primary and secondary sources of data were employed. The primary source constituted semi-structured interviews with a list of questions or 'interview guide' (Bryman 2008: 438) that was used as a tool for interviewing. Bryman says that semi-structured interviews are flexible, and questions do not necessarily follow a sequential order. When a topic of interest arises that is not part of the interview guide, this opens up an opportunity for the interviewer to follow up on new insights for the research

¹¹ This means that the group of women or 'sample' were selected contingent on information that they can provide that is relevant to the research (Bryman 2008: 415).

¹² Real name changed

(ibid). The respondents were chosen on the basis that they were related to victims who had been violently treated or shot by IA personell. Only one respondent, Thenyie, was related to a victim of gender-based violence where the victim had been raped and killed.

Neuman (2011: 127) says that there are different formats such as books, scholarly journals, dissertations, government documents and policy reports where data on previously conducted research can be found. The secondary sources of data for my research constituted scholarly books, articles in scholarly journals, official document of a non-governmental body (National Campaign Committee Against Militarisation and Repeal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1997) and newspaper reports and articles.

In the first process of coding¹³, in analysing data, 'open coding' was applied where the transcripts were highlighted in different colours and sorted into different themes. The idea was to extract themes from the dense data, at the same time, remain open to the possibility of new themes. The second process was 'axial coding' to identify categories or concepts that covered a cluster of coded themes. Lastly, 'selective coding' wherein the central concepts related to the core issue of the research were selected (Neuman 2011: 481-484; Bryman 2008: 543).

2.3.1 Primary data: interview

The interviews conducted were 'in-depth interviews' with an 'open-ended' nature that gives the respondent the opportunity to narrate their life experiences and express their opinions about the research topic. For the researcher, it also gives insight into how the respondents interpret the social world and give meaning to their experiences (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey 2005: 29, 30; Silverman 2005: 114). In Naga culture, story telling is synonymous with oral narratives, as village or tribe history is passed down through the oral tradition. In depth interviews were therefore suitable for my research as respondents narrated their life experiences and reflected on the significance of these experiences. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, and I could ask follow up questions based on the issues that the respondent talked about.

¹³ The process of reviewing the transcripts and sorting the component parts under labels or themes that have "*potential theoretical significance*" (Bryman 2008: 542).

Mack and her colleagues mention the necessity for the interviewer to prepare well and fulfill obligations and tasks before during and after the interview (Mack et al, 2005: 32). Prior to the interview, it was crucial that I had charged my mobile battery for the purpose of recording, and that the respondents were informed about recording the interview. For those respondents (Doshii, Mviisa and Thenyie) who wished to look at the questions beforehand, a copy of the interview guide was sent to each of them. Here it was important to use a language that was relevant and easy to understand (Bryman 2008: 442). It was also essential to have thorough knowledge about the research topic beforehand, and arrive punctual to prescheduled appointments.

Obtaining informed consent was central at the start of the interview. The research participants had to be given *"as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study"* (Bryman 2008: 694). All the informants gave their informed consent verbally. Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic, they were also informed that they were not obligated to talk about certain things if they did not wish to do so.

The presentation of the researcher plays a major role in establishing the first impression. The proper greeting of older persons, proper clothing, use of language and general conduct had to be culturally appropriate (Mack et al, 2005: 34). Presenting my research topic and the reasons why I wished to collect stories of women was important in gaining trust. During the interview, practicing 'active listening' on my part, by giving full attention to the respondent and allowing them the time they needed to talk about different issues was crucial to maintain the trust and to gather richness of data (Silverman 2006: 110). As interviewer, I also had to practice caution so as to avoid 'leading questions' that are formulated to influence the type of response from the respondent (Mack et al, 2005: 42).

After the interview, the tape recorder was turned off and respondents were thanked for their time. Mack and her colleagues (2005: 48) suggest that the respondent should be given the opportunity to ask further questions or clarify any details. Such a procedure was followed after every interview and I debriefed with my gatekeeper.

2.3.2 Observation

The research involved both non-participant observation and participant observation. As a non-participant observer, I did not actively participate in activities but observed the event (Mack et al., 2005: 19; Bryman 2008: 257). As a participant observer I took part in activities at the same time as documenting observations about the field site and about the respondents. This could include observations as respondents engaged in activities, of their appearance, and verbal and physical behaviour during interviews (Mack et al., 18-20). As a non participant observer, I made observations of the mass rally against the AFSPA and DAA¹⁴ that was initiated by the Naga Students' Federation (NSF) and supported by the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) and the NMA. The mass rally was held on August 11, 2016 in Kohima (Nagaland Post, 2016, August 04; the Morung Express, 2016, August 10). It was a peaceful rally as thousands of school children who formed the majority of participants in the rally shouted slogans such as "Repeal AFSPA". In retrospect, it is uncertain that the attendance rate would have been as "successful" had it not been for the fact that it was mandatory for the students to attend the rally. Moreover, the newspapers reported that many of the students did not know what the rally was about.

Bryman says that the participant observer "*gains a foothold*" in the social world as she participates in the same activities as other members of the social setting (Bryman 2008: 465). Attending church every Sunday during my research period in Nagaland gave me insight into the social networks that are maintained through church activities. I also observed how the main roles of conducting a service were taken up by men, whereas women had minor roles. My observations from attending 3 different churches was that all the services were led by a male and the speaker was also male. The women played less prominent roles such as reading the bible verse or presenting prayer requests. Such observations reflected what Temsula Ao meant by male dominated power structure - to be further discussed in the next chapter- within the church where the role of Pastor, or membership in Deacon Boards were only given to men (Ao 2010: 103).

The respondents Doshii and Mviisa had busy schedules as both of them work in educational institutions and they suggested that I spend the night at their home so that they could be interviewed at their own convenient time. The interview with Doshii was conducted after

¹⁴ Disturbed Areas Act mentioned in the introduction chapter.

breakfast on a drive to village B to pick potatoes from Doshii's farm. Doshii said that she preferred to be outdoors in the natural surroundings as it gave her a break from office work at the university. I wrote down the information in my field notes after arriving back to her house. On the car journey, we drove past several Indian Army jawans (soldiers) standing by the roadside with their guns. I also observed 7-10 army trucks carrying both soldiers and goods that drove past our car. As she talked about the AFSPA as a law against human rights where the army can "do anything to us and use AFSPA as the cementing to protect themselves", the presence of the army that was observed on this trip made the feeling of insecurity more real.

2.4 Gatekeeper and access

According to Neuman (2011: 441), a gatekeeper is a person who has "formal or informal authority to control access to a site". Silverman sees the role of the gatekeeper as both an access point to the group being studied, and also one who contributes with 'valuable data' on the research setting (Silverman 2006: 82). I worked with three different gatekeepers in three different sites. Gaining access through my gatekeeper was especially crucial in the case of Cadi in Fogtown as I was told that she only agreed to do the interview with me because my gatekeeper is a friend of hers. In my research, five of the interviews were assisted by gatekeepers, out of which four interviews of the women from village C¹⁵ were assisted by my male gatekeeper Pele, and one interview in village V was assisted by a female gatekeeper. The need for a gatekeeper in these interviews was because of the language barrier and for the purpose of finding the residential home of the respondent. Firstly, although I belong to village C, I do not speak the village dialect. Secondly, these women were illiterate so they spoke in their native language,¹⁶ and my gatekeeper had to translate certain terms or concepts for me. Neuman (2011: 444) says that gender is an important aspect in gaining access as the roles that a researcher occupies are 'gender-typed', so the extent to which researchers are accepted by respondents or groups depends on their gender. My gender allowed me to gain access more easily than a male researcher, this will be discussed further in my role as an "insider".

In the first interviews with my male gatekeeper Pele, by observing his choice of words and caution on different topics, and how he approached the older respondents with respect, I was able to adapt a similar manner of communicating with my respondents. This helped me

¹⁵ Including the interview conducted in Kohima.

¹⁶ The language used in the other interviews were either English or Kohima dialect of Tenyidie.

maintain a culturally appropriate manner of interaction with respondents. Pele also explained to me certain concepts during the interview so that I could better understand the cultural context in which the respondent was narrating. For example, while interviewing Cacia, she talked about traditionally mourning over a block of wood when the bodies of her brother and father could not be returned to the village people. Pele described to me that in the culture of the old religion, if the dead body cannot be retrieved, the villagers painted a block of wood and use it as a substitute for the deceased. Funeral rites are performed over the block of wood. A pig or other animal is killed to observe the ritual. This practice of replacing the body with the block of wood allows the family to mourn their dead; a ritual act that gives them a sense of closure¹⁷. Without the body to mourn and perform burial rites, the burial is kept on hold and this is viewed as a bad thing. Such knowledge provided by my gatekeeper Pele was crucial for me to understand concepts that I was not aware of prior to my conversations with respondents.

2.5 Positioning the researcher: insider and outsider status

In what Merton calls the '*sociology of knowledge*' the membership status of the researcher with regard to the respondent becomes a significant component as it influences interaction between the researcher and the researched, as well as the constructing of knowledge (Merton 1972: 11). Membership status refers to whether the researcher is an 'insider' i.e., identifies herself as a member of the group that is being studied, or an 'outsider' i.e., does not identify herself as being a member of the group being studied. Points of identification could be shared or not shared ethnicity, race, class, language, gender, history, age group or education (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009: 55; Merton 1972: 11, 12).

As a researcher doing research in my place of origin, I occupy the insider status because I have lived in Nagaland until I turned 16. My personal experience of growing up in a region where the AFSPA has operated and is still in operation gives me the advantage of insider knowledge. Other points of identification with the respondents was gender (being a female interviewing women), common language, and belonging to the same village as those from village C. On the other hand, I am an outsider because I have been living in Norway for over 12 years, and am affiliated with a foreign university (the Arctic University of Norway). My

¹⁷ In this context, saying farewell to the departed initiates the healing of the relatives and this is how they gain closure.

educational background as a Master student, with educated parents and grandparents as well as belonging to the middle class made me an outsider in relation to respondents with no education and belonging to the working class. I lived in Kohima town and my location further influenced my outsider status to people living in the village. In interviews where I did not speak the same dialect, my outsider status was made more distinct.

2.5.1 Insider issues from fieldwork

Dwyer and Buckle (2009: 58) point out that some of the advantages of being an insider include gaining access to groups or individuals, as well as being accepted by the respondents. In connection to insider privileges with language and culture, Johnson-Bailey (1999: 669) talks about "*culture-bound phrases that did not need interpretation*" in her research as an African- American woman interviewing other African-American women. By this she meant that such phrases were understood in a culture specific context while talking with her female respondents about the research topic and referring to race and gender. In my own research, a recurring culture-bound phrase was the word "*kemenga*". Its meaning changes slightly depending on the context. It could mean 'bereavement' or 'humiliation' or 'lack of something/someone important'. The word *kemenga* was repeated often by Kezei and Ketshii whose husbands were shot dead by the Indian Army, and by Kera and Cacii whose father and brother were shot dead. In Naga culture, the loss of a husband or father is seen as *kemenga* because one is deprived of a fundamental family member. *Kemenga* is not confined to grieving male relatives as the loss is equally severe if a mother, sister or daughter had died. At the same time, Riiyo used the word *kemenga* while narrating how her uncle's share of land had to be sold in order to bail him out from prison. Land inheritance for males in Angami¹⁸ culture is crucial for laying claim to their place in the larger community and their sense of belonging. Thus the loss of land is seen as *kemenga* because her uncle lost his inheritance. The same word *kemenga* was used to express insecurities due to lack of education or having to live with meager resources.

