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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Brännlund, Emma</td>
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<td>Publication Date</td>
<td>2015-09</td>
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<td>Item record</td>
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Narrating in/security: Women’s activism in Kashmir

Emma Brännlund

A thesis submitted to the School of Political Science and Sociology
in conformity with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor
Dr. Nata Duvvury

Global Women’s Studies Programme
School of Political Science and Sociology
National University of Ireland, Galway

September 2015
Table of contents

Statement of originality ................................................................. iii

Summary of contents ........................................................................ iv

Acknowledgements ........................................................................... v

List of acronyms ................................................................................. vi

List of terminology ............................................................................. vii

Map of Kashmir region ..................................................................... ix

Chapter 1: Introduction ..................................................................... 1
  1.1 Why study gender, identity and in/security Kashmir? .................... 3
  1.2 Aims of the study and research questions ................................... 10
  1.3 Research Design ........................................................................ 13
  1.4 Limitations ................................................................................ 14
  1.5 Outline of study ......................................................................... 15

Chapter 2: Feminist perspectives on gender and identity ..................... 20
  2.1 A brief note on power .................................................................. 21
  2.2 Gender ..................................................................................... 23
  2.3 Identity and subjectivity .............................................................. 30
  2.4 Constructions of gender in South Asia ....................................... 38
  2.5 Conclusion: Theorising women’s activism ................................. 43

Chapter 3: In/security in International Relations ................................. 47
  3.1 Questioning traditional approaches to security studies ............... 48
  3.2 Feminist approaches to security .................................................. 59
  3.3 Towards a framework to theorise everyday experiences of in/security ................................................................. 70
  3.4 Conclusion ............................................................................... 75

Chapter 4: Methodologies of doing fieldwork in an in/secure location ... 78
  4.1 The arrival .............................................................................. 79
  4.2 A feminist exploring the international ....................................... 81
  4.3 Research design: a framework for collecting data in a conflict zone ................................................................. 87
  4.4 Research methods: how I collected the data .............................. 95
  4.5 Working across linguistic and cultural borders: reflections on language and power ............................................ 107
  4.6 Conclusion ............................................................................... 112

Chapter 5: Historical background ..................................................... 114
  5.1 Pre-Colonial Kashmir ............................................................. 115
  5.2 The anti-feudal movement ......................................................... 118
  5.3 State formation ......................................................................... 128
  5.4 Call for a separate state ............................................................ 138
  5.5 Conclusion ............................................................................... 157

Chapter 6: Spatio-temporal locations of in/security ............................... 160
  6.1 Personal Life: in/security in family and community .................... 161
  6.2 Organisational life: in/security within organisations .................... 179
  6.3 National life: in/security and political identities ......................... 194
  6.4 Conclusion ............................................................................... 204
Statement of originality

I hereby certify that all of the work described within this thesis is the original work of the author and the author has not obtained a degree in this University, or elsewhere, on the basis of this work.

Any published (or unpublished) ideas and/or techniques from the work of others are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

Emma Brännlund
September 2015
Summary of contents

This thesis explores women activists' narratives of everyday experiences of in/security through a qualitative case study in Kashmir, northern India. In order to gather women’s in/security narratives I conducted 13 in-depth interviews and 3 focus group discussions with politically active women in Kashmir. I used techniques derived from thematic narrative analysis to analyse the data. I am particularly interested in how identity and subjectivity are constructed through processes of narratives, which are created in relation to understandings of the self and the other.

This thesis provides rich narratives on how living in militarised areas influences women’s everyday experiences of in/security. The narratives emerging from the interviews highlight how experiences of in/security breach the public/private divide and merge the two spaces. As critical theories on security demonstrate, the security logic functions through processes of signification: in order to make a subject secured, it has to be represented. Drawing on feminist security studies and feminist theory, I interrogate in/security in relation to ideas of gender, identity, and subjectivity, with particular emphasis on practices of femininity.

The narratives collected in this research point to that hegemonic femininity involves being a devoted, sacrificing wife/mother and a pious Muslim. Three main stories of femininity emerge. Firstly, the respectable women stories, wherein the participants emphasised doing good and working according to Islamic principles. Secondly, the heroine stories hold that the heroine is a subject in herself, as she is seeking to save other women. Lastly, the pariah stories narrated the failure of being accepted as a respectable woman and an activist. Thus, the heroine and respectable femininity stories facilitate acceptable forms of activism for women and maintain discursive constructions on the identities worthy of security, while pariah stories involve stories of women who remained outside the delineation of identities regarded merited to be secured.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to thank all the research participants for sharing their life stories; I hope I have been able to do your narratives justice.

I could not have completed the research without the support of civil society organisations in Srinagar. Thank you to the many devoted individuals who work relentlessly to make Kashmir a better place: Dr. Bashir Ahmed, Dr. Kishwar Ahmed-Shirali, Dr. Naseema Akther, Syed Zahoor Afzal, Qurrat ul Ain, Ezabir Ali, Abdul Aziz, Aala Fazili, Prof. Hameedah Bano, Sujayat Bukhari, Nazir Dar, Showkat Dar, Shahmima Firdous, Saima Gul, Anujum Zamurud Habib, Hazim Rashid Hanjoora, Pervez Imroz, Seema Kakran, Prof. Nilofer Khan, Raheel Kursheed, Iqbal Lone, Dr. Nazir Ahmad Malik, Tahmeed Mir, Narjees Nawab, Lebul Nisa, Nighet Shafi Pandit, Masooda Parveen, Khurram Pervez, Syed Faizal Qadri, Jimmie Muneeb Raja, Afsana Rashid, and Wakar Rasool. Special thanks to Prof. Noor Ahmad Baba for opening the doors to University of Kashmir to me.

My dear friends in Kashmir and their families made my research journey a fantastic experience with their love, help, and support: Asma, Abru, Sameer, Shoaib, Waseem, Raziya, Bilal, Rohini, Amir, Sumaira, Ghulam Rasool, Shahid, Sagar, Ayaan, Tufail, Seher, Irshad, and Abid. I thank you all.

I thank students and staff at NUI Galway for the friendship over the years. I greatly appreciate the help and patience offered by my supervisor Dr. Nata Duvvury. The current and previous members of my GRC provided expertise and guidance: Dr. Kevin Ryan, Dr. Eilis Ward, Dr. Niamh Reilly, Prof. Siniša Malešević, and Dr. Benarji Chakka; meanwhile Dr. Anne Byrne, Mary Clancy, Dr. Allyn Fives, Dr. Vesna Malešević, Dr. Stacey Scriver, and particularly Gillian Browne, mentored my teaching activities.

A warm thank you to Dr. Swati Parashar for giving inspiring feedback on a thesis draft, and to Dr. Veronica O’Neill for editing with care and kindness.

I would not have completed the thesis without the support from friends in and around the “cave” and the Feminist Society: Clionadh, Caroline, Aura, Ciara, Céire, Amie, Jenny, and Jennie, as well as Tanya, Emily, Marja, and Carol of GWSP. I thank Tanja in particular, for spending many weekends discussing drafts and for sending Slovenian music in times of darkness.

I am grateful of the support from my family and friends for believing in me and not allowing me to quit, particularly my parents, Runar and Lotta, and siblings, Olle and Frida. I am grateful for my friends, specifically Nadine, Vipasha, Samira, and Nyasha, for tough political discussions and laughs. I particularly must thank Lonan for the endurance he displayed while living with a strained student. The hill runs kept me focused to the end.

Finally, my deepest condolences to the friends and family of Shafat Siddiqui, who sadly passed away photographing the floods in Kashmir in September 2014.
**List of acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFSPA</td>
<td>Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSF</td>
<td>Border Security Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDP</td>
<td>Composite Dialogue Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRPF</td>
<td>Central Reserve Police Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSS</td>
<td>Critical Security Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>Indian National Congress, often referred to as the Congress Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JKLF</td>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MC</td>
<td>All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKM</td>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Khawateen Markaz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member of the Legislative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUF</td>
<td>Muslim United Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDP</td>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir People’s Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Safety Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAW</td>
<td>Research and Analysis Wing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Rashtriya Rifles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSDC</td>
<td>Women’s Self Defence Corps</td>
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List of terminology

Abaya 
A cloak-like garment worn by women.

Amarnath Yatra 
The pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave in J&K undertaken every year between June and August to worship the Hindu God Shiva.

Azaadi 
Freedom

Azaan 
The calling of prayers from the masjids (mosques).

Begar 
Forced labour implemented in Kashmir in the 19th Century, most often unpaid or at times nominally paid.

Burqa 
An enveloping garment that usually covers its wearer from head to toe.

Dargah 
A shrine built over the grave of a religious person.

Dukhtaran-e-Millat 
Fundamentalist Islamic women only group active in Kashmir from 1981 until present, led by Asiya Andrabi.

Dupatta 
A long scarf used to complement an outfit, usually worn either over chest or head.

Eid-ul-Fitr 
The religious holiday that marks the end of Ramzaan.

Hartal 
Shutdown, strike

Hizb-ul-Mujahideen 
The army of the holy warriors, militant group active in J&K and Pakistan.

Jamaat-i-Islami 
Islamic political organisation founded in 1941 in British India with outfits in Pakistan and India, including J&K.

Jamia Masjid 
The largest mosque in Srinagar, J&K.

Jihad 
Holy war.

Khanqa 
Sufi building for gatherings and spiritual development.

Lingam 
Pillar-shaped monument representing fertility in Hinduism.

Lok Sabha 
The Lower House of the Indian Parliament.

Maktab 
Elementary schools attached to a mosque.

Margdarshan 
Guidance, supervision.

Masjid 
Mosque

Meem 
Kashmiri for madam, referring to a white woman.

Mirwaiz 
Leader of religious group and reader of prayers, a position, which in the 19th Century, had become hereditary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mohalla</td>
<td>Colony or neighbourhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moh-i-Muqaddas</td>
<td>A strand of hair from the beard of Prophet Muhammad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongol Empire</td>
<td>The largest land empire in history, founded by Genghis Khan in 1205 and dissolved in 1368.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mughal</td>
<td>A Persinate empire covering large parts of South Asia from 1526 to 1857.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namaaz</td>
<td>Persian word for prayer or worship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat</td>
<td>Local level village councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qur'an</td>
<td>The holy book of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramzaan</td>
<td>Holy Month of Fasting (in Arabic: Ramadan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishi</td>
<td>An order of Sufi mystics present in Kashmir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadar-i-Ryasat</td>
<td>The title of the head of state of J&amp;K, instituted after the abolishment of the Dogra regime in 1952.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaah</td>
<td>The daily regime of worship obligatory in Islam (in Arabic: Salaat).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salwaar Kameez</td>
<td>A traditional outfit consisting of soft loose trousers and tunic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sati</td>
<td>Widow-burning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shariah</td>
<td>The laws of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stupa</td>
<td>Buddhist monument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumos</td>
<td>Private jeeps operating as public transportation travelling fixed routes in J&amp;K.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teeka</td>
<td>The mark worn on the forehead or other parts of the body by followers of Hinduism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wahhabi</td>
<td>A purist form of Islam originating from Saudi Arabia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yatri</td>
<td>Hindi word for traveller; person who undertakes religious pilgrimage.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Map of Kashmir region

This map does not seek to be geographically correct, but is for illustrative purposes only. The depiction of boundaries on this map does not mean that they are regarded as legitimate by the author. The map is sketched by author.
Chapter 1
Introduction
This thesis interrogates politically active Kashmiri women’s narratives of everyday experiences of in/security. It problematises the concepts of security and insecurity in relation to ideas about gender and identity in the context of the conflict in Kashmir. Traditionally, the focus of security in International Relations\(^1\) has been on national security and centred on the state both as object and agent of security. These theorisations argue that there is always a fixed subject that needs to be secured, which in traditional accounts most often refers to the state. These state-centred perspectives have ignored other conceptualisations of security and are highly gendered (Cohn 1987; Elshtain 1987; Enloe 1988; Enloe 1990, 1993; Peterson 2007).

This thesis draws largely on feminist security studies, with input from gender theory and narrative theory, as a conceptual framework to explore women’s narratives of everyday experiences of in/security. As the title of this thesis indicates, the term “in/security” is used to denote the multiple and complex relations that are co-constitutive of women’s lives in Kashmir. From a post-structuralist perspective, security as a discursive practice produces its subjects, subjects of security (Stern 2005; Wibben 2011). As will be seen in Chapters 6 and 7, traditional bifurcations arising from the security/insecurity binary are challenged by women’s narratives. “[T]he naming of the threat and danger” (Stern 2006a, p. 182) involves inclusionary and exclusionary practices which inform and recreate identities. Hence, this thesis relies on an open understanding of security, wherein it is not clearly defined as a concept or a tool, but is rather seen as a signifier which produces what it seeks to name (Huysmans 1998). Additionally, as the women’s stories in this research demonstrate, security and insecurity are deeply interlinked and cannot often be separated. Therefore I choose to use the term in/security to highlight this relationship and to avoid binary definitions.

\(^1\)Henceforth abbreviated as IR.
From the outset, it is important to emphasise that my perspective on women is not essentialised. I follow scholars that argue that there is no single discourse that produces “woman”: sexual difference is created through social, cultural, and political processes (Lloyd 2005, p. 19). Hence, I understand gender as a doing, or as phrased by Judith Butler, a “performative.” This performative is not a singular conscious act, but rather a “reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler 1993, p. 2). In order to conduct a non-essentialised analysis of persons identifying as women, Spike Peterson (2007) has created a useful framework that distinguishes between gender as analytical and gender as empirical. When employing a gender analysis empirically, it focuses on socially self-identified women and their roles, lives, and challenges. It involves gender as the common understanding of a biological dichotomy of male/female sex difference (Peterson 2007, p. 4). Gender as analytical, on the other hand, examines how gender produces and sustains power relations and creates dichotomies such as femininity and masculinity. This entails gender as a “signifying system of masculine-feminine differentiations that constitutes a governing code… [G]ender pervades language and culture, systematically shaping not only who we are but how we think and what we do” (Peterson 2007, p. 4). Viewing femininity and masculinity as practices and norms aids the unpacking of the way in which gender identities and bodies are constructed in locations of in/security. Narrative approaches to subjectification demonstrate that identities are formed and understood by narratives (Yuval-Davis 2010, p. 266). In these perspectives, identity is constructed by the stories that people tell “themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to/should be” (Baba 2014; Parashar 2014). In this thesis, I specifically focus on how the participants enact forms of femininity in order to navigate the in/secure terrain of Kashmir (Schippers, 2007).
1.1 Why study gender, identity and in/security Kashmir?
This thesis seeks to examine women’s narratives of their everyday experiences of in/security. Its historical and contemporary political canvas makes Kashmir an apposite site to study.

A geographical overview
What is generally referred to as “Kashmir” is a valley nestled between the Pir Panjal and Himalayan mountains, bordering China and Pakistan. It is one of the three main regions – together with Ladakh and Jammu – of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir². J&K has been disputed territory between India and Pakistan since Partition in 1947, and there has been an uprising in the Kashmir Valley since 1989 (Bose 2003; Whitehead 2007). The former Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir was split between India and Pakistan along the ceasefire line after the first war between the newly independent states. Pakistan occupied the south-western part of the Princely State, often called Azaad Kashmir, as well as the Northern Areas. J&K, the area held by India, encompasses the widely diverse regions of Jammu, the Kashmir Valley, and Ladakh (Behera 2006). These regions differ distinctly, both from each other: topographically, demographically, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously (Rao 1999a), and also internally in terms of very diverse populations. While Jammu is a majority Hindu state with a heterogeneous Dogri and Punjabi speaking population, one-third of the population is Muslim and there is also a minority group of Sikhs. The Kashmir Valley is largely Sunni Muslim, with a large Shi’a minority, and a previously substantial minority of ethnically Kashmiri Hindus³, Christians, and Sikhs. While Urdu is the official language, the main language spoken is Kashori (Kashmiri). Ladakh, on the other hand, consists mainly of Tibetan-Buddhists and Shi’a Muslims (Bose 2003). Due to the insurrection against the Indian government in 1989, a large number of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley fled their homes and settled in migration camps in

² For the purpose of this thesis, I use the abbreviation “J&K” to refer to the present Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, which comprises of the regions Kashmir Valley, Jammu, and Ladakh. Hence, I use the terms “Kashmir” and the “Valley” to refer to the Kashmir Valley region. I employ the “Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir” to refer to the larger area governed by the Dogra Dynasty from 1846 to 1947, which now is divided between India and Pakistan.
³ Henceforth referred to as Pandits.
Jammu; many of them still live there today in poor conditions (Evans 2002; Trisal 2007).

A historical overview

Kashmir is currently in a fluid state of insecurity. It is neither in a state of war, nor is it in a post-conflict situation. The vast majority of scholarship has focused on the position of Kashmir in the geopolitical conflict between India and Pakistan (Misra 2007). There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the Kashmiri secessionist movement: Sumit Ganguly (2002) and Sumantra Bose (2003) for example. They argue that modernisation has offered an alternative future to many Kashmiris, in particular the younger generation, but that the political process has proved to be a hindrance to such opportunities. Feminist theorisations, as discussed below, have provided pivotal insights into gendered aspects of the conflict. While the history of Kashmir is explored in-depth in Chapter 5, it should nonetheless be noted at this stage that J&K has experienced insecurity on several levels throughout modern history.

Firstly, since the dissolution of British India and the creation of India and Pakistan in 1947, J&K has been a bone of contention between the two states. This has led to four wars: 1947-1949, 1965, 1971 and 1999, several near wars, border quarrels, and shelling, as well as a nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan (Widmalm 2002). The mutual Indo-Pakistani enmity has affected the local population of J&K the most. In theory, J&K has been given special provision by the Indian government. In 1950, for example, J&K was granted its own constitution under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution (Baba 2014). This gave the state the right to decide on its own economic and political affairs. It instituted a General Assembly and a Chief Minister, elected by the people of J&K, to govern the state. The only areas to be governed by the central government in New Delhi were security - military and telecommunications In reality, the majority of the elections from 1953 to 1975 were allegedly rigged, “with local governments being imposed and dismissed at the will of the Indian government” (Wani 2009, p. 2). Misgovernment also resulted in destroyed infrastructure, forced
migration, low economic development, and unemployment, which has led to
disenchantment among the people of the state towards the Indian
government (Baba 2014).

Secondly, there has been an insurrection against the Indian regime based in
the Kashmir Valley since 1989 (Kazi 2009; Parashar 2014). While this
followed the rigged elections of 1987 that caused uproar in the Valley,
many consider it to be a continuation of the indigenous anti-feudal
movement that demanded freedom from the ruling Maharaja in 1931 (Kak
2011). In 1989, the Kashmiri population joined the uprising *en masse*,
demanding *azaadi*, freedom, from India. Militant groups, often funded and
supported by the Pakistani government, were supported and encouraged by
the people of the Valley in the early years of the rebellion. Many young
Kashmiri men crossed the border into Pakistan to join the militants, then
returned to Kashmir, trained and armed, to fight the Indian army which had
mobilised large troops in the area (Parashar 2011). While much popular
support for the militancy has today faded, the unrest is not yet resolved, and
parts of the population still consider *azaadi* to be a valid claim. The
situation is fragile, and any mistake by the security forces can aggravate the
conflict, resulting in stone-pelting, riots, and demonstrations. This local
uprising is mainly based in the Kashmir Valley; the populations in Jammu
and Ladakh generally prefer to remain part of India, and they fear the
consequences of a potential independent J&K.

Importantly, J&K provides a unique case study as it is one of the few
conflict zones in the world with little presence of the international
community. The 1972 Simla Agreement clearly holds that the issue of
Kashmir is to be solved through negotiations between India and Pakistan
only; no external actors are allowed to intervene. This has also excluded
Kashmiri stakeholders (Behera 2006). However, since May 1997, J&K has
been part of a larger Indo-Pakistani peace process, the Composite Dialogue
Process\(^4\), which has improved the dialogue between the two nation-states

\(^4\) Henceforth abbreviated as CDP.
but made little difference to the situation on the ground. This bilateral peace process provides a challenging framework for globalised discourses of peacebuilding and human security, as well as for specific policies such as United Nations Security Council Resolution\textsuperscript{5} 1325 (Shekhawat 2014). Thus, simultaneous to the slow reconciliation process between the two geopolitical powers, local dissent towards India continues to exist.

Hence, the Indo-Pakistani dispute and the Kashmiri uprising have resulted in a constant state of insecurity. The insecure state of both the public and private spheres (domestic violence, poverty, unemployment, and other gendered consequences of conflict) inhibit women from engaging in political activities. This context, with its intersecting discourses of gender, nationalism, and religion, is pertinent to the study of women’s political activism. These discourses constitute the security terrain that is Kashmir. Security and insecurity are ever-present in Kashmir. They are embodied, material, and \textit{real} in the presence of hyper-masculinised military troops, anti-government militants, and “unidentified gunmen.” Security is linked to insecurity for many of the Kashmiri women who participated in this research. The Indian troops stationed in Kashmir, supposedly there to provide security, make women feel insecure due to the army’s involvement in rapes, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, and encounters (Butalia 2002; Parashar 2014). This thesis seeks to deconstruct this security dilemma and explore experiences of in/security in Kashmir.

\textbf{Gender and in/security in Kashmir}

Up until 15 years ago, there was a conspicuous lack of feminist literature on the conflict in Kashmir. Rita Manchanda’s (2001a) chapter on women in the conflict was ground-breaking, and was soon followed by Urvashi Butalia’s edited collection (2002). Useful contributions were also made by Shaheen Akhtar (2006) and Kavita Suri (2006). Manchanda (2001a) and Swati Parashar (2009, 2011, 2014) focused their work on women’s activism and participation in the freedom movement. Both noted the changing character

\textsuperscript{5} Henceforth abbreviated as UNSCR.
of the uprising in Kashmir. What started in 1989 as a popular uprising, with mass mobilisation and public demonstrations, developed into highly militarised conflict between militants and the Indian army in the mid-1990s. The Indian government introduced repressive measures to quell the struggle, such as special laws that gave the troops impunity. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, militancy waned, but did not stop entirely. The democratic process was revived, but as Parashar notes, the rise of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the increased instability in Pakistan also led to a revival in extremist and separatist politics (Parashar 2009). These developments were clearly gendered. In the early years, women and men in the Valley were inspired to take to the streets again, just like in 1931. Freedom, *azaadi*, was the word that brought people out on the streets. As the struggle became violent, and women took on a stereotypical feminine nurturing role, supporting the militants through providing food, nursing, and helping out in any other way possible, they also smuggled weapons and helped to clear areas of civilians before bomb attacks. Parashar (2011) notes that women most likely also participated as militants: some women were trained and armed, and there have been reports of a specific women-only training camp in the Pakistani part of Kashmir.

The longevity of the conflict has had an immeasurable impact on Kashmiri society: several generations of Kashmiri people have been deeply affected, and young people growing up today have seen nothing but violence and destruction, as demonstrated in the accounts in Chapter 6. While no reliable statistics on the effects of the conflict have been gathered, some accounts note that over 70,000 people have been killed since in 1989, the majority of them men (Butalia 2002; Kak 2011). The conflict is highly gendered in many ways. The Indian army views almost every Kashmiri man as a potential militant, and men can be randomly picked up from the street and detained, often being subjected to abuse or torture (Kazi 2009; Manchanda 2001a; Parashar 2009, 2014). There have been many cases where men have never returned. The killing and “disappearance” of men has had a massive impact on the surviving widows, children, and relatives. In Kashmiri society, widows are in a vulnerable position. The man is traditionally the
head of the household, and in many communities in the state, women are not encouraged to seek employment outside the home; when the man has disappeared, the woman is known as a half-widow and is not granted the same rights and benefits as a widow (Rashid 2011).

Sexual violence against women has been frequent, although rarely reported. There are few systematic mappings of sexual violence. One report conducted in 1992, only three years after the start of the insurrection, documented 15 cases of rape, 44 extrajudicial executions, 8 cases of torture, and 20 injuries resulting from indiscriminate shootings of non-combatants by Indian army and security force personnel. Eighty percent of these violations occurred during the visit or in the ten days preceding it (Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights 1993, p. 3). While avoiding speculation about numbers, it is clear that rape is widespread and has been used as a tactic of war. The report describes that rape and sexual abuse are carried out by the Indian army units, the Central Reserve Police Force, and militants. Some mass rapes have gained a lot of attention in the media. One of the most infamous instances is Kunan and Poshpora: during one night in January 1991, women of all ages, in the two neighbouring villages in Kupwara District, were raped by Indian army men (Butalia 2002; Kazi 2009; Khan 2009; Manchanda 2001a). Importantly, in a conservative society like Kashmir, rape serves as a desecration of the woman’s honour, and by extension, that of her family. There have been many stories of how rape has caused marriages to break down, unmarried women being unable to marry, and women, sometimes whole families, being ostracised from society (Women's Initiative 2002).

Few women are active in political parties in J&K; also, the Indo-Pakistani peace negotiations, the roundtable discussions with separatist groups, as well as the democratic process, have largely excluded women’s groups (Shekhawat 2014; Singh 2007). Nevertheless, there have been several political initiatives organised by Non-Governmental Organisations that focus on women while working towards peace and human development in

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6 Henceforth abbreviated as CRPF.
7 Henceforth abbreviated as NGO.
the region. While these NGOs are excluded from political processes in the state, they provide an essential space for women to engage in informal political activities. Examples of NGO activities are: human rights campaigns, communal reconciliation initiatives, and empowerment building programs; and also the rehabilitation of victims of the conflict, the provision of services for the local population, the creation of jobs, as well as working towards increasing participation in political processes. In Manchanda’s overview of women’s mass mobilisation after 1989, she noticed women’s retreat into the private sphere after the initial explosion of activism and was led to ask:

But where are the Kashmir women activists today? Politically marginalised. Their activism in the informal space of politics has been depoliticised, for, denied recognition (by men), they have been unable to translate it into authority in the formal sphere of politics (Manchanda 2001b, p. 43).

Although written almost 15 years ago, Manchanda’s question is now more relevant than ever. The following chapters demonstrate the vitality of women’s activism in the informal sphere of politics. The multiple layers of in/security revealed in the women’s narratives point to reasons for women’s activism not yet having been translated into authority.

Kashmir, which is constantly in a state of in/security, constitutes a dynamic canvas on which to analyse women’s activism. Focusing on women is essential for two reasons. Firstly, the empirical reality of war is that women are in the midst of it as civilians, activists, soldiers, and fighters. Most often, women’s experiences during wartime are marginalised, although feminist scholarship and activism have started to shift the discourse. As long as women’s participation in war is not acknowledged, women’s position in peace negotiations or post-conflict reconstruction will not be recognised. It is important to point out that women are not a unified group of people: there is a large diversity of intersectional identities, ideologies, and interests. This project focuses on self-identified Kashmiri women. Secondly, there is also an instrumental importance in bringing women to the centre of analysis. By accentuating women’s experiences in times of conflict, I simultaneously unravel the gender dimensions of the international system in which the
importance of the local is often subordinated to state-focused politics (Nordstrom 1997; Parashar 2013). Therefore, I find it important to accentuate women’s narratives of in/security as constitutive of the reproduction of in/security.

1.2 Aims of the study and research questions
The focus of the thesis is the relationship between women’s political activism and in/security. Through a case study of women activists in Kashmir, I interrogate how in/security affects activism. Data for the research consists of three focus group discussions and 13 in-depth interviews with politically active women in Kashmir. Through a narrative approach, as phrased by Bina D’Costa, I seek to capture accounts of “the lived experiences of people who had to ‘re-landscape their lives due to political events’” (2011, p. 13, in Parashar 2013, p. 624). The telling of our own story from now-to-then produces a shifting of identity. The narratable self is exemplified in the way that personal narrative constructs identity, and in turn, in/security. In order to make sense of their everyday experience of activist work in an in/secure location, the women’s actions are recounted through in/security narratives. The women’s narratives connect experiences of insecurity and instability to experiences of security and stability. I argue that they seek to fix and stabilise identity claims in this way, yet, as pointed out above, this fixing is only temporary; it is taking place in that specific narrative.

The central aim of this thesis is the exploration of politically active women’s narratives of everyday experiences of in/security. The objectives of this research are:
1. To map women’s political participation in Kashmir, and to understand whether and in what ways women have been marginalised and/or included in the Kashmiri political processes, with particular attention to links between gender norms, familial gender relations, and women’s political participation.
2. To understand the link between women’s political participation and discourses of national- and religious identities.
3. To understand the link between women’s political participation and discourses of in/security.

To meet the first objective, I conduct a literature review of the scholarship on Kashmiri history. I seek to explore the various roles played by women at different times in Kashmiri history, with particular attention to turning points such as the uprisings in 1931 and 1989. The review of the history is also important in describing how religious identities were politicised in different ways at different times.

The second objective involves the exploration of the relationship between women’s participation and discourses of national and religious identities. This is done through the historical review and the data collection in Kashmir. The review of the literature on gender and nation demonstrates that women are produced and presented as markers of the nation (whether the nation state or the religion). Much of the depictions of Kashmir in media, film, and academia have focused on representations of women as rape victims, crying mothers, and disempowered widows. This seeks to reproduce nationalist narratives of the Kashmiri people as victims of the Indian occupation.

The third objective involves investigating the link between women’s participation and discourses of in/security. Following the critical literature on security, I am interested in exploring what in/security does to the articulation of identities among the participants, particularly religious, regional, and gender identities. In turn, I am interested in how identities are produced to navigate in/security.

The central research question of this study is:
* What is the relationship between women's political activism and in/security?

This can be broken down into three sub-questions:
- What are the spaces in which women experience in/security?
- How is women’s in/security shaped and formed through participation or exclusion from political processes and the salience of national/religious identity?
- How do women overcome the constraints posed by in/security?

The study defines women’s political participation as women’s mobilisation, representation, participation, and influence in formal and informal political decision-making (Falch 2010, p. 2). The contextual set-up of the political space, with few women involved in formal politics, but a higher number in the informal sphere, makes this definition useful for this project.

Feminist IR scholars are interested in women’s everyday lives during times of conflict. There is an interest in what counts as security and to whom the concept applies. Feminist scholarship looks for the absences and silences in traditional IR work (Sjoberg 2010). Hence, security goes beyond the remit of the state and is understood in more broad and complex terms, focusing on issues beyond national security (Sjoberg 2009, p. 4). In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of how feminists have theorised women’s role in conflict as victims, warriors, soldiers, supporters, and peacebuilders. Yet, this literature fails to point out how in/security affects women’s everyday experiences of activism. The work undertaken by the participants of this study goes beyond peace activism, and includes health work, human rights work, and political activism. From the narratives, it is clear that a lot of the women’s work involves navigating in/security: in the home, on the street, or at national and international level. Hence, it is important to study the relationship between in/security and identity (Stern 2006a; Wibben 2011). Viewing security from a feminist perspective involves admitting “that we are always already insecure, that there is no escape from our fundamental condition of vulnerability — and ultimately, from death” (Wibben 2011, p. 113).

Importantly, critical security gives an insight into the productive and meaning-making aspects of security. By viewing “in/security as a textual practice which produces the subject of security through the naming of danger and threat implies that the ‘definition’ of insecurity must be contingent and open, and only can make sense in relation to the text” (Stern
Post-structural and narrative approaches to identity and subjectivity contend that identities are formed and understood by narratives. Identity is thus constructed by the stories that people tell “themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to/should be” (Yuval-Davis 2010, p. 266). Importantly, I differentiate between identity and subjectivity in that I view the latter as meaning the individual’s sense of self as well as their understanding of their place in the world, and the former as the discourses of social categories that affect the subjectivity in intersecting ways (Butler 1990, 1997c; Lloyd 1999, 2005; Parashar 2014; Tickner 2005; Weedon 2004; Wibben 2014). Gender is defined as a performative, which is not a deliberate act but rather a repetition of practices (Butler 1993, p. 2). Gender is thus the practices, norms, and characteristics that are placed within a “heterosexual matrix” and give meaning to what society considers “manly” and “womanly” (Butler 1993; Schippers 2007). The concept of hegemonic femininity as theorised by Mimi Schippers (2007) is useful, as it entails the femininities that are valued in the specific context and viewed as complementing hegemonic masculinities within a heteronormative framework. While Kashmiri hegemonic identities are under-researched, in both colonial and post-colonial India gender constructions were based on ideal notions of femininity, placing women in the private sphere. The literature on women participating in nationalist movements, before and after independence, demonstrate how politically active women straddled the public and private norms (Banerjee 2006; Basu 1996; Radhakrishnan 2009; Rao 1999b). These constructions resonate with the Kashmiri context, and are explored in depth in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.3 Research Design
In this study I use a qualitative case study approach to examine the relationship between activism and in/security as narrated through women’s
everyday experiences as political activists. In order to gather women’s in/security narratives, I conducted in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with politically active women in Kashmir. My fieldwork was conducted in Kashmir in the summer of 2011. The data is analysed through thematic narrative analysis (Riessman 2008). As the chapter on methodology demonstrates, feminist methodologies have inspired this thesis since its inception. Throughout, I am striving to engage in feminist reflexivity, which emphasises the importance of thinking about the role of the researcher, her identity, subjectivity, and the ethical implications of doing research (Ackerly and True 2008). Additionally, cross-cultural research in an insecure location required additional care and sensitivity, as it is located in a nexus of global relations of power that is formed by discourses of colonialism, liberalism, and development. Here, intersectional identities of race, gender, and class shape and form the interactions between the researcher and participants. Feminist approaches to research often invite the researcher to enter inside; for example, by claiming the personal is political and thus formulating research questions and projects focusing on the lives of people in the midst of the international (Ackerly, Stern and True 2006). Conducting research in Kashmir entailed its own specific challenges and opportunities (Parashar 2014). The growing literature on entering the field in insecure contexts provided me with insight and sensitivity on how to plan and carry out the research (Jacoby, 2006). However, during my time in Kashmir, I encountered situations I could never have planned for in advance, and I had to renegotiate my research plan in order to collect any sort of data at all.

1.4 Limitations
This thesis focuses on politically active Kashmiri women. Hence, the study does not aim to represent all Kashmiri women, but instead delivers a detailed analysis of the negotiations of a small group of women living in the Kashmir Valley. The participants were adult women of different ages from Srinagar District, Kupwara District in north Kashmir, and Budgam and Pulwama in the south. While this study does not seek to cover all areas and communities of Kashmir, the addition of Kupwara, Budgam, and Pulwama
districts gives insight into rural women’s lives, while Srinagar sheds light on the urban terrain. The professional affiliations of the participants varied: law, medicine, academia, housework/homework, and students. All of these women, except for one, were Muslim. The remaining one was a Pandit. While a greater religious and ethnic diversity would provide a more representative sample, the circumstances on the ground and the low number of politically active non-Muslims made this impossible. Nevertheless, the lone Pandit woman is included in the study, as her story provides an insightful counter-narrative to the Muslim women’s stories.

1.5 Outline of study
This thesis is divided in eight chapters. In the second chapter, I outline my understanding of the theoretical concepts used: gender, identity, and subjectivity. As critical and post-structuralist theorisations are underpinned by Foucauldian conceptualisations of power, I commence the chapter with a brief overview of power as productive forces and regulatory practices. Thereafter, I sketch an overview of the sex/gender distinction and Butler’s (1990, 1993) theorisation of gender, which contends that gender is produced through the reiteration of accepted gender norms and practices which she terms performativity. I explore the concepts of masculinity and femininity (Schippers 2007). In the interviews, the women reported how they adopted feminine practices when navigating the in/security terrain. Interestingly, this study has outlined certain practices associated with hegemonic and pariah femininities in Kashmir. Additionally, this chapter describes post-structural and narrative approaches to identity. I distinguish between identity and subjectivity. Identities are discourses of social categories that affect the subjectivity in intersecting ways, hence shaped and formed by power (Hall and Du Gay 1996; Yuval-Davis 2010). Subjectivity, then, is the individual’s sense of self as well as their understanding of their place in the world (Weedon 2004). Finally, I overview some of the constructions of femininity in India. Colonialism and post-colonial phenomena, such as globalisation and liberalisation, have contributed to the production of Indian femininities and masculinities. The socio-political
context of Kashmir has resulted in its own form of femininities which this thesis seeks to unpack.

In the third chapter, I provide a critical exposition of the concept of security in the theorisations of IR, with specific emphasis on critical security studies and feminist security studies. Through a dialogue between the theorisations of gender and identity outlined in Chapter 2 and theory on women’s lives in conflict zones, it is clear that security produces certain forms of accepted gender identity. This contributes to scholarship that explores the narratives of people living through war and its impacts on our subjectivities (Nordstrom 1997; Parashar 2013). Viewing security and insecurity as discursive practices that create security subjects implies that we need to understand the relationship between in/security and identity on the one hand, and identity and subjectivity on the other. Hence, security needs a fixed subject to securitise. From a gender perspective, as noted by Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry (2007) and Linda Åhäll (2012), women’s violence is framed as deviant and non-feminine. Hence, hegemonic femininity constitutes the opposite: the peaceful, nurturing mother, mourning her dead sons/husbands.

The fourth chapter outlines the journey taken in producing this thesis. This involves methodological decisions taken when preparing for fieldwork, in the field in Kashmir, and during analysis and writing up; it also involves my personal journey in Kashmir, and the role of my identity and positionality while carrying out the research from start to finish. Feminist writing is grounded in the personal, and I adopt an auto-biographical approach in this chapter when discussing the methodologies, as the fieldwork was a highly emotional and challenging experience (Dauphinee 2013; Inayatullah 2011). This chapter is also concerned with my attempts at tackling ethical concerns around security, representation, positionality, and reflexivity. Feminist reflexivity emphasises the importance of thinking about the role of the researcher, her identity, subjectivity, and the ethical implications of doing research (Stern 2006b, p. 192). The intersectional positionalities as a young, white, European woman presented me with both privileges and obstacles.
during the fieldwork. I am highly influenced by feminist and narrative epistemologies, and this acted as a foundation to my perception of how knowledge is obtained and produced (Stern 2006b). Therefore, I view the state as not the only relevant site of analysis, and I believe subjects to be relational and the world to be continually changing. This puts “traditional” approaches to knowledge on trial by bringing forward personal stories and making them count “scientifically.”

The fifth chapter presents an overview of Kashmiri history. It seeks to map women’s involvement in Kashmiri politics, as well as the role of identity politics. The outline of the history demonstrates the various roles played by women at different times. Although Kashmir is a society governed by strict gender roles, women participated in the political mobilisation against the Maharaja in the early 20th Century, as well as in the insurrection that started in 1989. While it can be argued that women took on the traditional feminine practices of nursing wounded militants and providing food and shelter, they also took to the streets during demonstrations and helped to transport arms. However, women’s political participation has not yet translated into formal politics. This chapter also charts the articulations of political identities taking place in Kashmir. Over the centuries, the religious demography of the state has changed from a Hindu to a Muslim majority location. While ideas of Kashmiriyat, a syncretic Kashmiri identity based on affiliation to location and not religion, were wide-spread, in reality, religious identities were highly politicised.

Chapters 6 and 7 present the findings from the fieldwork and weave them together with analysis and discussion. The sixth chapter explores the spatio-temporal locations of women’s everyday experience of activism in an in/secure location. Firstly, I focus on the spatio-temporal location of personal life in the family and community. I highlight how the women’s personal life is situated in a politics of location, where histories and structures of inequality, women’s experiences of in/security. Secondly, I examine how women’s experiences in the time and space of organisational life are coded by class, politics, and gender. Lastly, women’s experiences in
the time and space of the national life demonstrate that the relationship between in/security and resistance depends on/is founded on articulations of national and religious identities.

The seventh chapter presents an analysis of how the participant women represent their activism. It brings together the narratives that emerge from the three spatio-temporal locations outlined in the previous chapter by examining how activism is articulated in the participants’ narratives. The three main ways the women narrate their activism is through stories of heroines, respectable women, and pariahs. The heroine stories involve the participant saving other women. The stories are based on the binary of heroine/victim, in that the subjectivity of the participants as heroines is created in opposition to other women as victims. The respectable women stories involve the importance of being seen as a respectable woman to be able to do activism. These performativities seek to accomplish the contextualised norms of hegemony, mainly being a “good woman” and a “good Muslim,” which most often intersect and co-create in the ideal type woman: the good Muslim woman. Lastly, the pariah stories contain experiences of being an outsider and the lack of a secure or “securitisable” identity. These three categories are not archetypes of women activists, rather, they are archetypes of stories that the participants tell about their activism.

Finally, Chapter 8 provides a conclusion to the thesis. It summarises the findings and opens up a discussion for wider questions around in/security in Kashmir. I argue that this thesis provides unique insight into the relationship between women's political activism and in/security. The framework of spatio-temporal locations presented in Chapter 6 aided an in-depth study of the participants’ experiences of in/security in all parts of their lives. In/security was often gendered and based on class and religion. Following the argument that security needs a fixed subject to secure, that stable subject is personified by the Kashmiri Muslim (Stern 2006b, p. 193). Securitisation also requires an insecure subject, the Kashmiri as victim, and particularly the Kashmiri woman, around which the security project can mobilise. This
upholds nationalist discourses of the Kashmiri people as victims of Indian violence. As boundaries are created between inside and outside, us and them, as well as danger and safety (Stern 2006b), the Muslim identity needs to be protected and kept pure.

A second insight of this thesis is the impact of in/security on how activist women employ norms and practices of femininity. As noted above, there has been little research on Kashmiri femininities, and while this study does not seek to be comprehensive, it is a start. Hegemonic femininity contains the practices of being a devoted, sacrificing (heterosexual) wife/mother, and a pious Muslim. The narratives of respectable women clearly fit well with the hegemonic femininity, as the participants sought to do good, and to work according to what they viewed to be Islamic values. This reiteration of the acts of goodness seeks to produce a good, pious identity of the participant (Butler 1997a; Mahmood 2005). The heroine stories, on the contrary, do not uphold hegemonic femininity, but neither do they threaten normative understandings of femininity. Yet, some participants fail to adhere to hegemonic femininity. In the pariah stories, Sumita’s narratives of being a Pandit woman in Kashmir spoke of how she was always identified as a Pandit in her encounters. As a Pandit she was already othered, and her identity remained outside the delineation of identities regarded merited to be secured.
Chapter 2

Feminist perspectives on gender and identity

Feminism is an expansive, diverse, and interdisciplinary theoretical approach. It is both a political movement that has been organised around issues of gender equality, and an academic disciplinary field of inquiry. Politically and academically, feminists have started from the viewpoint that women’s lives matter (Wibben 2011, p. 12). During the last 30 years, feminists have engaged with the academic discipline of IR, which was traditionally considered to be gender-neutral and acted as if it were gender-blind (Enloe 1990). Feminist scholarship has demonstrated that IR and the arena of international politics are already gendered.

Due to the limited scope of this research project, this chapter, while it briefly outlines the development of feminism at the start of the second section, does not provide a deeper overview of the development of feminism nor its different manifestations and critiques. Instead, the focus is on the specific concepts that are relevant to this research project through the lens of post-structuralism and narrative inquiry, and with specific emphasis on gender and identity. The next chapter, then, will focus on the development of security studies as a field of research.

Firstly, I provide a very brief overview of how I understand power in this thesis. I follow a Foucauldian theorisation of power as productive forces and regulatory practices. In this sense, social relations are embedded in power. In the second part, I describe the sex/gender distinction and the theorisation of gender. I agree with Butler that gender is produced through performativity, that is, the reiteration of accepted gender norms and practices. In social reality, gender is played out through enactments of masculinities and femininities. I also clarify how I justify a post-structuralist perspective in the thesis, with a deconstructive understanding of women while researching self-identified women’s experiences. In order to do this, I use Peterson’s conceptualisation of gender as analytical, and gender as empirical. Analytical gender analysis focuses on the gendered foundations of our understanding of our world that are based on power hierarchies and
notions of masculinity and femininity, while empirical gender analysis focuses on the lived realities of people that identify as women. In the third part, I outline how identity and subjectivity have been theorised with a specific focus on post-structural and narrative approaches. Post-structuralist perspectives have provided an understanding of identities that are shaped and formed by power and in relation to the other. In the fourth part, I explore some of the constructions of femininity in India. I describe how, during colonial times, Indian masculinities were constructed in resistance to British masculinities, which, subsequently, affected notions of Indian femininities. Post-colonial femininities were clearly based on these, but globalisation and liberalisation have in turn shaped urban, middle-class femininities into new constructions based on norms of gender, class and nation. The socio-political context of Kashmir has resulted in its own forms of femininities, which have not been widely researched.

2.1 A brief note on power

The concept of power is “essentially contested […] and, thus, notoriously difficult to define” (Connolly 1983; Lukes 2005, in Bloom 2013, p. 222). Power is extensively theorised in the field of political science and IR, and while I do not seek to provide an in-depth examination of power, this brief overview has two objectives. Firstly, it serves to place this thesis in a post-structural context: my understanding of gender, identity, and subjectivity is influenced by feminist and critical scholarship, which emphasise the role of power in discursively producing these. Secondly, by clearly stating how I perceive power as regulative practices, I situate my reading of the participants’ narratives as products of discourse.

As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, traditional realist conceptualisations of IR understand power as a zero-sum game, wherein one party always has power over the other, and a balance of power is essential in order to maintain peace (Mouritzen 1997). However, critical and

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8 The scope of this study does not allow space for a deeper analysis of power, but it is important to note the epistemological foundations on which the argument is based.
feminist security scholars follow Michel Foucault, who has developed a more complex perspective on power:

…power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere of which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallisation is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies (Foucault 1978, pp. 92-93).

Power, here, is not the traditional concept of power over something, but rather a type of power “that link[s] the juridical (i.e. the legislative, legal, and judicial apparatuses) with everyday lived experience and ‘common sense’” (Chambers and Carver 2008, p. 37). Power is regulatory practices that “produces the bodies it governs” (Butler 1993, p. 1). Hence, for Foucault, power is “formative or productive, malleable, multiple, proliferative, and conflictual” (Butler 1997c, p. 99). This productive power is about discourse, which is a concept that refers to “systems of signification” (Barnett and Duvall 2006, p. 20) that are produced through sites of social relations of power. It is within a discursive framework, where identities are formulated, as demonstrated below.

This understanding of power may be criticised for being imprecise and uncertain. Yet, as Bloom asserts, “instead of attempting to define, or find the ‘essence’, of either of these concepts [power and resistance], it is more instructive to see how certain characteristics of each speak to their stabilizing rather than dislocating effect” (Bloom 2013, p. 222). This follows Haugaard (2010) in that power is not understood as singular, but has a series of distinctive features. “Power, to this end, is increasingly understood as fundamentally relational in nature, composed of a ‘cluster of relations’” (Foucault 1980, p. 198, in Bloom 2013, p. 222). Through this, we learn that, while it is probably impossible to define power, we can study the role of power in forming relationships. Power is about the “culturally
embedded lived relationship between subjects” (Bloom 2013, p. 223). As relationships are shaped and formed by power, and we understand ourselves in relation to the “other” (Yuval-Davis 2010), identities are thus produced by power. This is explored in more depth in the third section of this chapter.

2.2 Gender
Feminism is the political ideology that seeks to advance women’s position in society and to enhance gender equality. Historically, feminist politics sought a stable, coherent, and unified subject. First wave theorisations of feminism generally focused on an essentialised understanding of the woman, connected to her reproductive organs and “natural” womanhood. Thus, there was no questioning of what the category of woman actually involved. These conceptualisations of feminism, mainly approached from liberal perspectives, focused on women’s advancements in public roles such as political representation and participation (Nussbaum 2000; Okin 1989). Contemporary liberal feminists continue to be concerned with women’s involvement in the public sphere. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this essentialised woman was often assumed to be white and middle-class (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983). Second wave theorisations interrogated the notion that politics is only situated in the formal sphere at governmental level. Radical second wave scholars argued that the government was a stronghold of patriarchal power, and that patriarchy would not be overthrown simply by women entering formal politics. Feminists also contended that placing politics in the public sphere concealed gendered power relations that shaped and formed the personal. By politicising personal life, including sexual relations, radical feminists redefined the realm of politics (Myron and Bunch 1975). The radical feminist theorisations did not, however, question the notion of the woman. In these perspectives, the essentiality of the woman was increasingly emphasised, as there was an amplified focus on the woman’s body and its specificities. Sexual relations became a political concern, sex work and pornography were criticised as violence against women, and political lesbianism became a political strategy (Bunch 2005). Theorisations distinguished between sex and gender, wherein sex was the natural,
biological categorisation of male and female, while gender was the social enactment of these categories (Rubin 1975).

While these political developments were crucial for the development of contemporary feminist thought and the socio-political context of Western democracies, they remain based on the understanding of a fixed unitary subject. Attempts to generalise feminism and womanhood into a whitewashed global sisterhood have been resisted and questioned by feminists in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, as well as by women of colour in Europe and North America (Combahee River Collective 2005; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983; Truth 2005). Instead, intersecting forms of oppression based on gender, as well as race, class, religion, and sexuality, were highlighted. These feminists also accentuated issues of colonialism and post-colonialism, and Western women’s, including Western feminists’, entanglement therein (Mohanty 1988; Spivak 1988). Post-structural scholars also questioned the idea of an essential and global understanding of what a woman is (Butler 1990), and viewed feminism as “a field of critical practices that cannot be totalized” (Butler and Scott 1992, p. xiii). Post-structuralism itself has also been criticised for being irreconcilable with feminist thought, however, vast scholarship has proved differently (Lloyd 2005; McNay 2000).

In the brief outline of the first and second waves of feminism presented above, sex was presented as a natural fact. This idea was deconstructed by Butler (1990) when she argued that sex, as gender, is a production of language and discourse. This perspective demonstrates that “woman” is not a unitary or stable subject, but is produced through discourse. Yet, there is no single discourse that produces “woman”: sexual difference is created through social, cultural, and political processes (Lloyd 2005, p. 19).

**Gender performativity**

According to Butler, gender is not the social construct of biological sex, as sex is also constructed by discourses. Butler (1990) argues that “gender is not to culture as sex is to nature, gender is also the discursive/cultural means
by which ‘sexed nature’ or ‘a natural sex’ is produced and established as prediscursive . . . a *politically neutral surface* on which culture acts” (Butler 1990, p. 11. Italics in original). By using the concept of discourse, Butler refers to Foucault, for whom discourse is not merely language, but “[…] the sociohistorical material conditions that enable and constrain disciplinary knowledge practices such as speaking, writing […].” Discursive practices produce, rather than merely describe, the ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ of knowledge practices” (Barad 2003, p. 817). What, then, produces the materialised, sexed, and gendered subjects? In order to understand this, Butler uses theories of language as a system of signification that produces subjects through interpellation (Butler 1993). Here, gender is understood as a doing, or, as phrased by Butler, a “performative.” This performative is not a singular conscious act, but rather a “reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (Butler 1993, p. 2).

The theory of performative is taken from J.L. Austin’s lectures from 1955 (Austin 1976) where he states:

> I propose to call it [an utterance that states what you do, and does what you state] a *performative sentence* or a performative utterance, or, for short, ‘a performative’. The term ‘performative’ will be used in a variety of cognate ways and construction, much as the term ‘imperative’ is. The name is derived, of course, from ‘perform’ the usual verb with the noun ‘action’: it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action […] (Austin 1976, p. 6. Italics in original).

For Austin, there is more to the power of language than just *saying something*; by saying something the language can actually *do something*. For Butler “[p]erformative acts are forms of authoritative speech” (Butler 1993, p. 225). This performative property of utterances is founded on their “ritual” characteristics. This means that the meaning is repeatedly reinforced in time in the form of a ritual (Butler 1997a, p. 3). These types of statement perform a kind of discursive power: they do what they say. However, at the same time, these utterances are produced *through* discursive power.

It is the “the cultural apparatus of gender that produces binary sex and it does so in a way that normalizes certain bodies, genders and sexualities and
pathologizes others” (Lloyd 2005, p. 134). This links with the function of “compulsory heterosexuality” wherein the “specific relationship between sex, gender and desire in which gender follows from sex and desire follows from gender” (Lloyd 2005, p. 134. Italics in original).

Heteronormativity then, continues to have significance as the tendency that has produced particular forms of family, gendered identities and desires as natural, eternal or historically progressive, through the mechanisms of law and state, and in the realm of ideas (Menon 2007, p. 10). Thus the reiterated enactment of heterosexual norms retroactively produces, on the one hand, “the appearance of gender as an abiding interior depth” (Butler 1997b, p. 14) and on the other hand, the seeming realness of sexual difference “which serves to further consolidate the heterosexual imperative” (Mahmood 2005, p. 19). Butler fails to study the meaning of gender practices in-depth, specifically those that are discursively coded as “womanly.” Schippers (2007) proposes a theory which scrutinises the meanings of masculinity and femininity and how the practice of these hierarchies results in asymmetrical power relations and distribution of resources. I explore these theories below, but first I outline how gender can be understood and used in the study of IR.

For feminist theory and praxis in the international arena, Spike Peterson has made the distinction between gender as analytical and gender as empirical. The empirical use of gender focuses on women and women’s roles, lives, and challenges. It involves gender as the common understanding of a biological dichotomy of male/female sex difference. “Understood empirically, gender can be deployed as a variable to investigate, for example, how women and men are differently affected by, and differently participate in, political and economic practices” (Peterson 2007, p. 4). Gender as analytical, on the contrary, examines how gender produces and sustains power relations and creates dichotomies such as femininity and masculinity. This entails gender as a “signifying system of masculine-feminine differentiations that constitutes a governing code… [G]ender pervades language and culture, systematically shaping not only who we are but how we think and what we do” (Peterson 2007, p. 4). The distinction
between the empirical and the analytical aspects of gender becomes clear when investigating women’s role in conflict. I contend, however, that it is the analytical aspect of gender that initially generates the gendered specificities of women’s experiences and often makes women’s activism invisible. It has been argued that gender as an empirical category is more useful and more accessible in policy contexts (Carpenter 2003, 2006). Nevertheless, scholars have argued that research focusing on gender as an empirical concept only, neglects the power relations that create dichotomies such as masculinity/femininity (Kinsella 2005, 2006). In the next section, I explore theorisations of masculinity and femininity in more depth, with specific focus on femininity from sociological perspectives.

**Femininities**

Masculinities and femininities are the configurations of meanings through which gender operates in different contexts and locations. Raewyn Connell, one of the most influential scholars on masculinity, and James Messerschmidt define masculinity as “…simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 71). Here it is important to note that Connell is working within a different epistemological framework to Butler in that she argues that gender is defined in the “‘reproductive arena’, which includes ‘bodily structures and processes of human reproduction’, that organises practice at all levels of social organization from identities, to symbolic rituals, to large-scale institutions” (Connell 1995, in Schippers 2007, p. 86). This differs from Butler in that Connell does not consider gender to be a performative based on a reiteration of gender practices. Butler criticises scholars who reproduce the binary gender system, “where masculinity opposes femininity in the way that male opposes female” (Lloyd 2005, p. 134). This involves the straight-forward aligning of sex and gender, in that femininity is connected to the female body and masculinity to the male. Research has pointed out how there are biological sexes that are neither female nor male, and that there can be more genders than sexes. Schippers integrates a Butlerian critique of compulsory
heterosexuality (or the heterosexual matrix, as it is also referred to) to Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity in order to produce a useful theory of masculinity and femininity that is dislocated from gendered bodies (Schippers 2007).

While extensive research has been done on masculinity, femininity is still an under-researched area. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on femininity as theorised by Connell and followed up by Schippers. While scholars on Kashmir, such as Parashar (2010), have hinted at the roles of hegemonic femininities for women’s position in Kashmir, substantial research has not been carried out on the topic so far. In my reading of the interview transcripts, it was clear that Kashmiri notions of femininity were at play in their activism. I start by describing the main tenets of Connell’s theories of masculinity in order to facilitate an understanding of Schippers’ reworking of it.

In Connell’s theories of masculinity and femininity, there are no femininities that are hegemonic (Connell 1987). “All forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men. For this reason, there is no femininity that holds among women the position held by hegemonic masculinity among men” (Connell 1987, p. 187). Instead, there is “emphasised femininity,” which,

...is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men. [...] Others [femininities] are defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of non-compliance. Others again are defined by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation (Connell 1987, pp. 184-185). Connell argues that there are multiple femininities, but as her studies are more focused on the relationships between masculinities – particularly the dominance of hegemonic masculinity over other subordinate and marginalised masculinities - she does not elaborate further.

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9 For a comprehensive overview of theory and research on masculinities, see Kimmel, Hearn, & Connell (2005); for an overview of critiques of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, see Connell & Messerschmidt (2005).
In contrast to Connell’s concept of emphasised femininity, Schippers argues that there is a hegemonic femininity:

Hegemonic femininity consists of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Schippers 2007, p. 94).