In conversations with my respondents, the word *kemenga* was understood in a culturally specific context. If I had been an outsider, I would probably not recognize the term at all. Nevertheless in the process of transcription, I faced difficulty directly translating the word *kemenga* to English, and maintaining a consistent translation because it needed a different

¹⁸ Riiyo's uncle belonged to the Angami tribe.

explanation in each context. What seemed to be an advantage for me as an insider in discerning culture-bound phrases posed a language problem when I tried to translate the narrative to the reader outside the culture.

2.5.2 Outsider issues from fieldwork

Scholars such as Wolff (1950: 402 cited in Hellowell, 2006) argue in support of the outsider researcher and their ability to stand at a distance and remain objective as well as provide insight and qualities into the group which do not originate from the group itself. Fay (1996: 10) says that if only those who identify with the researched are regarded as being able to understand them, then it would be an obstacle for outsiders to conduct research. Moreover, the outsider would not understand his own findings on the researched if there were no points of identification. Fay adds that in certain settings, an outsider can gain more knowledge of the experiences of the group because he or she is not as implicated in the situation as the members of the group themselves. Thus the outsider is able to conceptualize the experience, analyze and describe it from a distance (Fay 1996: 21).

My outsider status owing to the fact that I live and study in Norway was perceived by my respondents as a status of prestige. At the same time, it was also a disadvantage because as a Norwegian citizen belonging to a Norwegian University, my research could be stopped by authorities under the Indian government if they disapproved of the focus on the AFSPA. For the respondents, the awareness that the stories would not remain in the study location, but that it would be transferred to the university in Norway seemed to influence their openness. This was especially apparent in controversial stories of conflict between clans such as when the members of the Teak clan from village C chose to cooperate with the IA in their search for Naga Army members so that they could save their own Teak members from getting killed. This resulted in Teak clan members acting as informants and exposing the hide out locations of men belonging to the Mahogany clan and Salt clan from the same village. The actions of the Teak clan were seen as a great betrayal towards the other two clans because they had even raided and occupied the homes of the other two clans.

In my interview with Ketshii, she stated that her husband was shot dead by the IA in 1956 after a Teak clan member revealed his location to the Army. Ketshii said that such stories were not talked about anymore because it could cause a lot of bitterness and hatred among the younger generations of the three different clans. Nevertheless she was willing to talk about

the clan conflict to us (me, my gatekeeper and travelling companion) because I had come from a foreign land asking about "the real story".

My outsider status as a student from Norway also seemed to influence how openly the respondents talked about the church's role. As will be presented in the analysis chapter, six of the respondents said that the church did not play a significant role in women's coping with trauma. Such views might offend members of the church community, but since I am not part of this community, their openness to share their views might have been influenced by my outsider status.

2.5.3 Gatekeeper influence on insider/outsider status of researcher

The presence of the gatekeeper in the interview setting had positive effects. As an outsider to certain cultural practice and norms, I benefited from my male gatekeeper Pele by adapting his mannerisms in communicating with older respondents. He also provided insider knowledge on the concept of burial rites. On the other hand, the presence of a male gatekeeper in the interview setting could have prevented respondents from talking about sexual violence, because they felt uncomfortable. It should be pointed out here, that in interviews with a male gatekeeper present, the respondents talked about the loss of male relatives, and their experience did not involve sexual violence. Interviews with Mviisa and Thenyie (conducted without gatekeeper) were the occasions where gender-based violence and sexual harassment was brought up.

2.6 Measuring the qualitative research

The kind of qualitative research that is employed in my research is based on *oral history interview* where the interviewee was asked to recollect particular past events (Bryman 2008: 442). A challenge that arises in the oral history method is that failure to recollect events and situations correctly could create bias and errors while gathering data, thus the credibility¹⁹ is questionable. However, Samuel (1976 in Bryman 2008: 442) argues that the oral history interview opens up ways for marginalized groups to be heard. Regarding the sample of women participants, there were variations between educated and uneducated, employed and unemployed, they also varied in age, marital status, tribe and village. With regards to

¹⁹ Whether the "evidence is free from error and distortion" (Bryman 2008: 516).

generalization²⁰ from this small sample of women, it is impossible to know whether their experiences or views can be generalized to the rest of the population because the sample is not representative of the population.

It could be said that the contribution of participating observation and non-participating observation could strengthen the internal validity²¹ to a certain degree regarding power relations between the genders or the presence of the Army and the perceptions of threat that it creates on the population. However, it is very difficult for this kind of qualitative research to meet the external reliability²² criteria because there is bound to occur some changes in the social setting and the conditions of a subsequent study. With regards to representativeness²³ a look at other existing –albeit few- literature on the impact of conflict on women in Northeast India, and reports of various shooting incidents reflect similarities with the findings from the research. Such similarities could be factors such as the culture of impunity among army personnel as well as lack of knowledge and opportunity to compensation for women who have faced psychological trauma. However, I did not succeed in finding any documents on the occurrence/frequency of army violence on civilians, although reports on specific incidents are available.

2.7 Issues of Reflexivity

Interviews are not void of asymmetry in the power relation between the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale 2006: 485; Bryman 2008: 463). As interpreter of the experiences and viewpoints of the respondent, the interviewer has '*monopoly of interpretation*' thus occupying a position of power while constructing this information in his/her own theoretical frame (Kvale *ibid*). The researcher's interpretation of the data may not always coincide with the participants' own understanding of their situation, and may at times disagree with the women's representation of their own conditions. This indicates that researchers themselves are influenced by their own assumptions and perspectives while doing research (Bryman 2008: 464).

²⁰ Whether the findings can be derived of all other cases (Bryman 2008: 391).

²¹ the relation between what is observed by the researcher and the theoretical concepts that are formed (Bryman 2008: 376).

²² whether a study can be replicated (*ibid*).

²³ whether the evidence is "*typical of its kind*" (Bryman 200: 516).

Practicing '*reflexivity*' is a way of checking the power asymmetry between the researcher and the researched. It means that the researcher is aware of her own background, location, personal biases, and assumptions and examine the ways that these factors impact the research findings (Hesse-Biber 2014: 3). As an insider, I must be cautious of how my own personal biases and values differ from the values of my interviewees, or how my values are influenced by my outsider status -European/Norwegian values- as I have been living in Norway for more than 12 years. For example, I have to be cautious not to base my observations of uneven power equation between genders and projecting a need for women's empowerment on my respondents. Practicing reflexivity is also crucial in examining how my status as a researcher affects the interview situation. In the interview with Ketshii, she exclaimed "*Pumecii ho*", which directly translated means "*It's a bad story, I don't want to talk about it*". Then she proceeded to narrate how her husband was shot. In Angami culture, it is normal to say "*pumecii ho*" to prepare the listener that the narrator is about to tell a bad/terrible story. In retrospect, the fact that Ketshii had to revisit her past by retelling her story reflects the imbalanced power equation between interviewer and the respondent. My status as a researcher seeking answers may have caused Ketshii to feel obligated to narrate her story as she mentioned "*Pumecii ho, but since you, our youngsters ask about the story, I am telling it to you*".

2.8 Knowledge building through subjective narratives

In the social sciences, objectivity is defined as a '*an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors*' (Bryman 2008: 19). The principle of objectivity grounded on '*value free*' science lies at the core of positivist epistemology, and establishes that subjectivity is a hurdle to knowledge (Hesse-Biber 2014: 18; Bryman 2008: 13). Hesse-Biber presents feminist researchers' critiques of the positivist framework that distanced the researcher from the respondent and arrives at knowledge of the social reality independent of social actors. Since my thesis focuses on gender, it is relevant to look at *feminist research practice*²⁴ and its standpoint on how epistemological knowledge is built on subjective narratives that are in fact influenced by social actors. The approach of feminist research in the 1980s and 1990s to feminist epistemology

²⁴ Defined as "*the set of theoretical traditions that privilege women's issues, voices, and lived experiences*" (Hesse-Biber 2014: 3).

and methodologies aimed to advance further from prevailing '*androcentric or male bias*'²⁵ forms of acquiring knowledge (Hesse-Biber 2014: 5). Haraway (2003 in Hesse-Biber 2014: 5) talks about the concept of "*situated knowledge*" which argues that the lived experiences of individual women cannot be detached from the truth of women's social reality because it is subjective and characterized by power relations where values, biases and politics have significance in forming this truth. *Feminist standpoint epistemology*²⁶ presents the social reality through the view of the oppressed and gives a more holistic understanding of their social reality owing to women's position as the oppressed²⁷ in comparison to men, thereby women's nuanced observations of the environment (Hesse-Biber 2014: 6).

2.9 Ethical concerns

"Maintaining confidentiality means ensuring that particular individuals can never be linked to the data they provide" (Mack et al., 2005: 17).

A major part of the ethical aspect in my research was ensuring the safety of the identity of participants who were observed or interviewed. This meant that the actual identities that could be traced such as names, address, village or tribe were not documented in my field notes or on the computer, and all person names or place names were altered. Videos and pictures were not taken at the field sites and information about the respondents were not exchanged on the phone. Such precautions had to be taken because of the sensitive nature of the research involving the AFSPA, so that the information given could not be traced back to the participants.

Invasion of privacy is also connected to anonymity and confidentiality on the part of the interviewer (Bryman 2008: 124). Since almost all of the interviews were conducted in the private homes of the respondents, I had privileged access to both their stories and to the privacy of their homes. As a result, it was crucial to ensure the respondents that no one else would have access to the recordings other than the researcher. In the case of Mviisa and Tsiarie, their male relatives were informed about the purpose of the research upon enquiry.

²⁵ Androcentrism refers to "*the use of a male template for all human experience*" that dominated the sciences (Brooks & Elder in Wong & Wester 2016: 3). This means that knowledge building takes place from a male-centered perspective.

²⁶ based on Marxist and Hegelian idea that a person's understanding of their social environment depends upon their '*material and lived experience*' (Hesse-Biber 2014: 6).

²⁷ In my research, the dominance of male narratives in story/history -telling puts women in a position of the oppressed.

Apart from Tsiarie, it was not necessary to gain permission from male relatives of the other respondents, possibly because of my insider status as a female researcher.

The research employs oral history interview²⁸ where the respondents are asked to recount past experiences. This could have a harmful effect on the interviewee if the revisiting of a painful experience causes stress or depression. As mentioned earlier, it was important to take precautionary measures and assure respondents that they were not obligated to recount certain events if they did not wish to.

As an insider, there was a stronger sense of shared identity with the violent history of the group being studied, and the legacy of irreversible loss of lives were influences that I had to consciously distance myself from. This was necessary so as to avoid getting emotionally overwhelmed during interviews or "going native" (Bryman 2008: 412). Going native means that the researcher becomes too deeply involved in the viewpoint of the researched, and this impairs the objectivity of the researcher.

Closely related to issues of shared identity is the concept of secondary traumatization for the researcher from interacting with a group that has experienced high levels of trauma.

Secondary trauma *"relates to the natural and consequential behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other and the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person"* (Newell & MacNeil 2010: 60). Although secondary traumatization is a concept originating from social workers, it is not uncommon that social science researchers are affected by increasing amounts of distressing stories that they hear from respondents. As researcher, it was important for me to be mentally prepared to listen to distressing stories before interviews. I was often emotionally drained after hearing some of the stories, including while doing transcription. I followed a friend's suggestion and met with a psychologist after completing fieldwork, to share my experiences and be aware of how the stories could affect me. Practical suggestions such as reading my transcriptions repeatedly helped me develop a familiarity with the stories so that I was no longer emotionally vulnerable to these stories. Other helpful suggestions were to work with the "more painful" stories when I was in a "happy mood" so that my psychological state was less susceptible to these stories.

²⁸ Definition in page 11.

Language presented interesting issues during fieldwork and during transcription of the interviews. As mentioned earlier, an expression such as *"it is a bad story"* when directly translated could mean that the respondent plainly didn't want to talk about a certain topic. This made me rethink the ethical issue that the interview situation made the respondent feel obliged to talk about things that she did not wish to. On the other hand, language was used to interpret *"culture-bound phrases"* in different nuances, and this added to the richness of data. Therefore, language had to be carefully examined while transcribing interviews and presenting the data. Four interviews were conducted in English, while 6 interviews were conducted in Tenyidie. The data has been translated to carefully present what the respondent wished to convey.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the methods such as interview and observation that were employed for data collection. Issues concerning my position as both insider and outsider were examined as it provided challenges and advantages. As an insider, I enjoyed the privilege of access and discerning so called *"culture-bound phrases"*. Due to my outsider status, I experienced that respondents were more open about certain issues. A drawback as outsider was the language factor as I didn't understand the village dialect. The role of the gatekeeper in gaining access (for Cadi and Tsiarie) and assisting with translation was invaluable for my research. Other challenges during my fieldwork were social obligations to be on hospital duty (2 days) during illness of sick relatives. Heavy rains also posed as a challenge as it caused landslides which damaged roads. As a consequence, it was difficult and dangerous to travel, and one interview had to be postponed due to the bad condition of the roads. Finally, I look into issues of reflexivity concerning how my position as researcher affects the interview situation, or how I interpret what is being said. I argue for the subjectivity in the women's narratives drawing on feminist research practice that stresses the importance of women's nuanced observations in shaping the truth of their social reality.

Chapter 3: Conceptual framework

This chapter contains the conceptual framework that is intended to shed light on the study on the effects of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) on women in Nagaland and the influence of the church and the Naga Mothers Association in helping women cope with psychological trauma.

Jabareen (2009) defines the term conceptual framework as:

"... a network, or "a plane," of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena. The concepts that constitute a conceptual framework support one another, articulate their respective phenomena, and establish a framework-specific philosophy" (Jabareen 2009: 51).

Drawing on literature from previous research, the conceptual framework functions like a map that shows how different concepts in the study interlink with each other. It also guides the direction of the study based on the problem statement, providing interpretation of different phenomena that constitute the nucleus of the study.

In this chapter, I will firstly present the reasons for the focus of the study on gender and delve into power dimensions that are located in gender relations in Naga society. From a gender perspective, I will also look at the concept of "voice" and ways of utilising voice to give expression to women's experience. Next I will talk about the forms of violence that have taken place resulting from the role of the AFSPA as an inter-state²⁹ level conflict. Then I will explore how the concept of social ecology which in this study, mainly consists of the church and the Naga Mothers Association, can inform our understanding of how women tap into these resources to cope with psychological trauma. Theory that deals with forms of individual resilience as well as collective identity will also be dealt with. This is based on the findings that presented itself during the course of the study, pointing to an immense level of resilience that the female relatives developed.

3.1 Power relations within gender

To begin with, the decision to write about the effects of the AFSPA on women and how they cope with psychological trauma was a conscious choice based on a weak representation of

²⁹ By inter-state level of conflict, I mean the the Governemnt of India (GoI) that has imposed the AFSPA law on all Northeast states including Nagaland.

stories of women by women themselves in history books, and other news media such as newspapers, magazines and television. Ao (2010: 101) says that in a patriarchal setup such as Naga culture, it is the *"male superiority and male prerogatives"* that prevail in decision making. Although scholars like Chase Roy (2004: 11) note that there has been a change in women's roles due to modernization where women hold influential positions in politics and other professions, Ao points out that empowerment of women in Nagaland has taken place in cautious measures. She concludes that this is on account of the unwillingness of the society in general to *"revolutionize the grassroots organizations for fear of going against time-honoured traditions"* (Ao 2010: 106).

Ao's observations reflect the power relations that exist between the genders in Naga society. According to Foucault, power relations could take the form of obligatory tasks and obligatory distribution of labor that are instituted by tradition (Foucault 1982: 787). In Naga society, the assigned role of males in decision making that is instituted by tradition could be seen as representing the power relations between the genders. Furthermore, Foucault says that the ways through which power is exercised are not only through violence or consent – in a Naga context, the community's consent to the maintenance of power by men. Foucault states that power relations are embedded in the social structure where the person exercising power occupies a position of leader, and influences the person on whom power is exercised (Foucault 1982: 789). Consequently, the male domination in positions of power through what Ao calls 'male superiority and male prerogatives' can be traced in the power relations of gender. Even in the oral representation of stories, in history books or in documentaries, male voices have been predominant in retelling the history of the village and stories of its victims for many decades. Hazarika and Gill (2011: 4,5) point out that very little research on the conflict in the Northeast has focused on women's accounts of how they have been impacted by the conflict. This study aims to create a space for the female relatives of those who were wounded, tortured and killed, to voice their own stories, a concept which will be explored in the next part of this chapter.

The use of the term "victim" is debated in different sets of literature. Wessels (2009: 848) remarks that referring to persons subjected to war related violence as "victims" tends to depict them as vulnerable and weak. Affected persons may adopt the victim role as a consequence of the labeling, therefore the term "survivor" is preferred by practitioners. In my study, the term

victim refers to those persons who were killed by Indian military personnel, as none of the directly affected persons have survived.

3.2 Legitimising women's experience through voice

"The reclaiming and validation of women's experience through listening to women's voices has been central to feminism since the second wave of the 1970s" (Kitzinger 2004: 2). In response to the conventional male-centered Western form of knowledge building that has been based on men's description of their reality and their version of what they have experienced, female social scientists of the second wave of feminism have recognized women's experience as an equally important element for the holistic understanding of social reality. Listening to women's "voices" is central in the process of learning about women's lived experiences the way they wish to tell it (ibid).

The accuracy of experience through women's accounts is challenged by positivist science that questions the preciseness of subjective reports where for example, discrepancies may occur from faulty memory. The validation of women's experience through voice is also challenged by postmodernism that asserts that what women retell of what happened cannot be treated as accurate confirmation of the experience. Rather, it is a form of *'discourse', 'account' or 'repertoire'* influenced by *'interpretation and reinterpretation'* within already existing social discourses (Kitzinger 2004: 3,4). Wickramasinghe (2010: 170) argues for subjectivity as an aspect of feminist research methodology saying that all research is subjective, this includes the subjectivity of the researcher. She adds that by accounting for the reflexivity, the choices and assumptions made by the researcher could enhance objectivity. In the methods chapter, I account for reflexivity and problems of credibility, meaning that the retelling of women's experience through voice is not free of error. Nevertheless, the intention of voice is to create space for the women to reclaim their stories.

3.3 Conceptualising the types of violence as effects of AFSPA

The gender specific cases in the study show that the effects of the AFSPA law are present in two forms of violence: structural and direct. It extends to the individual and collective (community)³⁰ spheres, curtailing the political and social freedoms of women, often affecting

³⁰ Here, I employ the understanding of "community" by Asiedu (2010: 56) and Van Breda (2001: 151). A community is a network of informal relationships between people who share a sense of solidarity through their common territory, kinship, identity and values.

both spheres at the same time. This part of the chapter also seeks to examine a third form of violence; cultural violence as an effect of the AFSPA law within the confines of 'cultural impunity'.

"Direct violence" refers to when intended acts of violence are exerted through verbally or physically, as a consequence of which the "*body, mind or spirit*" of individuals or groups are harmed (Galtung 1996: 31). The targeted torture, beating and killings of insurgency members- at times even unconfirmed suspects of insurgency groups- by IA soldiers, police and paramilitary are acts of direct violence. Other acts of direct violence such as rape of women, harassment of civilians and destruction of property have been committed under the legal protection of the AFSPA law (Iralu 2009; C-nes 2011, Chasie & Hazarika 2009).

"Structural or indirect violence" refers to unintended violence that permeates structures of "*political, repressive and economic, exploitative*" spaces (Galtung 1996: 31). Galtung says that structural violence causes groups or societies to be segmented (divided), fragmented (disintegrated) and marginalized (ibid). The AFSPA law can be seen as a law that is built into a political structure that represses and exploits the economic condition of the population. In affected families, when the father -the head of the house- was injured or killed, it was often the wife who had to take on the economic burden of earning for the household (Gill 2010: 9). In those situations where the women had no formal education, their chances of finding employment were much lower and they had to support their families through meagre means. This is demonstrated in Tsiarie's story, as structural violence in the form of Tsiarie's lack of education excluded Tsiarie from the competence needed to gain higher employment. Poverty and unemployment also pose a security problem to poor families in times of illness as they have little or no savings. It also serves as reasons for recruitment of new members to insurgency groups. In this way, structural violence seeps into the socioeconomic life, affecting both the individual and the collective, and marginalizing affected families.

3.3.1 Culture of impunity in a militarised society

Cultural violence is defined as those aspects of culture, embedded in religious, ideological and traditional practices, or present in language, art, and the sciences that "*can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence*" (Galtung 1996: 196). Galtung adds that the "*act of direct violence and the fact of structural violence*" are accepted in society without question because they are legitimized by cultural violence (ibid). Cultural violence embodied

in the "culture of impunity" is seen to be a third form of violence through which the AFSPA law has affected women in Nagaland. Kikon addresses the culture of impunity located within the framework of the AFSPA law and how this culture ensuring the protection of the perpetrator can be linked to other domains of Naga society such as the community or private space of the family unit (Kikon 2015). The concept of culture of impunity is described as "*the established practice of absolving perpetrators and granting them legal impunity under extra constitutional regulations like the AFSPA (1958)*" (Kikon 2015: 23, 24). This refers to a clause that says that any IA personnel acting under the AFSPA cannot be taken to a court of law, unless sanctioned by the Central government of India (p. 3 in Introduction chapter).

Kikon argues that such a culture of impunity that has existed throughout the history of militarization of Nagaland has perpetrated Naga society at large and legitimised violence against women. She supports this claim by presenting personal testimonies of survivors of gender-based violence where the perpetrators of violence did not have to face the consequences of their actions. Kikon further explains that the perpetrator maintains impunity through the cultural context of how sexual violence is "*regarded as a private matter*" and hence should be dealt with by the family members (Kikon 2015: 24). Kikon's research contributes to an understanding of how the culture of impunity can be transferred from the AFSPA law to the larger society and reproduces both structural and cultural violence.

3.4 Social ecology

In their assessment of the impacts of conflict, the Psychological Working Group³¹ employed the concept of social ecology as one of three core domains that support the psychosocial well-being of individuals. The other two domains are 1) human capacity and 2) culture and values. A measurement of psychological well-being (PW) is conceptualised by Ryff's PW scales and it consists of Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relations with

³¹ The PWG is a collaboration between five academic partners: 1) Centre for International Health Studies, Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh, 2) Columbia University, Program on Forced Migration & Health, 3) Harvard Program on Refugee Trauma 4) Solomon Asch Centre for the Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict and 5) University of Oxford, Refugees Studies Centre). It also includes five humanitarian agencies: 1) Christian Children's Fund, 2) International Rescue Committee, Program for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, 3) Medecins Sans Frontiers – Holland, 4) Mercy Corps and 5) Save the Children Federation. A grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation has financed the work of the PWG (PWG 2003)

Others, Purpose in Life and Self Acceptance (Ryff 1989; Ryff & Singer 1996). Among these scales, Positive (social) relations with others can be seen as most closely related to social ecology because the integral role of support from relations with others can positively influence PW. Terms such as social environment or social capacity can also be used as points of reference to understand social ecology wherein the *”social connection and support”* in the social environment serve as resources for the individual and the communities to which they belong (PWG 2003: 3).