The concept of hegemonic femininity, as well as its antidote, pariah femininity, is highly useful for this study. As the narratives of the participants that I explore in Chapters 6 and 7 reveal, hegemonic ideas of femininity in Kashmir involve notions of respectable womanhood based on religious piety and doing good.

It is important to note that masculinity and femininity are not “static roles or a fixed set of behaviors that women and men adopt” (Schippers 2007, p. 94). Instead practices and behaviours that are considered womanly and manly are discursively produced and constantly changing. For Schippers, masculinity and femininity are understood “as produced, contested, and transformed through discursive processes, and therefore embedded within and productive of power relations” (Schippers 2007, p. 93). Power dynamics are pivotal here, not only in the theorisation of the hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity, but also in the “dynamics of the production, proliferation, and contestation of discourses articulating what men and women and their relationship to each other is and should be” (Schippers 2007, p. 93). Hegemonic femininity makes space for multiple feminities without “reducing femininity to the practices of women and masculinity to the practices of men as it distinguishes femininity from subordinate masculinities” (Bäckström 2013, p. 34). As Schippers points out, heterosexual desire\(^\text{10}\) acts as the centre in the production of gender identities:

For Butler, heterosexual desire, as a defining feature for both women and men, is what binds the masculine and feminine in

\(^{10}\) Although Schippers carefully constructs “heterosexual desire” as specific to Western societies, Menon’s (2007) exploration of heteronormativity and counter-heteronormativity demonstrates that practices of “heterosexual desire” as a central organiser take different shapes and forms in different contexts. In the Indian context, heteronormativity is a central organising category of gender (together with caste and community) (Menon 2007, p. 24).
a binary, hierarchical relationship. In contemporary Western societies, heterosexual desire is defined as an erotic attachment to difference, and as such, it does the hegemonic work of fusing masculinity and femininity together as complementary opposites. Thus, it is assumed that men have a natural attraction to women because of their differences and women have a natural attraction to men (Schippers 2007, p. 90).

There are two important aspects of Schippers’ theorisation of hegemonic femininities. Firstly, it is contextual. She argues that femininities and masculinities are deeply rooted in contextual norms, traditions, and cultures. What is considered hegemonic in one location, might not be so in another (Schippers 2007). Secondly, the viewing of femininities and masculinities as characteristics and practices that define the hierarchical relationship between women and men actually gives a “conceptual and empirical space to identify idealized gender characteristics that do not perpetuate male dominance” (Schippers 2007, p. 97). These are important foundations for a theorisation of women’s experiences. In the next section, I demonstrate how identity and subjectivity are theorised in post-structural literature.

2.3 Identity and subjectivity

Jettisoning the idea that humans have a vital core and, therefore accepting that subjects are constituted, means also jettisoning the idea that human nature is repressed, or alienated. There is no essential self that is distorted or denied by social, economic or political structures, only a variety of subjects constituted by and constituting themselves through the interplay of competing discourses and practices (Lloyd 2005, p. 23). Since the early 20th Century, identity has been widely theorised and researched in different academic fields (for a comprehensive overview, see Wetherell 2010). Importantly, identity is a central aspect of critical and feminist security scholarship, as next chapter demonstrates. In order to disentangle security and identity, it is essential to first look at how identity is understood.

The scholarship on identity is extensive and diverse. Much of it treats identity and subjectivity interchangeably. Similarly, it views identity formation and subjectification as indistinguishable. In this thesis, I
differentiate between identity and subjectivity, in that I interpret the latter as the individual’s sense of self as well as their understanding of their place in the world, and the former as the discourses of social categories that affect the subjectivity in intersecting ways (Butler 1990, 1997c; Lloyd 1999, 2005; Weedon 2004). Yet, the two are in relationship, and we cannot study one in isolation from the other. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on post-structural theorisations that follow Foucault as well as narrative perspectives that have built on and extended Foucault’s theories. These approaches argue that identities are complex, multiple, and contingent.

Foucauldian approaches to identity and subjectivity
Scholars who follow Foucault argue that identities arise both through discourses and processes of governmentality, and through practices of resistance to these discourses. In this understanding, identities are considered socially, culturally, politically and historically contingent, relational (deriving meaning with reference to what they are not), and a process (Menon 2007, p. 18). Foucault’s work identifies the normalising techniques of modern society (Foucault 1978, 1979, 1988). In his genealogy of the prison and prisoner, Foucault (1979) focuses on the intersections between power and knowledge that are formed by specific forms of expertise in discourses that wield their own form of identity normalisation on all of us. In his work on madness, the creation of the rational man and the modern self is presented (Foucault 1988). Hence, for Foucault, as outlined in the previous section, power is a central factor in the process of the making of the self.

Stuart Hall has sought to develop Foucault’s understanding of identity by bringing in a performative perspective:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more that product of the marking of difference and exclusion, then they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity – an ‘identity’ in its
traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differential) (Hall 1996, p. 4).

For Hall, identity is formed in the relationship between subjects and discursive practices, “or rather, if one prefers to stress the process of subjectification to discursive practices, and the politics of exclusion which all such subjectification appears to entail, the question of identification” (Hall 1996, p. 2. Italics in original). Hence, there is a close connection between identity and subjectivity.

Subjectivity in post-structural thought refers to the sense of self as constituted by historically and culturally contingent subject positions. Theorisations of subjectivity agree that becoming the subject is often through the process of subjugation (Butler 1997c). Veena Das (2000) defines subjectification as "the felt interior experience of the person that includes his or her positions in a field of relational power" (Das et al. 2000, p. 2). According to Foucault, “[t]he soul is the prison of the body” (Foucault 1979, p. 30), which implies that the prison not only regulates a prisoner’s behaviour, but also produces the prisoner. Hence, subjectification consists of a two-sided view of the human subject: the first concerns the human as a subject engaging with contextual situations, while the second involves the human becoming subject to, in the sense of being constituted by, contextual situations (Foucault 1979, 1988). Yet, importantly, Foucault demonstrates that the subject is not necessarily a captive of dominant discourses, but argues that there is space for resistance, in that “…resistance as an effect of power” (Butler 1997c, p. 98). The constitution of the subject within and in relation to context and discourses is thus never fixed. Chris Weedon’s elaboration is helpful in understanding the relationship between identity and subjectivity:

Identity is perhaps best understood as a limited and temporary fixing for the individual of a particular mode of subjectivity as apparently what one is. One of the key ideological roles of identity is to curtail the plural possibilities of subjectivity inherent in the wider discursive field and to give individuals a singular sense of who they are and where they belong. This process involves recruiting subjects to the specific meanings and values constituted within a particular discourse and encouraging identification. […] While it is possible to be a
subject without identification, identity presupposes some degree of self-recognition on the part of the subject, often defined in relation to what one believes one is not. For example, from our earliest years we learn who we are and what this should mean. We learn that we are female or male, even though we may not identify with or conform to ‘socially appropriate’ forms of female or male behaviour (Weedon 2004, p. 19).

The Foucauldian notion of subjectification has been criticised and extended by many scholars. Louis McNay notes that, while Foucauldian theorising views subjectification as formed through a logic of freedom and constraint, the emphasis is mostly on the latter (McNay 1999, p. 316). Theories of narratives expand Foucault’s notion that the self is produced by power relations of specific historical and cultural practices, but that the self is in a constant process of becoming (Tamboukou 2008).

**Narrative approaches to identity and subjectivity**

Human experience is most commonly ordered through narratives. It is through the connection with and retelling of events that we make sense of ourselves and our place in the world perspective (Bruner 1985, 1990, 1991, 2002; Labov and Waletzky 1968; Ochs and Capps 2001; Polkinghorne 1988). Narratives bring order to our understanding of the world and hence construct our world. “Narratives provide a very rich basis from which to explore political identities; critically, what an individual or a community choose to tell about themselves is intricately tied to how they construct their political ideologies” (Andrews 2007, p. 11). Narrative approaches to subjectification demonstrate that identities are formed and understood by narratives (Andrews 2007; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2008; McNay 2000; Yuval-Davis 2010). According to these perspectives, identity is constructed by the stories that people tell “themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to/should be” (Yuval-Davis 2010, p. 266). Identities are thus relational, which means that they are constructed through associating with other people or distancing oneself from the other (Andrews 2007). They are also contextual, in that “[t]he story of an individual life – the coherence of individual identity – depends, for its very intelligibility, on the stories of
collective identity that constitute a culture … cultures and societies organize individual identity” (Rice 2002, p. 80, in Andrews 2007, p. 13). The narrative provides meaning, but it never fixes this meaning. In a sense, this is in consonance with Hall’s (1996) perspective on identities as always in the process of being constructed. Maria Tamboukou considers “…the self as a threshold, a door, a becoming between multiplicities, an effect of a dance between power and desire, nomadic and yet narratable” (Tamboukou 2008, p. 285). This dance, as Tamboukou describes the interplay between power and desire that never settles, represents how narrative constitutes the individual. As I have discussed in the introduction, and further elaborate in the following chapters, “the very act of narration is immanently political, relational and embodied” (Tamboukou 2008, p. 285).

Embedded within the fluidity of its social, cultural and political milieu, the narratable self is always provisional, intersectional and unfixed. It is not a unitary core self, but rather a system of selves grappling with differences and taking up subject positions, not in a permanent way, but rather temporarily, as points of departure for nomadic becomings (Braidotti, 2006). The stories of the narratable self can thus be seen as events, prisms refracting actual and virtual possibilities of becoming, and in this sense I have called her the nomadic narratable self (Tamboukou 2008, p. 285).

Narrative, hence, is both ontological, “…constitutive of the self as narratable – and political in the Arendtian sense – exposing the vulnerability of the self and its dependence on others from the very moment of her birth” (Tamboukou 2008, p. 288).

Every telling provides narrators and listener/readers with an opportunity for fragmented self-understanding. Each telling of a narrative situated in time and space engages only facets of a narrator’s or listener/reader’s selfhood in that it evokes only certain memories, concerns, and expectations […]. In this sense, narratives are apprehended by partial selves, and narratives so apprehended access only fragments of experience (Ochs and Capps 1996, pp. 21-22).

It is thus clear that narratives and post-structural approaches share the rejection of a whole self that can be completely known. Yet, McNay (1999) points out an important difference between the two perspectives: the pivotal position of narrative to subjectivity implies that there are strong limitations to the ways in which identity can be changed. This suggests, unlike the external force present in post-structural thought, that “constraint is also self-
imposed. Individuals act in certain ways because it would violate their sense of being to do otherwise” (McNay 1999, p. 318).

The understanding of subjectivity as narrative is infused in this study. In my analysis of the interviews, I am interested in how the participants construct their sense of self through their stories. For this thesis, this has both methodological and theoretical implications. While I discuss the methodological implications in more depth in Chapter 4, it is important to highlight one point here: as experience is mediated through narrative, the self is a creation from “now-to-then” (Nordstrom 1997, p. 22). As Ochs and Capps point out “Narrative mediates this involvement. Personal narratives shape how we attend to and feel about events. They are partial representations and evocations of the world as we know it” (Ochs and Capps 1996, p. 21). This implies that multiple shifts occur in the narratives, as they are translated from when the experience happened to when the narration takes place. This is followed by further translations from the transcript to the academic work. These translations have crossed multiple linguistic, national, and disciplinary borders before ultimately being presented in the academic text (Brännlund, Kovacic and Lounasmaa 2013). Paying attention to these translations and the positionality of the researcher is the strength of narrative research. The theoretical implication of understanding subjectivity as narrative is that it aids the exploration of the functioning of narratives of the self in an in/secure context.

From a methodological perspective, it is important to consider Nordstrom’s assertion that “[w]hile all narrative is experience, not all experience is narrative. This sounds like a simple truism, but too often the terms are relegated to a single process: the event which occurs, and which we recognize in thought, speech, and action” (Nordstrom 1997, p. 20). Hence, when participants narrate their experiences, these experiences are filtered through intersectional identities, power, and contextual groundwork (Tamboukou 2008).
Intersectionality
In our social world, some of the most widespread formations of identity are race, gender, class, sexuality, and nationality\(^{11}\) (Hardin 2001, p. 7167). These are, at times, considered meta-identities; as they draw on discursive constructs of social categories and impact our subjectivity (Yus 2001). Scholars often differentiate between personal and collective identities. Yuval-Davis (2006a, 2010) notes the importance of social categories, or collectives as above, as one, often-central, aspect of identity narratives. However, personal narratives can be about individual characteristics, such as body image or career goals. Yet, Yuval-Davis concedes by noting that “even such stories as these often relate, directly or indirectly, to the perceptions of self and/or Others of what being a member of such a grouping or collectivity (ethnic, racial, national, cultural, religious) might mean” (Yuval-Davis 2010, p. 267). The concept of collective identity does not imply that individuals choose one identity over another, but instead focuses on the relational aspects of identity formation. Collective identity is less about how one sees oneself and more about the values and attributes that one feels are attributed to his or her group(s) because of how the group(s) is(are) seen by others. For Iris Marion Young (2000), a social group is a “collective of persons differentiated from others by cultural forms, practices, special needs or capacities, structure of power, or privilege” (Young 2000, p. 153). Thus it is less the shared attributes of its members than the relationship they have with the other. Lisa García Bedolla (2005) attempts to bridge individual levels of identity with contextuality. This involves “recognizing that both our everyday lives and the larger cultures in which we operate shape our senses of who we are and what we could become” (García Bedolla 2005). Hence, both personal and collective identities are formed through processes of relating to the “other.” Collective identities are the foundation of identity politics discourses, for instance as national identity which “is defined in an exclusive relationship of difference from others that is most often tied to place or lack of it” (Weedon 2004, p. 20).

\(^{11}\) This is not a complete list. Lutz argued that there are at least 14 forms of social category (Lutz 2002, in Yuval-Davis 2006a).
There is thus a link between identities and social categories such as race, gender, and sexuality. These categories are placed on,

…macro axes of social power but also involve actual, concrete people. Social divisions have organizational, intersubjective, experiential, and representational forms, and this affects the ways we theorize them as well as the ways in which we theorize the connections between the different levels (Yuval-Davis 2006b, p. 198).

According to Kimberlé Crenshaw, the issue is not the existence of categories, but “rather the particular values attached to them, and the way those values foster and create social hierarchies” (Crenshaw 1991, p. 1297). Crenshaw presents a Foucauldian approach to how power has attached to certain categories but not to others (Crenshaw 1991, p. 1297). This was the foundation of the theory of intersectionality which concerns how different forms of differentiation interact and interlink in people’s lives. It considers how various biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, and other kinds of identity interact on multiplex and often concurrent levels, leading to structural injustice and social inequality (Crenshaw 1989; Hill Collins 1991). Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix view:

…the concept of ‘intersectionality’ as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands (Brah and Phoenix 2004, p. 76).

Conventional manifestations of oppression like racism, sexism, and homophobia do not occur independently of one another. Instead, these conceptualisations of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the “intersection” of multiple forms of discrimination.

For women activists in Kashmir, intersectional positionalities of religion, class, locality, age, education, and family background strongly affect their access to activist work and the obstacles confronting them. In the following chapters, I describe how urban, educated women who live in gated houses and have personal drivers have different security concerns to poor, rural
women who have to travel long distances on public transport to get to work. While no one in Kashmir is immune to the in/security context, intersectional positionalities buffer or enhance the effects of in/security.

2.4 Constructions of gender in South Asia
Above I have outlined my understanding of gender and identity as derived from the literature. While gender roles in the Indian context have been researched extensively, there has been less work published on Kashmiri women. In this section, I survey the literature on gender in South, with specific attention to Kashmir. India, in itself a highly diverse nation, has a diverse population and vast regional and religious differences, and I do not seek to generalise its diverse population. Kashmir Valley, then, has its own specific history and socio-cultural context. Unlike large parts of what is now India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, Kashmir was never immersed in the British Empire and was not part of the anti-imperialist struggle. Kashmir’s socio-political history, therefore, has created its specific norms of femininity and masculinity.

Colonial and post-colonial constructions of gender in India
The research on Indian gender roles by scholars (Banerjee 2006; Menon 2007; Rao 1999b) has demonstrated how cultural and social norms in the different politico-religious contexts in the region produce gender identities. During colonial times, among the middle and upper classes, gender roles were produced in terms of inner and outer space. Many of these identities were built on a submissive and passive femininity which was confined to the home and required support from the outside. Women were constructed at the centre of the inner world, whereas the exterior domain of the public belonged to men (Thapan 2001).

Feminist scholars of nationalism have highlighted how during the anti-imperialist movement in the early 20th Century, women were interpellated as mothers. “Women's subordinate position in Indian society provided a justification for British rule and, [...] British interest lay ‘both in maintaining women’s subordinate position and in liberalising it,’ thus
contradicting itself in its approach toward women” (Liddle and Joshi 1985, p. 524, in Thapar-Björkert 1997, p. 494). Hence, women became central to nationalist discourse within India and nationalist leadership stated that women would become emancipated after the country had achieved independence (Thapar-Björkert 1997).

The process through which women's involvement was facilitated was by different representations of women constructed by nationalist leaders. Assigning women to certain role models through these representations was essential for the strategic development of the movement. Such representations opened up both the public and domestic domains and facilitated the contribution of women to the nationalist movement. Not only were the public/private boundaries blurred, the domestic arena became an important site for the steady politicisation of women's consciousness. Women did not have to be active in the public space to demonstrate their level of political consciousness and its adaptability to the prevailing political agenda” (Thapar-Björkert 1997, p. 494).

In the next chapter, I discuss the literature on gender and nation in more depth, but it is important here to briefly mention how the ideal woman was constructed during this time. In the early years of nationalist mobilisation, there were attempts to create a “new woman.” This woman was supposed to be educated, but also to maintain her central role in the family.

The formal education that middle-class women received inculcated ‘feminine’ virtues of cleanliness, discipline, restraint, and domestic responsibility. What is important is that the ‘new woman’ construct was used by those women who wanted to acquire limited education, but still maintain the harmony of the household (Thapar-Björkert 1997, p. 495). Shakuntala Rao notes that during the Indian independence movement, women joined the public sphere only for the nationalist cause. Afterwards they were expected to return home to their roles as mothers, wives, and, sisters (Rao 1999b, p. 318). Hence, both in colonial and post-colonial India, gender constructions were based on ideal notions of femininity that placed women in the household.

The literature on women participating in nationalist movements, both before and after independence, demonstrates how politically active women straddled public and private norms. On the one hand, they advocated the
private as the ideal place for women, and on the other, they entered the public themselves as politically active in supporting the cause. Sikata Banerjee (2003, 2006) gives account for how “the British gaze” constructed an identity of Christian manliness amongst the colonisers during the British era, which was juxtaposed against the constructed femininity amongst Indian men. Thus, Indian men responded by establishing their masculinity in the inner sanctum of the family, resulting in the creation of an ideal of a “chaste wife, devoted to husband and children” (Banerjee 2006, p. 67). Banerjee (2003) asserts that Hindu nationalism, as a response to the hegemonic masculinity inherent in the British colonial mission, became masculinised, and created its own form of masculinity based on the idea of the Hindu warrior. Women, in turn, created a space for activism by embracing the concepts of the warrior defending the nation, the wife supporting the warring husband and the mother nurturing the warrior sons (Banerjee 2003, p. 169). To some extent, these constructions live on today. In contemporary Hindu nationalist movements, such as the Bharatiya Janata Party, are highly male-dominated, but women negotiate this space by enacting values of family and chastity (Banerjee 2005; Basu 1996).

While women leaders in the BJP pay lip service to women’s oppression in public speeches, the BJP women’s organisation has not organised around issues like rape, female feticide or dowry deaths, which are the real violence women confront in their everyday lives. Instead these leaders emphasise women’s roles as dutiful wives and mothers (Basu 1996, p. 71). Yet, importantly, cultures are not static, but are constantly changing; and norms are contested. Contemporary globalisation, and its spread of capitalism and neoliberalism, has affected South Asian gender norms:

Global culture enters the home and erodes at that which is sacred, the inner sanctum, the woman, through a re-articulation of her identity as more directed to the outer world, as defined in the Western world, and this can be seen as a process of recolonization. In contemporary India so-called ‘old’ modes of contact (including religious practices, cultural tradition, and social custom) and apparently ‘new’ ones (most significantly, educational processes and the visual and print media) shape, influence, structure, and construct gender identity in particular and varied ways (Thapan 2001, p. 360).

12 Henceforth abbreviated as BJP.
Meenakshi Thapan (2001) argues that the post-colonial Indian woman is impacted by discourses of liberalism and Westernisation, wherein Western ideals of feminine beauty and behaviour have become hegemonic, while at the same time shaped by traditional norms:

This new construction is projected through the media primarily in terms of an enhanced physical appearance and a sexual identity as now constituting the core of the modern Indian woman’s identity. The resulting ambivalent construction of the Indian woman as one who is liberated and yet somehow adheres to traditional norms and values is thus a faithful reproduction of what has gone before. What is new, however, is not so much the experience of struggle as the articulation and awareness of this struggle by young women in postcolonial cultures, who seek to produce new cultural forms and practices in the process of constructing themselves as women (Thapan 2001, p. 370).

This resonates with Smitha Radhakrishnan’s study of female information technology professionals’ understanding and enactment of respectable femininity (Radhakrishnan 2009). The participants of her study spoke about the importance of upholding family values and choosing the family ahead of career. Despite the impact of globalisation Radhakrishnan holds that current constructions of femininity are produced from discourses of gender, nation, and class:

The reliance of Indian nationalism upon a gendered model of middle-class domesticity as the nation’s essence not only reflects the extent to which Indian nationalist constructs emerged as a response to British ones, but also attests to the power of gendered icons in securing a claim for the nation’s cultural superiority (Radhakrishnan 2009, p. 200).

She argues that the family is upheld as the core value of Indian identity (Radhakrishnan 2009). “Thus, contemporary middle-class, urban India finds itself in a safe, patriarchal haven as far as the politics of the family is concerned. The family remains the cradle of nurturance, comfort, and security that it has always constituted” (Thapan 2001, p. 360).

Kashmiri constructions of gender
Social norms and gender roles in Kashmir have clearly also been affected by globalisation, but to a lesser extent than urban India. Similar to India, the family is the central unit of Kashmiri society. Kashmir is traditionally a patriarchal society, and strict gender roles determine women’s and men’s
positions. Historically, women have had little place in the public domain and little access to political power (Dabla 2007, p. 44). Women are expected to partake in traditional feminine labour, such as house-keeping, child-rearing, cooking, and other types of care work. Yet, women often also participate in income generating activities, both within and outside the home; for example, handicraft production, trade, and farming. (Dabla 2007, p. 45). Many households are still joint families, where three or four generations live together in one household, sharing costs and housework. This results in decisions about women’s lives being taken by the decision-makers in the family: her in-laws if she is married, and her father, brothers, and uncles in consultation with her mother if she is not. This corresponds with Shaheed’s (1998) analysis of women in Pakistan. She argues that:

The family is the fulcrum for many activities, the location of honor (izzat), and the anchor of women’s identity (see also Weiss, 1992). Most women’s face-to-face interactions and relationships are located there and joys and sorrows are shared within it. The extended family and the immediate neighbourhood define the outer limits of mobility and social interaction for the vast majority of women. On a daily basis, individual women experience female identity in tasks assigned (or assumed), through interactions with others within the family (and to a lesser degree outside), and in the restrictions placed on women’s potentiality (Shaheed 1998, p. 148).

Women’s identity is thus mainly represented in relation to her family: as a wife, mother, daughter, or sister. This is reflected in how Kashmiri women are portrayed discursively. In Indian representations of Kashmir, the beauty of the Kashmiri woman is celebrated. However, she is a silent bystander of the conflict, while the Kashmiri man is portrayed as a militant, terrorist, and stone-pelter, inspired by Islamic beliefs (Kabir 2010). In Kashmiri nationalist discourse, on the other hand, Kashmiri women are portrayed as mothers supporting their militant sons. Propaganda videos show mothers crying by their sons’ dead bodies. Nationalist narratives also rely on women as victims. The rapes in Kunan Poshpora and Shopian, for instance, are used heavily in propaganda by proponents for azaadi. In reality, as I describe in Chapter 5, women have supported the uprising in many ways; for example, by smuggling and hiding arms, providing shelter and care for militants, as well as by participating in demonstrations and strikes. As there has been
limited research on women’s identity and subjectivity, this thesis seeks to explore this in more depth. I discuss my findings in further detail in Chapters 6 and 7, but, in short, the women I interviewed drew on contextual notions of hegemonic femininities in order to construct their sense of self. Among all of the participants, there was a clear activist identity. While everyone had different motivations for becoming involved in activism, being an activist had shaped their sense of self.

2.5 Conclusion: Theorising women’s activism

In this chapter, I have brought together literature that has theorised gender and identity from post-structural and narrative perspectives. Although the focus of this study is on women as activists, it is important to note that I am not taking an essentialist perspective on women and gender. Understanding gender as a doing, or, as phrased by Butler (1993), a performative, I see gender, not as a singular conscious act, but rather as a reiteration of practices that constitutes the subject. This means that the meaning is repeatedly reinforced in time in the form of rituals and practices (Butler 1997a, p. 3). These practices, discursively produced and constantly changing, are perceived as masculine and feminine. For Schippers, masculinity and femininity are understood “as produced, contested, and transformed through discursive processes, and therefore embedded within and productive of power relations” (Schippers 2007, p. 93). The concept of hegemonic femininity entails the femininities that are valued in a specific context. In a heteronormative framework, masculinity and femininity seek to complement each other; hegemonic femininity thus displays the feminine characteristics and practices that are valued in relation to hegemonic masculinity (Schippers 2007).

A narrative approach to identity and subjectivity tells us about the contingency, multiplicity, and contextuality of identity formation. Post-structural perspectives have provided an understanding of identities that are shaped and formed by power in relation to the other. Narrative approaches add to that knowledge by emphasising the importance of the story told. Identity is not something deeply ingrained in each individual’s “self,” but
rather “a common name for many different and distinct processes that need to be explained” (Malešević 2006, p. 36). More importantly, identity, power, and subjectivity are linked. García Bedolla argues that identity and contextuality affect the reasons for, and methods of, engaging. Consequently, “[i]dentity is an individual’s self-conceptualisation that places the individual either within or in opposition to a social grouping” (García Bedolla 2005, p. 4). Theorising identity as contingent, multiple, and contextual gives us the possibility to observe how identity formation takes place, and how it seeks to be fixed in order to form a politics based on identity claims. The narratives that I collected point to how identity formation always takes place in relation to the other.

Bringing together the above conceptualisations of gender, identity, and subjectivity aids in the analysis of the narratives of activist women’s experiences of in/security. By using intersectionality as a tool to understand the intersections of power in different contexts, it is possible to understand the conceptualisation of subjectivity in a network of social relations and structures. The participants all self-identified as Kashmiri women, and their narratives repeatedly constructed understandings of hegemonic femininities. As is demonstrated in the next chapter, masculinity in its militarised forms has been comprehensively theorised among feminist IR scholars. In Kashmir, hegemonic notions of femininity also affect women’s roles in times of conflict and war:

The women in these war theatres construct and endorse a normative femininity which is sanctioned by religious ideology. This normative femininity must be virtuous, docile and domesticated and act as support systems in a highly masculinised and patriarchal nationalism. The ideal woman’s place is clearly in the house, full of compassion and reproducing and nurturing for the nation (Parashar 2010, p. 449).

Hence, security privileges certain kinds of behaviour and prohibits others, and this also affects practices of masculinity and femininity. In part 4 of this chapter, I delineated South Asian constructions of femininity. Kashmiri women in mainstream discourse are portrayed as either mourning mothers or victims of rape; this is despite thorough feminist research contesting
these images. Through the stories I have gathered, we get an insight into the participants’ own understanding and performance of hegemonic femininity. The narratives reveal two archetypes for women activists in Kashmir: the heroine and the respectable woman. On the one hand, despite the in/security terrain of Kashmir, the heroine is capable of both safe-guarding herself and other women from in/security. The respectable woman, on the other hand, holds up traditional notions of being a good woman and performing piety in order to legitimise her activism. A third construction of femininity that emerges from the narratives is the pariah femininity. She is the antipode of hegemonic femininity. Pariah femininities “[…] are deemed to be, not so much inferior, as contaminating of the relationship between masculinity and femininity” (Schippers 2007, p. 95). While Schippers (2007) defines pariah femininity as the converse of hegemonic femininity – as a “bitch,” “slut,” sexualised, and masculinised feminine – this is not a fixed category. What is considered to be pariah femininity in the in/secure context of Kashmir is clearly different from the North American context that Schippers (2007) is writing in. In my findings, the only non-Muslim participant’s narrative is exceptionally different from those of the other women. She inhabits an outsider-status that none of the other women do. While poor women succeed in performing femininity through good deeds and religiosity, these avenues are not available to the non-Muslim. There may of course be other pariahs in Kashmir, such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender13 population and sex workers, but these were not discussed in the interviews. Yet, the complete silence on these issues reveals something about their pariah status.

In the next chapter, I elaborate on the construction of identity claims in a conflict-affected area. Through an overview of how the concept of security has been theorised in the different strands of IR, I argue that security is a practice which can be used to construct a “security scenario” through processes of “securitisation.” Security is thus a performative, in Butler’s

13 Henceforth abbreviated as LGBT.
(1990) sense of the word. Additionally, as feminist IR scholars have pointed out, security is always gendered.
Chapter 3
In/security in International Relations

Security is a central concern of the academic discipline of IR. At times, (International) Security Studies is considered to be a separate discipline altogether, although more often it is viewed as a branch of IR (see Buzan and Hansen 2009, for an extensive overview of the development of 'International Security Studies'). The term “security” has been understood and used in different ways. It has been theorised by a number of schools of IR theory, such as realism, liberalism, constructivism, critical theory, post-structuralism, postcolonialism, and feminism. It has also been situated in different schools (for instance Copenhagen, Wales, and Paris). It has been conceptualised in security communities (Adler and Barnett 1998; Bellamy 2004), securitisation (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008), and security as logics of “exceptionalism” (Agamben 2005). It has also been broadened to cover areas other than the traditional, for instance the environment, gender/women, migration, terrorism and the “war on terror,” the cyber world, international crime, and HIV/AIDS and health. These multiple uses clearly raise questions about the nature of security. When politicians, activists, or international organisations call for “security” or label a subject a “security issue,” questions arise as to what exactly they mean, and what happens when an issue is brought into the realm of “security.” Hence, there is clear ambiguity as to the meaning and function of security. This chapter does not seek to establish a single meaning; instead, it explores different narratives of security and the way in which practices of security are shaped through these narratives.

In this chapter, I present a critical exposition of the concept of security. I outline how security has been conceptualised in different schools of IR theory, and I construct a tentative conceptual framework that supports the data analysis in the subsequent chapters. In the first section, I describe how theories, broadly named “peace research,” have challenged the traditional approaches to security that had dominated the security agenda with their focus on the state during the Cold War. I explore the attempts to broaden and widen understandings of security, attempts that shift the focus from the
state to individuals. In the second part, I examine feminist theories and their focus on empirical and analytical approaches to gender in conflict zones. In the third part, I bring the theorisations of gender and identity (outlined in the previous chapter) together with theorisations of security. In this way I build a framework through which we can understand women’s experiences in conflict - specifically gendered subjectivities.

3.1 Questioning traditional approaches to security studies

During the last three decades, critical and feminist scholars have questioned the dominance of the study of IR by realist and liberal scholars. They have done this by shifting the security lens from the state to individuals and communities. Realists and neo-realists have been the most influential theorists of security, focusing predominantly on the survival of the state (Waltz 1959). Walter Lippmann states that “a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war” (Lippmann 1943, p. 51, in Ayoob 1997, p. 124). According to realists, states are the central agents of international politics and the key category of analysis in international theory. For neo-realists such as Stephen Walt, security studies concerns “the study of the threat, use, and control of military force” (Walt 1991, p. 73. Italics in original). Realists perceive power to be pivotal in both explaining and predicting state behaviour (Waltz 1959). Power is understood as a zero-sum game wherein one party always has power over the other, and a balance of power is essential to achieving peace (Mouritzen 1997; Waltz 1959). Realist and neo-realist narratives have had a considerable impact on foreign policy, especially during the Cold

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14 Realist scholarship can be found in the writings on the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides from ancient Greece (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 1997). Other European scholars, such as Niccolò Machiaveli, Thomas Hobbes, and Georg Hegel, have also included realist elements in their work (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 1997). Machiavelli focused his work on the role of the prince and his need to embrace a different moral stance from his followers (Machiavelli 2005). Hobbes considered power to be central in human behaviour and argued that a strong sovereign was needed to maintain stability and order. For Hegel, the state was the main concern of political philosophy, and realist scholars have been influenced by the Hegelian belief that the highest obligation of the state is its own protection and survival.

15 The difference between realism and neo-realism, in brief, is that while realism asserts that the workings of the international system depend on human nature, neo-realism focuses on structural constraints (Pashakhanlou 2014; Waltz 1959, 2000).
War. This narrative was challenged by peace researchers (Galtung 1969; Ullman 1983).

Peace research consists of diverse approaches that oppose the morality and rationality of realism. Buzan and Hansen (2009) describe peace research as a spectrum, spanning peace research on one end to strategic studies on the other with different forms of arms control advocacy in the middle. An extremely influential branch of “traditional” peace research is the liberal peace research inspired by political liberalism. The central tenet of liberalism is freedom of the individual. In contrast to realist thinking, liberal scholars argue that progress towards peace and reconciliation is possible. They believe peace to be the norm of the international system and the laws of nature to prescribe accord and collaboration between human beings. “War is therefore both unnatural and irrational: it is an artificial contrivance and not a product of imperfect social relations or some peculiarity of human nature” (Burchill 1996, p. 31). Liberal theory focuses on democracy and free trade as means to reach and uphold peace and harmony. Liberal international theory, then, contends that states have the right to not be invaded by foreign states. States not interfering in each other’s affairs would allow individuals to establish relationships across borders without state involvement (Doyle 1983, p. 213). According to this view, democracy and free trade are the main building blocks of international peace (Doyle 1983; Owen 1994). “Democratic peace theory” has been the most prominent liberal security narrative of the last 30 years, holding that democracies would never go to war against each other (Björkdahl 2002; Owen 1994).

The idea of balance of power materialised during the Cold War through a nuclear arms race wherein the USA and Russia competed in supremacy of nuclear arms. Specifically the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction, where both powers had the capability of destroying the other one in case of a devastating attack, narrated the means to avoid war (Elshtain 1985).

Freedom can be divided into two categories. Negative freedom, or freedom from “arbitrary authority,” involves freedom under the law, free press and speech, freedom of conscience, and the right to own and exchange property. Positive freedom, then, is about the conditions, capacities, and opportunities needed to achieve freedom. This includes social and economic rights, such as access to health care, education, and employment. In order to guarantee the above two, democratic participation and representation is required, as well as a legislative and judicial system (Doyle 1983, p. 207).
While liberalism became a dominant security narrative in the 1990s, peace research evolved into various critical approaches in the 1980s and 1990s, such as constructivism, feminism, critical security studies, and post-structuralism. This resulted in debates among security scholars to broaden and deepen the security agenda (Buzan and Hansen 2009). Broadening involves the extension of the study of security beyond the military sector to incorporate political, societal, environmental, and economic sectors, while deepening concerns the extension of the referent object of security outside the state to involve other agents, for instance organisations, human individuals and groups, and the environment (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, p. 5). It is important to note that this dichotomous division between traditional and non-traditional approaches to security is fictional and that there are contestations both within and between these camps. As Buzan and Hansen’s mapping of the evolution of international security studies demonstrates, there are no neat delineations between the different streams (Buzan and Hansen 2009, p. 222).

There are clear intersections, particularly between feminist, critical, and human security approaches, with ongoing conversations between feminist and critical scholars (Hansen 2000a, b; Sylvester 2007; Wibben 2011) and feminist and human security scholars respectively (Hoogensen and Rottem 2004). Human security has been predominantly interesting for feminist scholars working from standpoint and constructivist perspectives. The human security approach was developed as a response to state-centred IR theories, and it shifted the focus from the state to the individual. Hence, the most crucial aspect is that human security should involve a bottom-up approach wherein the security of the individual is protected. While this can be considered to be in agreement with the argument I am proposing in this thesis, there are several fallacies with the human security school, for instance the universalisation of the “individual.” Due to the popularity of human security amongst some feminists, I describe and critique human security in more detail before moving on to critical security studies.
Human security
In 1994, the concept of human security was first mentioned in the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1994). The report proposes a people-centred approach to security, emphasising threats to individuals and communities.

Human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities (UNDP 1994, p. 23).

The report identifies explicit elements that involve human security, including economic security (freedom from poverty), health security (access to health care and protection from diseases), personal security (physical safety from such things as torture, war, criminal attacks, domestic violence, drug use, suicide, and even traffic accidents), community security (survival of traditional cultures and ethnic groups as well as the physical security of these groups), and political security (enjoyment of civil and political rights, and freedom from political oppression) (Paris 2001, p. 90). Its four main characteristics are that it is universally applicable, its elements are interdependent, it should emphasise early prevention, and it is people-centred (UNDP 1994, pp. 22-23).

The main strength of the human security paradigm, according to its proponents, is that it highlights the interconnection between issues such as poverty, health, and disaster vulnerability, as well as seeks to improve the co-operation between organisations working with security, development, and human rights (Uvin 2004, p. 353). It also recognises economic security, “…and thus overturns traditional notions of high vs. low politics, a distinction that privileges the direct violence of war over broader forms of violence” (Ewan 2007, p. 184). As scholars have pointed out, there are several shortcomings with the concept of human security. It is too broad and all-inclusive as it involves most factors of human lives. Paris states that:

…[h]uman security may serve as a label for a broad category of research in the field of security studies that is primarily concerned with nonmilitary threats to the safety of societies, groups, and individuals, in contrast to more traditional
approaches to security studies that focus on protecting states from external threats (Paris 2001, p. 96).

Human security has been popular among certain feminists. Feminist research has demonstrated that state-centred security debates are highly gendered, hence privileging a masculinist perspective on security (Cohn 1987; Elshtain 1987; Enloe 1988; Enloe 1990, 1993; Peterson 2007). From a gender perspective, human security provides the opportunity to connect the everyday struggles of women with wider regional and global structures (Hudson 2005, p. 164). According to its proponents, it can be used to tease out the sources of insecurity on a micro-level and link these to larger processes of the state on a global level. It is clear that state actors are often involved in causing insecurity or failing to provide security (Hoogensen and Stuvoy 2006, p. 211). From this feminist human security perspective, security begins with the individual and would involve “freeing individuals and groups from the social, physical, economic, and political constraints that prevent them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do” (Basch 2004, p. 9).

Human security, despite attempting to broaden the security agenda to non-state actors such as individuals and communities, has also been criticised for taking a universalist approach. Critics of the human security approach raise questions about the individualist perception of human security. “The category of the ‘human’ deeply entrenches human security in its liberal humanist, normative, intellectual heritage, the excavation of which feminist critical scrutiny cannot afford to bypass” (Marhia 2013, p. 20). As Maria Stern notes: “which individuals, or humans, in which contexts? [...] Both the category ‘individual’ and the category ‘human’ become increasingly unstable when one begins to ask questions around identity and embodiment” (Stern 2006a, p. 180). Stern argues that looking at “basic needs” does not sufficiently explain why women feel insecure, but “women’s experiences of insecurity were multiple and integrally related to who they were, to their specifically gendered and racialized identities” (Stern 2006a, p. 180). Thus, viewing security as a discursive practice, an examination of identity and subjectivity, is more helpful (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989; Williams 1998).
Drawing from Foucauldian theories of discourse, subjects are produced and shaped by power (Foucault et al. 2007a; Lloyd 2005). Discourse involves the production of meaning; thus Stern analysed how “security as a discursive practice inform[ed] their [Mayan women’s] identities, as well as how the workings of inclusion and exclusion in their identity formation (and politicization) inform the naming of the threat and danger” (Stern 2006a, p. 182). Human security fails to ask questions about the history, ontology, and effects of security. These types of questions are instead asked by scholars working from critical perspectives. The next section outlines how critical security scholars deal with security and how they include identity and subjectivity in the analysis of security.

Critical approaches to security
Traditional and constructivist security researchers agree on what security is, but they disagree as to the causes and issues of security threats. This logic allows a multiplicity of meanings, but only as long as the “meanings are clearly identifiable and a hierarchy of meanings can be established” (Wibben 2011, p. 38). Critical perspectives on security question both the concept of security itself and the discourses, practices, and narratives in which security is imbedded.

Distinguishing between Critical Security Studies and critical security studies
Critical approaches to security do not comprise a unified set of literature; there are varying perspectives on what critical security involves. The many different strands share a criticism of the state-centric approach and the problem-solving tendencies of traditional security studies. At the outset, it is important to distinguish between Critical Security Studies (henceforth abbreviated as “CSS”18) and critical security studies (non-capitalised). CSS is influenced by the theoretical, methodological, and normative approaches of Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School (though this link has been questioned, see Peoples 2011), and it sets out a research agenda aimed at the

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18 CSS is also referred to as the “Welsh School” due to the location of its main proponents. Some mappings of security studies have situated the thinking in three different schools: Paris, Welsh, and Copenhagen.
broadening, deepening, extending, and focusing of security studies. Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School seek to extend Marxist critiques of capitalism beyond economics into popular culture, psychoanalysis, and technology. CSS, then, is concerned with a Marxist approach to international politics. Critical security studies (non-capitalised), on the other hand, includes a variety of critical approaches to security and is influenced by postmodern theories, such as post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and feminism.

CSS scholars differentiate between survival and security, where survival means persistence in a situation where there is a threat to life, and security implies the absence of threats. In this view, true security is only possible to achieve through emancipation; that is, freeing humans from constraints to their freedom, such as conflict, poverty, starvation, political oppression, or lack of education. For Ken Booth, “[s]ecurity and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security” (Booth 1991, p. 319). The debate on the broadening of security has involved the questioning of what it is that needs to be secure; what is the referent object of security? CSS scholars have argued that the main focus of security should be the human being. Wyn Jones (1999) contends that, even though CSS refers to the individual human, identity does not occur in the singular but is a product of a combination of factors. Individuals are composed of their multiple and intersecting membership of different political communities.

There are several problems with the normative assumptions of CSS. The significance placed on emancipation as universal ignores the fact that the notion of emancipation is derived from a Western tradition of political philosophy (Ayoob 1997). Post-colonial scholars of security, like Mohammed Ayoob, have criticised the Eurocentric aspect of emancipation:

…[S]uch semantic acrobatics tend to impose a model of contemporary Western politics – of national states that have by and large solved their legitimacy problem and possess representative and responsive governments, which preside over socially mobile populations that are relatively
homogenous and usually affluent and free from want – that are far removed from Third World realities (Ayoob 1997). Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey extend Ayoob’s critique by pointing out that CSS is problematic in that it upholds a difference between “strong” and “weak” “where only the former are assumed to have the capacity and agency to emancipate the latter”:

The politics of critical [CSS] and human security approaches revolve around the concept of emancipation, an idea derived from the European Enlightenments. In this literature, the agent of emancipation is almost invariably the West, whether in the form of Western-dominated international institutions, a Western-led global civil society, or the ‘ethical foreign policies’ of leading Western powers ... Even when the concrete agents of emancipation are not themselves Westerners, they are conceived of as the bearers of Western ideas, whether concerning economy, politics or culture (Barkawi and Laffey 2006, p. 350).

These criticisms from post-colonial perspectives have been crucial in criticising the Eurocentrism inherent in most IR theory (Acharya and Buzan 2010; Bilgin 2008, 2010; Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Muppidi 2012). Another problematic aspect is that viewing the relationship between security and emancipation as a positive condition results in a failure to apprehend the “political effects of security” (Peoples 2011, p. 1120). Claudia Aradau (2004) has argued that it is not the notion of emancipation itself that is problematic, but instead how it has been defined and used within CSS. The call for security often comes with authoritarian and exclusionary practices connected to militarisation and “securitisation.”

When equated with security, emancipation becomes problematic as it can no longer envisage social transformations outside of the logic of security [...] The struggle for security is re-styled as a struggle for emancipation, without any qualms about the relationship between emancipation and security (Aradau 2004, p. 398).

This exposé of criticisms of CSS from different strands of critical security bring forth the diversity of approaches that exist under the critical security studies banner. These perspectives contend that security is not necessarily a good thing and that we should not work towards more security, but rather we need to investigate what security does.
The Copenhagen School of Security

Another central theorisation of security derives from the so-called Copenhagen School. This was driven by Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute. The main conceptualisations coming from this perspective were societal security and securitisation (Wæver et al. 1993). Societal security is understood as “the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats” (Wæver et al. 1993, p. 23). This view saw both the state and society as referent objects for security: for political, military, environmental, and economic security, the state was the referent object, while society was the referent object for societal security. When state and society security interests clashed, there was a space for “identity security.” Societal security reduced the feasible referent object to two levels – state and society – and excluded the individual and the global (Buzan and Hansen 2009). The understanding of societal security relied on “possible or actual threats” and is thus still partly wedded to an objective definition of security. Simultaneously, the assertion that actors claimed identity to be threatened was in line with constructivist theorising. Subsequent work refined the conceptualisation of security into “securitisation,” implying a discursive creation of security in which an actor declares an issue as a security issue:

To set up such an open, analytical framework able to catch security in its increasing variation – across sectors, levels, and diverse units – and to be able to judge when an instance qualifies as security, it is necessary to focus on the characteristic quality of a security issue, i.e., to have criteria by which to avoid the slippery slope of ‘everything is security’. A security issue is posited (by a securitising actor) as a threat to the survival of some referent object (nation, state, the liberal international economic order, the rain forests), which is claimed to have a right to survive. Since a question of survival necessarily involves a point of no return at which it will be too late to act, it is not defensible to leave this issue to normal politics. The securitising actor therefore claims a right to use extraordinary means or break normal rules, for reasons of security (Wæver 1995c, 1997a; Buzan et al. 1998). With this definition of security, the approach has clearly turned constructivist in the sense that we do not ask whether a certain issue is in and of itself a ‘threat’, but focus on the questions of when and under what conditions who securitises what issue (Buzan and Wæver 2003, p. 71).
As such, securitisation is a political act conducted by securitisating actors. Derived from a combination of speech act theory, Schmidtian security analysis, and politics of exception, securitisation emphasises “authority, the confronting – and construction – of threats and enemies, an ability to make decisions, and the adoption of emergency measures” (Buzan and Hansen 2009, pp. 213-214). Hence, security has a performative and discursive strength; it is doing something – securitisating – rather than describing a condition.

Yet, the Copenhagen School has been criticised for its lack of gender perspective. Lene Hansen connects this to the absence of gender in mainstream security scholarship in general (Hansen 2000b). She argues that an issue has to be considered as having a certain political priority in order to be secured. As the notion of security does not exist outside of discourse, the production of security can only take place within acceptable discursive constructions. If discourse fails to consider gender an issue, it also fails to securitisise gender (Hansen 2000b).

Security as practice
Post-structural scholars of security, interested in identity and discourse, take the idea of “security as a doing” one step further. Jef Huysmans (1998) argues that meanings of security function as a “thick signifier.”19 Lastly, the thick signifier approach investigates what makes up security narratives, acknowledging that security is not universal. According to Michael Dillon, security is a “function of discourse, a function within a specific and modern discursive economy of the political” (Dillon 1990, p. 110).

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19 In Huysmans’ genealogy of security analysis, he asserts that security has been treated as a definition, conceptual issue, and thick signifier (Huysmans 1998). First, the definitional approach seeks to find a meaning by compressing and delineating content into a statement. While in principle there is no limit to definitions, in practice they are limited to the context within which they are employed. In IR, they are limited by the security studies community that needs to recognize an utterance as pertaining to a security narrative (Wibben 2011, p. 38). Conceptual analysis explores more deeply what a security policy or debate implies. It seeks to categorise a common measure in “the shape of an analytical framework which makes explicit how security analysis does (and should?) be organized” (Huysmans 1998, p. 231). Comparing a definitional with a conceptual approach, it is clear how they coincide, “that it is by reference to both the content (definition) and the framing (conceptual framework) that security narratives are recognized as such” (Wibben 2011, p. 38. Italics in original).
thick signifier approach “thus asks questions about the modern framework within which security is embedded and drafts a logic of security…” (Wibben 2011, p. 39). Understanding security as a thick signifier has implications for the study of security. It means not studying security as a “thing,” but as an action.

In this line of thinking, concepts such as “security,” “threat,” and “danger” are not objective conditions. “There is nothing that is inherently ‘dangerous’ and not all dangers are treated equally in international politics. Rather, danger must be understood as a ‘category of understanding’” (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, p. 68). The identity of the state is produced and defined against this conceptualisation of danger. David Campbell argues that identity is constituted on the notion of difference: “the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an ‘inside’ from an ‘outside’, a ‘self’ from an ‘other’, a ‘domestic’ from a ‘foreign’” (Campbell 1992, p. 8). It is through this logic that state identity is always a process in the making in relation to other states through the reiteration of practices that establishes the identity of the state as different from other states. This implies that states and their identities are performed (Campbell 1992). As Annick T. R. Wibben argues:

This implies that security is not only concerned with the values associated with a given subject but by naming those values as being in need of securing, and thus, by definition, existential to the subject being secured, security narratives (re)produce the subjects’ existence (Wibben 2011, p. 68).

Critical security studies, particularly from the Copenhagen School and post-structuralist perspectives, although offering interesting insight into the productive aspects of security, fails to distil experiences of security on an individual level; instead, it places its analysis on the level of the state or policy. While the effects described above have implications for individuals’ security and explains the narratives, I am interested in how women narrate security.
3.2 Feminist approaches to security

In the brief accounts of traditional, constructivist, and critical approaches to security above, we can see that IR has traditionally been defined as the study of states and state security. It is also noticeable how people's everyday lives are absent in the theorisations of security (with some exceptions within human security theory). The discipline has largely been male-dominated, involving the study of male actors by male scholars (Enloe 1990, p. 1). Women, although part of societies in conflict, governments, and academia, are most often under-represented, silenced, and marginalised. Feminist scholars were bothered by this silence around women and gender and started to ask questions: Where are the women in international politics? Who is the state? Where is the gender perspective? How does war impact women and men in different ways? How is war gendered?

During the last three decades, critical and feminist scholars have questioned the assumed fundamental security narratives identified in this chapter by shifting the security lens from the state to individuals and communities. In the 1980s, scholars started to question the gender-blindness of the IR field (Cohn 1987; Elshtain 1987; Enloe 1988). Jean Bethke Elshtain, in her influential book *Women and War* (1987), unpacks the gendered nature of traditional war stories and how they rely on dichotomies of the life giving “beautiful soul” in need of protection and the life taking “just warrior.” Elshtain accounts for the way in which male violence is channelled through the institution of war, while women, excluded from the conflict zone and draped in discourse of peacefulness, appear deviant when participating in violence. She argues that both the “beautiful soul” and the “just warrior” are central to the war narrative. Cynthia Enloe writes in the preface to her seminal title *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Relations* that the book exposes “how relations between governments depend not only on capital and weaponry, but also on the control of women as symbols, consumers, workers, and emotional comforters” (Enloe 1990, p. xi). For the first time, questions were raised about the gendered nature of the international system. While Elshtain
and Enloe question the marginalisation of women in war stories, J. Anne Tickner scrutinises IR theory through a feminist lens for the first time (Tickner 1992). By revisiting IR’s traditional levels of analysis – man, the state, and war (as presented by Waltz (1959), in the book with the same title) – Tickner enquires about the role of masculinity in shaping and determining the analysis of international politics. She takes a political stance and states that “attempts to alleviate these military, economic, and ecological insecurities cannot be completely successful until the hierarchical social relations, including gender relations, intrinsic to each of these domains are recognized and substantially altered” (Tickner 1992, p. 128).

The work of Elshtain, Enloe, and Tickner opened up many avenues of research for feminist scholars interested in the international. They proposed new methodologies that involved the interlinking of biographical accounts, diaries, and entertainment/media which questioned the positivist, often statistical, account that traditional IR relies on. It is possible to roughly divide feminist IR scholarship into two different fields of work. The first deals with the gendered aspects of conflict, most often with understanding the impact of conflict on women’s lives, while the second works on gendered representations in conflict, how conflict is based on and driven by gendered assumptions. Clearly this division is fictive, as these two fields of research frequently intersect.

Women in conflict
Feminist scholars are focused on “[t]elling security narratives from the ground up and thereby adopt[...] a bottom-up approach to security, [...]and] pay close attention to the impact of security policies, including war, on the everyday lives of people” (Wibben 2011, p. 11). Feminist empirical explorations of the literature on women in conflict have demonstrated that women play a wide variety of practical and symbolic roles during wartime (Enloe 1988; Jacoby 1999; Pankhurst 2008; Parashar 2009, 2014). Through exploring the lives of women in conflict zones, scholars not only centred their research on women as victims of war and sexual violence (Enloe 2000; Kelly 2000; Manchanda 2001b; Moser and Clark 2001; Skjelsbæk 2001a; Zarkov 1997), but also on women as actors of violence (Parashar 2011,
Gender has been mainstreamed into conflict management and peacebuilding, as most prominently noted in UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions (Hudson 2009; Shepherd 2011). However, as studies on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 show, it is clear that gender still equals women and is most often considered a “soft” issue as distinct from “hard” issues, such as the military and security sector (Ackerly, Stern and True 2006; Shepherd 2011).

Women as victims and agents in conflict
In modern conflicts, the largest number of victims are women and children (Manchanda 2001b; Moser and Clark 2001). Women are often considered to be “soft targets,” and locations largely visited by women such as schools, places of worship, and markets are targets of violence (Parashar 2014, p. 30). In the last two decades, much of the attention on women’s role in conflict has been on women as victims of rape and sexual violence. While rape and sexual violence have been central to warfare throughout history (Brownmiller 1975, pp. 31-40), it was during the conflicts in Rwanda and the Balkans in the 1990s that awareness of rape and sexual violence committed against women, as well as men, caught the international community’s attention for the first time (Hansen 2000a, p. 56). Conclusively, rape was recognised as a war crime by the international community (Skjelsbæk 2001b). This resulted in the growth in scholarly literature on rape and sexual violence from feminist perspectives. Inger Skjelsbæk (2001a) outlines the diverging perspectives on wartime rape presented by feminist scholars. She argues that essentialists (who assert that sexual violence is inherent in militaristic masculinity and targets all women in a conflict zone) and structuralists (who argue that certain women are targeted due to their political, ethnic, national, or religious identity) fail to recognise the complexity of wartime rape wherein both women and men can be victims (Skjelsbæk 2001a, p. 226). Wartime rape is, according to Skjelsbæk, formed by gendered constructions of femininity and masculinity wherein rape is constructed as a feminisation of the victim, and thus rape is conducted to masculinise, that is, to empower, the perpetrator (Skjelsbæk
Unwanted pregnancies, death, disability, and stigma (leading to social and economic hardship) are among the effects of rape and sexual violence (Hudson et al. 2012).

Importantly, critical feminist scholars look beyond women as victims. Feminist explorations of the literature on women in conflict have demonstrated that women play a wide variety of practical and symbolic roles during wartime (Enloe 1988; Jacoby 1999; Pankhurst 2008; Parashar 2009, 2014). Women support and participate in violent movements all over the world (Cunningham 2003, 2007; Ness 2005, 2008; Parashar 2009, 2014; Von Knop 2007). The research suggests that women’s involvement is growing; yet, their participation in conflict is often neglected or ignored: the assumed peacefulness of woman, the special status of the female body, and the fact that women are assumed to be victims of violence, are some of the main reasons why women’s participation in violence often goes unnoticed (Cunningham 2003, pp. 171-172). Scholars have also noted that the division between assailants, victims, or actors is much more complex (Parashar 2011, 2014; Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). Women are often both victims and perpetrators of violence.

Women have also engaged in conflict as peace-makers. There are strong historical and ideological links between womanhood and peace (Brännlund 2011; Pierson 1987). It has also been argued that feminist IR should be a pacifist project (Wibben 2011). Richa Singh (2007) argues that women’s peace initiatives have particular features that are distinct from traditional approaches. Women’s peace initiatives are influenced by women’s “day-to-day struggle for human security” (Singh 2007, p. 32). These would not be considered specific to women per se, but it is due to the exclusion of women from conventional politics that women are channelled into non-traditional spaces. For Enloe, peace is “women’s achievement of control over their lives; (…) not just the absence of armed and gender conflict (…) but also the absence of poverty and the conditions which recreate it” (Enloe 1987, in Kelly 2000, p. 48).
The most poignant development of the connection between women and peace is the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the year 2000. UNSCR 1325 concerns the situation of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and it compels member states to involve women and to provide a gender perspective in all peacebuilding, peacemaking, and peacekeeping activities (Cohn, Kinsella and Gibbings 2004; Hudson 2009). The resolution holds that women should thus be invited to take part at all levels of decision-making processes. This presents a policy shift in that:

…[i]t represents a consistent message agreed at and transmitted from the highest levels to actors located on each plane of peacebuilding activity who are responsible for interpreting the message and acting upon it, i.e., to be gender sensitive in their assessment of problems presented and in designing programs and interventions in response (Strickland and Duvvury 2003, p. 26).