In her research, Horn³² describes social ecology as consisting of elements such as family, friends, church or social organizations (2013: 4). The interrelations that are formed between an individual and the social ecology could strengthen his/her notion of identity and sense of belonging. Social support from these interrelations are seen as instrumental, serving as a protective force against pathological consequences of trauma, at the same time building a person’s resilience capacities (Ottman, Dickson and Wright 2006; Williams and Galliher 2006, cited in Horn 2013:5).

3.4.1 Limitations of social ecology

Studies have shown that social ecology may not always be advantageous in instances where the networks of people are weak with limited resources (Mulvaney- Day, Alegria and Sribney 2007). Contrary to assisting individual’s psychological well-being, the social ecology’s influence may be counterproductive when some members of a network end up giving more than their share of resources, time and effort because of the demands or obligations that are put on them.³³ Conversations with different women in Kohima revealed that often times, the pressure of social obligations tended to be a burden in addition to their jobs and running a household.

The social networks that are believed to provide a sense of security for its members through trust and cooperation could also be critically impaired during or after conflict (Becker & Weyermann 2006; Ohiorhenuan 2011; Horn 2013). According to Ohiorhenuan (2011: 4),

³² Dr. Rebecca Horn (2013) employed the concept of social ecology in her research linking psychosocial well-being and social connectedness among women in the Acholi region of Northern Uganda.

³³ In my own fieldwork, there were social obligations such as having to visit sick relatives and at times even stay overnight in the hospital. As a result, interviews had to be postponed.

conflict is a disruptive force that transforms resources from a state of production to a state of destruction, one of these resources being social networks. The story of the conflict between clans in 1956 where the Teak clan from village C chose to cooperate with the IA in order to save the lives of their own clan members is an example of how clan solidarity in the social ecology was eroded. Teak clan members informed the IA about the hide out camps of Naga Army members from the Mahogany clan and Salt clan, thus relations between the clans were impaired for many years.

3.4.2 Two elements of social ecology

Considering the protective influence of social ecology on psychological well-being, the second key question relating to my research is how the church and the Naga Mothers Association contribute to women's psychological well-being. Irwin and his colleagues (2008) have supported the notion that engaging in religious activities potentially reduces the level of psychological distress. However, Glass³⁴ (2014) found in her study that participation solely in religious activities—what she called “extrinsic religiosity”- did not have a positive impact on psychological well-being. It was in fact the “intrinsic religiosity”, i.e., the process of how a person internalizes their faith/religion to form their outlook towards their life and beliefs, that improved psychological well-being.

Following the spread of Christianity in the Naga Hills³⁵ by American Baptist missionaries, who arrived in the late 1830s with their mission for personal salvation of the Nagas, the church soon took a strong foothold in the villages, beginning with the Ao villages. As local missionaries were trained to spread the missionary work, Christianity replaced the old religion of the majority population and established churches in the villages. In the present day, the church is an important institution in congregating members of the community through weekly services, commemorating Christian holy days and organizing evangelical missions, funds for charity purposes and other church related activities. It is claimed that over 90% of Nagas today are Christians (Oppitz et al., 2008: 66, 67). The role of the church in actively reaching out to affected persons, and participation in church related activities, namely the “extrinsic religiosity”, is explored in this study to find out whether it has helped women cope with

³⁴ Glass did a study on the influence of “intrinsic religiosity” on stress and psychological well-being for African American women (Glass 2014).

³⁵ Not yet called Nagaland until the 1940s.

psychological trauma.

The second element of social ecology in this study is the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) that was formed in 1984. Its members are Naga women from different tribes. Initially, they were formed as a reaction to the problem of drug and alcohol addiction in Nagaland. Through the later part of the 80s and 90s until date, the NMA has increasingly voiced their protests against the violence and atrocities by the Indian army on Naga civilians and the oppressive AFSPA law³⁶. The NMA has also voiced their protest against killings perpetrated by the insurgent groups. They have been actively involved in negotiating for peaceful talks between leaders of warring factions (Shrinivasan 2013, January 10; Banerjee 2000: 139). In the study, I have investigated to what extent the NMA has helped women cope with psychological trauma.

3.5 The missing link

It is of relevance to mention that in the interviews based on incidents that took place between 1956 to 2016, the degree of assistance from the two aforementioned elements of social ecology varied. Variation depended on the year that the incident took place, meaning that affected families (Kera, Cacii, Ketshii, Kezei, Thenyie and Doshii) of the incidents that took place before 1984, did not have access to the church because it had not yet been established in their village. The NMA was formed in 1984, as a result, the NMA as an element of social ecology does not apply to the women who lost their relatives before the existence of the NMA. Elements in the domain of social ecology such as relatives, neighbors and clansmen have been acknowledged by many of the respondents (as will be shown in the analysis chapter) for their help in the fields or during the funeral. For those respondents who lost their relatives before the establishment of the church and the NMA – albeit also applicable to the rest of the respondents- there are other factors that enhance our understanding of how the women persevered in the face of psychological trauma. Two integral factors that I want to talk about in the next part of this chapter are: individual resilience (specifically the concept of hardiness rooted in their personal faith in the Creator) and culture of collective identity.

³⁶ The protest rally that I attended on Aug 11, 2016 (mentioned in Methods chapter) with thousands of school children, demanding the removal of the AFSPA was organised by civil society organisations including the NMA.

3.6 Multiple pathways to resilience

Bonanno (2004: 20) defines resilience as “*the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium*”. In a more comprehensive description, resilience to loss and trauma can be conceptualized as a person’s ability to positively adapt to and maintain a state of physical and psychological stability when exposed to the loss of someone close or to conditions of high adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Rutter, 1999; Bonanno 2004). Bonanno further states that the concept of resilience has not been given adequate attention and the empowering potential of resilience is often undervalued by trauma theorists. He states that contrary to widespread assumption in the rarity of resilient traits, resilience is in fact common and can be attained through different pathways.

3.6.1 Hardiness and personal faith in the Creator

The field of resilience is extensive, and to go into the task of exploring this concept is an enormous task. Therefore, I will focus on one personality trait that is seen to foster resilience. It is what Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn (1982) have termed as “*hardiness*”, a protective influence that can guard against severe stress. Three building blocks constitute hardiness: 1) the resolve to attain one’s purpose in life that is worthwhile, 2) the mindset that one has the potential to impact one’s surroundings and circumstances and 3) the belief that any situation whether negative or positive can teach something valuable. The concept of hardiness combined with Glass’ concept of “intrinsic religiosity” suggests a more wholesome explanation for the resilience³⁷ that the women have demonstrated in the aftermath of losing their relatives. Their personal faith in *Ukepenopfi*³⁸, and the belief that in spite of the hardships they have been through, *Ukepenopfi* is still with them and continues to provide for them has reinforced the internalizing of their faith/religion. This personal faith in turn plays an important role in their outlook towards their life and experiences as well as bolster their personality traits of hardiness.

3.6.2 Culture of collective identity

Culture of collective identity is the second factor that was gathered from the interviews to be a component that improves our understanding of how the women in the study cope with

³⁷ Resilience in the women’s case, as revealed in the study, is strongly connected to their will to persevere, and to not give up.

³⁸ Creator/ Christian God

psychological trauma. In her research on trauma theory and race-based traumatic stress, Moore defines “collective identity” as “..*the shared experiences of struggles and suffering caused by racial oppression that affects people of color in similar, yet dissimilar ways*” (2011: 12). Borrowing from this definition, collective identity in the context of my study can be understood as the shared identity of those who have experienced loss and trauma as a result of the AFSPA law. This collective identity is addressed by the C-nes research team who conducted a study of the impact of conflict on women in Nagaland. According to them, the collective identity “*is strongly rooted in clan and community*” and can be considered as a coping mechanism for individual trauma (C-nes 2011: 10). Van Breda (2001: 150) says that resilience could be attributed to a community as a whole, when the majority of members of a community share a strong sense of connectedness with other members of and resources in that community. In times of suffering, the trajectory of community connectedness then encompasses collective suffering. With this in mind, it is important to recognize the experience of trauma from a cultural and social context, and not only from an individual experience (PWG 2003; Becker and Weyerman 2006).

In as much as the intent of the study and the interviews concentrated on whether the individual women received help from the social ecology, there was a recurring issue of collective suffering. As will be shown in the analysis chapter, the respondents identified with this collective suffering, and remarked: “*everyone had a hard time... everyone was in the same situation*”. Looking back on the PWG’s definition³⁹ of social ecology, the village community that makes up the collective identity is another example of social ecology because it provides a support mechanism through the social environment. Such an identification to the collective could have contributed to the notion that they were not alone in their suffering while fleeing to the forest during the IA occupation of their village, or even when their relatives were killed. This is not to undermine the severity or magnitude of grief. Nonetheless, a culture of acknowledging the collective suffering, and consequently drawing attention away from their individual suffering could be seen as a protective factor against the incapacitating impacts of their grief.

³⁹ wherein the “*social connection and support*” in the social environment serve as resources for the individual and the communities to which they belong (PWG 2003: 3)

3.7 Conclusion

The chapter presents the conceptual framework of the study where I began by examining the power relations that exist between the genders in Naga society. I present arguments for the importance of listening to the voices of women to gain a holistic understanding of the women's experience. Based on the research questions, I have looked into different literature to investigate the structural, direct and cultural violence that the AFSPA has had on women in Nagaland and the factors that help these women cope with psychological trauma. The concept of social ecology has been utilized as a tool to determine to what extent the church and the NMA have influenced women's coping with trauma. I have also addressed the problem of those respondents who had experienced traumatic events before the establishment of the church or the NMA, and therefore these elements of social ecology were not applicable in their cases. In this situation, I have employed the concepts of hardiness and culture of collective identity to provide further perspective on the women's endurance when faced with situations of high adversity.

Wickramasinghe discusses how some scholars problematize Western theorization of non-Western setting or phenomena (Wickramasinghe 2010: 129). The argument lies in cultural differences between a Western point of view and the culture located in a non-Western context. Applying Western theorization may assert itself as the universal ways of gaining knowledge about culturally specific contexts. In my theory chapter, concepts in the non-Western setting of Nagaland such as social ecology, collective identity and resilience are all understood through Western theorization. In my research, Western theorization serves its purpose because -as will be shown in the analysis chapter- some of these concepts such as the help from the community or the protective factor of collective identity are not out of the ordinary for the respondents, although it may seem so for an outsider. For this reason, a theorization of these concepts tailored to the cultural context is seen as an essential part of explaining how and why the different factors helped the women cope with trauma.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Data and Analysis

In this chapter, I will present the findings from my fieldwork on the effects of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act on women in Nagaland (including one Naga respondent from Fogtown in Manipur). I will also present the findings on the influence of the church and the Naga Mothers Association (NMA), as components of the social ecology, in contributing to women's psychological well-being. The qualitative data from interviews with 10 respondents aims to give a better understanding of the different ways through which the women coped after experiencing traumatic events. As mentioned earlier (p. 1) I choose to use the definition of 'trauma' by Becker and Weyermann (2006) as a "*deep emotional wound*", and "*the psychological equivalent of destruction*" that is caused by breakdown in the social or political order, and exhausts a person's coping ability.

The findings on how the women endured in the aftermath of traumatic events is important to show that even in an environment that lacked counselling centres, or institutions such as the church and the NMA, women found other ways to cope with the effects of violence. I present findings that show that factors such as individual resilience and faith in their God, and a culture of collective identity were significant factors in helping the women cope with trauma.

4.1 Analysing data through Narrative analysis

In my research, narrative analysis was chosen for analyzing data. Narrative analysis refers to two things: 1) an approach "*that emphasizes the examination of the storied nature of human recounting of lives and events,*" and 2) "*..the sources themselves - that is, the stories that people tell in recounting their lives*" (Bryman 2008: 553). The reason why I chose narrative analysis as suitable for analysing my field data is because the qualitative research in my study involved 'giving voice' to the women being studied, with an aim to learn about their lived experience. '*Narrative text*' was employed by the respondents meaning that they narrated their experiences in the form of 'storytelling' together with '*narrative practice*' where they gave meaning to their subjectively experienced stories and their role within these events (Neuman 2011: 495). The narratives will be accompanied by analysis of how the women coped after experiencing the traumatic event.

As a tool for narrative analysis I employed the 'periodization' method that aims to divide history/time into periods so that I can identify significant elements across the different periods

(Neuman 2011: 498). The reason for choosing periodization as a tool was because, as mentioned in the theory chapter, affected families of the shootings/incidents that took place between 1956 and 1984 (Kera, Cacia, Ketshii, Kezei, Thenyie and Doshii) had no access to the church since it had not been established in the villages yet, whereas the NMA was formed in 1984. Hence periodization could help organize the flow of time into 'before' and 'after' the establishment of these institutions, and locate similarities and differences across these periods.

The list of respondents in the next page has been arranged according to the chronological order in which they were interviewed.

List of respondents

Alias	Age	Marital status	Children	Village	Educational background	Assistance: church	Assistance : NMA	Other
Doshii	47	Married	4	A	PhD	no	no	Neighbours, clan, village
Kezei	91	Widow	6	C	illiterate	no	NA	Neighbours, family
Kera	64	Married	3	C	illiterate	no	NA	
Ketshii	80	Widow	1 (1 died)	C	illiterate	no	NA	Family, clan
Cacii	75	Widow	3		illiterate	no	NA	Friends, family
Cadi	28	Widow	1	Fogtown	Graduate	Yes	Yes	Family, NGOs, community
Mviisa	48	Married	2	Z	PhD	Yes	Yes	Family, community
Tsiarie	80	Widow	9	V	illiterate	Yes	No	Family, village community
Riiyo	33	Unmarried	None	Pinetown	Post grad	Yes	No	Family
Thenyie	84	Widow	7	Pearltown	Undergrad	No	No	Community

4.2 Qualitative difference in demographic features

Variations in age and variations between educated and uneducated had an impact on the women's awareness about organisations such as the Naga Mothers Association, or their awareness about the AFSPA law. Since these variations in demography were relevant for the different responses to my research questions, I will highlight these factors. The younger generation between 28 and 50 (with the exception of Thenyie who is 84 years old, but educated) were not hesitant to voice out their opinions on AFSPA, the harm and suffering that it has caused and that it should be abolished/removed.

I am not backing any faction and do not belong to any political party. One has to look at the AFSPA and decide whether it is doing more harm or more good. From a relational perspective. The AFSPA is totally against human rights and it has no place anywhere in the world. Using force is a bad way to negotiate peace. The law is there to give a semblance of power to violate human rights.

-Doshii

It is because of this Act, there are so many widows. If this Act is not gone then there will be more and more widows. We really want to remove this Act. It affects the innocent life.

-Cadi

Doshii and Riyyo were not hesitant to talk about the lack of help from the church in women's coping with trauma. As discussed in the methods chapter, this openness could have been encouraged by my outsider status. A common response from the women aged above 60 - Kezei, Kera, Ketshii, Cacii, Tsiarie- was that they had "no knowledge of these things" (AFSPA) because they are women, and had no education. When asked whether they saw a need for women's mobilisation against injustice under the AFSPA, the older women suggested that we should talk to a male relative or leader in the community who would be able to answer this question. This could be seen as affirming a strong male centred narrative on historical events, as well as affirming a strong patriarchal view that women have little or no involvement in political awareness.

When we did meet up among the women, we talked about the suffering, but we had no knowledge of how to react or do anything.

-Kera

Even from our childhood, we were not aware of anything. We were naive. I was not educated, I cannot even write my own name. You should ask (referred to a male leader in the community).

-Cacii

These respondents also make up the group of women who lost their male relatives before the church or NMA were established in their villages. Therefore they could not say much about the significance of the church in helping women cope with trauma. Regarding literacy and awareness, only the educated respondents had knowledge about the AFSPA, and the influence of NGOs. Again, it was only the educated respondents who had familiarity with the idea of trauma to some extent. It is worth mentioning that the concept of trauma is very new to the Naga indigenous society as there is no equivalent term for the word trauma.

In the next part of the chapter, the narratives of the respondents will be presented in each periodization, according to the chronological series of the traumatic events (time of incident and death of victim) that they experienced.

4.3 Period 1956 to 1984

The narratives of Kera, Cacii, Ketshii, Kezei, Thenyie and Doshii make up the incidents that took place in the first periodization before the establishment of the church or the NMA. The shootings of the male relatives of Cacii, Kera (sisters) and Ketshii took place in 1956 while village C inhabitants were fleeing from a planned raid by the Indian troops. The shootings are also situated in a larger context of clan rivalry that was mentioned in the Methods chapter⁴⁰. Members of the Teak clan collaborated with the IA in order to save their own men from getting killed. They informed the IA of the hideouts of the Mahogany and Salt clan members who were then killed. The Teak clan members even killed members of the other clansmen who were in the NA. Kera was 9 and Cacii was 18 when their 16 year old brother and their father were shot by the IA. Their brother and father including 4 other men from the village had gone in search of food supply when they were captured by the IA. The captives were then taken to Grassaron and shot dead. Kera and Cacii's accounts were similar, as they had heard about the shooting from other witnesses.

⁴⁰ In "2.5.2 outsider issues from fieldwork".

Of course not all of them but there were some bad people in the Teak clan, but that's all in the past, it's been left behind in the past so that we can live in harmony. However, the root of the story is connected to this clan history, that's why I am mentioning it. When my father and brother were caught with the others (4 others), the soldiers did not know the difference between the people who were caught. They did not know who belonged to Teak clan and who belonged to Mahogany clan, but since the informants knew this difference, they asked for the people belonging to the Teak clan to be spared, whereas the people belonging to the Mahogany clan were killed.

-Kera

Ketshii was pregnant with her second child when her husband was shot dead by the IA in Doshali (10 kms from village C). This is how she recounted her story:

Some people from the Teak clan had done terrible things. The father of my children was in the Naga Army and he had gone to Doshali to rest in the house of his aunt Adi. On the way to Adi's house, he met with Chievii⁴¹. So he told aunt Adi, "Mother I was on my way here to rest in your house for a night and I met Chievii on the way. There was no way I could avoid him. I could not run from him because our paths crossed and we talked. But I hope it's ok". His aunt had looked after Chievii's wife years ago. So my husband's aunt thought it would be fine, that Chievii would not inform the IA. But Chievii went and informed the IA. Those people from the Teak clan who were soldiers in the IA, as well the IA went and surrounded the house. Since my husband was on duty for the NA, he was determined not to surrender to the IA. So at the break of dawn, he attempted to flee and he was shot. That is what they say. Aya⁴² it was an immense loss (kemenga).

It was Kolhou who came with the news to me while I was working in the field. When Kolhou came and said what had happened, I said, "Aya what a terrible thing", and I ran to the village and joined the rest of the people who went to fetch the body. He was shot in a horrible way, he was almost unrecognizable.

⁴¹ Chievii was a Teak clan member who acted as an informant for the IA.

⁴² An expression of grief or loss.

The case of clan conflict and enmity is an example of how clan relations in the social ecology were permanently damaged as a result of the AFSPA law⁴³. It demonstrates how the social network, meant to secure an environment of trust and cooperation, could instead be critically impaired during or after conflict (Becker & Weyermann 2006; Ohiorhenuan 2011: 4; Horn 2013).

Kezei's husband was the Speaker of the Federal Government of Nagaland which was banned by the Government of India in 1972. As a result, he had to go into hiding. He was killed on 11 July 1974, shot by an Indian unit while he was in hiding in the jungle. While her husband was hiding in the jungle, the IA surrounded Kezei's house. Recounting how the IA harassed her and her children, she said:

We lived in fear. I would carry my son and his older sister and go to our neighbor's houses. We could not even sleep in our own house, we had to go sleep in other people's houses. The soldiers pierced the walls of our house with the bayonets of their guns. They seized our rice and our clothes, they even kicked our pig to death. We suffered a lot. It was so frightful when they surrounded our house.

Thenyie's aunt was raped and killed in 1964 by the Indian Army who had decapitated her body. This is how Thenyie recounted the story:

Those were very bad times. She was 47 years old. She was returning home late after tilling her field when it happened. A big group of villagers went to look for her the next day and they found that she had been raped, killed and cut in pieces by the Indian army. It was a very terrible incident. Her body was taken to the hospital where they stitched up her body. After that, they took the body to the village in a coffin. I was so shocked when I heard about it. Four of my children were born by then. I used to fear for my own safety and for the safety of my children, especially the girls.

Thenyie's story is rare because rape is a sensitive issue that is tied to shame. Gender-based violence such as rape committed by the IA is not uncommon in the rural areas in Nagaland. However, my attempts to interview survivors of rape were not successful because it is an

⁴³ Although animosity existed between the clans dating many years back in history, the threat of a bigger adversary drove the Teak clan to commit such a huge betrayal.

issue that is not talked about in consideration of the victims and their families. Even the translated version of the term rape (*shii* in Tenyidie) is rarely used because the act of rape completely dishonors and devalues the woman⁴⁴. Instead it is referred to as “bad things done to women”. Even if people knew about rape survivors (which was rare) such information was not disclosed due to the cultural sensitivity and not wanting to invade the privacy of the rape survivor. As observed by other researchers in Nagaland, accounts of rape were rarely disclosed because of the social stigma that is associated with the victim of rape (Gill 2010: 10; C-nes 2011: 19; National Campaign Committee Against Militarisation and Repeal of AFSPA 1997: 15). In this case, the account of the rape incident was given by the victim’s niece as the victim had been killed years ago. This might explain why it was possible to get the story. When asked what she thinks is the motive behind decapitating the corpse, Thenyie replied:

The army were very brutal back then. Cutting up her body was an act of extreme brutality. As Indians, they have a caste system, whereas we Nagas are non-caste which is equivalent to sub-human, so they dehumanized us. They wanted to teach us a lesson, and they went for the soft targets like women.

Doshii’s father was not a member of the Naga Army (NA), but he and his friends would supply food to the NA while they were in hiding. He was jailed in the late 60s for aiding the NA with rations. This is how she narrated her story:

The Indian Army questioned my mother and when she refused to reveal the whereabouts of my father, they threatened her by gunpoint. My mother retold me how I held on to her as the Indian Army questioned her and threatened her. When they pushed her I would almost fall, but she told me that I was very brave even as a little girl. When I was around 5 years old, I saw Army jawans (soldiers) carrying two bamboo poles with two fresh corpses in the village. A corpse hung on each bamboo pole with their hands and feet tied to the poles. The fresh blood dripped from their bodies. I still remember that picture clearly in my head after all these years. I can never forget it.