Criticism of gender mainstreaming in conflict resolution has been in terms of it being “too little, too slow” (Swaine 2009, p. 410) and of it having failed to result in a shift of action on the ground (Strickland and Duvvury 2003). While having been criticised for its woman-centredness and lack of intersectionality (Shepherd 2011), as well its essentialisation of women as peaceful (Hudson 2013) (see below for an outline of this argument and criticism thereof), additional UNSCRs have been instituted.²⁰ Scholars have pointed out the dominant emphasis on sexual violence (in resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960, 2106) which “…separates the sexual violence experienced by women in armed conflict from that experienced by women in non-conflict settings” (Heathcote 2012, p. 86). Yet, there have also been discursive contestations taking place in some of the resolutions, primarily in 1820, 1889, and 2106, wherein gender does not merely refer to women. Laura Shepherd points out that:

In UNSCR 1820 and beyond, I have identified ruptures and shifts in the organizational logics of these discourses. While in UNSCR 1325 ‘women-as-informal-organisers and women-as-formal-actors are still, primarily, essentially women-in-need-of-protection’ (Shepherd 2008b: 120), UNSCR 1820

represents the policy beginnings of contestation over this discursive construction (Shepherd 2011, p. 515). This can be connected to the achievements of critical feminist scholars who have emphasised the importance, not only of studying women’s empirical experience of conflict, but also of studying the gendered aspects of conflict from an analytical perspective. The next part explores how women are discursively produced in gendered logics.

**Gendering conflict**

Feminist analytical interventions in IR have highlighted the gendered discourses that uphold dichotomies of war/peace, chaos/order, and confinement/freedom wherein femininity have often been connected to peace and masculinity to war (Ackerley and True 2008). As Tickner (1992) points out, masculinity and its connection to violence, power, and leadership is prioritised and valued in the conduct and analysis of international politics. Feminist scholars have unpacked the ideas around the sexed bodies of men and militarised masculinity in various ways (Cohn 1999; Parpart and Zalewski 2008; Zalewski and Parpart 1998). Peterson notes that gender acts as a “systemic code valorizing that which is characterized and privileged as masculine (reason, agency, control, objectivity, etc.) at the expense of that which is stigmatized as feminine (emotion, passivity, uncertainty, subjectivity, etc.)” (Peterson 2010, p. 18). As examined in the previous chapter, gender is relational, which implies that masculinity depends on femininity; masculinity is what femininity is not. Privileging masculinity and the characteristics connected to it involves devaluing femininity. Hence, gender deals with masculinity as much as it deals with femininity. As the literature on masculinity demonstrates, it is important to note that not all men are benefiting from the privileging of the ideals of masculinity (Connell 1987, 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Generally, men who fail to incorporate the ideals of masculinity are considered unmanly, or even, as in the case of the “feminine” translator in the film *Saving Private Ryan*, is portrayed as undermining the army unit and ultimately causing the deaths of the members of the team (Cohn 1999, p. 465). Peterson states that “gender—with its lauded masculinity and denigrated femininity—pervades
language and culture and devalorizes *all* feminized statuses” (Peterson 2010, p. 18). Hence, masculinity and its connection to violence, power, and leadership is prioritised and valued in the conduct and analysis of international politics (Tickner 1992). Militarised masculinity, in the sexed and embodied subject of the soldier on the battlefield or the statesman declaring war, is central to the traditional narratives of security outlined above (Parpart and Zalewski 2008; Peterson 2007; Zalewski and Parpart 1998). Yet, traditional war narratives, as pointed out by Elshtain and others, also rely on femininities, for instance narratives of “weeping mothers” which serve to legitimise war and violence (Kandiyoti 1991a; Sunindyo 1998; Yuval-Davis 1997). These narratives serve nationalist projects by producing women as national actors.

**Gender and nation**

The nation consists of “sexed subjects whose ‘performativity’ constructs not only their own gender identity but the identity of the entire nation as well” (Mayer 2000, p. 5). Certain norms and practices such as heteronormativity, militarism, and reproductive policies are reiterated in order to construct the nation (Mayer 2000). In turn, “the repetitive performance of these acts in the name of the nation helps to construct gender and sexuality” (Mayer 2000, p. 5). These are constructed in relation to the other and based on power. Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 11) differentiates between women’s role in discourses of the biological and the cultural reproduction of the nation. First, the centrality of women in the biological reproduction of the nation revolves around women’s role as bearers of children and their responsibility for the procreation of new generations. This demand on women to have (or not have) children often becomes part of a nationalist project, either to increase the population or to control it (Yuval-Davis 1997, p. 22). Secondly, gender symbols play an important role in the cultural reproduction of the nation. Through gendered markers of culture and nation, understandings of masculinity and femininity have a crucial impact on the construction of the nation. Nationalist movements often give women specific attention by “interpellating them as ‘national’ actors: mothers, educators, workers, and even fighters” (Kandiyoti 1991a, pp. 432-433). Simultaneously, they uphold
the cultural boundaries for what is considered acceptable feminine behaviour, for instance veiling or religious piety.

Because the nation is often constructed by elites who have power to define the nation in ways that further their own interests, the same elites are also able to define who is central and who is marginal to the national project. In the intersection of nation, gender and sexuality the nation is constructed to respect a ‘moral code’ which is often based on masculinity and heterosexuality. This is the reason why the leaders of the nation may try to represent their nation as ‘modest’ - and in turn speak in terms of the ideas if the nation in imposing on women a traditional moral code (Mayer 2000, p. 12).

Hence, women are central to nationalist narratives, yet many of the influential works on nationalism completely ignore the role of women in nationalist narratives (Charles and Hintjens 1998; Collins 1998; Yuval-Davis 1997). Some feminist scholars have taken the idea of the peaceful woman so far that they propose a peace theory built on “maternal thinking” (Ruddick 1990).

**Peaceful motherhood**

In many traditional war narratives, the hegemonic femininity (Schippers 2007) is the nurturing, peaceful mother (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). In this type of narrative, women are portrayed as naturally peaceful, which is linked to a connection between femininity and motherhood. As noted above, Elshtain (1987) unpacks the gendered nature of traditional war stories and how they rely on the dichotomy of the life-giving “beautiful soul” in need of protection, and the life-taking “just warrior.” In traditional war stories,

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21 There are two main strands of theorising the nation; those who hold that ethnic bonds make up the nation, and modernists who contend that nations are recent phenomena. The concept of the nation as a natural fact, founded in pre-modern ethnic collectivities, has been proposed by some authors (Smith 1998). According to this opinion, nations are natural, universal, and eternal, as well as the normalised extension of family and kinship. It is argued that modern societies require homogeneity to function well and nationalism serves to unify the population (Gellner 1983). This has been criticised by modernists such as Benedict Anderson (1983) who argue that nations are “imagined communities.” Anderson asserts that nations are not natural and universal, but are rooted in a very specific socio-political context of European history. Post-colonial scholars, such as Sami Zubaida (1989), argue that the ethnic homogeneity is a result of long-term central governance. Though the discussions on which came first, the nation-state or ethnic groups, are ongoing, there are clear links. Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 16) argues “that there is no inherent difference (although sometimes there is a difference in scale) between ethnic and national collectivities: they are both the Andersonian ‘imagined communities.’” Nation-states sought to create symbols that represented the nation and were strong enough to establish rational as well as emotional attachment by the people to the nation (Eriksen 1993).
women are portrayed as victims or supporters of the warring man, while the
man is the heroic fighter who goes out to fight for his country and his
woman. Women are portrayed as mothers crying for their sons or as
maidens or wives waiting for their future or current husbands who have
gone to war. Another portrayal of women is as victims of rape, torture, or
murder during wartime. Elshtain (1987) accounts for the way in which male
violence is channelled through the institution of war, while women,
excluded from the conflict zone and draped in discourses of peacefulness,
appear deviant when participating in violence. She argues that both the
“beautiful soul” and the “just warrior” are hence central to war narrative.

Much feminist scholarship has discussed the role of women in
peacebuilding and peace activism. Women have organised for peace in
various ways, and this has been portrayed in history and literature. One
early example is the sex strike executed by the women of Athens to
manipulate the men to negotiate peace during the Peloponnesian War as
portrayed in the play Lysistrata (Yuval-Davis 1997, p. 94). Sara Ruddick’s
theory on “maternal peace” starts with the assumption that mothering is a
practice equal to religious, scientific, or critical exercises (Ruddick 1990, p.
16). When applying this perspective to warfare and just war theory, “peace-
makers must invent myriad non-violent actions and then name, describe,
and support them” (Ruddick 1983, p. 139, in Peach 1994, p. 163). Here,
military work and maternal practice are placed as two opposites in a
dichotomy (Peach 1994, p. 163). A related, but different, approach is what
York (1998, p. 21) refers to as the cultural feminist argument. Here the
psychosocial development of women trains them to be “connected
caretakers” (1998, p. 21), while men become “individuated competitors”
(1998, p. 21). She argues thus that women, biologically or socially as
mothers, are closer to the feminine values of peace, caring, and nurturing.
Men, on the contrary, are seen as prone to war, killing, and destroying.
Ruddick emphasises that, by discussing mothering and maternal thinking,
she does not mean actual female-bodied women who have born children and
have a natural instinct of mothering; but rather, the kind of mothering she is
referring to is constructed through discourse. Yet, a theory around the idea
of “maternal care,” despite the fact that maternal in this sense has nothing to
do with real-life women as mothers, is a paradox, as the language itself links maternity to caring. This creates a false understanding that caring is connected to women, and the whole argument thus runs the risk of essentialising women as carers and peacemakers (Peach 1994, p. 163). Furthermore, simultaneously with Ruddick criticising the dichotomies of realist IR theory, she reinforces them through opposing soldiering and mothering. This not only reiterates a binary thinking, but also re-stabilises the categories of masculinity and femininity and their connection to these binaries. However, Ruddick’s (1990) argument brings forward one crucial point; it attempts to divert the attention from the realist theory on states and individuals to an interrelated global politics where relations matter. Robinson (1999) takes this point further and asserts that a reformulation of the understanding of the international system requires “moral attention on the networks of personal and social relations within which we may uncover, paradoxically, both the causes and solutions to exclusion, marginalization, suffering, and poverty” (Robinson 1999, p. 164). Here, by bringing care into the public sphere, Robinson seeks to deconstruct the separation of public and private. “By emphasizing differences between women and men, cultural feminists perpetuate the same dichotomy that underlies patriarchy itself: it polarizes differences between genders and minimizes shared characteristics” (York 1998, p. 21). These types of narratives of feminine peacefulness still circulate in accounts of women in conflict, either as women as peacemakers as discussed above, or as supporters of terrorists and militants as nurturing mothers. Scholars have noted a “‘maternal self-sacrifice code’, where a woman’s involvement in political violence stems from a maternal desire to belong to and be useful to that organization; in other words, to be needed” (Neuberger and Valentini 1996, p. 17, in Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, p. 33). In the next section, I explore narratives of violent motherhood in more depth.

Violent motherhood
The narratives of motherhood and peacefulness are closely linked to narratives of the ruthless mother avenging her killed sons (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). These narratives function to explain women’s violence as
deviant acts. The flip side of narratives of the peaceful mother is narratives of the violent mother:

If the nurturing mother is the domesticated terrorist, the vengeful mother’s onus is still maternal, but dangerously disturbed. The vengeful mother is driven by rage because of her maternal losses, maternal inadequacies or maternal incredulity. Her decision is not calculated retaliation but emotion-driven revenge (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, p. 34).

Femininity, whether hegemonic as when connected to motherhood as pointed out above, or as failed as when women are depicted like “monsters” or “whores” (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007), is the main lens through which women’s violence is portrayed.

A monstrous women’s violence is characterized as quite different from male violence. A violent woman is more deadly; she is more of a threat. […] The monster narrative at once demonizes violent women (characterizing them as evil) and ridicules them (hyperbolizing their evil, like the story of the 50-foot woman). This dual role that the monster narrative plays is further complicated by the element of sexual fantasy in the monster narrative, where popular culture fetishizes monstrous women (King and McCaughey 2002). The monster narrative is ridicule for women’s non-conforming behaviour ‘as a means of neutralizing the challenge [women’s violence] poses to dominant, hegemonic, patriarchal norms’ (Berrington and Honkatukia 2002, p. 57, in Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, p. 37).

The second deviant narrative proposed by Sjoberg and Gentry is the whore. In contrast to the monster, the whore is constituted by the evils of female sexuality. If female sexuality is left uncontrolled (by men), it becomes dangerous and possibly lethal. “Women’s integration into spheres of power and violence threatens patriarchy, until those women are dehumanized through sexualization” (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007).

It is useful to consider the mother/monster/whore narratives in relation to Schippers’ conceptualisation of hegemonic femininity and pariah femininities. Violent women in traditional war stories do not comply with ideal types of femininity.

Because their stories do not resonate with these inherited images of femininity, violent women are marginalized in political discourse. Their choices are rarely seen as choices, and, when they are, they are characterized as apolitical. Their tales are sensationalized and fetishized in the gendered
narratives that replace or substitute for their actual accounts. Stories of women’s violence through their own eyes necessarily interrogate the ideal-typical understandings of what women are, which threatens the gendered order at all levels of politics. Those with a political interest in the gender order cannot hear or tell those stories; instead, stories are produced and reproduced where women’s agency in their violence is denied (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, p. 51).

Feminist research on women’s empirical experiences in conflict deconstructs these types of essentialising narratives. In the next section I draw together the main points from feminist and critical approaches to security and conflict in order to build a framework to analyse the interviews I conducted with women activists.

3.3 Towards a framework to theorise everyday experiences of in/security

During times of conflict, all aspects of life are affected. Traditional approaches to IR fail to acknowledge the consequences of war on people’s lives (D’Costa and Lee-Koo 2009, p. 10). As we saw in the outline of traditional theories above, the human impact of conflict is disregarded, and instead a focus on states and state interests is privileged. In this final part I bring together elements from critical and feminist approaches to security to formulate the theoretical foundation for this thesis. While theorising the causes of war and its resolution, the human experience of living through war was most often forgotten. “People who fight/suffer/live inside wars do not worry about how wars begin and end (causes and consequences), for either they know the answers or know where to look for answers” (Parashar 2013, p. 617). Therefore, it is crucial to study war, not in the political and military institutions from which war is directed, but from the location where its violence actually takes place (Nordstrom 1997, p. 115).

International relations, thus, has an intimate relationship with war and yet the two seem to be estranged, few meaningful conversations taking place between them about the ‘human body, a sensing physical entity that can touch war, and an emotional and thinking body that is touched by it in innumerable ways’ (Sylvester 2011, p. 1, in Parashar 2013, p. 618).

Christine Sylvester notes that it is complicated to “translate war experience into war knowledge” (Sylvester 2013, p. 673). Therefore, we need to study
people who are living through war. They are the people who have experienced conflict. They know deeply what war is and how it affects their lives. Their war experience is deeper and more tangible than the work of any military strategist, statesman, or academic scholar. Ethnographic accounts of people’s lives in war are more useful in understanding the “smell, taste, sounds, touch, pleasures, and pains of war [that] lingers within and beyond the war” (Parashar 2013, p. 619, in Dufort 2013, p. 612).

That means looking at social aspects of war, people and/in/as war, rather than subsuming them in causes and effects. For many of us, those in-between moments that Parashar refers to — when war has started and has not been declared over — are the guts of war, not the wastelands of war refuse. They are the key bits taken up by war journalists, photographers, novelists, poets, artists, teachers, as well as by people living war at close or distant range (Sylvester 2013, p. 671).

War and conflict not only affect the physical terrain, such as the construction of bunkers and destruction of homes, but deeply impact on the subject’s sense of self. In one episode in Nordstrom’s ethnography on violence and war in Mozambique, she asked a local practitioner of traditional medicine what the war had brought his community, and he replied “everything” (Nordstrom 1997, p. 181). This story tells us about the impact of conflict on individuals and communities. As Carolyn Nordstrom points out: “The notion that a formed, self-sustaining, enduring self will feel and suffer the ravages of misfortune but will return home as basically the same person, to basically the same life, is an unrealistic legacy of Enlightenment logic” (Nordstrom 1997, p. 185).

If self is continuously constructed in thought and action, and identity forged through lived experience, then self-identity is defined by what one has lived through. Experience is not something that happens to the self, but experience becomes the self - it is that through which identity is forged. If cultural landscapes are layered on social and geographical landscapes to provide meaning to a person’s life-world, a change in the former necessarily refashions the latter. People exist in a continual process of re-formation. Even in locales far removed from war, people undergo constant, if often imperceptible, change. But in the vast dislocations that can mark war experiences, what can we say of the relationship between people as they were before exposure to violence, and as they are after they have weathered it? An irreversible
alteration has taken place. Can we say that the person who existed before the war has, at least in some small way, been killed – a casualty of war? A veteran, bearing the scars of war, has returned to take up residence in a post-war world (Nordstrom 1997, p. 185).

This points to the conceptualisation of subjectivity as discussed in the previous chapter. In this understanding, the creation of subjectivity, i.e. subjectification, takes place as the human engages with contextual situations as well as through the human becoming constituted by contextual situations (Foucault 1979, 1988). This constitution of the subject, within and in relation to context and discourses, is thus never fixed. In the discussion of the literature on critical security studies above, the conceptualisation noted that security and insecurity are discursive practices that create security subjects. Therefore, we need to understand the relationship between in/security and identity on the one hand and identity and subjectivity on the other.

Identity, subjectivity and in/security

Stern (2005) recounts how, for the women she interviewed, the processes of retelling themselves as Mayan women provided a feeling of security. Any “in/security configuration that was formed in tandem with these identity constellations could neither be partitioned off into separate ‘security’ needs, nor for that matter, specific threats” (Stern 2005, p. 115). Security thus works as a discursive practice that produces its subjects (Wibben 2011). Certain behaviours and norms become acceptable, and others forbidden. It is clear then that it is based on difference.

… [A]n in/security discourse gives substance to political subjectivity, both marginal and dominant. When the boundary lines between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ (the dangerous and the secure) blur, and the difference between the self and the other diminish, the discourse of danger re-instates the crucial dividing lines which secures identity – that is, ensures security. The assignments of ‘foreign’ threat safe-guards the identity of the community in question. Dominant identities are therefore fashioned, in part, as a response to the danger/threat implied by difference. Similarly, marginal identities, are, also in part, constructed for the Others by groups in power in order to secure their own dominance and legitimacy (i.e. to give form to their own identity) (Stern 2005, p. 44).
Conversely, subjectivity can also be embedded in similarity. By “hailing a subject in to place, [as argued by Austin (1976) and taken up by Butler (1997a) in her theories on performativity] this place is also where other similar subjects also dwell, and from where other like subjects also articulate their subjectivity” (Stern, 2005: 44). The security logic functions through processes of signification, similar to the identity logics described in the previous chapter. In order to make a subject secured, it has to be represented. Hence, security needs a stable subject, which identity politics can offer. “Read in this way, identity offers the vector for the forming of the subject so that it can be secured” (Weldes 1999, in Stern 2006b, p. 192). Thus, discourses of threats and safety that are used to secure the subject require a stable subject. This is where discourses of state, nationality, and religion are transfixed into identity politics:

The first time a Mozambican said to me that the war had taken from them everything they had, including who they were, I realized that identity, self, and personhood were strategic targets of war. The casualties and fonts of resistance of this war thus include intangibles beyond the physicality of bodies and action (Nordstrom 1997, p. 178). Borders are drawn between inside and outside, us and them, as well as danger and safety (Stern 2006b). These borders need to be guarded, in that our identity needs to be pure and untainted. This results in the intensification of different types of identities as well as a “the ‘taming’ or homogenization of an imagined ‘self’” (Stern 2006b, p. 193). Security is thus believed to be a possibility, as dangers and threats to the particular identity are neutralised.

Our understanding of who we are is strongly connected to who we say we are. “Telling and retelling one's story transforms the self - as does listening. The fluidity of subjectivity is exemplified in the way that personal narrative constructs identity and, in turn, security” (Wibben 2011, p. 105). Hence, narratives of security produce our identity. Conversely, an important condition of being able to claim security is to have a recognised identity. “Security claims cannot be heard from identities that have been enveloped and hidden by the dominant discourse” (Hoogensen and Rottem 2004, p. 165).
‘Security as silence’ occurs when insecurity cannot be voiced, when raising something as a security problem is impossible or might even aggravate the threat being faced. ‘Subsuming security’ arises because gendered security problems often involve an intimate inter-linkage between the subject’s gendered identity and other aspects of the subject’s identity, for example national and religious. (Hansen 2000b, p. 287).

Hence, women in nationalist contexts often gather around other identities, such as ethnicity or nation, instead of gender identity (Mayer 2000; Shaheed 1998). As security privileges certain identities in certain contexts, while ignoring others, it is important to look at security from an intersectional perspective. This accounts for the multiple subject positions that individuals can adopt and so feel secure and insecure in different ways at different times and thus the importance of exploring narratives of everyday experiences of in/security to unpack the relational self.

Bringing together the literature on gender and security, particularly Schippers (2007) and Sjoberg and Gentry (2007), it is clear that security produces certain forms of accepted gender identity. As Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) and Åhäll (2012) note, women’s violence is framed as deviant and non-feminine. In order to reproduce this in acceptable frames of femininity, women’s violence is represented as acts of mothers, monsters, and whores. Hence, in times of conflict, the peaceful nurturing mother, mourning her dead sons/husbands, constitutes the hegemonic femininity. However, in order to deconstruct the tropes of women and understand how women frame their own subjectivity in times of conflict, it is important that we consider narrative approaches.

In/security
As a final point to this section, I want to outline my understanding of security. The relationship between security and insecurity has been the thread running through this chapter. As critical security theories have pointed out, security and insecurity do not exist as opposites in a dichotomous relationship. Rather, security and insecurity are processes that are closely linked and intertwined. Didier Bigo and Anastassia Tsoukala (2008) understand security as sacrifice: “The knowledge of who needs to
survive, be protected and from what, also supposes knowing who is sacrificed in this operation” (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008, p. 2). This means that the securing of one actor leads to other actors being insecure (Bigo and Tsoukala 2008, p. 2). Hence, “security” cannot be a positive condition and “insecurity” negative; they are interrelated.

Stern (2001, 2005) also emphasises the relationship between security and insecurity by using the term “in/security”:

The concept of security bears with it ‘insecurity’. When one defines or names security, a notion of insecurity is also implied. [...] For example, in the struggle to 'secure' someone or something, to render it ‘safe’, one limits its possibilities, thus causing it 'harm' and endangering it. Security and insecurity can therefore be seen as intrinsically so interrelated that a co-operative concept, 'In/security', can be helpful in connoting the complex of naming both threat and safety (Stern 2001, p. 15).

It seems to me that there is little descriptive difference between the terms (in)security and in/security. There is, however, a difference in the mechanism of security in these two perspectives: Bigo and Tsoukala (2008), coming from a critical security perspective, refer to the practices of security, while Stern (2001, 2005), from a feminist perspective, is interested in experiences of security. Henceforth in this thesis, when I use the term “in/security” I refer to the constant negotiation and relationship between “security” and “insecurity”; security cannot exist without discourses of insecurity, and vice versa. They are thus inextricably interlinked.

3.4 Conclusion
This chapter has critically examined the concept of security in IR theory. It specifically focused on a number of concepts that will aid the analysis of the interviews in the subsequent chapters. This concluding part draws together the pivotal aspects of the theories and concepts discussed in order to present a conceptual framework.

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22 Nevertheless, in the article “’We’ the Subject: The Power and Failure of (In)Security” from 2006, Stern uses the term (in)security instead, and it is not clear why (Stern 2006b).
The brief outline of the background to the development of the concept of security in IR theory has demonstrated how realism, liberalism, and human security theories all take for granted a universal independent subject that needs to be secured (whether it be the state or an individual). In these perspectives, security is perceived as self-evident, unproblematic, and always positive. Most theorisations on Kashmir have been done through these lenses. Through reviewing the literature on security I have found critical and feminist perspectives to be more helpful. Critical perspectives, although diverse and contradictory, have argued that security is a signifier. They contend that security does not mean or describe anything in itself, but that it does something when an issue is named a security issue. Critical approaches to security thus focus on the productive and meaning-making aspects of security. Critical security studies, although offering interesting insight into the productive aspects of security, fails to distil experiences of security on an individual level. It places its analysis on the level of the state or policy, while the effects described above have implications on the security of individuals. I am interested in how women narrate security. Therefore I have found feminist perspectives to be fruitful in that they bring the analysis of the productive effects of security to the everyday. Feminists have successfully shown that in/security impacts every level of women’s lives and that it is gendered.

For feminist scholars, women’s everyday life during times of conflict matters. There is an interest in what counts as security and to whom the concept applies. As pointed out above, security is traditionally about the survival of states. However, the omission of gender from work on international security does not make that work gender-neutral or unproblematic, and feminist work seeks to highlight these absences and silences (Sjoberg 2010). For feminists, security is defined more broadly in “multidimensional or multilevel terms” (Sjoberg 2009, p. 4), incorporating issues ranging from domestic violence and rape, to access to food and environmental degradation. Feminist methodologies emphasise the need to study the margins: the margins of the discipline and the margins of the context (Parashar 2014). In this sense, feminist academic scholarship has
always been strongly connected to practice and feminist activism (Wibben 2011, p. 12). I have shown how feminists have theorised women’s role in conflict as victims, warriors, soldiers, supporters, and peacebuilders. Yet, this literature fails to point out how in/security affects women’s everyday experiences of activism. I am specifically interested in how women talk about themselves as activists. The feminist literature on peace activism does not cover the range of activities organised by women in Kashmir. Their work goes beyond peace activism to include health work, human rights work, and political activism. This connects the personal to the political, the political to the international, and the international to the personal. We also see that a lot of the work that the women are doing is navigating in/security, whether in the home, on the street, or at national and international level. This means that we need to gain a deeper knowledge of the relationship between in/security and identity. Wibben (2011) has created a sophisticated framework for analysing women’s security narratives. I hope to extend this by bringing in how the relationship between identity, the narratable self, and femininities operates through security discourses. Following feminist security scholars, I argue “that we are always already insecure, that there is no escape from our fundamental condition of vulnerability — and ultimately, from death” (Wibben 2011, p. 593). In/security for the women participating in this research is not only located in the location of conflict-affected Kashmir, it is also connected to multiple contestations of identity (national, religious, gender, class), gender relations, and histories.
Chapter 4
Methodologies of doing fieldwork in an in/secure location

In this chapter, I reflect on my fieldwork experience in the Kashmir Valley. I discuss the intersectional positionalities of gender, race, and class, their impact on my work, and how I went about negotiating the personal and the political. Feminist reflexivity emphasises the importance of thinking about the role of the researcher, her identity, subjectivity, and the ethical implications of doing research (Ackerly and True 2008; Jacoby 2006). Feminist writing is grounded in the personal, and, as a white woman in Kashmir, a meem\textsuperscript{23}, most doors were open to me, and my privilege of having studied at university in Europe provided me with the language and framework to analyse what I saw. However, I did not always feel privileged in Kashmir; I often felt weak and insecure, mainly due to gender and age.

This chapter is divided into six parts. First, I introduce Kashmir through my arrival to Srinagar and my encounters the first couple of months. Although the research begun before the arrival, I have chosen to begin my story here as I “…am constructing a narrative of my field research in order to present a comprehensible account of what was actually a dynamic, non-linear, and interpretive research process” (D'Costa 2006, p. 137). In the second part I overview feminist International Relations (IR) methodologies with a particular emphasis on questions of ethics and reflexivity. While these are always important to consider when doing research, they are of particular concern when doing cross-cultural research in a conflict setting where the intersecting power relations of race, class, gender, and economics, impact the interactions on the field. In the third part, I outline the research design for this thesis. I discuss why I chose to do a qualitative case study with a narrative approach, and I outline the research tools, questions, and location. Part 4 describes the research methods: the planning and recruitment, the data collection phase, analysis, and writing up. In part 5, I discuss cross-cultural research and the ethical and practical problems with carrying out research in multiple languages. Finally, the conclusion notes the importance

\textsuperscript{23} Kashmiri for ‘madam’, referring to a white foreign woman.
of a commitment to ethics and reflexivity when doing feminist cross-cultural research.

4.1 The arrival
On the grey slushy March day in 2011 when I arrived in Srinagar from New Delhi, a day of *hartal*\(^{24}\) had been announced by a local separatist group. While I am always a bit nervous when I enter Srinagar Airport, as it is heavily guarded by armed soldiers and police officers, this time in particular, although I knew I had all my paperwork in order, including special approval to do research in the conflict-affected state of J&K, I had a strange feeling in my stomach when I handed my passport to the police behind the ‘foreign visitors’ counter. My friend, Shahzada,\(^{25}\) collected me at the airport. Luckily, the airport buses were running despite the *hartal*, and we took a bus into Lal Chowk, the normally busy centre of Srinagar. Lal Chowk was silent that day, however. The shutters of the ice-cream parlours, handicraft shops, and shoe shops were all down, and the only people on the streets were soldiers and members of the CRPF. After a while, Shahzada managed to hail a lonely auto-rickshaw that was hurriedly passing by, and we made our way to her home in the Old Town.

I stayed with Shahzada and her parents for the first few weeks. As the rain was pouring down outside, I sat around chatting with Shahzada’s family and cousins, watching Indian afternoon soap operas and drinking innumerable cups of *chai* (tea). I generally spoke in English to Shahzada and her father, Hindi to her mother, and I slowly started to pick up the Kashmiri words for foods and drinks. After a few days, both the *hartal* and the rain ceased, and city life returned to normal for the approximately 900,000 people living in Srinagar.

A few days later, Shahzada escorted me to Kashmir University, where I met the Head of the Department of Political Science, Professor Noor Ahmad Baba, who generously gave me a lot of his time. I spent hours sitting in his

\(^{24}\) A term for strike or strike action in Hindi, Urdu and other South Asian languages.

\(^{25}\) All names are changed in order to maintain anonymity.
office drinking kahwa, a sweetened herbal tea with saffron, cinnamon, and cardamom, and talking about politics and university life. As the weather picked up, I was often seated on the grass outside the Allama Iqbal Library talking to students from different departments. The university is beautifully situated, on the north-eastern shore of Dal Lake with the Zabarwan Mountains in the background. The green lawns on campus were dotted with rose bushes, cherry blossoms in bloom, and dis-used fountains with stagnant water. Many students took an interest in my research, and told me how they were not allowed to study the situation in Kashmir themselves.

Due to the security situation in the Old Town, I could not stay with Shahzada’s family and had to look for accommodation elsewhere. It took me a couple of weeks to find a private room with a family living close to the university: there were not many rooms for rent in Srinagar and most hotels only catered for short-term tourists. Now, in a short space of time, I had two families in Kashmir: Shahzada's family and my new hosts. I was invited to visit and revisit cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and siblings. My friendship circle grew, and “family invitations” increased in number. Visits to friends and their extended families became a large part of my fieldwork life. On days when I had no interviews, or had finished my interviews or work-related meetings early, I would travel all over Srinagar to visit friends and their families. Although it was stressful to find time to accept all of these invitations, they were not a burden; I enjoyed sitting with my friends, with cricket or Bollywood music videos glaring in the background. I started enjoying nun chai, the pink salty tea that is popular in Kashmir, with lavassa or other types of local bread. The conversation topics varied widely, and we touched on topics as diverse as Kashmiri politics, the prospects for independence, the differences between Kashmir and Europe, politics, Shah Rukh Khan's latest film, feminism, and women's lives.

During that initial time of quiet rain spent sitting at home and subsequent days on the lawn of Kashmir University in warming spring sun, the conflict in Kashmir felt far away. After a while, I no longer noticed the bunkers and heavily armed soldiers on every corner. It was like they had melted into the
background and become invisible. Yet, everybody I met kept on repeating the phrase ‘Is Khoon Ka Badla June Mai Lenge’ (‘We Shall Avenge Our Blood In The Month Of June’), meaning that the Kashmiri people would rise up and avenge the deaths of the 112 young people killed during the summer of 2010 (which I describe in detail in Chapter 5). As I spent this time in Kashmir, speaking to women and men who had lived through intense conflict for many decades, I realised that in/security was not necessarily about violence, conflict, bombs, and raids, but about family, relationships, friendships, and work. Conflict affects all parts of life, and specifically during times of hartals and curfews, people would be stuck inside their homes for days, sometimes weeks or months, on end. In these situations, family feuds intensified, and violence often took place. The presence of security personnel on the streets, regular identity checks, laws such as Armed Forces Special Powers Act and Public Safety Act, all impact people’s access to the streets. People would avoid travelling on the roads after nightfall, and because of this, when visiting family and friends, they would generally choose to sleep over instead of travelling home. My friends spoke about their school terms being interrupted because of shutdowns, curfews, or violence; exams were often rescheduled at late notice. These stories brought the bunkers and armed soldiers back into view for me once again.

4.2 A feminist exploring the international
Research is always a personal and embodied act. Fieldwork in IR often involves intense experiences for the researcher, as she spends a long time in the research location(s), often away from home (Sultana 2007, p. 377). This experience is taking place in a nexus of global relations of power, formed by discourses of colonialism, liberalism, and development. Intersectional identities of race, gender, and class inform and mould the interaction between the researcher and participants. However, this relationship is not necessarily defined in the binary terms of “insider” versus “outsider.” Feminist approaches to research often invite the researcher to enter “inside”

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26 Henceforth abbreviated as AFSPA and PSA respectively. See Chapter 5 for more detail.
by claiming that the personal is political, and thus formulating research questions and projects that focus on the lives of people in the midst of the “international” (D'Costa 2006).

My study is situated in feminist security studies, which broadly concerns the study of gendered, everyday experiences of in/security (Parashar 2013; Sylvester 2013). As demonstrated in Chapter 3, feminist security studies accounts for the relevance of the personal in international politics. Scholars argue that the state is not the only relevant site of analysis, that subjects are relational, and that the world is continually changing (Ackerly, Stern and True 2006, p. 7). Importantly, I follow Wibben (2011) and Nordstrom (1997) in asserting the importance of studying in/security narratively. Epistemologically, narrative inquiry, as feminism does, puts “traditional” approaches to knowledge on trial by bringing forward personal stories and making them count “scientifically.” Following Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern and Jacqui True’s (2006) argument that there is no distinct feminist IR method, and acknowledging that there are manifold feminist epistemologies, my research approach is founded on a concern to unveil gendered dimensions of life in an in/secure area. In order to understand women’s everyday experiences of in/security, I needed the tools provided by feminist IR scholarship to deconstruct state-centric understandings of security and thus link “the micronarratives […] with the macronarratives and identity politics of the nation-state” (D'Costa 2006, p. 150). I chose a feminist approach to methodology, as it involves questioning the epistemologies, the understanding of knowledge, and the constant reflection on methodology and epistemology. Hence, feminism has, as have other forms of critical theory, criticised the positivist truth-claims of scientific theory.

The ethics of fieldwork
Research ethics is central to feminist research. The embodied, personal, and relational nature of IR fieldwork presents challenges and concerns for the researcher, which it was necessary to consider at every stage (Inayatullah 2011; Parashar 2014). In this kind of project, ethics must be considered at two levels at least. Firstly, feminist ethics requires the researcher to situate
herself in the research: a feminist researcher needs to consider questions of reflexivity and intersectional power-relations (Ackerly and True 2008; Davies 2008; Sultana 2007; Wibben 2014). Secondly, it is crucial to comply with the general principles of research ethics, i.e., do no harm, informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, privacy and anonymity, and preventing deception (Bryman 2008, p. 509). In my view, the two levels are not completely distinct from each other; they are intricately linked and each must be considered in relation to the other. However, for the purpose of structure, I first explore approaches to research ethics as reflexivity, before going on to describe the practical steps that I took to apply the general principles of ethical research.

**Ethics as reflexivity**

Ackerly and True (2008) present a framework of research ethics as reflexivity that can be used as a tool when doing feminist research. Instead of attempting to create a feminist methodology, they develop “[a] series of research considerations that do not map narrowly on to questions of research design...” (Ackerly and True 2008, p. 694). Consequently, Ackerly and True (2008) propose that an ethical approach to research involves considering epistemology, boundaries, relationships, and the situatedness of the researcher (Ackerly and True 2008, p. 695). This implies paying attention to the role of experience and privilege in forming our identity and perspectives on research and knowledge (Davies 2008). Hence, doing reflexive research and engaging in self-reflection involves “noticing and thinking through silences in epistemology, boundaries, and power dynamics (of the research process itself) from a range of theoretical perspectives” (Ackerly and True 2008, p. 695). In the following sections, I elaborate on the role of epistemology, borders, relationships, and positionality in opening up a multidimensional approach to reflexivity.

Epistemology, the theory of knowledge, is the system we use to differentiate fact and belief. Nevertheless, it is also a “belief system” (Ackerly and True 2008, p. 695) that comprises knowledge, evidence, and argument. Feminist epistemologies appeal to me, as they generally question “conventional”
sources of knowledge and hence distort binary constructions of the world. By shifting the gaze and deconstructing power relationships, feminism brings to light gendered conceptualisations of our lives (Peterson 2007). Feminism also demands the questioning of one's own epistemological framework. Feminist epistemology is thus not static and "ready," but is instead fluid, developing, and changing, and involves a constant critique of methodology and epistemology (Wibben 2011, 2014). A narrative epistemological framework focuses on a "methodology that is intersubjectively negotiated in order to gain access to the difficult questions of identity, transformation, and meaning" (McAdams 1999, p. 492). I was also concerned about the normative objectives of doing research. Knowledge and power are linked in complex ways; feminist research has historically been attached to the movement for equality and justice (Tickner 2005, p. 9); therefore ethics is deeply entrenched in feminist research.

A second aspect of reflexivity is the importance of considering boundaries. Paying attention to boundaries, marginalisation, and silences is difficult, but crucial, in a conflict situation. These could be boundaries between disciplines, between researchers and researched, or between epistemologies. Tami Jacoby (2006, p. 159) argues that the academic tradition of separating methodology and epistemology upholds a binary division between theory and practice. Feminist researchers seek to ensure that both are integrated: methodology must (and does) inform epistemology, and our epistemology needs to ensure that we reflect on methodology. Feminist security studies actively seeks to destabilise the boundaries of IR. In my research, I was specifically interested in listening to women's stories of everyday in/security. Arguing that women's lives and experiences matter has changed the research agenda; by bringing personal narratives into the study of security (Wibben 2011), this project destabilises the dichotomous distinction between state security and personal security.

Thirdly, the researcher needs to reflect on relationships during and after the fieldwork. The researcher can never leave the text, but must always consider the impact of the relationships between researcher and participants. The
dialogue and exchange between researcher and participants inform the research process and the data obtained (D'Costa 2006). This means that the researcher cannot leave the text, but must constantly consider the relationship between the experience and the narrative of the participant. A narrative approach emphasises the “relational experience between a researcher and research participants” (Brännlund, Kovacic and Lounasmaa 2013). Attending to the narrative as a co-creating between the researcher and participant requires consideration of the positionality of the researcher.

Finally, positionality is essential. As in feminist research issues of representation and power relations are crucial, the relationship between the researcher and researched must be identified and deconstructed (Ackerly, Stern and True 2006; Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002). Hence, while formulating the research questions and methodology, I constantly reflected on my own embodied positionality as a “Northern” woman researching events in the “Global South.” Intersectional identities of gender, race, and age impacted my experience in Kashmir in multiple ways, as well my data collection, analysis, and write up. As a white, European, young woman in Kashmir, I clearly benefited from white privilege and European economic capital. This reflexive standpoint brings out questions about the impacts and effects of my positionality on the data collection, as well as on my analysis of the data: How has the research design shaped the data collection? How has it shaped the conclusions? How did my role as researcher impact upon the participants, and vice versa?

In summary, feminist research involves careful consideration of its ethical implications. This involves both questions of implementation and reflexivity. Throughout this chapter I reflect on issues of epistemology, boundaries, relationships, and positionality. However, I start by outlining the practical steps I took to ensure that the project adhered to the ethics guidelines presented by my university.
**The practicalities of ethical research**

While planning the design of this research, ethical considerations were taken very seriously. Due to the inherent power relationship between the researcher and participant, which is mitigated, stretched, and fluid due to intersectional identities of race, gender, location, and age, research cannot be entirely ethical. Yet, we can do our best to avoid doing harm, as well as to mitigate and reflect on power hierarchies. During all the stages of planning, I took into consideration the fact that the research was taking place in a conflict-affected area, where the civilian population had been severely affected. As the aims and objectives focused on accentuating the power of women to improve their own lives, I formulated a research question that emphasised the agency of civilian women – not their victimhood.

I sought to follow ethical principles in order to avoid causing mental harm or distress to the research participants. As is demonstrated in the interview schedules, the interview questions revolved around the participants’ experience of activism; yet, as the research was conducted in a conflict situation, most of the participants had been affected by the conflict, either by loss of family or friends, or through loss of livelihood. I had formulated a plan to deal with upset or negatively affected research participants during and after the interviews. While the questions were formulated so as to avoid sensitive issues, some participants wanted to discuss these issues during the interview, which I then encouraged. In addition, questions were framed in consistence with locally accepted cultural and political nuances in order to avoid embarrassment and discomfort during the interview.

It was nevertheless important to adhere to the principles of ethical research that are institutionalised. The NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee reviewed and fully approved the ethical aspects of the project. I obtained informed consent in writing from all participants before the interview. The consent form (Appendix 5) guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. These forms were in English and translated orally to the participant if required. Full anonymity was
ensured to all participants. This was ensured through the coding of interview and consent forms. I gave each research participant a nickname, and thereafter added an identification number to the interviews and consent forms. This identification number was then used on the recordings and transcriptions. Both the consent forms and the “master key” were kept separate from the recordings and transcripts in a safe, secure, and locked location that only I could access. In addition, all interviews were, if participants approved, recorded and transcribed. I stated clearly at the beginning of the interview, both in writing on the information sheet and orally, that the participant could withdraw at any time, including after the interview had been concluded. In case the participant required additional support after the interview, I had prepared a strategy with check-ins and outside support. The digital recordings will be kept for five years after the study in a secure and password protected folder. If I wish to use these recordings for a different study, I will be obliged to contact the participants to obtain informed consent again. Paper records are kept in a safe and locked location at NUI Galway.

4.3 Research design: a framework for collecting data in a conflict zone
The research design is the “structure that guides the execution of a research method and the analysis of the subsequent data” (Bryman 2008, p. 27). This study uses a qualitative case study research design to analyse women’s narratives of in/security in a conflict-affected area. I have chosen to use multiple methods, not as a strategy of triangulation or corroboration, but to “deepen and enrich [my] understanding of [the] topic” (Bloor et al. 2002, p. 13). In order to gather women’s in/security narratives, I conducted key informant interviews with activists and stakeholders in the Kashmir Valley, as well as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with politically active women in Kashmir.

Why qualitative?
I chose to do a qualitative case study of women activists in order to gather rich and detailed data. As I am seeking to explore women’s experiences of in/security, I am specifically interested in how women talk about in/security.
In what contexts do women locate security and insecurity? Where do security and insecurity merge? How is in/security played out? These types of questions would be impossible to explore through quantitative methods. The dynamic approach of semi-structured interviews and focus groups provides a space to study the inter-personal creation of knowledge.

**Narrative methods**

As outlined in Chapter 2, narratives are central in the creation of our personal identities; narrative is “the primary scheme by which human existence is rendered meaningful” (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 11). I argued that identity and subjectivity are constructed through processes of narratives created in relation to an understanding of the self and the other (McNay 1999; Ochs and Capps 1996; Tamboukou 2008; Yuval-Davis 2010). I am particularly interested in narratives as experiences (Ochs and Capps 1996; Squire 2008). This is linked to the point I made above, that narrative and self are inseparable, and hence entities are “given meaning through being experienced” (Ochs and Capps 1996, p. 21).

Every telling provides narrators and listener/readers with an opportunity for fragmented self-understanding. Each telling of a narrative situated in time and space engages only facets of a narrator’s or listener/reader’s selfhood in that it evokes only certain memories, concerns, and expectations […] In this sense, narratives are apprehended by partial selves, and narratives so apprehended access only fragments of experience (Ochs and Capps 1996, pp. 21-22). The tempo-spatial relocation of experience that takes place through the retelling of the experience – experiences only partly remembered, partly invoked – suggests that “true” experience can never be retold. This points to the centrality of considering narratives as told “now-to-then” (Nordstrom 1997, p. 22). In this sense, through the narrative retelling of an event or experience, the experience travels from the past and gets shaped and formed by the multiple interactions and experiences that have happened since. As a result, the narrative of the experience will be different to the “original” experience. Yet, importantly, not less “true.” Nordstrom elaborates:

Narrative organizes experience after the fact. Though the narratives may affirm past violences, infusing old into new, they will never be the raw primary experience of which they
speak. They can never be synchronous with that which they ‘tell about,’ for raw experience is now-to-now, and narrative is a now-to-then process. Disputed, even embattled, realities and identities are the meat of experience, the conditions facing humankind. It is narrative that flows through the cracks and bridges the disjunctions to give meaning, but the narrator judges what “whole” the fragments should produce, what “reality” flows through ruptures (Nordstrom 1997, p. 22. Italics in original).

This is an important foundation for this study. In studying women’s experiences qualitatively, I do not assert to know these experiences, instead I explore how the participants narrate their experiences. Narrative research involves theoretical and methodological multiplicity which makes it impossible to clearly define “narrative” (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2008; Riessman 2008). Narrative research has been described as “amoeba-like”. “[This] means that it has no clear boundaries or straightforward rules, but rather, narrative research is a loose concept for any research related to narratives” (Rytivaara 2012, p. 304). Founding the research on a narrative perspective facilitates the exploration of the relationship between in/security and activism. Through my own experience in the field, how I write about this experience, key informant conversations, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews, I patch together my own narrative of women’s experiences in Kashmir. This brings together “different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change” (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2008, pp. 1-2).

Research tools

The formal aspect of the research design revolved around the interviews. Fontana and Frey (2003) differentiate between structured interviewing, group interviews, and unstructured interviews. Structured interviewing involves the researcher asking all participants a series of the same, predetermined questions; this leaves little room for flexibility in how questions are asked and answered. Group interviews involve asking a group of people a number of questions in a formal or informal setting (Fontana and Frey 2003, p. 71), while unstructured interviewing is a broad term for open-ended, ethnographic, in-depth, or participant observation (Fontana and
Accordingly, it is argued that participant observation is also built on interviewing, as the interviewer asks questions to the people around her (Fontana and Frey 2003, p. 74). I chose to conduct focus group interviews and unstructured interviews. However, the reason I chose these two methods was that I wanted to collect both collective accounts and individual narratives. Through this mixed-methods approach, I collected rich narratives of women’s lives in Kashmir.

**Focus groups**

I chose to conduct focus group interviews in order to tease out collective accounts of agency, security, and identity among women engaged in political activities. Focus group discussions have become increasingly popular as research techniques (Morgan 1996). Much of its attraction may be drawn from the human inclination to gathering in groups and discussing a topic; agreeing, disagreeing, and often, though not at all always, coming to a consensus (Krueger 1994; Morgan 1996). By interviewing women who worked together, I hoped to obtain a joint construction of women’s experiences of activism and in/security. I anticipated that the focus groups would bring together the main discourses and themes of women’s activism (Morgan 1996), and that I would be able to reveal narratives that had been normalised, and so were acceptable to voice in a group setting (Bloor *et al.* 2002). I also wanted to attempt to explore contentions and disagreements within the group, which would give a sense of power relations and hierarchies (Barbour 2007, p. 130).

Importantly, “focus groups may help, not only to expose the layers of oppression that have suppressed their expressions, but also to facilitate the forms of resistance that they use for dealing with such oppressions in their everyday life” (Liamputtong 2011, p. 128). Madriz (2003) points out how focus groups can give space for plural voices. This means that silenced individuals can be heard, in that the “multivocality of the group situation validates the subjects’ experiences with other subjects of similar socioeconomic, gender, and racial/ethnic backgrounds” (Madriz 2003, p. 373). In this sense, focus groups can be a suitable tool to advance a feminist
project, as they can serve to expose and validate women’s everyday experiences of subjugation and their individual and collective survival and resistance strategies” (Madriz 2003, p. 364).

One problematic aspect of focus groups that is important to consider is that they can overemphasise consensus (Barbour 2007, p. 130). Yet, this can be used productively, as focus groups are useful in exploring group norms (Bloor et al. 2002) as well as wider discourses. Simultaneously, inviting participants to reflect upon and discuss group norms reveals the contingency of these group norms. They can help in producing data on “the meanings that lie behind those group assessments” (Bloor et al. 2002, p. 4). Hence, as focus groups can at times emphasise group norms and silence individual stories (Bloor et al. 2002), in order to capture individual narratives in more detail, I also used in-depth interviews with narrative and semi-structured elements.

**In-depth interviews**

Interviews are one of the most common data collection techniques within qualitative research. As I was interested in gathering stories on the individual experiences of women activists, I considered in-depth interviews, in addition to the focus groups discussed above, to be an appropriate tool (Hobbs and Wright 2006; Silverman 2004; Skeggs 2007). The interview is “an active, emergent process” (Fontana and Frey 2003, p. 76). It is contextual and interpersonal, and it presents an opportunity for the co-creation of knowledge between the participant and the researcher (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2008). “[I]nterviews are not neutral tools of data gathering, but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (Fontana and Frey 2003, p. 62). Therefore it is important to not only consider the research participants, but also the researcher:

There is a growing realization that interviewers are not the mythical, neutral tools envisioned by survey research. Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in interactions with respondents, and interviews are seen as negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and
respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place (Fontana and Frey 2003, pp. 90-91).

The in-depth interview was a combination of a narrative and semi-structured interview. I had initially planned to first conduct a narrative interview, which would be followed up with a second, semi-structured, interview. However, when I was in Kashmir and started interacting with the organisations, I realised that it would be too much to ask for two interviews with one person due to participants’ time constraints. Instead, I combined the narrative and semi-structured interviews into one mixed-methods interview. Ultimately, I think this worked better, as some of the women did not respond well to the narrative question and did not elaborate much on the topic. In some instances, the participant would speak for about five minutes about the narrative question and, after a long silence and further probing from me, I would have to continue on to the second part.

The narrative interview was initiated by the narrative question: “Please tell me about your life as a female activist in Kashmir?” The participant was allowed to talk until she considered herself done. Thereafter I would follow up on further details and recurring themes in the woman’s story. I was specifically attentive to the categories of interest for this study: security, insecurity, conflict, religion, nationalism, Kashmiriyat, community, family, violence, and democracy, but I also kept an open mind to other categories or themes that might arise.

In the second part of the interview, I had prepared a set of direct questions: How do you, as a woman activist, experience the in/security situation in Srinagar? How do you perceive yourself as an activist? What does your family think about your work? How do you experience your family’s perception of your work? Your community’s? Do you experience any tensions between being Muslim (/Hindu/Sikh/Christian) and an activist in Kashmir? What is Kashmiri identity to you? (See Appendix 3). These questions were asked by me in an informal dialogue. I allowed the participants to talk as much or as little they wanted on each question. I also allowed them to ask me questions, and at times, I contributed with some of
my own thoughts on the topic if I considered it appropriate. This helped to both probe the participant further, as well as to remind her that the interview is an interpersonal process (Fontana and Frey 2003).

Research questions
The central aim of this thesis is to explore politically active women’s everyday experiences of in/security. The study follows Falch’s definition of women’s political participation as women’s mobilisation, representation, participation, and influence in formal and informal political decision-making (Falch 2010, p. 2).

The central research question of this study is:
* What is the relationship between women's political activism and in/security?
This can be broken down into three sub-questions:
- What are the spaces in which women experience in/security?
- How is women’s in/security shaped and formed through participation in or exclusion from political processes and the salience of national/religious identity?
- How do women overcome the constraints posed by in/security?

These questions were generated from my reading of the literature by feminist IR scholars, as well as the scholarship on the Kashmiri conflict. I noticed an overlapping gap in these two sets of literature, a micro-account on women’s lives during long-term, low-level conflict. While the feminist IR literature criticises the state-centric approaches of traditional streams of IR, there seems to be a reluctance, or failure, to go deep into women’s homes (with exceptions from e.g. D’Costa 2006; Nordstrom 1997; Parashar 2014; Stern 2005). Similarly, within the literature on Kashmir, although there is a growing body of literature on women, it is still focused on the meta-level, and particularly on the more violent aspects of the conflict.

Additionally, the practical reality on the Kashmiri ground makes women an interesting case study. As mentioned previously, there are few women
active in political parties in J&K, while exceptional figures, such as Mehbooba Mufti of the PDP, frequently figure in the media. Women and women’s groups have also been side-lined from Indo-Pakistani peace negotiations, roundtable discussions with separatist groups, and the democratic process. Nevertheless, there are several political initiatives organised by NGOs that focus their work on women while working towards peace and human development in the region. While these NGOs are excluded from political processes in the state, they provide an essential space for women to engage in informal political activities.

Research location
This research was conducted in Srinagar, the capital of J&K, and in three rural locations: Kupwara, Pulwama, and Budgam. Before going out to the field, I had initially chosen Srinagar District as the research site as it is the political and economic urban centre of the Kashmir Valley and serves as the summer capital of J&K. This means that the majority of the NGOs have their main office in the city, and that during the summer, the J&K political and legal institutions are based there. Since the mobilisation for democracy and good governance in the 1930s, Srinagar has always been a hotbed anti-government organisation. Thus, it has a crucial position in narratives of Kashmiri political history. Nevertheless, it is also the centre for the main political parties and NGOs, and hosts many other forms of political activities. The majority of Srinagar’s population is Kashmiri Muslims, but there are also Pandits, Sikhs and Christians living there.

During the field research, I extended the research site to Kupwara District in North Kashmir, as well as to Budgam and Pulwama in the South. Kupwara, which is situated close to the Line of Control (LoC) that draws the border between India and Pakistan, has been heavily affected by conflict, and is still a highly insecure area. The thick forests have served as hiding places and training grounds for militant groups. There are many Indian army bases around the area due to its close proximity to the LoC and the active

27 In J&K, Srinagar and Jammu are sharing the status as capital city. In the summer Srinagar is the capital of the state, while Jammu has this status in the winter.
militancy. Budgam and Pulwama were also intensely affected by militancy during the height of the insurgency, but the situation is now more stable. Therefore, these three areas are useful sites to study women’s activism in a state of insecurity. Although I did not aim to create a study that is representative of all areas of Kashmir, including Kupwara, Budgam, and Pulwama, the research has nonetheless provided insights into rural women’s experiences. In the next section, I outline the research methods I used to collect the data.

4.4 Research methods: how I collected the data

Research methods involve the techniques for collecting data (Bryman 2008). Planning and preparing the research were essential aspects of the pre-fieldwork stages (Goffman 2002; Punch 2005). As a white European woman, I would always be an outsider in Kashmir, but due to having developed a long-term relationship with India and Kashmir, I entered straight into the Kashmiri home. I had travelled widely in India on several occasions; I could speak Hindi and had taught myself to write and read the Urdu script. Two years prior to the fieldwork, I had spent a summer working for the organisation WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) in New Delhi, through which I had started to build up a network of activists and friends in New Delhi and Srinagar. I had taken the first steps to familiarise myself with the activist terrain of Kashmir by reading as much as I could about it before going to the field, as well as by talking to activists when I was working in New Delhi in 2009. I was already in contact with some activists that I had met with initially. Through them, as well as through my contacts at Kashmir University, my network in Kashmir grew. Before leaving Europe, I obtained the appropriate research visa from the Indian Embassy. This involved establishing contact with academics at Kashmir University to ask them to write me an invitation.

Strategic cups of chai: negotiating access

Initially the research plan that I had prepared involved including four organisations that were based in Srinagar. This was due to accessibility and security concerns. I had planned to conduct four focus groups with four to
seven participants in each, and to interview three adult female staff at the four selected programmes. I had planned to launch a call to organisations in the area and to recruit the participants through negotiations with the organisations. Nevertheless, it was clear when I entered the field that my Western understanding (derived from reading widely on research methods) of how to do research was flawed. The research process in Kashmir would not be as straightforward and systematic as the books on research methods had detailed. Instead of launching a call for participants, I started an irregular snowballing method, wherein I networked simultaneously at the university, public meetings (such as book launches and conferences), and NGOs.