⁴⁴ Mviisa and Tsiarie’s son who translated for Tsiarie referred to rape as “doing bad things to women”.

4.4 Period 1985- 2016

The narratives of Riiyo, Tsiarie, Mviisa and Cadi come under the period 1985-2016. The stories of Riiyo's uncle who was tortured by the IA in 1961, and Tsiarie's husband who was shot in 1981 are included in this periodization because both of the victims survived for many years after the incident. Tsiarie's husband died in 1993, while Riiyo's uncle died in 2011. This means that the affected families of the victims had access to the church and the NMA which had been established by that time.

Riiyo's uncle (father's elder brother) was a soldier in the NA. A detailed account of his story is documented in Iralu's book (2009 pp. 329-335). He was captured along with two other soldiers in 1961, and tortured when they refused to share information about the locations of NA camps to the IA. After being tortured, he was imprisoned for 3 years and was released in September 1964. His psychological health was severely impaired as a result of the torture, and he went insane. He became stuck in the world of his past where his duty as a soldier had been to guard and protect. So he would set up his camp in the bushes around the house and Riiyo's family would provide him with food. He agreed to come and live in their home in 1998 where he resided until his death in 2011. This is how Riiyo recounts the story:

He was 6 ft tall and in his prime. His mental state became worse after he had been tortured. The IA didn't plan to kill them, but to torture them so that they would suffer. They were hung upside down and beaten senseless, so the blood streamed out of their mouths, their noses. They were also electrocuted. It's shameful to talk about it, but they even put crushed king chilly⁴⁵ in their private parts. When I touch king chilly, and get a burning sensation, then I think about how much it must have hurt when he was tortured with king chilly. This may sound wrong, but what angers me is that, if he had been shot dead, then that's the end of it. But instead they tortured him, beat him naked, and if he screamed they laughed at him. Such an inhumane treatment. Even slaughtering of animals is done in a more humane way. After he was tortured, he was imprisoned in Taru. People back then were so poor, he didn't have a bank account and there was no facility in the government to pay his bail, so his land had to be sold in order to bail him out of prison.

⁴⁵King chilly, also called Naga chilly is one of the hottest known chilly peppers with a scoville scale (for measuring the hotness of chilly) of 1000,000 SHU (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naga_Morich)

Tsiarie's husband was a member of the NA and he was shot by the IA in 1981. He was shot in the hand and in the hip, and he survived for 12 years. Tsiarie had to look after her husband, as well as take on the economic burden of providing for her 9 sons. Prior to the incident, the IA base had been ambushed by members of the NA, who then ran to hide in the jungle. So the Army, suspecting the villagers, started blindly firing into the village. There was no evidence that the people who ambushed the Army were from this village. It is uncertain whether the IA targeted Tsiarie's house because her husband had been a former member of the NA, or it was a result of blindly shooting into the village area. As a result of his injuries, Tsiarie's husband was hospitalized 2-3 times every year, and each treatment lasted for 2-3 months. This is how Tsiarie recounts the shooting incident:

I was returning from the field with my husband and some of my children. The (Indian) Army started to fire into the village, towards our house. People asked, "Are your children at home? They must have been shot". My husband rushed home and when he opened the house to enter, they aimed at him and shot at him. After shooting him, our village folk were not allowed to go outside to help him. The Army said they would not allow injured people to be taken away. Because even their own people were injured (from the ambush). He was bleeding a lot and the Army would not let us help him.

When the Army were not watching, a group of village men boarded a Manipur truck that was bound for Kohima town and informed the Chief Minister. When the Army heard that the minister was coming to the village, they hid and ran away. Only after that, we were able to take the injured to the hospital.

Mviisa's brother was killed in 1998. She was in Vancouver when she heard the news that her youngest brother had been shot dead by the IA. The reason being that he and his friend did not stop their car in time when the Army asked them to stop at a check point some 5 kms from Kohima. This is how Mviisa narrates the story:

My brother was out for a ride with his friend on a Sunday afternoon. The Army version was that they were asked to stop. But according to my brother's friend who was driving, they did not see any army men instructing them to stop. They were not even driving fast. Very soon they started hearing gun shots so he was shocked and he slowed down. By that time, my brother was already shot several times in the back. He was already dead in the car. His friend also got injured and he had to be hospitalised.

Cadi's husband was shot by the Manipur police two years before the time of the interview. She was 8 months pregnant when her husband and another man were shot dead as they were participating in a peaceful rally against the deployment of the commando to Fog town in Manipur. As mentioned in the methods chapter, the presence of the military and paramilitary was the highest in Fog town, presumably due to a curfew that was being observed in Fog town. Since the incident was fairly recent, Cadi preferred not to focus on the incident, and she shared her thoughts on how she experienced the loss:

You know, after this incident, I became like a mad person, crazy. Because all my thoughts, whatever I wanted to do, I don't want to do anymore and I don't even want to live in this world. But when I thought of my baby... it gave me some strength. It is very hard to live as a widow. I feel lonely as myself. After he died, I collected all the pictures of him in the house and put them away so that I would not be reminded of the terrible incident. It doesn't mean that I left him. But I cannot see the pictures and be reminded of him. It's too hard.

I think about if I had not been pregnant at that time, I would have gone with him (to the protest rally). It's easy for others to talk about having to stay strong, but it's not easy in practical terms. I didn't want to go on with my life. It was so hard when I thought about it. But I have to live for my son and look after him. I worry about him.

4.5 Effects of the AFSPA on women

The next part of the chapter presents the findings on the effects of the AFSPA on the female respondents who were interviewed for my study. Similarities across the two periods regarding the kinds of violence that occurred and how this violence affected the women, as well as similarities and differences from already existing literature will be presented.

4.5.1 Direct violence

The incidents that took place during the first period 1956-1984 and the second period 1985-2016 are all cases of direct violence. At an individual level, direct violence by the IA causing human loss was the main cause of psychological trauma for seven of the respondents. The psychological trauma that the women experienced can be understood as prevailing negative memory as a result of one or more disturbing, adverse, painful and unwanted events (Bonanno 2004; Silcox 2013). For Doshii, the traumatic experience was connected to direct violence by

the IA who threatened and harassed her mother, and she witnessed the two corpses at the age of 5. The rape, killing and decapitation of Thenyie's aunt was an act of extreme violence carried out by the IA. Riiyo was traumatized by the direct violence of the IA who tortured her uncle, and by her lived experience with this family member who became mentally deranged. She explains:

When I was young, it was traumatizing to think of how much pain he suffered and that his thinking was so different from others.

In their assessment of the impacts of conflict, the Psychosocial Working Group mentions the disturbance of resources in communities in the form of "*physical, material and economic losses*" (PWG 2003: 1). Such losses were felt both at the individual level and at the community level as a consequence of direct violence. At the community level, the burning of granaries and houses was an immense material loss as the provisions of grain were destroyed. For Kezei's family, the seizing of their rice, clothes and killing of their pig by the IA was a material loss that disabled their means of survival. For Riiyo's family, the selling of her uncle's land in order to bail him out of prison was a material and economic loss. In Naga villages, land is cultivated and is the only means of sustenance for some. It may be observed that working in the field as the women's form of livelihood is mentioned in several of the narratives. Moreover, loss of land was also a symbolic loss of identity for Riiyo's family. This is because in Naga culture, land inheritance for a male and his family is crucial for laying claim to their place in the larger community and their sense of belonging.

At the individual level, findings from interviews revealed psychological effects related to trauma from direct violence. Becker and Weyermann (2006) talk about fear that can transform into chronic fear when individuals live in an environment of war and conflict. Depressive symptoms are also seen to be a long term effect of violent trauma. "*Anxiety, sadness, irritability, self-consciousness and emotional vulnerability*" are some of the forms of psychological distress that are presented by Winefield and her colleagues (2012). In my study, many of the respondents expressed hate and fear towards Indian soldiers, as a result of their experiences.

I grew up hating the Indian Army because of this experience (witnessing the two corpses) and seeing how they treated my mother. When they can treat another fellow human being like that, what more are they capable of?

-Doshii

Ketshii also said that she hated the Indian Army for killing her husband. Riiyo felt anger towards the perpetrators who tortured her uncle. Kezei narrated that she and her children lived in fear. Some of the findings also match with the literature that talks about fear connected to uniformed soldiers (p. 6).

I felt very unsafe and afraid to go anywhere alone, especially if it involved going near army camps. I felt fear when I saw Indian army soldiers.

-Theyie

My friends and I would run and hide whenever we saw IA soldiers approaching

-Kera

Kera, Ketshii and Cadi experienced depression and anxiety at the loss of their family members. All of them said that they could not eat or drink thinking about who would provide for them or earn a living for them.

I used to feel such a great loss. I was angry and thought life would never be the same again. I grieved to the extent that I could not live anymore.

-Ketshii

I can't really put in words what I felt. Having lost a father was such a significant loss (kemenga). I thought about how we would live without a father, I felt heartbroken and couldn't think about how to go on. I couldn't eat or drink, thinking about how there was no one to feed us, earn a living for us.

-Kera

For Mviisa, who found out that her brother had been killed while she was in Vancouver, she felt lost and helpless because she could not go home and mourn him. She said that the sense of helplessness made her go into depression. Both Theyie and Mviisa expressed shock and a sense of helplessness at the killings of their relatives.

Across the periodizations, the narratives of Theyie and Riiyo are cases of direct violence and extreme brutality⁴⁶. This extreme brutality can be further analysed by Theyie's reference to the army's dehumanizing of their victims. Dehumanizing can be defined as a practice of

⁴⁶ This does not undermine the cases of shooting to death because these cases can also be seen as extreme acts of violence.

treating other humans as “*subhuman creatures*”, and eliminating their “*distinctively human attributes*” (Mikkola 2011, in Smith 2014). Thenyie remarked that since Nagas do not belong to the Indian caste system, the IA perceived Nagas as subhuman. The practice of dehumanizing their victims, and treating them as lesser creatures could explain the brutality of violence that was perpetrated.

We were treated not as human but as animals. Even the slaughtering of animals is done in a more humane way.

-Riiyo

An interesting issue that needs to be considered is how the IA’s extreme brutality in the process of dehumanizing their victims could have contributed to dehumanizing themselves. In analyzing the violence, memory and techniques of atrocities on the Hutu people by the Tutsi population in Tanzania, Malkki (2004: 134) says that “*the dehumanizing gaze was necessarily turned against*” the Tutsis themselves who had produced such techniques of dehumanization. Similarly, for many Nagas, the accounts of extreme brutality perpetrated by the IA has caused so much fear of the uniformed Indian soldier that they see him as bereft of human attributes. This dehumanizing of the IA could be evidenced in the fear that the respondents felt on seeing uniformed soldiers or in the vicinity of army camps.

4.5.2 Structural Violence

Structural violence was also identified as an effect of the AFSPA on the female respondents as it impacted both the individual and the collective. As already mentioned in the theory chapter, women had to take on the responsibility of heading a household when their spouses were killed. This was the case for Kera and Cacii’s mother as well as for Kezei, Keshii and Cadi. In Tsiarie’s case, she had to look after her sick husband who survived for 12 years after being shot by the IA. This involved several visits to the hospital every year which lasted for 2-3 months. Her family suffered not only the loss of the main provider, but this loss transferred into the economic and social domain. As the whole responsibility of caring for her 9 sons fell on her, she had to work extremely hard all year in order to repay debts and send her children to school. In Tsiarie’s case, her lack of education was a form of structural violence that prevented her from gaining the competence or knowledge to find higher employment. Tsiarie’s son explained:

We did not grow any kind of cash crops so she was working in the field to provide the day to day meal for us. When she finished with her fieldwork, she would go to other people's field to work for them and get her day wage. She had an extremely hard life.