Through this snowballing method, I made contact with a variety of NGOs, academics, lawyers, journalists, and students. I relied on gatekeepers (Maginn 2007; Undheim 2003) from the early stages of the fieldwork—as I needed support from an Indian scholar to obtain the research visa to the country—and throughout the research process. Through meeting students and activists, I slowly negotiated access to participants. One specific turning point was meeting a student, Nazeer, at Kashmir University. I remember sitting down with Nazeer over chai outside the library. After a long conversation, during which he questioned me on my knowledge and perspective on the situation in Kashmir, he picked up the phone and gave me the numbers to several civil rights groups and activists. These contacts proved invaluable to the research. While I had initially set out to conduct interviews with key informants, I soon realised that the more appropriate and comfortable way of introducing myself to the organisations was to have a casual conversation with a key person from that organisation. On most occasions, an initial meeting or phone call was followed by a longer informal meeting.

I organised these informal meetings with key informants in order to negotiate access to women activists in Srinagar, and to get insight into the structures and relationships that existed in the area. The key informants were women and men activists, academics, politicians, or other stakeholders
in the area who were well-connected and immersed in local women’s politics. The conversation was focused in two areas: the structure, organisation, planning, and implementation of women-focused activities in the area; and the negotiations between civil society actors and the formal political establishment, for instance, access to funding, support structures, and coordination. In these meetings, I listened carefully to the language used to describe women’s activism. I also told them about my research project, its background, and what participating in the research would involve. I explained the consent forms and the importance of confidentiality and anonymity. This resulted in negotiations on whether the organisation would participate or not.

The participants were recruited through negotiations with the participating organisations and, after access had been permitted, prospective participants were approached by the contact person at the organisation. While this study does not aim to generalise women’s experience of activism in Kashmir, the diversity of age, class, education level, location, and, to some extent, religion gives us an insight into different women’s every day in/security practices. This brings intersectional identities to the fore, and how these impact women’s experiences of in/security.

Narrators
I recruited 21 women for this research. Ultimately three organisations agreed to participate in the research, which provided a diverse range of projects, participants, and activities. These were: Children and Social Work Organisation (CSWO), based in Srinagar and Kupwara; Human Rights Organisation (HRO), based in Srinagar; and Health Organisation (HO), based in Pulwama and Budgam. In order to widen the sample size, as there are many women who participate in political activities outside the recruited NGOs, I created a fourth group of independent activists. In this group I included: an academic who was speaking out in public about politics, two village level politicians, and a founder of a well-known organisation. Ultimately, I conducted three focus group discussions and interviewed thirteen women from urban and rural Kashmir, as shown in Appendix 1.
The three organisations that agreed to participate in the research represented a wide range of projects, participants, and activities. The participant women came from diverse backgrounds and different parts of Kashmir. The first category consisted of activists from the CSWO, was based in Srinagar and Kupwara District, and its work was focused on organising activities for orphans and economically deprived children, such as schools and play groups, as well as income-generating projects for widows and other vulnerable groups. The focus group discussion was conducted in English with women working in the Srinagar office (Tanavish, Nasreen, Osheen, and Sakira). All four were 18 to 20 years old and came from poor, urban families. They had been recipients of educational grants from the CSWO from an early age, and were now employed by them to work with children’s social and legal issues. Interviews were conducted with three women working as community facilitators in their villages in Kupwara District: Afreen, 22 years old, a second year BA student, Shagufa, also second year BA, 21 years old, and Zaara, 19 years old, 12th Standard, whose father had been a militant and killed by the Indian Army. All the women representing the CSWO were unmarried and lived with one or both of their parents. The interviews were conducted in either Urdu or Kashmiri with the aid of an interpreter working for the CSWO.

The second category, the HRO, was based in Srinagar and represented the J&K chapter of an All-India human rights organisation. It was involved in human rights advocacy work, legal and rights awareness-raising, and other types of human rights activism. It was the same three women participating in the focus group as in the interviews: Rabiya, a trained advocate from the Srinagar area in her late-twenties, unmarried and living with her family; Nilofer, also a trained advocate from Srinagar in her mid-thirties, married with one child; and Farhana, who worked as an intern during the time of the fieldwork, was completing an MA in Peace and Conflict Resolution, in her early twenties and living with her family in a small town in Southern Kashmir.
The third category, the HO, was based in Srinagar and was carrying out a large part of its work in Southern Kashmir. They ran open-air clinics for economically deprived people, trained local women to become community doctors, and conducted large-scale public health awareness campaigns. The women who participated in the focus group discussion were: Aaliya, 12th Standard, in her mid-twenties; Haseena, 12th Standard (age), and Farida, 10th Standard (age). They were all from different villages in Pulwama District; Zubaira, Sehrish, and Sania. Interviews were conducted with Aaliya and Farida with the aid of an interpreter. I also interviewed Asifa, the Secretary of the organisation. She was in her mid-forties, had obtained an MA abroad, and lived in Srinagar with her parents and her daughter.

The fourth category consisted of women, who participated in political activities outside the recruited NGOs. This group was comprised of women who partook in public discourse as debaters, NGO activists, and village-level politicians. Haleemah, in her early fifties, was a professor at an academic institution in Srinagar. She was involved in separatist politics and had written and debated extensively about the quest for Kashmiri independence. Rashida was an elected deputy Sarpanch in a village in Kupwara District. She was in her mid-forties, had no formal education, and was living with her husband with an intellectual disability and their children. Aniza was an elected Panchayat member from another village in Kupwara District. She was in her mid-forties, uneducated, and lived with her daughter who had intellectual disabilities. Her husband had been killed by the Indian army, and her other children were married and lived away from home. Shehla was the founder and Chairperson of a widow support organisation in Srinagar. She was in her mid-forties, uneducated, and married with children. One of her sons had been disappeared in the 1990s, and this had inspired her to start the organisation. Sumita, a medical doctor employed by an international organisation in Srinagar, was in her early thirties and lived with her mother. Sumita, a Kashmiri Pandit, was the only non-Muslim amongst the research participants.
Before moving on to the execution of the research, it is important to reflect on the unevenness of the participation sample. As outlined above, all research participants, except one, were Muslim; the remaining one was a Pandit (Kashmiri Hindu). While greater religious and ethnic diversity would provide a more representative sample, the circumstances on the ground and the low number of politically active non-Muslims made this impossible. As the history chapter demonstrates, the Kashmiri Pandits have been integral citizens of Kashmir throughout history. When the insurgency flared up in 1989-1990, many Pandits were targeted and fled their homes (Evans 2002). Currently, there is only a small number of Pandits living in the Kashmir Valley; a large number still live in refugee camps in Jammu. Due to the focus of this research being on women currently living in the Kashmir Valley, I did not travel to Jammu to interview refugees as this would have provided a different context. Besides Sumita, there were more Pandit women activists (including the Panchayat elected woman Aasha Jee), as well as a very small number of Sikh and Christian women activists, however, I was not able to contact these women for interviews. While recognising that Sumita’s story does not represent all Pandits’ stories, her narrative is a window into one Pandit’s experience. Her story provides an insightful counter-narrative to the Muslim women’s narratives.

Data collection
After the initial informal meetings, I started the formal phase of data collection which consisted of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. In reality, after the initial snowballing, networking, and contacting of organisations, the IOMs and data collection all happened simultaneously and depending on the availability of participants. As 2011 was the first summer in four years that was relatively calm and peaceful, it was a busy time for everyone. There were many public gatherings, book launches, conferences, and political events that took up participants’ time. Ramzaan28 fell in August, which put almost a full month’s halt to my research. During this month, many people want to devote much of their time

28 Holy month of fasting for Muslims.
to praying, and they are also too tired to work (particularly in the heat that we had that August). At the end of Ramzaan women are busy cleaning, cooking, and shopping for Eid-ul-Fitr\textsuperscript{29}.

With the permission of the participants, all focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed by myself. The majority of the focus groups and interviews were conducted in English, while some were conducted in Urdu or Kashmiri with the help of an interpreter. In some cases, where I found the interpretation to be unsatisfactory, the recordings were translated into English. This is discussed in more detail in part 5 of this chapter.

The focus groups were structured around an informal but guided interview schedule, featuring open-ended questions on activism, security, the role of women, and community (see Appendix 2). Nevertheless, as discussed in more detail below, my own experiences during the fieldwork influenced my research questions. This led me to ask additional questions that were not originally planned, but resulted in more culturally appropriate research (Colucci 2008) and refined interviews. The group dynamics varied between the three groups and produced different types of data. In the focus groups with HO and CSWO, for example, there was most often a general consensus; no one challenged another participant, but instead agreed and continued talking from a similar viewpoint. In the third focus group with HRO, however, there was more debate and disagreement. The reason for this may have been the educational level of the participants, as in the third group the participants were trained lawyers. As focus groups “retain their own internal hierarchies” (Bloor \textit{et al.} 2002, p. 16), the older women dominated the conversation.

The interview guides evolved during my time in Kashmir: my own experience in Kashmir impacted the questions I asked in the later interviews. The experience of maintaining the relationships narrated in the first section of this chapter made me reflect on the pressure on Kashmiri

\textsuperscript{29} The celebration marking the end of Ramzaan.
women to visit family, and on how they found the time to combine work, activism, family, and visiting relatives. I decided to incorporate questions about this into my interviews. Many of the research participants spoke about the pressure on them to visit extended family regularly and told me how their family often complained about them not visiting often enough. My experience of feeling compelled to visit friends and friends’ families, and spending most of my free time “sitting at people's houses”, gave me an understanding of the burden on women activists. The epistemological approach that sees knowledge as not fixed and objective, allowed my own experience in the field to influence the interview topics (Ackerly and True 2008, p. 695). This experience extended my research beyond “traditional” security concerns.

Analysis
How do you begin to approach a text? The literature on feminist methodologies in IR sets out a diverse range of approaches to how to conduct data analysis (see for instance Ackerly, Stern and True 2006; Tickner 2005). For this project, I found thematic narrative analysis useful. By bringing the individual’s narratives to the fore, thematic narrative analysis attempts to account for how the individual makes sense of their place in the world and how this is related to broader discourses.

As pointed out in part 2, narrative research is about stories of the life lived (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2008; Bruner 1991; Tamboukou 2008). Narrative analysis, then, focuses on the narrative elements of the texts analysed (Riessman 2008, pp. 60-61). Stories are the central focus of analysis, and by looking at how events are framed through specific narratives, researchers attempt to make sense of the social world (Wibben 2011, p. 3). “How to interpret stories, and more specifically, the texts that tell the stories, is at the heart of narrative analysis” (Patton 2002, p. 118). There is no specific method for narrative analysis but many different techniques. For example, Ochs and Capps (2001) outline five aspects that are central to consider when conducting narrative analysis: tellership, or who is telling the story; tellability, or how interesting the story is;
embeddedness, or how the narrative is situated within other stretches of text or talk; linearity, the sequential and/or temporal ordering of events; and moral stance, the moral values being conveyed through the telling. According to Ochs and Capps (2001), all narratives contain different aspects and degrees of these dimensions: some stories may be told chronologically by the person who experienced the event, others may be retold second or third hand.

Yet, the centrality of sequencing has been problematised. Tamboukou presents “the idea of nomadic narratives, stories that need not have definitive beginnings or ends…” (Tamboukou 2008, p. 290). This nomadic narrative travels through time and space: “there is nothing inevitable or fixed about the types of narrative coherence that it is possible to construct from the flux of events” (McNay 1999, p. 318).

Catherine Riessman (2008) developed a fourfold typology of narrative analysis: thematic narrative analysis, structural analysis, performative analysis, and visual analysis. For the purpose of this thesis, I focus on thematic narrative which investigates what is spoken or written rather than how. This is pertinent as I am interested in the content of the narratives rather than their structure, form, or linguistic construction.

There are no set rules of thematic narrative analysis. Riessman (2008, pp. 60-61) outlines one approach to thematic narrative analysis: After the interviews, the researchers selected stories that were relevant to the research questions; these were then coded and categorised, and then grouped into typologies. Thematic narrative analysis involves identifying the common themes that emerge from the interviews. Stern (2005) similarly coded the narratives thematically, focusing on specific narratives of security. She defines security in the loosest terms in order to allow the research participants’ understanding and experience to speak through the texts. Using framing, common for critical discourse analysis, Stern then organised the

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30 More recently there has been a differentiation between event-centred and experience-centred narratives (Squire 2008), a discussion which is outside the remit of this thesis.
narratives in spatio-temporal contexts (Stern 2005, p. 65). In these two approaches we can see similarities to the type of thematic analysis that is common in qualitative research. Yet, a thematic narrative analysis seeks to preserve the narrative features of the interviews.

The thematic narrative analysis, thus, brings to the fore individual units of meaning, such as ideas, words and phrases, experiences, and feelings, and these units of meaning are then ordered into themes. It important to pay attention to macro contexts, and to consider the links between the life worlds depicted in personal narratives and larger social structures, such as “power relations, hidden inequalities, and historical contingencies” (Riessman 2008, p. 76). The stories “women tell cannot be understood apart from their contexts, apart from the institutional discourses” (Souto Manning 2005, p. 87). Another important aspect of thematic narrative analysis is the fact that narratives are constructed interactively, with an audience and context (Riessman 2008, p. 62). “Stories are never told in a vacuum, and nor do we as researchers simply tabulate information that we gather. Rather, we feed into the process at every level, and our subjectivity is always a part of that which we are documenting” (Andrews 2007, p. 3). The richness of many of the interviews, along with the personal experiences within them, was emphasised through thematic narrative analysis. Through a thematic narrative analysis I have managed to bring out themes of women’s experiences of in/security at different levels, but also to keep the focus on the women’s personal experiences.

*The analysis process*

In order to conduct the analysis of the interviews and the focus groups, I loosely followed the four main aspects of narrative analysis as outlined by Baker (2006): It is guided by theory, although themes are also allowed to emerge from the texts; it seeks to preserve segments and preserve sequence; it attends to time and place, it aims to contextualise narratives; and finally, it is committed to a case-centred approach, placing the focus on the individual.
Following the steps outlined by scholars (Bryman 2008; Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor 2005), I began by familiarising myself with the data. I read through the transcripts, making short notes at the end of each that summarised my general impressions of the interview, the interpretation/translation, and the themes (Barbour 2001). I reviewed the study protocol (research proposal), including the research questions, aims and objectives, and the sampling strategy. These notes highlighted the major themes, length, form, and general descriptors of the interviews. I was looking for repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke 2006), and this involved reading the transcripts multiple times and making notes in the margins (Maier 2008, p. 89). Thereafter I started coding, rewriting “chunks” of text (quotes and notes) by hand, and highlighting the manuscripts with different colours. The coding was informed by the research questions and the literature review, however, I was also open to new themes that might emerge from the texts. Keeping the research question on the link between women’s activism and experiences of in/security in mind, I was looking for in/security narratives while coding, and in this sense, I viewed the significance of a theme, not by its frequency in the text, but rather by its centrality to meaning and identity (Mankowski and Rappaport 2000). The categories that came to light were: “description of situation in Kashmir,” “description of work by individual and/or organisation,” “security,” “resistance, coping, and strategies,” “identities,” and “politics”. Many parts of the texts were double-coded and were therefore placed under several categories. Thereafter I sub-coded the categories and rewrote the sub-codes into a new document.

This two-layered thematic coding aided the ordering of the texts into spatio-temporal locations (Stern 2005, p. 65). The security narratives of the interview participants were placed within these spatio-temporal locations of personal life, organisational life, and national life. These function as frames for the women’s in/security narratives, which are ordered by different sets of rules and regulations and discourses, and regulated by power (Butler 2009). Women’s roles and duties are thus regulated by norms and discourses that govern the specific spatio-temporal context. As I was writing
up the analysis, I wanted to remain true to the narrative approach of keeping the story intact and “theorising from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases” (Riessman 2008, p. 53). Hence, I returned to the transcripts and field notes and reconne\textsuperscript{cd}cted the coded “chunks” to the original teller. In the multiple re-writing of drafts, I have attempted to be faithful to both the individual participant’s narrative and the research story I am telling.

Notes on writing-up

It is important to consider questions of power in the writing up of the data (Squire 2008). Fontana and Frey contend that “[t]he spoken or written word has always a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers” (Fontana and Frey 2003, p. 61). Therefore, we need to acknowledge that the researcher and participants have different access to the data, its interpretation, and presentation. Many scholars recommend involving participants in the interpretation and a conversation about the research (Andrews 2007; Stern 2005). However, due to time-constraints in the field, I chose not to. Hence, I acknowledge that mine is one among many possible readings of the transcripts (Riessman 2008, p. 273). “Reproducing larger amounts […], sometimes glossing whole lives, it becomes harder to guarantee anonymity, especially when researching an understudied topic with a small community of potential respondents” (Squire 2008, p. 51). In order to maintain anonymity, it was necessary to omit or edit some rich narratives, which, if they had been included, would possibly have revealed the identities of some of the participants.

Another point to address is language. I have taken the liberty of correcting the grammar in the quotes, without changing the meaning, in order to maintain legibility (Krueger 1994, p. 154). This project was immersed in issues of language and culture, which I elaborate on in the next section.
4.5 Working across linguistic and cultural borders: reflections on language and power

Narratives, when translated through multiple languages, “become vulnerable to added layers of meanings, biases, and interpretations” (Fontana and Frey 2003, p. 77). Cross-cultural research is always exposed to questions of multiplicity and contradictions. It involves, not only the relocation of meaning, but also the translation of people’s lives (Temple and Koterba 2009). This translation implies, not simply mediation between cultures, but also reconstruction of these cultures, hence, the researcher is an active part of this reconstruction; translation is neither a neutral nor an innocent act.

Language and translation

In the context of my research, there were multiple crossings of language and culture. In Kashmir, as in other parts of post-colonial South Asia, English is the elite language; it is used in political and intellectual circles, and is also the official language in which political affairs are conducted (Mohan 1989). This English is always mixed with Urdu and Kashmiri: when people speak Kashmiri or Urdu, their vocabulary is sprinkled with English; words such as “security forces,” “unidentified gunmen,” “military,” and “army” are used instead of their Urdu or Kashmiri equivalents. The participants in my research had Kashmiri as their mother tongue and were mainly schooled in Urdu, though the ones who had university degrees had a good knowledge of English. While I do speak basic Hindi and Urdu, as well as even more basic Kashmiri (my mother tongue is Swedish), I am not competent enough to do interviews in Urdu or Kashmiri.

I was conducting most of the interviews in my second language (English), in the research participants’ second or third language, in a context where I was immersed in the Kashmiri and Urdu language (in which I was a beginner [Kashmiri] and proficient [Urdu] respectively). The participants who had completed second and third level education spoke English very well; in fact they often spoke it better than me (cf. Lounasmaa's account in Brännlund, Kovacic and Lounasmaa 2013, p. 81).
In other interviews and focus groups, I had to rely on interpreters. It is important to note that “translators are active producers in research rather than neutral conveyors of messages” (Temple 2002, p. 846). During the focus group with the HO members, a friend of mine, (Hajra), together with a representative of the organisation, (Asifa), helped with interpreting the discussion. In the interviews with women from the CSWO, coordinators from the organisation performed the interpretation. These set-ups were highly problematic as none of the “interpreters” were professionally trained in interpreting. In order to prepare them, we would meet before the interview and I would explain the research project. We would talk through the interview sheets and discuss each question in depth so that they could take notes on how to translate important concepts and have the opportunity to ask me questions if things were unclear.

During the focus group with the HO, Hajra – a young and eloquent female university student – proactively engaged with the participants. While listening and interpreting actively, she also engaged with the discussion and presented her own perspective on the topic. This moved the discussion forward to a large extent, and added to the richness of the debate. But it also clearly impacted the focus group discussion profoundly; a couple of times Hajra became so involved in the discussion that she forgot to actually interpret the comments. This is illustrated in the following interaction:

Hajra: [inaudible] [speaks in Kashmiri]
[participants chip into discussion]
Participant: [speaks in Kashmiri]
[silence]
Emma: Could you please translate?
Hajra: I was just sharing an incident with them, what type of society we live in. The elder people are in a different tribe and the younger people in a different tribe. That’s what. The same incident has happened to this lady [points to a participant]. The girl has been calling, get married to me, get married to me.

In this sequence we see how Hajra became involved and co-created the narrative. She shared a story with the other participants, who agreed and built on that story. This is an unusually explicit example of the involvement
of the interpreter. As Bogusia Temple points out, the mere presence of the translator and her identity affects the data (Temple 2005).

In the case of the CSWO interviews, the interpreter was a man who worked for the organisation, and this may have resulted in the recreation of power hierarchies within the room. The participant may possibly have felt that she was unable to speak openly about her concerns. As such, the lack of confidentiality within the interview setting may possibly have impacted on the accounts given by the participant. This is important to reflect on when analysing the participants’ narratives (Temple 2002; Temple and Edwards 2008). Nevertheless, during my week with the CSWO in Kupwara, I had many informal conversations with the coordinators about their own experiences, as well as about what they thought of the children’s coordinators’ experiences working for the organisation (Edwards 1998). I also had informal meetings with many of the CSWO participants, and observed their interaction with a counsellor who was working for the organisation that week. This made it possible for the participants to reflect on the narratives presented in the interview setting and to compare them with what I heard outside the interview room. This was not intended as “corroboration” or “triangulation,” but merely as a more holistic framing of the narratives.

Another issue of language was my own field notes. As Swedish is my mother tongue, I dream in Swedish (most of the time), and when spontaneously asked to write something, I write in Swedish. However, as I had conducted all the reading and writing about the Ph.D. topic in English, my “end-of-day” notes would often be a mix between the two languages. At times I felt I could not express myself eloquently or deeply enough in either language, which resulted in limited field notes.

A meem in Kashmir
In section 2, I discussed feminist ethics as presented by feminist IR scholars. Feminist ethics requires the researcher to situate herself in the research. It emphasises the importance of reflecting on the researcher’s role in relation
to epistemology, boundaries, and relationships (Ackerly and True 2008, p. 698). This involves examining the power dynamics between researcher and participants, as well as between researchers. Reflexivity does not produce a solid ethnographic experience, but "the ethnographer works within a “hybrid” reality” (Trinh 1992, p. 140). “Experience, discourse, and self-understandings collide against larger cultural assumptions concerning race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, and age” (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, p. xiv). This constantly evolving hybridity (or intersectionality) is crucial to keep in mind at all stages of the research, as it affects the relationship with the participants.

My identity clearly brought me many privileges in Kashmir. Colonial and post-colonial relations of power, instituted in race, expressed through the privileging of white/fair skin colour, as well as economic hierarchy between the Global North and the Global South nearly always placed me in a privileged position relative to Kashmiris. The visibility of my skin meant that I could never hide my identity, and as there are many Western tourists in Kashmir, I was mostly taken for a tourist in central Srinagar, although at times causing confusion and surprise as I wore salwaar kameez and spoke Urdu. However, in rural areas, as well as in the outskirts of Srinagar, my embodied identity made it impossible to “blend in.” When spending a week with the CSWO in Kupwara, the organisation did not want attention from locals, so the Indian psychologist working for them and I were not allowed to roam the city freely.

Even though I was treated well as a woman, and did not feel constrained in my everyday movement due to my gender, there were often subtle, and at times less subtle, interactions that made it harder for me. Intersectional identity of gender and age mattered, where I, as a young woman, was often met with sexism or not taken seriously due to my age. I often found it intimidating to be a researcher in a country where I did not speak the language fluently, and was not completely familiar with the culture. In many meetings with male representatives from organisations, politicians, and activists, I felt that I was spoken “at” rather than to. While women
representatives would involve me in a more conversational dialogue, men would talk to me in a lecture-style form. While I do acknowledge that Kashmiri journalists are more familiar with the situation in Kashmir than I am, the style of talking at me, without giving me a moment to add a comment or ask a question, felt clearly gendered.

One incident that clearly illustrates the gendered nature of my research experience was when I tried to contact the Chairperson of the State Commission for Women. A friend from Kashmir University had promised to help me and had managed to set up a meeting with a high level Member of the Legislative Assembly, who would, in turn, possibly arrange a meeting with the Chairperson. In my first meeting with the MLA, we had a friendly conversation over kahwa and biscuits about women's involvement in Kashmiri politics. At the end of the meeting, he gave me his number, and told me to call him to arrange a meeting with the Chairperson. A few days later, I called him and he suggested I come to his home on the following Saturday evening. When I replied that I had to check with my friend if he was able to join me at that time, the MLA said that he wanted me to come alone. I asked whether the Chairperson would be there, and he evaded the question. I persisted, saying that I would have to bring my friend, to which the MLA replied that it would be better if I came without him. It seemed clear to me that the intentions of the MLA were ambiguous, and perhaps not purely related to introducing me to the Chairperson. I decided not to contact him any further and to find other ways of contacting the Chairperson (ultimately I failed, but that is a different story).

Another issue I encountered as a woman was reference to my looks and style. As Nancy Cook points out, “clothing—an embodied set of cultural codes—is a vital part of performing subjectivity and enacting power” (Cook 2005, p. 357). I chose to wear the salwaar kameez. This was both to be comfortable, and to be certain that I upheld a sense of modesty when

31 Henceforth abbreviated as MLA.
32 A traditional South Asian outfit consisting of soft loose trousers (salwaar) and tunic (kameez).
travelling on public buses and *sumos*\textsuperscript{33}, where I would have to climb up on cars or stand in crowded bus aisles. It is also more comfortable to sit on the floor, as is the custom in Kashmir, while wearing the soft loose cotton of the *salwar* as opposed to tight jeans. With these clothes, I did not have to worry that I would show my shoulders, chest, or other body parts. In rural areas and, at times, on public transport, I would wrap the *dupatta*\textsuperscript{34} around my head. Friends and people I met often gave me positive comments for wearing *salwaar kameez*, and on the days when I did not feel like wearing one, or did not have any clean outfits, I would be asked why I was wearing jeans. People also often noted whether I was wearing jewellery, what type of jewellery it was, and whether it matched my clothes or not. As most of the time I did not wear any jewellery or it did not match the outfits, I was asked why this was so. The questioning may have been due to assumptions about my economic status as a European researcher. Many people most likely, and understandably, believed that I was wealthy as I could travel to South Asia to do research, while in reality I could barely cover my expenses in Kashmir. Interestingly, in an interview with a human rights activist, she pointed out how people had been complaining that same day that she was not wearing any earrings:

I’m a married woman so I should be wearing gold in my ears, you know. My earrings should be of gold. So, I think, from morning I’ve heard so many women say: ‘why don’t you wear [gold], have you sold everything?’ Since my work doesn’t also pay me that much, I can’t afford to have matching gold things. So can’t help! (Nilofer)

In this interaction, we could share the experience of being a woman in Kashmir. We were both examined and judged on our dress and decorations. In this case, our presentation was appraised through a lens of class and gender, where both of us failed to display the correct markers.

### 4.6 Conclusion

Feminist IR fieldwork demonstrates that social science is not the equivalent of an Archimedean truth, but simply a snapshot of life, one that captures the vicarious nature of research.

\textsuperscript{33} Private jeeps operating as public transportation on fixed routes within and outside the city

\textsuperscript{34} A long scarf used to complement an outfit, usually worn either over chest or head.
encounters that are at once partial and yet deeply personal (Jacoby 2006, p. 173).

In this chapter I have discussed the methodology of the fieldwork for this thesis. I have discussed the connection between feminist epistemology, ethics, and methodology, with its emphasis on reflexivity during all phases of the research. Feminist epistemology involves this constant questioning, in which a specific identity is never achievable. Hence, the locality, the time, and the purpose of the research will have an effect on how the researcher acts and sees the world. Clearly, in an insecure location, all of these concerns are particularly important. Data collection can be especially sensitive, as participants are more cautious about revealing personal information (Jacoby 2006, p. 163). At times, the personal safety of the participants and the researcher may also be at risk (Jacoby 2006, p. 157). Cross-cultural research travels across boundaries, and adds additional layers of interpretation that can create knowledge for social transformation. Questions of language, culture, translation, and ethics apply equally to focus group discussions as to in-depth interviews (Colucci 2008). Also, data analysis and presentation are sensitive, as a researcher neither wants to offend, take sides, or pass on propaganda or untruths. At the same time, as a feminist researcher, I have a normative objective to highlight injustices and promote peace through progressive politics (D'Costa 2006). This constitutes a difficult balancing act, but constant reflection and questioning of epistemology, ethics, and methodology facilitate a balanced approach.

Finally, briefly I want to address this question posed by Molly Andrews: “…at a more intimate level, what has been the effect of my entering and leaving (and sometimes re-entering) people’s lives?” (Andrews 2007, p. 42). As I noted in the beginning of this chapter, when I arrived in Kashmir, I arrived straight into a Kashmiri home: Shahzada’s family welcomed me with open arms and I was treated like a daughter in their house. Leaving Srinagar, and all the friendships I had created after five intensive months, was very hard. As privileged researchers, arriving at and departing from beautiful locations, we need to reflect on the scars we leave behind.
Chapter 5

Historical background

Agar firdous bar ru-e zameen ast. Hamin ast o hamin ast o hamin ast (Jehangir).\(^35\)

It is said that when the Mughal emperor Jehangir visited Kashmir in the 16\(^{th}\) Century he was stunned by the beauty of the valley. His words, which introduce this chapter, cast the idea of Kashmir as a “paradise on earth,” an idea that has been reiterated since. The beauty of the valley was not only appreciated by the rulers of the subcontinent; travellers from Europe also described it in glowing terms: “The whole kingdom wears the appearance of a fertile and highly cultivated garden” (cited in Akbar 2002, p. xii). Others were writing about the “…absence of religious discord in the region, presenting it as a place where Hindus were uncaring of caste rules and Muslims did not make the pilgrimage to Mecca, since they lived in what came to be described as the ‘Happy Valley’” (Zutshi 2004, p. 3). Later on, European colonisers appreciated Kashmir as a holiday resort where they could escape the heat and dust of the plains and visit picnic spots, go fishing, hunting, and enjoy the clear air. In 1947, at the time of independence, the Indian National Congress\(^36\) expected the Princely State to become part of India. For Jawhararlal Nehru, who was of Kashmiri Hindu descent and often referred to as Pandit Nehru, it was unthinkable that Kashmir would join Pakistan. “From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, India is one” is a well-known slogan in independent India, and the image of Kashmir as the “Crown of India” has been portrayed by Bollywood film producers\(^37\) and travel agencies alike (Kabir 2005). However, the idea of a lush, peaceful, harmonic paradise has been dented in the last 20 years due to conflict. Bill Clinton has referred to Kashmir as “the world’s most dangerous place” (Mishra 2010) and images of the gun-toting militants, stone-pelting crowds chanting \textit{Allah-oh-Akbar},\(^38\) and \textit{burqa}-clad\(^39\) women

\(^{35}\) Translation: If there is paradise on the face of this earth. It is here and here and here.

\(^{36}\) Henceforth abbreviated as INC.

\(^{37}\) The portrayal of Kashmir in Hindi cinema (‘Bollywood’) is clearly more complex, see Kabir for more a detailed analysis

\(^{38}\) Translation: God is great.

\(^{39}\) An enveloping garment that usually covers its wearer from head to toe.
have become the new stereotyped Kashmir. Kashmiri women have also been enveloped in similar discourses of beauty, civility, and innocence. In all of these stereotypes and discourses, Kashmiri people’s everyday experiences are silenced and hidden. This chapter seeks to move beyond stereotypes and to focus on the Kashmiri people.

The aim is to introduce the Kashmiri population through its history and to deconstruct the types of monolithic ideas presented above. An overview of Kashmiri history shows that the current political situation, wherein identity and ideology are framed through religious discourses, is not new to Kashmir. This chapter also seeks to locate women’s position during the important turns of the region’s political development. The first part provides a very brief history of pre-colonial Kashmir, highlighting the transition from being a Hindu to a Muslim-majority area. The second part explores the anti-feudal movement and the accession of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir to India. The third part examines the years of state-formation and J&K’s special status in the Indian Constitution. It also presents the Indo-Pakistani disputes over Kashmir in the middle of the 20th Century. Thereafter, the final part introduces the uprising and call for a separate Kashmir, and in conclusion, I reconsider the effects of the long-term conflict on the Kashmiri population with specific focus on gender concerns.

5.1 Pre-Colonial Kashmir

Kashmir has been ruled by foreign powers throughout history. This part demonstrates the complexity of its history and outlines how the area transitioned from Hinduism and Buddhism to Islam under the influence of different rulers. In order to understand the complexity of current developments in Kashmir and to be able to deconstruct discourses of religion and nationalism, it is important to highlight the role of different religions and how people from different religions interacted and fought during Kashmiri history.

Before the dawn of independence and the subsequent partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the Kashmir Valley was part of the Princely State of
Jammu and Kashmir. It was during the creation of the Princely State in 1846 that Jammu and Kashmir were merged under one ruler. The first known ruler of Kashmir, the Hindu king Gonanda, came to power in around 2450 BC (Gupta 2008). Though ruled by Hindu kings, Buddhism was a strong early influence in Kashmir and it was a centre of Buddhist learning for many centuries. The influence of Buddhism, as well as of the Brahminical social order imposed by Hindu rulers, faded during the Karkuta dynasty (around 630 AD). At this time, the Hindu kingdom stretched over what is now large parts of India and Pakistan: from Punjab in the South to Baltistan in the North (Gupta 2008; Kulke and Rothermund 2002).

Islam came to Kashmir through Sufi saints and missionaries in the 14th Century. This Persian-influenced Islam easily blended with the fusion of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy that already existed in Kashmir (Bakhshi 2009, p. 32). This gave rise to the Rishi cult, in simple terms, a syncretised Islam. The second Muslim ruler, Sultan Shah Mir, while he consolidated the trust of the people, many of whom had converted to Islam during the influx of missionaries, also managed to build networks with Hindu aristocracy. He did not attempt to convert people to Islam himself, but as more missionaries arrived, maktabas and khanqas (Bakhshi 2009) were built. Yet, until the arrival of the Persian Sufi master Sayyid Ali Hamdani in 1384, Muslims were still a minority in a Hindu Kashmir, and they lived according to traditional customs. Hamdani, a descendent of the Prophet Mohammad, lived in Srinagar and focused his work on teaching the Sultan.

40 There were 21 Hindu dynasties ruling Kashmir up until the Mongol invasion from Turkistan in 1320 AD (Gupta 2008).
41 Classical scripts argue that Emperor Ashoka founded Srinagar in 250 BC and the ruins of his stupas (Buddhist monument) can still be found in the Valley (Gupta 2008).
42 An order of Sufi mystics present in Kashmir.
43 The first Muslim ruler was Sultan Sadr-ud-din, a Ladakhi adventurer (Rinchen Shah was his real name) who was not allowed to convert to Hinduism by the Brahmin community and thus chose to follow Islam at the behest of the Sufi missionaries (Bakhshi 2009, p. 43). He held the throne for three years and after his death his wife, Kota Rani, who had never converted from Hinduism to Islam, ruled Kashmir during a short period of time. Shah Mir, a Punjabi Muslim in Kota Rani’s court, took over the control, married Kota Rani, and subsequently captured her. She committed suicide in prison and Shah Mir became Sultan of Kashmir in 1339 (Bakhshi 2009, p. 48).
44 Elementary schools attached to a mosque.
45 Sufi building for gatherings and spiritual development.
how to live according to Shariah and to be a role model to his people. Hamdani’s one year stay in Kashmir made a big impression, and his disciples succeeded in turning Hindu Kashmir into a Muslim Kashmir. However, the peaceful introduction of Islam to Kashmir ended when Sikander came to the throne in 1389. He enforced a coercive form of Shariah, and the non-Muslim population was forced to convert or face the threat of death. Temples were destroyed. It was during this time that the Rishi Movement arose in Kashmir, inspired by seers such as Lalleshwari, or Lal Ded as she is often referred to, and her student Sheikh Noor-ud-din.

In the 16th Century as the Mughals invaded the Indian subcontinent, Kashmir was attacked on several occasions but local rulers managed to thwart the attempts. In 1586, Kashmir was finally annexed to the Mughal Empire which was then ruled by Akbar from his capital in Delhi (Kulke and Rothermund 2002, p. 188). Many historians argue that this was the time when Kashmiri independence was lost. “It was precisely in the Mughal period that Kashmiri poets first began to self-consciously articulate a sense of regional belonging” (Zutshi 2004, p. 29). In 1635, a riot broke out and Shi’a homes were burnt. Fifty years later during the rule of Aurangzeb, there was a brief civil war between Shi’as and Sunnis. Hindus and Shi’as were maltreated during large parts of the Mughal times. During Bahadur Shah’s reign in Delhi, Hindus in Kashmir were forbidden to practise their religion, wear the teekas, ride horses, or wear clean clothes (Akbar 2002, p. 48).

The Durrani Empire, from a Pashtuni dynasty with its centre in Kandahar, ruled Kashmir from 1753 to 1819. Afghan rule is often portrayed as oppressive, forcing the population into extreme poverty and misery (Akbar

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46 The laws of Islam.
47 The rule of Sikander’s first son was equally harsh, but he was followed by the younger son, Zain-ul-abidin, who is considered to have been a merciful, great ruler, a “Bad Shah”.
48 The Mughals were part of a Persinate empire covering large parts of South Asia from 1526 to 1857.
49 During the rule of the subsequent Emperors Jehangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb of the Mughal Empire, local governors were appointed to lead Kashmir.
50 The mark worn on the forehead or other parts of the body by followers of Hinduism.
2002, p. 50; Huttenback 2004, p. 1). It was overthrown in 1819 and Kashmir was then incorporated into Ranjit Singh’s kingdom that covered the north and northwest of the subcontinent, its capital being Lahore (now in Pakistan). The new Sikh rulers forbade the *azaan*[^51] and closed Jamia Masjid[^52] in Srinagar. Cow slaughter was made punishable, which also angered the Muslim masses (Akbar 2002, p. 53; Zutshi 2004, p. 39). This was neither intentionally anti-Muslim nor pro-Hindu; rather, the Sikh rulers were attempting to distinguish themselves from the Mughals. The system of *begar*[^53] was imposed which affected all people of the state and made a mass migration inevitable.[^54] Thus, in the early 19th Century, the population of Kashmir lived in very poor conditions and there was growing antagonism between religious communities.

Another key moment in Kashmiri history was the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar. This resulted in the founding of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. At this time Jammu was ruled by Gulab Singh, a Hindu who was a local prince in the court of Ranjit Singh. Gulab Singh, an upper-caste Dogra, managed to conspire with the British to overthrow Ranjit Singh’s dominance in Northern India, and after his death this area was consolidated by Gulab Singh. In 1846, the British and the Dogra king signed the Treaty of Amritsar which held that the Gulab Singh and his heirs would take over the rule of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, although still acknowledging “the supremacy of the British Government” (cited in Bose 2003, p. 17).

### 5.2 The anti-feudal movement

This part provides an overview of the evolution of the anti-feudal movement on the indigenous Kashmiri political scene. In the 1920s, a Kashmiri political consciousness started to evolve. However, this was highly

[^51]: The calling to prayers from the *masjids* (mosques).
[^52]: The largest mosque in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, built in the 15th Century.
[^53]: Forced labour, most often unpaid or at times nominally paid.
[^54]: In 1841, a Muslim governor was sent from Lahore. He reopened Jamia Masjid and, in order to prevent further religious antagonism, repaired the Shankaracharya temple and replaced its *lingam* (pillar-shaped monument representing fertility). However, this was not enough to attract the people’s support and when the Jammu leader took over not much protest was heard.
fragmented according to religion, class, political affiliation, and region. This demonstrates the ahistoricity of the concept of Kashmiriyat, and how fragile any understanding of a unified Kashmiri identity is.

**A brief note on Kashmiriyat**

Before continuing with the description of the Princely State, it is important to outline the different approaches to and perspectives on the role, importance, and history of Kashmiriyat. John Cockell seeks to define it precisely as follows:

> The essence of *kashmiriyat* ethnicity is the network of sociocultural, historical and linguistic ties that bond all Subaltern political process Kashmiris, regardless of religion, into an interdependent social collective. While Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Hindus (Pandits) differ in religion, they share a great many cultural practices which infuse the practice of each religion with elements of the other as well as with uniquely Kashmiri devotional and philosophical norms (Cockell 2000, pp. 326-327).

Neil Aggarwal refers to *Kashmiriyat* as “an abstract noun that signifies ‘origin or affiliation to Kashmir’, literally referring to the ethos of being Kashmiri” (Aggarwal 2008, p. 227). He argues thus that *Kashmiriyat* is an empty signifier, i.e. that it means whatever someone wants it to mean. In his (2008) analysis of the term, he finds that different actors define it differently, and as it suits their political agenda. In his analysis, the term is central to public discourse on Jammu and Kashmir. In contrast, in some Indian discourse “*Kashmiriyat* is the symbol of a common culture devoid of religious connotations” (Aggarwal 2008). Attacks on Kashmiri Pandits in the early 1990s as described in the fourth section of this chapter has been denounced as assaults on *Kashmiriyat* (Aggarwal 2008). For other Indians, it involves a mutual spirituality between Hindus and Muslims. The shared worship of *dargahs* in Kashmir is pointed out as proof of a *Kashmiriyat*. One description of *Kashmiriyat* refers to “that particularly fragrant mix of the best in Hindu and Muslim customs, beliefs, manners, and rituals which so attracted Gandhi when he was searching for the roots of secularism” (Chopra 2003, in Aggarwal 2008, p. 228). Importantly, “[i]t is never

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55 A shrine built over the grave of a religious person.
explained how this so-called common culture of Hindus and Muslims is unique to Kashmiriyat - whatever it may be - when other regions of South Asia have also witnessed such exchanges” (Aggarwal 2008, p. 228).

In spite of the multiple and contradictory framings of Kashmiriyat, a common understanding in popular discourse represents it as the syncretised culture of Kashmir with a merging of religious traditions (Puri 1995). This has been criticised as “refracted through rose-tinted glasses, in which Kashmir appears as a unique region where religious communities lived in harmony since time immemorial and difference in religion did not translate into acrimonious conflict until external intervention [in the 20th Century]” (Zutshi 2004, in Whitehead 2004, p. 338). The historical accounts below demonstrate how political leaders used religion to mobilise support.

The Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir
The Princely State was one of the larger of the 562 princely states on the subcontinent, stretching from Jammu to Ladakh and covering Gilgit, Baltistan, and the Kashmir Valley. After its inception, the first ruler was Maharaja Gulab Singh and the throne was passed on to his male heirs. Before partition, the Princely State had around four million inhabitants. In Jammu, 53% were Muslims, although post-partition migration from Pakistani Punjab made Hindus a majority in the Jammu region (Guha 2007, p. 59). The Valley comprised 95% Muslims, which were divided between the majority Sunnis and minority Sh’ias (5% of the Muslim population) (Rai 2004, p. 38). The Sunnis were divided internally into Shaikhs, Saiyids, Mughals, Pathans, Gujars, and Bakarwals, as well as the ethnic groups, Doms and Watals (for more detailed description of the different groups, see Rai 2004, pp. 38-39; Rao 1999a). Importantly, there were more cultural and “ethnic” similarities between Muslims and Pandits in Kashmir than between Kashmiri Muslims and Jammu Muslims. The discrepancy between the ruling power and his people was massive. In the Valley, the begar system of landownershiip had prevailed since Ranjit Singh’s reign and the majority of the population was very poor. The last ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, on the
other hand, lived a life in luxury\textsuperscript{56} (Singh 1994, p. 1). The official language of the government was Dogri, and the majority of people employed were Jammuites or Kashmiri Pandits. The majority of the Muslim population in Kashmir spoke Kashmiri (Kashur), with minorities speaking Gojri, Pahari, and Pashto.

The situation of women in the Princely State was bad. Low education levels, early marriages, and \textit{purdah}\textsuperscript{57} were only a few of the problems that women encountered (Akhter 2011; Bazaz 2011; Misri 2002). Within the Pandit community, there were discussions on the position of women and a couple of organisations did small-scale work against \textit{sati},\textsuperscript{58} the ban on widow remarriage, and child marriage (Akhter 2011, p. 75). The Muslim community, which was generally poorer and less educated than the Pandit community, was governed by the two \textit{Mirwaizes},\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Mirwaiz} of Jamia Masjid and \textit{Mirwaiz} Hamadani, both of whom argued that modern science would pollute the minds of the people, especially the women. Thus they forbade education, upheld \textit{purdah} and polygamy, and generally argued against women’s empowerment (Akhter 2011, p. 78).

\textit{1910-1940}

During the 1910s and 1920s, there was growth in public activist organisations. The regime had forbidden political activities, hence the new organisations were mainly organised along religious lines; instead of political organisations, it was socio-religious groups that were involved in improving the conditions for their own group (Zutshi 2004, p. 218). The Maharaja established the \textit{Dogra Sabha} in 1903 and the \textit{Yawak Sabha} in 1915, both based on the ideology of exclusionary regionalism centred on the Dogra community. These organisations were also involved in social reform, in particular, in improving the lives of Hindu women (Khan 2009, p. 16). In

\textsuperscript{56} Maharaja Hari Singh recounts his time on the racecourses in Bombay and their journey to Cannes in France when the queen was about to give birth to their son in his autobiography (Singh 1989).
\textsuperscript{57} The religious and social idea that women stay separately from unknown men.
\textsuperscript{58} The practice of widow-burning.
\textsuperscript{59} Leader of a religious group and reader of prayers, a position which in the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century had become hereditary.
addition, Kashmiri Muslims under the Mirwaiz formed the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam which focused on social reform and the provision of education. Muslim Kashmiri emigrants in Punjab started up the All-India Kashmir Muslim Conference. They provided funding for young Kashmiri Muslims to attend higher studies at universities in British India. On returning to Kashmir, “they were imbued with ‘newfangled’ ideas of nationalism, liberty, and democracy” (Khan 2009, p. 16). At that time, nationalist ideas and sentiments were spreading all over the Indian sub-continent, so when they returned to the Kashmir Valley, these graduates were highly disappointed with the lack of possibilities. This frustration of the situation in their home country encouraged a group of graduates to start meeting regularly at a house in Srinagar. Sheikh Muhammed Abdullah, who was to become one of the most prominent Kashmiri leaders, returned to Kashmir from Aligarh and initiated the “Fateh Kadal Reading Room Party” which provided a space for Kashmiri Muslim men to discuss the political situation and write articles criticising the Dogra regime.

As highlighted above, socio-religious organisations mushroomed in the Princely State in the 1920s. In 1926, the first state-level organisation was initiated that focused on improving the conditions of women. The objectives of the Women’s Welfare Trust, which was founded by a group of Kashmiri and foreign upper class women, was “advancing the welfare of the Kashmiri women by imparting to them the knowledge, by stimulating home industry among them and by promoting their physical health and well-being” (cited in Akhter 2011, p. 72). Educational activities were considered the most important factor in empowering women, and the Trust focused much of it work on increasing the number of female admissions to government schools and colleges, and to opening girls’ schools in both urban and rural settings. It also organised a Women’s League which held debates on social issues and activism. Another organisation, the Women’s Welfare Association, was founded in 1929, and its main objectives were to improve the education of

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60 Fateh Kadal refers to a residential area in Srinagar.
women in the state, to create a park and gymnasium for women, to reduce poverty among women, and to improve women’s health.61

The summer of 1931 is regarded as a turning-point in the history of Kashmir. It is argued that this was the genesis of the Kashmiri resistance movement (for an indepth discussion, see Zutshi 1986). Although much less important than the concurrent events in British India, “the significance of the date drew from the fact that it was the first time that a gathering of Kashmiri Muslims openly challenged the authority of the Maharaja and his government” (Rai 2004, p. 258). According to Zutshi (2004, p. 213), these events did not occur in isolation, but were the result of the increased communalisation of politics in the Princely State as well as in British India.62 Also, the worldwide depression of the early 1930s had hit Kashmiri industries hard, leading to increased unemployment, reduced food supply, and soaring prices.

In early 1931, rumours had started to spread about officials employed by the Maharaja mistreating Muslims and insulting Islam in Jammu. The Government had taken action against Muslims through, for instance, prohibiting azaan,63 as well as ignoring the insulting of the holy Quran and demolition of mosques (Zutshi 2004, p. 218). Agitations incited by Muslims also took place, triggering the antagonism. In a speech, a Muslim man was “inciting his hearers to kill Hindus and burn their temples” (cited in Rai 2004, p. 259). Outside the trial, on 13 July 1931, the large group of Muslims that had gathered was met by police fire and 21 people were killed (Hasan 1999, p. 6; Rai 2004, p. 259). Ghulam Abbas and Sheikh Abdullah were subsequently arrested but released later the same month (Hasan 1999, p. 6). This resulted in the founding of the Kashmir Committee.

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61 The work of the Women’s Welfare Association was mainly focused on Srinagar, but it was planned to expand it into the countryside.
62 In the decades before independence from British rule and its subsequent partition, the political developments on the Indian subcontinent were intense and complex (for a detailed analysis of the Indian freedom movement, for instance, see Guha 2008; Jalal 1985; Singh 2011).
63 Azaan is the calling of the prayer from the minaret.
The request of the Maharaja to meet with the Kashmiri Muslims on 6 August 1931 was refused as Sheikh Abdullah and his followers wanted to wait until 14 August. This date had been announced as “Kashmir Day” throughout the Muslim parts of British India (Rai 2004, p. 260). The Maharaja responded to the heightened tension by asserting that the popular movement had been initiated by “outside elements” (Hasan 1999, p. 6) and criminalised speeches “creating hatred against the regime” (Hasan 1999, p. 6). In September, as a response to a street parade in Srinagar by armed young men, the Maharaja imposed flogging as punishment for political activity (Hasan 1999, p. 7).

On 19 October 1931, a group of Kashmiri Muslims headed by Sheikh Abdullah handed in a manifesto to the Maharaja. This demanded liberty, equal rights for all religious groups, and representational government. In November, the regime instituted a commission to investigate the conditions of the population of the state and the background for the uprising (Bose 2003, p. 19; Rai 2004). An official of the British government of India, B.J. Glancy, headed the commission which, in April 1932, proposed a number of reforms in education, taxation, and land holding. It also proposed the establishment of a Legislative Committee. While some initiatives following Glancy’s proposals were taken-up, the regime failed to follow through completely. But throughout the 1930s and 1940s it became increasingly clear that the autocratic regime could not meet the demands of the increasingly politically conscious people (Bose 2003, p. 20). In addition, Kashmiri Pandits were critical of the Glancy commission and their representative, Prem Nath Bazaz, was condemned for approving and backing the reforms (Hasan 1999, p. 8). Simultaneously, media in India criticised the movement in Kashmir for being proof of “dishonourable Muslim communalism” (quoted in Hasan 1999, p. 8).

64 Prem Nath Bazaz was considered one of the leaders of the Kashmiri Pandits. He founded the Fraternity Society in 1930 that organised for Pandits’ rights and progressive laws and politics. The Fraternity Society was reformed as Yuvak Sabha in 1931, being the main opposition to the Kashmiri Muslim organisations founded the same year (Rai 2004, p. 248).
Undeniably, the events of July 1931 fundamentally changed the political arena of Kashmir, with a number of players sensing an opportunity for change (Rai 2004, p. 260). In the course of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} Century, the senior \textit{Mirwaiz} of Jamia Masjid in Srinagar, Ahmad Ullah Shah, had been accepted by Kashmiri Muslims as their religious leader. However, when his son Muhammad Yusuf Shah assumed the leadership of the \textit{Masjid}, his power was challenged by Sheikh Abdullah who identified with younger Muslims and targeted the broader population (Khan 2009, p. 18). In October 1932, the first political party in the state was created, the All-Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference,\textsuperscript{65} under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah and Ghulam Abbas.\textsuperscript{66} Sheikh Abdullah’s pronunciation of the religious and economic rights of Muslims invigorated regional sentiment with an unmatched intensity (Rai 2004, p. 278).

The MC agitated vocally against the dominance of Kashmiri Pandits in the countryside. The language was at times vivid and exaggerated: “Suggestions were made that the ‘Kashmiri Pandit [wa]s by nature an enemy of the Muslims and that there were ‘as many Pandits as [there were] snakes’ with the difference that the bite of a snake would not prove fatal” (Rai 2004, p. 273). Subsequently, Muhammad Yusuf Shah, the \textit{Mirwaiz} of Jamia Masjid, founded the Azad Conference (Khan 2009, p. 18). During Eid in April 1933, the rift between Sheikh Abdullah and Yusuf Shah deepened and intensified into a bitter conflict.\textsuperscript{67} The general population had also grown to dislike Yusuf Shah due to his courteous relationship to the Maharaja. At the same time, two Muslim groups from the Punjab, the Ahmediyas and the Ahrars, also entered the political stage (Rai 2004, p. 260).

\textsuperscript{65} Henceforth abbreviated as MC.

\textsuperscript{66} At this time (October 1932) the Maharaja had implemented the recommendation of the Glancy Commission, allowing the formation of political parties (Rai 2004).

\textsuperscript{67} This has been called the fight between the lions (Abdullah’s followers) and the goats (Shah’s) (Rai 2004, p. 269).
Mridu Rai (2004) argues that during this time the MC shifted their political target due to the composition of the newly reformed Legislative Assembly, which now had a franchise of men paying at least Rs 20 per year in taxes. Previously, the MC had focused much of their attention on the poorer Muslim masses, but due to the elitist participation of the new Assembly, they realised they did not have enough supporters. Therefore the MC decided to tone down its anti-Pandit rhetoric and “(t)he ‘secular’ vocabulary of the Indian National Congress was sought to be approximated by an increasing use of the language of rights” (Rai 2004, p. 274). But, as Rai (2004) points out, Sheikh Abdullah, unlike Nehru, chose not to distinguish between religion and rights; it was argued that the very nature of the injustices in Kashmir was due to the religious nature of the state, wherein a religious minority was privileged at the cost of the majority (Bose 2003). Yet, the MC continued to reach out to the Pandit community, especially to those members who were willing to admit that injustices had been committed against the Kashmiri Muslims and to work together against the Maharaja. In 1935, Sheikh Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz started a newspaper in Urdu, Hamdard, which aimed at spreading democracy and unity among all Kashmiris, notwithstanding religion (Zutshi 2004).

The year 1931 also proved to be a turning point for women’s activism. Both the Women’s Welfare Trust and the Women’s Welfare Association, which were introduced above, ceased functioning when the Kashmiri population revolted against the regime. However, while these initiatives died out, women still partook in the demonstrations that started in July of that year. According to Shahzada Akhter (2011, p. 79), it was mainly working class and poorer women that took to the streets to fight side by side with the men. Women of Muslim middle- and upper-classes did not participate in the riots. So, while there were very few educated women that took part, there were women organising demonstrations, holding speeches, and pelting stones, but the male leadership failed to include these women at the top of the movement.

Surprisingly, there was a shift in the critical attitude of the Maulvis and other religious leaders, even they were
supportive. Nonetheless, patriarchy perceived a limited role for women. ‘Women power’ was unleashed for political mobilization and adding momentum to the ongoing political upsurge. When the movement subsided, women were sidelined and they slipped back into their traditional roles (Misri 2002, p. 18).

Hence, while Kashmiri women did not participate in the political movements between 1936 and 1946, many engaged in formal and informal educational activities (Akhter 2011, p. 81).

In 1938, the MC issued the “National Demand,” a manifesto asking for reforms of the government of the state, demanding “Responsible Government (…) under the aegis of the Maharaja” (cited in Bose 2003, p. 20). The National Demand asked for basic rights and citizenship, but, as Chitralekha Zutshi (2004) succinctly points out, should this citizenship be Kashmiri, Indian, or British? Yet, despite this call for reconciliation, the Maharaja responded with mass arrests and repression (Bose 2003, p. 20). In 1939, the MC changed its name to the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference\(^{68}\) which was yet another move to appeal to the Hindus and Sikhs of the state. This was done in order to further solidify support from the INC (Zutshi 2004, p. 253) and the lower classes of the Princely State. The party flag was red with a white plough, clearly influenced by socialist movements elsewhere, and the party was also outspokenly anti-imperialist, thus no longer solely working against the Maharaja. However, the new nationalist ideology did not appeal to many Pandits. This was because Sheikh Abdullah simultaneously continued spreading multifaceted messages: on the one hand he called for a diversion from religious-based politics, and on the other he promised Pandits “safeguards according to the sacrifices they [had] made” (cited in Rai 2004, p. 274). It is thus clear that, even though attempts were made to invite all Kashmiris to the movement for freedom, much emphasis was still put on religious affiliation. As a response to this, the Pandits approached Hindus in British India to gain sympathy and help in an attempt to create an alliance amongst Hindus. The NC, on the other hand, called for “regional nationalism” (Rai 2004, p. 277).