None of the respondents in my study received any form of compensation from the state. Similar to my findings, the research team assessing the impacts of conflict on women in Nagaland and Assam, point out that none of the victims were compensated or could seek justice from the legal system. One woman's experience was that even though she had complained to the authorities and asked for compensation, nothing had happened (C-nes 2011: 6, 11). The lack of help from the state during such hardships mirror structural violence on a broader context that represses the affected population. In the 1950s and early 1960s structural violence can be identified in the lack of a proper justice system. The research team explain that this is due to a nonexistent state or administrative machinery as Nagaland did not attain statehood until the end of 1963. The women who were illiterate had no knowledge of whom to consult for help or how to lodge complaints. In addition, the Indian authorities were seen as the enemy, and the atrocities were so widespread, therefore it was unrealistic for the affected families to file complaints (C-nes 2011: 14,19). This is consistent with the findings in my research as the illiterate women had no knowledge of the possibility of seeking compensation, and the affected families in the first periodization; Kera, Cacii, Kezei, and Ketshii had no access to a state machinery that could help them financially. However, the newspaper report on the Wuzu incident of June 2015 states that the families of the victims were paid compensation (p. 12). This indicates that more recent cases have the possibility of seeking compensation, although there are no exact dates suggesting when this was made viable. At the same time, it should be noted that it was the state government of Nagaland that paid the compensation and not the IA.

Furthermore, the legal protection granted to Indian police and army operating under the AFSPA law is the core of structural violence that is built into the law (p. 4). Some may rationalize that this legal protection of the armed forces is an example of Foucault's "power exercised through consent" because the AFSPA law has been enacted by the Government of India (GoI) representing the people of India. This means that the GoI was representing the Nagas since Nagaland is officially a state in India. The difference here is that the Act was imposed by the GoI on Nagaland without the consultation of the main policy-making bodies

of the Naga tribes. Therefore the structural violence of legal protection of the armed forces demonstrates in fact what Foucault refers to as "power exercised through violence". The impunity of soldiers creates an overbearing divide between the perpetrators of violence (the agents exercising power) and the affected population at the receiving end of violence (the persons on whom power is exercised). In this way, the law represses, exploits and marginalizes affected families.

4.5.3 Culture of impunity in a militarized society

The impunity of military personnel and police who are granted protection from legal prosecution means that the perpetrators have freedom from punishment of their actions. It is a culture of impunity where unrestricted power is laid in the hands of an authority figure without legal repercussions as long as he claims to have acted under the AFSPA. In this way, the culture of impunity can be used to justify and legitimize direct or structural violence because it is built into the legal system.

Because of the AFSPA, my brother and his friend had no say. The Army could shoot at them and then explain their own false story to others later on. So my brother died very unnecessarily.

-Mviisa

Even though we had anger towards the perpetrators, there was nothing more that could be done. They treated us so badly but we could not do anything.

-Cacii

While doing fieldwork in Nagaland, the latest development regarding the AFSPA was the Supreme Court ruling that the Army or paramilitary personnel cannot use "excessive or retaliatory force" in areas declared disturbed under the AFSPA. The Supreme Court also gave the authority to the criminal courts to investigate alleged excessive force by the armed forces (Hindustan Times, 2016, July 08; the Morung Express, 2016, July 09). This was a step towards removing the immunity of army personnel under the AFSPA because it meant that the armed forces could in fact be prosecuted by a court of law. The reports on the Court's ruling did not give a clear specification of what was meant by the term "excessive or retaliatory force". The term is somewhat clarified by a bench headed by Justice MB Lokur as "excessive fire power" that could cause death, adding that such a death caused by the state is

“destructive of the rule of law and plainly unconstitutional” (Hindustan Times, 2016, July 08). The findings from the secondary analysis of data shows that some changes have been made in delimiting the culture of impunity in the AFSPA law. However, since the court ruling was very recent, it had no bearing on the respondents in my study.

4.6 Influence of the church and Naga Mothers Association on women’s psychological wellbeing

This part of the chapter focuses on the second research question concerning whether the church and the Naga Mothers Association (NMA) have contributed to women’s psychological well-being after experiencing trauma. Regarding the church as an element of social ecology, the study aimed at examining how the participation in church related activities has helped women cope with psychological trauma. My study also looks at whether the church has actively tried to reach out to help the women.

The findings show that the respondents Kera, Cacii, Ketshii, Kezei and Thenyie from the first periodization received no help from the church or the NMA because these institutions had not yet been established at the time of the incident. Moreover, Kera, Cacii and Ketshii followed the old religion in those days. It was only in later years that they converted to Christianity, and developed their personal faith in the Creator. The respondents from the first periodization acknowledged support from other elements in the social ecology such as friends, family, neighbors and the community. In Pearltown where Thenyie lived, the church was already established at the time of the rape incident, but she explains that she and her family coped with the shock by relying on each other and on the community:

There were no women’s organisations at that time. The church had no branch for counselling in those days. We coped on our own, either by mourning together, or talking in hushed tones about it and trying to stay safe ourselves.

In the second periodization, only two respondents; Mviisa and Cadi acknowledged support from the NMA. All the respondents in the second periodization acknowledged the support from the church, however the type of support that they received from the church varied. Riiyo’s family got food as a form of material contribution from the church. This gift was meant for the elderly or the sick on special occasions and they received an occasional bag of sugar, milk or rice and a blanket during winter. Cadi and Tsiarie acknowledged that the

church helped them cope with their psychological well-being after experiencing trauma. Before the incident, Tsiarie's family used to follow the old religion. Although there were many who were skeptical to the new religion of the American Baptist missionaries, Tsiarie's story exhibits the experience of the other group of non believers' and their readiness to accept the Christian way. The converting to Christianity involved changes in lifestyle such as discontinuing home brewed rice beer. Tsiarie recounts:

While I was in the hospital with my husband, the church members visited us and prayed for us. When I heard about the goodness of the Christian God, I wanted to become a Christian myself. So I went home and got rid of the "zutho"⁴⁷ in our house. On Sunday I went to church with all my children. After becoming a Christian, I felt peaceful at heart and I felt happy, I worried less.

Cadi also explained how conversations with the Pastor, counselling with NGOs and the representatives of the NMA helped her cope with psychological distress to a certain degree.

I used to go to Pastor, because it (death of her husband) affected me negatively in my spiritual growth. When I go to the Pastor and discuss it all, like counseling, it keeps me strong and I feel relaxed when he talked to me. The church also helped me financially. I also got help from NGOs and from the NMA. They not only helped me financially but also gave me moral support through counselling.

Similar to the first periodization, the respondents in the second periodization also acknowledged support from the family and community. Mviisa explains that in the late 1990's, people's frustrations were at a breaking point because of the many shootings that occurred. When the news of her brother's death became known, there were a lot of voices raised against the IA and the atrocities. She further mentioned that her family got a lot of help from not just the church and neighbors but also from organisations and even total strangers.

It made them sort of feel that my brother did not die in vain. His death made people become more vocal, it made people understand the enormity of this unnecessary evil

⁴⁷ In Naga villages, it is common to have homebrewed rice beer or "zutho".

that exists. People did not just forget them after the funeral. Certain NGOs (including NMA) and organizations took up the call and organized rallies and things like that.

-Mviisa

However, Riiyo's experience contradicts the notion that the community as a part of the social ecology was a supportive factor. For Riiyo's family, there was no financial or other form of help that was offered from any organization, or from any group fighting for the Naga cause in recognition of how her uncle had suffered. When he died, the Mero tribe built a martyr's park for those who had laid down their lives, as a form of recognition. Riiyo commented:

"As his sister-in-law, my mother is not related to him by blood. It was not as if her aim in life was to look after a sick man. Yet she looked after him for 14 years, and the Mero clan gifted her a spear (laughs). That was the only recognition".

Riiyo did not want to seem ungrateful but she expressed that she sees the token of giving her mother a spear as being pointless. Riiyo's experience and the example of clan conflict in village C exhibits the limitations of social ecology. It contradicts the assumption that social relations have a protective influence on an individual during situations of adversity. In the case of clan rivalry, the social relations worsened during the conflict, and in Riiyo's case, there was no form of help from the community.

Across the first and second periodizations, the findings show that only four of the respondents received help from the church. Two of the respondents (Tsiarie and Cadi) consider the participating in church related activities as contributing to their psychological well-being, whereas Mviisa considered the church actively reaching out to her family as supportive for the psychological well-being. As for the support from the NMA, only two of the respondents; Cadi and Mviisa received help from the NMA. For Mviisa, support from organisations such as the NMA *"gave the family a sense of being understood by people and being supported"*. For Cadi she *"felt relief"* when she talked to representatives of the NMA. These kinds of support from the NMA could be seen as contributing to Mviisa and Cadi's psychological well-being.

Doshii's thoughts reflect the general picture on why the church and women's organisations have not been successful in helping women cope with psychological distress. She says that neither the church nor women's organizations are addressing the issues that need to be

addressed with regards to building resilience for women in a violent environment because they have other priorities. By this she means that the church's active participation in the lives of victims is missing since their contribution is mainly prayer. She elaborates further that there is a gap between rural women and their urban counterparts and rural women feel they cannot identify with their urban women leaders. Issues such as women's reproductive health, inheritance (in a patrilineal society) or gender power struggles that the NMA are talking about, are irrelevant to the rural women when their situation is one where their gravest need is physical protection. According to Doshii, AFSPA poses the greatest threat to women in vulnerable situations, and women's organisations need to recognise the primary need of rural women (protection) and address it first before they proceed with other things on their agenda.

4.7 Hardiness and personal faith in the Creator as pathway to resilience

In an environment lacking adequate support systems (due to a weak state) or counseling centres, it is interesting to examine alternative ways through which the women coped with trauma. In this part of the chapter, I will present my findings on the factors that can enhance our understanding on how the respondents developed resilient qualities. The concept of "hardiness" (Kobasa, Maddi and Kahn 1982) that I have presented in the theory chapter refers to the processing of situations that one encounters with a positive mindset to learn from these experiences. Hardiness was identified as a protective factor for the respondents in their reflections on their traumatic experience. For Riiyo, inspite of her lived experience with her mentally deranged uncle, she still believed that something good would come out of telling his story. Since Kezei's husband had suffered for many years hiding in the jungle with no proper food or clothes, she believed that Ukepenopfi (the Creator) had taken him away so that he would not suffer anymore. For Ketshii and Tsiarie, the responsibility of raising their children strengthened their will to impact their own circumstance. Ketshii was determined to look after her two children by herself after her husband was shot dead. When her parents called her to come back to their home, she knew that she would have to give up one of the children to her husband's family⁴⁸. For this reason, she insisted on building her own home and raising her two children. Tsiarie's son, who translated for his mother, explained that even though she was

⁴⁸ In Naga customary tradition, if the mother decides to go back to live in her parents' house after a divorce or the death of her spouse, then her husband's family can claim parental rights to some or all of her children.

disheartened/shocked by the maiming of her husband, all her thoughts were centered around how to look after her children, how to feed them and earn for the household. He said:

She took on the role of both mother and father to us. Everything she did was for us. Even if she didn't get to eat, she was fine as long as we had enough to eat. She sacrificed everything for us out of her love for us. She encouraged us to study like others, saying she would finance our education through one way or the other.

A positive aspect about Tsiarie's son translating for her was that he acknowledged and praised their mother's perseverance in the face of tragic circumstances. In retrospect, this kind of praise and acknowledgment that Tsiarie deserved would probably not have been made known to me by the respondent herself because in Angami culture, it would be seen as boasting. On the other hand, her sons praising her and giving her credit for their successes is not viewed as a boastful thing, it is culturally acceptable and in this way I learned about Tsiarie's resilience and perseverance.

The personality trait of hardiness together with the women's personal faith in God or *Ukepenuopfii* demonstrate how these factors play an important role in helping the respondents cope with trauma. Furthermore, the data on the respondents' personal faith in the Creator reflect the findings from the study conducted by the research team in Nagaland (C-nes 2011: 7). The research team revealed among other things that religion and the women's faith in their gods were factors that helped them cope with the painful experience of losing their relatives. In the narratives of Kera, Kezei, Tsiarie and Riiyo, a recurring phrase was "*because of our Creator's grace*" when they acknowledged that they could draw strength from their personal faith in God.

Fear is always there. But anger cannot get us anywhere. One cannot be angry at everyone or at the soldiers. Ukepenopfii has put things right. So even if we lived a hard life in the past, because of our Creator's grace, we have been able to bear it.

-Kera

Nagaland having a majority population of Christians, it is worth reflecting on the authenticity of the responses that credited the Creator. In the interviews, it was difficult to determine whether the respondents emphasized their faith in the Creator because they felt that it was what I wanted to hear, or because they genuinely felt that their personal faith in God helped

them. In this way, the responses also made me reflect on the effect that I have as researcher in the interview situation. Further, my position as an outsider having lived in Norway for more than 10 years may affect how I perceive the situation. To an outsider, the acknowledgement and affirmation that the women give the Creator may seem as though they underestimate their own individual capacities and perseverance. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the women are the narrators of their own stories, and as such, the acknowledgement of their faith in the Creator was indeed significant for them.

4.8 Collective Identity

The findings in my research point to a strong sense of collective identity among the respondents who had experienced trauma. Collective identity in this context, was the shared identity of those who have experienced loss and trauma as a result of the AFSPA. In the narratives of Kera, Cacii, Kezei, Doshii and Riiyo, a recurring phrase was “*everyone was in the same situation*” and “*everyone suffered*”. Riiyo commented that her family was not the only ones who suffered in terms of trauma among Nagas, but that so many people suffered. This focus on the village community as a collective indicated that the respondents’ individual identities were rooted in the cultural and social identity of the community. As a consequence, even though trauma was experienced at an individual level, the reflections on the traumatic event was processed through a collective lens. Interviews with the respondents indicated that the culture of collective identity served as a protective factor after experiencing the trauma, and made them feel that they were not alone in their suffering. At the same time, the collective identity may have influenced the acceptance of their situation because the number of people who had suffered these terrible experiences was so high. This means that the individual trauma was neglected and people were not able to talk about their individual suffering. In a tribal and community based society, approaches to dealing with trauma at an individual level do not “fit in” (C-nes 2011: 10). Collective identity can thus be seen as suppressing the individual experience and become an obstacle to individual healing.

4.9 Conclusion

My data analysis has employed narrative analysis where the respondents narrated their experiences as stories. The narrative analysis was seen as suitable since the study intended to give voice to the female respondents and validate their experiences. The analysis further employed periodization to give a better overview of the incidents that occurred before and after the establishment of the church in the villages, and the Naga Mothers Association. This

explains why the women in the first periodization received no assistance or support from the church or the NMA. In presenting the data concerning the effects of the AFSPA on women in Nagaland, I have looked at direct and structural forms of violence inflicted on the respondents and their families. There were interesting findings on issues such as dehumanization of victims and sensitivity and stigmatisation surrounding rape. The unwillingness to speak about rape because it is tied to shame results in silencing of the voice. The stigmatization of rape survivors further devalues women as it destroys their self-worth.

Structural violence is examined in the way the loss of the main provider has ramifications in the social and economic sphere when the lack of education excludes the women from gaining higher employment. Structural violence is also identified in the legal protection granted to the armed forces and police. This has resulted in a culture of impunity in affected areas such as Nagaland. The ruling of the Supreme Court on July 08, 2016 -saying that the army or paramilitary cannot use “*excessive or retaliatory force*” as well as authorizing criminal courts to investigate such cases of alleged excessive force- is a positive advancement to curb the absolute powers that the AFSPA has maintained for so many years. The public demand is nonetheless to remove the AFSPA law completely.

Data collected through interviews gave findings that ran counter to the assumption that the church and the NMA have been influential in helping women cope with trauma. The respondents across both periodizations acknowledged the community, family and friends as important supportive factors in the social ecology after experiencing trauma. At the same time, the social ecology had its drawbacks and this is made evident in the clan rivalry in village C and Riiyo’s experience that her family did not get any help from the community. It has been relevant to look at how factors such as hardiness and the personal faith in the Creator have been a source of coping mechanism for the women. The collective identity of the village community was also a protective factor, especially since a great number of them were exposed to the suffering and loss. The fact that many of them were suffering together somehow helped them to bear their pain in the knowledge that they were not alone. Consequently, the focus on the collective identity could have neglected the individual healing.

Chapter 5. Summary and Conclusion

This study seeks to inform our understanding of the effects of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and its violation of human rights on gender in Nagaland. The study also attempts to examine the ways through which women cope with psychological trauma by looking at how the church or the Naga Mothers Association have contributed to improving the psychological well-being of the women. Women were the ones to bear the brunt of military occupation, suffering loss of their men and having to bear the burden of economically providing for the families in the absence of the men. Researching the women's stories through "voice" is emphasized in this study. By telling their stories and addressing the past injustices and trauma that has been inflicted on them, voice is central in validating the women's experiences.

I began by mapping the chain of events that led to the invasion of the Naga Hills by the Indian military troops. I have also presented the details of the enactment of the AFSPA in 1958 as one in a series of laws to fight insurgency movements in different states in the Northeast of India. I argue for the epistemological and ontological value of subjective narratives by drawing on Hesse-Biber and her arguments on how the social reality in feminist research practice is influenced by the lived experience of individual women. Therefore, the subjective narratives are important in shaping the truth of the social reality because women's experiences are characterized by power relations, values and biases.

The AFSPA law has affected the women through direct and structural forms of violence, impacting both the individual and the community. A lack of adequate counselling centres has resulted in the women having to find alternative ways of coping with psychological trauma. Only three out of four respondents from the second periodization felt that participating in church related activities and the church actively reaching out to help them improved their psychological well-being. Whereas only two out of four respondents in the second periodization received help from the NMA in improving their psychological well-being. These findings run counter to the assumption that the church and the NMA as factors in the social ecology are instrumental in helping women cope with trauma. Findings on other aspects of the social ecology such as clan and community showed that these resources in the social environment are not always beneficial. This was demonstrated by the clan rivalry in village C, Riiyo's experience that there was no help from the community, and my own

observation of demands that are put on the individual through social obligations. I learnt from my gatekeeper, that the Village C Public Commission initiated in 2004 was established by the Village Council as a reconciliation body that would address the past wrongdoings and start the process of healing. In the Commission, all three clans were represented as the process of documenting the past hurt, and grievances was set in motion.

Other findings from the interviews such as resilient qualities of hardiness combined with the women's personal faith in the Creator, and the collective identity have been found to be protective factors for the women when they faced great adversity. The finding on the collective suffering of the community as a whole also supported the secondary data from the research team in Nagaland that suffering as a result of conflict was experienced collectively and served as a coping mechanism (C-nes 2011: 10). At the same time, the acknowledgement of personal faith in the Creator may be perceived as conforming to the larger society's religiosity, influencing the respondents to feel that they should respond in a certain way. Furthermore, the collective identity's emphasis on community suffering did not allow for the capacity of individual healing by not addressing the individual trauma.

In the study, the exercise of power is addressed on multiple levels. Power relations in gender in Naga society take place in the decision-making positions that men hold as well as the predominance of men's voices in presenting narratives on different issues. The exercise of power through the AFSPA law is examined in structural, and direct forms of violence. The issue of absolute power in the form of impunity or the freedom from punishment from criminal courts has been explored. This impunity of soldiers operating under the AFSPA has only recently been checked by the Supreme Court ruling, and it has been a significant first step towards preventing violence. Furthermore, the exercise of power can be identified in a culture of stigmatizing rape survivors, such that it results in the silencing and suppressing of their voices. Extreme acts of violence such as the decapitation of the rape victim and the different torture methods inflicted on Riiyo's uncle are analyzed through the concept of dehumanization. In the act of dehumanizing a people through violence, it is worth reflecting on how the agents exercising power dehumanize themselves in the process. In other words, the persons on the receiving end of violence no longer see the perpetrator/ soldier as human. This is manifested in the fear of uniformed soldiers or the fear of going near army camps.

In a future study that aims to measure the influence of the church and the NMA on psychological well-being of women more accurately, it would be strategic to investigate incidents that occurred after both these institutions were in place. In my case, I was advised not to investigate recent cases of AFSPA violence because of the increasing tension surrounding cases such as the Wuzu incident (the Morung Express, 2016, July 17) where two young students were shot dead by the Indian Army the previous year. For my own safety, I had to take precautions not to contact the family members of recent victims because there was a greater danger of raising suspicions from the IA. Therefore, most of my interviews date back to older incidents.

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The PWG is a collaboration between five academic partners: 1) Centre for International Health Studies, Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh, 2) Columbia University, Program on Forced Migration & Health, 3) Harvard Program on Refugee Trauma 4) Solomon Asch Centre for the Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict and 5) University of Oxford, Refugees Studies Centre). It also includes five humanitarian agencies: 1) Christian Children's Fund, 2) International Rescue Committee, Program for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, 3) Medecins Sans Frontiers – Holland, 4) Mercy Corps and 5) Save the Children Federation. A grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation has financed the work of the PWG (PWG 2003)
- <http://www.census2011.co.in/states.php>

Interview sheet

Master in Peace and Conflict Transformation 2016, The Arctic University of Norway

Interview conducted by student: Khriezomeno Iralu

How does the social ecology contribute to women's coping with difficult situations, unpleasant encounters or trauma?

1. Gender
2. Age
3. What are your views on the Armed Forces Special Powers Act?
4. Do you feel safe as a woman living in an environment where the AFSPA law is operational? Whether yes or no, please state the reason why.
5. Have you or a family member experienced unpleasant treatment from the paramilitary or Indian Army?
6. Have you experienced positive encounters?
7. Please describe. (You need not go into details if you do not wish to).
8. What were your thoughts after the negative encounter?
9. Did you approach family, neighbors, the church, Naga Mothers Association or other counselling bodies for counselling?
10. Was it difficult to approach these organizations/bodies? Do you know if the situation has changed now (is it easier or more difficult to approach such organizations now)?
11. How did the person or church or NMA help you cope with the negative encounter?
12. Did the assistance or counseling that you receive from the church or NMA help you in a significant way?

13. Did you feel that you were still part of the community after the encounter? Did other people's conduct or relationship towards you change after the negative encounter?
14. Are women more vulnerable to violence by the paramilitary or Indian Army? (Are women more liable to be targeted by the paramilitary or Indian Army owing to their gender?)

** For the safety of the participant's identity, your name, address, clan, village or tribe will not be documented. Names of participants will be changed.