\(^{68}\) Henceforth abbreviated as NC.
Yet, even though a nationalisation of local politics was developing in the state, the importance of religion also grew. While the politics of the MC was centred on the ideology of nationalism, the conditions of Kashmiri Muslims was still a focal point. Among Kashmiri Muslims, Sheikh Abdullah had become a symbol, not only of Kashmiri regional identity, but also of the “ideal Muslim” (Zutshi 2004, p. 233). Thus, the Muslim identity of Sheikh Abdullah’s movement grew stronger, both because the leaders did not consider alternative visions of Kashmiri nationalism, and because most of their followers identified as Muslim (Zutshi 2004, p. 260). This impacted the formation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir before and after Indian independence.

5.3 State formation
Much has been written about the 1940s, most of it discussing Partition and whether Kashmir rightly belongs to India or Pakistan. Yet, important changes were occurring on the local political scene, a fact that had repercussions on regional politics.

1946-1953
The decade started tumultuously when Ghulam Abbas of the NC decided to break loose and resurrect the MC (Bose 2003, p. 21). This was due to the fact that Jammu-based Ghulam Abbas experienced himself being side-lined in the increased leftist and socialist Valley-centred politics of Sheikh Abdullah (Zutshi 2004, p. 262). Hence, the rift between the two regions grew: the NC increasingly focused on Valley Muslims while ignoring the needs of Jammu Muslims, and its pro-Congress stance made Jammu Muslims uncomfortable. Simultaneously, the MC reinserted Islam into the agenda. The MC had distanced itself from the Congress as they thought the NC’s close partnership with the Congress would prove futile for Muslims. Instead they approached Jinnah and the Muslim League for support (Rai 2004, p. 280). For the NC, the recreation of the MC was not a positive development as they were no longer the only representative of Jammu and Kashmir. Also, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, with whom Sheikh Abdullah had
fallen out in the early 1930s, joined Ghulam Abbas, which further disturbed Sheikh Abdullah. This irritated the NC leadership and they instigated violence against MC members. Kashmiri newspapers also launched propaganda against the MC, labelling Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah a communalist and claiming that the religious leader should not be involved in politics.

The two parties also had different views on the developments in British India. The INC had launched its “Quit India” movement in 1942, propagating armed resistance against the British government in India (for detailed synthesis see Guha 2007; Jalal 1985; Rai 2004; Singh 2009). This was met with harsh force by the British, and many independence fighters were brutally arrested. The NC released a statement denouncing the attack by the British. The Muslim League and the MC, however, criticised the Quit India movement for not working towards all groups’ independence but mainly striving towards the establishment of Hindu rule.

When Mohammed Ali Jinnah visited the state in 1944, the NC and the MC competed to host the leader of the Muslim League. Jinnah chose to attend the annual meeting of the MC and announced that they were the leading representatives of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir (Bose, 2003). During his visit, Jinnah encouraged “the people to unite as Muslims under the flag of the Muslim Conference” (Zutshi 2004, p. 288). In response to Jinnah’s support for the MC, NC followers shouted abuse during Jinnah’s speeches, resulting in clashes between the two groups. Simultaneously in British India, the Muslim League had been growing in popularity among the Indian Muslims; thus, the closer ties between the Muslim League and the MC transformed the MC “from an organization that had registered dissent against the National Conference to an organization that presented a viable alternative to it” (Zutshi 2004, p. 289). As a consequence of this, Abdullah had no choice but to ultimately turn to Nehru for support.

Importantly, the growth of the NC and its socialist-inspired politics also brought women’s issues to the forefront. (Misri 2002, p. 19). During an NC
convention in September 1944, the Naya Kashmir Manifesto was crafted. This is considered to be one of the most crucial documents in the history of J&K and sets out an agenda for rebuilding it as a socialist democratic regime. It is regarded as a progressive program, including special provisions for women and gender equality (Bose 2003, p. 25). Its main purpose was to reinvigorate the NC after the leap ahead achieved by the MC (Zutshi 2004, p. 289). The Women’s Charter provided a focus on women’s participation in the workforce and their right to vote as well as political engagement, which implies that women were considered capable of participating in public life (Misri 2002, p. 19). In addition, by recognising the vulnerabilities and responsibilities that follow maternity, the political implications of private life were taken into consideration. This was a ground-breaking attempt to shift the discourse on the public/private divide. However, the Naya Kashmir manifesto was never fully implemented and women’s limited public activism and private sufferings continued to be ignored.

The manifesto was received with varied optimism in the Princely State, although many of the political enemies of the NC loudly voiced their criticism (Zutshi 2004, p. 291). Prem Nath Bazaz deemed it an opportunistic piece of rhetoric, aiming for a Communist state yet also courting the Maharaja. Other Kashmiri Pandits claimed that the manifesto focused too closely on the interests of the majority while ignoring the minorities in the state. It was called un-Islamic by Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah (Zutshi 2004, p. 291). The Dogra regime responded to the Naya Kashmir Manifesto by reforming the structure of the government, providing ministerial posts for a Hindu and a Muslim representative as heads of the state legislature. Of the 75 members of the legislature, 11 were elected from Hindu and Sikh

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69 There were three main pillars to the manifesto. The first part focuses on the constitutional structure of the state, with a legislative called the National Assembly and cabinet government. It proposed decentralisation of decision-making and administration into districts, tehsils, towns and villages. The king was to become a symbolic head of state with no actual power. Urdu was presented as the official language, whilst Hindi, Dogri, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Balti and Dardi were all made into national languages. The second part proposed Socialist economic policies, with a focus on planned state-led industrialisation. It was also heavily focused on reforming the land-ownership in the state by a redistribution of land and the creation of cooperatives. The third section focuses on social and educational reforms, which aimed at the unprivileged segments of society and endeavours to provide women with same rights and opportunities as men (Bose 2003, p. 26).
constituencies and 22 from Muslim. As the MC refused to send any representatives to the legislature, most of the Muslim members were NC workers or independents (Zutshi 2004, p. 293). As Zutshi (2004) points out, this was not a popular move among Kashmiris as they considered the NC to have sold out to the regime and thus, at the end of 1945, frustration with and aversion to the NC were at their height. This was another opportunity for the MC to become “a martyr” (Zutshi 2004, p. 293). Shortly thereafter, peasant committees, spearheaded by MC party members, started to appear around the Kashmir Valley. This was condemned by the NC.

In the year 1946, the NC launched its “Quit Kashmir” campaign, which marked a critical moment for the Kashmiri freedom movement. The Cabinet Mission, presented on 12 May 1946, announced that at the instance of India’s independence, its paramountcy would end and the princely states would retrieve their rights and independence (Rai 2004, p. 281). For Abdullah, this was an incentive to gather as many alliances and as much support as possible in order to have a strong voice against the Maharaja, thus preventing the regime from holding on to their power after independence (Rai 2004, p. 281). On 20 May 1946, the NC demanded that the Maharaja Quit Kashmir. Sumantra Bose describes the Quit Kashmir movement of May-June 1946 as “a landmark in the history of political mobilization in Kashmir” (Bose 2003, p. 29). As the Kashmiri population mobilised for freedom from the Maharajan regime in 1946 under the banner of Quit Kashmir, women again evolved as active agents, protesting and demonstrating for change (Khan 2009, p. 124). Many took on leading roles when the men were imprisoned or had gone into hiding. In contrast to 1931, upper- and middle-class women also participated in the uprising this time. Many women took on leadership roles and many joined as active participants in the movement (Misri 2002, p. 19). As a consequence of Quit Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah was arrested. Nehru travelled to Srinagar to act as his defence lawyer, but was also arrested and instructed to leave (Hasan 1999, p. 13). The NC attempted to attract the support of the Pandit community “in a ‘national’ struggle for freedom” (Rai 2004, p. 281. Italics in original) and while many Pandits followed, this was often with caution.
due to the fear that Muslims would gain power in Kashmir. The MC leader, Ghulam Abbas, condemned the movement as “an agitation started at the behest of Hindu leaders,” in a tone and phrase strikingly reminiscent of the Muslim League’s denunciation of Congress’s Quit India agitation in 1942. But mass protests spread in response to the NC’s call for a revolutionary overthrow of the regime, particularly in the party’s Valley strongholds, and were only contained after several weeks by means of mass arrests of leaders (including Abdullah) and brutal police action against the rank and file (Bose 2003, p. 29). The clampdown by the regime succeeded in repressing the uprising. The MC attempted to take advantage of the void that followed the imprisonment of NC leaders. As a response to the Quit Kashmir call, the MC issued the Azad Kashmir manifesto on 26 July 1926 “calling for the end of autocratic government and claims the right of the people to elect their own constituent assembly” (Hasan 1999, p. 14). This was also unsuccessful, nevertheless, and MC leaders were arrested. Hence, at the beginning of 1947, the complete political class of J&K was in prison or had gone underground.

The situation in the Princely State became increasingly tense in 1947 as the partition of British India dawned. While the British prepared to leave the subcontinent, communal riots broke out in parts of the country and the antagonistic Indo-Pakistan rhetoric intensified. Simultaneously, in North-Western Jammu, protests were voiced against the ruthless taxation by the Maharaja on the local Muslim peasantry. In April 1947, this revolt in Poonch was harshly suppressed by the regime. The uprising intensified in the wake of partition in August the same year, but with a clear pro-Pakistani character. By early October, the insurgents had taken control of a large part of the Poonch district, encouraging pro-Pakistani tribal chiefs to declare the creation of a provisional Azad (Free) Jammu and Kashmir government in Rawalpindi on 3 October 1947 (Bose 2003, p. 33). In early September, armed groups from Pakistan penetrated Jammu and Kashmir from west Punjab, raiding and attacking Hindu and Sikh minorities.

In addition, in August-September 1947, Punjab and the NWFP were caught in a circle of communal violence, breakdown of civil order, and banditry.
As the events were unfolding in British India, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir procrastinated on the decision of whether to join India or Pakistan, or remain independent. On 15 August, the Maharaja signed an agreement with the day-old Pakistani government, through which Pakistan would be responsible for the post and telegraph system in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as for supplying the state with necessary items such as food (Bose 2003, p. 33). This was a strategic move for the Maharajan administration as there were concerns regarding the growing influence of the Muslim League. In addition, there was a perceived threat from the Indian National Congress due to its distaste of feudalism and its connection with the NC in J&K. A month later, the government of Jammu and Kashmir protested to the Pakistani foreign ministry about the cross-border attacks (Bose 2003, p. 34). These accusations were denied by Pakistan, who instead highlighted the “terror and atrocities perpetrated by J&K forces against the Muslim population of Poonch – atrocities which, it suggested, were provoking spontaneous reactions both within J&K and from ethnic and religious kin across the border” (Bose 2003, p. 34). Thereafter, the relationship between the two governments collapsed entirely. On 3 October, the government of the Princely State cabled a complaint about the violation of the standstill to the Pakistani government. On 18 October, another complaint was sent, charging Pakistan with “economic strangulation as a pressure tactic” (Bose 2003, p. 34). On 21 October, thousands of Pashtuni tribesmen from the Hazara district of the NWFP, north and northwest of Kashmir, marched into the Princely State (Jones 2002, p. 64; Whitehead 2007). Scholars claim that the incursion was well planned, with well-equipped military leaders going straight towards Muzaffarabad (the capital-to-be of Azad Kashmir) and then towards Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley (Bose 2003, p. 35; Whitehead 2007). On 24 October, the government of the Princely State requested military assistance from New Delhi. The Indian government was ready to send assistance by then, but was advised by Lord Mountbatten, the former Viceroy of British India, that invasion would be illegal unless Jammu and Kashmir was a part of India. So a representative of the Indian government, V.P. Menon, was sent to Jammu and Kashmir to witness the Maharaja
signing the Instrument of Accession document⁷¹ (Rizvi 1992, p. 50). At the end of October 1947, Indian troops were swiftly moved to Kashmir. Srinagar was quickly cleared of insurgents, and Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh were taken under Indian control.

As a response to the invasion of tribesmen in October 1947, Sheikh Abdullah organised the Women’s Self Defence Corps.⁷² Volunteer forces of women were trained to use a gun as well as in general fitness. There was also both a political and a cultural dimension to the movement, which followed the NC ideology of socialism, nationalism, and freedom from feudal rule. This presented a space for women to discuss their issues and organise amongst themselves. The WSDC presented an opportunity for individual women to take on leading positions for the first time. One of the leading figures was Zoon Gujjari, who presented herself in traditional Kashmiri clothes and carried a gun on her shoulders (Khan 2009, p. 117). Another of the leading figures was Begum Akhbar Jehan, the wife of Sheikh Abdullah, who took the initiative to raise the political consciousness of the women through enthusiastic speeches during political rallies. Begum Zainab, a grass-roots level leader, was often seen leading and encouraging women’s groups on the ground, and Mahmuda Ahmad Shah propagated women’s empowerment and education (Khan 2009).

The Cultural Front organised a variety of activities, often frequented by poets, writers, and actors such as Sajjada Zameer Ahmad, Taj Begum Renzu, Shanta Kaul, and Khurshid Jala-u-Din. Radio Kashmir became a central part of the movement and many of these women volunteered, working at the radio station at various tasks. Women writers and poets became well-known in literary circles (Khan 2009, p. 117). Sajjida Zameer enthusiastically retells to Nyla Ali Khan (2009) her vivid memories from her participation in the play Kashmir Yeh Hai (This is Kashmir) as well as Shaheed Sherwani (Martyr Sherwani). Sajjida Zameer retells:

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⁷¹ There has been substantial discussion about whether the Maharaja actually signed the document on the 26th, as the date stamp claims, or on the 27th, which would make the Indian involvement illegal (see for instance Jha 2003; Jones 2002, p. 66).
⁷² Henceforth abbreviated as WSDC.
I remember the role played by Sumitre Lakhwara and her sisters who worked relentlessly round the clock with the women’s militia. Members of the women’s militia hoisted the flag of Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir when Abdullah was sworn in as prime minister of the state in 1948. Sumitra, her sister and I passionately sang the anthem of the state, ‘Leheraaye Kashmir ke Jhanday’ (‘The flag of Kashmir is unfurled and flies high’), at the ceremony (Khan 2009, p. 122).

In the narratives presented by Khan (2009), the passion and optimism displayed by the women participating in the activities of the WSDC are striking.

India’s Constituent Assembly included Article 306A in India’s constitution in October 1949 which confirmed that the central government’s jurisdiction in J&K should remain limited to defence, foreign affairs, and communication. As India became a republic in January 1950, the special status of J&K was written into the Indian Constitution as Article 370. This meant that India kept the right to govern the state’s external affairs, defence, and communications, but only in deliberation with the J&K government. It also gave J&K the right to its own constitution (Kaur 2006, p. 13).

Sheikh Abdullah became the first Prime Minister of J&K, and held his position from March 1948 to August 1953. Sheikh Abdullah continually defended his party’s arrangement to join India, and he repeatedly spoke vividly about India’s “democratic and secular credentials, derided Pakistan as a landlord-ridden country without a written constitution, and dismissed full independence for Kashmir as a utopian idea” (Bose 2003, p. 59). However, it is generally believed that Abdullah held divergent ideas in private.73

73 In an interview with the London Observer in April 1949, Abdullah mused on the future of the state. The current situation wherein J&K is trapped between the two states, he said, was unsustainable; rather it should “…have a neutral and friendly status vis-à-vis both India and Pakistan. (…) (A)n independent state’s territorial integrity would need to be recognized and guaranteed not only by India and Pakistan but by world powers and the United Nations” (Bose 2003, p. 60). These comments created great tumult in New Delhi where especially right-wing Hindu nationalists opposed the comments. Sheikh Abdullah soon had to withdraw his opinions.
In April 1952, Sheikh Abdullah once again “attacked what he described as the insidious influence of Hindu majoritarian ideas in the Congress party and the central government, and referred to the “full integration” movement as “unrealistic, childish, and savoring of lunacy” (Bose 2003, p. 61) This resulted in discussions between a delegation from the J&K government and the Indian government representatives. The outcome of the discussions was presented in an unwritten modus vivendi called the Delhi Agreement, which mainly maintained the status quo on the status of J&K. The Constituent Assembly abolished the Dogra regime on 21 August 1952 and Karan Singh, the son of the former Maharaja, was appointed Sadar-i-Ryasat, head of state.

On 9 August 1953, Karan Singh ordered that Abdullah be arrested and discharged as prime minister. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed was appointed as the new prime minister and Sheikh Abdullah’s supporters were dismissed from the government (Bose 2003, p. 66). Abdullah was accused of being a repressive leader, part of a foreign conspiracy to damage the relationship between India and Kashmir. Hence, during the second half of 1953, the discourse in Kashmir changed: any disobedience towards the central government would prove fateful to one’s political career and could brand one as enemy of the state.

Thus, the period 1946-1953 saw the build-up to and the fall of the Maharaja. The creation of a Kashmiri government institutionalised many of the political actors that had appeared in the 1930s. The creation of Article 370 created a sense of autonomy which was disbanded later in 1953 by the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah.

1954-1980
The time period between 1953 and the 1980s demonstrated the difficult relationship between Sheikh Abdullah and the Indian government. Abdullah

74 The assembly consisted of 43 representatives from the Kashmir Valley, 30 from Jammu, and two from Ladakh; 25 seats had also been left for the Pakistani-controlled areas of Kashmir.
spent most of the time from 1953 to 1975 in Indian prisons (Bose 2003). During his brief moments of liberty, he vocally criticised the Indian government and reasserted the autonomous position of Kashmir.

Simultaneously on the international front, Indo-Pakistani relations continued to be tense. In 1965, the two countries fought each other in Kashmir after Pakistan initiated Operation Gibraltar to encourage an uprising in Kashmir (Behera 2006). According to Navnita Chadha Behera, Pakistan was increasingly worried about losing its grip on Kashmir. The country’s leadership assumed that India was weak after the death of Nehru, and that Kashmiris supported Pakistan after the uprising caused by the theft of the Moh-i-Muqaddas in 1964 (Behera 2006). Hence, the war would be easily won. In reality, “Pakistan had started a war that it was in no position to win” (Behera 2006, p. 79). After a 17 days war, a ceasefire was reached.

In 1971, the people in East Pakistan revolted against the dominance of West Pakistan and demanded an independent Bangladesh. India supported the East Pakistanis as the war was mainly fought in East Pakistan and on India’s western borders with Pakistan, with immense loss of lives (D'Costa 2006, 2011). The religious identity of Pakistan was shaken up as “Muslims slaughtered their fellow Muslims, dispelling the previous notion that religion alone was sufficient to hold Pakistan together” (D'Costa 2006, p. 135). After the ceasefire, the Simla Agreement was signed in 1972. The Agreement involved an attempt to provide a framework for resolving the Kashmir issue. The most important aspect was the reinforcement of the LoC dividing the Kashmir region, and the reiteration that Kashmir was a bilateral issue. This would serve to restrain both countries from resorting to internationalisation of conflict. “East Pakistan’s secession on the grounds of being populated by Bengali Muslims rather than ‘simply Muslim’ put a hole in the two-nation theory” (Behera 2006, p. 67). In subsequent years, although Indo-Pakistan was not involved in another war until 1999, their relationship was based on military containment and nuclear advancement.

Due to lack of political will, recurring terrorist incidents and political instability in Pakistan, neither of the parties were
forthcoming in breaking the ice. While India continued its counter-terrorism strategies in J&K and elsewhere, Pakistan was content with using jihad as an instrument of foreign policy to force India to come to the negotiating table to discuss J&K. (Misra 2007, p. 507).

In Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah returned to power in 1975 and received a celebratory welcome from its population. The Indian government decided that Article 370, which brought J&K special status within India, would remain in place (Puri 1995).

### 5.4 Call for a separate state

This is the most central period of the Kashmiri conflict. The call for a separate state set the Valley on fire in the late 1980s, impacting all people in the area in disastrous ways. Manchanda (2001a) has divided the time period of the conflict into three overlapping phases. The first phase involves the early days from when the insurgency started in 1989, wherein the whole of Kashmiri society took to the streets in support of the militancy. Women and men demonstrated and supported the militant groups through feeding, logistics, joining the group, hiding the militants or weapons, and in many other ways. The second phase in the mid-1990s, due to the heavy-handed response from the Indian army, saw a decrease in both the level of and support for militancy. During this time, the population tired of militant activities and the mass movement faded slightly, with women disappearing from the scene. In the third phase, the late 1990s and early 2000s, a shift in political processes took place with a revival of democratic processes. This was followed by a rise in militancy in the mid-2000s and a revival of extremist politics (Parashar 2011). In addition to Manchanda’s three phases, I add a fourth, which starts in 2008 and leads up to the time of my fieldwork in 2011.75 During this phase, Kashmir has witnessed both a consolidation of democratic practices and a renewal and intensification of popular protests, the “new intifada” (Kak 2011). While the structure of this section is based on these four phases, it begins with introducing Kashmir in the early 1980s and the events leading up to the outbreak of the insurgency at the end of the

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75 At the time of completing this thesis there are contradictory signs of a further deepening of democratic processes and less frequent mass demonstrations, however this does not fall within the remit of this thesis.
decade, and concludes with a summary of the situation for women in Kashmir at the time of the research.

From discos to curfews
In the early days of the 1980s, Kashmir was peaceful and prosperous and received many tourists who came to enjoy the bars, shops, and game halls that were plentiful in Srinagar. The “state wore a permanent holiday air” (Talbot 2000, p. 274). In September 1982, Sheikh Abdullah died and his son Farooq Abdullah succeeded him as head of the ruling NC party and Chief Minister of the State (Ray 2002, p. 204). Farooq Abdullah was soon dubbed the “Disco Chief Minister” due to his frequent motorcycle journeys around Srinagar and extensive socialising. However, the liberal atmosphere in Kashmir was not appreciated by everyone: religious groups, such as the Jamaat-i-Islami, complained about the increased number of bars, video shops, and beauty salons. However, these voices were ignored at the time (Evans 2000, p. 23; Talbot 2000, p. 274). In the state elections of 1983, the main contestants were the NC and the INC. Indira Gandhi, the leader of the INC chanced her own status by engaging in the election campaign and touring all over the state. In the end, the NC won 46 out of 75 seats in the elections, while the INC won 26. According to Ian Talbot (2000), the defeat intensified Gandhi’s opposition to Farooq Abdullah and she launched a press campaign that focused on his “disloyalty” and “softness towards Pakistan.” Farooq Abdullah, for his part, joined with other state politicians in a common front against her centralisation policies (Bose 2003, p. 91). Farooq Abdullah was dismissed less than a month after Operation Blue Star against the Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian army operation in June 1984. G.M. Shah became Chief Minister as well as leader of a diverging NC faction. Corruption charges and commercial tension were frequent during

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76 Indira Gandhi tried to involve Farooq in a pre-election arrangement, which, to her great frustration, he refused (Talbot 2000, p. 274). Gandhi’s increased hostilities towards Farooq intensified her efforts in Kashmir. The Congress had played the Hindu card due to fears of an increased Muslim migration to Jammu if Farooq’s proposed Resettlement Bill became law (Talbot 2000, p. 274). The Resettlement Bill enabled pre-1947 residents to return to the state. This reduced the previous BJP support for the NC and hence heightened Hindu-Muslim tension.

77 Indira Gandhi also courted Farooq Abdullah’s brother-in-law, G.M. Shah, who had been a rival for the NC leadership in 1982.
G.M. Shah’s period in government. The “Disco Chief Minister” had been replaced by the “Gul-e-Curfew” (The Curfew Flower). Disruptions to trade and business ended the economic boom. There was also increased unemployment, which both intensified the appeal of Islamist groups (Talbot 2000, p. 276), and intensified general dissent in the state (Bose 2003, p. 92). Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984 in revenge for the operation in the Golden Temple, and under the new Prime Minister, her son Rajiv Gandhi, repression in Kashmir intensified (Bose 2003, p. 92). In September 1985, 600 villages were designated as restricted areas: “This measure, designed to curb Pakistani infiltration, only alienated their inhabitants who were subjected to searches by paramilitary patrols” (Talbot 2000, p. 276). In February 1986, police opened fire on protestors in Srinagar following the news that the locks at Babri Masjid had been removed. Echoing the national dispute, Hindu anger had been aroused because of a room next to a temple in the Jammu secretariat having been used for worship by Muslim civil servants. The Shah government was dismissed by Jagmohan, the Indian governor for J&K.

The state elections in June 1987 proved to be a turning point for Kashmir. A new party, the Muslim United Front, which comprised a coalition of religious groups headed by Jamaat-i-Islami, had been greeted enthusiastically and was expected to receive a majority of the votes (Evans 2000, p. 23). However, the INC and NC coalition won 60 seats and Farooq Abdullah came to power, while MUF only won four seats. This gave the impression that Farooq Abdullah acted as a representative for New Delhi, which resulted in the NC losing its reputation as a party critical of the Indian government (Bose 2003, p. 93; Talbot 2000, p. 276). The administration was accused of having tampered with the results and it was generally dubbed as a “stolen election” (Talbot 2000, p. 277). This caused a stir throughout the Valley and was followed by violent protests. Agitation started simultaneously in Jammu after the government had declared it would

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78 This was also the times of national rise of the BJP, communal tensions, and the Babri Masjid incident in other parts of India.
79 Henceforth abbreviated as MUF.
not shift the winter seat of government from Srinagar to Jammu: “When it backed down on the economically motivated decision; it seemed that agitation was the best method for advancing community interests” (Talbot 2000, p. 277).

What started in 1989 as a popular upsurge with mass mobilisation and public demonstrations, had developed into a highly militarised conflict between militants and the Indian army in the mid-1990s (Manchanda 2001a; Parashar 2009). The Indian government introduced repressive measures to quell the struggle, such as special laws that gave the troops impunity. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, militancy waned, but did not stop entirely. The democratic process was revived, but as Parashar (2009) notes, the rise of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and increased instability in Pakistan also led to a revival in extremist and separatist politics.

First phase: the early days of the insurgency
The uprising that had the Valley in flames in 1988-1989 was led by young Kashmiri Muslims. While there is little research on who these young men were, observations point to educated, unemployed youths from the lower middle classes (Behera 2006; Bose 2003). In other parts of the world, nations gained independence: the Berlin Wall was soon to fall and the Soviet Union had begun to crumble and these events clearly inspired the people in Kashmir. In 1988, large numbers of young men started crossing the LoC into AJK for combat training. The same year saw several public demonstrations and, on 31 July, several bombs detonated in Srinagar city. These attacks were executed by Kashmiri youth, but were, according to Bose (2003, p. 95), planned by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front.80 Strikes and so called “black days” took place on 15 August 1988 (India’s Independence Day), 26 January 1989 (India’s Republic Day) and 11 February 1989 (the day the founder of the JKLF, Mohammad Maqbool Butt, was hanged for killing a police officer during a bank robbery) (Bose 2003, p. 96). In 1989, several assassinations took place, both of active

80 Henceforth abbreviated as JKLF.
politicians such as Mohammad Yusuf Halwai of the NC, and “known and suspected agents and informers of the extensive Indian-intelligence-gathering apparatus” (Bose 2003, p. 96).

The JKLF’s campaign of selective assassinations of alleged Indian spies and political “collaborators” in the Valley escalated sharply in the final months of 1989, starting with the shooting of a prominent NC functionary, a Muslim, on a Srinagar street in August 1989. Over the next six months more than one hundred such killings occurred, effectively paralyzing the government’s administrative machinery and severely damaging its surveillance and intelligence apparatus. Approximately three-fourths of the victims—a mix of officials of the local political hierarchy, alleged spies and intelligence agents, and prominent citizens accused of pro-India leanings—were Muslims, and the rest were Pandits, members of the Valley’s small but high-profile Hindu minority (Bose 2003, pp. 107-108).

In these early years, women and men in the Valley were inspired to take to the streets, just like in 1931, and freedom, azaadi, was the word that inspired them. The unrest took New Delhi by surprise as it contradicted “official stereotypes of Kashmiri Muslim ‘docility’ and of an adherence to a composite secularised Kashmiriyat identity” (Punjabi 1992, p. 137, in Talbot 2000, p. 273). The magnitude of the demonstration and its emotional passion shocked even the JKLF’s still reasonably few underground militants (Bose 2003, p. 109).

As the struggle became violent in 1989-1990, women took on stereotypical feminine nurturing roles, supporting the militants through providing food, nursing, and helping out in any other way possible. But they also smuggled weapons and helped to clear areas of civilians before bomb attacks. Parashar (2009) notes that women most likely participated as militants as well; some women were trained and armed, and there have been reports of a specific women-only training camp in the Pakistani part of Kashmir. One man spoke about the importance of women’s support for the struggle:

The movement for [azaadi] has the support of women, it has the support of women in my family. Women’s participation in the struggle surpassed expectations. We could not have done without it… But women cannot expect similar roles and positions as men. It [is] for me to fight battles and women to support them… this [Kashmir] is a traditional society, women
are educated [and] have professions, we are not against that but, in a traditional culture such as ours, women’s place is primarily within the home and the family (cited in Kazi 2009, p. 143).

As the militant groups gained power through their guns, political institutions and the political system ceased to function. Politicians were threatened, and even killed (Behera 2006, p. 147). When the militants called for a boycott of the by-elections for the Lok Sabha in November 1989, people responded; in some districts, turnout was slightly more than 5%, in others, not a single vote was cast (Behera 2006, p. 147).

Second phase: militarisation and militancy

The first phase of the insurgency, as presented above, was defined by the mass call for azaadi for the Kashmiri people. The movement included the majority of the population. Historical accounts have recounted the enthusiasm and celebratory atmosphere at the rallies (Kazi 2009; Manchanda 2001a). After the incident at the Gawakadal Bridge in Srinagar on 22 January 1990 where the Indian Army fired on a crowd of unarmed protestors and killed more than 100 people, the tension in the state intensified. It was no longer simply a clash between militants and the army, it had evolved into a militarisation of the whole population (Talbot 2000, p. 277). Women and men marched together against the Indian state. During this time, women actively supported the militancy through nursing, cooking, and housing militants. One woman described her support for the freedom movement:

The first time I protested was when my husband was imprisoned in 1990, when the troubles started. I had to cope with my job and I had three children with no support at home. … I have supported the demand for [azaadi] ever since that year because for me, my husband’s arrested was not a result of any wrong-doing on his part but the Indian government’s refusal to respect Kashmiri people. […] We would cook and send food and messages for men in jail, provide moral support and information about what was happening. … If we came to know of a crackdown beforehand, we would warn men and arrange with friends and family to shift them to a safer zone. … We comforted and supported women and families whose husbands and sons were taken away or had disappeared (cited in Kazi 2009, p. 142).
Militarisation and violence

The response from the Indian side toughened during the early 1990s and the Kashmiri uprising was met with brutal force. In January 1990, Farooq Abdullah’s government was dismissed, even though he himself claimed that he had resigned, and Jagmohan was once again appointed governor of J&K (Bose 2003, p. 95). Jagmohan’s time as governor was marked by fierce state repression and there were many instances when unarmed civilians were killed by the Indian army. Between January and March 1990, Srinagar was under almost complete curfew, and martial law was introduced from July to September 1990 (Bose 2003, p. 112). The state repression intensified when Girish Chandra Saxena, former head of the Research and Analysis Wing,\(^{81}\) the main foreign intelligence agency of India, became governor in May 1990. He created the Rashtriya Rifles,\(^ {82}\) an elite army unit to fight militants. It was supposed to operate alongside regular army units and federal security forces, as well as the CRPF and the BSF. Also a special division of the J&K police known as the Special Task Force was established. The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, implemented in 1987, and the AFSPA (September 1990) legitimised human rights abuses (Talbot 2000, p. 278). General Krisna Rao replaced Saxena as Governor in March 1993 and pursued a similar hard-line strategy. The destruction of the Charor-e-Sharif shrine of the 14\(^{th}\) Century Sufi saint Sheikh Nooruddin Noorani in May 1995, which killed an insurgent leader, a veteran of the Afghan War who had taken refuge in the shrine, led to the intensification of protests around the state. The Indian authorities blamed the fire on the Harkat-ul-Ansar militants, and this intensified the complaints. This did not prevent the security forces from taking action against the even more sacred Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar (the shrine was the repository of the Moh-i-Muqaddas, a strand of hair from the beard of Prophet Muhammad) the following March (Talbot 2000, p. 280). At the same time, at an international level, Indo-Pakistani tension grew. The two countries were involved in a war in the distant Siachen Glacier, a war that was both costly and tiresome. The Indian Government also blamed Pakistan for fighting a proxy war in Kashmir, and

\(^{81}\) Henceforth abbreviated as RAW.

\(^{82}\) Henceforth abbreviated as RR.
intermittent shelling occurred along the LoC. Within J&K, the situation quickly deteriorated.

Violence against civilians has been conducted by both militant groups, the police force and the army. Killings, disappearances, torture, sexual violence, including rape, and unlawful detention are some of the abuses that people have been subjected too. This violence is highly gendered, in that men and women are affected in different ways. Civil society organisations have started mapping human rights abuses, but currently there has been no systematic charting of violence during the conflict in Kashmir (although currently there are attempts, see for instance ITPK and APDP 2012; JKCCS 2010). The two most cited reports on rape are a documentation commissioned by Human Rights Watch\(^{83}\) conducted in 1992 (Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights 1993) and a survey by Médecins Sans Frontières\(^{84}\) in 2005 (de Jong et al. 2008). Both of these studies are limited, both in terms of their scope and the fact that they were conducted 10 and 23 years ago respectively. Accounts are also presented in the scholarly work on Kashmir, but there are few reliable figures. The survey by MSF was conducted in Budgam and Kupwara. It reports that 73% of the respondents (male and female) had witnessed physical or mental mistreatment and 44% had themselves been mistreated (de Jong et al. 2008). The report states that the population in these villages have a high exposure to violence and that men are more widely affected. More than one in ten of the respondents reported having been raped or sexually assaulted (phrased in the interviews as “violation of modesty”). Interestingly, more men than women reported having their modesty violated. This may be due to how the questions were asked: men were more often frisked, arrested, and tortured, which often involved their bodies being touched intimately. Rape and torture were used to humiliate and discipline the population:

We must be able to see that a rape in Kashmir is no different from an enforced disappearance, an extra judicial killing, an illegal detention or a case of torture. When Captain Ravinder Singh Tewatia of 12 Rashtriya Rifles and SPO Bharat

\(^{83}\) Henceforth abbreviated as HRW.
\(^{84}\) Henceforth abbreviated as MSF.
Bhushan rape women inside their own home in Banihal (*Alleged Perpetrators* report, Case 42) or DSP Altaf Ahmad Khan rapes a schoolgirl who is the cousin of a surrendered militant inside the Zachaldara Police Post (*Alleged Perpetrators* report, Case 57) or Captain Gurtej Singh rapes a man’s wife in Qazigund (*Alleged Perpetrators* report, Case 98) they are doing their duty, they are teaching “them” a lesson, they are keeping Kashmir “integral” to India (Vij 2013).

From the HRW report it is possible to determine different scenarios of rape. One reoccurring situation involved rape by Indian army members during “search and cordon” operations. These often involve the army men looking for militants or hidden weapons. At times, the men and women were separated. The men were then violently tortured and the women were raped. Another scenario was when army men raped women to revenge on militants. The report (1993, p. 13) describes one incident in October 1992, when a BSF patrol was attacked by militants and one member of the patrol was killed. This led to that BSF forces stormed a village and killed ten people. Thereafter they entered a second village, Gurihakhar, where they raped several women. In a third scenario, rape was used against women who were associated to or were suspected to show allegiance to militants. In public statements, media officers often noted if the raped women were related to militants in any way. It is impossible to “…know whether such suspicions motivated the soldiers responsible for the rapes of these women, it is clear that the authorities intend to use the accusation that the women associated with "terrorists" both to discredit the women's testimony and -- implicitly at least -- shirk responsibility for the abuse” (Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights 1993, p. 11). Militants groups also raped Kashmiri women and the numbers of rapes increased after 1991 (Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights 1993). There were cases where women were kidnapped, raped and killed to put pressure on other family members to agree on the conditions of the militants. In other cases, women had been abducted and given to a militant leader (Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights 1993). These cases are often locally referred to as “forced marriages”, which highlights the stigma surrounding rape. Militants also conducted rapes of women suspected to be informers or opposed to the militant group. The violent response of the Indian state, as
well as of the militant groups, thus affected society at large. The killings, torture, or suspicion of Kashmiri men led to a situation in which women often had to become the head of household. Seema Kazi notes that “[w]omen’s public roles merged with their traditional domestic roles as the latter become politicised in the effort to protect and preserve the family against formidable counter-offensives by the state” (Kazi 2009).

New militants on the block
As noted in the previous section, the uprising was initially started by a home-grown collection of adolescent Kashmiris, demanding freedom and calling themselves the JKLF, and it quickly grew into a mass movement (Behera 2006, p. 145). After a few years, the revolt split into two factions, one demanding the independence of Kashmir, and the other arguing for accession to Pakistan. As the Kashmiri population got tired of the constant upheaval, smaller, well-trained groups joined the insurgency, many of which consisted mainly of non-Kashmiris, for example the Allah Tigers, People’s League, and Hizb-i-Islamia; the independence movement had been transformed into a jihad85 (Behera 2006, p. 145). This also resulted in the Islamisation of the insurgency. Internal and inter-group disagreements led to factions between the militias. The divide between the JKLF and the Jamaat-i-Islami grew, as the latter supported Hizb-ul-Mujahidin,86 a new group that assisted the Indian counter-insurgency effort. Even though the JKLF were already using Islamic discourse to mobilise public support, HUM intensified this further, for instance, by using the Friday namaaz at Jamia Masjid to consolidate support. However, HUM and JKLF militants were soon turning their guns on each other (Talbot 2000, p. 279). In 1995, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference87 was formed by the JKLF (which by then had laid down their arms) and a coalition of other groups. The Hurriyat was led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, and launched a new “Quit India” movement in Kashmir. However, due to political struggles in the organisation, they failed to fully take advantage of the momentum (Manchanda 2001a, p. 89). In

85 Arabic for holy war.
86 Henceforth abbreviated as HUM.
87 Henceforth abbreviated as APHC or Hurriyat.
2003, the *Hurriyat* split into two sections after a disagreement on the election of Maulana Abbas Ansari as the new chairman. Geelani opposed this decision, stopped attending meetings (Kaur 2006, p. 22), and after a while formed his own wing of the APHC called *Tahrik-e-Hurriyat* Jammu and Kashmir, which evolved into becoming more hard-line and pro-Islamic than the original group that was now led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the head priest of the Jamia Masjid in Srinagar.

The *Hurriyat* had an active women’s wing, Jammu and Kashmir Muslim *Khawateen Markaz*. The group objected to the Indian presence in the state and demanded freedom. Manchanda (2001a, p. 51) describes scenes from the mid-1990s where *burqa*-clad women of the MKM stood guard and forewarned militant men of approaching Indian soldiers. The then General Secretary, Anjum Zamarud Habib, recounted: “We would visit jailed militants, take them shoes, a shirt, pyjamas, cigarettes and collect funds to bail them. […] We did go for training in the use of guns, but we never used them” (cited in Manchanda 2001a, p. 52). Yet, the influence of the MKM declined: while in the early 1990s they could mobilise 2000 women on the streets of Srinagar, at the time of my research in 2011 there were only 20 or so that were active.

The number of renegades and *Ikhwans* grew and complicated the conflict in the state. Renegades were mainly former militants involved in looting and other criminal activities. The *Ikhwans* were former militants that belonged to groups that had surrendered to Indian security forces. These are not one monolithic group but a variety of organisations, for instance *Ikhwan-ul Muslimoon* led by Koko Parray, a folksinger and former JKLF militant. Security operations were “sub-contracted” to these groups by the regular security forces that also financed them. The Taliban (which was different from the Afghan group with the same name) worked closely with the Indian security forces.

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88 Henceforth abbreviated as MKM.
89 Habib left the MKM in 2003 after she was allegedly framed by members of the *Hurriyat* and sentenced to prison in New Delhi (as told by her in our private conversation).
army. The Ikhwan-ul Muslimoon worked with RR and the Special Task Forces (Talbot 2000, p. 279).

Exodus of the Pandits

Simultaneously with the violent crackdown of the Indian state on the Kashmiri uprising, the Pandit population fled the Valley. Before the insurgency started there were approximately 130,000-170,000 Pandits living in the Kashmir Valley (Bose 2003; Evans 2002); there are estimations that 100,000 Pandits left the Valley during the first months of 1990 (Bose 2003, p. 120). There are conflicting versions of the reasons for the exodus. Some accounts point to the Pandit population within Kashmir being targeted by militant groups, while others argue that the mass departure was engineered by the Governor Jagmohan (Behera 2006; Bose 2003; Chowdhari Tremblay 2007; Evans 2002). “Organized groups representing Pandit migrants have since claimed that they were forced out of the Valley by a systematic terror campaign of ‘ethnic cleansing’ and even ‘genocide’” (Bose 2003, p. 120). Behera describes the threatening messages in letters, posters, and pamphlets, persuading Pandits to leave the area and creating an atmosphere of fear and panic:

‘Yahan kya chalega – Nizam-Mustafa’ (What kind of law will prevail here? – the Islamic law). Specific warnings were directed at Pandits, ‘Zalimo, kafiro, Kashmir hamara chhor do’ (Ye cruel infidels, vacate our Kashmir), and ‘Allah-o-Akbar, Mussalmano jago, kafiro bhago, jihad aa raha hai’ (Arise and awake Muslims, buff off infidels, jihad is approaching) (Behera 2006, p. 125).

Prominent Pandit representatives and officials were killed in 1989 and 1990. Some argue that they were killed due to their position of power, as high-level Muslims were killed too. Yet, many Pandits experienced these killings being communally motivated, and this intensified the panic within the Pandit community (Evans 2002). However, separatist groups oppose this version of events, arguing instead that Indian officials, led by Governor Jagmohan, manipulated and “actively facilitated [the exodus] in a deliberate attempt to stigmatize the azaadi movement as sectarian and

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90 Panun Kashmir, a Pandit organisation, argues that there were 700,000 Pandits in Kashmir before the insurgency started, however Evans (2002) dismisses this and provides a thorough calculation determining the number to be 160,000-170,000.
‘fundamentalist’” (Bose 2003, p. 121). A third version proposed by Evans (2002) is that the violent insurgency had created an atmosphere of intense fear. The perceived targeting of Pandits and lack of assistance from the J&K government added to this feeling. Whatever the reason for the exodus, in the early 1990s Kashmiri Pandits began to leave the Valley in haste. The JKLF and Hurriyat have repeatedly claimed they were opposed to the exodus and that many from the Muslim population actively tried to stop Pandits from leaving (Evans 2002, p. 21). Many took shelter in migrant camps in Jammu and New Delhi, others went to live with family and friends in India or abroad. (Behera 2006, p. 125). The migrant camps were in poor condition and people lived in poverty. Parashar notes how the Pandit women she met in the camps in Jammu:

…mentioned the cordial relations between the two communities before 1989. Women talked of shared culture, tradition, and language, which were under attack when the militants began to threaten the Kashmiri Pandits living in the Valley. [...] Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu revealed bitterness and anger at how they had been forced to leave their homes due to the threats and killings (Parashar 2011, p. 301).

Pandits soon started to organise themselves politically in order to facilitate their return to the Valley. The Panun Kashmir (Our Kashmir) organisation was formed. In 1991, the Margdarshan convention articulated the group’s homeland resolution; this was subsequently confirmed by 2,000 participants at the World Kashmiri Pandit Conference in 1993 (Behera 2006, p. 126). The situation of Pandits has been a propaganda tool of the Indian state in the Kashmir conflict (Bose 2003, p. 121). There have been increased endeavours from state governments to encourage Pandits to return since 1996, including relief and rehabilitation packages. Separatist leaders, such as Yasin Malik from the JKLF, visited the migrant camps in the 1990s. At the time of the research, there was much activism in terms of Pandit political participation and celebration of Hindu holidays.

The developments in the early 1990s affected all parts of the population. While Muslim women and men took to the streets demonstrating, and

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91 Yet, there are allegations that the JKLF, together with HUM, had published threats to Pandits in a number of newspapers (Evans 2002, p. 20).
92 Sanskrit for guidance.
supported militant groups in any way possible, the Pandits left their homes to, in most cases, live in poverty in squalid camps. In the next section, I describe how the population grew tired of the militant activities in the mid to late 1990s and the mass movement faded slightly. Women disappeared from the scene, except for the continuing, but declining, presence of the MKM and *Dukhtaran-e-Millat* (which is described in more detail below).

**Third phase: Indo-Pakistani dialogue and changing face of militancy**

The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a decline in militancy. Bose describes the evolved atmosphere of Srinagar:

The beginnings of superficial normalcy became visible in the urban landscape of Srinagar, a city that had been under virtual siege from 1990 to 1995. The unsightly bunkers were reduced in number, the checkpoints were fewer and less aggressive during daylight hours, and there was even some pedestrian and automobile traffic in the city center after dusk. During the summer of 1997, thousands of middle-class Srinagar families made the excursion to Gulmarg, a popular resort forty-five kilometers from the city, for the first time in almost a decade (Bose 2003, p. 137).

During this period in the early 2000s, women stopped supporting militant groups as militants had become involved in criminal activities and exploitation. Instead of mass demonstrations, militant groups instigated *fidayeen*\(^{93}\) attacks on army bases, government buildings, and public places. These attacks were most often performed by a small group of men, sometimes only two. They would ruthlessly attack a target without regard for the risk to their own lives. A minimum of 55 *fidayeen* attacks were executed between mid-1999 and 2002 (Bose 2003, p. 141).

Women’s participation in militancy re-emerged in 2004 with the rebirth of *Dukhtaran-e-Millat*.\(^{94}\) DeM, already founded in 1981 and led by Aasiya Andrabi (a well-educated affluent woman), propagates a *wahhabi*-style\(^{95}\) Islam and asserts that Kashmir should be part of Pakistan and become a strict Islamic state. DeM claimed that, according to the Quran, complete *purdah* should be adhered to: women should stay at home, and if they enter

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\(^{93}\) Translation: life-daring.

\(^{94}\) Henceforth abbreviated as DeM.

\(^{95}\) A purist form of Islam originating in Saudi Arabia.
the public realm, *burqa* should be worn. They served as a moral police, encouraging women to wear the *burqa*, often through force, throwing colour or acid on the women who refused. DeM is semi-active today, and although their popularity has waned and the *burqa*-campaign has calmed down, they still have the capacity to mobilise women on the streets of Srinagar to protest against the Indian presence in the state. “Since 2004, [DeM] has been working with separatist and hardline militant groups like Lashkar-e-Jabber to enforce the Islamic code of conduct in the valley” (Parashar 2009, p. 246). Andrabi herself has been imprisoned on several occasions, most recently in 2010, which at the time of completing this thesis is still ongoing.

Large parts of the population had tired of violence and started looking for political solutions to the troubles (Parashar 2009, p. 246). This resulted in a revival of democratic processes (Manchanda 2001a). In the Lok Sabha elections in Kashmir in May-June 1996, there was a 40% voter turnout which has been attributed to widespread intimidation by the security forces (Talbot 2000, p. 280). The September 1996, state legislative assembly elections resulted in victory for Farooq Abdullah (NC) (Bose 2003, p. 138). The *Hurriyat* boycotted the state elections, calling them a sham (Talbot 2000, p. 280). In the state legislative assembly elections of October 2002, the NC became the biggest party, with 28 seats. However, a coalition was formed between the INC and the four years old party, PDP (Kaur 2006, p. 20). Noor Ahmad Baba notes, however, that despite democratic progress, Kashmiri people still felt alienated from the political process and little advancement was achieved:

> Ordinary people’s distancing from the militancy did not mean, though, a change of heart on the basic issues of the movement. In fact, greater repression by state agencies and indiscriminate human rights violations further alienated the people from the existing political set up. In this situation, even the ‘elected’ governments from 1996, working under a number of constraints, could not deliver anything worthwhile that could help to change the situation on the ground in any meaningful way (Baba 2014, p. 71).

At international level, this was an intense time of peace negotiations. In May 1997, on the side-lines of the South Asian Association for Regional
Cooperation\textsuperscript{96} summit, Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral (of the Janata Dal party) and Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan presented the idea of a structured dialogue. The CDP, as the dialogue was referred to, demonstrated a strong political will from both the Indian and Pakistani sides (Misra 2007, p. 507). The CDP included a variety of issues that were contested between the two countries, including Kashmir and terrorism. Only a year later in May 1998, the peace process came to a temporary halt when India and Pakistan performed thermonuclear tests, resulting in the menace of a nuclear war. In order to improve the situation, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (of the BJP) undertook a bus trip to Lahore where he, together with Nawaz Sharif, signed the Lahore Declaration on 21 February 1999. This declaration involved a commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, human rights, peace, and coexistence. “Recognising that the nuclear dimension of the security environment of the two countries adds to their responsibility for avoidance of conflict between the two countries” (Vajpayee and Sharif 1999), this entailed the implementation of the Simla Agreement in letter and spirit and a condemnation of terrorism.

The process was once again stunted when, in May 1999, the Kargil War broke out between India and Pakistan in the distant glacier area in Ladakh, J&K (Bose 2003; Misra 2007). After six weeks of fighting, the Pakistani army withdrew (Bose 2003, p. 141). In October of the same year, General Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan overthrew Nawaz Sharif’s government and reinstated a military dictatorship.

In July 2001, General Musharraf met with Vaypayee in Agra, India, which did not result in any resolution. The attacks of 11 September 2001 on the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon “changed the strategic scenario globally with implications in and around the region” (Baba 2014, p. 70). On 13 December, the Indian Parliament was attacked by a group of

\textsuperscript{96}Henceforth abbreviated as SAARC.
gunmen, allegedly linked to Pakistan and Kashmir,\(^{97}\) which severed the relations further (Baba 2014; Misra 2007).

In 2003, the dialogue was taken up again and the subsequent years witnessed similar uneven development. In July 2005, the two foreign ministers met in New Delhi where they specifically discussed the Kashmir question. The meetings did not result in any concrete measures, but were followed by joint statements in the following years (Misra 2007).

Then the 26/11 (2008) Mumbai attacks saw the prospect of peace crumble almost completely. But after every such situation of conflict, realisation dawns about the limitations of such stand-offs. Every time, after a while, the two realise the need to go back to the table for talks (Baba 2014, p. 70).

While the Indo-Pakistani dialogue slowly progressed, with many diversions and hiccups, the popular mood changed once again within Kashmir in the mid-2000s.

Fourth phase: the rise of the stone-pelter
While democratic processes and the Indo-Pakistani dialogue stabilised, militancy remained the same during the mid- to late 2000s. Yet, in 2008, mass violence in the Kashmir Valley flared up again, reminiscent of the early days of the insurgency. Now again, as in 1989, the people of Kashmir took to the streets chanting, marching, and demonstrating against the presence of the Indian state. This happened during the three summers leading up to my fieldwork in 2011.

The new intifada
In late May 2008, anti-Indian protests over a row to provide land attached to the Amarnath shrine to a Hindu pilgrim trust once again created tension in Kashmir. Due to fear of these protests, the government decided to reverse that order. This, in turn, caused a punishing blockade by Hindu hardliners of

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\(^{97}\) Three Kashmiri men, Afzal Guru, Shaukat Hussein, and S.A.R Geelani were accused and sentenced to death for being the masterminds behind the attacks. S.A.R Geelani was acquitted by the High Court, while Shaukat Hussein was released because of “good conduct.” Afzal Guru was executed in Tihar Jail in New Delhi in February 2013. Nandita Haksar, who acted as defence lawyer for the men, has written her version of the trial in her book (Haksar 2007).
the only road linking the Kashmir valley with the rest of India. This led to intense communal violence during the summer (The Economist 2008).

Large-scale mobilization of women was also visible in the Amarnath Shrine Board agitation in 2008 [...]. Kashmiri Muslims argued that India was conspiring to change the demography of Kashmir and was engaging in Israeli type settlement politics. Women were at the forefront of the protests [...]. In a curious development, mothers who lost their sons in the resistance (who died in police firing) were publicly honored as mothers of martyrs by Hurriyat leader, Yasin Malik, thereby suggesting that the discourse of martyrdom and motherhood [...] was far from over in the Kashmir conflict (Parashar 2011, p. 300).

In May 2009, the dead bodies of two young women were found in an orchard close to Shopian in the southern part of the Kashmir Valley (Duschinski and Hoffman 2011). It was suspected that they had been raped and killed by army men based nearby, but the autopsy and the subsequent investigation declared that the women had died from drowning. This caused a stir in Kashmir. People flooded the streets and participated in the protests. Many of the protests were met with harsh response from the police and army. Stone-pelting also took place on the streets. While the violence calmed down in the autumn, the government continued their oppressive regime. In January 2010, a 13 year old boy was killed by a tear-gas shell fired by the Kashmiri police, which sparked massive demonstrations on the cold snowy streets of Srinagar. Only a few days later, a 16 year old boy was killed by a passing BSF patrol after he had allegedly “jeered at the passing vehicle of a senior officer” (Kak 2011, p. x). In May 2010, the bodies of three young men were found in an unmarked grave in the forests of Kupwara. They had been killed and buried by RR soldiers in a fake encounter (Kak 2011). This was followed by street protests. Summer 2010 was the most violent in many years and 117 people, mostly young men, were killed by the police or the army. That summer reignited the insurgency completely.

Young people were dying, and it was other young people ardently remembering them. This was a generation that had grown up with searing conflict of the two past decades, but even amongst Kashmiris they had been frequently (although inexplicably) represented as apolitical, as disconnected, as innocent victims. Young Kashmiris, we had been told, had
moved on, distracted by beauty parlours, coffee shops, pool
tables and Internet cafes. The furious footfalls of the last three
summers quickly rubbed away that spurious patina, making it
clear that the young protesters refused to see themselves as
outside of the events around them. The almost daily killings
did little to subdue them, making them only more eager to be
part of the confrontation. This stepping out of young people
on the streets was a major consequence of the recent
transformation in the nature of the uprising in Kashmir (Kak
2011, pp. xiv-xv).

Through new technologies, such as mobile phones with internet connections
and young people with the knowledge of how to use them, the insurgency
moved from the streets to the Internet. People were using social media,
mainly Facebook and Twitter, to spread their messages, as well as Short
Messaging Services (SMS) to mobilise protesters. This quickly resulted in a
harsh crackdown on telecommunication and Internet facilities from the
Indian side. SMS were banned in the Valley and there were regular black-
outs of internet services. As the summer came to an end, the protests calmed
down. During the winter of 2010-2011, there were repeated calls for the
revenge of the bloodshed of the previous summer. Yet, as June arrived it
remained relatively peaceful.

Democratic developments
During this period, the Indo-Pakistani negotiations continued, and on 21
October 2008, trade links were opened between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.
Thereafter, a second trade route between Poonch and Rawalkot was
introduced. In November and December 2008, elections to the state
assembly took place with a fairly large rate of participation. These were
heavily guarded by the Indian army and several clashes between Indian
soldiers and protestors took place. The Hurriyat and JKLF, among many
actors, organised under the name of the Kashmir Coordination Committee
to boycott the elections and to work for independence. The PDP decided to
partake in the elections, as did the NC. The NC, under the leadership of
Sheikh Abdullah’s grandson, Omar Abdullah, managed to create an alliance
with the INC. The PDP started acting as an opposition party.
The *Panchayat* elections in spring 2011 took place under fairly peaceful conditions, with an 80% turnout (Wani 2011). The Pandit woman Aasha Jee won in Tangmarg (Tangpora), as well as another Pandit man in Pulwama district, and 25 Sikh men won in other Muslim-dominated areas (Wani 2011). These examples, and particular Asha Jee’s victory, were hailed as proof of a new era of Kashmiri unity. During the late summer of 2011, the Omar Abdullah government started a process of revoking the AFSPA. This was met with resistance from the army and many civil servants, as well as the BJP and similar minded parties.  

Another development in Kashmir is the growth in civil society organisations. This has been a very slow process in Kashmir, and the few organisations that exist often lack funding. One of the most prominent is the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, which was founded in 1994. They aim to highlight the circumstances surrounding the many disappearances in the state by visiting police, army headquarters, hospitals, prisons, and courts to look for their children. Here women as mothers are accentuated, but also politicised. NGOs such as the Indo-Global Social Service Society, Human Effort for Love and Peace, the Islamic Relief and Research Trust, the Volunteer Health Association of India, the Kashmir Humanity Foundation, and the Yateem Trust are doing different types of work for widows, orphans, and women. Organisations such as WISCOMP have led the way in documenting women’s peace initiatives (DasGupta and Sinha 2008a, b; Singh 2007; WISCOMP 2007). There is thus an active civil society in Kashmir. Nevertheless, as the next chapters demonstrate, it is based on a precarious politics and impacted by in/security on all levels.

### 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides a brief overview of Kashmiri history with specific attention to the political developments affecting the Kashmiri population. The few historical explorations of women’s roles in Kashmir point to the fact that women were largely excluded from public affairs. Women had a

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98 At the time of finalising this thesis, the AFSPA still has not been revoked.
strong position in the home, often making important decisions together with their husbands. Women from lower socio-economic classes were active in food production such as farming, and sold their produce on the markets in the Valley. While purdah was implemented during the Durrani Empire, it was generally only Muslim families of high economic status that could enjoy the privilege of having the women of the household confined to the home. During the tumultuous 20th Century, women took to the streets of the cities on several occasions in support of the freedom movement. Women played a crucial part in the 1931 demonstrations, the Quit Kashmir movement, and the 1989 uprising. As the struggle became violent in the late 1980s, women actively took part by smuggling weapons, nursing the wounded, as well as feeding and hiding militants. Nevertheless, women’s public input during the uprisings did not result in political influence when the uprising was over. Currently, in the absence of a feminist or women’s movement, individual women have organised and participate in political activities. This activism is taking place in a highly militarised location. In the following chapters I explore the relationship between women’s activism and in/security. Importantly, women’s activism is also taking place in a location marked by intense religious and ethnic identities.

In this chapter, I have deconstructed the idea of Kashmir as a place of religious synergy and harmony, and I have argued that identity politics framed through religion is not new to Kashmir. The first inhabitants of Kashmir were Hindus and Buddhists, but Kashmir transitioned into a Muslim-majority area in the 14th Century. While the initial conversion of the population to Islam was largely peaceful, religion soon became highly politicised. Religious animosity developed, both between branches of Islam such as during the feuds between Shi’a and Sunnis in the 17th Century, and between different religions. During the reign by Mughal leaders, Hindus were forbidden from practicing their religion or wearing religious markers, such as the teeka. In the late 19th Century, the Hindu Maharaja who ruled the Princely State implemented punitive policies towards the Muslim population, which led to the majority of the population being poor and uneducated. In more recent history, after the Maharaja had forbidden
political organisation in the early 20th Century, people mobilised along religious lines. Hence, religious animosity is not new to Kashmir, but has rather dominated its history. The Islamic undertone of the uprising that started in 1989 is thus not new to Kashmir. It is clear that the current intifada is built on the historical narratives of the past. Many people view the current uprising as a continuation of 1931, while others argue that it was a coup d’etat in 1953 that dismissed Sheikh Abdullah from power and started the oppression of Kashmiris. Still others argue that the original borders of Kashmir should be the land that was under the Princely State in 1846. These historical narratives also feed into the narrative of the Kashmiri people as oppressed and insecure. The idea that Kashmir has always been ruled by foreign rulers has circulated widely.

An historical overview demonstrates how the formation and articulation of identities, particularly religious, regional, and gender identities, are impacted by in/security. In the next chapter I suggest that, even though the azaadi movement evolved around a Kashmiri identity, the participants’ understandings of it differ. The only agreement on what is involved in Kashmiriyat is that it is not what it is claims to be. Kashmiriyat is not a secular, harmonious relationship between the religious groups in the region. Through the narratives, it is noticeable that Kashmiri identity is infused with religious identity. In the Kashmiri context, security needs the identity of Islam. Securitisation requires a stable subject that can be deemed insecure (Wibben 2011): the Kashmiri as a victim, and particularly the Kashmiri woman, around which the security project can mobilise.
Chapter 6
Spatio-temporal locations of in/security

This chapter explores politically active women’s narratives of everyday experiences of doing activism in an in/secure context. I examine how the women who participated in this research experienced in/security in three different spatio-temporal locations. The concept of spatio-temporal location is taken from Stern’s (2001) study, and I have adapted it to make it suitable to the narratives of the women that I interviewed. The spatio-temporal locations are made up of narratives that take place in specific spaces at specific times and the discourses that frame these junctures of time and space (Stern 2001, p. 12). After establishing the essential spaces and moments in the participants’ narratives, I created appropriate locations and assigned the narratives accordingly. I have organised the narratives into the spatio-temporal locations of “personal life,” “organisational life,” and “national life.” Hence, the structure of the chapter is influenced by Stern’s (2001) theorisation, and is categorised by my reading of the narratives emerging from the interviews and focus groups that I conducted.

In the course of five months, I conducted 13 interviews and three focus group discussions with politically active women in the Kashmir Valley. I also had a large number of unrecorded, informal orientation meetings with politicians, activists, academics, journalists, and administrators, as well as innumerable encounters, discussions, and conversations with “ordinary” Kashmiris who were not directly involved in organised activism. As outlined in Chapter 4, the focus groups were conducted with activists from three different organisations: the HO (focused on health-work), the CSWO (focused on children and social work), and the HRO (focused on human rights work). The interviews were conducted with participants active in these organisations as well as with independent political activist women, i.e. women not representing an organisation that was part of the research. The women participating in the research came from different backgrounds. Their professional status varied from trained lawyers, medical doctors, and academics to housewives, barefoot nurses, and children’s group coordinators. The women came from upper-, middle-, and lower-class
backgrounds. They were from both rural (south and north) and urban Kashmir, and the youngest participant was 19 years old and the eldest was between 50 and 60 years old. I will introduce the women in more detail as the findings unfold in the course of this chapter. In Chapter 4, I discussed the potentials and rationale of conducting both focus groups and in-depth interviews. In order to differentiate between the information in the focus groups, I clearly state when the information is taken from a focus group discussion, and I note the group dynamic relevant to the specific discussion point.

At the beginning of each part, I present a profile of one of the research participants. This profile is weaved into the theme of the location, but also contains biographical information, some of which is amended to ensure anonymity. The purpose of the profiles is to introduce the participants in a more detailed manner than I do in the methodology chapter, as well as to pay appropriate attention to their life histories and relate this to the research findings.

The first spatio-temporal location is personal life, and this comprises the women’s narratives about family and community. I have chosen to combine family and community within this category, as this location is about women’s experiences in their private life. The profiled woman of this location is Nilofer. The second spatio-temporal location is organisational life, and this comprises women’s experiences of being involved in the organisations. The profiled woman in this section is Rabiya. In this location, I focus on the relationship to the political sector and how gender concerns are formulated. The third spatio-temporal location is national life. The profiled woman here is Sumita, and in this location I elaborate on the competing claims of regional, religious, and gender identities.

6.1 Personal Life: in/security in family and community

…the pain is always with all working women. In South Asian countries especially, where a woman is not supposed to work. And Muslim societies again, where women are not supposed to work and if you’re working, […] you have a lot
of negative reactions coming from many quarters. But then you also see many successful working women, you know, with children. [They] are well-settled and families are fine, so that’s an inspiration, you see yourself at their places some years down the line. And, again, there is one more thing, I mean, these working women, working women have that sort of independence that housewives don’t have, I personally believe. So, even if it’s a small amount of money, at least I have my financial independence. […] But people don’t stop complaining. And don’t stop complaining at your, on your faces. Any harsh comment directly on your face [laughs]. So, we have to deal with it. You as a woman must also have, you know, some sort of things to answer to people and, you know, being a woman I think we’re answerable to every creation on her. So we’ll be answerable for our dresses, for our looks, for our bad looks, for everything we’re answerable. (Nilofer)

This is Nilofer. She is a human rights advocate working for the HRO. Nilofer is a practising Muslim, around 35 years of age, and comes from a middle class background. Nilofer told me about the difficulties in working with human rights activism, particularly as a female advocate. She had been interested in human rights since doing her law degree “because the type of atrocities we have seen in the Valley are so horrendous and painful that I think every human being wants to react to it at one point of time.” The situation that propelled her to become an activist happened when she was working as a commercial lawyer in New Delhi. The killing of a Kashmiri man in New Delhi upset her, and she initiated a process to attain justice for his family (discussed in more depth below). The above quote illustrates her experience of being a married, working woman with a young child.

The family is the central unit of Kashmiri society. The description of the context in Kashmir in the history chapter demonstrated the importance of the family as a social organiser. Traditionally a patriarchal society with strict gender roles and heteronormativity as central components, women in Kashmir were perceived as inferior, weak, and unequal (Dabla 2007, p. 44). Women are expected to partake in traditional feminine labour, such as house-keeping, child-rearing, cooking, and other types of care work. Yet, women often also participate in income generating activities, both within and outside the home; for example, handicraft production, trade, and farming (Dabla 2007, p. 45).
As the research participants in this project demonstrate, there are women resisting and negotiating these roles by partaking in public life in different capacities. Nilofer, in the quote above, reported the challenges she experienced in her everyday life as an activist and mother. She linked her personal experiences with the common perception that South Asian and Muslim women are not supposed to work. This connection between the personal and the regional discourses served as an explanation for why she experienced challenges as a working woman. Yet, she also noted the contradictions to this by pointing out that she knew many women who worked and how they acted as role models. Nilofer stated that women have to delicately balance work and family commitments. By asserting that women are answerable for everything they do, Nilofer seemed to claim that it is impossible to balance these commitments.

In this part on the spatio-temporal location of personal life, I investigate the themes raised by Nilofer above. The constraints and challenges outlined by Nilofer bring attention to the experiences of politically active women of in/security in family and community. While the above quote from Nilofer does not mention how in/security caused by long-term conflict and militarisation has impacted her experience of being a woman activist in Kashmir, this is an important theme that arose in other parts of her interview, as well as in interviews with all of the other participants. The first section brings to the fore these experiences of the research participants in public spaces that are connected to insecurities of conflict and militarisation. The second section examines the family as a site of support and struggle. Gendered expectations of the participants presented constraints and challenges for many of the participants, particularly within and ahead of marriage. The final section explores the participant women’s narratives of responses from the local community.

The personal in public spaces
The ongoing multiple conflicts in Kashmir have resulted in highly gendered forms of in/security. Chapter 5 demonstrated how the Indo-Pakistani conflict was a geopolitical struggle about territory, most often played out
through masculinised aggression and hyper-violence. I also described how
the popular uprising in 1989 and the violent conflict, at its most intense in
the 1990s, impacted life in Kashmir on all levels. At the time of my
fieldwork in 2011, the streets of Srinagar still looked like a battle-zone,
lined with bunkers, barbed wire, and Indian army soldiers on every corner.
The Indian army in Kashmir rallied specific conceptualisations of
aggressive masculinities in order to challenge the militants. After dusk, the
streets became quiet, and the few times I travelled home late at night, the
only creatures on the street were army men checking identity cards and stray
dogs attacking the car. Living in a context thus affected by conflict and
violence has had a fundamental impact on women’s lives.

Asifa, an educated woman in her mid-40s from Srinagar, described some of
the effects the conflict in Kashmir has had on the women she observed
during her time as the Chairperson of the HO. She said that women bear the
brunt of the conflict in Kashmir. The effects from the conflict range from
physical and psychological to economic, and it has affected women’s lives
on all levels. While the majority of deaths and disappearances have been
men, thousands of women have lost their fathers, husbands, and sons. This
means that many families have lost their main bread-winner. Women are
scared to go out alone and want male company. They feel vulnerable
because Kashmir is a highly militarised area. The militarisation had also
resulted in increased violence against women, such as rape, molestations,
and kidnappings. These crimes are often not reported to the police because
of notions of honour and shame. Asifa asserted that the only time rape and
sexual violence get reported is when women are killed, as in the case of the
rape and murder of two women in Shopian in 2009, which caused vivid
demonstrations and protests.

In her work, Asifa had noted a rise in cases of domestic violence. She
argued that men felt overpowered by the security forces, so at the end of the
day, the husband would take his anger and frustration out on his wife and
children. Divorces are still rare due to women being economically
dependent on their husbands and the social stigma involved in being a single
woman. Despite women being beaten and tortured, many choose to stay in violent relationships. She also reported an increase in wife burning and other forms of dowry-related deaths. Additionally, Asifa reported increased psychosomatic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders, “[b]ecause most of them had seen so much bloodshed.”

The bleak picture Asifa painted of Kashmiri society resonated with many of the other participants’ stories. Nilofer also saw insecurity taking place on several levels, and she believed that “…in Kashmir, nobody would say ‘I feel secure.’ Everybody, for everybody security would mean please take out these army men from our areas, we’ll be secure.” Nevertheless, she also saw other sources of insecurity, such as eve-teasing from boys on the streets and violence within the home. “The type of violence would be different, the expression of violence would be different, but I’m still threatened.” Hartals, curfews, and demonstrations curtail the lives of the Kashmiri population. Many of the women spoke about the harassment from the heavily armed army personnel on the streets and the fear they experienced in meeting them. Rabiya, an advocate working for the HRO, who is about 30 years old, retold her experience as a young woman in Kashmir:

Effect of conflict is also that your life completely takes a u-turn and somewhere you can’t live like the [rest of the] world and you are in a sphere where you have only violations, threats, pain, misery, bloodshed. That’s all you grew up with, that’s all you have to deal with. I remember the effect of conflict for me, not as a lawyer, but as an individual, is that at the age of 13 I had every idea of what is difference between curfew and crackdown, but I had no idea what is synonym for picnic. (Rabiya. Italics my own)

The fact that Rabiya, as a young girl, had such an intimate knowledge of war that she could distinguish between a curfew and a crackdown, but had not yet considered the meaning of “picnic,” points to the deep effect that conflict had on her life.

Many of the younger participants who grew up in the 1990s spoke about the effect the conflict had on their education. Schools were often closed for long periods, exams were cancelled, and there was little support from teachers
and academic staff. Aaliya, a health worker for the HO from southern Kashmir in her mid-20s, told me that:

Yes, it affected my life. I think when militancy started I was either in first year or second year [of secondary school]. There would be prolonged strikes for months together. We would just pass exams and would not care for the grades. Students would not know what is first unit, what is second term etc., like today’s students know. If conditions would be like today I am sure I would have done academically much better. Teachers and parents would not ever care for grades because they know the situation was not favourable. (Aaliya)

Some of the participants noted how they felt unsafe where they lived because of violence and demonstrations. Tanavish, during the focus group discussion with young women working for the CSWO in Srinagar, said that she had to move to a quieter area in Srinagar. In her old area, there had been regular stone-pelting, and her mother had developed heart-problems from the resulting stress.

Growing up in Kashmir as a Pandit woman, Sumita had different experiences to the other participants. Although she asserted that she did not feel insecure, she told stories about her father being kidnapped several times. Her father worked for the government, and he used to be threatened to get him to appoint specific people to certain jobs.

[M]y father, was like a principled man like, he said, nah if a person deserves this appointment I will appoint him. You kill me on the roadside, you do anything, you kidnap me, […] nothing [will stop me]. My mom used to feel scared and she used to feel, why did Dad go alone and without security […]. But in fact, […] the police were the ones who made him get kidnapped and all that. […] But in spite of that, he didn’t lose faith in what he was doing. And he said, he was adamant in that sense, he was saying, even if they kidnap me, even if they kill me, I’m not going to do this. […] So, you know, even the Governor called him and told him, you get yourself transferred, I get you transferred to Jammu […]. But then my father said, no I want to stay in Kashmir, this is equally my place […], I am happy working here, […]. But then he said, no I’ll still stay back. (Sumita)

While Sumita was clearly proud of her father for standing up to the threats and refusing to migrate, the situation proved to be very stressful for her family. Sumita explained that her brother felt more insecure than she did, as he was staying with their father at the time of two of the kidnappings. Like
many other Pandit families during the 1990s, they used to receive threatening letters from militant groups telling them to leave the Valley.

To summarise, the participants’ lives have been deeply affected by the in/security situation in Kashmir. Childhood and adolescence, education, mobility, and friends- and family life have been impacted by the conflict. This mirrors the literature on women’s security, in that security affects all aspects of their lives. In Nilofer’s quotation above, she linked the insecurity caused by the presence of the army with the insecurity from eve-teasing and sexual violence. Both of these, although different forms of violence, made her feel equally threatened. The next two sections detail how the in/security terrain shapes the way in which family and community perceive women activists.

Family
Participants’ personal stories were located in the wider context of Kashmir in 2011, where family was the fundamental unit of society. The background information the participants provided about themselves and their families helped me to construct the context in which they carried out their activism. In all the interviews, the women spoke about their families. Parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, as well as the extended family, including in-laws and cousins, are part of their support network. This support was important to many of the women, but for some, it also created hurdles to their activism. Decisions on whether to engage in activism, what type of activism, and how much and how often were often taken together with other family members, most often the men.

The narratives of in/security must also be read through silences. The unspoken stories about physical and sexual violence within the family are as intriguing as the stories about the violence happening to other women. As scholars have argued (Faizal and Rajagopalan 2005; Shaheed 1998), women in South Asia experience insecurity in their homes in the form of sex-selective abortions, infanticide, domestic violence, and sexual violence. None of the participants spoke about these issues in the interviews, yet they
came up during workshops that I observed. It is important to note that the silence around violence in the family did not mean that none of the women had experienced violence. There are many possible reasons for certain types of family tension not being spoken about in the interview setting; for example, feelings of trust towards me and the interpreter, the questions asked (see more in Chapter 4), or the experiences of the participants of the research.

Most participants depicted their stories about their families around the tension between support and struggle. Family tension primarily revolved around the following issues: gender norms and acceptability of women working as activists, class issues around the importance of salaries, and living in a joint family. Yet, many participants also spoke about the family being a site of support and the importance of parents encouraging them in their work. In the next part, I outline the main aspects of family support.

**Family as a site of support**

…If I’m feeling very weak I think my family support helps me. My father supports me, he’s always very encouraging and I don’t think he allows me to feel very weak. And if he does think that I’m feeling weak he always gives that extra boost and push to make me feel very strong again, that you know, he doesn’t allow me to fall. (Asifa)

Interviewees from both urban and rural areas spoke about the support they received from their parents. In the quote that introduces this part, Asifa recounts how her family, particularly her father, was her main source of security. A middle-aged Muslim woman living in Srinagar during the time of the fieldwork, coming from a privileged family, Asifa had had opportunities to live and study abroad from an early age. In her work, she had observed many instances of atrocities directed against women, especially violence. When she started up the HO in the 1990s, she did not expect her involvement to continue for as long as it did. It evolved into a full-time commitment to bring healthcare into rural areas through barefoot nurses and open-air clinics. Asifa told me that she finds her work to be both challenging and inspiring. She said that the problems are so gigantic that they are overwhelming at times. For her, success does not go to her head,
but is instead humbling: “You’ll be doing a little, but it’s when you stop that is when you start feeling guilty.” Asifa’s father, by not allowing her to feel weak or to fall, encouraged her to continue her work.

Many of the other women interviewed also spoke about how the family provided a supportive environment. Participants viewed their parents as inspiration in their work. Growing up in a supportive environment was key for Sumita’s engagement in the IO. She came from a middle-class Pandit family and had trained to become a medical doctor. After working in research, she became involved as an activist and medical doctor for an international organisation. Sumita described how her parents acted as role models. Her father always tried to encourage her to do good deeds and treat people well. He taught her to accept other people’s mistakes, emphasising how she, as a human being, would also make mistakes. Sumita’s mother was a housewife, and she was engaged in her local community by helping villagers as well as by making contributions to schools and welfare. She would also motivate the wives of her husband’s colleagues to become involved. Sumita emphasised the importance of seeing her mother helping out wherever they went.

Another aspect of family support that many of the participants spoke about was the role of parents in helping the participants to deflect the criticism of neighbours and people in the local community. As is highlighted below, many women experienced criticism and concern about their role as political activists. They spoke about how their parents would encourage them to ignore this criticism. Farida, a woman in her mid-20s who was working for the HO in Kupwara, spoke about how her mother supported her and encouraged her to ignore the people criticising her and to not take it seriously. The family of the Panchayat elected woman, Rashida, was initially reluctant about the idea that she would become politically involved, but as the elections came closer, they changed their minds and supported her. Similar to many of the other women, the family became both a site of support and tension.
In summary, the participants reported how the family provided essential support to their work as activists. Their families supported the participants through encouragement, acting as role models, and helping the participants to deflect criticism. In the next section, I describe how the participants spoke about the problems they experienced within the family.

**Family as a site of struggle**

When asked about their lives as political activists, many of the participants spoke about the problems they experienced in their own families. As demonstrated above, the family was often a space of support and encouragement, yet many also spoke about the constraints and problems they faced.

One aspect that surfaced during the interviews was the fact that some of the participants’ families did not approve of their activism. Many of the activists’ family members had expressed concern about the suitability of a woman doing certain types of work. This often reflected gendered norms: inconvenient working hours, public exposure, and low salaries reduced the respectability and acceptability of activist work, leading to it be considered inappropriate for women. Rabiya, a human rights activist, noted how her mother was initially against her work, as she thought it unsuitable for a woman. Her mother told her that it is unacceptable for women to work the unusual hours and to visit the public spaces that the work entailed. Haseena, in the focus group consisting of health workers from southern Kashmir, spoke of how her decision to work with the HO broke up her family. She had been living in a joint family, and her husband had allowed her to work with the organisation. Her brother-in-law, however, did not approve of her working, and he decided to move out of the house in protest. Similarly, Nilofer pointed out that being a woman, working uncomfortable hours, and earning a low salary made people around her criticise her work:

> It’s a difficult task for a woman to come […] to work for smaller wages. Because […] human rights work doesn’t pay you so well. So, ahm, money factor is also less and the working hours are more. The responsibilities and the timings are not fixed, so any time you might be required for
something. My husband has been very supportive for [...] this work [...] But I won’t say that everybody understands our work, so definitely, in family and after marriage you have many other liabilities and responsibilities, in a closed society like Kashmir. (Nilofer)

The above quote illustrates the gendered obstacles for women activists. Low salaries reduce the status of the profession, and this makes it harder for Nilofer to argue for the benefits of the work, especially considering the long and inconvenient working hours that the job entailed. Although the support from her husband was essential for Nilofer, she experienced ongoing questioning from her extended family.

Yet, for some families, the low salary did not matter. Aaliya, a health worker for the HO in southern Kashmir in her early twenties, pointed out that her parents did allow her to work there. She would give them her salary every month and then ask for money back when she needed to buy something. She was engaged to be married to a man with a postgraduate degree, and she expressed concern that her future in-laws would not accept her work. She told me that, when she moved into her future husband’s home, she might be the only daughter-in-law who worked:

And at the end of the month, suppose I decide to work, I will not have much to contribute financially. [...] I will be ashamed to give them a mere thousand rupees sum at the end of the month. [...] I can tell them I am earning, if they permit me to work then only I will continue. [...] I haven’t taken this job primarily for salary. But for others it matters [how much you earn]. [...] They will respect you only when you have money. My husband is doing an MBA in Hyderabad. Tomorrow if I give him this 1000 Rupees. What would he think of me? He would tell me rather it is better to polish [his] shoes. (Aaliya)

The meaning she ascribes to the importance of a salary for her future in-laws suggests that class was an important factor in how families accepted women’s activism. For her family, 1000 rupees (approximately 15 Euro) was not considered to be a legitimate salary. This can be compared to Zaara, a 19-year-old woman working as a children’s coordinator for the CSWO in a village in Kupwara district. She lived with her mother and younger siblings; her father had been a militant and was killed by the Indian army. She told me that the only reason her mother allowed her to be involved with
the CSWO was that she got paid for the work. A similar account was provided in the focus group with the health workers from the HO. Zubaira from Budgam spoke about how her husband did not allow her to work at first, but that her in-laws helped her to hide her involvement with the HO from him. After her husband had lost his job, he realised the importance of his wife working and allowed her to work again: “…I couldn’t have done it without the support of the in-laws. But now he understands, now he allows [me] to work.” This narrative suggests the centrality of salaried activities. Zubaira’s husband realised the advantage of having a second earner in the family after he had lost his livelihood. This demonstrates how the intersection of class and gender impacts women’s ability to work as activists.

For some of the women participating in the research, the family was a location of conflict. As noted above, none of the participants spoke about domestic violence, whether physical, sexual, or psychological. However, there were other types of conflict in the family that impacted on the lives of the participants. This is illustrated in Asifa’s story about her experience of living in a joint family. As she was unmarried, she stayed with her parents and brother in a joint family. She did not detail the events, but it is clear that her relationship with her brother’s family, particularly his wife, broke down. She described it as a traumatic experience, and she had “been through hell because of that.” Heteronormative values and local customs in Kashmir, disallowing women to live alone, made it impossible for Asifa to move out of her home; her parents would not consider it acceptable for a single woman to live by herself. This event made it hard for Asifa to focus on her work, and it took her a “long time to get over.”

The narratives from the interviews indicate that it was challenging for women to become involved in political activism. Many of the women participating in the research told me about their struggles with parents, in-laws, or extended family. For many of the participants, being involved in political activism resulted in long working hours, public exposure, and low salaries. Intersecting identities of class and gender impact women’s
experiences of negotiating these. Intersectionality concerns how various biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, and other kinds of identity interact on multiple and often parallel levels, leading to structural injustice and social inequality (Crenshaw 1989; Hill Collins 1991). As noted above, participants from low income groups had different access to activism than those from higher income groups. The protection that social status and family background provided made it easier for some women to negotiate activism, while for others, the access to an income was the most important. The next part looks more closely at the role of marriage for the participants.

**Gendered expectations of/in marriage**

Marriage is a central organiser in Kashmiri society (Dabla 2007, p. 44; Desai and Andrist 2010, p. 667), and many of the narratives above have touched on women’s responsibilities towards their (current or future) husbands and in-laws. Correspondingly, the unmarried women participating in the research spoke about the constraints due to not being married. When I asked Sumita, the Pandit medical doctor, about whether she experienced any negative reactions, she replied:

> …I haven’t seen many adverse reactions from anybody. Maybe just a few people, they are worried about the fact, in that I’m single and why she is single, still single, and she is not getting married. And she’s being a social activist. It’s not nice […] in the sense that you go out in public and you have public dealings and why does she react in this kind of a way. I mean, I suppose […] they’re being scared some people might hurt [me] or something. (Sumita)

The pressure to get married resulted in Haleemah’s parents arranging her marriage when she was only a teenager. Haleemah, an academic and activist in her late forties, was employed at a university in Srinagar at the time of the fieldwork. She described her household when growing up as political and progressive, where the situation in Kashmir was discussed regularly, and the children were included in the debates. Yet, she noted how the community norms regarding marriage also impacted on the family and affected her parents’ decision to marry her off to her cousin at a young age.

But as I grew older, I had to also face problems as a woman, in the sense that my decisions will be taken by my parents.
Decisions about my education and about my marriage. This is the time when… I had to… I had a terrible, terrible time in the sense that I opposed the decisions of my parents. My father… I mean in Muslim societies, a girl should get married before the age of 20 so this was taken as a gospel truth and you can’t change it. When you have a 20-year-old daughter, the people in the locality say you shouldn’t visit this house where the daughter is 20 years old and not yet married. You know that kind of those bloody customs. So my father, in spite of being very emancipated in his thinking, he was part of that culture where you will be worried when the woman... when the girl will be... will achieve the age of 15 or 16. So he also started thinking about my marriage and I was the person who was opposing it [by saying] that I had to complete my education. Because education is a [must]... And besides, I had this romantic notions from the very beginning that unless I like someone I will not marry. I can’t accept anyone is this and I had the strong notion from the very beginning that the spark of individuality which will not submit uh before anything unless it wants to. (Haleemah)

Similarly, many of the younger women spoke about the pressure to marry and have a family. After marriage, many women feel accountable to the husband’s family, and their professional decisions are taken together with the new extended family. The young women working for the CSWO expressed concern in the focus group discussion about whether they would be able to continue their work for the organisation after marriage. In this focus group, they all agreed that marriage is critical for both women and men in order to reproduce the family lineage. Nasreen said she wanted to continue working to help orphans and people suffering from poverty, but was worried whether she would be able to continue after her wedding. Sakira and Tanavish agreed with her, saying that the decision would be made by the future husband. The women in this focus group pointed out that most people have a conservative and narrow perspective on women which entails women staying at home and taking care of the children. Tanavish stated that: “The man has only one responsibility. To earn money, to give to children. Like that. But the woman has lots of responsibilities.”

Even for educated and married women, the responsibility for the household and children made it difficult to partake in activism. Many of the married participants described the constraints of combining long hours of work, low
salaries, and the pressure of attending social gatherings, both within the family and in the extended family. Nilofer spoke about the manifold responsibilities and liabilities of a married woman in Kashmir: “So these awkward timings as per them, and these difficult work styles and the not so paying results, so, there has been constraints on my work many a times. And I had to put a stiff face to continue.” Shehla similarly recounts the pressure to attend family gatherings. In her role as a leader of an organisation, she also has to attend receptions at other people’s homes:

…Going to their relatives, neighbours, in times of […] sorrow or […] in good times. Visit them, or when somebody is suffering, going there, ailing somebody, entertaining them there. […] Sometimes I feel too tired because it’s not only these things, these things only. Because you also have to deal with other such families, who have suffered, who’s in this organisation now. Their problems, they come and […] talk to [me] about their problems, then [I have] to look for the solution to their problems as well! So it’s very hectic that way. (Shehla)

Hence, expectations in and of marriage put severe strain on women’s ability to work in activism. From the narratives presented above, it is clear that the single women faced criticism and questioning about their relationship status. The impact of marriage in the participants’ lives reveals the heteronormative structures that govern Kashmir. Women’s status and access to activism depends on their marriage status. The married woman constitutes a hegemonic femininity in Kashmir. As Schippers (2007) has pointed out, hegemonic femininity is deeply rooted in contextual norms, traditions, and cultures (Schippers 2007). In Chapter 7, I elaborate on the construction of femininity in more depth: how heteronormative constructions of womanhood, being married, and being a mother shape their representations of their activism. Women who do not conform to the ideal of a married woman are questioned. If they are unmarried, they are questioned as to why they are single. Married participants were burdened by expectations from family and community to be a good wife and mother. In the next part, I examine how the participants spoke about their experience in their local communities.
Responses to women’s activism in local communities

The struggle and support within and from the participants’ families was often in reaction to criticism from people in their local community. The narratives above did not present any clear differences between urban and rural participants, as the norm of marriage was hegemonic. However, with responses from local community, there was a difference between urban and rural women. The largest difference between their experiences of in/security in their communities was their experience of neighbours interfering in their lives and work. The urban, educated women did not talk about neighbours interfering. During my visits, I noted that most of the urban, educated women often lived in gated houses and, often had their own driver. They were thus less susceptible to the gaze of neighbours. On the other hand, the women living in rural areas had to travel long distances on local buses or *sumos* to reach work or the NGO office. Their houses were also located in close proximity to their neighbours, and this reduced opportunities for privacy. The exception to this was the young women working for the CSWO in Srinagar who lived in busy and crowded areas in Srinagar and travelled by public transport.

The women in rural areas recounted different experiences to the women in urban areas. Those in rural areas often experienced problems with villagers being suspicious of their work. Neighbours and other people from the village asked about their whereabouts and questioned the motivation behind their work. Farida, who worked for the HO in southern Kashmir told me:

…[N]eighbours […] always show a kind of an interference. Why is she leaving on Sunday? Why she’s doing work on an off day? Where she has to go? …[A] lady is coming to our house […] at least […] four or six [times] where she is watching what [I am] doing and all that. But, ultimately […] my mother is always keeping saying one thing, you don’t listen to all of that, you just keep on doing work, what you are doing. […] At times when I get much more frustrated out of all this, that time I feel that either I kill her [the neighbour] or either I kill myself. Why she’s interfering? But that time I make myself understand that let her speak what she wants to speak, I have to do my work. And I keep doing all of that. That’s the thing. (Farida)
The interference from neighbours, as demonstrated in the quote above, was intimidating for the participants. This type of surveillance acted as exercises in control of the behaviour and whereabouts of women. Shagufa from Kupwara also recounted the insecurity the women in her village feel:

The girls here are not safe when we move out somewhere, we face a lot of difficulties and are under a lot of fear that anyone would pass comments. When we move out of our houses people talk a lot about us. The villagers inquire [...] what we are doing. Even if they know they still ask. It is very difficult for us [laughs]. (Shagufa)

The gaze of the neighbours falls on the women as soon as they leave their houses. The above quote illustrates how Shagufa feels observed and controlled by the people in her community. The fear of comments, as well as the questions and inquiries, put the burden on the women to restrain their behaviour.

The women involved as children’s coordinators in Kupwara District had to negotiate their work with the people in their villages. Afreen noted that the parents of children in her northern Kashmir village were reluctant to send their children to the playgroup, as there was no educational element to the activities. She said that “when I started this there were some problems, as people used to say that she is earning out of it and wasting the time of our children. Typical atmosphere of a village.” Similarly, Shagufa spoke about the way the villagers used to ask her about how much she earns for the work. She would try to explain to them that this work is about children’s development and to make the children more confident, but the villagers would not understand. She said that “the villagers’ thinking is very strange. People think that we will give their children things to play with [at home] but we only make the children play at the centre.”

Concluding remarks
In this part I have analysed how activist women’s personal lives are situated in a politics of location, where histories and structures of inequality, based on and infused in in/security, form women’s experience of activism. The participants spoke about the insecure terrain of Kashmir, where conflict – played out through militarisation, violent attacks, hartals, curfews,
demonstrations, and stone-pelting – has affected all spheres of public and private life. This concurs with the literature on Kashmir. Women and men have been affected in multiple ways (Butalia 2002; Manchanda 2001a). We have seen that, for the women, the geopolitical conflict for Kashmir between India and Pakistan, as well as the insurgency, set the canvas on which their everyday activities take place. The shelling across the Indo-Pakistani border, the televised encounters between militants and the Indian army in Shopian, Kupwara, or Baramulla, and the clashes between stone-pelters and the military are constantly replayed on 24/7 news channels and social media. But in their everyday lives, family and community are the most important aspects of in/security. Here we see how in/security permeates all spheres of the women’s lives. The conflict and its effects have trickled straight down into people’s lives, and uncovers the impact of global politics on the everyday lives of regular people (D’Costa and Lee-Koo 2009, p. 10). The insight into the Kashmiri family structures and how these are impacted by gender norms, on the one hand, and in/security on the other, contributes to the scholarship on Kashmir.

In the stories above, we have seen that the family is central to Kashmiri social life. Life decisions, such as career, marriage, and education, are most often discussed and decided on jointly within the family. The family can thus be a site of both struggle and support. Norms of femininity determine which practices are considered legitimate and acceptable (Schipper, 2007). While some notions of hegemonic femininity in the South Asian context are fixed, such as the centrality of wifehood and motherhood (Radhakrishnan 2009), there is also room for negotiation. Activism in itself was not considered an inappropriate act, but instead, as I will demonstrate in the subsequent chapter, can be achieved by performing acceptable, preferably hegemonic, forms of femininity. While Asifa’s father was her main source of security, other parts of the family caused tension. Living in a joint family, expectations from in-laws and relatives often intensified the in/security experienced by many women. This corresponds to Shaheed’s (1998) work on women’s experiences in Pakistan. She argues that “[w]omen’s comments were to the effect that they have no identity except that of their families, or
that ‘a woman is identified (by people outside her family) in relation to the men of her family’” (Shaheed 1998, p. 148). In contrast to Shaheed’s account above, the women in this research did identify beyond their families. As we have seen, their identity as activists was strong.

6.2 Organisational life: in/security within organisations

You see, we live in a state […] completely governed by the government. So whenever you work, that means you’re going against the government. That means that you are pinpointing a flaw in the government, asking them: ‘see, you were supposed to work here, you’re not working here so now we have to work here.’ So, every time you work with any issue, whether domestic violence, be it any issue directly related to the conflict, or any other very small issue, it’s one or the other way related to the government. Like, when we talk of human rights violations, it’s mostly because of the presence of paramilitary forces in the city that causes most of the human rights violations: you can’t move around, you’re being frisked, you’re killed, detained, your whereabouts are not known. So all this follows because of the presence of army in Kashmir. […] So you’re once again pointing towards the state. […] When you talk about domestic violence, why is domestic violence on such a high in Kashmir when you have a [State] Commission for it? Why are not things happening? Why are things not changing? You can’t bring any situation down over night, but at least there has to be a change of some authorities working for it… So every time we work we work against government, so it’s not question of them appreciating us… (Rabiya)

Rabiya was born into a business class family. She was educated at Presentation Convent School, one of the more prestigious girls’ secondary schools in Srinagar. She spoke about the expectations of the girls graduating from “Convent,” as the school is colloquially called, to go on to study Medicine. Rabiya struggled with her studies and failed in the entrance exams to medicine. She was then told that there was no option for her but to get married. Rabiya was then 18 years old. After sitting at home for a while, a friend suggested she take a one-year course in human rights at Kashmir University. Rabiya described how something changed for her during this course. Suddenly she started to see the world around her; what she read in the newspapers in the mornings they discussed in the classroom later in the day. It was the first time in her life that she felt her interests shifted from
sciences to humanities. After completing the course, one of her professors suggested that she should apply to study law. Rabiya was hesitant, as she already had a degree and had been admitted to a course in science; however, she decided to follow the advice of the professor and study law. After completing the law degree, Rabiya went on to work in the courts, but did not find it enjoyable. A friend suggested to her that she should take advantage of her postgraduate diploma in human rights, and that led her to become involved in the HRO.

In this spatio-temporal location, the organisational life, I explore the challenges the participants experienced in their work within the organisations. Rabiya’s narrative above illustrates some of the many challenges in terms of politics, representation, and in/security that political activism involved. She reported how political activists have to handle threats from all sides of the political sector, and yet have to seek cooperation with different groups to succeed in their work. The introduction is followed by a brief overview of the main characteristics of the NGO scene in Kashmir. Thereafter, I examine the findings. The first section of the findings outlines the motivations of participant women for becoming involved in activism. In the second section, I examine the women’s experiences of the political sector in terms of threats and cooperation. The final section focuses on the ambivalence and contradictions in the meaning of feminism for the participants.

Setting the scene: NGOs and activism in Kashmir
During the week I spent living with the CSWO coordinators in Kupwara, I heard many stories about the obstacles their organisation encountered in their work in rural northern Kashmir. The men who coordinated the work in the region were often accused of being Christian missionaries or of profiting from the work. The young women working for the organisation experienced similar suspicion. One of the children’s coordinators, Zaara, reported that: “…Some people say you [belong] to Christianity. […They say] [the CSWO] is a Christian organisation, they study Christianity, members of the CSWO do Christianity. But we ignore these things.”
As noted earlier, Kashmir is different from many other conflict areas in the world, with little presence of international organisations. Although there has been an overall increase in NGOs in the last decade, most of them have been local initiatives. However, a widespread distrust of NGOs has grown, and partaking in NGO activism or belonging to a political movement can be a subversive act. The history of (alleged) electoral fraud in the state has made many people disillusioned with the political system. During many of the conversations I had in the informal orientation meetings, the key informants spoke about the increase of NGOs since the early 2000s. It seemed to them that, since the reduction in the intense violence of the 1990s, more NGOs had formed. They told me that, while some of the initiatives are genuinely seeking change and are driven by social entrepreneurs, other organisations are set up for the sake of making money.

Political activism can be dangerous in Kashmir. It has been constrained by strict laws which have been upheld by violent, and at times lethal, force. AFSPA provides impunity for the Indian army, and the PSA, which makes it possible to detain an individual without trial (Amnesty International 2011, p. 5; Rabbani 2011, p. 260), have been used against political activists and civilians during the Indian government’s violent crack-down on all forms of protest.

The NGO sector has also been tainted by claims of nepotism and corruption, as well as prostitution (Kashmir Life 2014). In 2006, there were reports of girls and young women being lured into prostitution and pornography (Greater Kashmir 2006). Two ministers in the INC-PDP government, businessmen, and senior policemen were said to have been involved (The Hindu 2006; The Times of India 2009). A local woman was pointed out to be the central organiser, but she was acquitted in the trial in the High Court due to lack of evidence (The Times of India 2013). This event caused outrage locally, and it had severe repercussions for organisations that were active in the area. However, as I note below, it also inspired activism, as initiatives were launched in response to the event.
Personal motivations for joining organisations

There were many different reasons for women choosing to become activists. Their personal lives, family background, childhood experiences, and community relations impacted on their decisions to become activists in different ways, and their motivations were manifold. One prominent reason was rooted in compassion; this led to inspiration to help others. Sumita became involved with social and medical work, as she wanted to help people. She said that the motivation “just came from inside.”

I didn’t know, it just came from inside, so I thought like, I got myself posted into the [International Organisation] and it was, like, I wanted to go into social work and I started to doing like, any which way I wanted to […] try and help people. I’m not, I won’t say I’m the ultimate authority in helping people, I’ve been just trying to help people in whichever way I can. And that’s why I’ve been trying doing [International Organisation] also like, if anybody’s needs kind of, out of my job, those responsibility come out of those, extra responsibilities. (Sumita)

In a similar vein, Asifa’s interest in becoming an activist was awakened by seeing the pain of the individual Kashmiri. She initially became involved in the 1990s, when her Pandit friend’s father was killed, and their family left the Valley. According to Asifa, after the killing of her friend’s father, a distance grew between the girls. It suddenly seemed like their different religions had become more important than their friendship, and the friend stopped seeing Asifa as a friend. As the friend was a non-Muslim, Asifa felt that the killing of the father created a religious divide between her and her friend.

I had become a Muslim girl for her and our religion became more predominant in our friendship. Ah, because, we were so close and she […] would always share things with me. So when they were migrating, leaving this place, I would’ve be the first one to know, that they were planning [to leave]… But she did not [tell me about it]. Because probably she did not trust me anymore. (Asifa)

These feelings of compassion inspired Asifa to get involved and to work against the communal rift that appeared in Kashmir in the 1990s. In the mid-1990s she was involved in setting up the HO, which involved recruiting and training young rural women to become counsellors and nurses. After the
prostitution scandal in 2006 described above, the situation again inspired Asifa to launch a new organisation together with other activists:

But we all came together and said, let’s form this group and we fight social evils and we educate young girls on what are their moral rights and how best to avoid such kind of exploitations, you know, things like that. Let’s fight social evils. We called ourselves “Change”. It was a very wavy thing, because there were women from very strong backgrounds and there were loads of ego clashes within the group. (Asifa)

A second motivation that encouraged some of the participants to become involved in activism was the political aspiration to improve the situation in Kashmir. Haleemah’s passion for Kashmiri independence initially inspired her to become involved. She came from an educated, middle-class family, where political issues were often discussed. Her father used to lament the situation in Kashmir, and this influenced her at an early age. She “was always told about Kashmir as a slave nation” and was introduced to ideas of freedom from an early age. She felt, and still feels, passionate about the idea of freedom, that “this fire was smouldering in me from the very beginning.” After a turbulent adolescence and early adulthood, she graduated with an MA degree. After her doctoral degree, she became involved in pro-freedom activism at the university campus. Now she is a prominent pro-freedom public speaker and debater. When retelling the stories of her activism, her life story is always tied to the story of the Kashmiri freedom struggle. Similarly, for Haleemah, seeing the violence, human rights violations, and bloodshed inspired her to get involved politically.

…[C]rimes were committed against humanity. Gross human rights violations of all sorts and kinds took place. I’m cutting it short. So that catapulted me into human rights movement. I could not stand it any longer when I saw that people are… these forces were trampling over dead bodies, that cutting human bodies to pieces. That they’re using every method in interrogation centres to cripple people. All these stains I could not stand. In the university I started, you know, arranging with others, demonstrations against human rights violations and [… propagating for] the right to self-determination demand. (Haleemah)

The narrative above illustrates Haleemah’s strong feelings with regard to the fight for Kashmiri freedom, and how this inspired her to become an activist.
Nilofer also became involved in response to the situation in Kashmir. For her, it was the killing of a young Kashmiri man in New Delhi that inspired her to work with human rights issues. At that time she was working in New Delhi, earning a high salary and enjoying a good life. The young man who was killed was initially accused of being a militant; this later proved to be false. Nilofer said that:

[…] that, I think, instigated something in my heart and I wanted to react to such situations and help my friends in similar circumstances. So, we, we ran for a campaign over there [in Delhi]. It didn’t bring any results, but I think it motivated many of us to work in these lines. I came back from Delhi and since then I’m in Kashmir working with human rights issues. (Nilofer)

Similar to Haleemah and Nilofer, Rashida decided to stand in the Panchayat elections because she wanted to improve the situation in Kashmir. She had been involved in a local division of a Kashmiri political party for the previous 15 years as a political activist and party member. She wanted to participate in the elections in order to become more involved in politics.

A third motivation for becoming an activist was based on more practical reasons. Many of the, mainly rural, women joined the organisation due to lack of other opportunities and the need for income. Most often, they became involved after being asked by a local organisation to join them. Farida was notified about the work of the HO in their area by her cousin, and she decided to apply. Similarly, Shagufa heard about the CSWO and liked the idea of working with children. Afreen was unemployed when she heard about the opportunity to get involved in the CSWO, and she thought it was a good idea to get involved with them and learn about how to take care of children, “because life begins with a child and women have to look after children.” The Panchayat representative, Aniza, decided to participate in the elections, as the local coordinator promised her money and access to development work if she contested.

A final category consisted of participants who joined the organisations for practical reasons, but went on to develop compassion for the people in need, and this became a motivator to continue the work. For many of the rural
women, while helping and activism had not been primary reasons for becoming involved initially, “helping” turned out to be an important aspect of their engagement. Aaliya, from the HO, tells a story about giving first aid to a man who had been injured in an accident:

One day I was on my way home. Sahib had given us medical kits. A person was riding on bike […], he was riding at a fast speed. […]. He put breaks and his bike skidded into the field on the roadside. He got cuts and bruises on his wrists and on his face and on his knees. In our locality we don’t have a dispensary. My brother […] could guess some accident has happened outside. He asked if some medicine is available. I said, yes there is. Iodine was not available with me so I cut a glucose bottle with a blade and gave him a wash. My brother helped me a lot as the patient was a male. We placed ointment on his injuries. That man was so much relieved that after sometime he asked us how much and if he has to pay us. He told us that, since we attended to him, respected him, cared for him, he owes us some consideration. He was also feeling pain so boss had given us paracetamol tablets, I gave him one tablet. He felt we did something beneficial to him. (Aaliya)

In this story, we learn how Aaliya gained confidence through helping the injured man. She detailed the steps she took and the medicines used to help the man. Earlier in the interview, she said that she used to be shy and unsure of herself, but this episode clearly demonstrates how the activism improved her self-assurance. This confidence encouraged her to continue the activism and become more involved. In a sense, the telling of the story of being an activist was creating her subjectivity as an activist (McNay 1999; Tamboukou 2008). As pointed out in the beginning of this section, Rabiya’s pathway into human rights advocacy work was not straight. The fact that marriage was perceived as her only option after failing medicine demonstrates the gendered vulnerabilities and limited opportunities for some women. As an established human rights activist, Rabiya found her inspiration in rape victims and disappeared persons. In an assignment for a previous job for another organisation, Rabiya had to make a documentary film on half widows:

When I worked on that, I had no idea how to begin with, the word was only half widow. But when I started working on it, things started coming on its own and it gave me a realisation that I have a sense for, I have an understanding for the pain around me. (Rabiya)
Hence, for Rabiya, who initially studied human rights because of the lack of other opportunities, her interest in activism developed over time while working with different issues and meeting people who had experienced violence.

These narratives have exemplified the four categories of motivation for women to become involved in activism. The first was based on compassion and the desire to help others. The second was the political agency to change the situation in Kashmir. The third consisted of women who started to work for the organisations due to the prospect of paid work or lack of other opportunities. Finally, for participants who initially joined due to lack of other opportunities and the need for income, being able to help other people became a major motivator for continuing and sustaining the work.

Encountering political institutions
In the interview extracts above, the participants spoke about their motivation to work as activists in Kashmir. Yet, many of the organisations encountered obstacles to their work. Many of the key informants I spoke to told me about the fear of speaking up against the government. They spoke about how political activism is acceptable, as long as it is not questioning state practices. For the HRO, whose work is directed at human rights abuses by both state and non-state actors, this dilemma was common. Nilofer noted:

…[I]t has been lack of assistance from government side also. Rather hindrance from their, state side, most of the times. Because unfortunately, very sceptically they see all the human rights organisations, even if you intend to give justice to people, you know. That is also obstacles in their mind, because most of the times the atrocities are meted out [against] people by the state, so in terms of assistance, I can say, the state hasn’t helped a lot but instead of that it has been an obstacle many a times. (Nilofer)

The above quote illustrates the challenges posed by the government. Army outfits, CRPF, and other bodies affiliated with the state and national government are responsible for most of the violence in Kashmir (see Chapter 5 for more detail). Nilofer spoke about the harassment that activists from the HRO have faced from state officials who command them to close
cases and not engage in certain kinds of human rights activism. It was particularly difficult to work on gender issues, such as rape and sexual harassment.

Yet, the complexity of human rights work resulted in challenges from all strands of Kashmiri political life. The HRO was positioned between the “two sides,” as Nilofer pointed out:

Being [named] a human rights organisation, everybody think that they get a lot of money from all sides. Then being in Delhi, the Kashmiris may [say], they [the HRO] lack credibility. And… working against the state, the state thinks that maybe they are placed to work against us. (Nilofer)

The link between the HRO and its main office in New Delhi caused some people to express distrust towards the organisation. Because of this, the HRO constantly had to allay suspicions from both state and non-state actors. Other participants experienced similar double-edged challenges. Rashida, the Panchayat woman in northern Kashmir, said that she had been threatened by both militants and the army:

I had a threat, threat, from two sides, both… […] Threat of militants. […] Recently, up to Sarpanch [elections]. We haven’t got security. They’re at home. But I continued [participating in the pre-election canvassing], I wanted to continue this. I feel secure, but there is a threat of that militants. (Rashida)

During the Panchayat election in 2011, despite its taking place in a largely peaceful and enthusiastic atmosphere, some candidates were threatened or attacked (Sheikh 2014, p. 17). Both of the Panchayat women that participated in the research reported that they had received threats from militants during the campaign. The above quote illustrates the threat that Rashida experienced from both army and militant groups. Yet, the threats did not encourage her to discontinue her political activism.

Being an activist in an in/secure environment often results in the normalisation of fear. Rashida, in the above quote, stated that she felt secure despite receiving threats. Asifa articulated a similar dismissal of threats in the focus group with the HO barefoot nurses. She was describing the
achievements of the group and, as a side-note, mentioned the threats they received:

They’re trying to help and all. That is how gradually they gained confidence and allowed these girls to work. Otherwise they have shared [that] they felt threatened. There were threatening calls, there were threatening letters. Even a man received, his daughter was part of [this group], he got shot. You see where they, to what extent they reached. They’ve come a long way, it’s been a long journey for them, not an easy one to reach this level. (Asifa)

Zaara’s story stands out against the dismissal of fear articulated by Rashida and Asifa above. Zaara, from Kupwara in northern Kashmir, sympathised with the Hurriyat movement, and she would have rather been involved with them than working for the CSWO. She was the only female Hurriyat supporter in her village, but knew of more women in Kupwara who followed the movement. But her mother did not allow her because it was considered unsafe: “My mother doesn’t allow me. She says that your father was martyred by Indian army, if you do do something, if you support Hurriyat conference, perhaps the Indian army kill you. […] [M]y mother is afraid of the Indian army, very much.” While Zaara herself was not afraid of the army, for Zaara’s mother, the fear of violent reprisals from the Indian army prevented her from allowing Zaara to become involved with Hurriyat.

The participants involved in the CSWO and the HO who lived in rural areas had little contact with the formal electoral political sphere. None of the women working for the CSWO had the need to approach local politicians for any reason. Most people I met in Kashmir expressed a deep mistrust of the political system and political representatives, often concerning issues of corruption, abuse of power, and election rigging. However, many of the women indirectly implied fear of misconduct of a sexual nature. Aaliya, for example, said that “if I go to meet a politician, I will have to keep in mind that like I have a father, […] similarly this politician also […] have a young daughter. He cannot misbehave with us.”
In contrast to the other participants, Asifa emphasised the importance of government support. In the focus group, she highlighted the close connection their organisation had with government officials. She noted that, “it’s not easy to do any kind of work without the support from the government.” For her, it was important to maintain a credible organisation. In the interview, Asifa pointed out that: “It’s a big question about the credibility of each. Not all NGOs [are] like that but when some unregistered, unknown and such NGOs came forward and start doing bad things, it becomes a very awkward situation.” As outlined in the introduction to this part, there have been many revelations about nepotism, corruption, and sex abuse among the NGOs in Kashmir. This tainted the reputation of the NGO sector as a whole. Asifa held that it is a challenge for NGOs to prove that they are not like the dishonest NGOs. She pointed out that, if an organisation has an established record of activities, a decent board of members, and is known for its respectability and work, it does not have to “prove [it]self.” Asifa stressed that the HO had been active since the mid-1990s and was known for its activities. It was important that the organisation is registered, and that its board members all come from “respectable backgrounds.” The reputation of the NGO depended on who ran the organisation. Additionally, she asserted that they do not work with large funds. Hence, it is not only individuals that are under scrutiny in Kashmir, but organisations must also have a clean reputation.

The narratives presented in this part demonstrate that the vast majority of the participants have had either negative experiences or a negative perception of the political sector. Many of the participants had been subjected to threats from either state or non-state actors. In the next part, I examine the participants’ perspectives on gendered activism and feminism.

**Feminist disjunctions**

Since the start of the uprising for azaadi in 1989, women have played vital roles in the freedom movement (see for instance Manchanda 2001a; Parashar 2011; Parashar 2013, 2014; Shekhawat 2014). In Chapter 5, I described how women participated in demonstrations and stone-pelting, as
well as supporting militant groups with nursing, logistics, hiding of militants, cooking food and mending clothes. I also outlined how there are relatively few women engaging in activism, and that there is no women’s movement in Kashmir. It is interesting to note that many of the participants noted the gendered barriers in their everyday lives, yet none of them identified as feminists or saw the need for a feminist movement. This part focuses on this paradox.

The first aspect of this paradox is that, while the participants had personal experiences of gender inequality, their motivation did not stem from concerns about women. Both rural and urban women experienced obstacles within their organisations because of their gender. The vast majority noted difficulties in being taken seriously and had experienced feelings of gendered vulnerability in their job. Some reported feeling limited in their work because of their gender. Sumita argued that the gendered society of Kashmir privileged men, and that men sought to dominate and control women in the workplace. She said that women attempted to resist male control:

> Well, they [men] try to dominate you but we try to come out of it. I mean women out here, those I know also, me also. We try to come out of it and we succeed also, but you know, it’s a struggle. You would put a lot of effort into it and then you just move forward. (Sumita)

Nilofer pointed out that, while all women experienced this type of oppression, the situation was worse for the women who did not fit the norm; for example, working women, activists, unmarried, and divorced women. Haleemah reported the harassment she experienced throughout her time as an activist. She said that fears for that type of aggravation stop many women from becoming involved in work that can be considered dangerous:

> There is no one who talks on political problems. Because everyone is scared. They look for their small interests. That is one of the distinguishing features of me, in the sense that… Not that I’m self-gratulated, not that I’ve done something, I’m simply saying how difficult it is here to speak. […] if I go to some leaders’ place […] the person is being inquired about. (Haleemah)
Haleemah spoke about herself as an exception, as one the few who dared to speak out about how difficult it was for women to be activists in Kashmir. Nevertheless, she dismissed the value of a feminist movement.

The second aspect of this paradox is that, while many of the women, as well as the organisations, do in fact organise on the ground for women’s issues, they do not define their activism as feminism. I participated in several roundtables on different women’s issues during the fieldwork, and many of the organisations specifically focus on widows and half-widows, women’s social, economic, and political empowerment, as well as women’s health. However, as can be concluded from the previous part on the participants’ motivations to become involved, concerns about women’s situation were not prioritised. Hence, it is possible that the resistance stems from their motivation for becoming involved in activism.

Feminism was a contentious issue among the participants. No one identified with the term, and most of the participants vociferously rejected its usefulness. The participants who rejected the term articulated two main justifications. Firstly, some noted that they did not believe women had more value than men, and hence did not seek domination of women over men. Rabiya understood a feminist to be a woman who always supports women. She argued: “so it’s actually woman’s suffering that gives birth to a feminist. So yes, when she suffers I’m a feminist, because I’m completely for her.” Yet, Rabiya contended that she was not a feminist as she also cares for men: “And feminist means completely excluding yourself from the men fraternity and taking yourself only close to the women.” Instead, in order to raise concern about women’s suffering, Rabiya would ask men why women are suffering. She said that starting a women’s movement hence “means something is wrong with the women, they’re not having their kind of life they deserve. […] Why don’t we let men explain how they’re supposed to do think?” Rabiya therefore saw no need to fight back against men, but instead to create a movement for the men. “Transforming men instead of starting a movement against the men.” Sumita had a similar understanding of feminism:
I am not a feminist that way. I’m a… It’s for both the genders. Because I feel that if somebody is being deliberately troubled I don’t like it. So even if it’s a male. I feel somebody is like, if there is somebody doing injustice to him, I’ll speak up. The reaction is for later on. But I always speak up if injustice is being done, but it’s for both sides. I won’t say only for one side, for the females. I say for both the sides, I will react.

(Sumita)

Both Rabiya and Sumita expressed discomfort with a woman-centric, essentialising feminism based on the Western radical second-wave feminism that gained ground in the 1960s (see overview in Chapter 2). Instead, they articulated a vision of a feminism that seeks to include men and works against injustice of all humans. Interestingly, this is in line with contemporary feminisms that focus on drawing men into work on gender inequality (see for instance Chant and Gutmann 2002; Cornwall 1997; Greig, Kimmel and Lang 2000).

Secondly, other participants presented a similar, but slightly different argument; they argued that they were working for the benefit of all Kashmiris. As all Kashmiris were oppressed, there was no time to focus on women’s issues. Instead, they argued that the Kashmiri issue was more urgent. Haleemah emphasised the importance of focusing on the situation in Kashmir and highlighting the state of its population:

I said no, because Kashmir is passing through such a phase where everyone’s rights are important this time. And we cannot bifurcate, cannot talk exclusively, because both become equal, you know, victims of the violations, but women always suffer more. […] Because once there is a deluge, you have to take hold of that, before you go to sectional things. So the whole river is one section, one whole big thing. Then you make sections into to it. So it wasn’t the time to take the sectional things. You have to take the whole thing. The violation of all people. The absence of women and children’s rights, that has been there. (Haleemah)

It is clear from the above that, while the participants agreed on the gendered obstacles for women, feminism was a contested term that failed to unite women activists. The strong sentiments that the participants demonstrated towards feminism illustrate the narrow understanding they had about the meaning of the word. Additionally, many participants prioritised the “Kashmir issue” over women’s rights, as established in Haleemah’s quote
above. This concurs with literature on nationalism that has highlighted similar arguments articulated in other nationalist struggles (Mayer 2000; Sunindyo 1998). Prioritising nationalist issues over women’s issues is justified by the premise that, as soon as the political aims of the nationalist movement are achieved, the movement will focus on improving the situation of women. As the next section demonstrates, the national identity of the women was often stronger than their identity as women. Hence, it was easier to mobilise politics around nationalism than feminism.

Concluding remarks
In this spatio-temporal location, I have investigated the participants’ experiences in relation to the activist terrain. The four main reasons for becoming involved in activism were, first, due to compassion to people in need and the desire to help them. Second, some participants had stronger political motivations and became an activist as they wanted to improve the political situation in Kashmir. The third group became involved because of practical reasons, such as the opportunity to gain salaried employment or an opportunity to do something outside the house. The last group consisted of participants who became involved because of lack of other opportunities but developed a strong political subjectivity after sometime of involvement. Being involved in activism was often considered subversive, and the majority of participants spoke of threats from either state or non-state actors. In this section, I have also highlighted the contentions that have arisen, both between and within the political spheres. This has demonstrated the fragility of the political terrain. This section has also brought to the fore the feminist disjunction. This involves the discrepancy between the participants’ gender sensitive analysis of their experiences in Kashmir and their dismissal of the need for a feminist agenda. Many of the participants reported the multiple obstacles they experienced as women activists, and they agreed on the gendered inequalities that permeated their workplaces. Yet, most of the participants resisted the usefulness of feminism. While some had a narrow understanding of the term, focusing on a fixed subject of the “woman,” which echoes critiques presented by scholars (Butler 1990; Lloyd 2005), other participants privileged the importance of the freedom movement,
declaring that their focus was all Kashmiri people. Many noted that, as long as Kashmir is governed by India, Kashmiri freedom would be the focus of their struggle. I suggest that this disjuncture depends on the political contention discussed above and the contested nature of Kashmiri identity. This is in accord with scholarship on other nationalist struggles (Mayer 2000; Sunindyo 1998). As we will see in the next section, political identities attached to nationhood and religion take precedence over political gender identities in Kashmir.

6.3 National life: in/security and political identities

_Kashmiriyat_ as such, you don’t need that identity, only if you feel insecure [...] Only the people who feel very insecure search for these kinds of Kashmiri identities, separate identities. Why do you need an identity when you have got such a beautiful place. [...] People come from different places all over the world, all the way to Kashmir. [...] So, we should appreciate that, instead of saying you’re being tortured and, that _Kashmiriyat_, is a separate Kashmir, a separate land. Why, everybody in the world should ask, we want a separate land, why? (Sumita)

This is Sumita, a medical doctor in her mid-30s from the Pandit community. She grew up in Srinagar with her family; her father was working as a civil servant in the government, and her mother was a housewife. Inspired by her parents, Sumita wanted to do social work from a young age. She studied medicine and ultimately joined the IO where she worked as a medical doctor. As described in Chapter 5, the majority of Kashmiri Pandits left the Valley in the early 1990s. Sumita’s family was one of the few that stayed, and despite much hardship during the conflict when the family was targeted by threats and kidnappings, she stated that she is happy that her family did not migrate. Sumita’s narrative highlights the tensions of identity and in/security in national life. She was the only woman I interviewed who identified as an Indian patriot and proud to be Indian.

These issues of national and religious identity are examined in this spatio-temporal location. This part focuses on the role of identity politics expressed in national life. Competing claims of gender, regional, and religious identities intersect at the spatio-temporal location of the national. This part
is divided in two main sections. The first section explores the way in which the participants expressed *Kashmiriyat* and Kashmiri identity, and the second section analyses the role of religious identity, focusing on how it was discussed by the Muslim participants and the Pandit participant.

Kashmiri identity and its gendered politics

In Chapter 5, I described how Kashmiri identity has been contested and shifting throughout its history. The notion of *Kashmiriyat* is strongly connected to ideas of nationalism and the nation. A study of Kashmiri history clearly disqualifies the notion of *Kashmiriyat* as the syncretised and composite nature of a Kashmiri regional identity where Islam and Hinduism co-exist in harmony (Rai 2004, p. 37; Whitehead 2007, p. 14). In the interviews and focus group discussions, the participant women had different perceptions of Kashmiri identity and *Kashmiriyat*. Hence, it is clear that *Kashmiriyat* is a contested term, not only historically, but also for women in contemporary Kashmir.

Many of the participants emphasised their strong attachment to a gendered understanding of the nation. This was exemplified when both Aaliya and Farida, in separate interviews, compared Kashmir with a family and mother. Farida stated that she had a strong attachment to her nation, and she wanted to contribute to its progress. Referring to Kashmir as *mouj kashir*\(^99\), she said that “I don’t have a feeling to express what I am for Kashmir or what Kashmir is for me. I believe I am good that I’m in Kashmir. That’s it. That’s why [I] feel like it’s my mother.”

A similar account of nationalism was expressed by participants portraying Kashmiris as hospitable, kind, and helpful. For example, Asifa noted that, even though people in rural areas might not have enough food for themselves, they would still be sure to feed their guests. She emphasised that this was a tradition handed down from generation to generation. Asifa mentioned that, during the unrest in 2010, separatist groups organised food

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\(^{99}\) Kashmiri for ‘mother Kashmir’.
for the yatris, the people doing the annual Amarnath Yatra. The yatris, who mainly consist of Hindus from other parts of India, were unable to obtain food due to the strikes and hartals that summer. Asifa pointed out that, when the Government of India failed to support the pilgrims, separatist groups stepped in and provided food for them. For her, the separatist groups that represented the Kashmiri nationalist movement helping Hindu pilgrims demonstrated two aspects of Kashmiri identity: the harmonic relationship between the different religions, and the centrality of hospitality and helpfulness.

A contrasting perspective on Kashmiriyat was articulated by some of the participants who expressed a less essentialist view on the uniqueness of Kashmiri identity. Nilofer and Rabiya, in the focus group discussion with the HRO, compared Kashmiriyat to identity expressions in other states of India. There was consensus in the group that there were similar processes of regional nationalist identifications in other states of India. Rabiya said:

> For the sake of argument, if Kashmiriyat is there […] when you cross the Banihal, when you go outside the boundaries of Jammu and Kashmir, do you find India across? No, you find Maharashtra, you find Tamil Nadu, you find West Bengal. You find so many different diverse cultures. (Rabiya)

Yet, although the human rights activists in the focus group deconstructed the uniqueness of Kashmiriyat, they had differing sentiments for Kashmir that they expressed in their own ways. Nilofer expressed a strong dislike for regional nationalism all over, stating that the only place she liked in India was New Delhi due to it being a conglomerate of people from all over the country. She said she was Kashmiri because she was born in Kashmir, and its specific customs, language, and climate had formed her identity. Rabiya, on the other hand, showed a stronger sense of belonging to Kashmir as follows: “[B]ut I still consider Kashmir as my nation. It means a lot to me. It means I am a person. I have been born in Kashmir, brought up in Kashmir. There has been a lot of Kashmiriyat in me.” While Nilofer attempted to de-

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100 The Amarnath Yatra is an annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath shrine. A large number of Hindus from all over India travel to J&K for the yatra every year.
essentialise *Kashmiriyat* by arguing that regional nationalist identity is everywhere, Rabiya sought to base her subjectivity on her Kashmiriness.

According to Wibben (2011), security is articulated through the reclaiming and reaffirming of identity. This is often done through processes of creating a distance between “us” and “the other.” The competing claims for Kashmir by the Indian and Pakistani states, as well as from Kashmiri separatists during the freedom struggle and the subsequent conflicts in Kashmir, impacted on Kashmiri identity. The lines between “us” and “them” shifted during the development of the conflict. As Haleemah noted:

> Some people say that our *azadì* means going with Pakistan. That was up to […] this armed struggle started. People had a romantic attachment to Pakistan, which… is still in some percentages of population. That, […] geographically, religion-wise, location-wise, we should have naturally been a part of Pakistan. (Haleemah)

Haleemah recognised the importance of Pakistan to Kashmiri identity, particularly after independence, and how the people of Kashmir identified closely with the neighbouring country. Pakistan was created as a homeland for Muslims in South Asia, and during partition in 1947, several million Muslims migrated\(^{101}\), either voluntarily or forced, from the areas that were to become India to Pakistan (Pandey 2001, p. 2). Many Kashmiris, during the independence struggle in the 1940s, including their leader Sheikh Abdullah, wanted Kashmir to join Pakistan; and they have since protested against Kashmir’s accession to India. During the interviews, this resonated with many of the women who spoke about how Kashmir had been forced to stay with India when they actually demanded independence. As Haleemah pointed out above, for many of the women, the more viable identity options were between Pakistan and India; and hence they told me their hearts were with Pakistan. In the focus group with human rights activists, Nilofer illustrated the Kashmiri predisposition for Pakistan with the example of international cricket matches. As Kashmir did not have their own national team, although Kashmiri players would play for India, most Kashmiri players would play for India, most Kashmiri

\(^{101}\) Indeed, several million Hindus also migrated from areas that had become part of Pakistan into India. The partition of the Indian subcontinent was marked by violence on behalf of the two communities against each other (D’Costa 2011).
people would still refuse to support India. Instead they would support Pakistan or the team playing against India. Nilofer and Rabiya were critical of the development of the freedom struggle, and they argued that it had left the people of Kashmir without a national identity. Nilofer asked the following rhetorical questions:

Do you know why our nation also exists in such crumbles? And why our social fabric is dying so quickly? It’s because we don’t have the ownership you know? We lack that sense of [that this is] my place, my thing. […] That’s the entire thing behind the conflict. We want our own nation. We want a place of our own. (Nilofer)

For Rabiya, the Kashmiri people had been wounded by the freedom movement. The pain caused had, in Rabiya’s opinion, been pointless. She said that “[t]he irony […] is that we don’t have a leader to lead us. So this pain is not reaching to its logical end.” For her, this has resulted in a Kashmiri identity based on hurt and grievance. This identity has not succeeded in uniting all the people of Kashmir, it has united people in their own small groups. For Rabiya, the leadership to unite Kashmiri people, which is necessary to address their hurt, is missing.

This difference of opinion expressed by Rabiya and Nilofer, in the focus group discussion reflects the divergent understandings among the research participants of what Kashmiri identity involves. On deeper examination, it is noticeable that the Kashmiri identity attached to the location of Kashmir is infused with religious narratives. Two examples above illustrate this: both Asifa’s narrative about the yatris who were fed by separatists, and Nilofer talking about how the majority of Kashmiris identified with Pakistan instead of India. In the next part, I further examine the role of identity illustrated by the politics of identity cards.

The question of identity cards

In Kashmir, the population is required to carry identity cards (at times referred to as I-cards) at all times. These are laminated pieces, containing personal information and a photograph, stamped by the Government of India. Kashmiris are often stopped by the military or police, and are required to produce their identity cards for inspection: “[t]hese constant
identity encounters have the effect of reproducing vulnerability, alienation, and powerlessness among the resident population” (Duschinski 2009, p. 704). Hence, identity cards are a contentious issue, and many of the participants expressed strong feelings when talking about having to show their identity cards to prove that they are Kashmiri. However, it is not only the fact that they were required to show identity cards that annoyed the participants, but that they were requested to do so by non-Kashmiris. This insider/outsider binary was in evidence in many of the women’s narratives as is clear in Asifa’s answer to the question of what Kashmiri identity means to her:

Kashmiri identity would mean to me where I don’t have to show identity card to prove my identity, because that itself is a very embarrassing situation for me. […] Because in your own place, […] your own country, you are facing the humiliation of showing an identity card and proving your identity. And to those people who are not even from this place, who belong to some other place. […] It’s understandable if you’re in a different place that you have to… But in your own place, what is security then? (Asifa)

The comments about the identity card point to dichotomies of outsider/insider. The Indian army stationed in Kashmir came from all parts of India. For Asifa, they were “outsiders” who “belonged” somewhere else. As Shehla pointed out, “it’s like we’re renting it, it [is like it] all belongs to India and we’re living here on rent. And whenever you move out you have to show your identities. […] Although […] we’re living on our own land, […] we have to show the identities to others!” In these narratives, the participants’ view of Kashmir as distinct from India becomes clear. India and Kashmir are described as separate entities, and there is no acknowledgment of the legal and political fact that Kashmir is under Indian rule. From this perspective, some of the participants do not view Kashmiris as Indians, and Indians are not Kashmiris. Thus, the Indian army are portrayed as not belonging to Kashmir.

However, one participant recognised the particular circumstances of the soldiers. In the focus group with the HRO, Nilofer observed the insider/outsider experiences of the soldiers themselves:
…most of the time, lower cadres of the security forces is from the poor strata of the country. So, they face so much of animosity in Kashmir only. Because anywhere in India, in Delhi or other places, they are the part of the population. But here they are the anti-part of the population. So if you see one, you pretend you [have] not seen him. You will never smile, uhm… on a security force. No doubt, he might be the best person, in the whole area. Uhm, and I think the fact of this animosity lies in the policies by the government of state and the government of Delhi, which have [been] inculcated in Kashmiris the sense of hatred for the armed forces who were supposed to secure us. (Nilofer)

In this quote, Nilofer acknowledges the outsider-status of the soldiers. The fact that they are frowned upon, ignored, and feared, and the effects this has on them. They do not even understand the Kashmiri language, the print on the shops, or know why they are there or why they are hated.

In summary, the role of identity card as the mechanism required to prove identity emphasised the construction of insider and outsider. In this case, narratives describing “outsiders,” i.e. army men, asking “insiders,” i.e. Kashmiris, to prove their identities, clearly demarcated borders between us/them and legitimate/illegitimate. Nonetheless, as Nilofer’s account reveals, not all participants agreed on that formulation.

Religious identity
In Chapter 5, I demonstrated how, throughout Kashmiri history, political mobilisation was based on religious community in different ways. This corroded the idea of Kashmiriyat, the notion of Kashmiri identity as a composite syncretic culture where people of different religions co-existed in peace. In the interviews and focus group discussions, the participants spoke about what religion meant for them in the context of Kashmir. The religious set-up of J&K, as noted in Chapter 1, has changed during the last century. Many of the participants spoke of the exodus of Pandits in the early 1990s and how that affected the state. The fact that Kashmir had transformed from a place with many religions to a single-religion area concerned many of the participants. There was an evident distinction between the accounts by the Muslim participants and the Pandit participant regarding the impact of the religious homogeneity of the state on their lives (see Chapter 4 for a
discussion on the issue of inclusion of only one Pandit participant in the research). I have divided this section into two parts: the first deals with Muslim women’s perception of religious homogeneity, and the second with the Pandit woman’s experiences.

Muslim women discussing religious identity of the “other”
The Muslim participants pointed out their concern about Kashmir becoming an increasingly Muslim region. In the focus group discussion with the human rights activists, the participants noted that the religious composition in Kashmir had changed from Buddhism to Hinduism, into what is now a Muslim majority area, with only 5% of the population being non-Muslim.

Nilofer said:

And these five disturbs me a lot. This is a fact which […] is not conforming to a universal or pluralistic state. […] Because then you get confined to your religion and because my child will only understand that [on] Fridays [you only work until the] afternoon. And he won’t understand that there are people who would still work […] during your Friday prayers, huh? (Nilofer)

The other participants agreed with Nilofer. There was consensus that the dominance of Islam in Kashmir was a negative development. Farhana added that, even though Islam professes an ethic of equality and respect for all religions and peoples, some of the religious leaders have interpreted the religion to suit their own agenda and interests. Rabiya also pointed out that the Pandits had left, taking with them a large part of Kashmiri cultural heritage.

The discussion in the focus group was mirrored in the interviews with the other participants. Asifa was similarly disturbed by the change in the religious set-up of the region. She said that she had never previously felt communal tension in Kashmir, but that that had changed in the early 1990s. She repeated a claim that I had heard from many people in Kashmir, stating that the exodus of Pandits had been “engineered by the then governor… Jagmohan, who manipulated the entire thing and wanted all non-Muslims out of this place so that he could conduct a massacre on Muslims here.” Asifa’s version of the story states that the governor had not planned that the
Pandits should stay away from Kashmir for long, but they ended up not being able to come back. This still affects communal relations as “…one community feels that they were driven out and Muslims feel that they were left behind to face the killings, wrath of security forces.” This narrative has not been proven to be true, yet it has gained a stronghold in Kashmiri discourse (Parashar 2011, p. 301). Considering Asifa became involved in activism because of her Pandit friend, the fact that she reiterated and believed in the Jagmohan story clearly demonstrates how entrenched the story has become. This narrative works on two levels. Firstly, it holds that the Pandits did not leave voluntarily, but that it was part of a scheme organised by the Indian government. This works, on the one hand, to neither blame the Pandits themselves nor the Kashmiri separatist and religious leaders for the Pandits’ departure from the state, and, on the other, to hold the Indian government responsible instead. The second level is that it ultimately places the Kashmiri Muslims as the victims of the Indian government agenda, as they were left in Kashmir “to be massacred.” Yet, as accounts of the events of the 1990s have demonstrated, all Kashmiris of all religions were affected by the violence; for example, it was during this time that Sumita’s father was kidnapped several times.

*Pandit woman discussing religious identity*

In contrast to the Muslim participants, the Pandit woman Sumita talked about her experience of coming from a minority community. As noted in the introduction to this part, Sumita was the only research participant who identified as an Indian nationalist. She saw no reason why Kashmir should be separate from India. Nevertheless, similarly to the other participants, she expressed affection for Kashmir as a location:

> Kashmir, as such, I would say […] it’s heaven on earth. Maybe I’m saying it because it’s the place where I live. Maybe I'm saying it because the land is beautiful. […] God has blessed us in this place with such a natural beauty in the sense of surroundings, mountains, beautiful mountains, lakes, […] In that way you feel blessed, that you’re born in such a place. But then, […] when bad elements come you only feel bad. (Sumita)
Yet, unlike the other participants, she dismissed the notion of Kashmiriyat or any other form of Kashmiri identity. When asked about Kashmiriyat, she replied: “you don’t need that identity, only if you feel insecure.” During the interview there were several inconsistencies: she asserted that she felt secure in Kashmir, yet later on she said she was uncertain as to whether she felt secure or not when working. Sumita also told me that she often felt out of place. Other narratives about her experiences in her workplace, which I discuss in the next chapter, suggest that she experienced her religious identity as a cause of tension. This suggests an otherness of the Pandit identity, which makes the identity impossible to secure. Therefore, the Pandit woman neither fits the category of subject in Kashmir, as the Muslim participants do, nor does she fit the category of victim, as the Muslim women and men the participants are saving. Therefore, I argue that the Pandit woman inhabits a pariah status, which I explore in Chapter 7.

Religious identities play an important role in Kashmiri national life and are essential to people’s sense of themselves. Hence, religion was central to Kashmiri identities. While Kashmiriyat was initially proposed as a secular identity that emphasised the harmonious relationship between Hinduism and Islam, it is evident that religious issues constantly infused this identity formation. The Muslim participants expressed concern with the growing heterogeneity of the state after the exodus of the Pandits. Yet, there was still a tendency to paint themselves as victims of the agenda of the Indian government to emphasise that Pandits were not the only ones who had suffered. The Pandit woman, on the other hand, elaborated on her experiences of being part of a minority group in Kashmir and the struggles she had to face. It was clear that religion was central to her identity, and while it caused her insecurity from the outside, for herself she felt secure.

Concluding remarks
This spatio-temporal location focused on the function of identity politics expressed in national life, where contentions of gender, region, and religious identities intersect. The participants’ understanding of Kashmiriyat diverges, and there is no signifier to what this identity holds. This concurs
with Aggarwal’s (2008) assertion of Kashmiriyat as an empty signifier: there is no common understanding of what it means. Yet, it is evident that the narratives of the participants concur in terms of what Kashmiriyat is not. Kashmiriyat is not a secular, harmonious relationship between the religious groups in the region as is often asserted (Puri 1995). Through the narratives, it is noticeable that Kashmiriyat is infused with religious identity, mainly Islam. These types of identity are often strengthened and intensified in areas affected by political upheaval. When a number of political identities are in competition, clearly the strongest will survive. There is also less space for multiple or intersectional identities. As Stern (2006b) notes, an efficient politicised identity needs to be pure and spotless. Often, as in the case of Shaheed’s (1998) Pakistan, the identity of women in unable to cut across other identities, in this case, national identity.

While the public discourse in Kashmir, echoed by the Muslim participants in this research, reiterates narratives of a religious harmony by celebrating Hindu holidays and reaching out to Pandits in different ways, this discourse proved the exceptionality of the Pandit’s situation. The Muslim participants were worried about the growing heterogeneity in the state after the departure of the majority of the Pandits. Yet, they emphasised that Kashmiri Muslims also had suffered under Indian occupation. The Pandit woman, on the other hand, elaborated on her experience of being part of a minority group in Kashmir and the struggles she had to face. For her, religion was a central aspect of her identity and it always positioned her as “the other” in relationship to the Kashmiri Muslims.

6.4 Conclusion
This chapter has provided an exploration of the participants’ narratives of everyday experiences of doing activism in an in/secure context. The thematic division of the narratives in the spatio-temporal locations of the personal, organisational, and national life aided the analysis of the intersecting identities of class, gender, and religion that frame women’s activism. The spatio-temporal locations consist of narratives that occur in certain spaces at certain times, and the discourses that scaffold these
transversions of time and space. The context of Kashmir, characterised by its in/security, set the larger background to the women’s activism, and I have chosen to study the women’s narratives from the location of their everyday lives (Nordstrom 1997). The narratives presented in this chapter emphasise the human experience of living through war (Parashar 2013).

The first theme holds that it is evident that in/security does not only involve women’s experiences in public spaces through their work or on the streets, or in private with their families in the home. Instead, in/security breaches the public/private divide and merges the two spaces. The narratives presented in this section demonstrate that the participants’ experiences in the private sphere are ultimately dependent on the public. Most participants articulated the family as a space of tension between support and struggle. Family tension revolved around intersecting norms and identities of class and gender, which defined when, how, where, and with what it was suitable for a woman to engage in activism. Normative feminine and masculine behaviour becomes reproduced through performativities within the family. Through the lens of femininity as an idealised practice of what is considered normative female behaviour (Schippers 2007), the act of being an activist as a woman was considered highly regressive. This brings to the fore the tensions of productive power that occur on family and village levels. Surveillance is a central concept within Foucault’s theory of governmentality and the production of the subject (Foucault et al. 2007b). The proximity of neighbours and close-knit communities resulted in unwanted involvement from local communities, particularly among the rural women. The neighbours’ gaze, which was the responsibility of the woman to avert, acted as a mechanism of control and surveillance. This in turn affected family decisions about women’s availability to work.

The second theme, following the argument above, holds that in/security impacts women’s access to activism. The insecure terrain of the state is the backdrop to the family’s approval, wherein discourses of in/security interact with traditional norms of what are deemed acceptable femininities. Security acts as a discursive practice, producing its subjects (Wibben 2011). Through
processes of performativity, thus, the activist as subject is always in the process of becoming. The constant reiteration of negotiation and resistance to ideals of hegemonic femininities, as well as the reproduction of the same ideals, produces this subject (Butler 1993, p. 2). The boundaries set up by in/security discourses further encloses the space the women are working within (Stern 2006b). Moreover, organisational life of Kashmir was located on an in/secure terrain, where NGOs were at times mistrusted, at times fraudulent, and many people expressed a lack of faith in the political sphere. This impacted on the research participants and the organisations they were involved with. Many of the participants had experienced threats from both state and non-state actors in an attempt to stop their activism; this served to curtail political agency. The participants’ articulation of gender identity and its connection to feminist politics is highly paradoxical as demonstrated in the discrepancy between the participants’ gender sensitive analysis of their experiences in Kashmir and their dismissal of the need for a feminist agenda. While the participants agreed on the gendered obstacles for women, feminism was a contested term that failed to unite women activists. A number of complexities regarding the role of narratives in seeking to fix and stabilise identity claims were also noted.

The final theme contends that the formation and articulation of identities, particularly religious, regional, and gender identities, are impacted by in/security. The findings suggest that, even though the azaadi movement evolved around a Kashmiri identity, the participants’ understandings of it differ. The only agreement on what Kashmiriyat involves, is that it is not what it is claimed to be. Kashmiriyat is not a secular, harmonious relationship between the religious groups in the region. Through the narratives, it is noticeable that the Kashmiri identity is infused with religious identity. My findings on national identity and self-identity correspond to critical perspectives on Kashmiriyat (Aggarwal 2008). However, they also contradict Kazi’s conclusion of the “non-’national’ vision of the Indian state” (Kazi 2009, p. 200). Kazi uses the example of two Pandit women who would choose Kashmir over India if Kashmir were to gain independence. Kazi argues that “the modern Indian state has neither diluted nor erased
citizen’s identification with, and allegiance to, (Kashmiri) cultural identity” (Kazi 2009, p. 201). While this clearly holds strongly true for the Muslim participants in my research, the Pandit woman would disagree. Clearly, both mine and Kazi’s studies are based on individual accounts, and we can thus not generalise across the board. However, the differences appearing in the narratives are interesting. Asifa’s comments about becoming involved in activism following her Pandit friend’s departure from the Valley in the 1990s reveals the re-emergence of religious identities at the start of the uprising. As described earlier in this chapter, Asifa explained that the importance of their respective religious identities grew more important to them than their friendship, and ultimately the relationship ended. This demonstrates the politicisation of religion that appeared in Kashmir in the early 1990s. As Chapter 5 demonstrates, this was not new to Kashmir. Yet, it was new for Asifa and her friend, as expressed by Asifa as follows: “I had become a Muslim girl for her, and our religion became more predominant in our friendship. […] [S]he did not trust me anymore.”

While in/security had an impact on women’s political activism in the three ways outlined above, the participants also negotiated and resisted these impacts. In the next chapter, I analyse how the participants represent their activism. It brings together the narratives that emerge from the three spatio-temporal locations by examining how activism is articulated in the participants’ narratives. I am specifically interested in how the participants talk about themselves as activists. Three archetypes of stories emerge: the heroine, the respectable women, and the pariah.
Chapter 7
The in/secure narratable self

The previous chapter outlined the participants’ narrations of their experiences of in/security. Three overlapping themes structured by the spatio-temporal locations were evident. Firstly, in/security impacts all areas of women’s lives in the public and private sphere. Moreover, in/security breaches the public/private divide and merges the two spaces. Secondly, in/security influences the capability for and access to political activism. Thirdly, in/security impacts the formation and articulation of identities, particularly religious-, regional- and gender identities. To further our understanding of the relationship between in/security and activism, it is vital to unpack the participants’ stories about their activism. This chapter presents an analysis of the way in which the participant women represent their activism. It brings together the narratives that emerge from the three spatio-temporal locations outlined in the previous chapter by examining how activism is articulated in the participants’ narratives.

The women narrated their activism in three main ways: through stories of heroines, respectable women, and pariahs. These three categories are not archetypes of women activists in Kashmir; rather, they are archetypes of stories that the participants told about their activism. These archetypes are not intended to be interpreted as antipodal; in fact, participants’ stories were often based on more than one archetype. Hence, a participant could tell three different activist stories depending on the spatio-temporal location of the event. This also implies that the activist stories are connected and related.

This chapter is structured in three parts. The first examines the heroine stories in which the agency of the actor becomes visible. These stories rely on the binary opposition of heroine/victim: the subjectivity of the participants as heroines is created in opposition to other women in Kashmir who are portrayed as victims. There are two main aspects of the heroine stories: being able to save themselves and distancing themselves from in/security. In this way, the participants spoke about themselves as being
above in/security; in other words, in/security was irrelevant to them. While Chapter 6 outlined the spatio-temporal locations of in/security and how Kashmiri women experience security and insecurity in different places in different ways, some participants told narratives in which they were distancing themselves from other women, saying “I am not like them, I don’t need security.”

The second part presents stories about respectable women in which participants asserted their agency by upholding norms. The research participants described the importance of being seen as a respectable woman in order to be able to do activism (Radhakrishnan 2009). These performativities seek to accomplish the contextualised norms of hegemonic femininities circulating in the region (Schippers 2007). The hegemonic femininity is about being a “good woman” and a “good Muslim,” which most often intersect and co-create each other in the ideal type woman: the good Muslim woman.

Finally, the pariah stories are about experiences of being an outsider, about not fitting in. These are stories about a lack of a secure or “securitisable” identity due to her always already outsider intersectional identity of a Pandit, single, woman and activist. Through her narratives, it is evident that her activism neither manifested itself in heroine nor respectable woman stories. There was no other to which Sumita’s identity was presented (Stern 2006a; Yuval-Davis 2010). In this sense, Sumita provided a counter-narrative to the Muslim participants’ stories.

7.1 Heroine Stories
Many of the participants recounted their motivation to engage in activism through stories of helping and saving other women. One main driving force for many of the interviewed women was the aspiration to address the needs and concerns of women affected by the conflict in Kashmir.102 In these heroine stories the agency of the actor becomes visible. The participants

102 See Chapter 6 for a detailed account of the women’s motivations of doing activism.
described themselves as distinct from other women and have the capacity to save themselves.

**Narratives about being able to save oneself**
The heroine narratives demonstrate women’s refusal to be victims of the violence. The participants spoke of standing up for themselves in situations of adversity and of negotiating obstacles both in the private and the public sphere. In the private sphere the obstacles to activism were mainly posed by the family, although this often trickled out to the public in terms of suspicion and probing by neighbours and the extended community. In the public sphere, there was also the constant threat due to the militarisation of the region.

**Dealing with family and community**
The most common way of overcoming the obstacles placed by one’s family was to argue verbally with family members and to defend one’s decisions. Rabiya, a human rights advocate in Srinagar, spoke about having to constantly explain her work to people. People often questioned her decisions or criticised the limited progress her organisation was achieving. Rabiya felt that she always had to explain to them that she and her colleagues in the HRO worked as hard as they could in dealing with human rights cases.

...my family sees that you answer back people. You don’t let them speak, and when they do you attack them, like, why did you say so. Ahm, criticism, you see, for me criticism is something I’m not able to defend myself and I’m not able to speak back. I call that criticism. I call that, ya I’m suffering, you know, people have speak things. But with me, the thing is, if anybody speaks anything about it, I’ll always try to clear. (Rabiya)

Also, many of the rural participants spoke about dealing with criticism. Afreen, who was working for the CSWO in Kupwara district, described how people from her community would question her work and the intentions behind it. She said that people often wondered how much money she was earning from the work. While some people were worried that she would harm or even sell the children, most parents were concerned about
the non-academic nature of the group. For them, it was a waste of time for the children to participate in the playgroup. When they asked questions about what the CSWO and the work were about, she used to explain it to them. This made the people in the community cooperate with her:

Yes, I faced lot of problems. At first everybody suspected what is she doing? Where is she taking children to? And then many asked what are you doing and even some were saying that she might be taking children so as to sell them or doing some wrong to them. But when I explained [to] them [about] our work people started cooperating and [community support group] committee members also helped us. (Afreen)

Other participants struggled with family members who wanted to make decisions about their lives. As we saw in Chapter 6, Haleemah’s father attempted to have her marry against her will when she was a teenager. Haleemah spoke about how she challenged her father’s decision.

I will cut it short, but I had to fight a lot. And suffered a lot. […] I had to fight against all and all. Against the whole culture, against the whole domestic. […] Especially in my family. […] With great difficulty I won that freedom. Almost being engaged and then, you know, calling it off. […] Because I fought […] five years together. I had to fight against that. Because, you know, the kind [of] promise my father and my aunt had given to each other. That we’ll, you know, her son and my daughter are going to be married off. So I had to fight against that. [I said:] ‘I am not a cattle. I am not a property, that you can take decisions about me before I’m grown up’. […] Today it seems ordinary, but those days, it was extraordinary to talk like that. It was extraordinary. It was a kind of rebellion against the family and society. So what I’m actually trying to say, is that fire which was burning, smouldering in me, against the occupation in Kashmir, had to take a backseat when my own life came on the forefront in the sense that my decisions were also to be taken like my country’s decision [laughs]. You know? […] So… It had to take… That had to take a backseat and this was the first thing which had actually happened to me. So I fought against that, it took many years until I did my MA. After I did my MA, I succeeded in annulling that. […] And then I was born free in the sense that [inaudible segment]. It is now the irony of fate is that even when you are free you don’t get what you want. That’s the irony of fate. You understand? (Haleemah)

In this narrative, Haleemah linked the story of Kashmiri oppression with her own oppression as a woman by comparing her struggle with her parents to Kashmiris’ fight for independence. On the one hand she identified with Kashmir, in that she felt her agency was taken away from her, while on the
other, she emphasised that there was room for resistance. Haleemah herself managed to negotiate her parents’ decision and find a different way to solve the situation. Her use of the phrase “I was born free…” in the quotation above, suggests that she compared her own fight with that of the Kashmiri struggle for freedom. The struggle to avoid the decision taken by her father turned out to be long and difficult. Although the family were attempting to impose their beliefs on her, she emphasised that she had saved herself from letting them decide her fate. Clearly this is an important part of her adolescent years. Later in the interview, she mentioned two reasons for not wanting to get married. The first was because she wanted to finish her education. It is often assumed that, after marriage, the woman should take on full-time housekeeping responsibilities; however, for Haleemah it was more important to complete her studies. The second reason was that she expected a love-marriage. She said that she had “romantic notions from the very beginning that unless I like someone I will not marry.” This suggests that Haleemah had certain expectations for her life: she wanted to fall in love and develop a relationship before marrying that person, and after marriage, she expected to complete her studies and have a career. When Haleemah recounted the conflict she had with her family, she described the language she used to oppose them: “I’m grown up. […] I’m a human being, […] I have my own choice. Today it seems ordinary, but those days, it was extraordinary to talk like that. It was extraordinary. It was a kind of rebellion against the family and society.” Haleemah negotiated the marriage plans with her family by referring to her own agency and her capacity to make her own decisions. In this quote she presented her experience as exceptional by saying that “it was extraordinary to talk like that.” This implies a contrast between herself and what she believed would usually happen in those circumstances. Ultimately, after a five year struggle with her family, Haleemah had the engagement annulled through arguing for her right to decide over her own life.

The narratives above exemplify how the participants demonstrated agency towards family members and people in their local communities. In these instances, through the use of verbal communication and explaining their
decisions, the women asserted their will. Many of the participants also experienced encounters with police or army men in the public sphere and had devised strategies to protect themselves in intimidating situations.

Dealing with authority

The human rights advocates in the focus group discussion spoke about how being educated, particularly with a degree in law, helped them when dealing with the military. Nilofer retold an encounter with an abusive soldier:

For me, if I’m more educated and if I know that army men is giving me some nuisance, which I don’t need to take, or policeman is harassing me unnecessarily, and I know a piece of law for that, so I feel much more secure than a laywoman who is not equally equipped with legal knowledge. So I think being a lawyer has helped me a lot and… ahm… just a month back, uh… I was smashed by an army truck on Nowgam bridge and the first word he said was, he was a very driver of a very nasty language. He abused me and he said that ‘Leave the place, I know how to tackle you women.’ So I just stopped him and I parked on the road, ‘til their major came and then I got compensation directly on the road. So I think if there would have been a woman who were not legally aware, even if she was educationally a Master’s or Doctorate, but she’s not legally aware, she wouldn’t have been that empowered. So I think I feel secure because of my education, especially my legal education. (Nilofer)

This narrative highlights Nilofer’s experiences of being knowledgeable about the law. In this episode, she answered back to a rude and foul-mouthed army man and asserted her legal rights. Importantly, in this story she set herself apart from other women, even highly educated ones. In the focus group, Rabiya agreed with her and told a similar story.

I remember the other day me and my brother were travelling and we were stopped in the middle of the road […] So there were these army men who stopped us, who asked my brother to show him his driver licence and I asked him ‘You don’t have the authority, it is the traffic police who has the authority to check the licence. Under what authority are you checking our licence?’ So he […] started getting bad with us and my brother was ‘Ok ok, now be quiet’. And we had to show him, but still, I think I told him that you don’t have authority to check the licence, you’re not there. […] He couldn’t answer back and he got more violent on us. So, ya, it does help, it definitely does help when you’re aware of things. You know what the right is, how it is violated, who is the locus standi. You understand these things and, I think, that after doing my
law I have been able to argue and do debates in a much, much refined manner than I would do it earlier. (Rabiya)

In this narrative, Rabiya defends her rights in a confrontation with an army man because of her knowledge of the law. She proclaimed taking authority over the situation and speaking up for both herself and her brother. She demonstrated that strength and capability to defend herself, and despite her brother’s attempts to silence her, she spoke up.

In these narratives about being able to save oneself, the women are refusing to become victims of the conflict. One important commonality between these two stories is that the focus is on the participant protecting herself. In these narratives, the participants needed to negotiate their access to the road in order to be able to travel home without being delayed by the army. In both cases it was the participant’s responsibility to end the disruption by the army men. Nilofer and Rabiya both explain that they are different from other women in that their legal knowledge equips them to defend themselves during intimidating encounters.

**Dismissing in/security**

Another way the women spoke about themselves as heroines was in how they consider themselves to be above in/security: in/security was irrelevant to them. Chapter 6 outlined the spatio-temporal locations of in/security and how the women face security and insecurity in different places in different ways. In this second form of heroine narrative, the participants described how Kashmiri women were victims of the conflict, but distanced themselves from these other women. The participant women refuse to be victims, yet they reinscribe Kashmiri women as victims.

One pertinent example of this was when I asked Asifa what security meant to her. Previously in the interview, she had described the militarisation of society and its impact on both women and men in different ways. She spoke about the link between increased domestic violence and the humiliation of Kashmiri men by the security forces, as well as about the increase in threats against women’s security in the form of rape, molestations, and
kidnappings. For Asifa, these descriptions of the situation of women in Kashmir constantly referred to other women, the women she was involved in helping. She described how women in Kashmir were bearing the brunt of the conflict, and how they have been affected on several levels, ranging from physical to economic. While Asifa does not specify whether she means Muslim or Hindu women, her organisation has been involved in helping both. So, simultaneously as other women were insecure and whose insecurity needed to be moderated, Asifa had never thought of what security meant to herself: “This is a question I’ve asked many people [laughs]. I’ve never thought what it actually means to me.” Thus, she had never thought of herself being a victim of the long-term conflict in Kashmir. For Asifa, insecurity was primarily something that other people in Kashmir were experiencing. After some thought and coaxing from me, however, she started narrating an experience of insecurity, which is described in the next section.

For Shehla, the concept of security was meaningless. She believed that “if you’re doing something good you have the security of the God, so that’s it. So, I don’t fear anything, it doesn’t mean anything else. Basically you’re doing good, so you’re secure.” The momentary fixing of subjectivity through religion helped Shehla to feel secure (Stern 2005; Wibben 2011). This was not necessarily to do with how her community perceived her, but more how she felt herself. By telling the story of being secure because she believed in God, she produced herself as a secured subject. When probed a bit more on the sense of security given by her work in the widow support organisation, she proclaimed that her involvement in the work gives her security because everyone knows who she is and that she is doing the right thing:

[I’ve] been doing this job and everybody knows what [I’m] doing. So they won’t harm [me] that way... That way, it becomes, the kind of work that [I’m] doing, is a good work, and it’s making the security, you know, kind of it’s giving [me] an internal kind of security... [I’m] feeling more secure, because people know it and [I] know that nobody else can touch [me] that way. You know? (Shehla)
Here Shehla presented two different reasons as to why her public role as a leader made her feel secure. Firstly, she noted that she was doing good work (which is connected to the argument of the “good woman” presented in the second part of this chapter), and that she had a good reputation and was popular among Kashmiris, which meant that she would not be under threat from militants and the like. Secondly, the visibility that came with being a well-known activist from an acclaimed organisation provided her with a sense of security. She implied that the popularity of her work would prevent an attack on her, as that would cause outrage both locally and internationally. In this sense, the fixing of her identity as a well-known activist “securitises” her in her community, similar to what her religious subjectivity does for her own sense of security.

Victimised by the male gaze
In the stories above I have accentuated the agency of the participants. These narratives most often relied on contrasting one’s own heroism with the lack of agency of others. Analysing the activist stories in more depth, it is clear that these other women – often face-less and helpless victims of the Kashmiri conflict – were central to the narratives. Nevertheless, many of the participants spoke about episodes wherein they experienced being helpless. While the heroine stories mainly relied on “other” women being victims, some of the participants spoke about feeling victimised.

Some of the participants spoke about how they felt insecure when the male gaze was directed at them. In the section above, when Asifa was asked about what security means to her, after thinking about it for a minute she told me this story:

…[security is to me] when I can walk on the streets without the fear of the gun, because we have been living in this gun culture for more than two decades now and it’s had an effect on our psychology and we don’t feel safe anymore, you know. The presence of the military all around. […] The greedy looks that the security forces give you when you’re on the road, you know, it makes you feel so dirty, you know. Even when I’m driving on the road, and there’s a security vehicle right in front of me and there are three-four security men sitting behind and the kind of looks they are giving me. It’s so difficult to avoid that glare, […] and just cross them over.
Suddenly you start feeling so vulnerable and you feel that you’re a woman and vulnerable to all kinds of threat just because you happen to be in Kashmir and maybe because you’re single and also maybe because, because basically of your gender. And also of the fact that these people enjoy all the powers that they have and because of the [AFSPA] they are not even answerable to any kind of thing, so they are free to do anything they want. […] At that time you suddenly start feeling vulnerable and realise that though you keep talking about empowerment and development and such big-loaded words all around in conferences, and teach women on that. Suddenly you realised that you’re very weak yourself inside. I don’t like that weak moment, so I think security would mean that when I feel very strong, even being alone on the ground and I know that I have a right to be who I am and if these people have no right to question or threaten me with, just because they’ve got a gun! (Asifa)

In this long quote in reply to the question “what does security mean to you,” Asifa spoke about how the presence of the military on the street broke through the security barrier that her class, education, and family background normally held up. The vulnerability she described was an exception to how she normally felt when moving around in the city. While ordinarily Asifa would be the one who helped other women, as we have seen in the heroine narratives above, on this occasion she needed to be saved but no one was there for her. The insecurity caused by the army men is gendered. She emphasised the unavoidable male gaze of the soldiers directed at her: their “greedy looks,” “that glare.” This situation, and particularly their gaze, made her feel vulnerable. Here there were apparent breaches in the ideal practices of femininity that these participants would normally engage in. The gendered gaze reinforced her identity as a woman and as single. The status of being unmarried can be interpreted as being without male protection, hence she described her experience of feeling weak and vulnerable as a woman and as single. The unaccountability given to the security forces through laws such as AFSPA made her aware that she could not escape them; she knew that if they did something to her it would be difficult for her to bring them to justice. Keeping this situation in mind, her initial response as to what security means to her, that in/security is what happens to other women, is reasonable: she did not want to experience the utter helplessness that occurred when she was stripped of the protection
given by her activism and class. Through the spatial contrast between the conference rooms where she lectured on empowerment and development and the street where the army men stare at her, her class and professional status fade in the face of security threats against the single woman.

A similar story was recounted by Rabiya, who spoke about encountering a group of army men while being out shopping and the fear they made her feel.

Threat. It’s a threat to me. Because of the weapons that they have in their hands and because of the unaccountable power that is given to them. So in one word, if you ask me, it’s a threat to me and my life. Psychological and physical threat, that I have to face when I see the… Just a small example, I was yesterday, I’d gone to my boutique. And on my… it’s a very narrow lane that you have to come down. And there were two rows of these paramilitary… And I was alone in that whole lane and they were like 20-25 men coming down. So I had no idea, what to do. (Rabiya)

The above stories were exceptional among the research participants. Most of the participants did not portray themselves as victims of the violence in Kashmir. Yet, the narratives presented by Rabiya and Asifa highlighted the fluidity of in/security. The in/security terrain of Kashmir ultimately succeeded in shredding the “heroine cloak” of Rabiya and Asifa. On these two occasions, Rabiya and Asifa were two ordinary Muslim women walking down the road. When stepping out of the protection that being an activist affords, as well as the class-based protection (in terms of family name, money, driver, gated housing) that these two women had, the underlying dynamic of in/security of Kashmir impacted the two women.

Concluding remarks
The heroine stories contain narratives of insecurity and security. A heroine is a woman who is secure, who can save other women and help herself. The heroine stories narrate stories of victimisation and class, and they convey that the activist is not like other women. These other women were often described as victims. While other women in Kashmir are suffering and are in need of rescue, the activist is there to lend a hand. This bravery and passion for the situation was dislocated from the context: the participants’
privilege and class position protected the heroine from the threats that the *ordinary* Kashmiri woman encountered. The heroine stories are productive because they do not divert from the nationalist narratives of Kashmir as occupied territory, and, particularly Kashmiri women, as victims of state violence. Instead, through the heroine stories, wherein the teller of the story becomes a subject that comes to the rescue of the objects (victimised Kashmiri women), nationalist discourses about Kashmiri women becoming victims of the conflict were reiterated.

There were, however, instances when the privilege failed to save the participants, and this presented the flip-side of the heroine: the ultimate vulnerability when they could not be saved. In these cases, the privileged class-position of the participant failed to secure her from the gendered insecurity she experienced as a single woman in Kashmir (Hansen 2000b). However, in the state of in/security in Kashmir, there are also counter-narratives about threats to the narrator’s security and not being able to help. Herein, following Stern (2006b) in that to make a subject secured it has to be represented, the heroine stories serve as securitisation narratives in which ordinary Kashmiri women need to be secured. This security logic in Kashmir requires a stable subject, which is the Kashmiri Muslim. Securitisation also requires an insecure subject, the Kashmiri as a victim, and particularly the Kashmiri woman, around which the security project can mobilise.

### 7.2 Respectable woman

In the stories above, the participants constructed themselves as heroines who did not require help or support, but were instead outside the in/security context. There were other stories, however, wherein the participants spoke about themselves as deeply located in the context. In these narratives, the women were directly engaging with the gendered restrictions presented by the conservative and religious insecurity context. This resulted in the participants talking about themselves as respectable women. The research participants described the main aspects of being a respectable woman as
being a “good woman” and a “good Muslim.” In the narratives, these aspects often intersected, a good woman was necessarily a good Muslim.

**Doing good**

Chapter 2 examined the theories around hegemonic femininity which accentuated the way in which normative feminine characteristics and practices were valued while others were frowned upon (Schippers 2007, p. 193). Many of the research participants spoke about the centrality of doing good and what they did in order to be perceived as good women. This entailed performing good deeds, wherein the participants enacted the role of doing good. By taking on the identity of being a good woman, the participants could continue with their activism without their intentions or morals being questioned.

In order to avoid criticism the participants spoke about the importance of doing good, which resulted in them being good. This resulted in the creation of a subjectivity of goodness. Many of the participants spoke about the centrality of doing “right” when they sought to overcome challenges to their activism. Through upholding a good character the participants made people respect their work and not challenge them. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, class and respectability were important markers for activists. Aaliya said:

> I think if in the first place what you are doing is right and your character is good, then people also think good about you. So, if I say something to people they listen to me because they think she is not wrong so she can never say anything wrong. We had a couple of neighbours who were poor. One even had her husband expired. We had made an OPD [Out Patient Department] of our organisation here and we would give free medicines. Suppose during winters they would have chest infections *et cetera* and could not afford to see a doctor and get medicines for themselves. I would tell them to get medicines from the OPD. We gave them a lot of medicines and every time they would pray for me. (Aaliya)

In this quote, Aaliya spoke about how she sought to make the organisation’s work appealing to people in her community. Through demonstrating that she was being caring and generous by distributing medicines and medical aid, as well as opening up a clinic in the neighbourhood, she sought to prove
to her neighbours that her work was serving the community. In turn, this helped legitimise her engagement with the HO. Hence, relying on feminine practices and characteristics helped her to navigate the questioning and criticism.

While Aaliya’s portrayal of the importance of doing good was connected to the acts themselves, Asifa accentuated gendered characteristics that, according to her, described Kashmiri women:

> It’s good and… I love being a Kashmiri woman. I am proud to be a Kashmiri woman. But… over these few years, the atrocities, the problems that a Kashmiri woman had to go through also humbles me to think, you know, I’m not empowered in that way, I’m not strong in that way, to deal with the situation. Otherwise, as a Kashmiri I’m definitely proud to be a Kashmiri and that too being a Kashmiri woman – I love being that. I don’t think I would be very happy with any other identity, except that I’m a Kashmiri woman. It is a nice feeling. Because you know you’re a loving, affectionate, hospitable… You know, these are the qualities that come of being Kashmiri. And that too a woman, you enjoy a certain sensibility that probably is not there amongst men and other people. But I think this personality has got really overshadowed with the situation which is prevalent in Kashmir. And I think all in hearts of heart are praying for the time when we will feel that you can be very comfortable about your identity as a Kashmiri woman. (Asifa)

In the above quote, Asifa links being good with a Kashmiri identity. This identity was based on an essentialised and generalised understanding of Kashmiriness, which was, according to Asifa, natural and normal. This became evident when Asifa said: “…you know you’re loving, affectionate, hospitable” (emphasis my own). Hence, she expressed a certainty about what was involved in being Kashmiri, which was deeply connected with good characteristics. This goodness was also largely gendered, in that these good traits were specifically applicable to Kashmiri women. Here Asifa was making a distinction between women and men, valuing women more highly than men by noting that men lack the “sensibility” held by women. It is clear, thus, that Asifa was describing the practices of hegemonic femininity. In contrast to Schippers’ (2007) theorisation, Asifa located hegemonic femininity in women’s bodies and practices. But, aside from this essentialising view of femininity (which is disputed by the presence of
pariah femininities as outlined below), Asifa similarly described the privileged feminine characteristics and practices.

Another of the HO members articulated a similar line of thought. When I asked Farida, who also worked for the HO in southern Kashmir, about the role of religion in her life, she answered that religion does not prevent her from working. She addressed the importance of acting according to her understanding of principles of Islam in her work:

> My religion does not stop me from working. [Also a] female can be a doctor so we don’t have restrictions for working or studying. [...] If I go out of the house and do something wrong that is prohibited in Islam and come home and my family will come to know, obviously they will stop me from doing any kind of job, they will stop me going out. But it’s completely up to me: the way I go out, I should come back in the same manner. So that won’t stop me from doing anything. (Farida)

In this quote, Farida speaks about the tension around women’s work. It is possible that she assumed that I, as a non-religious Westerner, would have prejudices about Muslim women’s abilities to work, and therefore first wanted to underline that they are indeed able to do so. Hence, she noted that there are no restrictions on women working or studying, but that for her it was necessary to conduct that work according to Islamic principles. Thus, ultimately the onus was on herself to demonstrate that she could continue to work without infringing on her beliefs. The reiteration of good deeds would ultimately result in good character. In the Kashmiri context, religious discourses and societal power relations form women’s identities and subjectivities, encouraging the practice of embodying hegemonic forms of femininity.

**Doing religion**

In a similar vein to the importance of being perceived as doing good, following religious principles was central among the participants in demonstrating that they are respectable Muslims\(^\text{103}\) and hence respectable.

\(^{103}\) Here I am not attempting to describe the main tenets of Islam or the Qu’ran. Instead I am describing what and how the research participants spoke about being a Muslim woman. This differed greatly between the participants. Scholars and practitioners have discussed the
women. As Chapter 5 pointed out, the politico-historical context of Kashmir has resulted in the discursive formation of the pious nationalist Muslim woman. Being recognised as a devout Muslim deflects criticism and suspicion. Participants also used religion in their activism to legitimise their stance against compulsory veiling.

The CSWO focus group participants spoke about the negotiations and sacrifices they had to make in order to work for the organisation. On the one hand, living according to what was perceived as Islamic teachings helped them to negotiate their work for the organisation with their families and for themselves. One of the women, Tanavish, noted that she could do the work as long as there were no interaction between her and men and she covers her hair and prays five times a day. On the other hand, due to the irregular nature of the work, to completely follow Islamic principles was seen as difficult for the participants:

So when I go out from my home then I can wear that *burqa* or *abaya* or I can cover my face… so when I reach office, so… [laughs]. Here we can’t do that! Because we have public dealing here, so…. If anywhere… we had a call, that that child has a problem, so that time we have to drop everything here, even within five minutes or ten minutes we have to reach there. So how can we cover at that time? […] But in many ways we can balance our religion. For example, ahm, we are sitting here. We are doing work here, so we can so easily go for *salaah, namaaz*. If we’re willing for that. Ahm, for example we reach here for ten, then, ahm, 1.30, or 1? We have a break here. […] But here, we are all helpless. When we got a call we have to go outside. So that time we don’t have time to cover ourselves. And after that, we can go there.  
(Tanavish)

As with the rest of the women working for CSWO in Srinagar, Tanavish came from a poor Srinagar family. Her father, who had owned a carpet business, had passed away and, as no one else in the family was able to earn enough money, Tanavish had to take a job. The other women in the group agreed that their economic situation forced them to work.

We can go outside the city and outside the village and outside the area. But no, no, [not without] *burqa*. […] I can do, I can do everything. I can do everything. But I should be very

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role of women in Islam extensively (see for instance Al-Hakim 2005; Kandiyoti 1991b; Mahmood 2005) and it is not my objective to contribute to this discussion here.

104 A cloak-like garment worn by women.
careful [to] cover up, [which] is the […] must for religion…
(Nasreen)
The CSWO focus group participants described Kashmiri women as working long hard hours in the home and, consequently, always being tired. By generalising, they described “other women” as uneducated, devoted to religion by covering their hair and following religious principles firmly. The focus group participants see themselves as different from the other women.

Tanvish: We are a little bit different from them. Ah, like, like Kashmiri woman, all day she works at home…
Sakira: …But we’re not doing that… We’re outside. And they cover themselves. […] but [we] can’t. And what else? And they’re strict towards their religion, and we can’t.

In these quotes, the CSWO women differentiate themselves from other women. As identity formation happens in relation to the other, here the participants established a boundary between an us and a them, wherein we are going outside while they are working inside the home (Yuval-Davis 2010). Yet, as Sakira pointed out in the quotation above, “they cover themselves” and are “strict towards their religion,” while “we can’t.” There was a hint of regret and disappointment when Sakira noted that other women were adhering to religion rigorously, which she and her colleagues could not do. This suggests a sense of failure among the CSWO women to live up to the ideals of being a good Muslim. When they described themselves as different from other women, they also produced an ideal type of hegemonic femininity, wherein the good Kashmiri woman is following religious practices strictly.

The more privileged women did not speak about a need to follow Islam. By default, their class status made them respectable women. Yet, in some instances, religious discourse was utilised in activism to strengthen the argument. In one incident retold by Haleemah, she used an argument based on Islamic teachings to combat a burqa campaign by the fundamentalist group DeM.

So earlier on Asiya Andrabi had given diktats that woman should be burqa clad. And then she had used violent tactics to enforce burqa, like throwing acid on the faces of girls. I was the only person… Before that I went to so many women and told them, you sign this and I send it to the newspaper, that this is a travesty of Islam. That coercion and Islam is a
contradiction in terms. [...] What is coercive cannot be Islamic, and what is Islam can never be coercive. So I wrote accordingly [...]. I took winds out of the sails of her campaign by not negating and opposing Islam, but by saying how she is not actually following the right spirit of Islam. She is actually deviating from it. Because [...] prophet has [...] only used general persuasion and God has told him if people don’t change, don’t tire yourself after them. Your job is only to tell them, to persuade them. If they don’t listen to you, leave it to me. But never use any force... [...] So I brought back that focus. And then I also said that Kashmiri women had been using decent dress from the very beginning. There is no indecency about it, it is a moderate path. And there is no shape of any burqa or abaya given in the Qur’an\textsuperscript{105}. These are... uh... the shapes et cetera are given by different geographical considerations. This is not part of the moral ethos of Islam. This is part of the relative geographical, you know, compulsions. [...] I argued about it and after that it died down. (Haleemah)

As Haleemah pointed out, she succeeded in thwarting Andrabi’s militant Islamic campaign by using Islam as an argument. By alerting her audience to, what Haleemah called, the true nature of Islam, which focused on its non-coercive aspects, Haleemah emphasised her own Muslim identity while appealing to the Muslim identity politics dominating the region. When Haleemah referred to the already modest dress code of Kashmiri women, she reinforced the importance of respectability and modesty in the Kashmiri context. Similarly to the CSWO focus groups participants above, she produced a construct of the ideal Kashmiri woman as a modest, pious, Muslim woman.

In conclusion, it is clear that the gendered construction of the good religious woman is dependent on class. Participants of lower income classes used religion to negotiate obstacles to their work. By acting and dressing like pious Muslims, the women avoided criticism from family and community. In contrast, Muslim subjectivity was used by privileged women in campaigning against fundamentalist politics. Focus was also on being a good Muslim, or as in Haleemah’s case, being a better Muslim than Asiya Andrabi. It is clear from how the participants spoke about these ideals that they contained the norms and practices of hegemonic femininity. These

\textsuperscript{105} The holy book of Islam.
were the characteristics that privileged and idealised, and succeeding to employ them resulted in being respected and inhabiting the status of a respectable woman. While there is a certain gender essentialism present in the participants’ stories that asserts that Kashmiri women are in a specific way, these statements can be seen as speech acts that produce what they seek to name, that is, respectable women (Butler 1997a; Mahmood 2005; Schippers 2007).

Concluding remarks
In the stories above, the participants talk about themselves as respectable women. The participants were addressing the conservative and religious context that obstructed their activism by identifying as respectable women. They described the central features of being a respectable woman as being a “good woman” and a “good Muslim.” In the narratives, as demonstrated in Farida’s story, these aspects often intersected; a good woman was necessarily a good Muslim. This resonates with Radhakrishnan’s synthesis of respectable femininity, which involves “…the embodiment of the family—an embodied symbolic capital that also serves as a primary symbol for Indian culture” (Radhakrishnan 2009, p. 201). The similar emphasis on doing good and doing work according to what was considered Islamic principles highlights the performative aspects of gender identity. The reiteration and citation of already accepted norms and behaviours produces the gender identity of the participants (Butler 1990; Lloyd 2005). As is particularly clear in Aaliya and Farida’s narratives above, it is not only what they do that is important, but the effects of what they are doing. This resonates with Mahmood’s (2005) analysis of a group of Egyptian women’s involvement in the mosque movement. In her study, the women are involved in “retraining [their] ‘ethical sensibilities’” (Mahmood 2005, p. 193), which go beyond acting piously, to actually becoming pious. This form of a good Muslim woman was common among the low income and middle class research participants, as upholding a Muslim identity was essential to justify their work. Yet, as Haleemah’s anti-burqa campaign demonstrates, educated and upper class women also used the argument of
religion in their work. This demonstrates the narrow spectrum for political dialogue that is available in Kashmir.

7.3 Pariah stories
The heroine and respectable women stories above demonstrate how the majority of participants talked about their activism. These participants presented stories of activism through narratives of heroines and respectable women. These stories were deeply situated in the women’s class position and privilege. A third type of story that emerged from my reading of the transcripts was the pariah story. The pariah stories were about experiences of being an outsider and not fitting in. As noted, the heroine stories were dislocated from the context – insecurity did not affect these women (except in some exceptional circumstances) – and respectable women stories were deeply located within the context – the women used contextual understandings of respectability to achieve their work. Pariah stories, in contrast, were about being outside the context, not fitting in and not being listened to.

Sumita: living as a minority in Kashmir
As noted in previous chapters, I only interviewed one non-Muslim woman, the Kashmiri Pandit, Sumita. It is important to consider the limitations of this, which are highlighted and discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Although I am not asserting that Sumita represents the whole Pandit population and their experience in Kashmir, it is important to look closely at her particular narrative. Her experience was considerably different from the other women I interviewed. When asked about her experience of being an activist in Kashmir, Sumita replied:

Negative, as I told you, ahm… Being, ours, is as you know, a conservative society, you must have experienced during these passed few months. It is a very conservative society and, because of, political conditions I don’t want to go in very deep into that. I’m usually… Because I’m not, I’m from a minority, so I’m deeply pinpointed that she is not a M… I’ll be very honest if you don’t mind [laughs]. […] Oh, I’m in a minority here. It’s, ahm, the ultimate truth. So, that way I’m pinpointed most of the time that she is a Hindu. (Sumita)
As demonstrated in the quote above, Sumita was initially reluctant to disclose in the interview setting that she was a Pandit, even though we had spoken about it in a previous meeting. Although wearing salwar kameez the couple of times that I met her would make her look like any other Kashmiri woman from a distance, her name and teeka on the forehead would reveal her religion when she was walking down the street. However, after the initial disclosure, her religious identity was a frequent topic during the interview. This points to the fact that she had deep reservations about revealing her religion. Yet, as it was the first thing she mentioned, it was clearly fundamental to her identity as well as to how she understood her life and situation in Kashmir. She said she was being “pinpointed” for her religious identity, which suggests that her identity was constantly highlighted and discussed. It was therefore impossible for her to fit into Kashmiri society. She was constantly othered.

Sumita told me she often felt provoked by colleagues because of her religion. She described it as not direct bullying but more of a contestation of her identity. She said she felt “pinpointed that she is a Hindu.” At work, she was repeatedly called in for duty during holidays or asked to travel to distant locations; this happened particularly during Eid and other Muslim holidays, as she was the only non-Muslim in the organisation. Sumita said that she felt as if they were targeting her because of her religion. She had attempted to negotiate these practices with her managers:

Ah, in some situations I have to react adversely. [...] Otherwise I try to ignore it. Because it’s the only thing I can do, because, you know, it’s a line of people who don’t want you to move forward. Like, I tell you an incident: I had to go for my post-graduation in Delhi… [...] We were five people selected all over India in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. [...] I worked for the government as I told you, [my director] could’ve easily sent me, if he wanted to. But he didn’t send me. He didn’t give me the leave, which I needed to go over there. So I could’ve completed my post-graduation as well as… I did my post-graduation later on, but then it was over here I did it. But out there I could do it and it was in Community Health that I wanted to do, so I could not go there, because, you know, he had this, that feeling that, no I won’t send her. In spite of me, if somebody else had to go for a training, they send somebody else for a training to
In the quote above, Sumita speaks about how she was often silenced or ignored. When she had chosen to do a post-graduate course in New Delhi, her director did not allow her to go. Later on, another person was selected to go to study in Australia, sponsored by the organisation. Even though she tried to convince him to change his mind, she did not succeed. Sumita even tried to bring the issue to public attention, but there was little response. Ultimately, it seemed like she had capitulated: “…presently I’m in a minority and I’m not heard properly here. But I try to adjust with it […] When I feel something [adverse is] happening I do react but only thing is that, I can’t do much about it right now, in the present situation.” This can be viewed in stark contrast to the heroine stories above, wherein many women accounted for succeeding in defending and speaking up for themselves. Yet, in another episode that Sumita recounted, she did manage to thwart her manager’s decision:

[T]his year I had to go for duties, they put me for Eid duties or any other kind of duty. Especially me. I mean there are other people out here, there are other ethnic groups living here, there are other people, Muslim people also. Ok, maybe it was Eid at that time, […] I respect all religions and I respect all the festivals, they could have put anybody else! They just pinpointed at me! So, this time I reacted very strongly: ‘no I won’t give duties. I didn’t want, it’s not that I didn’t want to give duties, but […] why me every year? Why not anybody else? I told them, ‘why not everybody else? Why me? I have a life too. I have my mom, I have personal problems also at home. My mother is not well. So I’m not going to give duties.’ So this is one thing, the way I reacted very adversely, I mean. […] Well, ah, in a way, in fact his response immediately was kind of rude: ‘you talking a director?’ I said: ‘yeah I know I’m talking to a director, I respect you as a director, you’re my senior, but you have to respect me also, because it’s mutual, respect is mutual: you give respect and you get respect.’ I said: ‘if you understand my problems, I’ll maybe later on in life, or whatever some other time, I’ll understand yours. […] You send me for duties, you send me
to far-flung areas, I don’t say no to that. But this time you have to understand.’ So his reaction was like, ok, first he was a bit arrogant, but then later on when I was adamant, so he just pulled back and he said: ‘ok, don’t give duties this time.’ So I thought in a way it was a success. That way a success. (Sumita)

In this extract, she recounted how she challenged her director because she experienced herself being pinpointed because of her faith and the assumption that a non-Muslim would not mind working during Eid. However, by referring to her family obligations, she succeeded in getting time off like her colleagues. Hence, despite Sumita’s experiences of being silenced and ignored, this is an example of how she managed to assert her will.

For Sumita, security was impossible to achieve. When I asked Sumita what security meant to her, she replied: “… a secure environment, where you can really express yourself…” Probed further as to whether she felt secure herself, she said was uncertain about that, but that her mother did not feel secure. It seemed difficult for Sumita to express herself and to live fully as a Pandit woman in Kashmir at the time of my research. She said that she often felt out of place and pointed at. Although she, at one point, succeeded in negotiating work commitment with her director, this was evidently an exception. Sumita said that security is about limits; insecurity takes place when people go beyond the limits. As the pariah stories demonstrated, she often existed outside of these limits. At the end of the interview, Sumita thanked me for giving her the opportunity to talk about herself without any judgment from my side.

Today I felt good in a sense that, I… whatever I felt inside, whatever I feel about the situation, whatever I feel about the people, whatever I feel about myself, my identity, or the whole thing, as a person, or the world as such, I was given the freedom of speech. Nah? That’s what I feel good about. Satisfied. (Sumita)

Concluding remarks
The difference between Sumita’s story and the other participants highlights her specific identity position in Kashmir. Sumita clearly fell outside the demarcation of identities deemed worthy of security in Kashmir. Similarly
to the “silent mermaid” in Hansens’ article, Sumita’s security “cannot be voiced.”

‘Security as silence’ occurs when insecurity cannot be voiced, when raising something as a security problem is impossible or might even aggravate the threat being faced. ‘Subsuming security’ arises because gendered security problems often involve an intimate inter-linkage between the subject’s gendered identity and other aspects of the subject’s identity, for example national and religious (Hansen 2000b, p. 287).

Thus, Sumita’s sense of security was negotiated through the multiple aspects of her identity: woman, Pandit, unmarried, and activist. None of these provided a secure subjectivity on which she could rely, yet they all intersected in different contexts and situations. Thus, “intersectionality, as a meta-theorisation of power and domination, proves invaluable to anchor the formation of subjectivities and agency within a nexus of social relations and structures […] that work together to (re)produce power and privilege” (Bilge 2010, p. 23).

In this sense, Sumita provided a counter-narrative. From her initial reluctance to tell me her religion, to her concluding comment that she appreciated me listening to her without judging, it is evident that her activism did not manifest in either heroine or respectable woman stories. There was no other to which Sumita’s identity was juxtaposed (Stern 2006a; Yuval-Davis 2010). Sumita experienced her own identity as already othered. Sumita’s activism was expressed in a pariah-hood. This was neither dislocated from the context, as with the heroine stories, not located in the context, as the respectable women were. Rather, Sumita’s story happened outside the context, un-located to the context.

7.4 Conclusion: narrating one’s in/security
In this chapter I have explored the ways in which the participant women represent their activism. It brings together the narratives emerging from the three spatio-temporal locations outlined in the previous chapter by examining how activism is articulated in the participants’ narratives. The narratives that emerged from the data are heroine stories, respectable women stories, and pariah stories. The heroine stories revolve around being
able to save oneself and dismissing in/security, but also questions of victimisation and class.

The heroine stories were based on a delineation between the subject woman involved in saving other women, and those other women who were incapable of this act. This suggests the assertion that the activist is not like other women. While other women in Kashmir are suffering and in need of being rescued, the activist is there to rescue them. The heroine stories contained ideal notions of femininity and, importantly, did not disrupt nationalist narratives of Kashmiri women as victims. Yet, when there were gaps in the acceptable practices, such as the participant venturing out on the streets alone without male company, they experienced ultimate vulnerability when they could not be saved. In the narratives described above, the gendered gazes of the army men emphasise their identity as a woman and as single. Being unmarried can be interpreted as being without male protection as well as threatening heteronormative ideals of the centrality of marriage.

The respectable women stories described the central features of being a respectable woman as being a “good woman” and a “good Muslim.” In the narratives, these aspects often intersected: a good woman was necessarily a good Muslim. The theorisation of the hegemonic femininity is useful in understanding the creation of the respectable woman narrative. “Hegemonic femininity consists of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity…” (Schippers 2007, p. 94). The respectable women stories are created in this “heterosexual matrix” (Schippers 2007), wherein femininity is created in relation to masculinity. Although being a pious Muslim in itself is not gendered, the religious practices that the women enact, such as veiling, are clearly gendered. The similar emphasis on doing good and doing work according to what is considered to be Islamic principles highlights the performative aspects of gender identity, which is produced through the reiteration and citation of certain practices (Butler 1990; Lloyd 2005). This results in the participants seeing themselves as respectable women, which in turn creates a legitimate, activist subjectivity.
In the pariah stories, Sumita’s narratives of being a Pandit woman in Kashmir are explored. Her identity as Pandit is always already politicised. She speaks of how she was *interpellated* as Pandit in all the encounters she had (Austin 1976; Butler 1997a). Although constituting several intersecting social structures, such as being a single, Pandit, woman, and activist, all of these are already insecure. Sumita experienced her own identity as already *othered*. Hence, her activism was expressed in a pariah-hood. This was neither dislocated from the context, as with the heroine stories, nor located in the context, as with the respectable women stories; rather, Sumita’s story happened outside the context, *un-located* to the context. Sumita clearly fell outside the demarcation of identities deemed worthy of security in Kashmir.

The exploration of women’s experiences of in/security in relation to their personal, organisational, and national lives demonstrated how in/security has impacted women’s lives, activism, and the formation and articulation of identities. As the narratives above display, the participants constantly have to navigate in/security obstacles which are often gendered and class-based. The security logic in Kashmir requires a stable subject, which is the Kashmiri Muslim. For Kashmiri women thus, the central piece of a Kashmiri hegemonic femininity is about being a respectable Muslim woman. Qualities related to *respectable women* such as being good, caring, and generous are closely linked to an Islamic identity which involves being modest and pious. Hence, in the Kashmiri context, security needs the identity of Islam. Securitisation also requires a stable subject that can be deemed insecure (Wibben 2011): the Kashmiri as a victim, and particularly the Kashmiri woman, around which the security project can mobilise (Stern 2006b).
Chapter 8
Conclusion

This thesis has provided an in-depth exploration of politically active women’s narratives of everyday experiences of in/security in Kashmir. In this final chapter, I reflect on my journey through this thesis. I started writing this thesis from the ontological viewpoint that women’s lives, experiences, and stories matter. Feminist and narrative epistemologies provided the roadmap that I followed. The Kashmir Valley has been the focal point of two inter-related conflicts for almost 70 years: the geopolitical territorial war between India and Pakistan since independence in 1947 and the insurrection within the Valley of the Kashmiri people against Indian presence of the state since 1989. As a result of this, Kashmir Valley has turned into one of most militarised areas in the world and all aspects of Kashmiri life have been affected (Parashar 2009, 2011). In popular imaginations and media representations in India and abroad, the Kashmiri is presented as a gun-raising militant or a stone-pelting young man (Kabir 2010). Women are most often invisible in these narratives. This has been contested by feminist scholarship which has revealed women’s participation in the uprising (Kazi 2009; Parashar 2014). My interest in the mundane everyday, identity, and gender norms inspired me to build on this work by collecting narratives of women who have lived through the conflict. Listening to how women talk about themselves as activists informs us how in/security shapes and forms women’s identity and subjectivity, but also what security means to women.

8.1 Research rationale and aim of the study

Women play important roles in conflict – although in mainstream representations mostly recognised as victims and innocent civilians. Yet, this view on women’s role in a conflict is too simplistic and more attention on the intersection between gender and identity is needed in order to understand how women make sense of their experiences of in/security. Political activism is particularly interesting, as the activist has to enter the public realm and interact with actors from different parts of society. Activism can also be considered a voluntary act, in that women chose to
become an activist not out of economic necessity but because of passion and zeal to change the situation (this is however deconstructed in Chapter 6). In order to unpack the relationship between activism and in/security, this thesis explored the role of the intersecting identity claims of class, gender, and religion in women’s experiences of in/security. I used a framework of spatio-temporal locations focused on personal, organisational, and national life in order to examine these experiences in detail (Stern 2001). Using this approach, this thesis focused on how women negotiate their identity based on gender, class, and religion in relation to their experiences with security and insecurity. This seeks to demonstrate that critical security and feminist studies need to take intersecting identities into consideration in order to understand how women make sense of their experiences of in/security. As I have made clear in previous chapters, this thesis is founded on post-structural understandings of feminism and is seeking to contribute to the intersecting fields of critical security studies, feminist security studies, and South Asian studies, by providing a micro-analysis of women’s life during times of conflict.

This thesis has aimed to explore politically active women’s narratives of everyday experiences of in/security. Three specific research objectives were explored to address this overall research aim, namely:

1. To map women’s political participation in Jammu and Kashmir and to understand whether and in what ways women have been marginalised and/or included in the Kashmiri political processes, with particular attention to links between gender norms, familial gender relations, and women’s political participation.

2. To understand the link between women’s political participation and discourses of national and religious identities.

3. To understand the link between women’s political participation and discourses of in/security.

After the overview of the theoretical and methodological framework below, in the third part of this chapter I discuss how I sought to achieve these objectives.
8.2 Theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis

The research involved desk research of Kashmiri history and a qualitative case study of women activists in Kashmir. I conducted three focus group discussions and 13 in-depth interviews with women activists in the Kashmir Valley. The purpose of the focus group discussions and interviews was to gather in-depth accounts of women’s experiences of in/security. As this thesis sought to examine politically active women’s narrations of everyday experiences of in/security, I was particularly interested in narratives as experiences (Ochs and Capps 1996; Squire 2008). These were micro-narratives that gained insight into women’s everyday lives. Hence, this study does not seek to generalise or make broad assumptions about women’s lives in Kashmir; this study is merely a peek through a small window. In this thesis, I understand women’s political participation as women’s mobilisation, representation, participation, and influence in formal and informal political decision-making (Falch 2010, p. 2).

The research questions presented below were generated from my reading of the literature by feminist IR scholars as well as the scholarship on the Kashmiri conflict. I detected a common gap in these two sets of literature: a micro-account on women’s lives during long-term, low-level conflict. The literature on women and peace (see for instance Enloe 1993; McKay 2004; Pankhurst 2008) demonstrates that for women, security is not merely about the cessation of military violence; security also involves the ending of structural violence such as economic instability, gender inequality, and food insecurity. Yet, this literature fails to take into account the productive aspects of security when security is understood as a practice (Stern 2006a; Wiben 2011). Instead, I follow scholars that argue that subjects of security are produced through processes of naming dangers and threats, which implies that in/security is “a textual practice” (Stern 2005, p. 65). In this understanding, insecurity is seen as contingent and open, without a static definition. According to theories of securitisation, discourses of threats and safety that are used to secure the subject require a stable subject (Wiben 2011). There is a growing body of feminist IR work that focuses specifically
on the everyday lives of women in conflict (Nordstrom 1997; Parashar 2013; Stern 2005).

Similarly, although there is a growing body of literature on women in Kashmir, it mainly focuses on women as either victims or violent actors (Manchanda 2001a; Parashar 2010, 2014). These studies fail to provide an in-depth study of norms and practices of femininity in Kashmir. In order to facilitate to achieve this, I drew on work on constructions of Indian femininities during colonial and post-colonial times. This literature demonstrated how certain practices of femininity and masculinity were privileged; women were interpellated as mothers and warriors, at different times, in order to advance the nationalist project (Banerjee 2006; Basu 1996; Rao 1999b). I find Radhakrishnan’s (2009) theorisation of “respectable femininities” among software professionals particularly helpful, as she argues how the family, and women’s identification to it, are central to narratives of gender, nation, and religion in contemporary India. To be able to explore the construction of Kashmiri hegemonic identities, an understanding of what gender, identities and subjectivity imply is necessary. In this thesis, gender involves the practices, norms, and characteristics that give meaning to what is perceived as feminine and masculine (Butler, 1993; Schippers, 2007). The concept of hegemonic femininity concerns the femininities that are valued in the specific context. These are the characteristics that are seen as complementing hegemonic masculinities within a heteronormative framework. I argue that identities are shaped in relation to the other, and formed and understood by narratives (Andrews 2007; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2008; McNay 2000; Yuval-Davis 2010). Subjectivity refers to our sense of self and how we understand our place in the world, while identities are discourses of social categories that affect the subjectivity in intersecting ways (Butler 1990, 1997c; Lloyd 1999, 2005; Weedon 2004).

Methodologically, this thesis is a qualitative case study. I conducted in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with politically active women in the Kashmir Valley in order to gather women’s in/security narratives. I
analysed the data through thematic narrative analysis. While preparing and conducting the fieldwork, I followed feminist methodologies on how to do research in conflict-affected areas (Parashar 2014; Tickner 2005; Wibben 2014). I sought to engage closely with theories of feminist reflexivity which emphasise the importance of thinking about the role of the researcher, her identity, subjectivity, and the ethical implications of doing research (Ackerly and True 2008; Inayatullah 2011; Jacoby 2006). Conducting research in Kashmir involved its own specific challenges and opportunities which I reflected on in the methodology chapter (Parashar 2014).

8.3 Key research findings
As indicated above, based on the literature review, the central research question and sub-questions of this thesis were the following:
What is the relationship between women’s political activism and in/security?
- What are the spaces in which women experience in/security?
- How is women’s in/security shaped and formed through participation or exclusion from political processes and the salience of national/religious identity?
- How do women overcome the constraints posed by in/security?

Firstly, the research focused on understanding the degree and extent of women’s political participation in Kashmir and the process of inclusion/exclusion from political processes through primarily desk research of Kashmiri literature, historical and current. Chapter 5 described women’s involvement and the development of identity politics in Kashmiri political history. The outline of the history demonstrated the various roles women played at different times. During times of political upheaval, there were clear patterns of women taking to the streets during mass mobilisations, such as during the uprisings in 1931, 1946, and 1989. Women were part of demonstrations on the streets and supported the freedom movement in different ways. In the 1930s and early 1940s, there were several women’s initiatives that encouraged women to join the movement for freedom. Similarly, as described by Manchanda (2001a) and Parashar (2010), during
the last 20 years, women have participated in all parts of the popular movement and provided logistical, medical, and emotional support to the militant organisations. There have been several women’s organisations mobilising for independence, such as DeM and MKM. Yet, women’s participation in popular protest movements did not translate in power and influence in the formal political arena, with women under-represented in the Legislative Assembly and in high political positions (Shekhawat 2014).

Equally, the analysis of the historical setting and the fieldwork in Kashmir facilitated the exploration of the relationship between women’s participation and discourses of national and religious identities. There is a strong link between women’s political participation and discourses of national and religious identities (Mayer 2000). As the literature review demonstrates, discourses on feminine peacefulness can both legitimise women’s political activism as peace work, and fix women into the static role of hegemonic femininity (Banerjee 2005; Basu 1996). These symbolic roles are often positioned within different discourses such as nationalism, religion, and gender (Rao 1999b). Consequently, they can be negotiated through the articulation of nationalist, religious, and gender identities and can be used by women to resist marginalisation and facilitate participation. The feminist literature on peace and security demonstrates that, despite the narrow roles given to women in wartime, there is room for resistance and action (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; Åhäll 2012). Chapter 5 charted the articulations of political identities taking place in Kashmir. It demonstrated how the religious demography of the state changed over the centuries, from a Hindu to a Muslim majority location. As factions of society started to organise politically in the early 1900s, which were banned by the Maharaja, political sentiments were articulated through religious arguments instead. The notion of Kashmiriyat, a syncretic Kashmiri identity based on affiliation to location rather than religion, was widely circulated (Puri 1995). Yet, it had little relevance in practice, as the term has been manipulated to serve the political agenda of the people articulating it:

Just as Dogra rule after the 1846 Treaty of Amritsar imparted a specifically Hindu flavour to the state and conflated religion
with governance, Muslim leaders later couched their demands in terms of Kashmiriyat, conflating Islamic identity and political disenfranchisement. Kashmiriyat excludes religious minorities within Jammu and Kashmir and ignores the diversity within Hindus and Muslims, standing in as a poor synecdoche for the aspirations of the state’s entire population. Like the state’s true borders during British rule, the term is imprecise (Aggarwal 2008, p. 233. Italics my own).

This suggests that identity politics have functioned as a political mobiliser in Kashmir, whether to gain support in abolishing feudal rule in 1931, or in the call for azaadi since 1989. This analysis sets the backdrop for the closer examination of the three sub-questions of this thesis. The subsequent three sections summarise the key findings of the thesis.

What are the spaces in which women experience in/security?
The framework of spatio-temporal locations helped me structure women’s stories of in/security (Stern 2001, p. 12). The spatio-temporal locations consist of narratives that are told in specific spaces at specific times and the discourses that frame these crossroads of time and space. After establishing the essential spaces and moments in the participants’ narratives, I created appropriate locations and assigned the narratives accordingly. I structured the narratives into the spatio-temporal locations of “personal life,” “organisational life,” and “national life.”

In the spatio-temporal location of personal life, I analysed how the participants’ personal life was affected by in/security. The women I interviewed spoke about how militarisation and its multiple forms of violence – such as killings, tortures, rape, disappearances, as well as restricted education and employment opportunities, domestic violence, and environmental damage – had affected all parts of their lives (cf. Bose 2003; Kazi 2009; Parashar 2014). The participants’ narratives demonstrated the centrality of the family in their lives. They noted how family and community sought to control their behaviour by questioning their activities and probing into their whereabouts, which brings to fore the tensions of productive power producing women’s identities (Yuval-Davis 2010). Decisions regarding education, career, and most often also marriage, were
taken jointly by parents and extended family, which resulted in that women’s capacity to become engaged in activism often was dependent on other family members. For some of the participants, the family was supportive and encouraged activism, while other participants had to negotiate their involvement. The participants’ identities were thus constructed in relationship to their families in their roles as wives, mothers, or daughters. From the narratives, it was clear that wifehood was a particularly important identity. Unmarried participants spoke about being pinpointed as single and pressurised about getting married, while married women were burdened by the social expectations that followed motherhood. This highlighted how socially reproduced norms of appropriate feminine are constructed and upheld by the community (Radhakrishnan 2009; Schippers 2007), which I discuss in depth below.

In the spatio-temporal location of organisational life, the participants’ spoke about the political landscape of activism. Many of the participants described becoming involved because of a determination to improve the situation for people affected by the conflict. While some participants emphasised their solidarity for victims, other focused on the resolve to overturn the political situation; thus both demonstrated activist subjectivities at the outset. The participants who reported joining the organisation for practical purposes, such as the opportunity to earn an income, often spoke about having developed an activist subjectivity over time. It was clear, however, that whatever the motivation, activism was often a dangerous act and a large number of participants reported intimidation from either state or non-state actors. The threat of rape and sexual harassment lingered in many of the participants’ stories about approaching government officials. This spatio-temporal location also highlighted the fragile politics of women’s activism in Kashmir. Most of the participants openly contested the label feminism even though they had noted the gendered injustices taking place in all spheres of Kashmiri life. While some of the participants had a limited understanding of the term, focusing on a fixed subject of the “woman” and reverberating with criticisms presented by feminist scholars (Butler 1990; Lloyd 2005), other participants focused on the prominence of the freedom
movement, declaring that they sought to liberate all the Kashmiri people before focusing on the narrow topic of women’s issues.

The spatio-temporal location of national life explored identity politics with specific focus on the intersection of gender, regional, and religious identities. In the narratives, religious identity acted as a subject of securitisation for the participants. As Stern (2006b) notes, an efficient politicised identity needs to be pure and spotless. The Muslim participants were worried about the growing heterogeneity in the state after the departure of the majority of the Pandits. Yet, they had tendencies to paint themselves as victims of the agenda of the Indian government so as to emphasise that Pandits were not the only ones who had suffered. While the regional identity of Kashmiriyat is often argued to be a secular, harmonious relationship between the religious groups in the region (Puri 1995), in conversation with the participants it was evident that Kashmiriyat is actually permeated by religious identity, mainly Islam. The Pandit woman, on the contrary, elaborated on her experiences of being part of a minority group in Kashmir and the struggles she had to face. Religion was a central aspect of her identity, both in her relationship with others and to her subjectivity. The relational aspects of identity creation (Yuval-Davis 2010) are observable as she noted how she was identified as Pandit in her encounters, which caused her experiences of in/security. Yet, paradoxically, for herself she felt confident with her religious identity and the subjectivity made her feel secure.

How is women’s in/security shaped and formed through participation or exclusion from political processes and the salience of national/religious identity?

The thematic division of the narratives in the spatio-temporal locations of the personal, organisational, and national life, as outlined above, aided the analysis of the intersecting identities of class, gender, and religion that frame women’s activism. From the overview of Kashmiri history as presented in Chapter 5, and the women’s narratives presented in Chapter 6, I have established three themes that help us understand how women’s
in/security is shaped and formed through participation or exclusion from political processes and the salience of national/religious identity.

Firstly, in/security ruptures the divide between the private and the public. As described above, the in/security of Kashmir seeped into the homes of the participants and affected experiences in the private. The longevity of conflict impacts society, relationships, and people’s sense of self (Nordstrom 1997). Many participants described the family as a location of tension between support and struggle. Family tension revolved around intersecting norms and identities of class and gender, and this defined when and how it was suitable for a woman to engage in activism. Normative feminine and masculine practices are reproduced within the family. From the perspective of femininity as an idealised practice of what is considered normative female behaviour (Schippers 2007), the act of being an activist as a woman was considered highly subversive. This brings to the fore the tensions of productive power that occur on family and village levels. The neighbours’ gaze, which the women were responsible to deflect, acted as mechanism of control and surveillance (Foucault et al. 2007b).

Secondly, in/security impacts women’s access to activism. As described above, discourses of in/security intersect normative femininities and produce the hegemonic femininity that is acceptable for securitisation (Wibben 2011). Through processes of performativity, thus, the activist as subject is always in a process of becoming. The boundaries set up by in/security discourses further enclose the space within which women work (Stern 2006b). Moreover, the organisational life of Kashmir was located on an in/secure terrain, where NGOs were at times mistrusted, at times fraudulent, and many people expressed a lack of faith in the political sphere. This impacted on the research participants and the organisations they were involved with. Many of the participants had experienced threats from both state and non-state actors to stop their activism, which acted to curtail political agency. The participants’ articulation of gender identity and its connection to feminist politics is highly paradoxical, and this is demonstrated in the discrepancy between the participants’ gender sensitive
analysis of their experiences in Kashmir and their dismissal of a need for a feminist agenda. While the participants agreed on the gendered obstacles for women, feminism was a contested term that failed to unite women activists.

Finally, the salience of identities, particularly religious, regional and, gender identities are impacted by in/security. It is clear that religion plays a central role in Kashmir. The regional identity, Kashmiriyat, is used to discursively produce Kashmir as a tolerant and homogenous location that is accepting of people of all religions. Yet, from the research participants’ narratives, it is clear that the only agreement on what Kashmiriyat involves is what it does not involve; it is not a secular, harmonious relationship between the religious groups in the region. Through the narratives, it is noticeable that Kashmiri identity is infused by religious identity. These findings on national identity and self-identity parallel critical perspectives on Kashmiriyat (Aggarwal 2008). After the uprising started in 1989, religious identity became the identity around which the freedom movement mobilised. In Kashmir, the only acceptable religious identity became Islam. Asifa’s retelling of her entrance to activism after her Pandit friend left the Valley in the early 1990s, revealed the re-emergence of religious identities at the start of the uprising. Asifa explained that the importance of their respective religious identities grew more prominent to them and finally separated them from each other. This demonstrates the politicisation of religion that appeared in Kashmir in the early 1990s. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, this was not new to Kashmir. Yet, it was new for the participants, as demonstrated in the episode about Asifa and her friend. As expressed by Asifa: “I had become a Muslim girl for her and our religion became more predominant in our friendship. […] [S]he did not trust me anymore.”

While in/security impacted on women’s political activism in the three ways outlined above, the participants also negotiated and resisted these impacts. To analyse the relationship between in/security and activism in more depth, I investigate how activism is articulated in the participants’ narratives.
How do women overcome the constraints posed by in/security?
To deepen the analysis of the relationship between in/security and activism, it is crucial to unpack the participants’ stories about their activism. Through exploring how the participants represent their activism, I uncovered three types of archetypes of stories: heroines, respectable women, and pariahs. These stories brought out the different forms of femininity that was enacted by the participants as suitable to the in/secure context.

The heroine stories were about the activist who saved other women. In the heroine stories, the activist became a subject that comes to the rescue of the objects (victimised Kashmiri women), and, in turn, nationalist discourses about Kashmiri women becoming victims of the conflict were reiterated. These stories, hence, fed into the hegemonic discourses of the Kashmiri people as victims of Indian violations. Importantly, the heroine was not part of these groups of victims, but her mission is to save these victims. While other women in Kashmir are suffering and are in need of rescue, the activist is there to help. This bravery and passion for the situation were dislocated from the context: the participants’ privilege and class position protected the heroine from the threats that the ordinary Kashmiri woman encountered. As the heroine stories slotted into acceptable nationalist discourse, the heroine women did not threaten normative understandings of femininity. They reiterated that (some) Kashmiri women are still victims, and that the Kashmiri woman heroine is their saviour. As the heroine stories relied on victims, in some of the narratives the heroine turned into a victim herself. In these instances the privileged class-position of the participant failed to secure her from the gendered insecurity she experienced as a woman alone on the streets in Kashmir (Hansen 2000b). Herein, following Stern (2006b), in that to make a subject secured it has to be represented, the heroine stories served as securitisation narratives in which ordinary Kashmiri women needed to be secured. This security logic in Kashmir required a stable subject, which is the Kashmiri Muslim. Securitisation also required an insecure subject, the Kashmiri as a victim, particularly the Kashmiri woman, around which the security project can mobilise.
The respectable women stories conveyed how the participants were negotiating the conservative and religious context that hampered their activism. This was done by the participants through identifying as respectable women. The participants described the pivotal aspects of being a respectable woman as being a “good woman” and a “good Muslim.” The emphasis on already accepted norms and behaviours – “doing good” and doing work according to what were considered to be Islamic principles – highlighted the performative aspects of gender identity (Butler 1990; Lloyd 2005). This form of a good Muslim woman was common among the low income and middle class research participants, as upholding a Muslim identity was essential to justifying their work. Yet, as Haleemah’s anti-
*burqa* campaign demonstrates, educated and upper class women also used the argument of religion in their work. This demonstrates the narrow spectrum for political dialogue that is available in Kashmir.

The pariah stories, as described by Schippers (2007), served as the opposite to the hegemonic femininity. While the respectable women stories upheld the norms of respectable femininity, and the heroine stories contained alternative, though acceptable, forms of femininity that fed into nationalist discourses, the pariah fell outside the identities worth protecting in Kashmir. Although in the next section I discuss whether there are more pariah groups in Kashmir, in terms of my sample, it was the Pandit woman, Sumita, who experienced her own identity as already *othered*; there was no *other* to which Sumita’s identity was juxtaposed (Stern 2006a; Yuval-Davis 2010). Sumita’s activism was expressed in a pariah-hood. The difference between Sumita’s story and the other participants highlighted her specific identity position in Kashmir. Sumita clearly fell outside the demarcation of identities deemed worthy of security in Kashmir, and her security “[could not] be voiced” (Hansen 2000b). The multiple facets of Sumita’s identity – woman, Pandit, single, and activist – failed to provide her a securable subjectivity.

So, what is the relationship between women's political activism and in/security? Firstly, from the discussion of the findings it is clear that the participants continually traverse in/security hurdles to their activism which
are often gendered and based on class and religion. According to critical approaches to security, the security logic functions through processes of signification: in order to make a subject secured, it has to be represented. Security thus needs a stable subject, which can be offered by identity politics (Stern 2006b, p. 192). In Kashmir, that stable subject, worthy of securitisation, is personified by the Kashmiri Muslim. Securitisation also requires an insecure subject, the Kashmiri as a victim, and particularly the Kashmiri woman, around which the security project can mobilise. A pertinent feature of the Kashmiri security logic is that the Kashmiri victim is also the hero. The persons subjected to torture, disappearances, and other forms of violence are put on display, in order to confirm the violence executed by the Indian government. In this security logic, the privileged identity is the Kashmiri Muslim identity. As borders are created between inside and outside, us and them, as well as danger and safety, the Muslim identity needs to be protected and kept pure (Stern 2006b, p. 193). This is done through the privileging of hegemonic femininities.

Secondly, in/security impacts how activist women employ norms and practices of femininity in order to practice their activism. While there is no research on femininities in Kashmir, drawing from the scholarship on femininities in India and the data collected in this research, it is clear that hegemonic femininity involves being a devoted, sacrificing (heterosexual) wife/mother and a pious Muslim (Radhakrishnan 2009; Rao 1999b). The respectable women stories evidently feed into the hegemonic femininity, as the participants emphasised doing good and doing work according to what was considered Islamic principles. This reiteration of the acts of goodness seeks to produce a good, pious identity of the participant (Butler 1997a; Mahmood 2005). The heroine stories, on the other hand, do not necessarily uphold hegemonic femininity, as the heroine is a subject in herself, working to save other women. Yet, they do not threaten normative understandings of femininity, as the heroine stories feed into acceptable nationalist discourse. They reiterate that (some) Kashmiri women are still victims, and that the Kashmiri woman heroine is their saviour. The importance of adhering to some of the norms of femininities becomes conspicuously clear when the
participants fail to adhere to hegemonic femininity. In the pariah stories, Sumita’s narratives of being a Pandit woman in Kashmir revealed how she was constantly pointed out as a Pandit in meetings. The Pandit identity as non-Muslim was already othered. Sumita’s activism was expressed in a pariah-hood. The Pandit security remained outside the demarcation of identities deemed worthy of security in Kashmir (Stern 2006b).

8.4 Limitations of the research
This study focuses on politically active Kashmiri women. This means that the study does not claim to represent all Kashmiri women, but instead provides an in-depth analysis of the negotiations of a small group of women living in the Kashmir Valley. The depth and width of the study could have been increased if I had been able to extend my fieldwork. However, due to logistical and practical constraints, I could only spend five months in Kashmir during 2011. This was also the time of Ramzaan, which is a busy month for most Muslims, particularly women, who are responsible for the cleaning, cooking, and preparations for the Eid celebrations. This led to my research coming to a standstill for one of the five months I was there, although during Ramzaan and Eid, I had more time to spend within the family and participating in daily duties. This provided me with additional insights into the lives of the Kashmiri woman.

The participants were adult women of all ages from Srinagar District, Kupwara District in north Kashmir, and Budgam and Pulwama in the south. While this study did not aim to be representative of all areas and communities of Kashmir, the inclusion of Kupwara, Budgam, and Pulwama districts gave insights into rural women’s experiences, while Srinagar shed light on urban lives. Their professional affiliations varied: law, medicine, academia, housework, and students. All of these women, except one, were Muslim. The remaining one was Pandit. Although a greater religious and ethnic diversity would have provided a more representative sample, the circumstances on the ground and the low number of politically active non-Muslims made this impossible. As the history chapter demonstrates, the Pandits have been integral citizens of Kashmir throughout history. When the
insurgency flared up in 1989-1990, many Pandits were targeted and fled their homes (Evans 2002). Currently, there is only a small number of Pandits living in Kashmir Valley; a large number of Pandits still live in refugee camps in Jammu. Due to the focus of this research on women currently living in the Kashmir Valley, I did not travel to Jammu to interview refugees. This would have provided a different context. Besides Sumita, there were some additional Pandit women activists (including the Panchayat elected woman Aasha Jee), as well as a small number of Sikh and Christian women activists. However, I was not able to contact these women for interviews. While recognising that Sumita’s story does not represent all Pandits’ stories, her narrative is a window into one Pandit’s experience. Her story provides an insightful counter-narrative to the Muslim women’s narratives.

A final limitation concerns the silences in the data. As discussed in Chapter 6, none of the participants spoke about domestic or sexual violence in their homes. It has been demonstrated that women in South Asia experience violence in their private lives (Faizal and Rajagopalan 2005; Shaheed 1998). During the workshops that I observed, participants spoke openly about violence in the home – although once again, not necessarily in their own home – yet, these issues were not reported in the interviews. Another silence was the invisibility of non-heterosexual practices and identities, as well as sex work, in the interviews and in the work of the organisations. These activities would appear to threaten to contaminate the hegemonic position of heteronormativity as confirmed in my findings, and as such are conspicuously absent. I had informal conversations with some NGO activists, and one man was particularly concerned about this issue. He told me that he knew some LGBT individuals, who either hid their sexual identities or moved outside the state. More research clearly needs to be done on this, but it could be argued that LGBT individuals and sex workers are also pariahs in Kashmir. Reflecting on and developing the research methods further could have helped participants give voice to these silences and reach these marginalised individuals (D'Costa 2006).
8.5 Recommendations for future work

The discussion of the findings opens up larger questions of how we can make sense of women’s activism and Kashmiri identity politics. Can we understand women’s activism as a space for liberation and radical politics? Are there additional or different responses and performativities of women activists beyond the heroine, respectable women, and pariah stories presented in this study?

When I was doing the fieldwork and writing up the thesis, I was struck by the little research available on women in the Kashmiri Panchayat councils (for overviews, see Kaul and Sahni 2009; Sheikh 2014; Wani 2011). There is a clear reason for that: while Panchayats councils have been productively implemented in other parts of India, the first successful elections to take place in Kashmir were in 2011. In my interaction with Panchayat elected women, I noticed several issues with the system that need to be highlighted and researched further: many of the Panchayat representatives that were recently elected had little political awareness and no understanding of the political system. Many women were unable to read and write and could only speak the local dialect of Kashmiri. As most of the meetings were conducted in Urdu or English, the participants had difficulty in understanding what was actually going on. In order to provide a complete picture of the progress of the Panchayat process, this needs to be researched further.

Additionally, the Pandit question needs to be explored further. While Parashar (2014) and Kazi (2009) include Pandit women’s accounts in their work, a more thorough understanding of the Pandit women still living in the Kashmir valley and how they understand and negotiate security is needed. Trisal’s (2007) piece on the Pandits who remained is an important piece of work, but an in-depth narrative exploration of Pandits’ perspectives on the last 20 years would be fruitful. In particular as it would contribute to the conversation that has been going on since Spring 2015, after the Kashmiri government proposed building specific townships for Pandits to return to. This was met with huge protests from Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims, as
well as many people in India, and it presents an opportunity to further reflect on the relationship between in/security and religious/national identities in Kashmir.

Finally, following on from the discussion of silences and pariah statuses above, there is a conspicuous lack of research on LGBT identities in Kashmir. Whether non-heterosexual relations are not spoken about due to their stigmatised nature, the fact that homosexual acts are illegal, or for other reasons, this needs to be investigated further. Unlike other parts of India, there is currently no civil society activism on the issue and no political discussion of whether Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which penalises same-sex sexual relations (Boyce and Khanna 2011), should be repealed. Considering how in/security shapes identities, as this thesis has demonstrated, my hypothesis is that the in/security situation in Kashmir, which is very different from other parts of India, together with the heteronormative nature of acceptable gender roles, to a large extent similar to other parts of India, affects the silencing of LGBT individuals.

8.6 Implications of findings
The thesis provides a valuable contribution to the scholarship on women in Kashmir. It adds to the already insightful works on women as combatants and perpetrators of violence (Parashar 2011, 2014), women’s lives during the conflict (Manchanda 2001a; Shekhawat 2014), gender and militarisation (Kazi 2009), and widows (Rashid 2011) in Kashmir. The constructive contribution of this thesis derives from its focus on in/security and identity, with a specific focus on femininities.

The identity politics that has been deconstructed in this thesis demonstrates the narrow spectrum for political dialogue that is available in Kashmir. The exploration of women’s narratives displayed how in/security on all levels have impacted women’s lives, women’s activism, and the formation and articulation of identities. As the narratives above demonstrate, the participants constantly have to navigate in/security obstacles which are often gendered and class-based. The security logic in Kashmir requires the
Kashmiri Muslim as a stable subject. For Kashmiri women thus, the central element of a Kashmiri hegemonic femininity is being a respectable Muslim woman. Qualities related to respectable women, such as being good and caring and generous, are closely linked to an Islamic identity, which involves being modest and pious. Hence, in the Kashmiri context, security needs the identity of Islam. Securitisation also requires a stable subject that can be deemed insecure (Wibben 2011): the Kashmiri as a victim, particularly the Kashmiri woman, around which the security project can mobilise. At a practical level, even though mainly making a theoretical argument, the findings seek to open a dialogue on the ground. Even though the number of women activists and organisations with a women-focused agenda are relatively few, gender equality in Kashmir would benefit from dialogue and collaboration between the actors. This is already happening to some extent, but it can be strengthened further if actors distance themselves from identity politics and seek to focus on political issues instead.

Methodologically, this thesis contributes to the “ethnographic turn of IR” (Dauphinee 2013; Inayatullah 2011) by conducting an in-depth study of everyday lives in conflict zones. While I was not involved in formal ethnography or participant observation, my fieldwork experience was a deeply personal experience (Dauphinee 2013; Inayatullah 2011). I lived with a Kashmiri family, became friends with Kashmiri people, and spent all of my free time in Kashmiri homes. After having finished a day of research, I would go “home” to my Kashmiri “mummy” and “daddy” and continue to learn about Kashmiri family life. I attended weddings, engagement parties, circumcision celebrations, and funerals. I spent days locked in the house because of hartals or curfews. I spent hours sitting in the dark as the “power” had gone. Through informal conversations with friends, people next to me on the bus, or at NGOs, I learnt more than I did during the interviews. While this material was not formally included in the research, it clearly helped in forming the analysis. The below extract from my field notes demonstrates some of the contradictions I experienced while in the field and how I tried to make sense of them. I describe how I was struck by the contrast between beauty and suffering, as well as between the mundane
everyday and a painful past, when I was visiting some of the villages in Kupwara District in northern Kashmir which have been heavily affected by conflict:

13 July, Kupwara: I was actually supposed to go back [to Srinagar] today, but there are hartals in both Srinagar and Sopore so I cannot go yet. It is the 80th anniversary of the Martyr’s Day – 13 July, 1931, when 21 people were killed by the Maharajan army in Srinagar. Here in Kupwara there is no hartal today, but it is very calm and peaceful where we are staying. A few men are sitting outside the mosque and some cows are grazing on the football pitch. I am sitting on the balcony and am enjoying the light breeze. It is hot in the sun, but I am sitting in the shade.

Yesterday I went with [Amir] to [a village] to, [as he phrased it], “count orphans.” The feeling of riding a motorcycle through the rice fields… It’s the greenest of green I have ever seen. And the mountains in the background, it is indescribable. My whole body enjoyed the sun, the wind and all the green all around me. Men in kurta and Nehru hats were working on the fields, women carrying hay or water. If I had not read that widely on the conflict, widows, children, poverty, army, rapes and all the trauma the population has gone through, I would have thought I was in heaven. Now it mainly feels like an illusion. Some kind of weird “model prison”: beautiful and decorated to show for sponsors and tell them “all is ok. All is well.” But it’s not. In Salaamatwari we met about 20 children who had lost their parents, mostly their fathers. Many, possibly the majority, by the Indian army. And then the children and their mothers won’t receive compensation. They looked malnourished and wore torn clothes. Only a few of the girls looked well and healthy, and they went to school in Srinagar, living in [an organisation’s] hostel. We also visited [Sofia] in Poshpora. […] [a village where almost 100 women were raped by the Indian army in 1991 and still carry that stigma]. Outside their house there was a group of boys sitting around playing Carrom [a South Asian board game] and a bit further away a group of young men was playing volleyball. (Diary notes, translated from Swedish)

My own positionality, and the questioning of it, has been a major obstacle for this research. The familiarity of post-colonial criticisms of the violence of Western knowledge production and particularly white, Western feminists implication therein (Mohanty 1988; Spivak 1988) has often made me want to quit the project and focus on something nearer to home. Yet, despite my many misgivings, as a feminist researcher and activist I wanted to write
about Kashmir. I was convinced that the most important task was to make Kashmiri women’s voices heard:

In order to explore the overwhelming silence of women whom feminist researchers intend to represent, one needs to build a triangular passage of interaction that connects western feminists to marginalized women to southern feminists. We, as feminist IR scholars, can no longer afford the time to argue about who has the right to represent, or whose representation is more ‘authentic.’ We should discard our self-protective stand on who is best able to represent the marginalized and become more forthright with our research commitment. We should be able to say what we have to say while being aware of the politics of location (D’Costa 2006, p. 138).

I ultimately found that including my own positionality and experience in the research gave deeper insight into the in/security in Kashmir. As an “outsider looking in” I do not claim to know its culture as well as someone who has grown up during times of conflict, but an outsider perspective can give additional opportunities to observe norms and practices that are taken for granted. Therefore, I hope that this thesis has provided an insight into the everyday experiences of in/security of women in Kashmir and what in/security means to them. Understanding security narratively, this thesis has shown the strong link between in/security, identity, and subjectivity. The meaning of security for the participants can be summed up with this phrase by Asifa: “[s]ecurity would mean feeling strong […] and knowing I have a right to be who I am.”
Appendix 1

Research participants

All the names of groups and individuals are changed in order to protect anonymity.

Focus group discussions (FG)

FG1: Children and Social Work Organisation (CSWO)
FG1a: Tanavish
FG1b: Nasreen
FG1c: Osheen
FG1d: Sakira

FG2: Human Rights Organisation (HRO)
FG2a: Nilofer, Advocate, Srinagar, mid-30s.
FG2b: Rabiya, Advocate, Srinagar, late-20s.
FG2c: Farhana, MA student in Peace and Conflict Resolution, intern, early 20s, Pulwama

FG3: Health Organisation (HO)
FG3a: Aaliya, 12th Standard, Pulwama
FG3b: Haseena, 12th Standard, Pulwama
FG3c: Zubaira, 12th Standard, Budgam
FG3d: Sehrish, Budgam, 12th Standard,
FG3e: Farida, 10th Standard, Pulwama
FG3f: Sania, 12th Standard, Budgam

In-depth interviews (II)

II1: Haleemah, Professor, Srinagar, early 50s.
II2: Aaliya, HO, Health worker, Pulwama District (village), mid-20s, 12th standard.
II3: Farida, HO Health worker, Pulwama District (village), early 20s, 10th standard.
II4: Afreen, Community Facilitator, CSWO, Trehgam, Kupwara D., 2nd Year BA, 22 years.
II5: Shagufa, Community Facilitator, CSWO, Dhulpora, Kupwara D., 2nd Year BA, 21 years.
II6: Rashida, Deputy Sarpanch, Poshpora, Kupwara D., mid-40s, uneducated.
II7: Aniza, Panchayat member, Salamatwari, Kupwara D., mid-40s, uneducated.
II8: Zaara, Community Facilitator, CSWO, Babapora, Kupwara D., College (12th Standard?), 19 years.
II9: Shehla, Founder and Chairperson, Widow Organisation, Srinagar, unschooled, mid-40s.
II10: Asifa, Secretary, HO, BA/MA, mid-40s.
II11: Nilofer, Advocate, HRO, Srinagar, mid-30s.
II12: Rabiya, Advocate, HRO, Srinagar, late-20s.
II14: Saba, widow/activist, school teacher, early 40s (bad sound quality).
Appendix 2
Interview guide - Focus group discussions

Topics/Questions

1. Please tell me about your organisation’s engagement with women’s issues in this area?
   *What forms of activism are you (this project) involved in?
   *What is your role in women’s activism in this area?

2. How do the staff at your organisation experience being activists in this area?
   *What are the positive and negative aspects about your work?
   *How is your job perceived by your closer family?
   *How is your job perceived by your extended community?

3. How do the staff at the organisation experience the security situation in the area?
   *What do you do to feel more secure?
   *Why?
   *What factors play a role in this experience?
   *Would that be different if you lived somewhere else?
   *Somewhere else in Srinagar? Somewhere else in Kashmir?
   *Do other women have similar experiences?

4. What is Kashmiri identity to you?
   *Is there such a thing?
   *What does it involve?
   *What role does religion play?
   *What are the positive aspects of this?
   *How do you as a woman experience this identity?
Appendix 3
Interview guide - Semi-structured interviews

Narrative question:
“Please tell me about your life working with political issues in Kashmir?”

Follow up topics/questions: (clearly depending on previous narrative)

1. Please tell me about your engagement with women’s project in this area?
   *What forms of work are you involved in?
   *What is your role in women’s work in this area?
   *What made you interested in these issues?
   *What was your life prior to engaging in these issues?

2. Do you perceive yourself as an activist? How? Why (not)?
   *How important is the activism for you? In what ways?
   *How important is it to work for women’s issues for you?

3. What event, person or issue has had the largest impact on your work in this area?
   *Why?
   *Do you think your colleagues have the same experience?
   *What other events or issues have influenced your work?

4. Has your engagement in women’s issues had any impacts on your life?
   *How? What?

5. How do you think people around you perceive your work?
   *How does your family perceive your work?
   *How does the wider community perceive your work?
   *What is your experience of this?
   *How do your clients perceive your work?
   *Do you experience any benefits because of your work?
   *Do you experience any negative side-effects?
   *Would this be different if you worked with other, non-women related, issues?

6. How do you experience the security situation in your area?
   *What do you do to feel more secure?
   *Why?
   *What factors play a role in this experience?
   *Would that be different if you lived somewhere else?
   *Somewhere else in Srinagar? Somewhere else in Kashmir?
   *Do you think your work with women’s issues has had an impact on how you experience the security situation?
   *Do other women have similar experiences?

7. What role does religion play in your work?
*What are the positive aspects of this?
*Do you experience any tensions between being Muslim (/Hindu/Sikh/Christian) and an activist in Kashmir?
*How has this affected your engagement?
*If any obstacles, what do you do to sidestep these hurdles?
*Do you think other people encounter similar experiences?

8. What is Kashmiri identity to you?
*Is there such a thing?
*What does it involve?
*How do you as a woman experience this identity?
Appendix 4
Strategy for dealing with trauma

Taking the local circumstances in consideration, the researcher developed a strategy for dealing with trauma arising during or after interviews with research participants in conflict-affected areas. This applies to the narrative/semi-structured interviews and the focus groups.

(1) During stage 1 in my research, I will familiarise myself with the infrastructure of support mechanisms existent in Srinagar. I will personally contact the different organisations and discuss possible avenues for cooperation. As mentioned above, these organisations have little resources and therefore this kind of direct cooperation may be difficult. However, more importantly, these organisations can provide me with information on culturally suitable strategies on how to deal with trauma arising during or after interviews. Step 2, outlined below, will be adjusted accordingly. It will also provide me with a network of activists and social workers with whom I can interact and voice my concerns and worries.

(2) I have developed a “check in” system, in which I will take 10-15 minutes at the end of the interview to have a chat with the participant about the interview. This will give both of us the opportunity to reflect on the interview; what kind of feelings arose during the interview; what will be remembered from it; and how to deal with the feelings and experiences from the interviews. I will give all interview participants the opportunity to meet informally between the first and the second interview, as well as after the second interview, for a brief conversation about the previous interview. Though I am not a trained councillor and will not be able to provide professional support, this strategy of “check in” will be more suitable to the Kashmiri context in terms of building up relationships and interacting on a less formal level outside the interview room. Clearly, this is a time-consuming exercise and it is likely that these check ins will serve as social visits, to meet family and have a chat over tea. Simultaneously, it is an important factor to ensure the interview participant that the researcher is not deserting them.

For focus group participants, I will conduct a similar scheme. I will provide the participants with my mobile phone number so they can call me if they want to talk. I will also collect their phone numbers and either call them, or in case they do not have mobile phones, I will do home visits.
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